

Higher Education and Research to Meet Education for All (EFA) Goals

Coordination: International Association of Universities

Project duration: 3 years

Funding support: IAU, Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)

Background

For the past decade and a half, the goal of universalising education has been on the global agenda. Starting with the Jomtien World Conference in 1990, reconfirmed in Dakar in 2000 and in the UN Millennium Development Goals, the Education For All (EFA) programme is gaining urgency and momentum as we near the 2015 deadline. This is so because its success or failure impacts on many other sectors – health, economy, democracy, security, etc. It is therefore not surprising that EFA has become UNESCO’s highest priority in the education field. As the lead agency UNESCO has proposed to coordinate the international effort through a *Joint Action Plan*.

Recently and very tentatively, attempts have also been made to investigate the role of higher education in the fulfilling of the EFA objectives, focusing mainly on the provision and quality of teacher education. Yet, it has been argued, not least by UNESCO itself, that education must be viewed in a holistic manner, as a system, in which all components play an essential role, including universities, whose active participation and contribution are key to the sustainable implementation of the EFA at the local and the global levels.

There exists, though, relatively little systematic research, data and focused discussion about how higher education institution and their research efforts can help achieve EFA goals. Nor are the efforts that may already have been made widely known or well documented. Similarly, very little research has been undertaken concerning the possible impact of the achieving the Education For All goals on the higher education system both at the national and global levels. Yet, it is clear that already, in many countries, demand by far outstrips the capacity to offer higher education for all who need and want it.

The **International Association of Universities** (IAU) is launching a project to investigate, learn more about and disseminate examples of good practice and successful methods by which inter-university linkages and research cooperation between institutions in industrialised and developing countries can contribute to the achievement of the Education For All goals. The aim is to gain an understanding of the multiple ways, including through research for policy, planning and pedagogical improvements, that this can be achieved. By increasing the awareness of higher education institutions about the EFA programme, the project will also better prepare the higher education community to the possible changes that might have to be addressed relatively rapidly to cope with the impact of improved educational achievement levels of a growing part of the population.

Objectives

The general objectives of this project are to:

- analyse the current role of university partnerships in various EFA-related activities (teacher or administrative staff training, research, curriculum development, policy planning, monitoring, etc);
- discuss and propose ways to strengthen research related to the sustainable achievement of the EFA goals, looking more particularly on to what should be the school in the 21st century including research on access, gender, quality, communication technologies, dropouts, etc ;
- compare strategies among different partnerships and share good practices;
- identify main obstacles that stand in the way of stronger higher education and research participation in improving other levels of education;
- determine strategies to broaden or develop in-the-field linkages between research, policy and practice;
- anticipate and inform on the possible repercussions of the EFA programme on the higher education system and develop possible strategies;
- raise awareness within higher education institutions of EFA goals and actions.

And the more specific objectives are to:

- collect information on the past and on-going activities of higher education institution in EFA matters;
- analyse the strengths and weaknesses of current higher education and research institutions' involvement in the pursuit of EFA goals;
- encourage and facilitate the creation of North-South partnerships to develop joint actions to strengthen the system of education in the developing countries;
- stimulate networking both North-South and South-South and among different organizations managing or designing institutional linkage and other partnership programmes;
- identify and present research gaps and develop a possible longer-term agenda.

Actions

Taking into consideration that IAU's membership is international and in line with the Association's motto '*universities of the world working together*' the project will be inclusive and not limited to developing countries.

In order to achieve these objectives the following actions are considered:

Year 1: Data gathering, building a project network

The first year will be focused on data gathering, mostly at the cooperation agency level, to ascertain what has already been done in this field, what programmes may exist to enable higher education institutions to become involved in EFA and in what specific areas of action related to EFA, higher education institutions have chosen to intervene. The information that will be collected will consist of:

- name and contact information of the higher education institutions already involved in projects related to the achievement of the EFA goals.
- title of the project, the name and contact of its coordinator and if possible a link to its results or to more information on the project.

- information on all partners involved in the project, including NGOs or government departments.
- name of the cooperation or management agency funding the project (if any).

In addition, the IAU will conduct additional research to gather information on the following:

- Listing and descriptive information on international cooperation agencies active in the EFA programme that include support for research and involvement of higher education
- Identification of Internet and other documentation sources

Year 2: Meeting, learning from the data and discussion

The second year will focus on drafting the conceptual paper, defining the terms of reference and establishing the contacts for the international experts meeting on the work of higher education institutions and research efforts designed to meet the EFA goals. The main objectives of this international gathering would be to share good practice, learn from each other, develop a set of policy and funding recommendations as well as to determine whether and why it may be worthwhile to develop a network of institutions and individuals whose purpose would be to pursue activities linking, defining and improving the role of higher education and research in the achievement of the EFA goals.

The IAU Secretariat will convene such a meeting of approximately 20 experts. They will be identified by a call for expressions of interest addressed to all higher education institutions having been or still engaged in EFA-related programme of activities in partnership with another university from another region. Leaders of interested cooperation agencies that support inter-university linkages in the field of EFA or would like to do so in the future will also be invited.

Year 3: Networking and advocacy

The third and final year of the project will see the development of collaborative networking activities through:

- the establishment of a collaborative electronic forum where universities can ask questions, seek help and provide information on their on-going research and projects related to EFA;
- an electronic information letter designed to inform the EFA community at large of projects linking higher education to EFA and about the latest research outputs in this topic;
- the creation of North/South or/and South/South partnerships to address some of the issues raised by the EFA programme.
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IAU will develop the products and services, including reports and policy statements, with the help of the interested universities, cooperation agencies and any other interested stakeholder.

Outcomes

- Creation of a Web tool on higher education and research contribution to the EFA programme;

- Organisation of an expert meeting to articulate how higher education is involved in the EFA programme and develop an informed argument to enhance the role of higher education in the EFA programme;
- Launching of a collaborative network to mobilize and offer support that will help higher education institutions address some of the challenges of the EFA programme;
- Lobbying for the recognition of the role that higher education can play in the EFA programme and advocacy for greater involvement such institution through education, research and community service actions.

Schedule

Year	Activity	Calendar
1	Conceptual work	Sep-Oct 05
2005/09	Identification and selection of a consultant	Oct-Nov 05
2006/08	Identification/Consultation of Cooperation Agencies	Dec 05-Feb 06
	Internet and documentation search	Dec 05-Feb 06
	Data treatment	Mar-Jun 06
2	Terms of reference for the expert meeting	Sep 06
2006/09	Call for participation	Oct-Nov 06
2007/08	Logistical preparation of the expert meeting	Oct-Jan 06
	Expert meeting	Feb 07
	Meeting report	Mar 07
	First e-newsletter (results of the Meeting)	April 07
	Web tool development	May-August 07
3	Second Newsletter (Forum presentation/Web tool)	Sep 07
2007/09	Forum launching and follow-up	Oct-Nov 07
2007/12	Third Newsletter (Forum results)	Dec 07
	Web tool updates when necessary	All year