

Terms of Reference

International Meeting on the University Community and Education for All *-creating and sustaining improvements-*

3 to 4 November, Paris, France

Venue : *UNESCO Headquarters Paris*

The global and national effort to bring various segments of the society into the EFA process, taken together, is a recognition of the need for a broad partnership to achieve education for all goals. However, the specific role of universities in EFA is not evident in the in global equation, although universities are among the most important structures for research and training of educational personnel. Some universities offer post graduate and undergraduate degrees in early childhood, primary, literacy and adult education. They are also involved in short term training for educational professionals. This is particularly true for developed countries. Nonetheless developing countries are also making an effort to involve universities in EFA. Recently Uganda established the Kyambogo university that offers a Bachelor of Education Degree in Primary Education. Some countries have taken the policy decision requiring all lecturers in primary teacher training institutions to have at least a first degree. Now the universities and other institutions of higher learning are being called upon to use their comparative advantage to be more visible with the EFA agenda.

To be effective, universities must take into consideration that achievement of EFA goals is the hub for social transformation and sustainable development. It is not surprising that countries advocate for education both as a right and as a need. The challenge of countries is not only to make the changes for improvements demanded by EFA movement but also to maintain such changes in the education system. Although the flow of financing to EFA is way below the targets, it is evident that changing behaviours in society is not solely dependent on financial investments but on a several interacting phenomena.

What, for example, if by 2015, the world actually achieves “education for all” by boosting education systems without building sources for renewal and continued development? Unless urgent consideration is given to instituting the props of system renewal, even if we should achieve the six goals of EFA, this would be short lived. Tanzania is an example of such an experience. In the 1970s adult literacy rate increased to 80% and in later years, it plummeted to under 50 %. This happened primarily because there were no props to support a literate environment.

To achieve EFA, there must be no ambiguity in the commitment of governments. The EFA Monitoring Report of 2002 offered three answers to the question of importance of the six EFA goals to governments. These answers were elaborated under three headings: “Education as human right”, “Education and human capabilities” and “Education and other goals”. But, it was in the concluding statement of the Report that it arrived at the core of the concerns for implementing Education for All. The Report stated that “The Challenge for individual countries is to recognize

the validity of these [EFA] arguments, define their own distinctive policy priorities and map their own routes to achieving all of the EFA and MDG education-related goals.”

Achievement of EFA is interdependent on social and economic issues. One major concern is the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems. Sluggish economies and high unemployment rates, even among university graduates do not provide motivation for education. Abject poverty deprives children of a basic education while the gender issues in education remain, for the most part unresolved, particularly at higher levels of education. Although globalization offers many advantages, indeed for advancing knowledge, it drags in its wake many disadvantages for young people. Unlimited access to cross border questionable information and weakening cultural structures, are making it more difficult for young people to define themselves. More than ever, it is critical for education systems to recognize the challenges young people face in an ever changing environment and prepare them to manage themselves. In such an environment, life long learning becomes meaningful and self reliance a necessary tool for survival.

The statistical reports show that additional resources are needed to achieve EFA (more than US\$8 billion additional per year). In reality a substantial proportion of the education development budget is dependent on external loans and grants. The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was introduced to provide additional flow of funds to those countries that are considered deserving. However, at present it is not clear what proportion of the budget is allocated to sustaining change. That is, what proportion of financing is provided for: (a) development and implementation of quality programmes for training educational personnel, (b) for preparation and implementation of policies to professionalize the education ministries, and c) for the installation of affordable monitoring systems? Above all, what linkages are established to ensure that a country consolidates its energies for EFA?

Universities have the advantage of having various disciplines. They offer fields of study that must converge for the effective implementation of EFA. Such fields include health, science and technology, engineering social sciences and research. They could contribute to reaching EFA goals from various angles, such as improving the quality of education through personnel training and research that could help to foster the right to education and inform national and international policies. This meeting is aligned with UNESCO global coordination and monitoring mechanism: the High-Level Working Group (HLWG); the Working Group on Education for All (WGEFA) and the EFA Monitoring report.

The objective of this Conference is to open a dialogue between Rectors of universities and the education for all community on advancing the contribution of universities to EFA. It will identify areas of comparative advantage for universities to contribute to EFA and determine initial actions to be undertaken. Furthermore, this meeting will aim at exploring ways to forge effective linkages among universities and between universities and the UNESCO lead EFA mechanism and EFA stake holders.

Why rectors of universities? The education for all development requires interdisciplinary support. Many faculties as well as students would be implicated in establishing support of universities for education for all. A first step is to create space

for dialogue between universities and ministries of education. In such a forum, both partners can agree on mutually rewarding activities.

Universities meeting the challenges

Probably the critical question is not what universities can contribute to EFA but rather why the work of universities has not been integrated in the EFA movement. The first probability is easier to deal with than the second. Universities are basically responsible for research and teaching. Universities can benefit through negotiation and sharing of the resources mobilized for EFA as long as they are committed to undertake specific tasks leading to the achievement of the goals. This may require EFA to work within its broader vision of social and economic development. With regard to the second probability, one could ask universities if they have been proactive or passively waiting to be brought into the action. As far back as 1993, the League of World Universities concluded in its Rectors' Conference that "universities cannot sit on the sidelines during the education crisis" This statement is as relevant today as it was then.

As the universities are not visible with EFA, then one wonders if the training is consistent with new thinking advocated by EFA and, in general, with the new and emerging demands of the global agenda. Further to this there are issues that ministries grapple with, among them is to change the mind set of the educational professionals. Research has shown that in-service training of teachers, for example, in new methods and techniques often has little impact on their teaching. One university in the USA showed that they were able to change teacher behaviour through a process of engaging teachers in research, reflection and interpretation and application of relevant theories. In Cuba, the leaders of education use systematic enquiry, reflection and experimentation to keep improving the educational outputs.

The decision to achieve education for all by 2015 brought additional diversity to the classrooms in developing countries. Already there is no system of testing children for learning difficulties or disabilities. With many more children in school there is a wider range of differences in learning styles, abilities and pre-school backgrounds. Old demanding ways of supervision, requiring frequent school inspection by an inspector, must be replaced by new and less costly but effective approaches. Some countries have already embarked on this exercise but could benefit more if there was more open dialogue between the academia and the public system.

Understandably, universities will want to maintain their intellectual space and academic freedoms. They want to be free of political and ideological pressures. If one could simplify the expectations for social transformation, implications are that universities would strive to ensure that their students are prepared to drive the change agenda progressing from:

- Exclusive to inclusive societies
- Wastage of human abilities to human capital formation
- Intolerance to peace and democracy
- Dependency to self-reliance
- Inequities to equity
- Abject poverty to sustainable livelihoods

Environmental degradation to sustainable environment
Illiteracy to literacy
Ignorance to knowledge

At the same time universities would be able to align their contributions to EFA with the global mandate for change.

Fundamental questions for up-scaling participation in the EFA agenda

1. In what ways is the mandate of universities compatible with the expectations of EFA?
2. Considering the role of universities in research and development, how can universities improve pedagogy, policy and perspectives for EFA?
3. If universities take on the wider task of supporting EFA will they have access to resources to assist them (keeping in mind that universities are being asked to mobilize resources for their own existence)?

UNESCO, Universities and EFA

UNESCO has the programme structure in higher education that would facilitate going to scale with support programmes for EFA. Its historical involvement with teachers date back to 1964 when the joint UNESCO /ILO recommendations were approved for implementation. Much has change since then, however, the greatest challenge to the programme has been the tangible evidence that teacher education is at the core of EFA. The teachers most implicated in EFA are primary school teachers and in many countries universities are not directly concerned with their training. But, now is the time for universities to come to the forefront in assisting governments to improve teacher education. UNESCO is challenged with dismantling the old order in education systems, but an even greater challenge is to make the new order understood by those who must make the transformation.

In collaboration with UNESCO there are four main tasks that universities could perform to enhance their role in the EFA process:

1. Education of Teachers

UNESCO assists the introduction and use of technology in teacher training so that teachers in rural areas can be supported despite distance and difficult terrain. Universities are able to assure the quality of the content, media delivery channels and advance solar energy as a source of power. Universities can identify groups of teachers colleges for which they provide the accreditation for teacher training certificates through approved training programmes and examinations. This would help to raise the prestige of primary teacher training. As a source of electricity is a basic need for use of technology, universities are able to introduce or expand renewable energies programme so there is a cadre of engineers with the skills and the entrepreneurship spirit to provide renewable energy sources to rural areas.

2. Research

The UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge provides a platform for researchers, policy-makers and experts to engage critically with research issues and research findings. It offers an enormous potential for research in EFA as it focuses on: a) gathering and engaging with existing and on-going research; b) identifying research gaps and new priorities, c) stimulating and facilitating research, d) bringing to the fore current issues and debates e) making available research findings and f) disseminating information on policies and practice. (Source: Brochure, UNESCO Forum on Higher Education Research and Knowledge) It operates through global scientific committees in the five regions and works with a variety of partners. Because of its access to high level researchers, it can assist the EFA process by identifying research needed to enable a more effective learning environment.

3. UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs as a strategy for implementation

UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs and networks has been one of UNESCO's outstanding programmes for promoting and building higher education capacity. There are 508 Chairs and 63 networks distributed over all the regions of the world. This programme can be utilized to establish co-ordinating points for the involvement of universities in EFA. Through the Chairs and networks, universities can help each other by sharing information, courses and experiences promoting the use of technology in realistic and effective ways. The complimentary programme of Academics Across Borders (AAB) can help access volunteer academics to help in building programmes and also in strengthening the use of technology.

4. University student body as a resource for EFA

Already UNESCO experimented with using university student body to assist communities in EFA programmes in Jordan. To go to scale with such an initiative would require certification policies on the part of the universities. In fact working with communities could help the universities to keep their academic programmes relevant to the needs of the people who will be eventually served by their graduates.

Who pays?

The question of financial resources will arise. So far universities are not normally included in the resources allocated for EFA. The main reason being that the levels of education dealt with in EFA are not those found in universities. What we tend to forget is that the universities train the managers of education of whom EFA expects new and creative thinking and broadened vision. To a large extent, it is also the universities that train the teacher trainers. Thus not including universities in pursuing the EFA agenda will undermine the short term changes and deny the long term benefits.

Preparation for the meeting

1. Research presentation on actual contributions of universities to the EFA process.
2. All participants will be invited to submit a month before the conference their ideas for effective cooperation between universities and the EFA process.
3. These proposals will be compiled and shared with the participants as one of the working papers.

Expected number of participants - 60-100

Procedure for the meeting

The meeting will cover two days.

Day One: Presentations and discussions on:

1. Challenges of EFA
2. Integrating universities in the EFA Agenda
3. Concrete experiences of universities with EFA

Break out groups will work on the fundamental questions posed in the text

Day Two -

1. Presentation and discussions on international partnerships with universities for EFA
2. Preparation of strategies and measures that will advance the involvement of universities in EFA – going to scale

Follow-up of the meeting

This will be determined by the participants

Date : 3 and 4 November, 2004

Language: English and French

Venue : UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

Partners: To be determined