

THE NAIROBI REPORT



Frameworks for Africa-UK
Research Collaboration in the
Social Sciences and Humanities

The British Academy and
The Association of Commonwealth Universities



BRITISH
ACADEMY

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March 2009



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Universities**

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Foreword by Dr Thandika Mkandawire

Experience has taught us that Africa needs its humanities and social sciences. Attempts to improve Africa's prospects by focusing on scientific advances and the benefits accruing from them have all too often overlooked the important perspectives which the humanities and social sciences afford; perspectives which draw attention to the cultural and social dynamics of people and places and institutions. Much of the work undertaken to date has, however, been by scholars based outside the continent. The potential for African scholars to respond has steadily diminished, as their research centres have been under-funded and their energies diverted. Growing recognition that research and higher education matter is welcome, but it is vital that the social sciences and humanities are granted their rightful place, alongside the natural, engineering and medical sciences, if Africa's development challenges are to be fully and properly addressed.

This report from the British Academy is a welcome contribution to the debate – not only a call to action, but an attempt to offer some concrete solutions. The product of an extensive consultation with African academics, it makes a powerful case for the humanities and social sciences. Crucially, it focuses on the practical aspects of research and the creation of an environment within which African academics can prosper. The importance of connections and collaboration between African researchers is emphasised, and links with scholars outside the continent are approached from this point of view. Universities are at the heart of research, but are struggling to advance this mission. The report is frank about the problems that they face, but sees the potential for new forms of national and regional cooperation to renew them. Strengthening research, as the report argues, rests fundamentally with the next generation of African scholars. If they are to be trained and developed to become the continent's future research leaders, then Africa's experienced researchers will need to invest their time and energy in this, and to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to take us forward.

Dr Thandika Mkandawire

Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

Foreword by Baroness Amos

The UK has a vital part to play in assisting African universities to strengthen their research base. This report makes an important contribution to that discussion by setting out how this might be done. It manages to capture the essence of a conversation between African and UK researchers, and the organisations that fund and support them, about the concrete steps which could be taken.

There is much in the report that relates to the need for change and reform within African universities. They face significant challenges which can only be tackled from within. But the report also makes a clear case for partnership and collaboration. The UK has a substantial community of academics and experts focused on researching and reporting African issues. The Royal African Society and the African Studies Association of the UK are two organisations which seek to bring these interests together, and to encourage a richer and more realistic understanding of the continent, as well as a number of specialist African studies centres and individual researchers.

There is great potential to increase and expand collaboration here in the UK, and with our counterparts in Africa. This will assist us in improving our knowledge of the African continent and assist African institutions and researchers as they seek the time and space to reflect critically and analytically on a range of issues. We need to find opportunities to celebrate the great diversity – and potential of – the continent's many social, religious and linguistic forms, and the creativity of its people and places. African research is needed which is set firmly within African intellectual frameworks and is embedded in African approaches. The onus is on all of us to support this whenever we can.

Baroness Amos

Chair of the Royal African Society

Contents

vii	Preface
1	Executive Summary
1	Institutional foundations – improving structures, systems and governance
1	Communities and networks – forging collaboration within Africa
2	Investing in individuals – the early research career
3	Recommendations
3	Institutional foundations – improving structures, systems and governance
4	Communities and networks – forging collaboration within Africa
5	Investing in individuals – the early research career
6	1. Introduction
6	The humanities and social sciences are critical – and are in a critical condition
6	A serious and extended discussion
7	A complex set of issues requires joined-up thinking
8	The challenges should not be underestimated – serious support will take time and action at many levels
8	Being realistic about what donors can and cannot do
10	2. Institutional foundations – improving structures, systems and governance
10	The problem of weak institutions
10	Forging better relationships – making the connections within institutions
11	Challenging consultancy cultures but recognising the positive potential
12	Making research attractive – the need for incentives
13	Monitoring research to enable future planning
13	Setting national agendas
14	3. Communities and networks – forging collaboration within Africa
14	Linking researchers within Africa
14	Developing research networks
15	Inter-institutional collaboration: creating communities of excellence
16	Making collaboration work
16	A networked approach to revitalising African publishing

18	4. Investing in individuals – the early research career
18	Laying the foundations for research
18	Increasing doctorates but protecting quality
19	Split-site PhDs – a collaborative approach to doctoral training
19	New modes of PhD training in African universities
20	Mentoring researchers through their early careers
21	Supporting local research training
21	Re-integrating returning scholars
22	Developing proper career structures for emerging researchers
24	Appendix 1. Report contributors
27	Appendix 2. The product of experience: contributions to the debate

Preface

There is a vital need to foster a strong humanities and social science research community in Africa that can take its full place in international research networks. In a period of rapid and often turbulent change, it is essential that African scholars are able to chart and to understand the transformations occurring in African societies and cultures and their impact on the quality of people's lives. Effective policies, critical to the continent's future, can only be developed with deep and textured knowledge of the societies in which they are to be implemented.

This report, the culmination of a two-year process of reflection and discussion among African and UK scholars initiated by the British Academy and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, examines the practical steps that need to be taken to strengthen humanities and social science research in Africa. It draws on an extensive survey of the African university community, and on the discussions of a subsequent conference in Nairobi which brought together into a remarkably frank and lively dialogue the diverse parties involved in research development in Africa – senior university officers as well as junior staff, administrators as well as researchers, established academics as well as the new generation.

This summary provides a persuasive analysis of some of the hurdles to be overcome – the severe internal resource and organisational barriers, the difficulties of providing incentives for young researchers in terms of time and career paths, the complexities of ensuring that external assistance in research training is effective in developing research capacity within Africa and the problematic impact of certain forms of donor funding. Inter alia, it underlines the importance of real and sustained collaborative research partnerships, both within Africa and between African researchers and those in other countries – partnerships that generate trust among participants, that can draw on the knowledge of all parties and that provide a context for mutual learning. It highlights the need for a more integrated research funding system that can provide a 'ladder' for the progression of good collaborative research teams from small-scale intensive projects to test initial research ideas and methodologies to large scale projects that can provide rigorous evidence.

We outline here a series of frameworks which offer a way forward, building on examples of successful practice. We hope that the report will stimulate serious discussion among the diverse groups of people and organisations, within and outside Africa, with the capacity to effect change. We commend these frameworks to the bodies we represent and to the broader community of people and institutions – African and UK researchers, vice-chancellors, and research and university associations, and to UK, African and international research funding communities – committed to revitalising African universities and to strengthening humanities and social sciences research on the continent.

Our heartfelt thanks are due to a number of individuals and institutions who have contributed to the organisation of the Nairobi meeting and the production of this report: Abdallah Uma Adamu, Graham Furniss, Andrew Kaniki, Kenneth King, John Kirkland and Paschal Mihyo, who chaired the sessions at the conference, and steered the participants through a complex and wide-ranging discussion; Justin Willis, Susan

Mwangi and colleagues at the British Institute in Eastern Africa; Gemma Haxby and the staff at the Royal African Society; Jane Lyddon and Rachel Paniagua at the International Relations Department of the British Academy; and particularly Jonathan Harle, the author of this report, and who conducted our initial consultation, at the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Our warmest thanks are to Graham Furniss, Chair of the Report Steering Committee and Vice-Chair of the British Academy's Africa Panel, who initiated the whole concept of the study, the consultation and the conference, and who led it to this successful conclusion.

Professor Duncan Gallie

Foreign Secretary and Vice-President of the British Academy

Executive Summary

Across Sub-Saharan Africa it is evident that humanities and social sciences research is in urgent need of support. Universities and researchers face many challenges, the results of declining funding in the face of huge increases in enrolments. Infrastructure and facilities are insufficient and incomes have fallen. Many academics have been forced to sacrifice research in the face of impossible teaching and administrative commitments, and as they are driven to find other ways of generating income.

This report represents the culmination of a substantial two year British Academy and Association of Commonwealth Universities project, which began in early 2007, and consulted researchers in Africa and the UK. Its intention was to develop a better understanding of the problems, and in doing so to identify what might practically be done to strengthen the research base in African universities.

In examining the issues it was clear that each impinges on the next, to form a complex web of circumstances that cover everything from the physical and human infrastructure of African universities, through to the policies and priorities of international agencies. The full report contains some 22 recommendations addressed severally to three main constituencies – African universities and governments; national and international funders; and UK universities, the UK government and UK agencies involved in higher education and international collaboration.

There are three main thrusts of the report:

Institutional foundations – improving structures, systems and governance

While poor funding for research, and for higher education more widely, is a major problem, many of the barriers to research are organisational and managerial rather than simply financial. New money for research can only be provided if there is confidence in the ability of institutions to manage it and to deliver good research. Systems and processes within institutions, and relationships between key staff all present obstacles to research. These are in turn affected by the lack of clear research agendas and postgraduate training plans at national level, which are needed to ensure coherent frameworks for research, within which researchers can work, and to which donors can respond as appropriate. Consultancy is often negatively perceived, but it can offer valuable additional income, and new research opportunities. The challenge is therefore not to eradicate it, but to incorporate it constructively within institutional research programmes.

Communities and networks – forging collaboration within Africa

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, and must be encouraged and supported within research funding programmes. In addition very few African institutions have the capacity to support a full programme of humanities and social science research. For a varied research programme to be sustained nationally or regionally a greater degree of collaboration across institutions will evidently be needed. Much emphasis has been placed on a ‘centres of excellence’ approach but we feel that the focus should instead be on communities of research excellence. By building collaborative programmes between institutions and in specific disciplines or subject areas, and by making use of institutional hubs as appropriate, research training and mentoring schemes could be delivered, and shared research programmes established, which aim for economies of scale, and leverage wider expertise.

Investing in individuals – the early research career

It is ultimately individuals who will revitalise research and take humanities and social sciences scholarship into the future. Investing in them, and ensuring that they are well supported, will therefore be key. This means that funding for research and funding for research training cannot be separated. The early career of a researcher is marked by two distinct phases: the PhD, and the early post-doctoral career. Postgraduate training must be dramatically increased, but it must also be harnessed more effectively so that researchers can build an active postdoctoral career on doctoral foundations. Achieving this at the scale required, and to make best use of the money available, will require new methods of delivery and new types of PhD. More of this training will also need to take place within Africa. Split-site and distance learning approaches will undoubtedly be valuable, and there is great potential for partnerships between African and UK institutions. Doctoral programmes will need to emphasise skills in proposal and grant writing, and support researchers to get their work published. Dedicated mentoring will be critical. At postdoctoral level proper career structures must be defined, which support progression, and provide access to further research and project management training.

Recommendations

Institutional foundations – improving structures, systems and governance

Institutional structures and relationships

- **R1:** African universities should work to establish central research management offices, or support existing units, with a responsibility to manage and provide support to the full range of activities which surround research, from developing strategies, mapping needs, and disseminating funding information, to assisting researchers to put together grant applications, and to manage the financial and legal aspects of contracts. Institutions seeking to develop their own research management structures will benefit from the existing regional research management associations, such as the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) and its West African equivalent (WARIMA).
- **R2:** African universities and research associations should recognise that libraries play a critical role in research, and that stronger relationships between researchers and libraries are needed, to agree priorities, identify available resources, and to assist in the collection and dissemination of African research.
- **R3:** African universities and university associations, via their staff development or human resources departments, should ensure that leadership and strategic management capacity is built within institutions. Specialist training courses and attachments or exchange visits to other universities may be valuable. Other key staff will require training in personnel and research and consultancy management to ensure strong leadership at all levels.

Consultancy

- **R4:** African universities should seek to incorporate consultancy formally within departmental research programmes and in doing so make it more attractive for academics to contract their expertise through their institutions rather than independently. Donors should encourage consultancy contracts to be undertaken in this way, and avoid contracting academic expertise on an individual basis.

Incentives for research

- **R5:** African universities should establish performance management systems, linked to appropriate reward and incentive mechanisms, to encourage research, supervision and mentoring, publishing and policy or other external consultancy work.
- **R6:** Donors should consider including a contribution towards salary costs for a principal investigator as part of any research funding programme. This would enable researchers to focus properly on research, and enable universities to cover teaching replacement costs.

Monitoring and information

- **R7:** African university and research associations should work with universities to gather better data on higher education and research at national, regional and continental level, including the number of doctorates being produced, levels of research funding and where it is spent, university specialisation, and existing initiatives which support research and postgraduate training.

National agendas

- **R8:** African universities and university associations should engage their governments and regional and continental bodies, to help them to appreciate the value of research and the risk that continued expansion poses to quality within higher education. In doing so they should advocate the design of national frameworks for research and postgraduate study, seek to initiate a dialogue on funding formulae for higher education, and ensure that obstructive mobility and visa arrangements are addressed to enable African academics to travel more freely within the continent.

Communities and networks – forging collaboration within Africa

Research networks and associations

- **R9:** African universities must recognise, through their research policies and budgetary allocations, and through academic appraisal mechanisms, that active participation in disciplinary or subject-based associations is essential to a successful academic career, and vital to encourage greater inter-African collaboration at national, regional and continental levels.
- **R10:** Donors should support disciplinary or subject-based associations to enable them to develop long term research strategies, and provide funding to enable researchers to explore emerging ideas arising from these.
- **R11:** UK research associations and networks should seek to strengthen links with their counterparts in Africa, as a step towards identifying where shared, longer-term research agendas might be possible, where research programmes might be effectively linked and where joint conferences might be held. Specifically, UK associations could offer support for African colleagues to attend conferences in the UK, or for UK academics to attend the conferences of African associations.

Communities of research excellence

- **R12:** African universities and donors should explore the development of inter-institutional research communities, as the basis for collaboration in research and postgraduate training in specific disciplines or subjects. The process should seek to learn from the experiences of existing collaborations, and should take an holistic view of research, recognising the roles of research management offices, staff development departments and university libraries.
- **R13:** Donors should collectively consider the levels of research funding which are currently available to African academics, to ensure an appropriate ‘ladder’ of funding, enabling initial ideas to be explored, and subsequently developed into larger scale research projects. They should recognise that large scale projects take time to plan, and should incorporate proposal development funding to allow proper design and planning.

Publishing

- **R14:** African universities and university and research associations should consider establishing an academic publishing network in order to collect and peer review new work and prepare it for publication. Online publishing and print-on-demand technologies should be explored to enable research to be more widely disseminated across Africa by circumventing the problems and expense of warehousing and delivery.
- **R15:** African universities should support university libraries to develop digital repositories of theses and dissertations in order to improve access to African research. Further development of the Association of African Universities’ Database of African Theses and Dissertations may represent the best way to do this.

Investing in individuals – the early research career

Doctoral training

- **R16:** African universities, African university and research associations, donors and UK universities and research associations should collectively explore opportunities to develop new modes of PhD training, drawing on split-site and distance learning approaches and making use of summer schools or study centres, delivered by African or UK researchers, or retired academics. Collaborative approaches at national or regional levels, including shared postgraduate schools, should be considered. Doctoral training should be firmly embedded within wider research strategies and funding programmes.
- **R17:** UK universities hosting split-site or other African scholars should investigate the possibility of providing continued access to electronic library resources during the periods in which a scholar is based at their home institution, in order to bridge the resource gaps between home and overseas study phases and to ease the transition into postdoctoral study when scholars return home.

Supervision and mentoring

- **R18:** African universities should prioritise supervision and mentoring, encourage senior academics to support their junior colleagues, and ensure that they are appropriately rewarded for this. UK and African universities and scholarship agencies should ensure that scholars are effectively trained in research skills, the writing of grant proposals, and in publishing their work. Existing initiatives such as AuthorAid offer valuable mechanisms to do this. Where existing staff are over-stretched, retired academics might be employed specifically to mentor postgraduates and early career researchers.
- **R19:** African universities should seek to maintain regular contact with staff training overseas, make an effort to understand their needs and interests, and ensure that they are deployed properly, effectively reintegrated, and able to continue their research on their return. Teaching loads and administrative duties will need to be moderated. Staff development departments should be involved, in cooperation with academic departments.

Postdoctoral research

- **R20:** African universities, through staff development departments, should work to define proper postdoctoral career structures, including research fellowship or equivalent positions. These should ensure that researchers are granted the time to turn doctoral theses into publishable work, and ensure that suitable training programmes are developed for early career researchers, matched to appropriate external opportunities.
- **R21:** UK universities and university and research associations should lobby UK government to ensure that African scholars funded to visit the UK are able to do so with greater ease. Major UK scholarship and fellowship schemes, particularly those supported by UK public funding, should be officially recognised and immigration officials provided with details of accredited schemes and programmes.
- **R22:** UK universities, scholarship agencies and other doctoral funding bodies should seek to support the continued development of their returning alumni. Specifically they should consider a hybrid programme for early career postdoctoral researchers which would enable them to return to their UK institutions on an annual basis over a five-year period, in order to continue existing work and to develop new collaborations, in a manner compatible with their maintaining a full time position in an African institution.

1. Introduction

The humanities and social sciences are critical – and are in a critical condition

- 1.1. Research in the humanities and social sciences across Africa is in urgent need of support.¹ Undoubtedly, the continent's research community – like the universities to which its members belong – faces many challenges. The long decline of funding, insufficient investment in basic infrastructure, and falling incomes, coupled with huge increases in undergraduate enrolments, which have overstretched academics and seen research dry up as a result, have been well and widely documented. But there is also great potential for new and exciting research, and there are researchers strongly committed to taking this forward. For its part, the UK has a vibrant Africanist community, with a long history of academic collaboration. This report therefore does not ignore the many challenges facing African research, but argues that there is a pressing need and that there are clear opportunities to develop new partnerships to revitalise research, and to support existing partnerships as they develop in new directions. A collaborative approach is, we believe, vital.
- 1.2. The humanities and social sciences are critical and much needed fields of scholarship; their value must be emphasised and their profile raised. The perspectives and knowledge which they offer on history, culture, social interaction, political systems, economics and much more are vital to development and well being; and there are many examples of such quality of work within existing scholarship. It is only by engaging with history and its expression through literature and performance that communities and nations are able to understand and reflect on their origins, to understand their pasts and define their place in the world. Securing space for these conversations will be essential if Africa is to confidently articulate its own identity, define its own approaches and to build on the foundations of its own scholarship. Similarly, subjects like anthropology, sociology, psychology and African languages enable scholars to learn from and interrogate the breadth of social and cultural forms which underpin daily life. Such understanding will be vital if scientific and technical knowledge is to be effectively adapted and applied to tackling problems in public health or the environment, for example. Beyond individual subjects, the humanities and social sciences are important for the analytical and critical abilities which they help to cultivate in their students, and the debates which they foster on the major issues facing the world today.²
- 1.3. Persuading hard-pressed governments of this will not be an easy task. While humanities and social sciences research should not be forced into limited agendas defined by 'relevance', scholars will nevertheless need to make the value of their work clear, particularly its contribution to policy making, and the returns that governments can expect from their investment.³ Pressure on capacity building in basic science to meet medical, environmental and technical needs and on sustaining graduate employability, has understandably seen science and technology rise up national research agendas. Many undergraduates in African universities have been drawn to business or finance-related courses, perceiving these to offer better potential routes to employment. The next generation of humanities and social science research will not be secured unless its profile is raised and students are convinced of the value of these disciplines to their own futures and that of their countries and societies. There is a need for academics who offer a vibrant and stimulating departmental environment, with a passion for their subject, and capacity to demonstrate how their own work is engaging with critical issues.

A serious and extended discussion

- 1.4. This report represents the culmination of a substantial two year project, commissioned by the British Academy from the Association of Commonwealth Universities, which began in early 2007. The aim was to consult African and UK humanities and social science researchers in order to develop a better understanding of what needed to be done to strengthen the research base in African universities. A particular concern was how partnerships with the UK might be harnessed in support of this. It is not the

¹ For the purposes of this report, Africa is taken to be Sub-Saharan Africa.

² A 2000 UNESCO and World Bank report strongly advocates the importance of a general or liberal education, arguing that "a specific expertise in technology will almost inevitably become obsolete. The ability to learn, however, will continue to provide valuable insurance against the vagaries of a rapidly changing economic environment": Taskforce on Higher Education and Society (2002), 'Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise', http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079956815/peril_promise_en.pdf

³ A UK perspective on the contributions of humanities and social sciences research is offered by the British Academy's 2008 report *Punching Our Weight: The Humanities and Social Sciences in Public Policy Making*, www.britac.ac.uk/reports/

first report in recent years to tackle the issue of research strengthening in Africa, although there have been few prior investigations specific to these two fields. However, it does represent a serious attempt to develop a practical programme of revitalisation, driven by the concerns and experiences of African academics and university leaders.

- 1.5. The discussion in this report and the recommendations it offers are based on a series of serious and extended conversations with African scholars, and are taken as directly as possible from a series of face to face and electronic consultations. The first phase of the project involved a desk-based survey of African researchers, from which an initial report was produced (*Frameworks for Africa-UK Research Collaboration in the Social Sciences and Humanities: African University Perspectives*).⁴ It enabled a number of key people and constituencies to be identified, and it formed the basis of a follow-up conference, held in Nairobi in September 2008, to further and deepen the consultation, with the aim of developing a series of practical and policy-relevant interventions. Submissions were gathered from participants in advance of the conference to frame the debate, and the results – of two email consultations and a three day working conference – are presented here.⁵
- 1.6. This report is presented to African and UK researchers, to African university vice-chancellors, and to their counterparts in the UK, to African research and university associations, and to UK, African and international research funding communities. It does not seek to be prescriptive, or to offer complete solutions. It recognises that the challenges, and the obstacles to tackling them, are complex, but it nevertheless attempts to propose a series of practical and workable solutions. The duty to take these forward, where appropriate, rests with a diverse group of people and organisations. Where possible, we indicate who we feel that these should be. The complex and interlinked nature of the problems means that ultimately research will only be strengthened by all parties working in partnership – donors, academics and institutions. What each is able to achieve will depend to an extent on work done and support provided by another constituency; without this, the efforts of a single constituency are likely to founder.

A complex set of issues requires joined-up thinking

- 1.7. In general terms, levels of research, including postgraduate supervision, are relatively low in many African countries, and the familiar constraints of resources, finances and time have suffocated research cultures in many institutions. These few generalisations aside, it is vital to recognise that there is no single and homogenous African research landscape. Commitment to research and higher education (HE) at national level varies, as do institutional financing and governance structures, all of which have a strong bearing on research. Several relatively well-supported institutions (in many cases with external donor funding) exist alongside many others which are constrained by limited budgets and poor infrastructure. Equally, a single institution with struggling departments may boast one or two research centres which attract greater external funding, undertake significant levels of research and are relatively prosperous. One-size-fits-all analyses and solutions are not possible; different institutions will need to set their own targets, according to local needs and what is likely to be achievable. It may make sense for some to concentrate on training to master's level, others to PhD. What is presented here is therefore a series of components which might be assembled and adjusted according to local contexts, and which range from modest initiatives (a programme of faculty seminars or workshops for example) to substantial programmes (funded by major donor investments). 'Africa' is used here for convenience, but a country by country approach is undoubtedly required.
- 1.8. The report identifies a number of cross-cutting themes which emerged as clear threads throughout the various stages of consultation and discussion, and which underpin much of the research process. Considerable emphasis is placed on the crucial early stages of an academic research career: the future of African humanities and social science research – and research in general – lies in ensuring that new and emerging researchers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to develop bold agendas and to lead

⁴ www.britac.ac.uk/intl/area_panels_africa.cfm (or contact africa@britac.ac.uk).

⁵ For a list of those who participated in the Nairobi conference, and who have endorsed this report, see section 5

research and their institutions forward. Recognising the critical importance of supporting researchers during this phase in their careers is, we believe, the key to any programme of support and investment.

- 1.9. As the report's title indicates, this project has concentrated particularly on the social sciences and humanities, and on the specific challenges of improving research in these fields. Nevertheless, many of the issues outlined here and the recommendations made are relevant to research across all disciplines, and should be of interest to anyone researching on or in Africa. As far as possible this report draws out a number of key themes and issues; however, none of these can be entirely isolated, and all are interdependent. Success will depend on the extent to which ways are found to make the connections between these, institutionally or inter-institutionally.

The challenges should not be underestimated – serious support will take time and action at many levels

- 1.10. There will be no quick fixes to strengthening the African research base. Several decades of declining funding have hollowed out many universities, and the challenges to rebuilding research capacity and reinvigorating research cultures are substantial. The problems will need to be addressed at a range of levels – from national policy environments, to university governance, to that of the individual research career. This will take time, and programmes of long-term investment, support and partnership are required. All too often HE's objectives and policy, and hence support, change direction and research is left stranded. External interventions must therefore be sustainable; funding agencies will need to set clear policies and stick to them.
- 1.11. This project did not set out to develop a comprehensive blue-print for strengthening higher education and research in Africa – a task both beyond its scope and which others are better placed to tackle – but rather specifically to address research activities in a defined area (humanities and social sciences), and to see where the UK particularly, but other countries more generally, might have a role to play. Nevertheless it is clear that research problems cannot be divorced from the wider higher education environment; some of the problems will need to be addressed at national levels and on a larger scale. These are acknowledged here where appropriate, and will be areas for further lobbying and advocacy. University governance and national HE reforms will not be achieved overnight. Solutions will therefore be found only in an approach which pushes for the necessary policy change at higher levels, while in the meantime seeking to bridge some of the gaps through targeted initiatives which recognise the urgent need to retain and develop a cadre of able researchers, who will go on to train future generations. Many areas are within the scope of individuals – or groups of individuals – and organisations to change. A higher degree of selectivity is needed and the conflicting aims of different policy goals also need to be recognised. Not everything can be achieved at once, and improving research will clearly cut across the political imperative to further expand undergraduate education.

Being realistic about what donors can and cannot do

- 1.12. It is important to emphasise that these are by no means just donor issues, although donors will continue to be a source of external funding. Donor agencies and research funders are diverse, providing different types and scales of funding; whether large or small, each can make valuable contributions, and smaller funders are often well placed to deliver particularly innovative and responsive forms of support. Opportunities for greater communication and coordination between donors should, however, be welcomed, such as that offered by groups such as the UK Collaborative on Development Science (UKCDS)-convened Research Capacity Strengthening Group.⁶
- 1.13. Donors are and will continue to be an important source of funding for research, and it is therefore important that while challenging them where necessary over the types and modes of research funding they provide, the limitations to what they can do – and should be expected to do – are recognised. First, it is the responsibility of national governments to finance the basic infrastructure and staffing of their higher

⁶ UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS): www.ukcds.org.uk

education and research sectors – donors can only provide support to discrete projects and programmes, not fix national systems. Second, where donors are in a position to support research, they can only do this where institutions have the structures and systems to present a good case for funding and to make use of the money they receive, which means that governance and management are critical. Third, while donors can coordinate their efforts to a degree, each has a different set of objectives and each a different constituency to which they are accountable: UK research councils and academies, for example, have an obligation and a mandate to support UK research, and are only free to support international research where it partly meets these aims; development agencies for their part tend to look for clear outcomes relating to their poverty-reduction goals, though some such as DFID, Sida/SAREC and the US foundations have tended to take a relatively broad interpretation of research capacity building. Donors need to ensure that their interests are clearly explained, but it will help universities and researchers if they are able to understand and appreciate the basis on which support may be available, and when it is unlikely to be offered.

2. Institutional foundations – improving structures, systems and governance

The problem of weak institutions

- 2.1. Weak institutions are the major obstacle to African research. With notable exceptions – the University of Botswana and a number of South African universities, for example – institutions typically lack the resources and facilities for research, and the systems and structures of governance to manage it. But institutions are also the bases from which research is built: they pay the salaries, provide the libraries, office space, internet connections and computing infrastructure on which research depends. Circumventing institutions will not help to create sustainable and long term research capacity in African universities. While avoiding the complexities of institutional structures, targeting individuals or particular departments may appear more attractive to donors and researchers alike, sidelining central university organs in this way is likely in turn to reduce their support for these same departments.⁷
- 2.2. Much will undoubtedly depend on major investments in ICT. Internet connectivity is often poor and campus networks unreliable. Institutional email systems often do not exist in any meaningful way (where they do servers frequently crash and emails bounce), and staff typically make use of privately provided Hotmail or Yahoo type accounts. The US Partnership for HE in Africa (PHEA) has made ICT a major focus of its programming, and has experienced considerable success in the institutions in which it works, while the Association of African Universities (AAU) and UbuntuNet aim to create a continental high-speed broadband network.⁸ Initiatives of this scale of course require major funding, but there are also opportunities for African universities to better manage the connectivity and bandwidth which they already have; much of this will rely on better communication between academic departments and colleagues in ICT departments.⁹ The same is true of developing better library collections, which now intersect with issues of internet access and connectivity. Some of this is discussed in more detail below.

Forging better relationships – making the connections within institutions

- 2.3. Although major investments are undoubtedly needed in basic services and facilities, many of the barriers to research are nevertheless organisational, rather than simply financial. While funding is a major constraint, major obstacles are often presented by the systems and processes within institutions, and the relationships between key staff. This is clearly evidenced when available funding cannot be directed or spent effectively, contracts managed, or when new initiatives are not effectively communicated to users. In an era when information – new funding calls, for example – is typically disseminated electronically, the lack of institutional email systems makes it almost impossible for the central university to broadcast information to its staff and to provide vital information in good time. As one participant commented, he is required to send his colleagues a text/SMS message to alert them to check their email when something important has been sent. A lack of access to funding information is a common complaint. Research Africa, a news and funding information service, has been developed specifically to remedy this, but anecdotal accounts suggest that even in subscribing institutions, individual academics are unaware of its existence.¹⁰ Similarly, numerous schemes exist to improve access to academic journals, in electronic and print form, at no cost or at substantially reduced rates.¹¹ While internet bandwidth and connectivity are major obstacles to online access, in some cases access schemes are not taken up because libraries are not aware of them, or encounter obstacles within their institutions when trying to release the necessary funds, or set up the necessary ICT systems. In other instances libraries have secured access, but researchers are unaware of what is available to them.¹²

⁷ See for example Miihyo, P.B. 2008 'Strengths and Weaknesses in Institutional Partnerships Between Northern and Southern Academic Institutions', NORRAG News 41, December 2008: www.norrag.org

⁸ For information on PHEA work on internet access in African universities see: <http://www.foundation-partnership.org/index.php?id=29>. The AAU has been part of the PHEA-supported work on bandwidth, and recently agreed to work with the UbuntuNet Alliance for Research and Education Networking, which aims to create a dedicated fibre optic network in Eastern and Southern Africa: www.ubuntu.net; www.aau.org

⁹ See for example INASP's work on bandwidth optimisation and management: www.inasp.info/uploaded/documents/infobrief1-bandwidth-english.pdf. A more detailed report is available at www.inasp.info/file/361/optimising-internet-bandwidth-in-developing-country-higher-education-.html

¹⁰ Research Africa is a subscription funding and research news service specifically for African higher education and research institutions www.research-africa.net

¹¹ These are too numerous to catalogue here, but include the ACU's Protecting the African Library Scheme (print journals) and PERii (operated by INASP): www.inasp.info/file/186/publishers-working-with-inasp.html

¹² INASP's 2008 study sheds light on some of the obstacles to ensuring resources are well used: *Evaluating Electronic Resource Programmes and Provision: Case studies from Africa and Asia*, www.inasp.info/file/839/evaluating-electronic-resource-programmes-and-provision-case-studies-from-africa-and-asia.html

- 2.4. Clearly administrative structures, university policy, and the relationships between key staff underpin any attempt to improve research. To identify funding, develop fundable applications, manage contractual and legal reporting requirements, and disseminate and publish research, academics need proper support from a central office which can manage the pre- and post-award aspects of external funding. Faculty grants and funding advisors may be helpful to assist researchers to identify available funding and consultancy opportunities according to their interests and expertise. Building such research management structures within universities is vital and the Southern and West African research management associations, SARIMA and WARIMA, are well placed to support this process.¹³ University librarians also have a key role to play in supporting research. Researchers and librarians will need to forge stronger relationships, the academic status of librarians will need to be duly recognised, and the two groups will need to work closely to ensure that collections are developed in support of research, journal access initiatives are well advertised and well used, and that senior managers are persuaded to make appropriate budgetary provision for libraries, and recognise the need to develop their librarians too.
- 2.5. Research also requires good institutional policy environments and cultures of management which create the conditions and set the rules and procedures which enable research to take place. Policies for postgraduate training, academic staff development, and research are not always well linked. Universities may have a staff development policy which assists people to identify and secure opportunities to study abroad, but it may not make provision for them to be effectively supported and reintegrated into their departments on their return (see section 4.13); training programmes where they exist may go as far as the PhD, but make no provision for further professional development in areas such as grant writing, project management, or postgraduate supervision. Policies therefore need to be developed jointly by administrators and researchers, in such a way as to ensure research becomes the interest and responsibility of the central university. In addition institutional attitudes and the relationships between staff may need to be improved. Training in personnel management at all levels may well have a role to play here, while leadership and management programmes will be important at senior levels.¹⁴

Challenging consultancy cultures but recognising the positive potential

- 2.6. Complaints that consultancy undermines academic research are frequently heard, and indeed have been since the 1980s, but to some extent the problem is misunderstood. The real problem is less consultancy itself, but more a research system which does not offer alternatives, and where the benefits of consultancy do not penetrate down into departments. A well paid consultancy contract is understandably attractive in an environment where there are few incentives for academic research and researchers are relatively poorly rewarded. The lack of strong research cultures, which place a premium on long-term projects of considerable intellectual depth, is also to blame in some instances, and makes shorter-term consultancy more appealing. Donors and NGOs have also played a role in generating a demand for consultancy, with its attendant requirements for feasibility, evaluation and completion reports. But faced with weak and unresponsive institutions, it is unsurprising that their preference has been to contract expertise on an individual basis and outside of the university system.
- 2.7. Consultancy is generally understood to be damaging to research, not only because it takes researchers away from their academic work, but because it is by its very nature short-term and does not allow for continued and sustained study in a particular area, undermining disciplinary base-building and constraining the range of areas or issues studied by researchers. However, the detrimental effects of consultancy have been over-emphasised to some extent and the potential benefits under-acknowledged. The need for consultancy expertise will not disappear, but there are clear advantages: it can also provide a valuable way of ensuring that academic knowledge contributes to understanding important societal and cultural problems. It may enable the groundwork for new research to be undertaken, offering an opportunity to do initial fieldwork, gather data or investigate the literature in a particular area. For an academia which is increasingly required to diversify its funding sources it is also likely to offer an important revenue stream, while for cash-strapped lecturers it can help to make academic life pay, and give them an opportunity actually to do

¹³ Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA): www.sarima.co.za; West African Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA): www.warima.org. It is hoped that an East African association can be established in the near future.

¹⁴ The AAU for example runs a programme of management and leadership development workshops: www.aau.org/madev/backg.htm and www.aau.org/ledev/; the PHEA operates a University Leaders' Forum: www.foundation-partnership.org/ulf/

research. Scholarly and consultancy research both matter to academia – one providing a foundation of rigorous intellectual investigation, the other offering the potential to ensure that research informs public policy-making. The challenge is to harness the latter for the benefit of the former, while making sure that the policy engagement is effectively achieved.

- 2.8. It should be possible to incorporate consultancy positively into departmental or individual research programmes, but ways of doing this need to be explored. Research management offices, highlighted above, offer a way of channelling and administering consultancy contracts, and can assist academics to generate funding and manage the reporting requirements, while also offering additional services to funders. Botswana was cited in the Nairobi meeting as a prime example of how consultancy could be domesticated and integrated into promotion and incentive systems. In Rwanda all consultancy income must be channelled through institutions, while a proportion of the consultancy income channelled through the University of Ghana is reportedly top-sliced as a contribution to the department in question. A policy – implemented by universities and supported by donors – which required consultants to involve junior staff as research assistants would offer valuable training opportunities to help develop the next generation, and spread benefits more evenly within departments. Individual academics can, for their own part, ensure that consultancy contribute to their own career development by developing consultancy material into publishable scholarly articles.

Making research attractive – the need for incentives

- 2.9. All too often, research is an additional and unrewarded pursuit driven by little more than academic dedication; as noted above this has often made consultancy a more attractive option. Paying researchers properly is critical, or they will move to other institutions, or be drawn out of research altogether. Salaries will need to be raised across the board to make academic life viable, but external research funders could assist by assuring salary contributions for the principal researchers (or teaching replacement costs) are included within any project funding, to ensure they are able to focus on research and are not diverted to teaching or other consultancies; universities will in turn be more likely to allow staff the time to undertake research. However, not all incentives need be monetary. A package of incentives is needed, which offers an attractive working environment, takes account of career structures and provide opportunities for progression, and offers access to funding or research leave to take up sabbatical fellowships at other institutions. Teaching loads will also need to be balanced, so that academics are granted the time and space to undertake research, and to supervise postgraduate students (see section 4). Providing time for research clearly runs counter to continent-wide attempts to expand access to HE at undergraduate level, which is increasing teaching loads, and this suggests that fairly strategic decisions will need to be taken by universities and governments. Donors might assist by offering teaching replacement costs for those taking up research fellowships or sabbaticals.
- 2.10. The success of incentive schemes will in part be determined by the extent to which these are encoded within university policy, transparently advertised, and observed. Performance management systems may be a valuable mechanism here, and have reportedly been introduced successfully at the University of Botswana. In South Africa academics are rewarded for publishing, through subsidies for peer reviewed articles in accredited journals and for monographs or book chapters; funds credit to institutions which have their own formulae for division between the academic, faculty and the central university. In addition the National Research Foundation operates a ratings system, whereby established researchers receive incentive funds towards academic and research activities.¹⁵ Doctoral supervision is an important part of departmental research engagement and should also be accounted for within incentive systems – a system of credits, for example, for the number of PhDs produced, whilst acknowledging that a degree of flexibility is needed in any system attempting to structure or measure research training.

¹⁵ Department of Education, South Africa: www.education.gov.za; National Research Foundation rated researchers scheme: <http://evaluation.nrf.ac.za/Content/evaluation/peri.htm>

Monitoring research to enable future planning

- 2.11. A major obstacle to supporting African research is a lack of good information on what is needed and where, including how many doctorates are held, how much funding is available for research and training, and where this is spent. The fact that the same initiatives are often regularly cited by way of example – in this report as in others – illustrates that better knowledge is also needed on what has worked and where. Information is also needed on the subject strengths of particular institutions and the content of masters' curricula, so that those students equipped to continue into doctoral work can be more readily identified. Universities, research councils, and their respective ministries could assist the process by improving data collection within the system, using it to identify and monitor areas where assistance is needed, and making this information available to others. The AAU, as the named HE partner of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), could play a valuable role collecting this information at continental level and mapping the strengths and needs of research.
- 2.12. While not the sole way of measuring and accounting for good research and training, research outputs will also be important indicators of success and progress. In the humanities and social sciences this will typically be in the form of published articles and books. Figures are often quoted on the relatively low output of African research but these commonly rely on scientific and technical citation indexes, and ignore local publishing. More sophisticated information is therefore needed on what is published, by whom, and where it comes from (see section 3.13).

Setting national agendas

- 2.13. Universities ultimately reflect weakness at national policy levels. Relative to need, higher education is drastically underfunded, although it does tend to receive a relatively high proportion of overall national education spending. Underfunding, the lack of effective national policy and budgetary frameworks and the need for robust quality assurance mechanisms can only be successfully addressed by government intervention. But while decisions on these issues may be beyond the control of researchers, effective lobbying by the academic community and university leaders will be important in ensuring that they are kept on the agenda and are highlighted at the appropriate levels. While governments across the continent are keen to expand higher education, less attention is paid to the problem of quality.¹⁶ Getting quality on the agenda must therefore be a priority for universities, but unrealistic targets must also be challenged. In 2008 Nigeria and Kenya both announced that all university lecturers would be required to hold a PhD by 2009 and 2015 respectively, but neither country currently has the capacity to train the number of doctoral candidates that would be necessary, particularly if staff are to carry on fulfilling their teaching duties. Universities for their part will need to demonstrate their relevance, and how they can assist the aims and needs of their governments, while continuing to defend the need for scholarly enquiry unconnected to immediate policy goals.
- 2.14. While governments may struggle to make substantially greater investments in research, they do need to be more certain of the place, purpose and value of research, and to articulate this in national research agendas.¹⁷ While national agendas should not constrain research, and scholars should be free to pursue interests beyond those specified within them, they are nevertheless valuable in demonstrating a serious government commitment to research and enabling donors to respond to a country's own priorities. They also offer researchers a reference point when seeking external funding, or when they wish to explicitly align their work with national objectives. Conversely, a country which lacks a defined agenda is in a significantly worse position to negotiate with external funders. Botswana's own national plan has reportedly been successful in helping to change attitudes to HE as a whole.

¹⁶ That expansion has led to deteriorating quality is clearly recognised in the World Bank's 2008 report 'Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa': http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRREGTOPEDUCATION/Resources/e-book_ACU.pdf

¹⁷ The World Bank report (p.109) similarly argues for the value of national agendas, although with a focus on their importance for economic planning and human capacity development.

3. Communities and networks – forging collaboration within Africa

Linking researchers within Africa

- 3.1. Better connections between African researchers and institutions are needed for two reasons. First, very few African institutions have the capacity to support a full programme of humanities and social science research. While institutions need to make strategic decisions about priority subjects and disciplines, sustaining a varied programme will evidently require a greater degree of collaboration between departments and centres across institutions. Second, research suffers particularly from a paucity of intra-African academic networking, collaboration and dialogue.¹⁸ Good research depends on active intellectual communities, but African academics are frequently isolated. In many cases communication is greater between African researchers and colleagues in Europe, North America or Asia than it is within the continent, on a sub-regional level, or even within a single country. Institutions and individuals need to be connected nationally, regionally and continentally to overcome this isolation, to stimulate research, and to avoid, in the words of one participant, departmental ‘in-breeding’. Networks and associations can serve as vital hubs around which information can be collected and disseminated – websites and mailing lists can offer portals for funding information, conference announcements, project updates, and ways for individuals to find colleagues with similar interests. Two researchers participating in the Nairobi meeting had successfully developed a project on Nigerian literature which had originated from contacts made in this way.
- 3.2. The need to increase academic discussion nationally should also not be ignored in the interests of more ambitious networking. It is only with an active national research community at this level that regional and continental networks are likely to be sustained, for the simple reason of cost. Joint programmes, conferences, postgraduate and staff exchange and other activities at national level are also likely to have a more immediate impact on local institutions. South Africa has actively encouraged staff and student mobility within the country; its National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme (NASSP) links 14 institutions and continues to be very successful.¹⁹ Two mechanisms are identified here which would improve the prospects for inter-African links: the research association or network, bringing together individual academics at national, regional or continental level, and the inter-institutional research community, linking key departments and centres across a group of universities to forge a collaborative research programme.

Developing research networks

- 3.3. Academic associations and networks already exist at various levels – from national research communities such as the Network for Historical Research in Zambia to those linking academics in several countries, such as the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa. Some may be fee-paying membership organisations, while others may be looser forums of like-minded individuals; the distinctions are, however, not always clearly made in the names applied. A Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA) survey was able to gather information on over 120 networks and associations for postgraduate training and research in 2007.²⁰ Many of these associations nevertheless have low visibility, have become largely dormant, or with little or no funding are difficult to sustain beyond the enthusiasm and efforts of particular individuals. Their activities are further constrained by poor access to email and the internet, obstructive visa processes and a lack of funding which frustrate travel within the continent and thwart collaboration at a distance.²¹
- 3.4. Better ways of advertising existing networks and associations (across all disciplines) are needed as a first step to encouraging greater participation. This would also help to identify the areas where viable networks exist, and where they are lacking. While collating and maintaining reliable records is difficult, this might be an area where the Association of African Universities (AAU) could play a useful role as the continental

¹⁸ The Association of African Universities operates a Staff Exchange Programme, providing funding for approximately 10 academics to visit another institution each year, for between one and three months: www.aau.org/academic/detail.htm?ai=186. CODESRIA and OSSREA also provide funding for intra-continental research visits: www.codesria.org/Links/Training_and_Grants/advanced_fellowships_programme.htm. Other schemes, funded by a range of donor agencies, typically provide for research visits overseas.

¹⁹ National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme (NASSP): www.star.ac.za

²⁰ The US Foundation-funded Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA) surveyed over 120 networks to compile the Africa Regional Networks database, most recently in 2007: www.foundation-partnership.org/index.php?id=16

²¹ The Nairobi meeting provided perfect evidence of the latter: it was only with the efforts of the British Institute in Eastern Africa that several participants from Cameroon were able to secure visas to attend.

body for higher education and research. Existing databases, such as the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa's Africa Regional Networks database, could be used as the foundation for such a project.

- 3.5. Many researchers are unable to afford membership fees for disciplinary or subject associations, which must often be paid from their own pocket, and there are few grants to enable conference travel. Some of the most successful research associations and networks are heavily sustained by donor funds, and their long-term viability is thus vulnerable. It is therefore critical that the need for this level of scholarly interaction is recognised by university policy-makers, and that membership or participation costs are accordingly budgeted for at departmental level, or within research grants.
- 3.6. To be successful and sustainable networks and associations clearly need to do something, and to offer opportunities which keep people involved and interested. They should be focused on a particular discipline, around a core set of subjects, or use a particular theme or set of issues to bring together an interdisciplinary group. Regular conferences, enabling researchers to meet, discuss ideas, and lay the foundations for collaborative work are important, but to ensure that such communities actively contribute to new research it may be useful to conceive of 'smart' networks, existing to promote research in a particular field, and convening conferences and workshops explicitly as a means of developing and advancing longer-term, 5–10 year research agendas. Mechanisms also need to be developed within or attached to research networks which offer opportunities to secure initial funding for pilot or early stage exploratory projects, or to facilitate training. A network with a clear agenda might also articulate better with the ways that research is funded, allowing ideas to be developed and people to be linked, who are then in a position to approach donors with a more developed set of ideas. Exploratory or seed-corn funding will need to be made available, but modest initial investments are likely to offer donors a better chance of identifying projects worthy of additional support.

Inter-institutional collaboration: creating communities of excellence

- 3.7. While academic networks and associations link individuals, and may help to support the development of individual careers, researchers are based within institutions. Associations and networks depend on vibrant centres and departments with active research cultures if they are to survive, and it is institutions which ultimately provide the salaries, core facilities and library and computing resources on which everything depends. Bypassing institutions, however weak, to support researchers independently, or through autonomous research organisations, will not sustain research or higher education institutions in the long term.²² Inter-institutional collaboration, to create research communities spread across a number of centres or departments, would both contribute to the development of institutional capacity, and link researchers to colleagues working elsewhere. Furthermore, basing these on specific disciplines or subject areas is likely to ensure greater engagement from academics, who typically invest a greater passion in their subjects rather than in their institutions. Centres of excellence have been promoted as the solution to Africa's weak existing institutions, but creating new centres requires huge investments, and does nothing to revitalise existing institutions which were once excellent. They are also likely to suck talent and resources away from established institutions.²³ An alternative approach would be to strengthen the links between institutions. In this way communities rather than centres of excellence might be created.
- 3.8. Communities of excellence are not a new idea. In recent years there has been considerable investment in similar initiatives in the natural and technical sciences in Africa.²⁴ The Regional Initiative in Science and Education (RISE), funded by the Carnegie Corporation and managed by the African Academy of Sciences, has invested \$4.9 million in five research and training networks, while the Wellcome Trust's African Institutions Initiative is providing funding to develop networks of institutions in health and biomedical

²² See for example Mihyo, P.B. 2008 'Strengths and Weaknesses in Institutional Partnerships Between Northern and Southern Academic Institutions', NORRAG News 41, December 2008: www.norrag.org

²³ Centres of excellence have been promoted particularly in science and technology. A network of African institutes of science and technology are planned, with the first being built in Abuja, Nigeria: www.aust.edu.ng. The African Union has recently announced plans for a Pan-African University: www.africa-union.org/root/au/Conferences/2008/november/hrst/education/ConceptPaper2_Aug08.doc. However, both the InterAcademy Council's 2004 report '*Inventing a better future. A strategy for building worldwide capacities in science and technology*', and the World Bank's 2008 '*Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa*' acknowledge that centres of excellence can be created by revitalising national institutions, rather than needing to be built anew: www.interacademycouncil.net/?id=9988.

²⁴ A useful list of some established collaborative postgraduate training programmes is offered in Annex C (p.29) of the World Bank's 2008 report (see previous footnote).

research.²⁵ More established programmes, encompassing the social science and humanities, include the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), based in Nairobi and run and managed as an entirely separate organisation, while USHEPIA (University Science Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in Africa), linking eight universities in Southern and Eastern Africa, has taken a different approach, with a secretariat based within the University of Cape Town. In Europe, the AEGIS network of African studies centres relies on an annual subscription from its members and has a rotating secretariat.²⁶ DFID's social science Research Programme Consortia were similarly designed to establish collaborative programmes between institutions in order to investigate a particular research question, although most have tended to be led by UK institutions, and are sustainable in this form only for the life of a particular research programme.

Making collaboration work

- 3.9. Maintaining collaborations between institutions brings its own challenges and will not be easy, but such an approach is likely to offer the only way to rebuild existing institutions and renew research in a targeted fashion. Simply linking departments or centres together and expecting resources and expertise to flow between them would of course be naïve. Funding formulas, research profiles and status, and student recruitment drives mean that institutions are typically set up to compete rather than to collaborate, and many universities struggle within their own existing systems, let alone managing the activities of a wider network. Some form of organisational and management structure would be needed – perhaps a central facility might be needed requiring a host centre or institution with the capacity to support this, and to receive and manage funds on behalf of the consortium – and a firm commitment to sustained collaboration. Such research communities would undoubtedly take time to scope, plan and implement. Each member may need to contribute a proportion of their budget towards joint activities and programmes, and seeking additional donor funding for particular elements.
- 3.10. However, despite obvious challenges, basing a community of excellence within existing institutions rather than creating an external body or new organisations would be advantageous. Local ownership, with national research communities and institutions, is undoubtedly critical to long-term sustainability, while at an organisation level, experience and expertise in managing larger-scale research would be built. At the level of research and training, responsibilities and tasks could be shared, relieving the burden on any one centre or department. One might take the lead in developing postgraduate training in research methods. This could help to level the field, ensuring each institution benefits from more equal access to central sources of training or materials. Mentoring programmes might also be developed jointly, and joint PhD supervision offered, creating within the community a group of mentors who share learning and assessment and monitoring tools, and whom researchers can consult via email. Research resources or collections in one institution might be made freely available to academics from another. More strategically, library collections could be developed in such a way as to ensure complementarities, and a specialist librarian appointed or nominated from within the community to offer dedicated support to researchers and ensure not only good access to necessary resources but also the strategic development of collections. A greater number of such collaborative training initiatives exist in the natural sciences and technology, and a study of how these work may offer valuable lessons to the humanities and social sciences.

A networked approach to revitalising African publishing

- 3.11. Clearly research must be published if it is to be of any value. Where there is limited potential to publish, there is also less incentive to do good research and strengthening publishing will clearly be an essential part of revitalising research in general. Despite great potential in the 1970s, academic publishing in Africa has struggled to establish sustainable models, with few university presses still operating outside South Africa, and lacks a ready market in which to sell books and journals. In the next decade the new technology of 'print on demand' will provide the possibility of reprinting when needed single copies of academic monographs in many universities round Africa. The system is already available commercially in South Africa

²⁵ RISE networks link universities in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. <http://sites.ias.edu/sig/rise>. Wellcome's African Institutions Initiative will make awards for 5 years in the first instance (renewable for a further 5) in the order of £2.5m over 5 years www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Biomedical-science/Grants/Other-initiatives/WTD028338.htm.

²⁶ The African Economic Research Consortium has required significant amounts of donor support, arguably secured only because of the perceived importance of economic research to development and policy planning processes: www.aercafrica.org; in the USHEPIA case participant universities contribute salaries and staff time, while donors provide larger scale funding: www.ushepia.uct.ac.za; AEGIS: www.aegis-eu.org

and the World Bank is experimenting with a less expensive integrated printing and binding machine. Network electronic university presses could be established under the umbrella of institutes such as CODESRIA, OSSREA and HSRC to ensure standards of scholarship and production. Research budgets should include the costs of dissemination so that material could be free on line and could be chosen to be printed for university libraries and departments.²⁷ Printing and distribution outside Africa can already be handled through the existing African Books Collective.²⁸ A considerable amount of research is also undertaken by masters and doctoral students. The Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD), managed by the Association of African Universities (AAU), provides a mechanism to index abstracts of postgraduate research undertaken in Africa.²⁹ The continued development of research repositories will help to increase access to African research both within and outside the continent; librarians will have a crucial role to play in supporting research in this way.

- 3.12. Journal publishing is a very different enterprise, requiring committed expert editors and a pool of dedicated peer-reviewers. Because African journals generally make little or no profit, editors and reviewers often receive little if any payment for their time. The development of online journal capabilities offers some hope for the reduction of basic costs but as a review by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) confirms, online journals need a strong existing operation and solid readership base in order to be viable.³⁰ Nevertheless African Journals Online (AJOL) established by INASP with donor support and now managed from South Africa has enjoyed significant success and offers a model for future online journal publishing. It currently hosts some 340 full-text journals, with 105 in the humanities and social sciences, available free of charge to researchers in Africa, and providing a dedicated publishing environment for each title.³¹ The inter-institutional research communities proposed above would be well placed to contribute to increased book and journal publishing, by marshalling reviewers and editors, mentoring new researchers to enable them to develop publishable work, and by providing a locus for workshops in editing and publishing skills.
- 3.13. Although African indigenous publishing needs to be revived and strengthened, African researchers still want and need to present their work in titles published outside Africa. Getting more work published depends fundamentally on the quality of research which is undertaken, and the ability of researchers to produce manuscripts worthy of publication. Writing and editing workshops run by experienced researchers and editors will be valuable, and are an area where UK researchers could make particular contributions; the ASAUK will hold a first workshop in March 2009 for the benefit of African scholars and fellows currently in the UK, an initiative which might be expanded at modest cost, and paralleled by similar events when UK academics and editors are visiting African countries for conferences or fieldwork. Two other initiatives already under way are also relevant here. AuthorAid, managed by INASP, provides a mechanism for experienced researchers to mentor junior colleagues, offering advice and guidance and direct one-to-one support via an online mentoring service.³² The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and INASP recently launched a new initiative 'Publishers for Development', which aims to work with the international publishing community to improve its understanding of university research environments in Africa and elsewhere, and to work with publishers not only to increase access to journals but also to increase the volume of work received and published from developing country scholars.³³

²⁷ The World Bank has expressed considerable interest in the potential of print on demand facilities, and has been trialling a print on demand machine at its Washington InfoShop: <http://go.worldbank.org/EODBH6ES70>. The machine is manufactured by OnDemandBooks: www.ondemandbooks.com. In the UK the new imprint Bloomsbury Academic have recently launched an online and print on demand publishing model: www.bloomsburyacademic.com

²⁸ The African Books Collective, based in the UK, is founded, owned and governed by a group of African publishers, and its participants are 116 independent and autonomous African publishers from 19 countries. It seeks to strengthen indigenous African publishing by improving the visibility and availability of African scholarship outside of the continent: www.africanbookscollective.com

²⁹ Database of African Theses and Dissertations: www.aau.org/datad/

³⁰ INASP, 2005, African Journals Online Publishing Programme (AJOPP) Programme Report, www.inasp.info/file/279/african-journals-online-publishing-programme-ajopp-report.html. A guide to *Getting Started in Electronic Journal Publishing* is available from www.inasp.info/file/179/getting-started-in-electronic-publishing.html

³¹ African Journals OnLine: access is free to researchers in Africa, while others www.ajol.info

³² The AuthorAid mentoring project has been piloted with three institutions and is due to be opened to all countries and institutions in February 2009: www.authoraid.info

³³ Publishers for Development: www.inasp.info/file/818/publishers-for-development-pfd.html

4. Investing in individuals – the early research career

Laying the foundations for research

- 4.1. The key to strengthening the humanities and social sciences will be to invest in individuals, to ensure that Africa has a strong foundation of researchers, producing good research and able to train successive generations. Funding research and training researchers, through scholarships or fellowships, cannot be separated. Where institutions are weak, or where research cultures have disappeared, it is individuals who can, with appropriate support, galvanise activity within their departments and build research and postgraduate programmes around them. The early careers of researchers are marked by two distinct phases: the PhD, and the early postdoctoral career. Together these provide the foundation of research training, but doctoral funding is limited, and defined postdoctoral positions are often lacking. Research expertise is already too low to meet existing needs and many of the continent's best scholars will retire over the coming years without sufficient next-generation researchers to replace them.³⁴

Increasing doctorates but protecting quality

- 4.2. It is evident that to improve research capacity postgraduate training must be dramatically increased. There is some evidence of this already taking place, with participants from Botswana and Cameroon both reporting high numbers of PhDs in their departments, but the picture is mixed and uneven. Although policies to increase the numbers of PhD-trained staff in some countries are welcome, these have often underestimated the capacity to train and supervise doctoral students, and policies which simply mandate lecturers to gain a PhD are unlikely to address the problem, and may risk sacrificing quality, particularly if lecturers are encouraged to take doctorates in the cheapest or most readily available areas, rather than in subjects of real interest to them. Instead countries will need to assemble coherent national postgraduate training plans, identifying internationally available scholarships which may help to supplement local opportunities, and making sure these are used to their full potential. Increasing PhDs to the extent to which they are needed will be expensive, but the benefits extending from a PhD, and accruing beyond the individual being trained, should be acknowledged when decisions are made – it is after all an investment in improving research, and a well trained researcher will go on to train others. Where universities are able to offer a high quality PhD programme modest funding might make it possible for them to offer part-mentorship to candidates who make a teaching contribution as part-time lecturers. This could help to retain the best talent within an institution towards future staffing needs, and also help to rebuild postgraduate schools. The University of Zambia, for example, has plans to do this through a graduate teaching assistant programme.
- 4.3. Decisions also need to be taken on the relative balance between masters and PhD training, and who should be responsible for these. The PhD is the basic research qualification, but high quality masters programmes, with rigorous methodology components, can prepare students for doctoral study, ensure that research outlines are well thought out, and mean that there is a greater likelihood of a PhD successfully being pursued to completion. Universities largely have the capacity to train masters students; what many institutions lack are the staff and facilities to develop scholars to doctoral level. Scholarships for overseas study have traditionally provided a solution to the low capacity of African universities to train at home, but while high quality is assured, this is considerably more expensive, and it makes sense to train scholars at home where possible. A tiered approach will be needed, where those that can are supported to train at home, or through split-site schemes spending part of their PhD abroad to benefit from additional supervision and better facilities, and those that cannot send their students to other regional universities, or overseas.

³⁴ See for example an article by University World News in 2007 which reported 45% of professors were due to be retired. 'Nigeria: Critical shortfall in academic numbers', 17 February 2008: www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20080214152645863

- 4.4. The key will be to create a critical mass of newly trained researchers, and, as already argued, to aim for concentrations in specific fields or subject areas, rather than offering lone scholarships to otherwise isolated researchers. This is more likely to make a noticeable impact in defined areas of research, and to justify the investments which will be required. Currently the dispersed nature of split-sites PhD awards (scattered across different departments and institutions) is one of their chief weaknesses. Existing doctoral funding schemes often experience difficulties in identifying the right candidates. Research communities with coherent training plans might offer scholarship agencies a way of locating candidates, while ensuring universities are able to train the best candidates. Similarly, staff development or human resources departments have an important role to play, by ensuring that policies are well articulated and embrace both selection for scholarships and training, that scholarship opportunities are transparently advertised, and by working with funding agencies to help them locate suitable candidates.

Split-site PhDs – a collaborative approach to doctoral training

- 4.5. The split-site PhD model represents a combination of the best of overseas and home study, by enabling students to pursue the majority of their study (and be registered) at their home institution, but to benefit from joint supervision, and access to the resources and facilities of an overseas university for up to a third of the time. The UK Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) has explicitly sought to expand its own split-site provision as a way of meeting the need for African scholars to be trained at home, but with additional support.³⁵ Split-sites help to ameliorate resource constraints, broaden academic horizons, and enable scholars to forge important contacts which can help to support them in the early stages of their career at home. At the same time the bulk of training is undertaken at home, meaning that scholars can more fully participate in the intellectual lives of their institutions, and the connection to another university can help to raise quality locally and enable supervisors to maintain links with colleagues abroad.
- 4.6. While a proven model, split-sites do present a number of challenges. Insufficient resources at home can constrain research during critical phases. This may be particularly problematic if limited access to up-to-date material prevents a strong research question being formulated, and the overseas portion becomes a 'catch up' period, or if a successful PhD stalls once a scholar returns home to other pressures and limited facilities. In the short term they are thus unlikely to be suitable for the lowest income or least-resourced countries. Ways of bridging this within the split-site framework therefore need to be investigated. Locating potential split-site awards can also be difficult. They rely fundamentally on an established and active partnership between two supervisors and typically take longer to plan than traditional PhDs as a result. Locating split-sites within existing research programmes can help, ensuring that research funding is more effectively joined-up, and with the PhD becoming one of the outputs of a wider project and with the candidate also benefitting from this wider experience. Completion rates for the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme's split-site awards have been satisfactory to date, but the Commission is nevertheless keen to explore new ways of identifying candidates and host and partner institutions under this programme. DFID research consortia are now invited to nominate for CSC split-site PhD awards, for example, and the Commission has expressed an interest in collaborating with other UK and African partners in a similar way. Subject-specific programmes, run in collaboration and based in a select number of existing institutions might be an approach worthy of exploring further; this might enable intensive methodology programmes to be delivered for example by dedicated staff freed from other commitments.

New modes of PhD training in African universities

- 4.7. It may also be necessary to develop new forms of PhD, if the demand for doctoral training is to be met in African universities. It may not be necessary for all PhDs to be entirely research-based, for example, whilst distance learning and split-site study approaches (as discussed above) might be combined in new ways. Taught elements may be suitable in some fields; the PhD programme of the African Economic

³⁵ Under the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Split-Site Scheme, students are registered at their home institution, but benefit from two six month periods (or one 12 month period) attached to a UK institution and with a UK supervisor: www.cscuk.org.uk/apply/splitsite.asp

Research Consortium (see below) includes substantial taught elements, for example.³⁶ The well-established USHEPiA network has trained 31 PhDs over the course of its 13 years amongst a group of eight Eastern and Southern African universities, while the planned Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) of the Africa Population and Health Research Center envisages training cohorts of up to 25 students through an inter-disciplinary programme involving a network of African universities and research centres alongside several northern institutions. Students will be based in their home institutions but will come together at various stages to take part in a programme of joint seminars covering methodological and analytical issues, and with online support provided between seminar courses.³⁷ There may be potential to develop further such programmes for the humanities and social sciences; however doing so would require a long-term commitment, and a careful and lengthy planning and design exercise by a group of African research departments or centres. Substantial external funding would then need to be sought; sustaining the AERC has required substantial funding from 17 major donors, for example.

- 4.8. More modestly, and drawing on ideas already outlined, the best of split-site and distance learning approaches might be combined in alternative ways. Retired African academics or UK or other overseas researchers might feasibly deliver intensive summer schools or a programme of regular research seminars, focusing on research methods, critical approaches, and analytical and interpretive skills.³⁸ Supervision between these phases might be possible through online learning environments. This additional teaching and supervisory support might enhance the capacity of some African universities to deliver their own PhD programmes and retain their students and staff at home. A collaborative approach to PhD training between African universities, and involving foreign academics where possible, could be incorporated into new or existing research ventures (see section 3) while joint training, supervision and conferencing might ultimately help to create or strengthen clusters of research staff in particular institutions or countries, and around specific subjects or disciplines. Pursuing a non-traditional approach to doctoral training would mean focusing particularly on issues of quality, particularly if remote supervision is involved; the duties and responsibilities of supervisors would need to be carefully specified, and supervisors appropriately remunerated to ensure sufficient time is devoted to mentoring their students.

Mentoring researchers through their early careers

- 4.9. If greater numbers of PhD researchers are to be trained and if existing training capacity is to be used to best effect – to produce high quality theses, and to strengthen the research base – then the PhD study period will itself need to be harnessed more effectively. It is during this period when the culture of research and collaboration should be inculcated in scholars, and when scholars should be given the chance to gain a broad range of skills and experiences to support the transition from doctoral to postdoctoral research – from designing new projects, developing fundable research proposals and grant applications, to writing publishable articles and monographs. Opportunities will also need to be provided so that researchers can continue to develop these skills beyond their PhD, as writing proposals and winning funding become increasingly critical to their careers, and as they are required to manage increasingly complex projects, involving multiple researchers and possibly dispersed across more than one institution. Staff development and research offices will play an important role in developing institutional training programmes and ensuring support is provided where it is needed. Ensuring continuity within academic departments is vital and new generations of researchers need to be equipped to become new research leaders.
- 4.10. High quality supervision and mentoring are without doubt essential to producing high quality PhDs and to provide continued support to emerging researchers through the early years of their postdoctoral careers. Sustaining research, and training successive generations depends on the flow of ideas, knowledge and skills from experienced researchers to their junior colleagues. Support to write publishable articles and fundable proposals are two critical areas where mentoring could have a perceptible impact, and encouraging senior academics to take junior colleagues as research assistants would offer valuable learning opportunities. Many experienced African academics are however already over-stretched by teaching demands and other

³⁶ Three core courses in theory and methodology are taken, plus a further two in a particular subject area. Students are examined in four of these courses, before beginning their thesis component. www.aercafrica.org/programmes/training_cpp.asp African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

³⁷ African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Collaborative PhD Programme; around 21 students are sponsored each year, with four universities eligible to host PhDs and teach core courses, and a further four able to award degrees to students who attend core components elsewhere: www.aercafrica.org/programmes/training_cpp.asp. See the presentation by Alex Ezech, executive director of the Africa Population and Health Research Center's Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA), at the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa University Leaders' Forum 2008: www.foundation-partnership.org/ulfi/ and www.aphrc.org

³⁸ The Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) organise both country and regional level workshops each year on research methodology: www.ossrea.net/training/

duties, and sometimes forced to undertake additional teaching or consultancy elsewhere to compensate for poor salaries. There is thus often little time available, or reward, for supervision and mentoring, while in some cases senior academics may feel threatened by the rise of younger colleagues. In some departments senior academics already work hard to help rather than hinder the progression of their younger colleagues – the University of Ghana was reportedly supporting junior researchers to advance their careers, while some faculties at United States International University have given postgraduates faculty member status as part of their own approach to mentorship – but such support is not always forthcoming. Teaching duties will need to be reduced to enable this, academics rewarded accordingly, and the culture of mentorship strengthened.

- 4.11. Mentorship will need to be formally recognised as an institutional priority and as a critical part of any academic training programme. The USHEPiA initiative has, for example, placed mentorship at the heart of its own core programme. Mentors will need to be supported themselves, to understand what is expected from them. Where it is not possible for existing staff to mentor colleagues, it may be useful to recruit retired academics for this; the AAU's Roster of African Professionals might be extended to do this. New mentoring tools and approaches – linking academics via email or online portals such as the new AuthorAid programme to support academic publishing (see section 3.13), or involving overseas academics – may offer valuable additional support, to strengthen that provided by traditional face to face supervision.

Supporting local research training

- 4.12. PhDs gained at home are likely to differ from those gained abroad, certainly in terms of poorer access to resources and facilities and less frequent contact with researchers from other countries and institutions. In addition to supporting doctoral candidates to train in the UK or elsewhere outside Africa, there is also considerable scope for academics from these regions to contribute to local doctoral training and to support local research environments, just as they in turn benefit from African academics visiting their own institutions. More foreign scholars would be brought into African research communities simply by holding more conferences or workshops in African universities. Greater numbers of African PhD students might then have an opportunity to build contacts with colleagues pursuing similar interests, and would have a greater awareness of contemporary debates, and the opportunity to contribute to these. Opportunities for UK academics to contribute to research training in African universities would also be valuable, and might be achieved with relatively modest funding, through offering small stipends to enable lecturers to extend fieldwork or conference visits in order to deliver short courses, workshops or seminars. The African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) has recently piloted a teaching fellowships scheme, enabling a recently qualified UK PhD-holder to spend three months at an African university.³⁹ A series of postgraduate summer schools organised in African universities would also offer opportunities for UK academics to contribute to local research training.

Re-integrating returning scholars

- 4.13. Although researchers training abroad enjoy many benefits, the return process is not always well managed, and while keen to bring their skills and expertise home, many find the transition difficult to make. They typically move from a sophisticated system with access to the latest research and good facilities, to an environment where both are limited, and where time for research is not included in addition to teaching and administrative duties. Resources and facilities are not the only problems, however: also crucial is how scholars are deployed on their return home and re-incorporated into their departments. Colleagues at home, struggling to advance their own careers, may feel that returning scholars have an obligation to relieve them of some of the additional administrative and teaching duties with which they have been burdened. Several researchers reported experiencing considerable hostility and resentment on their return, with senior colleagues often unsupportive of attempts to establish departmental seminars or research groups. While the potential tensions are understandable, 'wasting' new expertise and skills by overburdening returning scholars will damage both their own emerging research careers, but also limit the benefits that

³⁹ www.asauk.net/downloads/asauk_teach_fell08.pdf. The ASAUK's fellowship is for the relatively modest sum of £5000 for 3 months; additional funding would enable additional fellowships to be offered each year.

their colleagues and departments stand to gain from their return. Departments and university staff development units have a responsibility to ensure that returning colleagues are well supported, and deployed in suitable roles. Maintaining regular contact with staff training overseas is likely to ease this transition and to ensure that returning staff are properly utilised and less likely to return overseas.

Developing proper career structures for emerging researchers

- 4.14. One of the greatest challenges that emerging researchers face is in moving from their PhD into a first research post. Positions such as the research fellow, which offer a first postdoctoral role for researchers and are often part of an externally funded project, are lacking in many African universities, making progression difficult. Junior lectureships are often the only positions available, and while teaching is typically an important part of an early academic career, for many scholars these provide no parallel opportunity to embark on new research. A proper career structure for junior researchers is needed which offers a clear vision of progression from PhD study and the time to ensure PhD research can be developed for publication. This is something which staff development or human resources departments would be well placed to address; a well defined research career structure would also enable universities to make better use of available scholarship and fellowship schemes, while also giving donors greater confidence when allocating opportunities during their selection processes. Similarly, and as noted above, returning scholars and fellows often report that research begun overseas stalls or falters through lack of time or resources. Alumni schemes might be valuable to support returning scholars to ensure a first publication is achieved in good time, or to present their research at a conference.
- 4.15. Overseas scholarships or research fellowships are valuable contributions to African research and training, but have a tendency to become islands in academic careers, providing a one-off boost in skills, and the time to focus on research and writing or access resources, but which are otherwise surrounded by long periods where research is near dormant. Subsequently, international fellowships tend to focus on the middle stages of a research career – by which time many of the obstacles which early career academics encounter will either have been overcome, or they will have long left research ambitions behind. They also tend to focus on a single and specific period of time. A scheme which built funding around the notion of a longer-term relationship between an individual and an overseas institution might go some way to addressing this. The Cambridge/Africa Collaborative Research Programme specifically aims to create long-term partnerships by funding small groups of fellows to spend 6 months in the UK, organised around a particular theme, and following this with a return conference in an African university; such schemes might be linked to the research communities proposed in section 3.⁴⁰
- 4.16. Enabling scholars to return to a UK or other overseas institution regularly for short periods as part of a hybrid career track (perhaps for several weeks each year for a number of years) would ensure that they did not become isolated, and might help to stimulate research in the home institution. African universities would likewise benefit from retaining their best academics, and from the continued links which such a scheme might encourage. Such an arrangement would also benefit the UK, ensuring that institutions are able to maintain contact with high quality junior researchers but at relatively low cost, and without being in danger of worsening the academic brain-drain. Although developing the initial relationship may take more time, there is no reason why the same scheme might not be extended to researchers gaining their PhDs at home, without prior overseas experience; indeed this would go some way to restoring the balance between home and overseas-trained researchers. Although such a scheme would require additional funding, it could feasibly be managed by existing scholarship agencies without the need for the creation of additional structures.

⁴⁰ Cambridge/Africa Collaborative Research Programme: www.african.cam.ac.uk/grants_cambridge.htm

- 4.17. Emerging researchers need both time and financial support if they are to be able to advance their research careers, but while institutions typically lack funding to provide their own small grant schemes to encourage this, funders seeking to secure a good return on their investment with minimal risk often prefer to support more senior or established academics. A change of emphasis towards support for early career researchers will be vital if the future research base is to be assured. To enable donors to move towards this, universities will need to demonstrate that they are part of a sufficiently supportive system which will allow them the time and freedom required to produce high quality research. A range of research funding is needed to catalyse research, targeted specifically at early career scholars – from small pilot or exploratory grants to subsequent funding to further develop ideas or promising projects. Grants available within an institution, for release on a competitive basis, but without lengthy application processes, might be valuable; Sida have provided funding for this purpose to a number of universities. In some institutions it may be possible to devote specific funding towards a research grant scheme, whilst donors might consider supporting institutions that are able to present a well-designed scheme but lack the ability to make their own investments. In some cases existing institutional research grants have however not been widely taken up, suggesting that the need for proper forms of accountability must also be balanced with sympathetic arrangements to account for staff who are working under significant time constraints.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

The product of experience: contributions to the debate

This evidence base is drawn from the written submissions received immediately prior to the Nairobi conference. However, many of the ideas and experiences which underpin this report were generated verbally during discussions in Nairobi and as such are not recorded here.

Institutional foundations – improving structures, systems and governance

On the problem of weak institutions and a lack of research cultures...

“Good research in many African universities is still circumscribed by inadequate access to current journals and books as many university libraries are reportedly finding it difficult to stock new and current volumes. Not even the emergence of on-line journals has helped the situation as many of such journals require subscription fees, and this has posed other problems as well.”

“Infrastructural impediments include a lack of research culture – including lack of awareness of need for dedicated ‘research writing time’, lack of technical facilities, limited mentoring by senior staff, limited motivations by institution (e.g. reward and time allocations).”

“Currently, there is a dearth of academic culture among African scholars because of the constraining need for survival and a lack of information.”

“Senior academics are over-burdened with teaching and administrative responsibilities and this has further reduced their abilities to engage in well funded and involving research programmes.”

“Many lecturers in African universities would like to do research. However, the environment is not enabling enough for them to design projects and effect them. Sometimes when they manage and draft projects, access to funding causes a problem. Universities first of all do not allocate reasonable sums of money for research, at least for what filters down to researchers. This then pushes lecturers to either seek administrative appointments or get into other forms of business that could keep them afloat with living costs.”

“Eastern Africa's social science faculties are increasingly training students to write reports for NGOs, and laying down their role as incubators for a politically critical citizenry. In consequence, the range of research conducted in the arts and social sciences is increasingly narrow, geared to answer the immediate, pressing questions that donor organizations ask. There are very few Africa-based scholars who find it possible to conduct a cosmopolitan, broad programme of research.”

...and on strengthening them

“Donors should have more faith in African institutions by allowing them to assess their own needs and encourage their participation in the design and awarding of scholarships to their staff. The scarcity of funds has also now necessitated a change in the way funding for capacity building should be managed. It is prudent for African institutions to now be empowered to identify their own needs and request for funding to deliver their programmes with those needs in mind.”

On the need for research management structures...

“My suspicion is that not all individuals and departments in African Universities access funding information. This is due to a variety of reasons. Key among these is the lack of proper research management

in many African universities. Among the many responsibilities of well functioning research management system is the responsibility for tracking available research funding, appropriate sources of research funds and matching them with the needs/specific researchers and departments. A well functioning research management office should facilitate the preparation of the research funding proposal, particular in the non-content aspects... that require more than just subject knowledge. Few academics have access to or are aware of sources of funds. They often do not have the time to sift through the many sources of information about funding and collate them for their needs.”

“A key problem... is where the UK university holds the budget and African universities claim in retrospect with receipts. African bank charges are extremely high and African recipients lose out double-fold – in the exchange rate and in bank charges. The need to provide funds up-front is extremely difficult. If funds could be released on invoice direct to African universities – to be justified retrospectively with receipts this would make a huge difference to cash-flow problems.”

“In my experience, and when the project is sufficiently large, a dedicated financial manager should be included. The shared use of a university employee’s time is not conducive to excellence in financial reporting, and the project may not fit comfortably within the university financial structure, requiring some informed integration.”

“The best modality is to work through central university authorities. Dealing with departments directly creates problems for management and accountability at central university level, because while departments have control for scientific delivery, central administration organs are in charge of crucial services and if they feel sidelined they may lose interest in departmental issues.”

“Assessment of existing capacity can best be done through needs assessment and delivery gap analysis. In a needs assessment staff can point out the skills they feel they lack. But they may not be aware of their gaps as it relates to capacity to deliver. Hence a gap analysis can be conducted on various issues: leadership – capacity to provide intellectual leadership for research; programme management capacity; governance structures, related to quality assurance and managing resources; financial resources mobilization capacity; infrastructure (hardware and soft ware management and physical infrastructure); networking capacity and capacity to mobilize and manage intangible assets including social capital.”

...and access to funding information

“Speaking from personal experience, the information about vacancies, funding, research are made available only to the individual universities after the deadlines would have expired. In many other cases, researchers become aware of such opportunities through embedded gatekeepers within such bureaucracies (e.g. friends, cousins, old-boy social networks, etc); as such the opportunities circulate within a small cabal of individuals who are able to negotiate access to such information. The web made it possible for individual researchers to be aware of networks and funding opportunities around the world.”

“A significant number of calls for grant proposals are internet-based and communication links (phone, internet) at African universities are notoriously poor. It might be argued therefore that information on funding does not filter through to individuals and departments as frequently and effectively as it does outside Africa.”

“Dissemination of funding information at university level is bureaucratised and problematically slow. Recently a DELPHE call for funding proposals routed through the university administration was forwarded to departments and institutes one month before the deadline. It would help if institutions and departments had a named contact in charge of disseminating funding information to staff and researchers by email, through pigeonholes or other appropriate modes of dissemination that reach all members.”

“It is a fact that information on funding and related matters does not filter through easily to departments and their members. There are two reasons for this: 1) often the information is held up at one of the offices of the Registrar for so long that by the time it reaches the department it is no longer useful. 2) It is likely that funding agencies do not make enough allowance for the inefficiency of the internal postal systems of countries.”

“Often the deadlines are very close, as if overseas applicants are an afterthought, and the problems they may have accessing the internet in order to meet that deadline are not understood.”

“Information does not filter through to individuals. It is frequently withheld – for a variety of reasons. Electronic information is very difficult to access and browsing is too expensive and time-consuming.”

On the importance of research agendas

“We have a Faculty of Education research plan that is rooted in the university-wide research strategy. More recently, the dean’s office has requested the departments to come up with their research plan and our department has been able to articulate its research plan together with the teams that would come up with collaborative research agendas in the nearest future. This whole arrangement is to complement individual research interests and activities. In most cases, the agendas being pursued respond to local needs and issues that are perceived as very crucial to the nation.”

“The result of the lack of coordinated “research agendas” is often individual research ideas that are uncoordinated and addressing limited interests and “individual” goals. Of course individual researchers are expected and should be given the freedom to address their own identified problems and issues. However, the failure to have national research agendas and effective mechanisms to facilitate the processes of national agenda setting results in the inability of African countries to collectively address big issues, invest in research areas that are most appropriate/relevant and or take advantage of those areas in which they have comparative advantage. A country with readily available research agenda is more likely to use such an agenda to negotiate with donors as to where research funding should be invested. A country would use such an agenda to match available donor funding and it is likely that donors will be more also be aware in advance as to what research priorities a country has in place.”

On the need to engage at national level...

“In Ghana an unexpectedly large number of new universities have been created during the last decade and a half, and the likely probability is that the expansion will continue to increase since governments do not seem to show any inclination or willingness to exercise control over this new wave of enthusiasm for the establishment of institutions of higher learning. The new trend has compounded the problem of shortage of teaching staff. Teachers from the older, better established universities are induced to take up informal part-time teaching appointments in the newer ones. The quality of their teaching and research is badly affected.”

“To assess the needs of African institutions in the area of staff development, there is a need for a country-wide survey, whereby the need of African institutions will be identified and the means of delivering them will be generated within their institutional framework.”

... And to demonstrate the value of research

“Scientific or scholastic publications are important for researchers but there is also need to give popular and concrete meaning to dissemination of research findings to make it more relevant to those who need the results most. In order to achieve this, there is need to strengthen the skills of scientists and researchers on how to package research findings in other user friendly formats such as policy briefs and news releases that will encourage the public to read and understand the issues and also influence policymakers to use them to make decisions and implement policy for the ultimate benefit of the people.”

Communities and networks – forging collaboration within Africa

On intra-African collaboration....

“African Universities are very weak in regional and continental linkages, and therefore there is an imperative need for these institutions to engineer regional and continental linkage, by establishing more collaborative research... among these institutions within Africa.”

“I feel that the best way to develop staff is through institutional partnerships. This broadens the horizons of the individuals, exposes people to different institutional cultures and processes, and prevents nepotism.”

“The potential exists for collaboration between institutions in Sierra Leone and between Sierra Leonean institutions and institutions in other sub-regional countries such as Ghana or the Gambia but these are often not explored either because of lack of funding or because such collaborative frameworks do not exist.”

On professional associations and research networks...

“There are some academic networks and associations in Africa. Unfortunately, many of them do not have the resource base to hold regular meetings. Most [academics] look forward to sharing their ideas in ‘foreign’ journals and fora leaving behind a very wide communication gap on the continent. For example, there is no regular and viable professional association for adult educators in Southern Africa. In some instances, the national professional associations are either non-existent or simply mentioned on paper.”

“There are some online networks to be found within my domain in Africa but limited in Cameroon. One handicap is that since there is limited access to the internet researchers tend to check their mail and reply to the urgent ones rather than spend time on these possibly important but not urgent emails. We have had experience organising regional meeting but again, researchers need to be funded to attend these meetings as their basic salaries cannot even pay for an air ticket.”

“Professional networks are very limited. The few that begin do not survive for long, possibly due to lack of funds and therefore sustainability measures. Often a visionary leader starts such an organization but subsequent leadership fails to manage it. University conferences lack the academic rigor that is promoted through professional associations. Instead we see too much ‘in-breeding’. Professional associations provide more diversity and growth of ideas across time/decades.”

“I have organised three international conferences in Yaoundé in a bid to bring together colleagues so as to establish a solid network. This however has been with little support from the university and the ministry. It is difficult to use money from your pocket when you do not have enough! These conferences brought together researchers from all over the world and have yielded two publications, one in progress. If funders could encourage this initiative, I think research in Africa would be greatly accelerated... Donors could cater for the transportation and accommodation of conference attendees and may be, support the publication of the proceedings of the conference.”

“Networks are always useful for new academics but they may not always have funding to attend events etc. Greater (and more regular) publicity of these networks and websites would be useful – especially since poor internet access sometimes prevents immediate follow up of such information.”

“There is a dearth of professional academic networks and associations in Sierra Leone, especially in the social sciences and humanities. Some research networks have been encouraged and fostered by external agencies such as the Nordic African Institute’s Sierra Leone Research Network on Post-conflict Societies. But such networks are often tied to specific projects which last for a specific number of years. Opportunities for meetings in the broad discipline of political science, for instance, are few and far between.

The need for support of professional associations becomes critical in such areas as they have the potential of encouraging regular meetings to promote active research in the discipline.”

“It is very important that donors encourage the holding of international professional meetings in African countries but this should be well coordinated with African institutions playing a major role. In 2006 the (US-based) African Literature Association held its annual meeting in the Ghanaian capital Accra. This meeting attracted six hundred scholars from Africa, Europe and North America. This gave African professionals in the discipline a greater opportunity to attend, network and present papers at a gathering that is closer to home.”

“There is no substitute for face-to-face meetings, and there is a need to ensure that more meetings take place on African soil. There is everything to be said for creating regular fora in which research ideas and findings can be discussed. In the UK, there are already funding streams that facilitate conferences and workshops. But there are limits to what can be achieved in a format that presumes the existence of a common research agenda in the first place.”

“What is needed is the kind of funding that allows for meetings that go beyond the standard conference and permits the time and resources to work up a common research agenda that can secure funding for the longer term.... Funding for ‘smart networks’ should ideally be multi-layered and embody a sense of progression. By the former, I mean that there is a need for standard workshops; meetings to work on honing research agendas, formulating funding proposals and agreeing on joint outputs; and graduate summer schools. By a sense of progression, I mean that the basis on which networks should be funded is not merely that academics have some interesting research they would like to share ideas about, but that researchers have a clear strategy for how an agenda can be developed over a 5–10 year period. Initial funding for a network could provide start-up costs for 2 years, at which point the networks could be continued or be wound up, depending on progress.”

“Attention should also be paid to how best to strengthen the existing relationship with UK academics while at the same time encouraging a triangular collaboration of two African Universities and one from the UK. This presents a case for building capacities at horizontal levels and I would suggest that funding agencies... design programmes that could bring African academics of similar interest together... Funds to encourage an academic to present a research result in another African university could be a seed for collaboration and horizontal networking.”

“Regional associations and networks tend to work best when they are supporting researchers with strong research communities and networks in their countries, or helping researchers build such country-level communities and networks. It helps if activities are specific and regular, for example disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary conferences and journals, small grants or awards for fellowships and travel. The multi-level dialogue and exchange between local academics, their institutions and regional facilitators can reshape the structure and administration of local institutions.”

On the potential of collaboration...

“Our partnership project ran exchange workshops and designed training material to address research and writing capacity building needs, followed by small scale research activities where partners developed research questions collectively. Capacity needs were assessed informally, based on expressed needs of partner institutions.”

“The 13-year old Legon-Trondheim Linguistics Project funded by NUFU has transformed the image of the Department of Linguistics through capacity building, infrastructure and research output. I believe the success of this project was due largely to the careful preparation that went into the initial planning.”

“I am currently involved in a research network involving co-operation between African universities and German universities, funded by Volkswagen Foundation. The focus of the research provides insight into how

media facilitates transformations in popular culture in African societies. This research agenda would never have been supported in Nigeria, simply because such esoteric issues are not seen as part of a social curriculum.”

“We have since 2002 run a programme of academic exchange, called the 'Cambridge/Africa collaborative research programme'. Each year we have invited four or five Africa-based university scholars, chosen out of a competitive process, to come to the Centre of African Studies for six months, to pursue research on a shared theme. This programme has proven to be markedly successful in stimulating African scholars' research, while also cultivating intra-Africa networks of academic co-operation. To date the thirty African scholars involved in the programme have published some twenty-five articles and books, and many more works are in preparation. Moreover the programme has opened up channels of collaboration that have developed their own momentum. Ex-visiting fellows are today writing comparative essays together and pursuing shared programmes of research.”

“Partnerships between UK and African institutions could be strengthened by granting the latter access to electronic resources (e.g., e-periodicals) available to UK institutions. Unavailability of such resources at African institutions is a major drawback in furthering research agendas and production of knowledge.”

“All players must understand the quality of what they can offer to a partnership as well as what they can get. In my experience this talks to joint ownership in the partnership, joint decision-making, and clear funds reporting so that all the partners can see how they have benefitted in comparison with all other partners. Ongoing monitoring/research should also be carried out, in order to better understand the 'softer' benefits as well as the more measurable ones.”

“Research collaboration is beneficial if and when it brings together a mix of partners for mutual benefit.... For example collaboration ensures that while using external expertise it also provides an opportunity for local led approaches and creates a shared understanding of the problem and/or situation being studied... In order for research collaboration to work...in good faith therefore, equal partnership is an important process issue that has to be tackled from the onset and built into the partnership. Having partners come together to design the project is one way to inject some equality but it may not necessarily provide the antidote to equal partnership if certain conditions prevail such as having partner(s) on one side (usually the north) be the main or only principal or lead investigator and the principal grant holder.”

“Joint research projects involving many universities in the UK and Africa, within Africa and within the Commonwealth present one realistic way forward. Such projects should be for about five years, with a major conference out of which a good publication should be produced. There could/should be an evaluation conference in the third year of the project. The research projects should include teaching exchange programmes. Graduate research and supervision and co-supervision should be a high priority.”

On mobility within and outside of Africa

“Acquiring visas is a major headache.... for Nigeria this is a major problem and can be very stressful getting permission. Sometimes permission does not come through in time.”

“I and some of my colleagues have had experiences both in the British, French and American Embassies in obtaining visas. The problems range from booking appointments to obtaining the visas themselves.”

“Travelling especially to continental Europe to attend academic functions is frustrating. I was unable to obtain a visa to Italy to go to the Bellagio centre. More recently, my VC was also denied a visa to Italy to attend a conference for which he had a proper invitation.”

“Sometimes colleagues do not want to go to some embassies, especially some Western embassies because of maltreatment. You first of all have to line up for long hours, and then may be wait the whole day to have an appointment to be attended to on another day when you are not excused not to line up on that day! If you go away without someone really talking to you, thank God.”

On getting research published...

“The expectation in many African universities is that at least one-third of your publications must be in outlets outside Africa and/or your country. Yet many of these scholars do not have the motivation to do research. It is to be observed that the few who venture to seek publish in Europe and American outlets get ‘frustrated’ obviously because of the wide differences in writing styles and interests.”

“Getting internationally published requires negotiating a whole raft of intimidating obstacles [so] that most young academics do not aspire to be international. These might include research that is genuinely interesting and captivating and promises to provide significant insights into uncharted waters. There are plenty of these areas; but the conditioning of researchers in this part of the world is geared towards producing ‘relevant’ research that would be seen as an aid to policy making.”

“Kano has a series of independent publishers that make it possible for academics to get their books printed, if not published, at the local level and to meet some promotion requirements. The university, however, frowns at these publications, even when accepting them because the ‘publishers’ lack an effective peer-review editorial policy; everything is cash-and-carry, and so long as the author is willing to pay, the publishers – or more accurately, printers – are not too worried about the quality of the work.”

“The policy in my university as it is with most others is that an appropriate publication that earns promotion is one that is published in local and international peer reviewed journals. Invariably, the preference for scholars has been to seek and publish in international journals to be assured of making the standards for earning recognition and promotions. The situation appears to have led to a trend where... flow of research results has been over concentrated, relatively speaking in the academic community and less and less with the people and policy makers [for whom] research findings often also hold direct and most benefit. Of course one can also talk about other unintended effects where local journals fail to attract best local articles in the face of competition. And sometimes the publications circulate in the international domain to the deprivation of the local community where the data for publication was obtained. In my own experience I have two publications that are marketed and sold in the Netherlands but not available in Ghana yet the issue in one of them is more relevant to Ghana.”

“The central problem of academic publishing is distribution. The related problem is the small size of print run. The origination of academic books is expensive. Intra-African trade is difficult and the movement of printed paper from country to country is expensive. The cost of moving small amounts of money from one banking system to another erodes all margins. Modern technology enables new forms of co-publishing which would allow publishers of academic books in Africa to develop new ways of working together. Electronic distribution coupled with short run print on demand could help break the hold of the old trade routes which up until now have meant that it is easier to get books into Africa from Asia, Europe and America rather than from one African country to another.”

“Getting published in acclaimed international journals has been a problem and is one that is stifling the potential of young researchers who often struggle to get their works recognized. They lack the networks and skills required to successfully go through the rigorous refereeing process employed by reputable international journals. There is also the lack of domestic journals that can serve as a training ground for young researchers to enable them crack the international scene.”

“Local journals play an important role in the advancement of a young African scholar’s career since it is from publishing in such journals that he/she graduates into publishing in regional and international journals.”

“The problem(s) – from the Editors’ perspective: Journals want contributions from Africa – especially from countries and institutions which do not regularly publish, and from younger scholars; journals also want editorial board members based in Africa, especially if they can help us solicit submissions! At present we get a lot of submissions from Nigeria and South Africa and very few from (or about) other parts of the continent. Many submissions are rejected without even being sent to review (This does not just apply to

authors from Africa, but all of our authors) – because they are empirically weak (general overviews of recent politics, drawing on author's own knowledge or newspapers) or because they are consultancy reports, which have not been revised. Often authors have identified really great topics, but haven't carried out the level of research or analysis required – so the paper is more at the level of lecture notes, or newspaper coverage – and we expect more than this. Although we are very sensitive to concerns about our role as 'gatekeepers', we also have a responsibility to past and future authors, to maintain high standards. From our perspective, the problem is not with making an article *publishable* – we help **all** our authors do that – but in getting the original research project right, and in encouraging authors to send the results to us. So researchers need more support in setting up research (finding a problematic, writing an analytic study), but also in writing it up and targeting the right journal."

"Statistics about scholars based in Africa publishing in Africanist journals are not all negative – but there is a lot of variation from year to year, between journals, and between regions. Some journals either don't collect these statistics or don't publicise them. Perhaps leaving African scholars feeling at a disadvantage. Contributors need to be realistic, but not unduly pessimistic. Journal editors are willing to work with contributors to make pieces more publishable, but papers need to 'fit' the journal, and have a strong basis – either empirical or theoretical. If there is a good case study, then, even if the secondary literature is a bit out of date... the author's analysis should be publishable. So, in our experience, it is nearly always possible to turn good data from a PhD, or a thorough consultancy, or an externally funded research project into an excellent article."

Investing in individuals – the early research career

On research training...

"Discussions are under way within the university to develop a postgraduate training programme... by making available some limited sponsorship to those admitted, especially for doctoral studies, to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants. These Graduate Teaching Assistants would get tuition waivers from the university. This would facilitate a considerable number to take up doctoral studies and contribute to both teaching and research within the university. Another attraction to this proposal is that senior academics within the university will have enough time on their hands to be able to carry out research."

"Increasing staff development must take place in Africa because this is relatively less expensive than overseas scholarship. But there is need for the universities to provide the staff with an environment that is conducive to research and teaching if brain drain is to be reduced. Developing staff locally is important also because staff are likely to do much of their research and teaching on African issues/problems and to publish their research findings in local journals. Currently, there is greater flow of staff on training programmes, from the South to the North. There is need to increase the flow from the North to the South, so that more staff from the North can use their expertise to train staff in Africa."

"African universities know best what their training needs are. To assess their needs they need to look at the needs/priorities areas for the university to fulfil its mandate; and the development needs/priorities of the country. Institutions must identify their staff for training. Donor funding must be channelled to the staff through the institutions. Universities should get a proportion of the funding for 'managing' the award. They shouldn't be mere surrogate mothers. In some countries, there is a perception that overseas (Western) training is better than domestic (African) training. Since most African universities have poor resources, this appears true, yet some of them have strong MA and PhD programmes and they have trained internationally-recognised academics."

"A central aspect of any programme of PhD training lies in the expansion of post-graduates' network of academic contacts, and in their immersion in an cosmopolitan academic environment where seminars, conferences and other programmes of academic exchange are frequent. Many of eastern Africa's universities

are at present unable to provide the intellectual environment in which junior scholars can mature in their research and writing.”

“It is very important that staff development should take place in Africa rather than overseas – this is more cost effective, enables continuity, less disruption of families and other concerns and facilitates the strengthening of African dissertation supervision skills etc. Donors should encourage applications that demonstrate the ability to be supervised in Africa. This should include capacity building funding for developing masters and doctoral supervision skills within African HEIs. There are examples of split-site scholarships, but mostly the opportunity arises when African universities supplement their staffing with expatriates – this could also be a way of funding African support – providing staff exchanges and overseas secondments for academic development needs.”

“Since it would not be possible to engage in massive training at PhD level in UK universities, for instance, due to cost implications, it may be advisable to identify a number of African universities for targeted capacity building to an internationally acceptable level. Such institutions could then engage in meaningful staff development for a significant number of master’s degree holders working in African universities. This arrangement could be of great help to African institutions where academic staff who require training have young families (with school-going children) and may be unwilling to train outside Africa. Furthermore, the cost to the universities concerned would be significantly lower and more attractive to the candidates and/or their sponsoring institutions. In order to guard against in-breeding in the select African institutions offering PhD programmes, it will be desirable to continue offering training opportunities for some up-coming African scholars overseas.”

“Given limited resources, the training of PhD students should be given a first priority. It is expected that, ultimately, the majority of African university teachers will be trained locally. Hopefully, with support from governments and donor agencies human capacity will continue to be enlarged and infrastructure improved to make this possible. At the present time, however, most African universities are not sufficiently equipped in terms of capacity and infrastructure to train enough PhD students for available teaching positions. The older, more established African Universities could, with considerable assistance, expand their PhD programmes to accommodate their own needs and those of some of the newer universities.”

“The need is greater for a PhD because there are very limited resources in carrying out a PhD in Cameroon. What I personally suggest is to continue with the split site PhD programme. I think it works out well as it reduces the chances of brain drain as the candidate does their viva in their home country and has a job guarantee as well. However, scholars lack a support system post PhD and move from a very sophisticated system to a rudimentary one. I suggest the funders make it possible to extend library access for scholars upon completion.”

“Most African universities now have the capacity to deliver training at masters’ level but training at PhD level is still problematic due to lack of adequate infrastructure and the required human and financial resources. It is therefore my considered view that priority should be given to doctoral provision but with an increase in local provision and other modes such as the split-site one already been implemented by some UK institutions. A major shortcoming of this programme, however, is the lack of resources at home institutions which impedes the progress of researchers enrolled under this programme. Institutions participating in this scheme should therefore be provided with the necessary resources, particularly access to the internet, online journals and books.”

“Many opportunities for staff development are provided through overseas scholarship programmes but I strongly believe there is now the urgent need to increase the proportion of staff development taking place in Africa, particularly in those countries that have proven capacity to deliver internationally acclaimed courses. Universities which lack the capacity to deliver certain staff development programmes should take advantage of emerging centres of excellence elsewhere in Africa rather than continue to send staff to often expensive European or American institutions.”

“I think that it is essential that academic staff development take place in Africa. Perhaps an accreditation system could be developed for institutions, or, which would be more useful, for specific departments in universities. The working, living, and research environment in Africa is so far removed from that of other continents that research supervision elsewhere by academics ignorant of this environment is inadequate and without insight. If the opportunity is only available overseas, then I suggest that it be made a split-site scholarship. The research project should be relevant to the home country with fieldwork to be carried out at home. The overseas supervisor or contact should be required to visit the home country.”

“The PhD provides opportunities for the first publications for ‘young serious academics’, not those who would like to return immediately and directly into the administrative straight jacket of headship or deanship. In order to reduce wastage (particularly for part-time candidates), it is imperative for quality assurance strategies to be in place: Team supervision (including supervisors from other adjacent institutions) as opposed to single supervisor, recording by the candidate of all supervisory meetings, periodic checks through the differentiation of ‘enrolment’, ‘registration’, MPhil / PhD as opposed to straight to the PhD, in order to certify that there is a PhD substance in the research.”

“Masters degrees should emphasise research methods, though a systematic empiricist approach should be avoided in favour of one that can cater for both political and social scientists and those in the humanities. A good grasp of methodology is the gateway to completion of the PhD as well as writing up good research proposals. By basing the teaching in Africa, it will help not just in developing local infrastructure and ensuring spread effects, but it will also impact upon the curricula for relevance in terms of case studies, examples and general ideas.”

“Without competent faculty the university’s very existence will be threatened. Doctoral provision should therefore be given the priority, with a focus on relevance of study areas and the quality of study programmes which in turn will reflect on the quality of doctoral products. To ensure that HEIs in Africa contribute meaningfully and extensively to development on the continent, staff development should be provided for on home ground – nationally or regionally. Undertaking more staff development programmes within Africa may ensure that such development is more demand-driven with higher target institution or country ownership and therefore higher commitment and greater payoffs.”

“Staff development opportunities should take place both within the continent and abroad, with a bias towards encouraging greater cooperation amongst universities within the African continent. I can't see any way out of retaining qualified academics than creating a proper environment for conducting effective research and teaching. Poorly resourced institutions will invariably stunt the growth of even the most committed of scholars. African institutions must determine their needs and agenda, they know best. This does not mean that their decisions cannot be discussed and scrutinised – this can only strengthen THEIR case. On the whole, the main problem with staff development in many African universities is lack of resources and heavy teaching involving a large number of students who are often ‘under-prepared’. This makes it difficult for effective research to take place.”

On supervision and mentoring...

“Mentoring is not common because the few seasoned academics... are often unwilling to share their skills, such as on how to develop a research proposal, with young scholars. It is as if PhDs and Professorships, for example, are exclusive positions.”

“The overstretched cadre of lecturers holding PhDs already finds it difficult to find time to train doctoral students. Postgraduates sometimes find themselves waiting for months or years for feedback from their dissertation supervisors. Supervisors based at African universities cannot be asked to take on an added burden in training doctoral students (unless salaries are vastly raised, allowing supervisors to spend the time required to adequately supervise postgraduates).”

“Academic mentoring becomes an important route to career independence and enhancements considering the current learning condition in most African universities. But mentoring does not end when funding ends. For me, the very first day I got the Commonwealth split-site doctoral scholarship was a great opportunity most particularly in networking. When the scholarship ended, that was when the real mentoring opportunities came up, especially during proposal writings, requesting for relevant materials on specific topics, links to some funding opportunities, reading drafts of articles and offers for supports through refereeing or referrals. That has been keeping my career on.”

“The University of Botswana initiated an official mentoring scheme between senior staff and junior staff in its adult education department. This should be possible, along with a programme to develop a research culture – eg seminars, workshops, mentoring, research seed funding incentives, reward systems for publications, timetabled allocation for writing and short sabbaticals/study leave.”

“Supervisions of PhD theses/dissertations of African postgraduate students – in the UK and in select African institutions – could also be organised in a manner that promotes a mentorship process that outlives the studentship. For example, supervisors/advisors could be UK- and Africa-based senior scholars. The Africa-based scholars could be encouraged to continue with the mentoring process in order to nurture continued interest in research and publishing among fresh graduates, thus ensuring continuous production of knowledge.”

“Mentoring schemes are a very practical way of developing staff at African universities but these are lacking in institutions of higher learning in Sierra Leone. There is often a wall between young and upcoming researchers and the more research-established staff of, particularly, Professorial rank. This wall is often too difficult to breach and so ideas fail to cascade down to junior staff. There is also an acute shortage of well established research staff in Sierra Leonean institutions of higher learning which makes it very difficult to implement an effective mentoring scheme.”

“My experience becomes relevant in the area of mentorship. When I joined University of Ibadan service in 2000, I was unable to write for publication in journals published in UK, US and other advanced countries. But my visit to UK in 2005 as a recipient of ESRC fellowship exposed me to [two academics] at the University of Birmingham. They reshaped my writing skills and in conjunction with mentorship enjoyed from [other academics] who always offer to read my manuscripts before sending them for publications, I have been able to overcome my initial difficulty. I therefore suggest that African scholars should imbibe the culture of mentorship.”

On postdoctoral careers...

“Donors should design programmes that are closely linked to the staff development programmes of African institutions. One of the ways this can be achieved is for African institutions to be accorded the opportunity actively participate in the design of such externally funded programmes.”

“A hybrid career track for junior academics seems to be the best way to provide this assurance. New PhDs trained in British universities might be granted a five or ten year fellowship, under which they would return to the institution at which they completed their graduate training for one or two months per year, there to conduct further research in company with other scholars. By this means junior scholars' energy as teachers would be dedicated to African university students, while they themselves would be able to carry forward the research and writing work they commenced in graduate school.”

“African HEIs must be the institutions that identify training needs. African universities should be invited to initiate proposals (perhaps in partnership with UK HEIs), rather than be the subsidiary institution. An example of this happening is the European EDULINK initiative which allows lead institutions to be in a developing country.”

“UK universities could enter into partnerships with African institutions that promote staff and student exchanges for between a semester/term and a year, with transferable credit.”

“Donors could tie funding of programmes or staff development opportunities to proven centres of excellence in Africa. The German donor, DAAD, for instance funds the University of Dortmund's Masters Degree in planning that requires students to complete part of their programme at the Department of Planning, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, in Ghana. This Programme which is now in its 20th year is one of the most successful models of international academic cooperation between a developed nation and a developing country. Another example which can serve as a model for donors is the multi-donor funded African Economic Research Consortium's capacity building scheme for training and research in economics for Sub-Saharan Africa. The collaborative PhD which started in 2002 has four host universities which deliver the core courses covering the four regions of Africa. The programme supports 21 students from Sub-Saharan Africa each year.”

“UCT has a programme called the Emerging Researchers Programme, and has a book for sale at R50 which describes the programme content. This kind of initiative should be relatively easy to introduce in other institutions, if not already there.”

“The Academy and other funding agencies should make resources available for British and African academics to be available to lend their expertise, in the manner of the now defunct British Council collaboration programme. I am aware of Prof. Beinart's work on the Masters programme in the University of Fort Hare, which I gather draws on a large number of students from the Southern Africa sub-region.”

“Donors should collaborate on programmes among themselves where interests are mutual, to ensure that limited resources are not scattered, to facilitate sustainability and to increase scope, impact and efficiency. The AAU Study Programme on Higher Education Research Management benefited from such collaboration. The Swedish and Netherlands Governments together supported the first two phases of the Programme which spanned a period of close to 14 years. Over 66 research projects were supported and 138 individual researchers were exposed to the methodology and processes of higher education research under African conditions. A special feature of the scheme was that experienced resource persons of international repute, supervised the projects and grantees were given intensive, often personalized, training in various aspects of HE research through workshops and seminars within Africa. Participation in these training workshops was a condition for disbursement of tranches of the grant. When appropriate, grantees undertook short attachments at recognized centres for higher education research in Europe to help raise the quality of their work. After the completion of their projects, grantees were selectively sponsored to participate in international HE conferences as part of their professional development.”

“Many colleagues have had to benefit from staff development funding provided through overseas scholarship programmes... These have been very resourceful programmes that many of us have benefited from but ironically, very few colleagues return to their home universities on completion of their training. This raises the question as to whether this training cannot be offered locally, and what can be done to

reinforce local training in African and other developing world universities. Donor organisations involvement here may do the trick especially if this is linked with projects initiated in the department, projects to which PhD students should be associated.”

“Considering research carried out on brain drain among Commonwealth Scholars one of the problems was lack of postdoctoral support. It was suggested that if former scholars and fellows had opportunities to frequently travel abroad for research, it could considerably reduce problems related to brain drain as most of the push factors related to lack of infrastructure and access to publications and publishing facilities.”

On donor coordination and collaboration...

“I think that the best path to take is to meet, and to interact regularly (by email) with a donor representative, in order to build up better insight and trust on both sides. This would depend on what the donor wants. From my perspective I think it should be at project management level, and yes, it would involve a bit more administration at the level of regular proactive communication. Listen, learn, and support. The most successful programmes are often those that are small but very well supported and very well understood by donor, recipients, and management.”

“Improved donor coordination is the best especially in areas of common interest. Donor competition undermines outcomes. What makes donor coordination difficult is for example in science donors may have their own subject specializations. NORAD may for example be interested in geology and energy while Sida has medicine and engineering as its favourites and DfID may be interested in economics while USAID is more into governance. Once these subject specializations are taken as flagships, coordination may be difficult. I think coordination is best done through consultative mechanisms. Regular meetings of the stakeholders are the best. The UNESCO working groups on education are the best examples of participatory mutually reinforcing systems of coordination involving all stakeholders. There is no blue print.”

“Greater collaboration between donors and researchers is necessary in order to ensure that access to funds is facilitated at the right time. This will also enable most of the funds to be geared towards the project, not for administration. Coordination should involve less administration. This could be assumed by a joint body.”

