Strengthening the Regional Engagement Role of Universities in Africa and Asia (SRERUAA)[1] – Project Report

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Overview

Following a workshop in Cape Town, South Africa in June 2017, this Report discusses outcomes, reviews developments and summarises findings of the *Strengthening the Regional Engagement Role of Universities in Africa and Asia (SRERUAA)* scoping project. The project is concerned with the regional engagement (third mission) role of universities, namely those activities that lie outside the core missions of research and teaching. This work builds upon substantial experience that already exists within the University of Glasgow, developed within the Pascal Universities for Regional Engagement (PURE)[2] and was funded by the Scottish Funding Council as a contribution to supporting efforts by Scottish Universities to engage with the UK funding councils and learned academies' Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) initiative. It was directed by Professor Michael Osborne in collaboration with Dr Muir Houston and Dr Katarzyna Borkowska within the [Centre of Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning](#) at the University of Glasgow. Following a period of fieldwork by partners, a preliminary network meeting was convened to develop possible areas of collaboration and partnership to address global challenges faced by ODA DAC listed countries, namely, **Tanzania** (least Developed) **Zimbabwe** (Low Income Country)**, Philippines** (Lower Middle Income) and **South Africa**, **Iraq** and **Iran** (Upper Middle income). The meeting was spread over 2 days and took the form of presentations

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As indicated at https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/ris/knowledgeexchange/gcrfsfcsmallgrantsfund/, the scheme was set up 'to support teams, wherever possible working across the remit of two or more research councils, and including partners in ODA recipient countries, to develop partnerships and projects to target large scale, external GCRF funding calls. This may include network strengthening activity, e.g. travel for UK teams to ODA recipient countries to co-develop research agendas, and research activity'.

[2] http://pure.pascalobservatory.org/

and discussions to add in-depth context to understand regional profiles and a plenary session discussed each days' key points.

Partners

Partners were recruited through existing networks, since all involved have already been strongly connected with the PASCAL Observatory and CRAD&LL networks. The partners in the project were Dr Marius Venter (PASCAL Director, Africa) and Professor Lorraine Greyling (University of Johannesburg), Dr Mpoki Mwaikokesya and Dr Heriel Moshi (both University of Dar es Salaam), Professor Charles Nherera (University of Zimbabwe), Dr Tendai Nhenga (Africa University, Zimbabwe), Professor Kamal Ketuly and Dr Sizar Dosky, (both, University of Duhok, Iraq), Professor Nematollah Azizi and Lamiah Hashemi (both University of Kurdistan, Iran) and Dr Zenaida Reyes and Dr Jenina Nalipay (Philippines Normal University).

Regional Profiling Tool and University Benchmarking Tool

All partners were provided with a *Regional Profile Tool* for initial self-assessment of engagement, which could be readily adapted to different cultural contexts. This tool was based on the indicators developed as part of the PURE project.[3] The aim was to capture 'the picture of the system' which required consideration of **all** HEIs in the region that is being investigated, and consultation with regional stakeholder. The profile covered a number of domains including (1) key issues and challenges confronting the region, (2) Universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) portrait, (3) Regional Aspirations and Agenda.

All partners were also provided with a more comprehensive *University Benchmarking Tool* for commentary only. Based on the previous work of PASCAL PURE (Duke, Osborne and Wilson 2013), the tool was designed to capture university/community engagement practices. Aspects of engagement were grouped into eight domains and included (1) Promoting engagement within the institution, (2) Developing human capital, (3) Developing regional learning processes and social capital, (4) Development of business and innovation, (5) Community Development processes, (6) Cultural development, (7) Promoting good practice in sustainable development, (8) Contributing to regional infrastructure and development processes (Hamilton, Osborne and Tibbitt 2013). On their own initiative, the University of Zimbabwe trialled the whole tool and thought it suitable and could be applied as it stands. Other partners commented on the tool and made proposals as to how it might be used in their own countries. Examples of benchmarking tool feedback are as followed:

Philippines National University
>All domains are applicable to our context. However, it is important to consider the following points: (1.) partnership with NGOs and People's organization, (2.) long term overall plan/ blueprint of universities for community partnership, (3.) efficient means to get feedback from the community and other stakeholders, (4.) identifying future steps.

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[3] http://pure.pascalobservatory.org/projects/current/pure

University of Dar es Salem
> The tool is comprehensive and the domains are compatible with Tanzanian HEPs and community. The only fear is about the time, which it might take for the respondents/institutions to complete.

Project Outputs

- ✓ Six regional profile statements, each included customised sections to fit particular contexts. Each of six partner universities conducted self-assessments to examine processes of engagement with a specific concern as to how both regions and universities are managed and engage, taking into account the range of sometimes competing missions that universities have, and the differing national policy contexts in which regions and universities find themselves.

- ✓ Commentary on the feasibility of using the more detailed University Benchmarking Tool, except for the Zimbabwe who piloted the tool.

- ✓ A web2.0 space was created for interaction within the PURE sub-domain.

- ✓ A sustainable network was established based on the synthesis of self-assessments and the identification of common ground.

- ✓ A Feasibility Report is being produced on the prospects for the strengthening of regional engagement at each university. The aim is to offer practical proposals based on existing successful models that strengthen the contribution of universities, cities and regions to key aspects of regional development.

Anticipated Outcomes

The main anticipated outcome of the scoping project was the establishment of a network that would be positioned to bid within The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) for a major project. This outcome was met by submitting a bid to the British Academy - The Cities & Infrastructure Programme. The call invited problem-focused research projects that address the challenge of creating and maintaining sustainable and resilient cities in developing countries. The submitted proposal, based on the scoping project, addressed a core problem in emerging economies of strengthening the urban engagement role of universities, and ways they contribute to developing sustainable cities in the context of the major social, cultural, environmental and economic challenges facing the global south. This project, **Strengthening Urban Engagement of Universities in Asia and Africa (SUEUAA)**, was funded and is currently underway (see http://sueuaa.org)

Summary of presentations[4]

Zimbabwe

The project on University Community Engagement in Zimbabwe presented by **Professor Charles Nherera and Dr Tendai Nhenga** focused on strengthening the informal sector currently estimated at more than $7bn (EIU, 2015). It is premised on the belief that given the right support, the informal sector can grow into a viable SME sector that contributes more meaningfully to the national economy through increased production of quality goods and services. Universities need to engage in more research that provides entrepreneurs in the informal sector with knowledge and skills in the origination and development of design of new products, production of high quality products, costing, and marketing of products to enable them to operate more viably. There was also recognition of issues related to deforestation, drought and issues of sustainability.

Iraq

Prof. Dr. Kamal Ketuly and Dr. Sizar Abid Mohammed focused on the Duhok governorate, which lies in the far north-west of Iraq and forms the western governorate in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. It has a strategic location since it is considered to be the joining point between Syria- Turkey- Iraq. Suburban areas of Duhok City are Zakho, Akre and Amedye. The presentations considered social issues. The University of Duhok (UoD) through its College of Medicine is graduating students to work in the various health departments and is assisting the health department in various aspects of research. The health services and education are free. Duhok city is a mixture of various historically integrated ethnic and religious cultures, and after the ISIS (DAAESH) occupation of Mosul the entire academic, non-academic and students at Mosul university, IDPs (850,000) and refugees from Syria (250,000) have been giving temporary offices within the campus of the UoD. Many of these students have been accepted as guests, and overall this influx of refugees presents major challenges (UNHCR, 2017). Taken together, the low prices for crude oil and gas, the high influx of refugees, the cost establishment of refugee camps and the high cost of the military operations for security and the fight against terrorists (ISIS); results in significant socio-economic challenges.

Philippines

Dr. Zenaida Q. Reyes and **Dr. Ma. Jenina N. Nalipay** presented the case of Manila. The presentation described the socioeconomic, cultural, political, and environmental profile and issues of Manila in the context of how HEIs develop and implement their community engagement programmes. This identified a number of pressing issues related to poverty, health, education and environmental degradation (Davao, 2014). Two major points were identified:

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[4] http://pure.pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow/pascal-activities/news/series-reports-strengthening-regional-engagement-role-universities-

1. Although there were no deliberate efforts on the part of HEIs to align their programs with the agenda of the city, somehow they were able to address some of the agenda on the basis of the needs assessment in their partner communities; and
2. HEIs operate their community engagement based on their direct observation of community needs, rather than being guided by the national policies.

Iran

Professor Nematollah Azizi and **Ms. Lamiah Hashemi** presented the case of the Kurdistan region in Iran. They considered a number of economic challenges for the region including those related to agriculture, unemployment, transport infrastructure, lack of external investment and the lack of collaboration between education and industry (Salehi-Isfahani, 2009; UNPO, 2017). They also presented a range of social issues related to health, welfare and unemployment, and a range of environmental challenges related to agricultural practices, de-forestation and water sanitation. These issues were related to the priorities of the HE system, and the challenges of developing the third mission.

Tanzania

Dr Mpoki Mwaikokesya and **Dr Heriel Moshi of the University of Dar es Salem** presented the case of Tanzania. In recent years, higher learning institutions in Tanzania have become key to improved social welfare, sustained growth of communities and increased competitiveness. This presentation focused on describing the Tanzanian national profile in connection with the project on Strengthening the Regional Engagement Role of Universities in Africa and Asia (SRERUAA). It analyses several shifts and changes made by higher education institutions in their attempts to become relevant and responsive to society (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2010) . It further examines national policy thrusts and contexts influencing universities' regional engagement role and also highlights a range of issues including poverty, environmental degradation and the large influxes into urban areas which can exacerbate these issues (Bailey et al 2011).

South Africa

Dr Marius Venter and Professor Lorraine Greyling presented two relevant cases. Marius Venter, who is PASCAL Director for Africa and directs the Centre for Local Economic Development (CENLED) at the University of Johannesburg, provided an overview of a newly established college (Elgin-ECCOWELL) for strengthening the entrepreneurial-ecosystem in the Overberg municipality of the Western Cape Province. The college's focus is on socio-economic transformation of local communities through applied research, skills-development programs and incubation programs particularly in the areas of housing, health and environmental management. The Department of Higher Education in South Africa identified entrepreneurship development as a priority area and supports the college as a pilot project. The college will also be developed to provide research infrastructure and/or internship opportunities in Local Economic Development and programmes to upskill and professionalise existing community workers to operate more effectively.

Dr Lorraine Greyling, University of Zululand, presented details of the Economics and Entrepreneurship Education Program (TEEEP), a three-unit sequential educational program for children in Grades 5-7, developed by Northern Illinois University for use in after-school settings in South Africa. The goal of the program is to empower children with knowledge and skills for effective participation in the economy, including entrepreneurial skills that broaden their opportunities. Providing children with a solid foundation in economics and entrepreneurship when they are still in elementary grades opens their eyes to new career possibilities and helps them see the benefits of education and training, thus increasing their chances of being well-prepared for the world of work and becoming entrepreneurs.

Summary of the key issues

This project provided valuable insights into the possibilities of developing common, but regionally sensitive, methods for universities and regional governments to better understand the nature, quality and extent of their current engagement, and the potential for growth. Common among partners is a sense of the 3rd mission being a worthwhile investment. There is unanimous deep commitment to ensuring that HEIs can strengthen their capacity to contribute to regional development and in so doing improve the social, health, economic, environment and cultural outcomes, leading to better quality of life and more diverse opportunities. In a rapidly changing world, regions are looking for solutions to increased levels of uncertainty within a precarious economic context. This is not to say that there is a 'one-size-fits-all' answer but there are possibilities to create a common but regionally sensitive vision to address current societal challenges.

Initial analysis of the regional profiles highlighted a number of common themes across partners that could be the focus of future research activity. One issue facing all partner countries is increasing urbanization, albeit at different rates and in different forms. All countries are experiencing increasing *rural to urban migration* and it is a challenge for all of the DAC countries to address the issues which arise from this trend. Whilst on the one hand population health and education have tended to increase because of urban-rural migration, there are significant negative effects of *unequal distributions of opportunities and benefits* within urbanized communities often resulting in *high levels of unemployment* and *increasing urban poverty* and associated infrastructural and health issues related to water, utility provision particularly electricity and housing are challenges faced by all partner countries. Moreover, partner countries experience various forms of fragility. These include forced migration as a result of war and terrorism (notably the influx of Syrian refugees to Iraq), environmental degradation (e.g. deforestation, soil erosion, animal poaching, toxic waste disposal from mining in Zimbabwe and South Africa (Mapani and Kribek, 2012), climate change (e.g. major weather events in the Philippines; and, drought in Tanzania, South Africa and Tanzania), poor regulatory frameworks (e.g. Tanzania), poor internal infrastructure (e.g. Iran) and health issues related to for example: HIV/Aids which are the focus of concerted efforts in Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe; or psychological trauma as a result of conflict and forced migration in Iran and Iraq.

Current engagement activities

The following examples highlight current regional engagement projects delivered by HEIs supporting economic, social, environmental and cultural developments.

Economic issues

In both developed and developing countries, *entrepreneurship* is increasingly viewed as a positive strategy to address a perceived lack of appropriate or relevant opportunities in the formal economy. As a result of rigidities and associated lack flexibility labour markets are slow to respond and with limited access to capital, there is a clear recognition, in the regional profile statements, of the need for universities to be engaged in activities, which lead to growth in the formation and development of SMEs. In many regions, skill development, especially of young people is of central importance. The University of Zimbabwe is developing a range of special programmes to improve the capacity of the informal sector and strengthen entrepreneurship skills. The intervention encompasses programmes to increase design and technology capabilities including the origination and development of new products, the production of high quality artisanal crafts; and efficiencies in production and marketing costs. The training and orientation of those engaged in the informal sector also includes a mix of soft or transferable skills related to communication, team working and problem solving; and, academic skills related to mathematical, scientific, technological and engineering competences. In South Africa, the University of Johannesburg has been delivering after-school educational programmes for economic and financial literacy of young learners in grades five to seven; and, through the Elgin Ecowell Centre aims to promote economic development through the organic growth of local community skills and competences.

All partners place a high priority on economic development and are interested in how their universities and further education colleges can support that objective. The Philippines Normal University recognises the need for HEIs to work in collaboration with individual firms and large companies to develop and supply skilled labour, which is in line with the needs of the local market. In the case of Manila a Megacity of over 24 million people, it is suggested that HEIs need to start responding to local needs; as, there is a mismatch between what is learned and available employment opportunities. It is argued that higher education institutions have to play a direct role in mediating people's access to the labour market (especially to higher status and professional occupations) for example through providing service learning and work-integrated leaning opportunities for students in order to improve the life chance of the 3 million that live in slums without electricity, sanitation, and access to drinking water.

With limited access to employment opportunities and income, partner regions are faced with high levels of internal and external migration as a result of conflict or urban 'draw' and/or as a result of food, water insecurity and in search of work.. However, these population movements can often precipitate health crises for example by crowding people in inadequate housing with poor sanitation and water supplies and overwhelming already

poor infrastructure. The University of Duhok (Iraq) is involved in physical infrastructure development projects where the College of Engineering, in collaboration with city authorities, coordinates irrigation and urban water programmes. Migration may also trigger tensions within host populations and can lead to new conflicts, insecurities and undermine social cohesion. Consequently, as indicated in the next section all of the partner universities promote activities contributing to social inclusion.

Social issues (including education, health and welfare)

The vast majority of engagement activity identified is related to *increasing participation in education* as the vehicle to drive change. For example, in Tanzania levels of literacy remain low and attempts to increase participation have resulted in an expansion of primary education. Thus, the level of primary school attendance is relatively high (in excess of 81.7%); although attendance in secondary schools falls to around 14.4% (as such, secondary school attendance remains a minority experience) (UNESCO 2015). Consequently, in Tanzania, it is suggested that despite efforts to provide basic education for all, there is a need to develop a culture of learning. The promotion of this notion of developing learning, especially in the context of lifelong learning is a common theme amongst partners. For example, in Iran, the government supports all state universities in development of LLL units and growth centres to facilitate access to higher education. In the Philippines the government provides funds for strengthening the curriculum, teaching, extension programmes and research activity to promote LLL.

While the community engagement activities are multidisciplinary, it has to be recognised that much more work is needed to integrate promotion of health. The only example of dealing with health issues came from the University of Duhok (Iraq) where the College of Medicine in collaboration with city health authorities provide health services for Mosul and Syrian refugees and support Kurdish fighters in the war zone. Moreover, in relation to welfare the College of Basic Education (in collaboration with German universities) provides training in trauma and psychological rehabilitation for ICD and refugees. In countries such as Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa, considerable effort is directed into sex education programmes and the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, in order to try to reduce the risks associated with sexual activity which crosses generations.[5] Partner universities also identified a wide range of other health-related behaviours, including alcohol and drug abuse.

Environmental issues (including food/water security)

The major environmental challenge, identified by all partner universities, is to provide adequate and good quality food, energy and water to an increasingly urban population. Valuing *ecological sustainability,* including agriculture and food security, is promoted by the Elgin Learning Foundation (ELF) /Community College in South Africa. With the focus upon

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[5] http://www.unaids.org/en

improving agricultural skills the college offers accredited programmes in Agriculture, Bio-diversity, Waste Management and Agribusiness employment. A similar focus on training is offered by the College of Agriculture, University of Duhok, which provides programmes for farmers related to use of pesticides, soil treatment, water irrigation, honey production or health care of animals. There is an increased realization that *environmental degradation* and *diminishing natural resources* e.g. deforestation, soil erosion, animal poaching, toxic waste disposal from mining cannot be stopped without encouraging new behavioural norms. In response, all partner universities have been making efforts to bring new community based projects to address local and regional environmental needs and develop possible solutions in partnership with local communities. It is suggested that while solutions may require a multi-disciplinary approach; education can play a key role in informing behavioural change.

The adverse effects of global warming and climate change are most felt among developing countries. As indicated by the partner universities, extreme weather events such as flooding, drought and typhoons have a number of health consequences (e.g. water contamination poses serious threats to health from cholera, typhoid and dengue) and challenge food security (e.g. crop failure and the reduction of agricultural productivity disrupting the distribution of food). The Philippines Normal University organizes extension programmes to increase environmental awareness and promote and develop resilience to natural disasters, again highlighting the role that lifelong learning can play in *addressing environmental concerns*.

Cultural Issues

Promoting the diverse traditions, culture and languages of various ethnic groups should be a crucial element of the work of regions and universities. The ability to create an inclusive multicultural society is an important agenda for all partners who identified challenges related to marginalization of minority groups, disregard for traditional indigenous culture (including language and heritage sites) and the cultural domination of western values. One of the principal roles of higher education has been to offer access to cultural activities through a variety of extension programmes. In Tanzania, the University of Dar-es-Salaam has established a Children's Theatre programme run by the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. The objective is to recognize and promote African traditions. Similarly HEIs in the Iranian Kurdish region are committed to promoting traditional music, dance and carpet weaving. Another important factor for regional development, highlighted by all partner universities, is the preservation of cultural heritage sites for example by turning them into visitor attractions. Cultural tourism can lead to the development of infrastructure and have an enormous social and economic impact.

Synergies between culture and sport were highlighted by the South African partner, as in 2010 Cape Town was a host city of the FIFA World Cup. Most events of this kind go beyond sporting activities and utilise cultural programmes to engage the wider community and strengthen regional traditions, local pride and community spirit. Overall, cultural engagement of partner universities relates to a wide range of activities and courses focused

on the needs of particular communities to promote the living traditions and heritage sites of African and Asian communities.

Identifying constraints to regional engagement

A number of significant issues emerged from looking across the partner universities:

- ✓ Limited collaboration between regional government, universities, industries, and civil society – there is a need to develop sustained trust-based partnership between the different stakeholders. Regional governments may need to start taking a lead in establishing collaborations and sustainable partnerships in their territory. This could be achieved by organising regular forums where different stakeholders, including universities, take part. Funding arrangements could be in place to support collaboration between universities as well as universities and other tertiary institutions. Similarly university leaders should encourage departments and individual academics to create partnerships for community development and commercialisation by providing formal support and clear guidelines for engagement. Education institutions need to position themselves as regional partners.

- ✓ Limited funding - with the unfavorable economic climate the majority of engagement activity is influenced by governmental priorities, often driven by short-term economic measures. Regions aiming at developing balanced and sustainable development should be given more trust to act competently to enhance their own regional assets. Moreover, universities with their multidisciplinary expertise should take the lead in developing Third Mission activities, and to be proactive in seeking potential resources for implementing a vision of regional development.

- ✓ Lack of research capacity and invisibility of African and Asian research - many of the frameworks for regional development and lifelong learning are based on Western assumptions and models, which may not be applicable to Asian and African cultures. One feature of responsibility in research is to work towards an understanding that is multiple and rich, rather than parochial. There is a need to establish local multidisciplinary research units, which would integrate regional engagement activities and provide quality research aimed at addressing economic, social, environmental and cultural issues. Similarly, being a part of international knowledge networks and working on international collaborative research can strengthen African and Asian research capacity and its visibility.

- ✓ Lack of clear polices and guidelines for universities how to engage in the Third Mission – overall the scope and scale of regional involvement, while being significant, appears to be fragmented and lacks an overall strategic vision.

Engagement activities tend to be dependent on the efforts of individual departments (or academics) within universities. A more comprehensive institutional approach should be implemented to addresses issues related to regional engagement (including strategy, partnership and internal planning). Similarly, regional and national governments' expectations in relation to HEIs and their role in sustaining regional development should be clear and supported by appropriate funding.

Feasibility

We call for *multidisciplinary approaches* that cross disciplines that include engineering, health, the arts, environmental sciences, social sciences and business studies. Improvements in such aspects of development in cities fundamentally requires a HE research and teaching base, responsive to the demands of society and working to stimulate demand based on expressed needs through engagement with key city stakeholders. Education is seen as a tool to communicate, implement and drive change.

All partners place a high priority on economic development and are interested in how their universities and further education colleges could support that objective. For example, given the importance of small business to the economy, there is a clear recognition of the need for regions and universities to be engaged in activities, which lead to growth and development of SMEs. There is a widespread expectation among partner universities that HEIs can contribute directly to initiatives which aim to alleviate social inequalities. Higher education's contribution to greater social inclusion embraces extension programmes and community initiatives, intended to mitigate the circumstances of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups and promote the traditions, culture and languages of various ethnic groups. By engaging with the broader community (not just students) universities create accessible and safe space for social and behavioural change to occur with the aim of enhanced social cohesion. Similarly, partner universities promote ecological sustainability and encourage local citizens to adopt an active approach to environmental degradation and diminishing natural resources.

This project highlighted important examples of good and outstanding practice in various regions of Africa and Asia, demonstrating deep commitment to regional development and lifelong learning. However, it also became clear that there are some major barriers and constraints related to collaborative partnership, funding, capacity of research and clarity of policy that need to be addressed. The Third mission has to be considered as part of a long-term strategy as economic social, environment and cultural changes have to be embedded over time. It is recognised that change will take time and the success of multidisciplinary approaches to develop solutions will be key to stakeholder buy-in at both the policy and community levels. The successor project (SUEUAA) will allow the development of key projects involving multidisciplinary teams engaging with relevant stakeholders including community leaders and other representatives of civil society alongside policy makers and public and private enterprises.

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[6] Some references updated in 2021