

**Cooperation, Complexity and Adaptation:
Higher Education capacity initiatives in international
development assistance programmes in sub-Saharan
Africa.**

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Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

by

Dublin City University

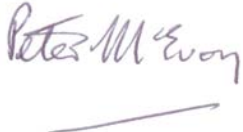
Dublin City University Business School (DCUBS)

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January 2018

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD is entirely my own work, that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed:  Peter McEvoy. ID No: 12210024

Date: 8th January 2018.

Et velle et perficere

Not only to nurture aspirations but to bring them to fruition

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List of Acronyms

AAU	Association of African Universities
ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
AERC	Africa Economic Research Consortium
AFHECI	Aid Funded Higher Education Capacity Initiative
APSO	Agency for Personal Service Overseas
BAP	Bilateral Aid Programme (Irish Aid)
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, S Africa group of nations
CAQDAS	Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis
CARTA	Consortium for Advanced Training in Africa
CAS	Complex Adaptive Systems
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DCD	Development Cooperation Division (of the Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Trade)
DCU	Dublin City University
DFA(T)	Department of Foreign Affairs (and Trade), Ireland
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
DHG	Donor Harmonisation Group on Higher Education
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DN	Deductive-Nomological model (or 'covering law')
DS	Development Studies
DSAI	Development Studies Association, Ireland
DSAI	Development Studies Association Ireland
EADI	European Association of Development Research Institutes
EADI	European Association of Development Research Institutes
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
EDI	Economic Development Institute (within the World Bank)
EEC	European Economic Community (precursor of the European Union)
EP- NUFFIC	Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation
EPFL	Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne
ERC	European Research Council
ESRC	Economic & Social Research Council (UK)
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAWE	Forum of African Women Educationalists
FTP	Fellowship Training Programme (Irish Aid)
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Higher Education
HECG	Higher Education Consultation Group (HEDCO predecessor body)
HEDCO	Higher Education for Development Cooperation
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HIPCs	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
IA	Irish Aid
IAP(RCB)	Irish African Partnership (for Research Capacity Building)
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IDS	Institute for Development Studies (Sussex)
IEBI	International Education Board Ireland (successor body to HEDCO)
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IoT	Institute of Technology
ITD	Inter- and Trans-Disciplinary
IUA	Irish Universities Association
IUCEA	International University Council of East Africa
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
LIDC	London International Development Initiative
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOOCs	Massive On-line Open Learning courses
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Development
NORRAG	Network for International Policy on Education & Training
NUFU	Norwegian Programme for Development Research and Education
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway
NUIM	National University of Ireland Maynooth
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAEG	Programme Appraisal and Evaluation Group (Irish Aid)
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PHARE	Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring Economies (EU programme)
PRTL	Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions
PSC	Programme of Strategic Cooperation
QA	Quality Assurance
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise (UK)
RBM	Results Based Management
RCB	Research Capacity Building
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARUA	Southern African Region Universities Association
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SIU	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attributable, Realistic and Targeted
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
SUA	Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania)
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance (or Assistant)
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCD	University College Dublin
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)
UI	Universities Ireland

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WB	World Bank
WBI	World Bank Institute

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Dublin, January 2018.

Abstract

McEvoy, P.

Cooperation, Complexity and Adaptation: Higher Education capacity initiatives in international development assistance programmes in sub-Saharan Africa.

At a time when global relations are characterised by great complexity, uncertainty and inequality, the role of higher education is crucial for a balanced and coherent development strategy, and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is especially true for countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a critical need to generate knowledge that can be used in the service of social and economic development, human rights and climate change adaptation.

The study concerns itself with that aspect of international development policy and practice which relates to aid-funded capacity development for systems and institutions of higher education, specifically in the sub-Saharan African context. Looking back over a period of thirty years, this study explores the role of higher education capacity as a component of international development assistance programmes to Africa, provided by international finance institutions, and by OECD member states (including Ireland). With reference to testimonies of authoritative informants and unpublished archival material, it examines the historical pathways which have supported aid-funded higher education capacity initiatives (AFHECIs), and their contribution to strengthening sub-Saharan Africa's higher education systems and to wider societal transformation.

The underpinning theoretical perspective which has been chosen as the lens through which to view and reflect on this important subject matter is that of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory, which has been gaining currency as a theoretical prism on topical problems in public management and organisational analysis. The study critically examines the adequacy of the conventional techniques used by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies in assessing what constitutes an effective AFHECI. It finds that far-reaching policy decisions in relation to AFHECIs have in the past been heavily influenced by fickle donor proclivities regarding aid priorities and modalities, rather than the deliberative evidence-based policy-making which donor agencies ostensibly espouse.

Finally, the study resolves the long-running 'ends -v- means' antinomy in which the discourse on capacity development has long been mired, and concludes that capacity development, when considered as 'outcome', rather than merely as instrument, constitutes a public or social good *per se*, albeit one which becomes discernible only over time.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The study concerns itself with that aspect of international development policy and practice which relates to aid-funded capacity development (CD) for systems and institutions of higher education (HE), specifically in relation to sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The realisation that the phenomenon of capacity development has been relatively under-researched has enticed me to probe both the concept itself and its operational context in higher education and research in Africa. This endeavour is informed by the extensive literatures, key informant testimonies, archival case study material to which I had privileged access, and my own reflection informed by practitioner experience. The underpinning theoretical perspective which has been chosen as the lens through which to view and reflect on this important subject matter is that of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory, which has been gaining currency as a theoretical window on topical problems in public management and organisational analysis (Rhodes, Murphy et al. 2011).

Capacity building and CD have assumed prominence as a theme and as an instrument within the development assistance programming of bilateral and multilateral donor agencies for over four decades, but they have been beset by conceptual and terminological confusion as to its status, whether a 'product' or a 'process'; a 'means' or an 'end'. The terminology surrounding 'capacity' has too often been used as if its meaning were axiomatic; this in turn has led to the many stakeholders involved in such donor-funded programmes having variable expectations, and therefore variable levels of satisfaction (or frustration) regarding successful outcomes (or the lack thereof).

The principal object of investigation in this study consists in aid-funded higher education capacity initiatives (AFHECIs) directed towards SSA from donor countries which are members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The study considers AFHECIs as comprising time-bound projects or programmes focused on strengthening of institutions of tertiary education in SSA (or indeed in the global South more generally). Such interventions have an inbuilt, often implicit, aspiration or expectation (at both donor and recipient end of the relationship) that strengthening institutional capacity of higher education institutes (HEIs) will contribute towards a macro-level sustainable development goal, for example in health, education, agriculture, or technology.

Research Question

The principal research question which motivates this thesis and which will be analysed more fully in Chapter 8, is formulated as follows:

a) *Can a complex adaptive system (CAS) ‘lens’ assist a better understanding of the role and status of higher education capacity development in sub-Saharan Africa, as seen within the framework of evolving policy and practice in international development assistance; and if so, to what extent?*

Enveloped within this over-arching question are three cognate ones:

b) *What has been learned about the suitability of programme instruments / mechanisms used by donor agencies and national governments over the past four decades, for the purpose of creating sustainable systems and research capacity in sub-Saharan Africa’s higher education sector?*

c) *Which modalities (or combinations of modalities) are likely to best support Africa’s higher education systems, in their role as instruments of human and societal development?*

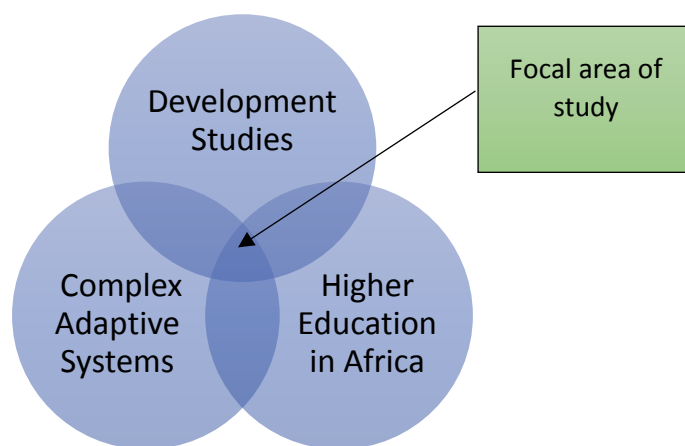
d) *How can improved individual capacity in Southern higher education institutions translate sustainably into improved institutional capacity?*

The evidential base of the study draws on two complementary sets of sources. One is depth interviews with three stakeholder panels of key informants, all of whom have had direct experience of the AFHECI domain of policy and practice. The second source is analysis of extant archival material of two distinct Irish-based implementing agencies for AFHECIs, both now defunct, whose life-spans were separated by a hiatus of some twenty years.

Conscious that ‘a careful look at practice can generate new theory, and theory – or theoretical praxis – can inspire new practice’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2009), this study seeks to integrate the two. It has been suggested that both a strength and a weakness of development thinking is its policy-oriented character: it is as much problem-driven as theory-driven; there is a tendency to confuse historico-analytic explanation with policy prescription; too often we find development specialists confusing what *ought* to be with what *is* (Colman, Nixon 1988). In obvious respects, theory tends to lag behind innovations on the ground, but seen from a different angle, practice tends to lag behind theory if as is often the case activists and policy makers in the development arena lack the time for reflection. In seeking to reconcile this apparent conundrum, this study utilises CAS theory as the frame of reference. The validity of CAS as the theoretical lens for this enquiry consists in its intuitive applicability to the lived experience of complex social processes – such as CD – that might otherwise seem impenetrable. From a CAS perspective, social processes are posited as open systems with a large number of elements that interact in a dynamic way, evincing the attributes of non-linearity, unpredictability, emergence and adaptation through feedback. This analytical frame enables us to better understand the convergences and divergences between policy and practice within the SSA context between the

two domains of concern in this study, one being international development and the other being tertiary education. Both share a common concern about nurturing institutional capacity, though they may go about it in different ways. Applying CAS to these intersecting domains of enquiry integrates and unifies the multi-dimensional character of the subject matter: (a) the contextual factors at play in the organizational environment of international development, (b) the agent-based factors which underlie the systems and processes involved in emergent capacity development, and (c) the implementation modalities and mechanisms for delivery of programmes aimed at capacity strengthening.

Figure 1: Focus of Study



An aspect of the intellectual challenge of this study, and of its contribution to knowledge, is the trans-disciplinary nature of the subject matter. I share with Darbellay (2015) and others the belief that productive and valuable research is often situated in the interstices between traditional disciplinary boundaries, and that there is an increasing interest in research endeavours which are inter- and trans-disciplinary (ITD) in their scope: this is attested to by the fact that ITD now features routinely on the research agendas of reputable international agencies which promote and fund research, including the European Research Council (ERC). Darbellay further observes that the higher level of academic productivity in ITD ‘also reflects a growing awareness of the multi-dimensional complexity of research contexts and objects and, hence also, of societal issues that require the greater synergization of institutionalized disciplinary skills’ (Darbellay 2015:164).

Why the subject matter merits enquiry.

Capacity deficits are a recurrent feature of myriad projects and programmes across the international development spectrum, ranging from health, education, water and sanitation, to

public administration, governance and improved systems of basic service delivery.¹ Issues of capacity building or CD (the distinction between the two will be examined later) seem perennially to be at the heart of general development discourse. Strengthening capacity has been a touchstone of evolving efforts and initiatives in the higher education sub-sector of international development assistance over the past four decades. Yet despite their ubiquitous use in the arena of international development, these concepts are seldom explicated.

A schema of the conceptual terrain to be covered in the study of AFHECIs, and some key themes associated with this phenomenon, is presented in Figure 2 below. The two organisations referred to in the Figure below – HEDCO and PSC / IAPRCB – are the subjects of detailed case studies that feature in Chapter 7.

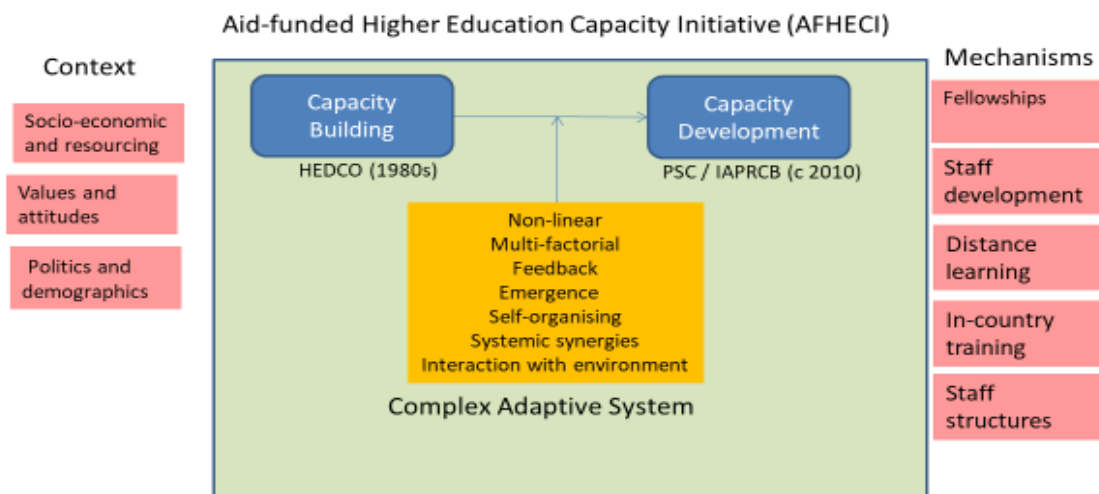


Figure 2: A Framework for AFHECI-facilitated Capacity Development as a Complex Adaptive System

Although the respective realms of higher education and international development are replete with literature, policy papers and evaluation reports, the interface between them (in other words, what is construed in this study as CD, as portrayed in Figure 2 above) has nevertheless been under-researched. The World Bank has observed that ‘capacity building has not developed as a well-defined area of development practice with an established body of knowledge about what works in meeting different needs under different country and sector conditions’ (World Bank 2005: viii). This was subsequently echoed by an analyst in the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), who though strongly convinced of the centrality of capacity to development discourse, conceded that:

¹ The World Bank has estimated that each year aid donors spend more than \$20 billion on products and activities designed to enhance the capacity of developing countries to make and carry out development plans. (Otoo et. al. 2009:1).

...the subject of capacity, as a body of knowledge subject, has a weak intellectual standing in the wider development world. It comes with no accepted and tested body of theory that people can use with any confidence. (Morgan 2006:4).

One of the motivations for the present study is to help fill this acknowledged gap. Another motivation is a perplexing fluctuation (revealed in Chapter 3) concerning the status and relative priority accorded to aid to HE and research, within the broader framework of evolving policy and practice in international development assistance, both over time and across different donor organisations (bilateral and multilateral). Ireland is a particular case in point: over more than three decades past, official thinking has ebbed and flowed on the extent to which HE and research merit inclusion in Ireland's overseas development assistance (ODA). In that time, Ireland has experimented with different institutional structures for assisting higher education as a stimulus for development: (i) Higher Education for Development Cooperation (HEDCO) which was active between 1980 and the late 1990s, and (ii) the more recent Programme of Strategic Cooperation (PSC) between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes 2007-11. These two interventions were separated by an interval of almost twenty years. This circumstance invites some comparative study of their different modalities (see Chapter 7 – Case Studies), in an attempt to discern the transfer of learning (if any) between the two, and the shifts in substance and emphasis that have occurred in that time.

Before proceeding further, it is appropriate to clarify one point. The acronym which has been coined for this study – AFHECIs – is used to encompass both international development policies and programmes centred on HEIs on the one hand, and those focusing on the use of research for development on the other, unless otherwise specified in the text. This is because the two overlap so frequently (as indeed was the case with the above-mentioned PSC). However it is acknowledged that they are not synonymous: on the one hand, programmes involving higher education institutions can focus on university reform or capacity building for teaching and not necessarily on the production and dissemination of knowledge for development; on the other hand, programmes supporting development-related research may not necessarily involve higher education institutions (HEIs)- there are many types of organization apart from HEIs that are so engaged, such as international research centres and networks, civil society organizations, and think tanks.

Research Contribution.

The study is distinctive, in that it was stimulated by, and is infused with, reflective practice on the nexus between higher education and development. In blending reflective practice with a strong theoretical and critical realist perspective, this study generates a four-fold contribution:

- a) An integrative, whole-of-system and praxis-oriented understanding of the dynamics - over thirty years past - of the phenomenon of AFHECIs in SSA, as seen through the revealing lens of CAS thinking (with its constitutive attributes of emergence, non-linearity, feedback, and self-organizing adaptation). This analysis resolves the long-running ‘ends -v- means’ tension in which the discourse on capacity development has long been mired.
- b) Retrospective critique of donor engagement with higher-level capacity development programming from 1979/80 to date, with particular reference to Ireland, based on a combination of authoritative testimonies and previously unpublished archival case study material of two Irish-funded AFHECI framework initiatives in which I served as an employee (one at an early phase, and one at a late phase of that time-span).
- c) Evidence that far-reaching policy decisions in relation to AFHECIs have in the past been heavily influenced by higher-level lurches in donor proclivity regarding aid priorities and modalities, rather than the deliberative evidence-based policy-making which donor agencies ostensibly espouse. Associated with this inclination was a residual ‘modernization theory’ bias in Irish Aid (IA) in the 1990s, whereby earlier policy and practice in relation to AFHECIs came to be disparaged, in a manner reminiscent of ‘Whig history’².
- d) With a view to contributing to improved policy and practice for future AFHECIs, the study adduces strong evidence that commonly-used monitoring and evaluation instruments derived from short-run results-based management are only minimally applicable to AFHECI-type interventions; rather, an inter-generational time frame is needed to discern sustained institutional capacity development outcomes.

Drawing on the conceptualizations of what constitutes a valid research contribution of Whetten (1989) and Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007), the table below summarizes the contribution made by this study, alongside some key foundational elements.

² Whig history is defined as “an approach to the past that makes its meaning and its lessons subservient to the demands of the present and to the present’s reigning idea of what constitutes ‘progress.’... Such history sought to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain.... and paved over the ambiguous outcomes and inconclusive experiments that are the soul and substance of life as lived and remembered” (McClay 2011:48).

Table 1: Added Value Contribution of this study

	Supported	Developed	New
Theory (theoretical knowledge)	<p>Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project outcomes transcend ‘cause and effect’ linearity. • Adaptive to emergent conditions. • Integrative and multi-disciplinary view of social reality. • Organisations and structures are multi-dimensional 	<p>CAS has been applied to public administration and management (Rhodes, Murphy et al. 2011, Teisman, Klijn 2008; Land, Hauck et al. 2009).</p> <p>CAS has also begun to feature in capacity development work (Land, Hauck et al. 2009).</p>	<p>Results based management and logical framework analysis are minimally applicable in assessing institutional capacity development (though instrumental value is acknowledged). CAS approach more conducive to ‘whole of systems’ contextualisation.</p>
Empirical evidence	<p>CAS implies wide-angle context analysis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment (endogenous and exogenous) • Agents and stakeholder interests • Process-related factors including power relations. <p>CAS is also outcome-focused</p>	<p>Looking for evidence of gaps between governing intent and outcomes post-implementation e.g. (Rhodes, Murphy et al. 2011).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed modalities of aid architecture profoundly affected support for AFHECIs. • Donor priority setting is short-circuited by ‘groupthink’ e.g. re scholarship funding. • Changes of personnel (funders, host institutions) affects policy dynamic. • Inter-generational time frame needed to discern CD outcomes.
Method	<p>Predominantly inductive methodology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented case studies. • Stakeholder testimonies • Ethnographic observation. 	<p>Participatory testimonies. Thematic analysis Documentary evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 x pilot ‘scoping’ interviews • 26 x substantive key informant interviews spanning three distinct agentic constituencies • Archival Case study material from author’s direct experience.
Knowledge of practice	<p>Considered to be a pre-requisite</p>	<p>Substantial</p>	<p>30+ years worth of ‘reflective practitioner’ knowledge of CD project operations of different donor agencies</p>

Adapted from Whetten (1989) and Colquitt, Zapata-Phelan (2007).

Irish Aid

Frequent mention is made in this thesis of IA, the Irish Government's programme of ODA to less developed countries, the agency which was the principal funding source of the two case-study organisations discussed in detail in Chapter 7, and referred to extensively throughout. The genesis and culture of that organ of the Irish State impinges considerably on the discussion of the evidence and findings of the study, and for this reason, a short profile of IA is presented here.

The Irish Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs, instituted a programme of ODA upon Ireland's accession to the (then) European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. Until then, ODA consisted only of Ireland's mandatory contributions to multilateral organisations, such as the United Nations (UN) development agencies.³ In April 1973, in what was unprecedented initiative, Garret Fitzgerald TD (then Minister for Foreign Affairs) called all Irish ambassadors serving overseas to a consultation in Dublin, to engage in a wide-ranging review of priorities (Murphy 2012). Although the main business of this gathering consisted in Ireland-EEC relations and the conflict in Northern Ireland, he made it clear during the proceedings that Ireland was not meeting its obligations in regard to ODA, a situation he was determined would be rectified (FitzGerald 1991). This was the first time that ODA had been given such prominence among the policy objectives of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) (Murphy 2012:24). In part, this initiative was designed to bring Ireland into line with other member states of the EEC, and with the OECD. It was motivated also by the growing strength of reputable non-government development organisations (NGOs) based in Ireland, in continuity with the country's missionary tradition (Smilie 1999:129), as well as by Fitzgerald's own conviction, and that of other influential figures advocating in a similar vein - T K Whittaker, Tom Barrington and Professor George Dawson (Murphy 2012).

The 'in principle' policy announcement was followed by implementation measures: in 1974 the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO) was established, to manage a national overseas volunteering initiative, and in 1976 a Bilateral Aid programme (BAP) came into being, staffed by a new dedicated civil service unit known as the Development Cooperation Division of the DFA. The latter was to enable the Government to begin to finance programmes of technical assistance, drawing on appropriate Irish expertise in response to requests from Governments and institutions, mainly in the four chosen 'priority' countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Lesotho, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia). The selection of these concentration countries was one of the parameters adopted at an early stage to guide the incipient BAP: the other parameter was that preference would be given to projects which would address identified skills deficits in the

³ For example, in the fiscal year 1973/4, Ireland's ODA allocation amounted to IRE1.5 million (source: (Murphy 2012)).

priority countries, requiring the expertise of appropriately-skilled personnel (this being the area in which Ireland seemed to have a comparative advantage), as distinct from large infrastructural and capital-intensive projects (Murphy 2012).

Murphy, a former head of Irish Aid now retired, recalls that ‘there was heavy reliance on technical assistance from Ireland...and many projects were linked closely to the availability of Irish expertise’ (Murphy 2012:68). Some of these personnel served on generous remuneration packages (HEDCO assignees being among these), and others on more modest quasi-volunteer terms contracted by APSO (Agency for Personal Service Overseas), by NGOs and by missionary entities. This fact alone gave rise to anomalies and jealousies in specific situations where the two sets of personnel worked contiguously. Murphy further recalls: ‘the administrative side of looking after large numbers of expatriate technical staff and their families took up a great deal of the Head of Mission’s attention.’ (Murphy 2012:155).

At its height in the early 1990s, Irish Aid had over 70 long-term technical assistants (TAs) contracted on professional terms (Murphy 2012:161), while APSO had approximately 690 volunteers on placement⁴. By the year 2000 hardly any TAs remained (Murphy 2012). By 2003 APSO had ceased to exist, after a 30-year span,⁵ and HEDCO as an implementing agency for AFHECIs, was already moribund (as chronicled in Chapter 6).

Limitations of the research

The limitations of this study, which to some extent impinge on the generalizability of its conclusions, are partly geographical, partly linguistic, and partly temporal.

One geographical limitation consists in the fact that Ireland, which receives extensive attention in this thesis, is one of thirty donor countries affiliated to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. Within this group of nations there is great diversity, and it would be difficult to sustain a claim that any one is typical or representative (and I do not advance any such claim for the case of Ireland). The choice of focal country is based rather on (a) the fact that IA was the principal donor for the two case study organisations which generated rich and illuminating evidence (as will be seen in Chapter 7), and (b) the fact that IA has hitherto been relatively under-researched.

Another geographical limitation is that the outward focus is on SSA, with the consequence that other beneficiary regions of ODA (and of AFHECIs) such as Central and South America and South and East Asia are not included in the narrative. However to have included all

⁴ Irish Aid: Consolidation and Growth Strategy Plan. July 1993; p.32

⁵ APSO’s ‘integration’ into Irish Aid came into effect on 31.12.2003 on foot of a recommendation of a Review of the Development Cooperation Programme of the Government of Ireland published February 2002 (p. 90).

disadvantaged regions would have made the study unwieldy; even the SSA region itself, comprising 51 countries ⁶, encompasses such tremendous diversity as to render generalization difficult and to warrant a strong caveat:

Diversity in function, quality, orientation, financial support, and other factors are evident in Africa; national circumstances and realities vary significantly (Teferra, Altbach 2004: 22)

The geographical limitation is compounded by a significant linguistic limitation: almost all of the literature survey and evidential matter in this thesis relates to Anglophone Africa, and reference to Francophone and Lusophone countries is scant. These distinct linguistic traditions of SSA are a product of the colonial period, as also are their diverging systems and models of education, including HE. Divergences of structure, organisation and ethos in the university systems across the three language groupings would be a fascinating topic of future research, but would require a multi-lingual proficiency, broader network of contacts and considerably greater material resources than I was in a position to muster.

The temporal limitation relates to the dynamically changing environment of African HE, as well as in the donor discourse and analysis thereof. In the span of time taken to research and compose this thesis, numerous research reports, monographs, evaluations and other publications have appeared and continue to do so, with the result that this contribution may itself be overtaken within a short time. The same could be said of most research theses.

Finally, the issue of my positionality vis-à-vis the research subject-matter merits explanation, in recognition of the possibility of author bias arising (see also Chapter 5). My inclination to undertake this study derived from intellectual curiosity, born of a 30-year-long career in development project management and evaluation, approximately half of which was focused on higher education and training interventions in SSA. This professional background confers a privileged opportunity to bring a reflective practitioner's critique to bear on the nexus between higher education capacity strengthening on the one hand, and development policy and practice on the other. I therefore acknowledge from the outset that I have been a protagonist in this arena, and more specifically that I have worked at different times in both of the case study organisations featuring later in this thesis. I consider that this is more a strength than a weakness, in that this experience equips me to draw upon a deep reservoir of embedded knowledge, and has afforded me access to a range of reputable and trusted key informants in Ireland, mainland Europe and Africa. Even so, in order to mitigate any accusations of personal bias, a solid epistemological anchor-point is articulated in the Chapters 2 (Theoretical Underpinnings) and 5 (Methodology). This informed the subsequent evidence-gathering and analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, all within an over-arching desire to 'share a commitment to

⁶ Source: Library of Congress: see www.loc.gov/rr/amed/guide/afr-countrylist.html

theoretically and conceptually formulating an engagement with the world that produces vivid descriptive accounts of human experience' (Preissle 2011: 688). I return to this issue of positionality at the end of Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 5.

Structure of the Study

This dissertation is organised into eight chapters, including this one.

In Chapter 2, my philosophical standpoint in relation to this study is explicated. A robust theoretical positioning is presented with which the researcher can authentically identify, and upon which the substantive research can subsequently build. This provides the point of reference from which relevant literatures are considered, empirical evidence is interpreted and analysed, and lines of argument developed, thus forming a 'red thread' carrying through to the final conclusions of the study (contained in Chapter 8).

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, a broadly traditional literature review is presented, featuring a blend of both 'critical' and 'scoping' approaches. Chapter 3 is devoted to a condensed treatment of the main strands of international development theory and the considerations (both normative and pragmatic) which underlie official development assistance programmes. This leads on to a precis of authoritative commentary on higher education in SSA, culminating in a synoptic up-to-date review of numerous studies focusing on the nexus between higher education and development.

The following Chapter 4 is devoted to the emergence of CD as a concept; here, the constitutive characteristics of 'capacity', 'capacity building' and 'capacity development' are investigated in detail. The literature on complexity theory and CAS is then examined, and moves on to review recent literature on the application of this theoretical framework to development programming in general and CD in particular. The Chapter concludes with an important conceptual framework for CD in a public management setting, which provides the springboard for Chapter 5's account of the development of the research design, rationale and strategy.

Chapter 5 sets out the complementary sources of evidence-generation that were pursued, and the instruments and tools used in the analysing that evidence. It describes the impressive array of high-calibre expertise that was harnessed and distilled into developing the conclusions that are presented towards the end of the research thesis. Recalling the CD literature which had postulated five core elements as constitutive of generic CD processes (the '5Cs' model), the chapter chronicles the progression of observation, thought and analysis whereby the initial 5-point generic framework underwent a mutation into a more differentiated and expanded eleven-point framework when translated into the specific domain of AFHECIs.

Chapter 6 extracts the detailed Findings emanating from the key informant interviews and analysis of the interview transcripts), with reference to this eleven-point analytical framework. Using this same framework, Chapter 7 proceeds to interpret the relevant archival evidence relating to two case study organisations in Ireland – HEDCO and the IAP (both now defunct). Each organisation was an AFHECI in its own right and shared a similar mission, though they existed in different timespans. The ensuing evidence reveals much about the dynamic at work in their being constituted, their functioning and ultimately becoming extinct, challenging certain orthodoxies which had held sway in the institutional memory of Irish Aid and other donors.

Chapter 8 begins with a brief recapitulation of the theoretical prism (CAS theory) and methodology of the study. A synthesis of the findings against the eleven attributes is then presented and interpreted against the original research questions posed at the outset of the study, culminating in two sets of conclusions arising from the research:

In crafting this study, there were frequent junctures at which a trade-off between breadth and depth presented a dilemma. Much of the subject matter is intangible, and the trans-disciplinary nature of the study is such that it may seem ambitiously broad in exploring the interlocking attributes of that specialised sub-stratum of development policy and practice which AFHECIs constitute. However on closer scrutiny, breadth and depth are both present in a balanced way in the thesis: breadth is a feature of the Literature Review and Conclusions chapters, and these are complemented by a depth of analysis and reflection to be found in the two Findings chapters.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

This Chapter sets out to build a cogent philosophical foundation to underpin the remainder of the dissertation. Recalling the thematic ‘triad’ of Figure 1, comprising (a) Development Studies, (b) Higher Education in Africa and capacity issues related thereto, and (c) Complex Adaptive Systems thinking, the Chapter begins by defining these concepts, in order to provide conceptual clarity. This is followed by an exploration of the contrasting influences exerted by the positivist vis-à-vis phenomenological perspectives on development theory, and proceeds to justify the selection of an epistemological position which marches well with the subject matter under investigation. Such an approach accords with Nederveen Pieterse’s (2009) view of theory as a distillation of reflections on practice into conceptual language and as

...the critique, revision and summing up of past knowledge in the form of general propositions, the fusion of diverse views and partial knowledges in general frameworks of explanation. (Nederveen Pieterse 2009:2).

Development Studies

The domain of Development Studies (DS) and associated theory constitute an important backdrop to this study. DS is characterised by a great diversity of perspectives and views on the world, knowledge and research processes. Although the antecedents of DS can be traced back to eighteenth-century anthropology, the era of decolonisation (1950s and 1960s) effectively saw the emergence of DS, largely as an offshoot of economics. Quintessentially, DS is a trans-disciplinary domain, which has grown from its initial post-War nucleus in economics, to progressively encompass aspects of politics, agriculture, anthropology, sociology, ecology, public administration, and organisational analysis.

Development theory concerns itself with complex problems at the nature–society interface, and thus has to deal with issues in which phenomena of different ontological status are interlinked. Consensus regarding the nature and scope of development as a domain of analysis and discourse is elusive. This paper takes the following definition of the term ‘development studies’ as a useful starting point:

...a problem–oriented, applied and interdisciplinary field, analysing social change in a world context, but with due consideration to the specificity of different societies in terms of history, ecology, culture, etc. (Hettne, 1990: 4).

The development process has increasingly come to be accepted as multi-dimensional, but such was not always the case. For the early generation of development theorists, ‘development’ was equated with economic growth, evincing a decidedly positivist stance, e.g. the Harrod-Domar

growth model, Rostow's (1960) 'stages of growth' theory ⁷, and human capital theory (Harriss 2002, Kanbur 2002, Loxley 2004). Such economic views of development were challenged as reductionist by the emerging dependency school of the late 1960s and 1970s (Amin 1970; Frank 1967; Cardoso, Faletto 1979), and later by the structuralist and human capabilities approaches (Sen 1999). Further discussion of these schools of development thought appears in Chapter 3; suffice it to note here that complexity has increasingly come to the fore as development discourse has evolved, recognising the interplay of myriad factors as critical to the development process, including macro-economic forces, historical legacy, power relations between socio-economic groups, governance, human rights and political culture, climate change and conflict.

A defining and consensual characteristic of DS is its trans-disciplinary character. By crossing conventional disciplinary boundaries, the analysis and understanding of processes of development and change can be expanded and enriched. On the other hand, because different disciplines may privilege particular epistemological positions, it is all the more desirable for an inter- or trans-disciplinary study such as this one to elucidate the epistemological stance underlying its analysis.

Epistemological Issues arising in Development Discourse

Much of the discourse of the contemporary social sciences (of which development theory forms part) proceeds from the 'constructivist' viewpoint of knowledge as being socially produced. In the realm of DS, epistemological questions thereby arise, such as: What constitutes 'evidence' or 'knowledge'? How should the imperfect observability and measurability of the subject matter be addressed? Where lies the distinction between 'evidence', the interpretation of 'evidence' (techniques and methods), and inferring causality? According to Hammersley (2002), two significant challenges arise in seeking to arrive at 'conclusive knowledge about causal patterns in social phenomena', whilst adhering strictly to the 'covering law', or Deductive-Nomological (DN) model ⁸. These challenges are (a) 'the measurement of social phenomena' and (b) 'the validation of causal relationships amongst those phenomena (Hammersley 2002: 19).

Development discourse can be considered as a field of inquiry which has a focus on processes of social, political and economic change taking place primarily – although not exclusively – in countries of what is loosely termed 'the Global South', in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Moreover, much of development discourse tends to be imbued by an aspirational, emancipatory desire to combat world poverty and to promote distributional equity at global level, enabling the

⁷ Devised by Sir Roy Harrod in 1939 and Evsey Domar in 1946, this is a growth model whereby the rate of economic growth in an economy is dependent on the level of saving and the capital output ratio.

⁸ According to the DN model, the occurrence of an event should be derivable from one or more general laws and a statement of initial conditions; these are roughly the set of circumstances or conditions that constitute the cause of the event to be explained.

‘bottom billion’ of the world’s population (to borrow a phrase from Collier, 2007) to achieve better quality of life. As observed by Sumner (2006):

[Development studies] has a normative point of departure – to improve people's lives – thus a shared commitment to the practical or policy relevance of teaching and research. There is also a growing interest among DS teachers and thinkers in the importance of addressing local and global inequality, particularly gender inequality. (Sumner 2006: 645)

The value-laden overtones of development discourse are captured by Rist (2002), when he writes about

...the dual meaning that ‘development’ assumed in any debate...the first kept up the stock belief that inspired the extension of market society and its colonial expression; while the second was more akin to religious messianism in its voluntarist enthusiasm to establish at once the ideal of a just and affluent society. (Rist 2002: 212).

Contemporary DS, as a human science, remains a field of enquiry marked by much ideological and epistemological contestation, with myriad competing influences ranging from normative rights-based approaches, to relativism and positivism. Two of DS’ recurring ‘fault lines’ have been (i) the palpable tensions between economics and other social sciences (Sumner, Tribe 2008: 753), and (ii) the tension between positivism and relativism. The core issue here is the extent to which one can assert a science of human or social behaviour of a kind that models itself even remotely on the natural scientific method as represented in the DN model. From a strictly positivist viewpoint, normative conceptualisation of development studies (as offered by Sumner above) stray into the realm of the unknowable. Positivists would contend that such subject-matter is not amenable to empirical scientific method: in other words, not measurable or determinable to a confidence level sufficient to sustain claims as to validity, veracity and predictability. For the positivist, ‘real’ entities and phenomena exist independently of human agency, and exert causal force in a mechanistic fashion; the purpose of the creation of closed systems in experiments is to isolate and identify these entities and phenomena.

Relativism also has a strong influence in the interpretation and understanding of development through discourses such as the post-development critique, and in the rise of participatory approaches to research in DS, e.g. Chambers 1997 on participatory approaches, Escobar 1995 on post-development, and Narayan et al., 2002 on participatory poverty assessment⁹.

At another level, DS has evolved in such a way as to accord ever-greater centrality to human agency as a core concept: according to Sen (1999), ‘free and sustainable agency emerges as a major engine of development’, and goes on to elaborate as follows:

⁹ The term Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) is attributable to Lawrence Salmen (1995).

Not only is free agency itself a constitutive part of development, it also contributes to the strengthening of free agencies of other kinds. What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of peoples freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities. (Sen 1999:4).

Explanation of social realities

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that DS has not been immune from the wider tensions in intellectual discourse between positivist and phenomenological modes of understanding.

The notion of knowledge as justified true belief, espoused by philosophers of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Enlightenment, underpins most Western scientific thought, but it has been and remains far from unchallenged, both within and beyond Western tradition. (Powell 2006:520).

The disjuncture between the natural scientific method of positivism on the one hand and the understanding of unpredictable and non-linear patterns of social phenomena on the other had already become evident in the late 19th century to Max Weber and to William Dilthey - both influential figures in what was later to become the phenomenology school (Makkreel 1987). The latter was best known for the way he distinguished between the natural and human sciences: whereas the primary task of the natural sciences is to arrive at law-based explanations, the core task of the human sciences is the understanding of human and historical life. For his part, Weber had argued that historical and cultural knowledge is categorically distinct from natural scientific knowledge; consequently, our attitude to other people is fundamentally distinct and even opposed to the scientific attitude. We seek to understand their actions not by explaining them in terms of external causes, but 'from within', by an act of rational self-projection called '*Verstehen*' (using ideal-type concepts to understand the meaning people attach to their action).

This multi-layered understanding of social reality translates well into the domain of development theory. A salient insight into the nature and transmission of knowledge in the development studies domain is to be found in Powell's notion of the reflexive and dynamic properties of knowledge:

If we are interested in applying knowledge to development problems, our concept of knowledge needs to extend to the user's successful receipt and understanding of such knowledge. Failure to achieve this means that we may have created knowledge, but we have not created the conditions in which it

can be applied. Successful communication and application of knowledge therefore depend as much on the recipient as on the provider. (ibid.: 520).

The above quotation points towards the influence of phenomenology in interpretivist approaches prominent in contemporary social science. In contra-distinction to the positivist stance that the meaning of an object is by definition 'objective' and is the same for any and all observers irrespective of their perspective and orientation, phenomenology contends that an object is context-dependent, and is constituted as meaningful (i.e. 'intended') by a particular intending subject from a particular orientation and from a particular perspectival viewing point. In contending that social phenomena (social practices, institutions, behaviour) are intrinsically meaningful and that their meanings are constituted by the meanings that social actors give to them, the phenomenological school countered the post-Enlightenment orthodoxy of scientific empiricism and mechanistic causality as the primary mode of explanation of reality. Its founding proponents (Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl) held that the meaning of an object cannot be separated from the meaning-bestowing act of intending on the part of a constituting subject; objects had 'essences' that are constituted intentionally by human consciousness and the immediate directly-experienced 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*): the subject and the object are both part of the same phenomenon - the Noetic (subjective) and the Noematic (objective). In a somewhat similar vein, Schutz wrote of the 'postulate of subjective interpretation', whereby social scientific accounts must treat social actors as conscious beings whose activities have meaning for them and others (Schutz 1967). Moreover, the social reality in which action takes place is the outcome of the interpretations made and courses of action undertaken by social actors. The act of analysing a phenomenon influences the characteristics of the phenomenon studied (Merton 1949).

Phenomenology and emerging interpretivist social analysis

The influences of the phenomenology school are discernible in those tendencies of development theory which fundamentally challenge structural, mechanistic or normative assumptions about a society's progression towards some putative 'developed' status, in conformity with a linear and universally applicable model. Rather, the now dominant interpretivist perspective in DS would consider that

...meaning and use depend on the context in which [knowledge] is presented, and on the skills and needs of its recipients. Along with much other 'knowledge', there would be distinct gender differentiation in the way it is received, understood, and acted upon. (Powell 2006:520).

We have fallen into the temptation of designing interventions based on at least two misguided assumptions: that we can control and predict another's development; and that organisations behave logically, like machines. (James 2014).

Taking a wide-angle view over the evolution of development theory in the half-century or so of its existence, three shifts in epistemological positioning can be discerned, which together elevate the phenomenological stance as the pre-dominant perspective of DS; the shifts are illustrative of what has been occurring in the wider social sciences field (Nederveen Pieterse 2009):

- the shift from structuralist perspectives to more institutional and agency-oriented views: earlier understandings of social realities as being determined and patterned by macro-structures and forces were gradually supplanted by the account of social realities as being largely constructed, e.g. Roy Bhaskar’s position that ‘society is mediated through intentional human agency’ (Bhaskar 1979:102).
- the shift from deterministic to interpretivist views of reality (ibid);
- the shift from materialist and reductionist views to multi-dimensional and holistic views, as reflected in the work of – among others – David Bohm (Bohm 1980).

Consistent with an interpretivist perspective and inspired by Sen’s analysis on human capabilities (Sen 1985), the human development paradigm has for the past three decades exerted a salient influence on development discourse; this is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Other anti-positivist perspectives

Phenomenology is not the sole philosophical perspective to offer a countervailing view of social science to that of positivism. Some cognate philosophical orientations which also contributed to these modal shifts towards constructivism and interpretivism included existentialism (with its emphasis on individual responsibility), hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology (in anthropology), new institutional economics and rational choice (in economics), and feminism. Elements of post-modernism can be seen as later expressions of this re-orientation. In her commentary on post-modernism, Rosenau asserts that:

Post-modernism's appeal is broad and varied, difficult to identify. Part of its magic is that its open-endedness and lack of specific definition is at once attractive to the affluent, the desperate, and the disillusioned of this world. (Rosenau 1992: 11).

It comes as no surprise therefore that leanings towards post-modernism are discernible in the ‘post-development’ critique by writers such as Arturo Escobar (1995) and Gustavo Esteva (1992) among others. In broad terms, their view of DS, which echoes the notions of knowledge and power of Michel Foucault (1982), is one of an imperialist discourse which frames, shapes, and controls the ‘Third World’, seeking to impose upon it a Western view of ‘development’ as modernity.

Another philosophical perspective – one that would seem to march well with development discourse and which for that reason I would favour – is **critical realism**. This conceives of social science as socially situated, but not socially determined, and which maintains the possibility for objective critique to motivate social change, with the ultimate end being a promotion of human freedom (Bhaskar 1975, 1979). It posits a realist ontology, i.e. the existence of a world independent of researcher’s knowledge of it; at the same time, it suggests a fallibilist epistemology in which the researchers’ knowledge of the world is socially produced. Critical realism can be said to represent the social science counterpart to ‘transcendental realism’ which was Bhaskar’s proposal for a proper philosophical foundation to natural scientific theorising, insisting that ‘meanings cannot be measured, only understood’ (Bhaskar 1979: 59).

Critical Realism invites an expanded concern with history, agency, and culture as contributory impulses to social reality. Three levels of reality are posited: (i) the Real (generative mechanisms, the ways things act in enabling or preventing change; (ii) the Actual (the domain in which events take place, some of which are experienced, others not); (iii) the Empirical (the domain of events experienced through direct or indirect observation). Finally, critical realism conceives of a world composed, in part, of complex things (including systems, complexly structured situations, and institutions with powers and capacities to act in certain ways, even if those capacities are not always realized. This emphasis in critical realism to the recognition of complexity leads us back to the title of the thesis, and to the theoretical lens through which I have chosen to investigate donor-supported capacity development initiatives in African higher education, namely complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory.

Capacity as a concept within development discourse

Human capacity is ever-present as an indispensable ingredient of development process(es): questions, for example, regarding the role of human agency; cultural and historical context; uneven power relations which potentially distort opportunities for capacities – once acquired – to translate into operational effect; pre-conditions (if any) that might constitute the enabling environment for capacity development to be sustained; the extent to which ‘success’ can be reliably gauged. In practice, the concept usually manifests itself in term of ‘capacity deficits’ in organisations, institutions and systems in the global South, and initiatives to remediate these deficits are a recurrent feature of myriad projects and programmes across the international development spectrum, ranging from health, education, water and sanitation, to public administration, governance and improved systems of basic service delivery.

Most of the ideas about capacity have come out of a wide range of North American and European ways of thinking including performance management, organizational development,

political economy, institutional economics and sociology. In addition, thinking about capacity has also been influenced by ideas to do with participation, public sector reform, civil society and empowerment. In spite of the many epistemological doubts and insecurities, it is undeniable that 'capacity' now occupies a central position in the discourse of development. For Eade (1997), capacity building constituted 'an approach to development, not something separate from it' (Eade 1997: 24). The Paris Declaration, and its further elaboration, the Accra Agenda for Action recognised capacity development as a fundamental ingredient of the development process.¹⁰ The World Bank labelled it the 'missing link in sustainable development' (World Bank, 2005: viii), while Fukayama (2004) called for it to be the overall goal of development cooperation. Kaplan rather insightfully observes:

The first requirement for an organisation with capacity, the 'prerequisite' on which all other capacity is built, is the development of a conceptual framework which reflects the organisation's understanding of the world. This is a coherent frame of reference, a set of concepts which allows the organisation to make sense of the world around it, to locate itself within that world, and to make decisions in relation to it. (Kaplan 2000: 520).

Project Management as applied to the development sector

Just as development studies has evolved as a trans--disciplinary domain of inquiry, so also have development project and programme design and management. Models, conventions and practices have been absorbed into the domain of development-centred project and programme management from a variety of disciplines, including civil engineering, business and management (including organizational behaviour), economics and political science, and public administration. Project management came to be understood as 'a set of principles, methods, tools and techniques for the effective management of objective-oriented work in the context of a specific and unique organizational environment' (Van der Waldt, Knipe 1998: 13).

The dominant disciplinary imprint of development praxis has changed over time, depending on the nature of interventions, and on the point in time - over the past half-century - at which the interventions were conceived and implemented. For example, some of the earliest and largest externally-funded interventions in post-independence Africa were capital projects, intended to create or improve physical infrastructure; examples were the Upper Volta Scheme in Ghana (mid-1960s), the Kariba Dam in Zambia / Zimbabwe (late 1960s) and Kenya's Kiambere Dam scheme and associated Bura Irrigation project (1980s). Naturally, such projects were guided mainly by the principles, methods, tools and techniques of civil engineering. However as the thrust of development programming moved more towards support for social sector interventions in health, welfare and income support, as well as education and training for what was termed

¹⁰ Accra Agenda for Action. 4th September 2008, available at: www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45827311.pdf; accessed 31.05.2017.

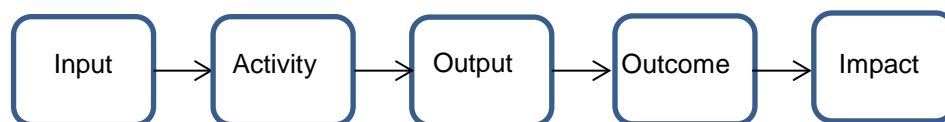
‘human capital formation’, the social and management sciences began to be reflected more in the conceptual frameworks and language used by policy analysts and by development practitioners.

Given that the project management function is considered later in this study, it is appropriate to discuss briefly how it may impinge on the theoretical positioning. A useful prompt for this inquiry is the observation by Morgan (2006):

Historically in [the domain of] development cooperation, policy issues - the big ‘what’ and ‘why’ issues - have been accorded more importance than their lacklustre counterparts that deal with management or implementation. The usual question is the ‘capacity for what’ as compared with the ‘capacity of what’. (Morgan 2006: 17).

Historically, the blended influence of engineering and management science manifested itself in the extensive adoption by major donors of project planning methodologies, in particular Project Cycle Management, Results Based Management (RBM) and associated methodological tools, Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) and Results Framework. Supposedly, these bring ‘logic’, clarity and accountability into the planning, monitoring and evaluation of a project, with clearly stated goals and targets at all levels and a set of objectively verifiable indicators that will assess progress towards these. The basic logic of thinking consisted in an ‘inputs-outputs-outcomes-impact’ framework that created a sense of linear progression and escalating importance as the eye moves from left to right along the proverbial flow-chart.

Figure 3: Results Chain representation



The results chain paradigm implicitly makes formidable epistemological claims in relation to causality. The associated tools (such as Logframe and Results Framework) can thus acquire an aura of ‘scientific’ cogency which tends to disguise their epistemological provenance; the following example from a reputable good practice manual illustrates this linearity of thought:

The results chain establishes the causal logic from the initiation of the project, beginning with resources available, to the end, looking at (the attainment or otherwise of) long-term goals. (Gertler, Martinez et al. 2011: 24).

In contrast, Smilie (2001) deflates the epistemological claims implicit in the results chain logic model and other ‘scientific’ project management tools:

The generic project form [...] is similar to a production engineering model. It is grounded in the idea that all inputs must be foreseen, and that every input should lead to a measurable outcome. The 'logical' framework analysis is based on this hypothesis, and its kissing cousin – results-based management – is the same. It is basically about doing and measuring things, but avoids the importance of a process...Real achievements cannot be realized by avoiding the importance of time and the complexities of the great forces arrayed against change: culture, politics, money, markets, technologies, attitudes, vested interests. In real development projects, achieving the efficiencies of the engineering model will always be a fantasy. (Smilie 2001, quoted in Earle 2003:1)

The 'linear causality' models are paralleled in the development domain by persistent adherence over many years to quantifiable performance indicators and 'results chain' protocols of project management, but the intended outcomes of such efforts have proven to be elusive (as is further discussed in Chapter 6).

Complexity and Complex Adaptive Systems – an apt theoretical lens

In an outworking of both of complexity and systems theories, Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) thinking tends to seek integrative and multi-disciplinary understanding of social reality, rather than one grounded in a tradition of analytical positivism or empiricism. The value of CAS lies in its ability to explain how and why human systems unfold as they do. Its analytical approach tends to view capacity as emerging from multiple processes that are complex and unpredictable, and that evince non-linearity, emergence and self-organization.

Those who subscribe to CAS thinking take the view that organisations and networks – whether simple or complex - are more analogous to living organisms than they are to machines, in so far as they sustain themselves through constant adaptation in the face of new circumstances. This process of change is only partially open to explicit human direction and, importantly, cannot be predetermined (Land, Hauck et al. 2009). CAS thinking thus focuses on processes, interrelationships, emergence and self-organisation rather than on the reductionism of human development to the equivalent of the input-output sequence more characteristic of commodity production or machine bureaucracy.

These and other analyses of CAS are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

There are three main reasons for choosing CAS as the main theoretical prism of this study:

- 1) CAS, although originating in the biological science field, has gained increasing currency in the social sciences in general and in the literature of public sector management in particular. It enables important insights into organizational analysis to be harnessed from both systems theory and complexity theory.

In a coherent, grounded way, complexity theory aims to connect disparate branches of knowledge, all of which are relevant for social change, but which are otherwise scattered over different areas of study and practice (Fowler 2008).

Complex adaptive systems theory suggests itself ‘for a variety of reasons, but not least because it seemed to have the potential to integrate various strands of theory rather than to erect yet another contesting and exclusive conceptual framework’ (Rhodes, Murphy et al. 2011: 130).

2) The delivery of public goods and services can exhibit characteristics of unpredictability, variability and, on occasion, chaos; neither higher education, research or development cooperation are exceptions to this observed tendency. Linear and rational analytic models of public management theory fail to adequately recognise this reality, and have relied unduly on attempts to eliminate unpredictability through increased reliance on measurable performance objectives, improved financial and human resource management techniques, and resolving principal-agent behaviour pathologies. By changing the way we look at cause-and-effect relationships, emphasising possibilities and probabilities rather than predictable results, CAS challenges many assumptions about the role of planning, detailed design and control.

From this perspective, the task of capacity development can be viewed as less analogous to machine building, and more akin to shaping and influencing processes driven by local contextual factors, including politics, and culturally defined norms, values and practices. (Land, Hauck et al. 2009: 2).

3) The CAS perspective suggests that no single factor or constituent element – incentives, leadership, financial support, trained staff, knowledge, structure – can by itself lead to the development of capacity. This implies a need to take account of a broader range of approaches when addressing capacity development, seeing the interlocking elements as part of a ‘whole-of-system’ view. Development outcomes cannot simply be engineered by the delivery of external inputs. Interventions need to be flexible and able to adapt to future, usually unforeseeable, system behaviour.

Complexity implies that there is no one solution to any problem any more than there is one discrete cause. (Dennard, Richardson et al. 2008: 12).

It is important to acknowledge, as do Land, Hauck et al. (2009), that CAS does not represent an approach for intervening: instead, the insights it offers into organisational behaviour and dynamics can help to question some of the assumptions upon which current practice is founded and can, as a result, shed light on possible ways of improving this practice. Even when one tries to support capacity development through a purposeful intervention, there will always be more powerful forces at work that impact on the way capacity emerges.

Summation – Chapter 2

The eclectic and divided nature of development theory has enabled it to draw upon and be enriched by the diverse epistemological perspectives that have been briefly reviewed above. Much of the discourse of the contemporary social sciences (of which Development Studies forms part) proceeds from the viewpoint of knowledge as socially constructed: just as perception not only reflects but shapes reality, so knowledge both reflects and constructs reality.

Within this broad frame of understanding, the perspective offered by critical realism is one which I believe offers the ‘best fit’ as an epistemological anchor-point for this research study. This is because critical realism admits of an objective social reality, in a way that resonates with my experiential knowledge with the praxis of ‘development’ and ‘capacity’, whilst at the same time recognising the multi-dimensionality and complexity of those same phenomena. Critical realism is consistent with the CAS perspective adopted in this study, which seeks to integrate various strands of theory, and which accommodates a recognition that interventions need to be flexible and able to adapt to future, usually unforeseeable, system behaviour, as is advocated by the proponents of adaptive programming (Valters, Cummings et. al., 2016). As the understanding of development in general and development capacity in particular has become more differentiated and more cognizant of complexity, so the ‘product as outcome’ perspective has tended to give way to one which recognises ‘process as outcome’. Fowler (1996) reminds us that human development results from a complex mix of non-linear processes which are largely determined by non-project factors.

Pursuing this self-declaration regarding my normative position towards this study, there are two conceptual threads deserving of mention, on which three decades of development programming engagement have led me to reflect, and to revise previously held positions. One such realisation relates to the virtual unattainability of Edmund Husserl’s ideal of pre-suppositionless detachment in one’s way of relating to objects and events (‘phenomena’) as they are perceived or understood in the human consciousness. On the contrary, I incline to the view that human agency and action in the social world are *framed* by the context in which they take place, and furthermore may effect *change* in that same context, while at the same time being potentially changed by it. So embedded are we in the constant, pervasive inter-active dialectic at play between the human dynamic of engagement in the public arena and the ambient societal, cultural and institutional context that we cannot remove ourselves from that milieu by stepping outside and invoking the mantle of a presupposition-less perspective. Arising from this emerging realisation, I have grown to recognise the cogency of an interpretivist approach, understood as the search for intersubjective meanings in lived experience: in other words, ‘ways of experiencing action in society which are expressed in the language and descriptions constitutive of institutions and practices’ (Taylor 1987:75).

The other realisation is the alluring but ultimately unsatisfactory notion (beloved of Enlightenment thought of the 17th Century and the philosophical legacy it bequeathed) that human progress moved constantly onwards and upwards. This notion predicated much of modern discourse, from Hegelian idealism's paradigm of teleology in human history, resembling an upward spiral comprising thesis, antithesis and synthesis; this in turn provided a conceptual anchor-point for the historical determinism of the Marxist philosophical tradition. A subsequent philosophical expression of this concept of inexorable progress arises in Meliorism, which to a significant extent pre-figured modern liberalism, for example in the writings of John Dewey and William James. A similar progressivist paradigm underlies Whig history. Orthodox Marxism too espoused this view of an inexorable, unilinear and deterministic account of the progressive dynamic of human history, as articulated in a 1963 Marxist-Leninist treatise cited in Larrain:

All peoples travel what is basically the same path... The development of a society proceeds through the consecutive replacement, according to definite laws, of one socio-economic formation by another. (Larrain 1986: 55).

Fundamentally, this paradigm does not satisfactorily fit the half-century of accumulated effort and investment in the human development 'project', characterised as it has been by many deviations, zig-zags, reversals and revisionism, as will be borne out in the next chapter (Chapter 3: The Discourse on International Development and Higher Education).

CHAPTER 3: THE DISCOURSE ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Reflecting the trans-disciplinary nature of the study as a whole, this Chapter presents the main streams of international development discourse (which forms the over-arching context for this thesis), the considerations both normative and pragmatic which underlie official development assistance programmes, and their relationship to the landscape of higher education in the context of post-independence sub-Saharan Africa.

Section I - Outlines of International Development discourse.

Nederveen Pieterse (2010:190) observed that ‘studying development is an undertaking that, like the horizon, recedes and changes as we approach’. International development encompasses ‘big issue’ topics and concerns such as poverty, human rights, access to essential services such as education and health, women’s empowerment and gender equity, water and sanitation, food security and nutrition, all of which are well-established themes. Over the past decade they have been joined by equally big issues - migration and trafficking, climate change adaptation, conflict (especially fragile states), disaster risk reduction and strengthening of civil society (Green 2012). With issues such as migration and climate change, the conventional North -South demarcation becomes less meaningful, as aspects of the ‘South’ become manifest in the ‘North’.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the phenomenon of development as a field of enquiry grew out of the Economics discipline post-World War II, though some earlier adumbrations can be traced to the neo-Classical school (having its origins in the classical writers on political economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Smith, Ricardo and Malthus). These had emphasised the importance of enlightened self-interest, competition and free market mechanisms as principal drivers of growth and (therefore) development, with poorer strata of society benefiting mainly by way of the ‘trickle down’ effect. This strand of thought found influential expression in the Washington Consensus of 1989, which advocated fiscal discipline, liberalization of trade and foreign direct investment, deregulation and privatization (Williamson 2004).

Development studies in the early 1950s emerged in a very specific historical context. This was pertinently defined by Myrdal (1968) as a combination of three elements: (i) decolonisation, (ii) the emergence of new indigenous elites in many developing countries with a development oriented agenda, and (iii) the increasingly pervasive polarization generated by the Cold War. This early genesis of development theory relied on what seems - from a contemporary perspective - to be rather crude notions of economic ‘backwardness’ and ‘underdevelopment’:

poor countries were posited as having been ‘poorly endowed by nature’, such as to warrant that ‘such land and minerals as they do possess must be divided among dense populations’ (Samuelson 1971). Such orthodox analysis revealed an imperfect understanding of underdevelopment, if only for the obvious reason that vast areas of the Global South (West Africa and Central Africa, parts of Central and Latin America, Indonesia) were – and are - among the most richly endowed with high value mineral resources, such that they sustained colonial exploits for centuries, but yet remain profoundly poor in terms of livelihood vulnerability of their majority populations.

Broadly speaking, three main strands of thinking in regard to economic aspects of development theory are identifiable:

Since the 1960s, the main views of the advancement of Africa have been characterised by the dominance of three paradoxical development theories: 1) the modernisation theory; 2) the human capital theory, and 3) the dependency theory. All these theories owe a good measure of their effect and persuasiveness to the impact of the university. (Agbo 2005: 49).

The second of these (human capital theory) is closely identifiable (though not synonymous) with the structuralist approach. Each of the three strands is briefly considered in turn.

Modernisation Theory

The geo-political zeitgeist of the 1960s (with colonialism on the wane, and with the pervasive Cold War attitudes holding sway) ushered in a new focus of attention in international affairs towards those areas of the world - most of them colonies or former colonies - in which poverty, illiteracy and poor health standards were widespread. At the late 1960s, ‘it is as if the world’s attention had suddenly become focused on the question, producing a veritable flood of books, journals, reports and documents, whole libraries of scholarship’ (Harris 1988: 44). The phenomena of global poverty and world hunger became the subject of much analysis largely from an economic perspective, tending to view underdevelopment as remediable through a combination of economic growth and technology-led ‘modernisation’, and taking as a paradigm the sustained period of economic growth which was being enjoyed at the time in the US and much of Western Europe. Toye recalls this as ‘a time of exuberant confidence in the power of applied scientists to re-order the world’ (Toye 2012:12).

The then prevailing tenets of economic orthodoxy saw development as co-terminous with a economic growth, defined as ‘a long-term rise in capacity to supply increasingly diverse economic goods to the [country’s] population, this growing capacity based on advancing technology and the institutional and ideological adjustments it demands’ (Kuznets 1973, quoted in Todaro 1989:137). In a somewhat similar vein, Rostow (1960) articulated the ‘linear stages of growth’ theory: development was presented as a series of stages through which all countries

necessarily pass, extrapolating from historical analysis of how the British Industrial Revolution unfolded:

It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: (i) traditional society, (ii) the pre-conditions for (iii) the take-off into self-sustaining growth, (iv) the drive to maturity, and (v) the age of high mass-consumption. These stages are not merely descriptive....they have an inner logic and continuity. (Rostow 1960: 4-5).

The key stage in development, according to Rostow, was that of 'take-off', which would occur consequentially from raising the savings ratio to 15-20% of GNP; this in turn would yield growth rates of 5-7%, and generate a dynamic effect towards a self-sustaining cycle of growth. The main constraint retarding the 'modernization' process, according to Rostow, was the low rate of new capital formation in developing countries, which could be counteracted by foreign direct investment and substantial aid transfers *à la* the Marshall Plan in post-war Europe.

Although Rostow's model of economic modernization held sway in mainstream economic analysis for most of a generation, its ontological stance can be seen in retrospect to have been excessively mechanistic and narrowly deterministic, failing to take adequate account of myriad human, social, cultural and environmental factors which are now recognized as critical to the development process. For instance, the focus on the Marshall Plan in post-war Europe as providing a prototype for development aid in other contexts failed to acknowledge key productive factors inherited by most of Europe, but relatively absent in less developed countries, such as a well-educated workforce, embedded systems of constitutional governance, and know-how in regard to technology, industry and agricultural productivity.

The conceptual limitations of the 'stages of growth' theory, and similar universalist economic theories current around that time, had been recognized even then by a critic of the conventional economic paradigms, Dudley Seers. Seers – on the basis of empirical-historical evidence - questioned the claims to universal validity of conventional economic modelling, predicated as they were on assumptions that certain 'principles' or 'laws' are valid everywhere and for everyone. Seers enumerated the fundamental differences which exist in nearly every respect between the industrialised nations and the rest of the world: factors of production, structure of the economy, foreign trade, public finances, household expenditure, savings rates, investment capacity, demographic patterns – all these differ radically from one group of countries to another. The various aggregates conventionally used by economists are themselves inadequate when applied to 'underdeveloped' countries. The task, Seers concludes, is to reconstruct Economics on the "modest but revolutionary slogan that Economics is the study of Economies" rather than of economic models (Seers 1963: 27).

Structuralist approaches / Human Capital Theory

The structuralists, who identified rigidities in economic structures requiring state intervention to promote balanced development and to counteract the effects on poor and disadvantaged people of market failure. The importance of social inequality, access to opportunity, and distributional equity of income and wealth as factors in poverty reduction were brought to the forefront of debate by, among others, Myrdal (1968); Streeten (1972); Ward and Dubos (1972), and Jolly (1984). This viewpoint exerted influence on many in the structuralist school of human capital theory which from the 1960's onwards had generated a formidable literature of detailed analysis of the contribution of education to economic growth and of the costs and benefits of different levels of education (Schultz, 1961; Denison, 1962; Becker, 1964). It remained influential in major international agencies (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Labour Organisation) well into the 1980s, and provided the framework for the influential Brandt Report (1980) *North-South: A Programme for Survival – Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues*.

Dependency school

The 'dependency' school, a derivative of structuralism, maintained that poor countries remain poor because of being entrapped in an international economic system that is inherently skewed, exploitative and neo-imperialist in character. They positioned themselves not so much as analysts of development, as its obverse - underdevelopment. The central contribution of the dependency school was to expose the fallacy of studying Third World development in isolation from the advanced metropolitan economies; rather it was necessary to treat the world as one single system (Roxborough, 1979). This more socially radical 'dependency' perspective gained momentum from the late 1960s, arguing that at a global level the industrially advanced 'centre' gains at the expense of the poor periphery, thereby perpetuating the unjust power relations left behind by colonialism. The advanced capitalist economies had become 'developed' by expropriating the economic surplus of those overseas territories with which they had at first traded and then colonised; meanwhile those same overseas countries found themselves enmeshed in external global structures, reinforcing their situation of dependency and underdevelopment.

The industrialised capitalist states had left their overseas territories with a narrowly-specialised export-oriented primary production structure which found its handmaiden in a frozen internal class structure dominated by a small landed or mercantile 'comprador' elite whose economic interests were intertwined with those of the advanced capitalist states. (Hoogvelt 1988: 73).

The crucible of dependency theory can be traced to a team of Latin American political economists who constituted the secretariat of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), led by Raul Prebisch (Rist 2002). The thinking of the '*dependistas*' coalesced with that of the left-leaning intellectual movement then prevalent in Latin America advocating liberation from mass oppression (e.g. the vision of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), support for land reform and for the rights of agrarian peasantry, and self-determination (Cardoso 1979). The Latin American narrative on dependency was extended to Asia and Africa by, among others, Andre Gunder Frank (1967), Samir Amin (1970) and Walter Rodney (1972), chiming well with the liberation and self-reliance doctrines of figures such as Julius Nyerere and Amilcar Cabral. Rodney's seminal work *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was influenced by the emancipatory ideals of the Dar es Salaam school (where Rodney himself taught for a time, and from which a critique of African dependency rippled out across the continent as an important intellectual influence on SSA development theorists of that generation). Rodney exposed the negative legacy of systematic exploitation by European imperialists, which he saw as having led directly to the modern underdevelopment of most of the continent. Of relevance to this study is the observation that his work also:

...sharpened the divide between those scholars who wanted to re-examine the purpose, structure and content of University education and those who saw education as part of the process of civilising the African. (Campbell 1991: 102)

Dependency theory exerted lasting influence on mainstream development theory and practice in important respects:

(i) Dependency theory generated reflections and strategies of 'alternative development', with a people-centred focus on participatory engagement with and by beneficiary communities, and on 'bottom-up' ownership of development initiatives (Chambers 1997). In general, the *dependistas* strongly countered what they saw as the technocratic tendencies of both classicists and structuralists; whereas both these tendencies sought the progressive inclusion of 'emergent' economies into the world market, the dependency school advocated dissociation from what they saw as the structure of exploitation. The *dependistas* also presaged the more recent upsurge of concern with sustainable development and climate change, by drawing attention to ecological limits associated with technological innovation and consumerism, requiring countries of the North to embrace lifestyle change in the interests of greater justice in international trade relations, and to restructure their economies accordingly (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. 1975). The incorporation of ecological thinking into development discourse was to prove seminal to an awareness of the human, social and resource-intensive costs of industrialization and urbanization (Ward, Dubos 1972, Brundtland 1988).

(ii) Dependency theory moved the fulcrum of development discourse towards the global South: for example, it added legitimacy to the Southern-led manifesto for self-reliance which was embraced by the non-aligned 'Group of 77' nations (embodied in the Arusha Declaration 1967), which in turn induced a UN General Assembly Special Session of 1974 to adopt a Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO). This declaration proclaimed that justice and equity demanded favourable treatment of the South in international negotiations and sought economic growth, expansion of world trade, and increased aid from the industrial countries (Rist 2002). However the outworking of this reform charter was eclipsed by the co-incidental onset of the OPEC oil crisis also in 1974, which dealt severe shocks and adverse repercussions for the entire world economy. (Nunnenkamp 1982).

Washington Consensus and ripostes

The mid-to-late 1980s saw a revival of neo-classical and neo-liberal economic prescription, epitomized by the extensive imposition of structural adjustment programmes by the World Bank and IMF on highly-indebted poor countries (HIPCs), as a condition for their receiving financial assistance and credit. The standard suite of prescribed measures typically entailed trade liberalization (including the reduction of tariffs, devaluation and removal of exchange controls), reliance on market mechanisms as the arbiter of prices and incomes, and reducing the role of the state (through rapid privatization and public expenditure cuts). Assumptions about the speed at which structural maladies could be corrected proved unduly optimistic, nor did they have regard to considerations of equity and the harmful consequences for socially vulnerable groups (George 1990). The impact was counterproductive, resulting in an aggravated debt crisis which accentuated the mal-distribution of income within developing countries (South Commission, 1990: 68).

By 1990, the World Bank was beginning to re-think its policy direction. Though still steadfast in its attachment to economic liberalisation and the belief that development was best attained through support of the private sector in the provision of goods and services, its emphasis on poverty reduction in the 1990 World Development Report signalled what was, for the Bank, an early and unexpected shift of position (Hewitt 2000). Some observers detected a subsequent crisis of confidence in development thinking, as a reaction to the allegedly negative experiences of development programming in the 1970s and 1980s. Examples of such disillusioned voices are as follows:

In the 1970s, the solution to rural poverty was not less government, but more, and in the 1980s, the solution to the problems of development was not more government, but less. Both ideologies and both sets of prescriptions, embody a planner's core, centre-outwards, top-down view of rural development. They start with economies, not people; with the macro, not the

micro; with the view from the office, not the view from the field. (Chambers 1989: 4).

The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape...It is time to dismantle this mental structure. (Sachs 1992: 1).

Sachs' rather nihilistic idea presaged some assertions about the 'end of development' from post-modern and 'post-development' writers such as Escobar (1995) and Schuurman (1993): they voiced a critique of the 'big ideas' way of thinking about development at a time of historically significant world events of the early 1990s, such as the collapse of the Soviet model of state socialism and the abrupt end of the Cold War, the slump in East Asian economies, and the partial demise of the dominance of neo-liberal economic policies.

The Human Development Movement

Notwithstanding the 'post-development' claims about having arrived at an impasse, the direction of a re-energised development discourse throughout the 1990s broadened well beyond political economy, to embrace the integrative and inclusive human development paradigm. Already in 1979, Seers had identified an appetite for a new development agenda, considering that neoclassical economics had a flawed paradigm and that dependency theory lacked policy realism (Seers 1979). The capability approach articulated by Sen (1985) provided the impetus towards such people-centred renewal in development thinking of the time, in contra-distinction to preoccupation with economic growth so evident in the modernisation school and the free market ethos of the Washington consensus. This human development tendency was grounded in the core concept of human capability, drawing on a long philosophical lineage, including Aristotle, Smith, Kant, Mill and Marx among others.

Human Development thinking was characterised by a clear focus on people as the 'ends' of development; clarity about ends and means, the notion of freedom related to well-being (capabilities) and agency (empowerment), recognition of multiple capabilities and a focus on supporting people as active agents, not passive victims, of development. The momentum of thinking manifested itself most tangibly and prominently in the annual series of Human Development Reports published since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Returning to the basic (but often forgotten) precept that people are the real wealth of nations, the first such Report set out the conceptual basis of this human development perspective in the following terms (in which Sen's thinking is discernible):

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect – what Adam Smith called the ability to mix with others without being 'ashamed to appear in public' (UNDP 1990: 10)

The human development paradigm therefore encompassed all aspects of development, and it provided a broad conceptual umbrella for the Millennium Development Goals to subsequently emerge. It also provided a unifying perspective for important sub-themes of development discourse, such as rights-based approaches, inequality and the poverty 'trap', international migration, climate change, health and reproduction, the challenges of building inclusive and cohesive societies, and the imperative of promoting participation and ownership of beneficiaries and 'stakeholders' in development programming.

Ul-Haq (1995:19) sums up the key characteristics of the Human Development paradigm as follows:

- Development must put people at the centre of its concerns.
- The purpose of development is to enlarge all human choices, not just income.
- The human development paradigm is concerned both with building human capabilities (through investment in people) and with using those human capabilities fully (through an enabling framework for growth and employment).
- Human development has four essential pillars: equality, sustainability, productivity and empowerment. It regards economic growth as essential but emphasises the need to pay attention to its quality and distribution, analyses at length its link with human lives and questions its long-term sustainability.
- The human development paradigm defines the ends of development and analyses sensible options for achieving them.

In an observant comment, Alkire (2010) suggests that:

...while the capability approach spans from philosophy to practice, human development – particularly as represented in the Human Development Reports – emphasises real world applications, identifying and advocating policies that advance capabilities and human development in different contexts and institutional settings and at different levels. (Alkire 2010:14)

Fukuda-Parr (2005) takes issue with a common mis-interpretation of the capabilities approach, in which development is equated with the domain of social development only:

Despite the broad and complex nature of human development, an assumption has arisen that it is essentially about education and health. (Fukuda-Parr 2005:117).

In a similar vein, she also points out that the notion of human development is much broader than its measure – the Human Development Index (HDI):

There has also been a tendency to imprison human development strategies and ideas within the HDI... The power of the HDI as a communications tool has proved difficult to moderate. (Fukuda-Parr 2005: 117).

This same author also brings clarity to what she considers to have been an inverted ends-means antinomy pervading much of the discourse on human capital theory:

The ends-means relationship is reversed in theories of human capital formation or human resource development, in which human beings are treated as a means to economic growth. While the human development approach views investment in health and education as having intrinsic value for human lives, the human resource development approach stresses how education and health enhance productivity, and have important value for promoting economic growth...Growth can be ruthless, rootless, futureless, voiceless and jobless - but when the links are strong, growth and human development are mutually reinforcing. (ibid: 118).

Consistent with the broad human development perspective outlined above, the UN Millennium Declaration (2000) was significant in positing the fight against poverty to the fore as a global objective and as a declared shared interest of the international community (Engel, Keijzer 2013). The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) contained in that Declaration expressed a commitment to meet specific targets by 2015. Though achieving the MDGs became a key objective for many donor agencies, many commentators in academia and in civil society were uneasy about what they saw as MDGs' 'reductionist' tendencies, in that they focused unduly on statistically quantifiable inputs and targets (e.g. gross school enrolment), at the expense of effective outcomes (e.g. quality of teaching) (Fehling, Nelson et al. 2013). Another critique surrounds the confusion between ends and means permeating the MDGs, and their inability to differentiate the needs of the poorest, thereby detracting from a rights-based approach:

It is only through collective recognition, responsibility and action that the programme of human rights can be realised. The MDGs should be seen as part and parcel of making rights actionable, providing forms of consensus and benchmarks for action. However, attention to the poorest and most deprived must be the central principle. (Khoo 2005: 55).

Contemporaneous critique also drew attention to fragmentation and duplication of donor resources (Green 2012). Initiatives aimed at more joined-up thinking and concerted action among development actors, both state and non-state, were articulated in a series of high-level aid donor fora - the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) adopted at the third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and the Busan Declaration (2011) adopted at the fourth such high-level Forum.¹¹ An emphasis on the quest for evidence of

¹¹ The texts of these communiqués are available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm> accessed 09.09.2017.

impact and results was increasingly evident in these high level declarations, and later in the deliberations leading to a new global framework post-2015 – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹² with their implied recognition that the fight for poverty reduction embraces parallel and coordinated effort across all sectors of development action – education, health, food and nutrition, water, gender equity, peace, climate change and debt relief, and mutuality in trade-and-aid relationships. In the process global development indicators underwent reconfiguration, with the emergence of more complex patterns of poverty incidence (Sumner, Tiwari 2010).

Capabilities

An important stimulus for the more differentiated SDG approach was the recognition that human development is not contingent merely on economic growth, but also on myriad human, political, social and cultural dimensions. Returning to Amartya Sen, although starting from a perspective of macroeconomic analysis, he proceeded to comprehend development more broadly, as consisting in the exercise of human agency and freedom:

Free and sustainable agency emerges as a major engine of development. What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of peoples' freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities. (Sen 1999: 4).

Central to Sen's analysis is a two-way relationship: the expansion of the 'capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value' (*op.cit.*: 10). These capabilities can be enhanced by public policy, but equally the direction of public policy can be influenced by the effective use of participatory capabilities by the public. Sen's was a particularly salient voice helping to propel the evolution of development discourse firmly towards multi-dimensionality and away from an economistic approach; other such voices include Paul Streeten, Martha Nussbaum and Ravi Kanbur (Sumner, Tiwari 2010; Sumner 2006). Klein observes that

...the concept of sustainability challenged the dominant Western paradigm of social transformation, embodied in older interdisciplinary concepts of modernization and development. It moved beyond narrow indicators of economic efficiency to include social justice and political regulation. (Klein 2004: 5).

¹² See *Transforming our World -the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E; accessed 09.09.2017.

Overseas Development Assistance as the outworking of development theory

International development aid, or ODA as it is more properly termed, emerged in the post-war period of reconstruction and decolonization, and evolved to be a distinct ‘cross-over’ strand of public action and discourse, embracing both international relations and political economy. Many of the institutions that are still prominent as development actors were instituted at that time - the World Bank and IMF (collectively known as the ‘Bretton Woods’ institutions), and the OECD’s precursor, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC). The underlying message of optimism inherent in much of the discourse justifying ODA in the years that followed was not misplaced. Over the subsequent half-century, worldwide growth in average per capita income exceeded two percent a year (historically unprecedented), many poor countries (especially in East Asia) became more affluent. Infant mortality declined, diets improved, longevity increased, diseases were contained, and the number of persons in poverty (average per capita income of under \$1 per day at 1985 values) was halved despite a more than doubling of the world population (Cooper 2004). On the other hand, on average, countries of sub-Saharan Africa fared much less well than other regions: their low average growth rates saw them recede considerably relative to their position in 1950, such that by 1998 their per capita income, while 60 percent higher than in 1950, was less than half that of the east and south Asian countries on the same comparison (Maddison 2001:305, 327).

Despite its avowedly idealistic and humanitarian impulse, aid policy is considered by many to have been motivated also by self-interest (Calderisi 2006, Easterly 2006, Moyo 2009). Motivations for aid have been political, strategic and economic, as well as ethical and humanitarian in nature (Sogge 2002). An inevitable consequence of the fact that the development ‘project’ was from the outset firmly embedded in the machinery of international relations meant that aid was enmeshed in the bi-polar power dynamic of the Cold War. The febrile and competitive race for geo-political influence and neo-colonial economic alliances exerted influence on development aid practice, policy and priorities; so aid acquired selective and strategic utility in the world powers’ quest to reinforce their respective spheres of influence. The commentary on the geo-politics and fundamental motivation of development aid spans a wide ideological spectrum, from those arguing that development aid is essentially self-interested (Hancock, 1989), through those that suggest aid is counter-productive and promotes dependency (Moyo 2009), to those who contend that aid tends to favour a self-serving ‘kleptocracy’ rather than the destitute ‘bottom billion’ of the world’s population (Collier 2008). Undoubtedly the severe fiscal constraints faced by many OECD countries in recent years have exerted pressure on governments to renege on their aid commitments and to guard against public scepticism on the merits of aid. Nevertheless, overseas aid remains a feature of public policy in all OECD countries (including in Ireland during the downturn post-2008). Moreover, provision of official

development assistance is even now beginning to be embraced also by the emergent BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) group of nations. McGillivray and White, writing in 1993, took a suitably wide-angle view of aid:

From the donors' point of view, aid is seen as an instrument of foreign policy, serving to: promote political and diplomatic relations with developing countries; enhance stability within countries of strategic importance; expand export markets; procure strategic imports... Indeed there is a reasonably wide acceptance that political, strategic, commercial and humanitarian motives offer a reasonable *a priori* basis for explaining patterns of aid allocation among developing countries. (McGillivray, White 1993: 2).

Those sceptical of the entire development aid project (Calderisi 2006, Easterly 2006, Moyo 2009) point to the allegedly limited success to date on poverty reduction, on food security, or on conflict prevention and mitigation. Others such as Paul Collier, while acknowledging that progress has perhaps been disappointingly modest, argue that on balance, a positive verdict is merited:

Without aid, cumulatively the countries of the bottom billion would have become much poorer than they are today. Aid has been a holding operation preventing things from falling apart. (Collier 2008: 100)

Collier then concludes:

Aid does have serious problems, and more especially serious limitations ... But it is part of the solution rather than part of the problem, The challenge is to complement it with other actions. (ibid.: 100).

The 'architecture' of official development assistance.

As the thematic scope of international development discourse diversified, so also have new modalities of development cooperation emerged over the past three decades.

Although aggregate aid flows had increased in the years after the MDGs were declared in 2000, fragmentation and duplication between donors and a propensity towards project proliferation prompted serious questioning as to whether the resources being provided were exerting optimal impact, and whether deadweight effects were being imposed unnecessarily on aid recipients (Booth 2012). Efforts to improve donor coordination and 'country ownership' of projects, and to align development efforts with national strategies and administrative systems through general budget support and sector wide programming, culminated in a sequence of international donor initiatives that unfolded: the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008 and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in 2011. The first two of these communiqués emphasised harmonisation and alignment between aid donors, accountability, value for money in aid expenditure, and a focus on more rigorous results-based management of programmes. The last declaration (Busan) made a significant

addition to this list of desired outcomes - namely, domestic resource mobilization becoming the core development stratagem of developing countries themselves. Of relevance to this study is that all three communiqués accorded major importance to capacity development and capacity retention as the essential bridge between the advances in knowledge management and a new understanding of what constitutes sustainable development in a multi-polar and more resource-constrained world.

For the twenty-four member states that comprise the OECD-DAC, the emphasis on aid effectiveness was given added urgency by severe budgetary constraints following the onset of financial market failure and currency instability in 2008 (Birdsall, Kharas et al. 2010). An unsettling feature of the depth and severity of the economic crisis for the historically more affluent countries of the Global North is that their entreaties of the Global South regarding the core development objective of sustainability now sound hollow (Easterly, Williamson 2011). The deeply pervasive effects of this crisis give rise to uncertainty about the capacity of the current international economic system to solve the severe complex economic difficulties which are being experienced, and thus the future of the established international development aid framework is in flux (Eyben, Savage 2013).

Development dynamics of sub-Saharan Africa post-2000.

Two competing narratives describe the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa over the last fifteen years or so.

On the one hand, for the first decade of this century, sub-Saharan Africa out-performed the rest of the world in terms of positive changes in the Human Development Index (a composite measure that includes dimensions of education, health and income) (Ul-Haq 1995; The Economist 2011). After lacklustre economic performance for decades, during which the divergence between Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the developing world widened, the region's economies have seen a sustained acceleration in output growth, from under two per cent in 1978-1995, to nearly six per cent in 2003-08. Poverty rates for the continent south of the Sahara (aside from South Africa, the region's largest economy) fell by more than 10 percentage points between 1999 and 2008 – a reduction in poverty rates of more than one percentage point per year (World Bank 2012). Moreover, for the first time, between 2005 and 2008, the absolute number of people living on or below \$1.25 a day fell (by 9 million) (ibid.). Although this is not sufficient to eradicate poverty in a generation, it stands in sharp contra-distinction to the rising poverty rates experienced in the 1970s, 1980s and much of the 1990s. Meanwhile private investment flows from the rest of the world into SSA now exceed foreign aid volumes (Fuentes-Nieva, King 2012). This positive investing environment is reflected in the growing number of countries (Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Namibia, Zambia) that can access international capital

markets; an example of this phenomenon is Zambia, which in 2012 raised \$750m in a 10-year Eurobond at an interest rate lower than that which some troubled Euro economies could attract at that time (ibid: 2). Similar positive trends have also emerged in regard to key indicators such as falling maternal and child mortality and rising primary school enrolment rates (The Economist 2011).

The World Bank (2010) describes SSA as having been in catch-up mode since the late 1990s, following two lost decades of stagnation. ‘A conjuncture of four interrelated factors explain Africa’s growth recovery since 2000, which has become the most sustained expansion since independence and which was not significantly interrupted by the global financial crisis: policy, demography, geography, and technology’ (World Bank 2012). To this list one might add ‘geopolitics’. The eastward shift in the centre of gravity of global economic power towards China has exerted a pronounced influence in the African region: China has become a dominant actor in African business and diplomatic affairs; over the decade to 2012, African trade with China rose from \$11 billion to \$166 billion per annum, making China Africa’s biggest trading partner (The Economist 2013).

The alternative narrative recognises the serious unresolved development challenges that persist for sub-Saharan Africa.

Africa faces some deep development challenges—in growth, poverty reduction, structural transformation, human development and governance—that at best call into question the gains of the last fifteen years and at worst could undermine them. (World Bank 2012:12).

Some illustrations of these challenges are:

- Food insecurity persists over much of the continent, and constitutes one element within a panoply of interrelated social and demographic challenges, which also include climate change adaptation and rapid urbanisation. Absolute levels of human development continue to be the lowest in the world, as some 230 million people across the continent still suffer from undernourishment - a proxy for hunger (FAO 2012¹³).
- Africa’s growth trajectory of the past decade is somewhat distorted in that exports are highly concentrated in primary commodities and over-reliant on mineral and natural resource extraction whilst manufacturing’s share of GDP has remained static at 1970s levels (World Bank 2012).
- Indicators of vital service delivery in some places are poor: teachers in public primary schools in Tanzania are absent 23 percent of the time; public doctors in Senegal spend a

¹³ Source: Food and Agriculture Organisation (2012): *The state of Food Insecurity in the World*, available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3027e/i3027e.pdf>, accessed 20.09.2017

total of 29 minutes a day seeing patients (Devarajan, Fengler 2012); on any worldwide indicator of corruption (e.g. Transparency International's index), Africa scores the lowest. Such systems are unlikely to be able to deliver at the scale required by Africa's growing population.

- Finally, while Africa's civil wars may have diminished, political instability is widespread: at the time of writing, unrest looms in South Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Cameroon.¹⁴

How can the two seemingly contradictory narratives of Africa's economic fortunes be reconciled? Devarajan and Fengler (2012) contend that the growth phenomenon is mainly due to reforms in economic policies, necessitated by misguided policies of the past. Meanwhile, the development challenges—lack of structural transformation, weak human capital and poor governance—reflect government failures that are difficult to overcome because they are deeply political. From this problem analysis, capacity emerges as the key factor in unlocking the path to progress. This analysis is different from, but compatible with, that of Chuhan-Pole and Angwafo (2011), who contend that while the proximate causes of African countries' failure to thrive are quite different they can be boiled down to two main sources: (i) market failures, such as the common-property externalities associated with desertification, and (ii) government failures, often created by state intervention to correct market failures (Chuhan-Pole, Angwafo 2010).

Summation of Section

Development does not take place in a political vacuum, but is a complex and multi-dimensional process rooted in a cultural context: there is thus no universal formula for development. Consequently, whereas the economics discipline had earlier predominated in development discourse, the disciplinary boundaries have progressively broadened to embrace a much more eclectic mix - sociology, politics, anthropology, human geography, epidemiology, agriculture, environmental studies. Currently, development thinking grapples with the effects of **complexity and uncertainty** that cannot be adequately addressed within the confines of traditional disciplinary silos. From the above synoptic (and necessarily stylized) *tour de terrain* of development theories, three elements in a more or less shared understanding of the nature of development can be discerned.

Firstly, underlying the highly variegated discourse there are basic normative assumptions of development as goal-oriented and aspiring to a 'better' future. Development studies and development theory can be said to have at their core a teleological orientation towards a future

¹⁴ Source: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>; accessed 29.09.2017.

world order which is normatively better than that which has so far prevailed, involving a more equitable global distribution of opportunities, resources and quality of life. The vision of a desirable society may form an aim towards which to direct efforts at improvement (Thomas 2000). According to Nederveen Pieterse, 'development can be understood as organised intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement' (2001:3). However Cowen and Shenton (1996) argue that development should be conceptually differentiated from progress, the latter connoting continual improvement reaching ever-higher levels through the Hegelian dialectical paradigm of 'thesis – antithesis – synthesis'. Development is more analogous to an often discontinuous and erratic movement towards fulfilment of potential and the unfolding of capabilities (in keeping with Sen, 1999). Although many conceptions of development see it as a change process which is all-encompassing and which builds on itself (improving on previous improvements), there may be negative moments in its outworking as well as positives; losers as well as winners. Far from being a smooth upward linear curve, development is 'a dialectical process, in that every change in the economy brings with it new problems and adjustments - there are always problems to every solution' (Colman, Nixon 1988).

Secondly, development is by definition an on-going process, and is seen to require concerted North-South action as never before; the moral case for an interest in development issues is as strong as ever, but needs to be complemented by a sharper-edge capacity for in-depth critique, analytical research and genuine learning from practice. The perceived polarity between global North and South in terms of wealth disparities and quality of life has come to be seen as an over-simplified portrayal. This requires a nuanced analysis involving a more permeable geographical demarcation reflecting the multi-polar reality of global relations, a recognition of development as a multi-dimensional process that impacts on all countries and an acknowledgement of inter-dependence between global North and South.¹⁵ (Koponen, 2004; Summer & Tribe, 2008; Haddad et al, 2010).

Thirdly, the ever-changing nature of global events, circumstances and power relations combine to form a context which is highly dynamic, and so development discourse has moved towards a prevailing view that development occurs by processes of experiment and innovation, whose consequences are unknowable in advance (Toye 2012).

The contrast is striking between on the one hand this human agency-centred, chaos-like conceptualisation of human development, and on the other the rational-analytic, deterministic notion of development that prevailed a half-century ago, when the term *development* described the sequence of economic growth of the nations of the Third World (Huq 1975). The debate of

¹⁵ Inter-dependence was much in evidence in the language of the communiqué of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Busan, 2011)

an earlier generation between neoliberalism and structuralism has also been superseded (Thomas 2000). The earlier linear, mechanistic and deterministic models have tended to be overtaken by approaches which emphasise complexity, multi-dimensionality and agency, and which have 'capacity' and 'effectiveness' as central concerns. Development and growth are no longer considered synonymous or co-terminous: a more plausible proposition is that growth is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the development process. Development now tends to be acknowledged as multi-factorial, contradictory and complex, and these attributes are best highlighted by viewing development as 'an historical process which is not consciously willed by anyone' (Arndt 1981: 461).

However the proposition of existence of common ground cannot be taken too far: a recurring feature of many discussions is that development theory has been accorded more coherence and consistency than it possesses (the 'myth of development' asserted by Tucker 1999). What we actually find is a plethora of competing and successive currents, schools, paradigms, models and approaches, and encompassing a range of epistemological standpoints from which reality is viewed and interpreted. 'From the start development thinking has been a patchwork with divergent paradigms operating in different terrains' (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001:40). Singer (1989) offers an astute observation, concerning the discontinuities and disjunctions in development thinking referred to above:

The trouble seems to be one of time lags...The development thinkers seem to base their action and thought on the experiences of the last-but-one decade, or a last-but-one phase, only to be overwhelmed by the inappropriateness of such action and thought in the face of new events and new problems. Is it perhaps a case of a problem for every solution, rather than a solution for every problem? (Singer 1989: 32).

This time lag issue will recur later in this study, on account of its importance (often underestimated) as a factor affecting CD.

Looking ahead, the myriad factors impinging on Africa's development status and prospects therefore constitute a highly complex and dynamic scenario, which has been neatly summarised by Sumner and Towari (2010) as follows:

Any post-2015 framework will need to fit into the current context of multiple and interlinked crises, stressors and uncertainties which could have potentially large adverse impacts on poverty. Not only the global economic crisis and the post-crisis fiscal squeeze, but also issues such as climate change, demographic shifts, energy prices and urbanisation. (Sumner, Tiwari 2010: 2).

This observation leads us directly to the second section of this Chapter which considers HE's status in the context of SSA post-independence.

Section II - Higher education in the African development context

This section will offer an account, based on the literature, of the position of HE in the post-independence dispensation of SSA, and the ways in which aid donors have responded (or not) to the evolving needs of this sub-sector. The following quotation conveys a sense of the fluidity of the context of this discussion:

Higher education in the developing world has been buffeted by many winds of change over the years. This has been particularly true in the financially weaker nations of the world, and especially those in sub-Saharan Africa that have become dependent on a substantial measure of external development assistance. (King 2009: 33).

The purpose of HE (which in this study is deemed to include initial teacher education and higher-level technician education) is ‘...to educate, to train, to undertake research and, in particular, to contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole’ (World Conference on Higher Education 1998: Art. 2). At an earlier juncture, the UK Government’s Robbins Report (1963) eloquently set out four aims of higher education: (i) instruction in skills, (ii) promoting the ‘general powers of the mind’, (iii) the advancement of learning, and (iv) the ‘transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship’. The report also set out guiding principles, including the principle that ‘higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so’ (The Robbins Report 1963: Art. 24-28).

HEIs play both reproductive and transformative roles in society (Brennan 2008; Collini 2012). The reproductive role of universities has been linked to ‘preserving traditional values and in legitimising existing structures of society’ (Brennan, Shah 2011: 17). Regarding the transformative role, the literature reveals diverging positions on higher education as an agent of social change and human development. Castells (2001: 206) describes universities as ‘dynamic systems of contradictory functions’; these functions have developed historically in response to different social interests, generating conflicting pressures:

Universities are required to perform functions which are part of the traditional role of universities. They have to meet the demands of a changing global context as well as specific local, national and regional needs. The combination of implicit and explicit pressures and of different social functions results in a ‘complex and contradictory reality’. (ibid:211).

The challenges faced by universities in developing countries in trying to reconcile such conflicting pressures are aggravated by the paucity of available resources. In the context of SSA, the tension has been pronounced between the ‘public good’ argument in favour of public investment in HE (whether through domestic or external funding) on the one hand, and a more utilitarian, labour-market oriented rationale on the other:

The interconnections between education and various aspects of African society remain problematic in so far as the structures, content and language of higher education in Africa is geared to the training of high level manpower. (Campbell 1991: 99).

Singh (2001) compellingly argued that HE policy must go beyond a concern for labour market issues or individual or national economic competitiveness, and engage in broader social and philosophical understanding of the public good. This public good ethos is shared by Khoo (2015), whose stance is a rights-based one, centred around participatory social transformation:

A broader HE educates people to form and interpret ideas that are key to sustainable development, such as social inclusion, equity, ethics, and political contestation, while research and analysis conducted within HE serves to inform and reform social policy and governance. (Khoo 2015:11).

Agbo (2005) also asserts that an appreciation of the university's contribution to society must go beyond the dimension of socio-economic development: although important this is only one aspect according to which the role of universities in nation building can truly be assessed:

There are other intangible aspects of the contributions of higher education to society that cannot be measured quantitatively... the African university needs to become closely related to its local environment and draw inspiration from it. (Agbo 2005: 62).

This latter comment resonated with that of Sherman (1990), who saw the African university as an important repository for codifying and transmitting traditional knowledge and enhancing pride in Africa's cultural heritage.

In a synthesis paper covering a wide spectrum of commentary on HE's contribution to development prepared for the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), McGrath (2013) considers higher education as integral and fundamental to the process, and adduces five grounds which together make a convincing case for this view:

- (i) HE's research role serves the development sector with evidence of what works, and with reflective and context-appropriate ideas to guide future practice;
- (ii) HE is indispensable to technological catch-up and innovation (see also Bloom, Canning et al.2006; World Bank 2008; Ugwu 2013; World Bank 2017);
- (iii) HE provides professional and technical education of key cadres essential to sustainable development – e.g. in health, education, infrastructure, rural development, public administration, law and governance;
- (iv) HE is an important incubator of a culture of democracy, accountable governance and active citizenship, through education of journalists, applied social researchers, statistical analysts, etc.

(v) HE has an intrinsic humanistic value (if permitted to find proper expression), instilling a leavening, civilising and culturally sensitive effect on the society it serves.

Higher Education and decolonisation

The above-mentioned Robbins Report was published just as many African societies were in transition to independence (including Tanzania, Zambia and Lesotho which were to become priority countries for Irish Aid a decade later). In the initial post-independence euphoria, African national universities enjoyed a period of growth and national prestige: they were regarded as power-houses of economic modernisation and human capital formation, and were expected to lay the basis for economic take-off. (Agbo 2005:50). According to Mamdani, the post-independence African university was initially ‘triumphantly universalistic...we made no concessions to local culture’ (Mamdani 1993:11). However the sense of renaissance of the African university that accompanied the period of transition to political independence did not obliterate the colonial legacy; Ashcroft and Rayner remind us that

...the form of many sub-Saharan African higher education systems can be traced back to colonial influences; even though universities might have been created post-independence, they were largely modelled on Western institutions. (Ashcroft, Rayner 2011: 37).

This reality continues to the present day, as observed by Teferra and Knight:

Today the continent (of Africa) is dominated by academic institutions shaped by colonialism, and organised according to the models of colonising Europeans, which themselves are moving towards the prevailing U.S models. (Teferra, Knight 2008: 28).

Although the early period of independence was mainly positive for the expanding university sector, the negative aspects a social structure inherited from colonial domination (and reinforced by hierarchical forms of traditional social organisation) proved more tenacious than liberation idealists might have anticipated.

Social reproduction in the newly independent states provided the societies with a challenge, either to continue the colonial project of educating a select few to rule or to develop new institutions to harness the knowledge and skills of the African masses, so that the alienation and snobbery of colonial school would be broken. This latter project required a state and society which accorded social transformation the number one priority (Campbell 1991: 100)

In the first decade post-independence, priorities for HE reform were the process of Africanisation of faculty, and producing the graduates to replace the departing colonial administration (Sawyer 2004). But de-racialisation did not necessarily lead to de-colonisation. Replicating the asymmetry of the colonial days in a new guise, new patterns of dependence began to emerge, whereby the South sent its people to - and received knowledge from - the

North (Munck, Barrett et.al. 2010). Just as with globalisation more broadly, Africa's insertion into global networks of knowledge production has been patchy and of low intensity (Teferra, Altbach 2003). Nor were the effects of asymmetrical power relations limited to the global stage: the African university's relationship with its host society and government institutions came under strain, as national governments of newly-independent states increasingly asserted their rights to 'own' and exert control over HE institutions, one indication of which was the extent to which vice-chancellorships and other senior appointments became politicised. Agbo writes in terms of 'the artificial environment of the African university' and claims that this had

...a profound effect on the relationship between the university-educated person and the rest of the society, which constitutes the basis of the conceptions the educated elite have of themselves. (Agbo 2005: 58).

Agbo (2005) is very clear in his view of the predominance of instrumentalism in the stance taken by government and public administration cadres within Africa in the post-independence era:

In the late 1950s and early 1960s...the movement to expand educational opportunities in Africa was strongly tied to economic development and technocratic visions of societal reconstruction (Agbo 2005: 49).

The technocratic view continues to exert influence into the present millennium, finding expression in the language of the knowledge economy and funding of global research linkages within the ambit of technology-centric commercialisation and internationalisation:

As the world economy transitions from an industry-based to a knowledge-based economy, tertiary institutions – especially those with established or aspirational research orientations – are increasingly called to align their teaching and research activities with market imperatives, most notably in disciplines related to technology. (Jessop 2008: 14).

Challenges in African Higher Education

In the late 1970s much of SSA was suffering from economic crises caused by various combinations of falling commodity prices, OPEC price increases, Cold War geo-politics, civil conflicts and - in the case of the 'front-line states' - struggles against apartheid South Africa. During the following decade, almost all SSA states turned to the World Bank and the IMF for economic relief as current account deficits threatened to spiral out of control (Szanton, Manyika 2002). The newly independent governments could no longer afford to support universities to a level necessary for standards to be maintained, particularly in the context of rapidly increasing enrolments. The situation was exacerbated by Structural Adjustment Programmes and the contraction of the public service, for which many graduates were destined. Large-scale graduate unemployment ensued, with an exodus of talent to more alluring economies, constituting 'brain drain'. A generation of academic talent was lost, with untold damage being done to the human

capital base, depleted as it was of specialist skills in key areas such as agronomy, medicine, hydrology, pedagogy, applied statistics, law, public administration, journalism, engineering, business and commerce. The onset of the HIV and AIDS pandemic further depleted the human resource base in HE in SSA (Kelly 2001).

By the mid-1980s, scepticism was growing within the international financial institutions about the comparative merits of public investment in HE in less developed countries, vis-à-vis possible alternative ways of deploying scarce public funds (see following sub-section). Writing just after the turn of the millennium, Teferra and Altbach (2003) suggested that the problems facing Africa's universities were already difficult and may even be getting worse as the pressure for academic and institutional expansion came into conflict with limited resources. The under-investment in African Universities - a legacy of structural adjustment in the 1990s – undermined capacity to influence development research with indigenous knowledge. Equally, they detected encouraging signs: (i) a revival of collective self-confidence in African HE, and the renewed commitment by many to build successful and resilient institutions despite difficult circumstances; and (ii) recognition by leading donor agencies that investment in African HE is vital for development (ibid.).

Optimism is tempered by a pragmatic resignation of the reality that HE in SSA cannot be expected to remain immune from powerful and pervasive macro-economic, geo-political and societal influences (Ashcroft, Rayner 2011). Nor can higher education be insulated against more endogenous but nevertheless adverse trends in post-independence political culture *within* their home country, such as inter-ethnic conflict, discriminatory political patronage, and repression of civil society (ibid).

Massification

Massification in HE is a worldwide phenomenon, but its manifestation in SSA derives from (a) pent-up demand where the HE systems are being rebuilt after years of neglect, (b) demographic growth and (c) expanded participation rates at lower levels of education working through into the third level age cohort, as the 'Education for All' programmes implemented by most African countries came to fruition (Mohammedbhai 2008). Growth in the number and diversity of third level institutions, and the levels of student enrolment therein, has been a striking feature of the African HE scene in the decades after independence, albeit from a very low base:

Higher education in Africa is undergoing a transformation wrought by massive expansion, which has implications for every facet of the sector. What makes Africa's growth unique is that it has seen a "flash flood" of growth with consequent implications that range from quality to funding, from governance to employment... Buoyed by new favourable policies and also pressure from the pre-tertiary sector, countries have registered huge gains in terms of access to higher education. While growth has been

universal the region over, some countries have shown phenomenal expansion, if not in gross enrolment ratio but absolute figures (Teferra 2014: 9-10).

HE enrolment in 1975 was estimated at 181,000, and within five years increased to 600,000 in 1980 (UNESCO / IAU statistics, quoted in Sawyerr 2004: 17). Following a lull, the numbers almost tripled to 1,750,000 in the decade to 1995 this latter phase coinciding with an acceleration in the rate of establishment of private universities (ibid.). More recently between 2000 and 2010, HE enrolment more than doubled, increasing from 2.3 million to 5.2 million.¹⁶ This expansion has been described in the literature (Mohammedbhai 2015, Teferra 2014) as 'massification' of enrolments, i.e. the move from a system that served an elite only, to one that every member of society, qualified by ability and attainment, might aspire to experience (Bloom, Canning et al. 2006). The particularly rapid expansion in enrolment in higher education in Africa in absolute terms between 1985 and 2002 has been verified also by Materu: numbers of tertiary students in Africa increased by a factor of 3.6 (15% p.a.) from 800,000 to 3 million (Materu 2007). A combination of factors underlie this - rapid demographic growth, active encouragement of establishment of private universities and colleges, and diversity of institutional type (especially technical and vocational institutions). As a consequence of the rise of private HEIs in SSA, the role of the state is no longer confined to that of a direct funder, but also a licencing and regulatory authority for autonomous institutional providers, in an effort to nurture credibility of standards. Given this scenario, the implementation of credible quality assurance mechanisms at national level is an issue of increasing priority (Teferra 2014).

Notwithstanding strong growth in absolute terms, enrolment rates for Africa remained around 5%, the lowest of any region in the world (DfID 10/2008); although Nigeria and South Africa enrol 10% and 15% respectively, Uganda and Ethiopia report just 3% and Tanzania 1% (ibid.). A sobering assessment of how far Africa lagged behind was provide by Teferra and Altbach writing in 2004:

The total yearly expenditure on higher education in Africa as a whole does not even come close to the endowments of some of the richest universities in the United States...the budgets of individual universities in many industrialised countries exceed the entire national budgets for higher education in many African nations. (Teferra, Altbach 2004: 21) .

They proceeded to portray the immense strains faced by the sector at the time:

In virtually all African countries, demand for access to higher education is growing, straining the resources of higher education institutions ...Enrolments have escalated, but financial resources have not kept pace. In many countries, resources have actually declined due to inflation, devaluation of the currency exchange rate, economic and political turmoil,

¹⁶ Source: UNESCO / IAU (2013). *Guide to Higher Education in Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

and structural adjustment programs, further stressing the financial stability of institutions and systems. (Teferra, Altbach 2004: 25).

Students of African origin also study abroad: according to OECD-UNESCO data, every tenth foreign student enrolled worldwide is of African origin (OECD i-Library, 2013). Of all international students in OECD countries, 9% are from Africa, with European countries (Germany, France, Portugal, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, UK and Ireland), hosting appreciable numbers of African students (Academic Cooperation Association, October 2013).

Looking ahead, the challenges will continue to be formidable. It is projected that Africa's share of the world population, which increased from 8.9 to 12.8 percent during the period from 1950 to 1995, will rise to more than 18 percent by 2050 (Shabani 2007). In these circumstances, African HE will need to expand and strengthen institutional capacity, in all the aspects pertaining to the core features of a university system as traditionally conceived: teaching, research (and its translation into societal gain), civic engagement, internal organization and management, national-level quality assurance, and furtherance of an ethos of 'civil society'. These myriad dimensions of capacity will be explored in the review of literature relating to this core concept in the following Chapter.

Donor motivation for funding North – South collaboration in higher education.

The standard rationale of donor agencies in providing funding support to the higher education sector in Africa is to contribute to alleviation of needs corresponding to the ODA funding priorities such as hunger, ill-health, illiteracy, conflict, human rights, over-population, water resource management, climate and environmental degradation (Samoff, Carroll 2002, Bradley 2007). A recent study of support to tertiary education in the South exemplifies this:

Tertiary institutions are uniquely positioned to help improve community health and welfare, social cohesion, and a healthy and sustainable environment, each goal guided by their respective missions... For example, universities are well positioned to conduct research on key topics such as sustainable food production in rural areas, training specialized scientists and other knowledge workers through academic and further education programs, and serving as a conduit between interested stakeholders, such as community groups, NGOs, and governmental agencies (Marmolejo 2016: 17).

This constitutes a benign, albeit instrumental, perspective on the role of HE in development. It is reflective of a relatively recent re-discovery of the value of such assistance, after two and a half decades of scepticism and vacillation within various of the donor agencies. The pendulum of discourse about what universities are for in the SSA context has swung to and fro in that time, both between the utilitarian -v- purist understandings of the university's role, and between HEIs catalysts of socio-economic transformation -v- bastions of self-perpetuating power elites.

During that time-span, the place (if any) of a HE strand within the wider canvas of development assistance programming became devalued, and the contribution of HE to economic and social development relative to other priorities became sharply contested.

In particular, a report issued under the imprint of the World Bank (1986) analysed the contribution of education to economic growth and of the costs and benefits of different levels of education, using earnings differentials as a proxy measure for quantifying direct benefits (Psacharopoulos, Tan et al. 1986). This study also presented conclusions based on comparative analyses of rates of return to investment in different levels and types of education across different regions of the world. It also compared the returns to individuals (the private rate of return) with the returns to wider society (the social rate of return). The conclusions were that the private rate of return (the economic benefit to the individual) was greater than the social rate of return (the economic benefit to society as a whole) for all levels of education; but the greatest social rate of return accrued to primary education, followed by secondary, with third level being the least 'cost-effective'. The Report proceeded to assert that in most developing countries 'the present financing arrangements constitute a misallocation of resources devoted to education' because 'higher education was the relatively less socially efficient investment' (Psacharopoulos, Tan et al. 1986: 9-10).

The work of internal analysts in the World Bank in the 1980s (Colclough 1982, Psacharopoulos, Tan 1986) was much referenced in support of a public policy of preferential investment in basic / primary education, practically to the exclusion of higher secondary, vocational and HE (Haddad, Coletta et al. 1990). The argument was further strengthened by the sense that participation in HE was dominated by the relatively more affluent social strata who were effectively being subsidized by the rural poor who did not have access to this education, thus increasing inequality (ibid.). An influential UN sponsored international conference 'Education for All' in Jomtien, Thailand (1990) stopped short of outright endorsement of a sharply segmented view of the education system and adopted a broadly sectoral, more holistic broader of educational opportunity, as did the successor gatherings such as the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO 1996) and the Dakar World Forum on Education (1999). However the essence of these conference deliberations subsequently came to be interpreted otherwise by international donors and national governments alike who insisted that the international education priorities lay firmly with basic education, and this view prevailed in the Millennium Summit (2000), which put in place the MDGs:

Attention given to the MDGs in broader development debates has contributed towards the narrowing of the educational agenda, down to a focus on primary schooling, which began after Jomtien (King, McGrath et al. 2007: 351).

King criticises the international donor community for its tendency to artificially segment the education system, failing to recognise its component levels as inter-dependent; such arbitrary demarcation was later superseded by the more integrationist view of higher education's role in development which has re-emerged in more recent years (King 2009). MDG 2 (universal primary education -UPE - by 2015) was interpreted with an almost exclusive focus on easily-measurable primary education enrolment rates, such that donors' and national governments' preoccupation with quantitative expansion of school enrolments in elementary education eclipsed vocational and higher education (Samoff 1999).

As a further and arguably even more serious consequence of over-emphasis on quantifiable targets for UPE, considerations of educational quality, teacher performance and school effectiveness were overshadowed for too long (Barrett 2011). In the Education for All Global Monitoring Reports published by UNESCO ¹⁷, it became increasingly apparent that the focus on enrolment is ineffective without high-quality teacher education, smaller class sizes, curricular innovation, properly moderated state examination systems, a rigorous school inspectorate, reliable management information and other associated infrastructural frameworks. Self-evidently, these all link directly back to the indispensable role of higher education as a repository of expertise and builder of capacity for these very functions. The same rationale holds true of higher education's position as the crucible of human capabilities in the other key sectors of health, water and sanitation and agriculture and food.

World Bank - earlier orthodoxies revised.

As mentioned above, the influential studies that emanated from the World Bank were shown to have been defective because their calculation of the social rate of return had been unduly restrictive, relying on relative earnings data (Samoff, Carroll 2002; Bloom, Canning et.al. 2014). Teferra (2008) considers that 'the World Bank stands out as the most important multilateral agency shaping the policies of higher education on the continent (of Africa).' Many of the policy positions and much of the influence have been articulated through numerous policy documents' (Teferra, Knight 2008: 46). Specifically, they cite the Psacharopoulos and Tan (1986) study on comparative rates of return across the respective sectors of education as having exerted 'tremendous impact on higher education policy across the continent' (ibid.: 46), on the lending policies of the World Bank itself, on domestic priority-setting by governments at country level, and on the aid strategies of international donors in the two decades that followed (ibid.). The resultant sceptical sentiment regarding the relative priority of HE investment as a modality of balanced development assistance programming persisted for a generation

¹⁷ Considerations of educational quality were given prominence in the 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Reports of 2005 ("Quality", 2008 (Mid Term Review of MDG 2) and 2014 ("Teaching and Learning – Achieving Quality for All". See <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/allreports>

(especially donors in the Anglo-Saxon world, with the exception of the major US based philanthropic foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller).

In the meantime the damage was done, in terms of the retardant effect both on donor aid to HE and on domestic resource mobilisation for the sub-sector by SSA governments (Teferra 2009). During the 1980s and early 1990s, African university budgets declined substantially in real terms, under the combined pressures of falling economic growth rates, macroeconomic adjustment policies, pressure to expand enrolments to absorb growing demand from secondary school leavers, and a smaller share of the education budget share resulting from greater investment in primary education:

For the best part of a generation, university faculty salaries remained flat or declined, research funding dried up, university libraries stopped purchasing books and journals, physical facilities crumbled, new building was terminated, ... student scholarships were largely eliminated, ... and new faculty hiring was curtailed. (Szanton, Manyika 2002: 2).

Not all donors were uniformly influenced by the predominantly sceptical tone of the Bank's position on HE: the Scandinavian and Dutch donor agencies (for example) sustained significant volumes of aid to HE and research as part of their development assistance programmes, and evinced a greater continuity in their institutional mechanisms for managing and delivering their assistance (King 2009: 37).

Of course, it would be mistaken to characterise the World Bank (or indeed other international financial institutions or large donor agencies) as monolithic: there is a healthy culture of peer contestation and critique at play within their ranks, only a portion of which is manifested in the public domain (as attested by three key informants to this study who worked there). Thus even at the time when the work of Colclough, Psacharopoulos and their colleagues was being published, it was attributed to them as named individuals, and did not necessarily represent a uniform official stance by the Bank (though much of the material found its way into publications which bore the Bank imprint). Stalwart advocates of a more favourable stance towards higher education within the Bank included William Saint, Peter Materu and Nat Coletta. By 2000, these more modulated voices in the World Bank and in cognate institutions such as UNESCO had begun to assert a countervailing influence. Determination to row back from the earlier orthodoxy of Colclough, Psacharopoulos and others began in 1997 with a joint communique by the Bank and a range of African apex level HE stakeholder bodies (including Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa – CODESARIA, and Conference of Rectors of Francophone Africa), launching their *Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa* initiative:

A series of rate-of-return studies favouring primary education over higher education in Africa, together with the Bank's strong leadership within the

Education for All movement, have given many Africans the impression that the Bank does not view universities as worthwhile investments. This perception has been reinforced by the Bank's reduction in lending for higher education in Africa during FY 1995-97...It has also influenced many donors to cut back on their support for higher education...In the light of the Bank's new willingness to consider investment in higher education under its Partnership for Capacity Building, it is recommended that the Bank clarify its position on this matter in the public eye. (World Bank 1997: 23-34).

This 'clarification' came in 2000, in the form of *Higher Education in Developing Countries – Peril or Promise* - Report of a Task Force on Higher Education (World Bank 2000). This document sought to 'clarify the arguments for higher education development, especially from the standpoint of public policymakers and the international community' (ibid.: 9), and in so doing the Task Force (mandated jointly by UNESCO and the World Bank) formally distanced itself from Bank's earlier orthodoxy on such investment, now acknowledged to have been flawed:

Since the 1980s, many national governments and international donors have assigned higher education a relatively low priority. Narrow – and in our view misleading – economic analysis has contributed to the view that public investment in universities and colleges brings meagre returns compared to investment in primary and secondary schools, and that higher education magnifies income inequality...The Task Force is united in its belief that urgent action to expand the quantity and improve the quality of HE in developing countries should be a top development priority. (World Bank 2000: 10).

A subsequent 2002 Report *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education* further reinforced the Bank's recognition of, and re-engagement with, HE in pursuit of the growth, competitiveness and knowledge economy agendas (World Bank 2002). Two interesting dimensions of the narrative at this juncture were (a) support for education at any level should be integrated in an holistic approach covering the whole education sector; and (b) to be effective, public investments in the tertiary education sector should be made within a policy framework that (i) promotes improved quality of training and research, (ii) adjusts training programs more closely to a country's development needs, and (iii) promotes greater equity in the benefits from public education spending among different income groups.

Over time, these perspectives were augmented by influential voices in the World Bank with an ever more favourable stance towards AFHECIs; for example in the work of Jamil Salmi (2009) focusing on the transition to a knowledge-based economy as requiring an appropriate economic and institutional regime, a strong human capital base, a dynamic information infrastructure, and an efficient national innovation system. Finally, most recently, AFHECIs have received strong endorsement from a World Bank policy team using a whole-of-systems perspective (Marmolejo 2016). Most recently, a 2017 Study concludes that:

Access to HE will become increasingly significant as developing countries move up the value chain. Growing demand for HE will put increasing pressure on limited fiscal resources, with consequent threats to quality as well as the possible unregulated growth of private provision. (World Bank / IEG 2017: xi).

Adaptation

The fridity regarding aid to HE which had spread into much of the donor community (Ireland included), precipitated by the ‘return on investment’ studies emanating from the World Bank in the 1980s, took some time to thaw after the Bank itself had shown a change of heart.

Meanwhile, fragmentation of effort and dissipation of resources were evident:

They (the donor community) isolated individual variables for support. For example, one aid agency might support teacher education, and another textbook production, but if the cracks between such support were not filled systematically, the education systems’ new weave would continue to be threadbare. What was needed was a more systemic approach and it was this which the new aid modalities sought to begin to provide (Riddell 2012:9).

In a comparative study of donors, commissioned by IA in 2005, Leen (2006) wrote of ‘new thinking’ then underway on aid to HE and research. Separately, Boeren and Maltha (2005) wrote that what was new in this approach was that universities were now seen as an integral part of the education system, in which they play an indispensable role in ensuring the quality of the other sub-systems (Boeren, Maltha 2005). Hindsight would suggest that what was greeted as new thinking should really have been a matter of common sense all along,

In the more recent phase, adaptations in donor thinking and practice on AFHECIs have pertained more to the apex-level agenda surrounding aid architecture, aid effectiveness and management by results, rather than as a response to the far-reaching changes taking place in the institutional environment of HE in Africa. The changed landscape is manifest in factors such as the demographic surge in the eligible age cohort for third level, more extensive course provision especially at graduate level, and greater diversity in institution type, with the advent of private institutions of variable quality alongside the well-established state-sponsored universities. The resulting competitive market for scarce academic teaching personnel has created a new pressure point for accelerated production of PhDs, and has given rise to the need for new state institutions to oversee the necessary regulatory framework and quality assurance functions. The impetus for adaptation comes from several distinct directions – one being analytical research on rates of return on investment in HE, another being demographic pressures on the ground, and another being nation states’ political ambition to keep abreast of globalisation.

In response, over more than a decade, institutional-level partnership programmes of a bilateral nature and for multi-annual durations have attracted official aid support from UK, the Scandinavian donor countries, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Canada, Australia, and (as will

later be discussed) Ireland. An initiative to up-scale this collaborative model to apex-level multi-country collaboration was implemented in the 2008-2010 period jointly between European University Association (EUA) and the Association of African Universities (AAU). Their joint communiqué (2010) proposed to integrate development cooperation into the overall institutional internationalisation strategy ¹⁸, to explore joint European-African projects to build staff capacity, to prioritise long-term university partnerships that are needs-based and flexible, and to include a framework for Africa-Europe higher education exchange and collaboration within the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership (European University Association / Association of African Universities 2010: 20-21).

Internationalisation

Internationalisation in higher education is a dynamic concept about which a great deal has been written in the past decade from a variety of ideological perspectives. In part, this is a consequence of the reality that ‘the internet and all the social networks it has spawned have created new modes of knowledge production, storage and dissemination – the most fundamental functions attributed to universities’ (Gourley 2012: 31). The extensive literature on the subject is largely beyond the scope of this thesis, except in so far as internationalization strategies include ‘international cooperation and development projects, institutional agreements and networks, the international / intercultural dimension of the teaching/learning process, curriculum and research, the mobility of academics through exchange, field work, sabbaticals, and consultancy work’ (Knight 2008, xi). Furthermore, a link between internationalization and development discourse is recognised:

Studies of global importance such as professional education, environmental studies, climate change, food security and public health require a comparative and international dimension if they are to be meaningfully mediated. (Munck, Barrett et al. 2010: 2-3).

Internationalisation is also considered in a study of the role of the research university in South Africa which assert the capacity building (understood in this context as research training) to be a precursor to a aspiring research-intensive university to manage the ever accelerating, complex dynamics of internationalized dimensions of HE (Smit, Williamson et al. 2013).

However, as Munck, Barrett et al. (op. cit.) observe, internationalisation as a mode of embracing globalisation and integration into the new global order may - unintentionally - give rise to more negative processes associated with the so-called ‘commodification of knowledge’, seen over the last decade in HE worldwide. This is echoed by a multi-country survey for the ACU by Brennan, King et al. (2013), which found that

¹⁸ This call was subsequently taken up by, among others, Dublin City University in its *Strategic Plan 2012-17*.

...the diversification of higher education is marked by a commercialisation of educational services which, in new competitive environments, also affect public institutions. (Brennan, King et al. 2013: 47)

Munck, Barrett et al. (2010) observe that for countries of the South, internationalization often equates narrowly to a prevailing university policy whereby the South dispatches people *to*, while receives knowledge *from*, the North. They maintain that internationalization is intrinsic to wider policy positions where contested constructs such as 'global knowledge economy', participation, partnership, interdependence, sustainability and co-operation' dominate. (ibid. 2010:2).

Bursaries

The contribution of international bursary schemes for higher education feature consistently in the literature, both on international development programming and academic mobility and internationalization of higher education. Historically, postgraduate scholarship programmes for Africa have depended on support from external donors (Szanton, Manyika 2002; Creed, Perraton et al. 2012). Major investments by governments and charitable foundations have seen the initiation, renewal, and expansion of large scholarship programmes in Europe, North America, China, and elsewhere. While the motivations from the donor side for provision of such support were diverse (as discussed later in Chapter 6), the objective justification for provision of such support from the 1980s onwards lay in the ageing profile of first generation of academic faculty of Southern HEIs post-independence, the consequent need to accelerate the formation of successor generation, and the demographic-driven expansion of HEI enrolments necessitating numerical strengthening of faculty.

Confidence in international bursaries as a vehicle to support CD seems high according to three published evaluation reports scrutinized for this study (EP-NUFFIC 2012, Commonwealth Scholarships Commission. 2008, DAAD / German Academic Exchange Service 2012). Credible interpretations of what has been, and can be, achieved through bursaries and scholarships, is an area in which there is continuing need for longitudinal research. There is much potential for shared endeavour among donors, yet in many ways the field remains fragmented: provision is split across continents, organisational sectors, and divided by seemingly shared outcomes approached or measured in subtly different ways. The overall positive experience of Europe-based funders evident from the above evaluations appears not to be matched by that of US-based funders due to the apparently high incidence of brain drain experienced among the latter beneficiaries (Szanton, Manyika 2002). In a telling observation, Teferra and Altbach noted,

...the causes of migration – be it regional or international – are a complex phenomenon. The reasons why scholars migrate or decide to stay abroad are

products of a complex blend of economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological factors. (Teferra, Altbach 2004: 43).

These questions are considered further in Chapter 6, in the light of evidence from empirical investigation by this study.

Summation of Section

HE has a vital role to play – alongside government and wider civil society – in promoting human development, alongside an appropriately critical role with regard to ethical development and the realization of human rights (Steiner, Posch 2006). As socio-economic development becomes more knowledge-intensive the role of HE is essential to the promotion of balanced and coherent national development strategies of improving quality of life, reducing maternal and child mortality and morbidity, eradicating poverty, nurturing peace and respect for human rights, and striving for environmental sustainability, by integrating the spaces of teaching, research and engagement, and by probing ‘important ethical dilemmas around planetary thresholds, equity and justice’ (Khoo 2015: 25-26).

This Section while presenting the fickle ebb and flow of sentiment in the development aid community towards AFHECIs in SSA, also takes account of the profound transformation that has taken place in the wider environment in African HE over the thirty-plus years under review. Agbo analyses the situation in the following terms:

While critics do not question the contribution of higher education to development, they question whether education in its present form can contribute to the social and political equality that they consider important to the continued advancement of less developed countries. (Agbo 2005: 52)

Teferra (2014) summarizes the current state of the discourse in this regard:

The past decade provides evidence that higher education and research contribute to the eradication of poverty, to sustainable development and to progress towards reaching internationally agreed-upon development goals...In the emerging knowledge societies, exponential growth in the quantity of knowledge produces an ever-growing gap between those who have access to knowledge and culture – and learn to master them – and those who are deprived of such access. (Teferra 2014: 1).

It is ironic that the World Bank, having been the source of the misleading economic analysis that led to HE being relegated by many donors to a subordinate position for a generation, has since become the leading advocate and practitioner of policies which accord HE high priority (Marmolejo 2016), albeit with a somewhat instrumentalist, STEM-oriented emphasis. More generally, the fragmented nature of aid to HE has given way to a stronger appreciation among donors of HE support as integral to a systemic approach towards a broader CD perspective. AFHECIs are positioned at a pivotal point in new thinking around global development.

Research of topical global importance, such as professional education, environmental studies, climate change, food security, and public health, require a comparative and international dimension if they are to be meaningfully translated into the domains for policy and practice.

CHAPTER 4: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS

This chapter is a continuation of the literature review, and (like the previous one) falls into two sections. In the initial section focusing on the Conceptualisation of Capacity, attention is devoted to the emergence of capacity development (CD) as a concept which has attained considerable prominence in Development Studies discourse and practice. Although ‘capacity’ was briefly introduced in Chapter 2, its treatment here is more exhaustive, not least because of prevalent confusion regarding germane terminology (competence, capability, capacity). The morphology in terminology from capacity building to capacity development is reviewed, having regard to the more or less parallel evolution in development thinking towards a more participative and Southern-led paradigm. An important distinction is drawn between understanding CD as ‘product’ versus ‘process’.

The second section of the Chapter focuses on complexity theory and complex adaptive systems (CAS), including an explication of a particular CAS framework which provided the conceptual model (‘5 Cs’) for the methodology subsequently used as the basis for the analysis of evidence later in this study. The Chapter then concludes with a presentation of the more recent literature on the application of this theoretical framework to development programming in general and CD in particular.

Section I. Conceptualisation of ‘Capacity’ in international development discourse

The evolving vocabulary of global North-South relations over the past several decades is mirrored in changes in understanding of capacity in the discourse of both development theory and of development aid programming. Also in the past decade, capacity building and capacity development have begun to attract growing emphasis internationally in high-level public policy deliberations, for example on aid effectiveness, and on the results-focused approach to aid delivery and management.

Language of ‘Capacity’

It used to be said of ‘capacity building’ that it lacked a language or set of terms that could aid communication and shared understanding; the concept was thought by some to have been broadened to the extent of now being amorphous, even vacuous (Moore 1995). In a similar vein, the World Bank, over a decade ago, expressed concern that:

Capacity building has not developed as a well-defined area of development practice with an established body of knowledge about what works in

meeting different needs under different country and sector conditions.
(World Bank 2005: xiii).

Eade (1997) distinguished three capacity building modes - capacity building as ‘means’ (training and related activity), as ‘process’ (fostering communication and adaptation) and as ‘ends’ (focusing on organisational objectives and outcomes). This conceptual triad offers another way of comprehending the ‘hard–soft’ spectrum of interpretations of capacity: all three modes blend into an integrative understanding of capacity development as the process whereby individuals, groups, and organisations enhance their abilities to mobilize and use resources in order to achieve their objectives on a sustainable basis.

Kaplan (1999:7) through his work in the mid-1990s with the Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) in South Africa, focused on organisational capacity in the context of not-for-profit organisations, and formulated seven hierarchically ordered pre-requisites (Table 2).

Table 2. Kaplan’s Analytical Framework for Capacity Development

ATTRIBUTE	FUNCTION IN RELATION TO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
Context	Understanding of the milieu and the attendant risks
Vision	What the organization aspires to do in response to the context
Strategy	How the organization proposes to realize its vision; emerging methodologies of practice.
Culture	Norms and values underlying the organisation’s way of working; power relations.
Structure	Outlines and differentiates the roles of staff, lines of communication, decision-making.
Skills	Skills, abilities and competencies of staff
Material Resources	What the organisation needs to implement its work programme - finance, equipment, property.

Source: Kaplan 1999:7.

A noteworthy aspect of Kaplan’s analysis is that ‘skills’ constitutes only one of the elements within the entire capacity framework - a reminder that CD entails much more than delivery of skills training.

The OECD paper *The Challenge of Capacity Development: Working towards Good Practice* (OECD, 2006) offered new insights: it saw CD as a development outcome *per se*, as distinct (but as well as) an intermediary contribution that external donor agencies can offer to country development strategies. Drawing together documented experience from many sources, this OECD study resonated with an agentic development policy stance which placed human capacity at the heart of the development process. It offers straightforward – if rather loose - definitions of the key terms relating to capacity:

- ‘Capacity’ is *the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully.*
- ‘Capacity Development’ is *the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time”*
- ‘Capacity Development Support’ *refers to what outside partners (domestic or foreign) can do to support, facilitate or catalyse country partners to develop their capacity(ies)* (OECD 2006: 2).

It was also a milestone in the recognition that CD is a multi-dimensional process that goes far beyond the transfer of knowledge and skills at the individual level to embrace whole organisations, sectors and systems, and the enabling environment in which they all exist.

Not surprisingly, normative connotations have tended to permeate much of the discourse on capacity: for example, Black regarded the concept as denoting ‘the improvement of systemic conditions to create an enabling environment for poverty reduction and sustainable development’ (Black 2003: 116). De Grauwe (2009) draws an important distinction between *competence* (as an individual attribute), *capability* (as an organisational attribute), and *capacity* (as a combination of competencies and capabilities). Reserving the term ‘capacity’ for generic use, De Grauwe’s rationale is that ‘the specific skill of an individual officer or the collective capability of an entire department can only be considered as capacity when they are part of a creative and collaborative process’ (de Grauwe 2009: 48).

The more that the term ‘capacity’ has been used in the context of international development, the more it defies definition, and the greater the accretion of diverse phenomena that it purports to denote:

A host of concepts are included under its general umbrella such as participation, organisational development, technical assistance, performance, institutional economics, empowerment and many others with no clear sense of their interrelationships. (Morgan 1998: 2).

Like development theory, so too the concept of capacity building carries within it some flavour of teleological or aspirational progressivity which as Clarke and Oswald (2010) put it:

The ‘capacity development concept implies a promise of gradually building self-reliance, national ownership and sustainability; yet practice seems to continually fall short of this emancipatory promise (Clarke, Oswald 2010: 2).

This teleological flavour can also be seen in the following definition of capacity building currently used by an Irish-based intermediary funding body:

any process that develops values, attitudes, skills and knowledge to empower stakeholders at individual, organizational, community and national levels to grow and develop their maximum potential towards sustainable development.¹⁹

In the final analysis, I favour a combination of the two definitions of capacity offered in the literature, firstly as ‘the ability of people, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives’ (Fukuda-Parr, Lopes et al. 2002) and secondly as ‘the emergent combination of individual competencies, collective capabilities, assets and relationships that enables a human system to create value’ (Baser, Morgan 2008: 3).

The emergence of capacity as a conceptual construct in development thinking owes much to the work of Amartya Sen (1999) who outlined a ‘capabilities’ approach to development praxis. This perspective accorded strongly with Sen’s work on ‘development as freedom’ discussed in the previous Chapter. Sen argues for the necessity of going beyond the conventional development targets and measures of success (embodied in commodities, goods and services), and rather place emphasis on improvements to human potential. Development, from this perspective, is fundamentally about developing the capabilities of people by increasing the options available to them. This can be done, in part, by focusing on the freedoms generated by conventional outcomes rather than just on the outcomes themselves. These freedoms come in the form of capabilities that people can exercise to choose a way of life they value. The emphasis here is on individuals and their options for making their way. Sen’s concepts also reverse the conventional way of thinking by turning conventional development results into means rather than ends.

‘Capacity’: linguistic and conceptual morphology

During the 1960 and 1970s, ‘technical assistance’ was the standard term for filling identified or supposed gaps in specialist expertise in the global South²⁰ through the transfer of knowledge and skills, especially technical and scientific know-how, from a more sophisticated North to the disadvantaged South (Lopes, Theisohn 2003). Broadly speaking, in the 1980s and 1990s this terminology gave way to ‘capacity building’, still with a technical skills focus, even though ‘technical skills are not [necessarily] the only ones needing to be strengthened, and in some cases they may not even be the main ones’ (de Grauwe 2009: 48). For example, individual knowledge acquired from a learning module or course may remain static and have little organisational impact unless those individuals on their return to the workplace encounter a receptive environment allowing the innovation to be embraced.

¹⁹ www.miseancara.ie accessed 08.05.2013.

²⁰ This paper utilizes the terms ‘South’ and ‘Southern’ to denote the Global South, comprising countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and developing Asia including the Middle East.

‘Capacity building’ occurs in both a restricted and expanded sense. In its more restricted meaning, it refers to imparting skills that enable institutions (both state and non-governmental) to be more effective in implementing interventions intended to bring about a pre-defined development outcome. In its more expanded sense, the term implies a broad development approach relating to

...individual and organisational learning which builds social capital and trust, develops knowledge, skills and attitudes and when successful creates an organisational culture which enables organisations to set objectives, achieve results, solve problems and create adaptive procedures which enable it to survive in the long term. (DfID 4/2008: 3).

Léautier (2014) observed:

Donors’ perspectives have usually driven the discussion on capacity...As a result, the concept of capacity has various definitions in practice, and extraction of lessons has been problematic (Leautier 2014: 1)

Historically, the terms ‘capacity development’ or ‘capacity building’ have tended to be used interchangeably among international development practitioners, but in the last two decades approximately, a nuanced distinction has become discernible (Baser, Morgan 2008). DfID’s conceptualisation of capacity building quoted above implies a more strategic dimension of organisational learning, which has tended to be substituted with the terminology of ‘capacity development’. Although ‘capacity building’ continues to be commonly used, it rather carries the more restricted, ‘know how’ connotation of training to enhance individuals’ skills and proficiencies, since the ‘building’ metaphor suggests something at the more specific or tangible end of the spectrum. An example would be support by external agencies for the dissemination of technical information to professionals in the South through scientific publications and, more recently, access to internet-based networks and portals.

Conversely, commentators (e.g. Kaplan 2010; Clarke, Oswald 2010; OECD 2006) have tended to ascribe the term ‘capacity development’ to a more expansive idea, whereby pre-existing knowledge and skills of stakeholders is recognised, and further enhanced towards improved development outcomes and service delivery for target beneficiary communities, institutions, regions or countries. CD is thus understood as:

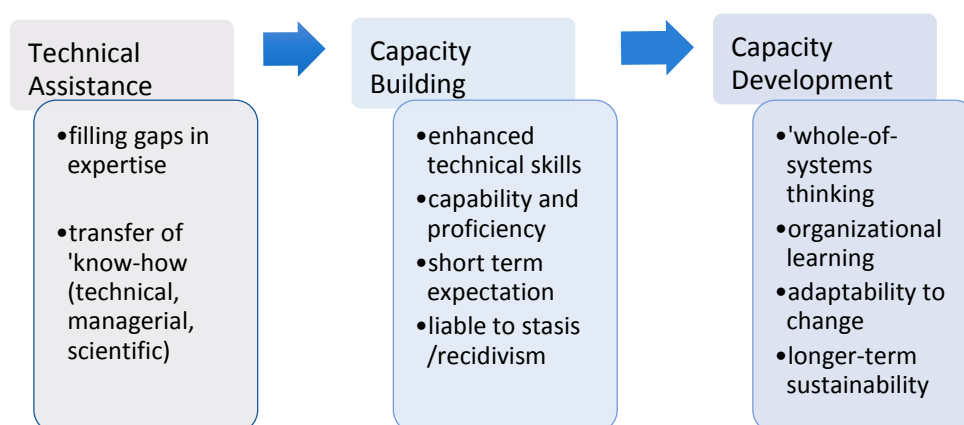
An endogenous course of action that builds on existing capacities and assets, and the ability of people, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives. (Rubens Ricupero quoted in Lopes, Theisohn 2003: xi).

There is a subtle shift in perspective here: no longer are the Southern voices in recipient mode, but rather are they assuming a more active, self-motivated and self-determined role that encompasses (a) both process and outcomes and (b) improvements in individual capabilities and

organizational performance, as well as the results of those efforts in terms of capacities developed (Morgan 1997).

The discernible shift in language is suggestive of a significant shift of donor thinking, away from capacity as product (a mainly instrumentalist injection of transferred knowledge) to capacity as process - requiring local ownership, participation and an endogenous (and in this case Southern-centred) strengthening of existing human capabilities, and (ultimately) institutional effectiveness (OECD 2006: 12). Figure 3 below represents this conceptual progression in a schematic way, and will prove to be germane to this thesis, in later discussions under Findings and Conclusions Chapters 6, 7 and 8). At one end of the continuum is ‘technical assistance’, understood in the restricted sense of imparting skills that are intended to bring about a desired development result in the relatively short term. At the other end we can posit ‘capacity development’ understood in a more expanded sense that implies a broader development approach as articulated in the DfiD (2008) document cited above.

Figure 4. Conceptual progression from technical assistance to capacity development



The distinction between capacity building and capacity development as articulated above is not uniformly observed in practice; however the more nuanced linguistic and theoretical progression represented in the above schema has received multilateral endorsement in the terminology used in official practitioner manuals of ECDPM (2008), IDRC (2009), UNDP (2009), WBI (2009) and EuropeAid (2010).²¹ The further the progression along this continuum, the greater the extent to which capacity develops organically as an endogenous process (Lopes, Theisohn 2003: xi), rather than being something injected from outside, and the more meaningful the interactions between the key actors are likely to be. ‘Capacity development’ permits of a more participative endeavour towards shared learning between genuine partners in development.

²¹ Source: <http://www.lencd.org/learning/capacity-development>; accessed 28.09.2011.

Emphasis on CD as a key stratagem of development policy has been apparent in the concerted movement towards the ‘Aid Effectiveness agenda’ expressed in apex-level policy pronouncements of the (mainly Western) donor countries, as per the Paris Declaration (2005), the Accra Declaration (2008) and the Busan communiqué (2011).

Capacity development found itself propelled to the centre of policy discourses on aid effectiveness ... Since the mid-1990s, all main multilateral aid agencies, bilateral donors and non-governmental development agencies adopted capacity development as a core element in their repertoire of interventions, moving it up from the operational to the policy and strategic levels (Land, Greijn et al. 2015: 3).

The prominence accorded therein to capacity development, along with new aid modalities (to which we return later in Chapter 7), was hailed as a ‘new consensus’ on the development strategy of the future:

The new consensus, articulated strongly in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, sees capacity development as a necessarily endogenous process, strongly led from within a country, with donors playing a supporting role. According to this vision, political leadership and the prevailing political and governance system are critical factors in creating opportunities and setting limits for capacity development efforts. (OECD 2006: 7).

A paradox becomes apparent from the above discussion: notwithstanding the ‘new consensus’ on capacity building and CD as crucial to development agencies’ operational strategies, staff in international development agencies who are dedicated to working on capacity issues are few in number. Also, the monitoring and evaluation systems at agency level have been slow to adapt to revised methodologies, benchmarks and indicators which are appropriate for tracking the outcomes of CD over the extended time-frames that are necessary (Van Deuren 2013).

In the context of this study’s thematic focus, it is relevant to note that ‘capacity’ was not explicitly mentioned in the MDGs (2000). Merely five years later the Paris Declaration (2005) contained multiple mentions of ‘demand-led capacity development’ (though in the restricted sense of the term, equating to training). In 2008, the Accra Agenda for Action gave prominent emphasis to capacity development, as did the outcome document of the UN Summit on the MDGs in September 2010²², particularly in relation to developing countries having the capacity to lead and manage development processes. With the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals²³ in 2015, the terminology reverted to ‘capacity building’ of public management in the South, with regard for example to disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, water and sanitation. What is striking in the narrative used in all these high-level communiqués is the

²² See: www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/.../mdg%20outcome%20document.pdf. Accessed 09.09.2017.

²³ See: Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E, accessed 09.09.2017

inference that capacity building and capacity development are of instrumental value only: there is a manifest absence of an understanding of capacity development as constituting a development outcome *per se*.

The three-tiered Levels of Capacity

An influential group of papers emerged from research commissioned in 2002 by the OECD, which tasked the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) to study the capacity of organisations, mainly in low income countries, its development over time and its relationship to improved performance. The findings emerging from this work were synthesized by Morgan (2006), in particular the identification of three distinct levels at which capacity operates: **Individual Capacity** (referring to the skills, experience and knowledge that are vested in people), **Organisational Capacity** (comprising the internal policies, arrangements, procedures and frameworks that allow an organization to operate and deliver on its mandate, and that enable the coming together of individual capacities to work together and achieve goals), and **Systemic Capacity** (the broader system within which individuals and organizations function and that facilitates or hampers their existence and performance). These three levels can otherwise be represented as micro (human skills development), meso (changes in organisations and networks) and macro (system-level changes in governance/institutional structures).

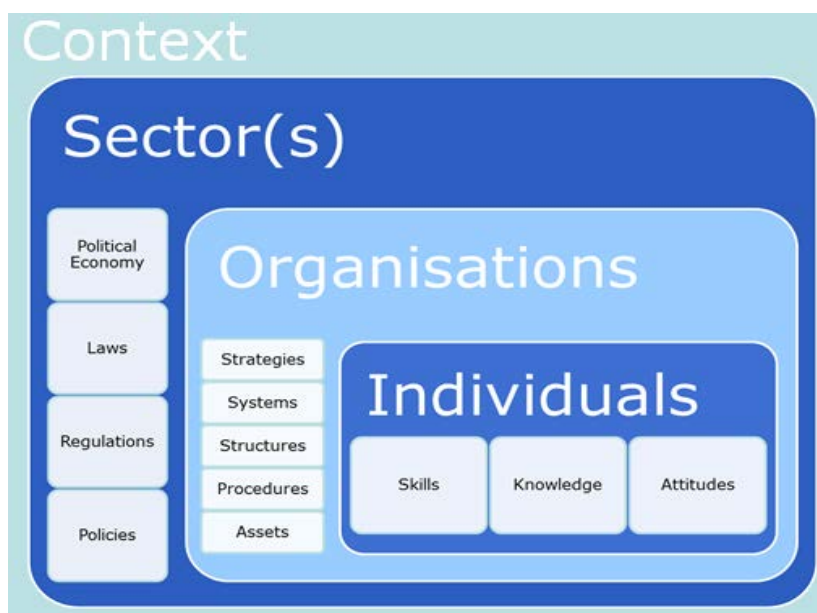
To explicate this triad of levels (portrayed in Figure 5 below) in more detail:

The **individual level**, at which capacity refers to the skills, experience and knowledge that are vested in people. Each person is endowed with a mix of capacities that allows them to perform, whether at home, at work or in society at large. Some of these are acquired through formal training and education, others through learning by doing and experience. Translating this into the sub-sector of assistance to HE and research, capacity building and CD initiatives focus on building up a critical mass of researchers competent in a particular thematic, disciplinary or methodological area. Individual level approaches have more recently expanded to include a broader range of stakeholders involved in knowledge generation, translation and dissemination.

The **organizational or institutional level** of capacity is concerned with the internal policies, arrangements, procedures and frameworks that allow an organization to operate and deliver on its mandate, and that enable the coming together of individual capacities to work together and achieve goals greater than that of the sum of individuals' efforts. If these exist, are well-resourced and well-aligned, the capability of an organisation to perform will be improved. In practice, and within the policy context of support to HE and research, the focus would be on organisational structures, processes, resources, management and governance issues, so that local institutions are able to attract, train and retain capable researchers (Jones, Bailey et al. 2007).

The **system level** denotes the broader **enabling environment** for the sector in question, at national and regional levels within which individuals and organizations function and one that facilitates - or hampers - their existence and performance. The emphasis here is on the development of coherent policies, strategies and effective coordination across sectors and among governmental, non-governmental and international actors. This level of capacity is not easy to grasp tangibly, but it is central to the understanding of capacity issues to improve national and regional innovation environments. Capacities at the level of the enabling environment include policies, legislation, power relations and social norms, all of which govern the mandates, priorities, modes of operation and civic engagement across different parts of society. Although a newer area of focus, it blends in well with ‘whole of systems’ thinking outlined later in this Chapter. Typical funding targets under this category would comprise public management structural reform, participatory budget scrutiny and review, continuing education, strategic planning, priority setting, knowledge management (Nuyens 2005). The policies correlated with growth (trade openness, macro stability, small government consumption, rule of law) are all highly correlated among themselves. When all of these policies are included in regression analyses, it can be difficult to identify the separate effects of different policies; however the fact that appropriate policies tend to appear together as a constellation in successful economies suggests the presence of a common factor, which can be considered as systemic capacity. (Rodriguez, Rodrik 2000; Levine, Renelt 1992).

Figure 5: Levels of Capacity Development and corresponding constituent elements



Source: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/>

In general, though CD interventions cut across all three levels of capacity represented in Fig. 5 above, this study places particular emphasis on the organisational (intermediate) level, because

(i) the individual level of capacity development is considered to be of primarily instrumental value for achievement of the other two ‘higher’ levels, and (ii) the system level is considered to be too diffuse to reliably gauge the effectiveness or otherwise of CD in given interventions.

The three distinct levels of ‘capacity’ are treated distinctly in the literature. For example, the World Bank’s Capacity Development strategy document for SSA, puts greater focus on the macro-perspective of state building, setting out a strategy for Africa with the ‘dual objectives of building effective states and forging engaged societies’ (World Bank 2005:2); whereas a study by ECDPM (2008) focuses more on capacity development at the level of the discrete organisation. Dissatisfied with ‘the vagueness of the CD analytical territory [that] mixes empirical and normative perspectives’ (Brinkerhoff, Morgan 2010: 2), the ECDPM (2008) study on CD was a landmark work, comprising the meta-analysis of sixteen individual country case studies in the South (Baser, Morgan 2008). This research yielded the ‘5 C’s model’, describing five core capabilities that contribute to system-level capacity performance – see Table 3 below. This research provided a theoretical anchor-point for subsequent scholarly studies (Brinkerhoff and Morgan, 2010; Keijzer, Spierings et al. 2011). The ‘5 Cs’-model has also informed programme evaluations including one by Ramboll (2012) evaluating Dutch CD support, in which the importance of a holistic approach to CD in higher education was highlighted.

Table 3: The ‘5 Cs Model’ of system level capacity performance

	Core Capability	Actors are able to...
1	The capability to commit and engage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobilize resources (financial, human, organizational); • create space and autonomy for independent action; • motivate unwilling or unresponsive partners; • plan, decide, and engage collectively to exercise their other capabilities.
2	The capability to carry out technical, service delivery, and logistical tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce acceptable levels of performance; • generate substantive outputs and outcomes (e.g., health or education services, employment, justice); • sustain production over time; and • add value for their clients, beneficiaries, citizens, etc.
3	The capability to relate and attract support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish and manage linkages, alliances, and/or partnerships with others to leverage resources and actions; • build legitimacy in the eyes of key stakeholders; • deal effectively with competition, politics,

		and power differentials.
4	The capability to adapt and self-renew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapt and modify plans and operations based on monitoring of progress and outcomes; • proactively anticipate change and new challenges; • learn by doing; • cope with changing contexts and develop resiliency.
5	The capability to balance diversity and coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop shared short- and long-term strategies and visions; • balance control, flexibility, and consistency; • integrate and harmonize plans and actions in complex, multi-actor settings; and • cope with cycles of stability and change.

Adapted from Baser, Morgan (2008).

Both the strength and the limitation of the ‘5-Cs’ model was its generic applicability which allowed for adaptation and refinement of what is a high-level framework to the lower level of institutional capacity (van Deuren 2013: 20). This is precisely what was done in the outworking of the Methodology of this study (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Modalities of Capacity Development

The triadic typology of capacity levels has been systematically applied to the domain of development practice by the OECD (2006) and has exerted considerable influence on the ways in which development-centred capacity has subsequently been understood. Van Deuren’s (2013) analysis of capacity development in the higher education environment concludes that:

Organisational capacity development in HEI is not conceptually different from organizational capacity development in general. HEIs differ from other organizations and as such impact effectiveness of change processes, but concepts and relationships seem similar. (van Deuren 2013: 68).

The distinctiveness of CD support to higher education consists rather in the modalities and instruments used by donors to translate AFHECIs into operational effect. In the interests of economy of narrative, three main instruments of capacity development intervention are selected for mention here, on the basis that they subsequently feature prominently in the Findings (Chapters 6 and 7): namely, incentivised postgraduate study through bursaries and scholarship study awards, North-South institutional partnerships, and research capacity strengthening.

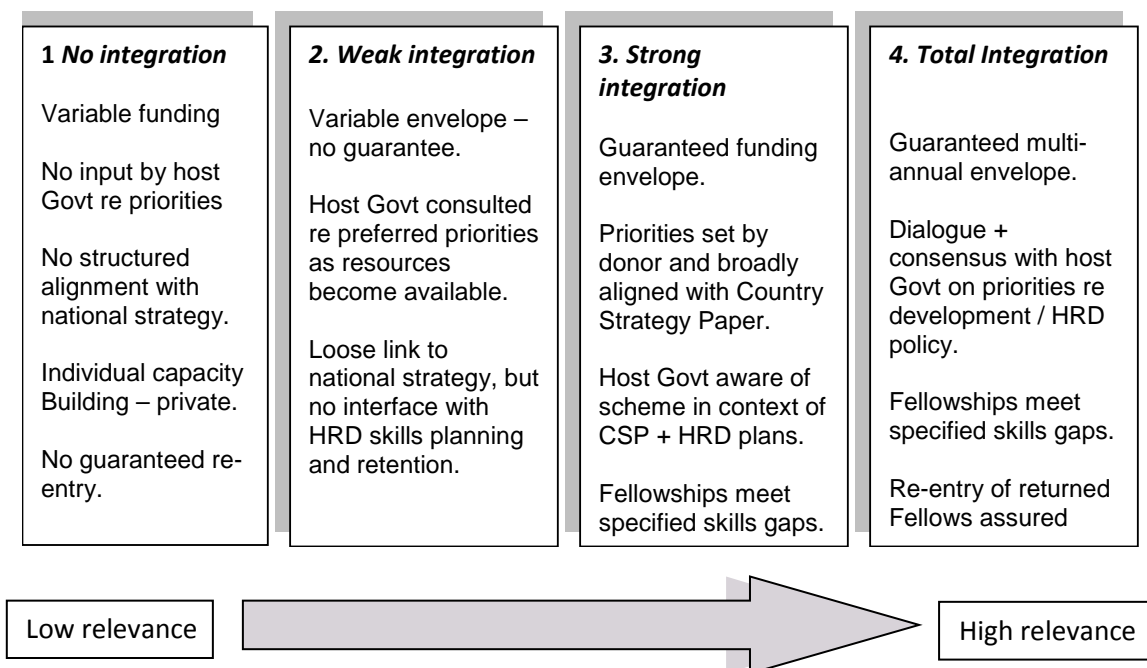
(1) Bursaries for incentivised Postgraduate Study:

With the aging faculty being a pervasive phenomenon across African higher education, the rate of output of award-holders under this traditional model (multiyear, fulltime mode of overseas study) is considered by some to have become untenable. Supply of funded bursaries falls short of what is required merely to replace those now retiring, let alone to effect the net expansion of PhD award holders demanded by the rapidly-expanding higher education sector throughout the continent. The following observation by Sawyerr (2002) remains valid now:

As the first generation of [post-independence African] scholars moves towards retirement, we truly are coming to the end of an era, for they are not being replaced at the rate required to maintain appropriate levels of leadership and experience within the academy. This has brought on the phenomenon of the ageing of the faculty in African universities, an alteration in the demography that bears not only on the quality of research and teaching, but also on the crucial task of mentoring younger colleagues. (Sawyerr 2002: 32-33).

Linkages between donor-funded bursary programmes on the one hand and wider development priorities and strategies on the other have been a subject of recurring concern among donors (Boeren, Holtland 2005). In response to this concern, a relevance scale model which depicts the various levels of inter-relatedness between support for scholarship training and national development or poverty reduction programmes was developed, based on the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (IAP) - one of the Case Studies in Chapter 7.

Figure 6. Relevance Scale of donor-funded bursary programmes to Country Strategies and National Development Plans



A horizontal structure (as well as a self-evident vertical structure) is discernible in the above schematic representation: some of the elements of this structure are: funding mechanisms; host government inputs; level of alignment with national strategy; building of individual skill levels; re-entry of bursary-holders into their home environment post-qualification.

Within sub-Saharan Africa, efforts on the part of smaller countries in particular to 'localise' PhD production have been introduced, but have proved problematic for a number of reasons: these include academic inbreeding, long completion periods, limited choice of programmes, shortage of supervisory capacity, weak infrastructure, and poor funding (Szanton, Manyika 2002). A number of (larger) countries are developing plans to boost PhD production: Nigeria and Ghana intend to produce 3,500 and 1,500 PhDs respectively within five years, while Ethiopia, has massively invested in its higher education system, with an ambitious plan to produce 5,000 PhDs in 10 years (Teferra 2014). South Africa currently produces some 1,700 graduates a year and is intending an increase that to 5,000 by 2030 (ibid). There are also several region-wide and continent-wide initiatives in this area, such as the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA), Regional Initiative in Science and Education (RISE), Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in Africa (USHEPiA) (Uduma, Glavey 2012). Other current intra-African initiatives of note in this regard are Pan African University (under the aegis of the Africa Union Commission) and the Nyerere Fellowship supported by European Commission, along with the Center of Excellence initiative funded by the World Bank.

A new departure in the discourse on bursary schemes featured in a relatively recent study, whereby a donor pragmatically accepts the reality of emergent patterns of mobility induced by a globalised labour market, and designing bursary schemes for postgraduate study overseas accordingly:

Where once the preoccupation in scholarships schemes was to ensure a good rate of return and avoid brain drain, we are now seeing some scholarship programmes, e.g. AusAID, also embracing the idea of increasing skills for migration through projects with the explicit aim of preparing participants for the global nursing and teaching market. (Creed, Perraton et al. 2012: 6).

Before concluding on the bursaries topic for the present (it will recur later under the Findings chapters), a caveat is required against uniform generalisation in relation to the return rates among beneficiaries of schemes of various donor. There appears to be considerable variation, particularly as between US-sponsored and European sponsored postgraduate bursary programmes, such was found by Szanton and Manyika (2002) to be the case:

Return rates [of African PhD students] from the US – with its huge array of colleges, universities and other employment opportunities – were much worse than from Europe and the UK, where it seemed more difficult for even highly trained Africans to gain entry into the smaller academic or other job markets. (Szanton, Manyika 2002: 21).

(2) North-South partnerships: North-South collaborative initiatives offer important opportunities for collaboration in teaching, training and research that engage development issues (Nakabugo, Barrett 2010; Hayter 2015). An evolution can be seen in the orientation and profile of aid-funded partnership-based linkages between higher education institutions in the Global North and the Global South over the years. The UK experience is an example: a HE Links scheme came into being in 1981, administered by the British Council to strengthen the research and institutional capacity of Southern HEIs, through meeting the costs of individual UK academics working with one or more colleagues in partner institutions in over 50 developing countries. This scheme terminated in 2006. This was replaced by a successor programme Development Partnerships in Higher Education (DePHE) 2006 to 2013, which was more closely tied to DfID's programmatic thrust: this sought to use higher education institutions to support developing countries meet the MDGs, working horizontally with other academic institutions and vertically with policy makers²⁴.

Like development partnerships, research partnerships may have too much expected of them. The partnership may end up operating in a silo, providing temporary respite from the deteriorating research environments in so many Southern university systems. This might suggest that a realistic starting point for any ambitious partnership would be to review the research environments on both sides of the proposed marriage, paying particular attention to the incentive systems for particular kinds of academic work (King 2008).

(3) Research Capacity: DfID defines research capacity as 'the ability of individuals, organisations and systems to undertake and disseminate high quality research effectively and efficiently' (DfID 4/2008). There is, in addition to the three levels in this definition (individual, organizational and system-level), the 'institutional' context: this covers the incentives, the economic, political and regulatory context and the resource base on which the context is built.

Evaluations of research and development organizations undertaken by Horten (2003) found that capacity development is seldom systematically planned or managed. Capacities are usually built up over time as staff members are trained and gain experience and as formal procedures are established. Where concerted efforts have been made to develop capacity, they have often been externally motivated and led (Horton, Alexaki et al. 2003: 49).

²⁴ Source: www.britishcouncil.org/partner/track-record/development-partnerships-higher-education; accessed 30.09.2017

In a later significant study undertaken under the auspices of the Irish African Partnership (Barrett, Conway et al. 2010), nine factors were identified which together form the ingredients for sustainable and successful research capacity building at institutional level:

Table 4. Factors conducive to effective institutional-level Research Capacity Building

1	An effectively functioning Research/Graduate Studies Office to manage the research process across the institution.
2	Research infrastructure, in particular electronic connectivity facilitating on-line access to global research.
3	Increased research training, more structured modalities of postgraduate formation and stronger foundation in research methods.
4	Expanded Research funding, better coordination of national and international research grant funding lines, and effective use of finite resources
5	North-South and South-South partnerships and networking
6	Output of quality research publications, e.g. in peer-reviewed journals
7	A well developed process of dissemination of research findings, linkages with evidence based development policy and practice.
8	Increased participation by women entering and remaining in research.
9	Strong relevance poverty reduction and the improvement of quality of life in the context of national socio-economic development.

Source: IAPRCB 2011: 153

Certain generic weaknesses of partnership-working have been observed: for example, impact on research capacity building has often related more to individual capacity building rather than the institutional level (Velho 2002). The rationale for most North-South partnerships has also been narrowly focussed on addressing capacity gaps in the South (King 2009). North-South partnerships have also been largely managed from outside the developing countries, and their sustainability has been donor-dependent. In addition, while principles of good partnership practice have existed for decades (UNDP 1997), the actual nurturing of mutually beneficial North-South partnerships still remains a challenge not least because the ‘.....asymmetry between partners remains the principal obstacle to productive research collaboration’ (Bradley 2007: 2).

Pitfalls in capacity development interventions

The heightened interest in CD in recent years is - at least in part - a response to widely acknowledged shortcomings in perceived performance and impact of development assistance generally, e.g. the dominant role of donor-led projects and inadequate attention to long-term ‘capacity’ issues (CIDA 2000; Clarke, Oswald 2010).

Scepticism about effectiveness of capacity development arises from (a) the historically fragmented nature of many initiatives in this area, (b) the apparent failure of such initiatives to

permeate beyond the individual beneficiaries and exert the hoped-for transformative influence at organisational or system-wide levels, and (c) insufficient attention being paid to local conditions, context and extent of beneficiary ownership. The UN and the World Bank, apex-level bodies in the international development arena, have recognised these shortcomings:

Capacity building efforts have often lacked clear objectives or focus, relying instead on fragmented project-by-project approaches... Training, equipment and technical assistance – also often provided without clear demand and effective management by recipient countries – frequently failed to take root. (World Bank 2005:12).

With the advent of the more expansive concept of CD, more emphasis came to be placed on 'grounded' stakeholder participation, and in-country workshops were frequently organized to plan, undertake, or review CD efforts. This resulted in the proliferation of a 'workshop culture' among research and development organizations in the South, which manifested itself in increased dependency on external resources (including funds) to convene such meetings and pay moderators to help plan and facilitate them.

Summation on Capacity

Development programmes of an earlier generation often focused on technical assistance and 'hardware', such as the construction of facilities and the provision of basic equipment. Later, technical advisors from the North were often sent to train 'counterparts' in the South, to 'upgrade' local staff knowledge, skills, and attitudes, while investments were made in human capital through the provision of donor-funded bursaries and scholarships for developing country nationals (Horton 2003). This capacity building model incurred critique on the grounds of (a) elitism and (b) reification (reducing a process to a set of tangible inputs). A historical example of such an intervention strategy will feature in Chapter 7, using HEDCO Ireland as the case study.

As part of the international donor community 'new consensus' (2005), capacity development has become a core issue in the contemporary development discussions and is seen as a necessarily endogenous process, strongly led from within a country (Gordijn, Helder 2013). The terminological and conceptual shift from 'building' to 'development' also reflects a modulation of practitioner thinking around the very concept of capacity and its scope, as well as the changing understandings of the 'development' phenomenon itself. The quiet evolution of the 'capacity' concept from an instrumentalist model to a more multi-layered process-oriented one, in turn reflects an evolution in the conceptualisation of global development in the literature of political economy. Just as the instrumentalist view which is implied in the term capacity building can be seen to betoken an 'input-output' approach to development policy and practice, so also can the more process-oriented and eclectic conceptualization of development be

signified in the more nuanced, porous and holistic view of ‘capacity development’ (OECD 2006, UNDP 2013). This stance acknowledges CD as a highly complex process, involving the interplay of a great variety of factors (economic, social, geo-political and environmental). Its proponents have also proven less inclined than their antecedents to prescribe neat and discrete ‘solutions’, in response to acknowledged or perceived deficits of skills or capabilities of the intended beneficiaries; indeed serious doubts arise as to whether in reality such solutions are attainable.

From the increasing currency of the concept in development literature, some important characteristics of capacity that are relevant to the remainder of the study are discernible:

- a. CD is a long-term endogenous process; it is also a holistic process encompassing multiple, interlinked layers of capacities (i.e. the 3 levels identified above). Capacity is not static – it is highly dynamic, correlative with both the elapse of time and the unfolding processes of societal development and the contextualizing of new capacities to different cultures and social-economic structures (Baser, Morgan 2008, van Deuren 2013). The dynamic character of capacity development is also evident in the bi-directional flow of benefits between North and South (Southern institutions having understandings and approaches to offer that are of value to the North). What then eventuates is co-creation, and is classically exemplified in the following observation:

We have noticed some slower-burning initiatives, initiated through a development intervention that have apparently sunk without trace and yet some time later re-emerge within various contexts, having undergone a ‘sea change’: the ideas, techniques and knowledge that have been applied in the longer term have almost invariably been ‘Africanized’, look far different from those originally presented, and seem to have a greater change of taking root and effecting longer-term change. (Ashcroft, Rayner 2011:2)

- b. Capacity as a state or condition is inherently a **systems phenomenon**, and concerns with complex human activities which cannot be addressed from an exclusively technical perspective. External actors cannot create capacity, but can only provide support to processes which are locally-owned and which respond to genuine needs, identified in a participative way. Also, capacity is an emergent property emanating from the positioning of a system within a particular context. In these terms, capacity can be viewed as a ‘complex adaptive system’ (Morgan 2006:7).
- c. ‘Capacity’ embodies not only ‘hard’ skills, but also generically-transferable ‘capabilities’ such as the ability to commit and engage, to identify needs, to communicate, to monitor and evaluate actions, and to acquire and apply knowledge. (UNDP 2009; Land, Hauck et al. 2009).

- d. Capacity has to do with **collective ability**, i.e. that combination of attributes that enables a system to function, to add value, or to confer social gain. Or to paraphrase Morgan, the capabilities that allow systems - individuals, groups, organizations, groups of organisations - to be able to do something with varying degrees of intentionality and effectiveness, and at some level of scale over time. (Morgan 2006:7).

While the capacity literature of the past generation has elucidated the multi-dimensionality of process, and its status as fundamental to development agencies' operational strategies, the unresolved paradox is why international development agencies, despite their professed priorities, dedicate relatively few staff resources to working on capacity-related issues.

Section II - Complex Adaptive Systems and Capacity Development.

In this section, the trans-disciplinary concept of complex adaptive systems (CAS), having been introduced in Chapter 2, will be examined more closely. CAS' constitutive theories – systems theory and complexity theory – are briefly set out, conscious that systems theory has been the object of growing interest from the development community (ECDPM 2009). The strong conceptual congruence between CAS on the one hand and an expanded understanding of CD on the other will then be examined. This congruence consists in four shared attributes: systems, emergence, feedback and context: this congruence, and the consequent potential value of the CAS approach to understanding the phenomenon of capacity development, has been recognised by Land, Hauck et al. (2009), among others.

Complexity Theory and Systems Theory

Complexity: Early complexity theorists sought to break down the division between natural and social sciences through seeing both domains as characterised by 'complexity' (Wallerstein 1996, Prigogine 1997). In a distinctly non-Newtonian turn, they no longer conceived of humanity as 'mechanical' or nature as mechanistic, but rather conceived of nature as active and creative (Urry 2003). They based scientific analysis on the dynamics of non-equilibria, dissipative structures, uncertainty and non-linearity; the laws of nature needed to be seen as compatible with the experiential unpredictability of events, novelty and creativity (Wallerstein 1996). In reviewing the German-language literature on complexity, Klein (2004: 4) identified five keywords: problem-oriented, beyond disciplinarity, practice-oriented, participatory, and process-oriented. It is noteworthy that these same key words recur also in the discourse on capacity development

A celebrated example of complexity theory at work in the environmental sciences in the 'butterfly effect', whereby a butterfly fluttering its wings in the Amazon basin can unexpectedly

alter the weather in Chicago (Kauffman 1993). Thus complexity theory is a way of investigating and discussing a class of phenomena from many different disciplines but is resistant to being understood through reductionist analysis.

Complexity theory breaks with straightforward cause-and-effect models and deterministic approaches to understanding social phenomena. It instead replaces them with organic, non-linear, and holistic approaches, in which relations within interconnected networks are the order of the day (Youngblood 1997; Cilliers 1998; Wheatley 1999). Byrne (1998) makes the case that

In the social world, and in much of reality including biological reality, causation is complex. Outcomes are determined not by single causes but by multiple causes, and these causes may, and usually do, interact in a non-additive fashion. In other words the combined effect is not necessarily the sum of the separate effects. (Byrne 1998: 20).

Urry (2003) identified the emergence of complexity theory, which already had a transformative influence on much of the biological and physical sciences, as a powerful new paradigm for the social sciences. In the social and organisational domain, complexity theory is the study of 'the phenomena which emerge from a collection of interacting objects', or – one might add - agents (Johnson, 2009: 4), and 'unlike analytic science, complexity science is defined more in terms of its objects of study than its modes of investigation' (Davis 2004:150).

What is it that makes something complex, as distinct from just being complicated? Most real-world examples of complexity involve a plurality of objects or agents competing for some kind of limited resource, e.g. food, energy, land, wealth or even political power. Complexity theory focuses not only on the critical junctures when emergent phenomena, in the absence of any overall controller or 'invisible hand', succumb to system breakdown or overload (traffic jams, market crashes, internet overload, epidemics), but also the adaptive and self-organising characteristics that are evinced by these same phenomena. Complexity theory argues that systems evolve with each other in a non-linear fashion and systems are subject to dynamic feedbacks both in positive and in negative sense. Moreover, they co-evolve with each other with potentials to 'co-organize' (Teisman, Klijn 2008).

Society is characterized by differentiated subsystems, such as the economy, politics, law, media, and science. These systems have developed their own running modes or 'codes', to use Niklas Luhmann's term (1997), that enable them to be productive. At the same time, differentiation also produces unintended, and sometimes unwelcome, side effects that cannot be handled within the codes of the system. Indicative of this development, the problems of society are increasingly complex and interdependent.

They are not isolated to particular sectors or disciplines, and they are not predictable. They are emergent phenomena with nonlinear dynamics. Effects

have positive and negative feedback to causes, uncertainties continue to arise, and unexpected results occur. (Klein 2004).

Systems. Complexity resonates with the principle attributed to Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.²⁵ In what now seems a prophetic tone, Senge, in his book *The Fifth Discipline* (1993) commented that

Systems thinking is needed more than ever because we are becoming overwhelmed by complexity, the scale of which is without precedent. All around us are examples of systemic breakdowns - the credit bubble, global warming – problems that have no simple local cause. (Senge 1993: 8).

According to Senge, organisations are best understood as open systems comprising a number of interlinking and interdependent elements. These elements form a hierarchy of importance, and therefore, certain elements were more central than others in the attainment of organisational capacity. Senge contends that the ‘unhealthiness’ of our world today is in direct proportion to our inability to see it as a whole.

Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing inter-relationships, not things, for seeing patterns of change rather than snapshots. It is a set of general principles spanning fields as diverse as the physical and social sciences, engineering and management. (ibid.: 8)

Senge challenged the ontological view of reality as being composed of separate, unrelated forces, and instead to build the understanding of the ‘learning organisation’, wherein people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, and where collective aspiration is set free. What he terms ‘metanoia’ is needed to see inter-relationships rather than cause and effect chains, and to see *processes* of change rather than snapshots. He stresses however that systems thinking need not be a ‘dismal science’: small, well-focused actions can sometimes produce significant and enduring improvements. Systems thinkers refer to this as ‘leverage’ – seeing where actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements. Katz and Kahn (1978) drew attention to the application of ‘open’ systems theory to organisation theory, in describing its emphasis on relationships, structure and inter-dependence (Schneider, Somers 2006). At an earlier stage than Senge, Kast and Rosenweig (1972) had referred to this as *synergism*, whereby the whole can only be satisfactorily explained as a totality and is not just a sum of its parts.

Emergence and Feedback are also key attributes in CAS, combining to produce the ‘adaptive’ dimension through which organisations and networks (including those engaged in CD initiatives) sustain themselves through constant adaptation to emergent realities and unexpected circumstances. This process of change is only partially open to explicit human direction and, importantly, and cannot be predetermined (Land et al., 2009). Complex systems evince an

²⁵ Aristotle. [Metaphysics, Book VIII, 1045a.8–10](#) 3rd entry

emergent quality that comes from the interaction of their elements, which may react disproportionately to exogenous change, such as to potentially alter the fundamental character of that system due to the inter-relatedness of system parts often far from equilibrium (Anderson 1999). Its distinctive analytical approach allows complexity theory to better explain some aspects of social systems, such as the importance of agency, the uncertainty of complex systems, and the process of change (Harrison, 2006).

Systems thinking, and the concept of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) in particular, offers a perspective that can help us better to understand how capacity develops within organisations and large systems. In so doing, the concept of CAS suggests what external partners need to do differently to improve their support for endogenous capacity development processes. (Land, Hauck et al. 2009: 2)

Mintzberg (1994) helps us understand this sense of ‘emergence’ by distinguishing between planned and emergent strategies: change wrought by emergence is not predictable because it derives from the tangled web of interactions that take place within a system. It is these emergent properties that enable an organization to learn and evolve. By the same token, because of the unpredictable nature and timing of these emergent elements, CD implementers and participants are required to be constantly reflective, adaptive and flexible in their way of working.

A Complex System therefore would have most if not all of the following features: (ibid. 13 - 14):

- The system (comprises a collection of many interacting objects or agents: the interactions may arise because of physical proximity, because of sharing a common identity or group interest, or because of pursuing some common information (e.g. commuters tuning in to a traffic report).
- The behaviour of these objects is affected by memory or ‘feedback’: information from past experience or from embedded knowledge influences a present decision.
- The system exhibits emergent phenomena which are often surprising in terms of their scale, timing or apparent dis-equilibrium.
- The system is typically ‘open’, at least partially contingent on factors in the external environment.
- The objects are capable of adaptation to new sets of circumstances.
- The way in which the output of a complex system changes over time represents a non-linear dynamic; if plotted on a graph, they would portray step changes and oscillating peaks and troughs, rather than a smooth gradient (Johnson 2009).

In the context of the present discussion, an important distinction is to be drawn between complexity theory and systems theory; in spite of the common terminology, there are important conceptual differences between the two (Phelan 1999). However the integrative character of systems thinking chimes well with complexity theory. The latter has been described by Fowler (2008) as

...combining and organising observations and knowledge to bring together various disciplines and their contributions into a wider framework for understanding societal processes. In a coherent, grounded way, complexity theory aims to connect disparate branches of knowledge, all of which are relevant for social change, but which are otherwise scattered over different areas of study and practice. (Fowler 2008: 1)

Because CASs are at least partially contingent on factors in the ever-changing external societal environment and the economic and political context, the teams or individuals who act within that system are interdependent agents. Fowler (1996) has transposed this proposition into the development arena:

A fundamental characteristic of complex human systems is that cause and effect are not close in time and space. There is a fundamental mismatch between the nature of reality in complex systems and our predominant ways of thinking about that reality. Human development results from a complex mix of non-linear processes which are largely determined by non-project factors. This means that the actual change in people's lives is contingent: it is an open system, determined by and dependent on many things. (Fowler 1996:58)

Fowler goes on to argue that focusing on processes, interrelationships, emergence and self-organisation, CAS can help us to understand the more unpredictable and disorderly aspects of CD. By changing the way we look at cause-and-effect relationships, emphasising possibilities and probabilities rather than predictable results, it also challenges many assumptions about the need for planning, detailed design and control. In the process, it questions the way external partners set about influencing local change processes. Specific capacity development outcomes cannot simply be engineered by the delivery of external inputs: interventions need to be flexible and able to adapt to future, usually unforeseeable, system behaviour.

The wide-angle view of or interconnections between systems are also of interest to complexity theorists. For them, the most fruitful research occurs at the points of intersection between disciplines, and involves making links between phenomena across conventional disciplinary boundaries, seeing common patterns in phenomena hitherto regarded as unrelated. In this they diverge from analytically reductionist approaches associated with the natural scientific method, and focused more on fine-grained particularity. Lewis (2007) considers it more helpful to think of complexity not as a 'paradigm' but simply another 'approach' in a methodologically pluralistic field.

Complex Adaptive Systems Theory

In continuity with the previous sub-section, the attributes and broad characteristics of a CAS are elucidated by Cilliers (1998: 3–5) to include the following: (i) a large number of elements interact in a dynamic way with much exchange of information; (ii) these interactions are rich, non-linear, and have a limited range because there is no over-arching framework that controls the flow of information; (iii) complex systems are open systems with feedback loops, both enhancing and stimulating (positive) or detracting and inhibiting (negative); both kinds are necessary; (iv) complex adaptive systems operate under conditions far from equilibrium, which means there is continual change and response to the constant flow of energy into the system; (v) complex systems are embedded in the context of their own histories, and no single element or agent can know, comprehend, or predict actions and effects that are operating within the system as a whole; (vi) complexity in the system is a result of the patterns of interaction between the elements. These attributes resonate strongly with the perspective of Fowler (1996), who reminds us that human development results from a complex mix of non-linear processes which are largely determined by non-project factors.

Increased interest in real-world complexity implies that ‘there will be few major advances in human medicine, sociology or economics without a better appreciation of complexity... this will be a very rich area for research’ (Johnson 2009:7). Teisman and Klijn (2008), in applying complexity theory to the realm of public administration and management, have discerned four generic and broadly accepted insights offered by the growing body of complexity theories across the social sciences:

- Firstly, ‘that phenomena are more dynamic than most of the traditional scientific approaches assumed’ (ibid.:288). Complexity theories thus tend to focus attention on the emergent dynamics of phenomena they examine; understanding this non-linear and emergent character of policy and practice in organisations is an important ambition of the complexity theory.
- Secondly, ‘that phenomena do not develop only by external forces imposed upon them’ (ibid: 288). Entities do not (only) behave according to laws or principles, but they have self-organizing capacities; within a larger compounded whole, the larger entity will develop in an unknown direction and with an unknown speed.
- Thirdly, context is all-important: CAS thinking encourages a holistic way of looking for patterns of interaction and underlying structures in the social world, enabling patterns of change to be discerned as a continuum, rather than as an amalgam of discrete elements.

- Fourthly, ‘the behaviour of actors – often the term agent is used – within complex dynamics, self-organizing landscapes’ (ibid: 289).

These four basic features are to be found among the theorists of Complex Adaptive Systems, who take the view that organisations and networks – whether simple or complex - are more analogous to living organisms than they are to machines. They constantly adapt and change in the face of new circumstances in order to sustain themselves. CAS thinking thus focuses on processes, interrelationships, emergence and self-organisation rather than on the reductionism of human development to the equivalent of the input-output sequence more characteristic of commodity production or machine bureaucracy.

CAS’ Applicability to development practice.

CAS theory is being absorbed into the literature of public sector management and public policy, and has strong relevance to the present study since development aid policy and practice is predominantly a derivative of the public administration domain (populated by bilateral and multilateral institutional players, albeit with partnership involvement on the part of voluntary sector and private sector entities). Conventional theoretical frameworks in public management had relied more heavily on attempts to eliminate unpredictability through increased reliance on measurable performance objectives, improved financial and human resource management techniques, decentralisation of authority and accountability and resolving principal-agent behaviour pathologies. In contrast, a CAS approach to public services shifts the focus to identifying patterns of behaviour of the participants with the ultimate objective of increasing policy-makers’ and practitioners’ understanding of the factors that may enable more effective public service decision-making and provision.

Generally, the study of complex adaptive systems provides an expansive and potentially interactive framework within which to view the ordinary territory of policy analysis. (Dennard, Richardson et al. 2008 :8).

The complexity-inspired analogy of the ‘butterfly effect’ (Kauffman 1993) mentioned six pages earlier is called to mind on reading a recently published World Development Report issued by the World Bank, which evinces complexity theory in a pronounced way, whether consciously or otherwise:

Seemingly small details of design can sometimes have big effects on individuals’ choices and actions. Moreover, similar challenges can have different underlying causes; solutions to a challenge in one context may not work in another. As a result, development practice requires an iterative process of discovery and learning. Multiple psychological and social factors can affect whether a policy succeeds; while some of these may be known before implementation, some will not be. This means that an iterative process of learning is needed, which in turn implies spreading resources

(time, money, and expertise) over several cycles of design, implementation, and evaluation. (World Bank 2015:15).

Such a phenomenological narrative would have been highly unlikely in a World Bank publication a generation ago. For some 35 years past, the well-established practice in programme planning and monitoring right across the international development field (including capacity building initiatives) has demanded adherence to quite standardized methods and techniques, all of which have a presumption of linear cause-and-effect chains, e.g. Logical Framework Analysis, ZOPP (*Ziel-orientierte Projekt Planung*), and Results Frameworks. Even though most donor agencies have, for some time now, acknowledged at a conceptual level that development is a multi-dimensional, complex and unpredictable process, they remain wedded to these stylized and mechanistic ‘input-output-outcome’ paradigms in their everyday practice.

Donor-funded aid projects and programmes encompass a wide scope of activity - poverty alleviation / eradication, emergency relief and rehabilitation, essential service delivery, and strengthening institutions of governance or community self-reliance. One can postulate a spectrum of aid interventions, ranging from the most tangible at one end (e.g. capital works and infrastructure), to that which is amorphous at the other, e.g. the development of institutional capacity of, say, a higher education institution, a national audit office, or a system of administration of justice. Yet despite the obvious differences between projects of widely differing types and contexts, uniform project management protocols and monitoring templates are routinely employed, and standardised indicators used to evaluate their performance without sufficient cognisance of context.

The phenomenon of heightened public scrutiny of aid budgets and policy and rising calls by development agencies themselves for greater accountability and transparency drove a concerted focus by the donor community since the late 1990s on evidence-based results and empirically-verifiable impact of development interventions (Woolcock 2013: 229). In the international development arena, many differing conclusions about aid performance have been advanced, but historically most have tended to rely on linear cause-and-effect relationships. Over many years development practice has adhered to quantifiable performance indicators and ‘results chain’ protocols of project management, but the intended outcomes of such efforts have proven to be elusive. Essentially, such protocols can be seen as attempts to improve the ‘steering’ capacity of managers and policy makers, consolidating their position of relative institutional power at the expense of the voice of end-beneficiaries and community-level stakeholders (Eyben 2013). The conventional tools and toolkits of project cycle management (PCM) which are commonplace among aid donors for the appraisal, management and evaluation of project interventions are strongly characterized by such linear thinking, implicit in which are some formidable ontological assumptions about the existence of a chain of causality comprising sequential links.

The results based management approach and its associated planning tools, supposedly bring ‘logic’, clarity and accountability into the planning, monitoring and evaluation of a project, with clearly stated goals and targets at all levels and a set of objectively verifiable indicators that will assess progress towards these. Foremost among such tools is logical framework analysis. (Earle 2002).

Earle goes on to note that the logical framework matrix derives from the engineering and business management disciplines. It was first introduced into the development arena by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the 1970s, and variations on the original theme of the 4x4 hierarchical matrix are still very much in evidence in donor and bilateral agencies today. The structure of the logframe suggests that everything will go according to plan: programme activities, outcomes and goals are all laid out in advance, as are indicators with which to monitor these. In this respect, it is an example of the ‘optimism bias’ in project management practice which was critiqued by Hirschman (1967).

In PCM methodology, an indicator can be defined as a factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor. Widely-used PCM guidelines used for example by the World Bank (Gertler, Martinez et al. 2011) stipulate that indicators, in order to be reliable and verifiable, must fulfil five requirements encapsulated in the acronym SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attributable, Realistic and Targeted to the objective population. Although originally conceived as a planning tool, LFA continues to be of utility as a monitoring tool for gauging progress and evaluating effectiveness, indicators for evaluation being built into its structure as a key component.

While logframes have earned credibility for the way in which they can encourage strategic thinking at different ‘levels’ of a project, weaknesses in the model are readily acknowledged by many practitioners of LFA (Bakewell, Garbutt 2005).

- Logframes are perceived as rigid and can lead to simplification of complex social processes aimed at behavioural, attitudinal, policy or institutional change.
- The fact that indicators must be determined at the outset of the project leaves little scope for nimble response or adaptation to unexpected factors that had not been factored in to the matrix.
- The linear view of change whereby processes feed into each other in neat sequential order and in a hierarchical manner does not accord with the often ‘messy’ reality of development work, buffeted by cross-winds blowing from different cultural and political directions.

- In practice, logframes tend to be initiated by agencies from above, often with little beneficiary participation at field level; many donor agencies now mitigate this by insisting on a prior participatory needs assessment being conducted, thereby securing a dual benefit of (i) facilitating stakeholder input into project design and (ii) establishing a baseline against which project results and outcomes can subsequently be ‘measured’ (a key requirement of results based management).

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, the pragmatic practitioner view persists in multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and in many larger NGOs, that LFA constitutes the best of the options available for planning and monitoring development work.

Although the logical framework has become universally known, it is far from universally liked...The position of the LFA in development organizations if anything is stronger than ever. A simplistic characterization of the prevailing attitudes to the LFA runs as follows: donors insist on it, while NGOs use it under sufferance. (Bakewell, Garbutt 2005: 1).

Continued reliance on the LFA would appear to be linked to the increased focus of large donors and aid agencies on the setting of goals and targets for their interventions, and the creation of objective indicators for their evaluation (Eyben 2013). Gradually, donor agencies are showing signs of adopting a more eclectic approach to project planning, distinguishing between the capacities that an organization needs to carry out its day-to-day activities (operational capacities) and the capacities needed for the organization to learn and change in response to changing circumstances (adaptive capacities). Some donor agencies (e.g. IDRC Canada) emphasize this distinction by recourse to 'outcome mapping' methodology (Horton, Alexaki et al. 2003). Work continues on the development of alternative, qualitative monitoring and evaluation techniques with a countervailing emphasis on learning as well as on accountability. One such approach is the Most Significant Change technique, a qualitative monitoring and evaluation tool centred on stories of change (Wigboldus 2015). Wigboldus cautions, however, that a ‘comprehensive and integral methodology’ is needed that draws on complexity thinking and other related approaches; otherwise, development programmes will keep falling back into ‘linear programming mode’.

In contrast, the CAS perspective provokes questioning about the way external partners set about influencing local change processes, recognising that systems co-evolve and co-organise with each other in a non-linear fashion and are subject to dynamic feedback both in a positive and negative sense. (Teisman, Klijn 2008). It also focuses on ‘system emergence from complex agent interactions’ (Land, Hauck et al. 2009).

Summation on Complex Adaptive Systems

The review of the research on CD earlier in this chapter confirms that it presents complex challenges that are highly context-dependent and difficult to predict, though not devoid of discernible patterns. This applies particularly when CD is undertaken at a time of institutional change and formidable expansionary pressures, as is the case with HEIs (public and private) throughout the sub-Saharan Africa region. In this context, CAS thinking, infused by whole-of-systems perspective, finds strong resonance with the phenomenon of CD.

CAS thinking focuses on processes, interrelationships, emergence and self-organisation rather than on the reductionism of human development to the equivalent of the input-output sequence more characteristic of machine bureaucracy, reliant on linear cause-and-effect relationships that conventionally underpins much official aid practice (Verkoren, 2008). Rather the value of CAS in this context lies in the appreciation that no single factor or constituent element – incentives, leadership, financial support, trained staff, knowledge – can by itself lead to the development of capacity. A broader palette of approaches is needed in relation to CD.

An abundance of approaches to problem solving is more productive than a reduction of methodology to one or two ‘proven’ methods or even interpretations. (Dennard, Richardson et al. 2008: 12)

CAS integrates and unifies the multi-dimensional character of the multi-dimensional subject-matter of the present study: (a) the contextual factors at play in the organisational environment of international development; (b) the agent-based factors which underlie the systems and processes involved in CD; and (c) the implementation modalities and mechanisms for delivery of programmes aimed at capacity strengthening.

Rhodes, Murphy et al. (2011) identify six core elements of CAS, which appear in the left hand column in Table 5 below. These correlate rather well with key aspects of the discourse around CD, as indicated in the right-hand column.

Table 5: Correspondence between Core Elements of CAS and Capacity Development

Core CAS Element	Explanation	Where this impinges on Capacity Development
1. System	The ‘scope’ of the system, the nature and extent of the boundaries separating the system from its environment	CAS accommodates multiple interpretations of capacity that are culturally and socially defined.
2. Environmental Factors	Features of the environment that affect the behaviour of agents and the outcomes of the system.	CD is driven by local initiative and circumstance. It is a process of its own separate from external intervention.
3. Environmental Rules	The laws, codes, assumptions and norms that influence how	CAS takes due account of non-tangible aspects of capacity, i.e.

	agents behave.	informal relationships, interactions, values, etc., and aspects of capacity “conferred” from outside, such as legitimacy.
4. Agents	Protagonists engaged in processes within the scope of the system to accomplish individual or joint objectives.	Values, meaning and moral purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal structures and systems • Relationships (internal and external) • Legitimacy, confidence and identity
5. Processes	Related collection of actions and interactions among agents and perceived by those agents as purposeful.	Emphasis on learning and iteration, without necessarily any formal design elements. Notion of evolving design.
6. Outcomes	The results or impact of the system as understood by the agents participating therein,	The most critical decisions in organisations have system-wide consequences that stretch over years or decades (Senge 1993).

Source: Rhodes, Murphy et al. 2011.

Only in the relatively recent past has CAS thinking permeated into the arenas of international development and capacity development, but its appropriateness and applicability have quickly become evident and have excited research interest in terms of both development theory and practice. As an alternative to the rationalistic and deterministic underlay of much of the project management body of knowledge and the ‘good practice’ guides deriving therefrom (Palmberg 2009)), an alertness to context, adaptability, systems thinking and learning (in essence, CAS theory) offers those involved in CD work important countervailing perspectives to the more linear mode of project and programme management, involving an integrative and multi-disciplinary understanding of the social reality.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the overall research design, its rationale, and the research strategy emanating from these. It then explains the distinct but complementary sources of evidence-generation (appropriate to the context) that were pursued, and the instruments and tools used in the analysing that evidence. It describes the impressive array of high-calibre expertise that was harnessed, and how their rich testimonies informed conclusions that are later presented in Chapter 8. Certain logistical and other problems encountered in implementing the research strategy, and how these were dealt with, are discussed. Issues relating to potential author bias are also addressed in the course of the chapter.

Research design

This study concerns itself fundamentally with two public policy domains (international development and higher education) that are demonstrably complex and multi-faceted. In customising a research design to suit the nature of the present research study, its interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary (ITD) character required a heterogeneous methodology which would encompass multiple sources of evidence. The design of the empirical research phase of this study proceeded from, and reflected, the overall conceptualisation of the study set out in Chapter 1, its theoretical underpinnings (Chapter 2), and the researcher's personal and professional background.²⁶

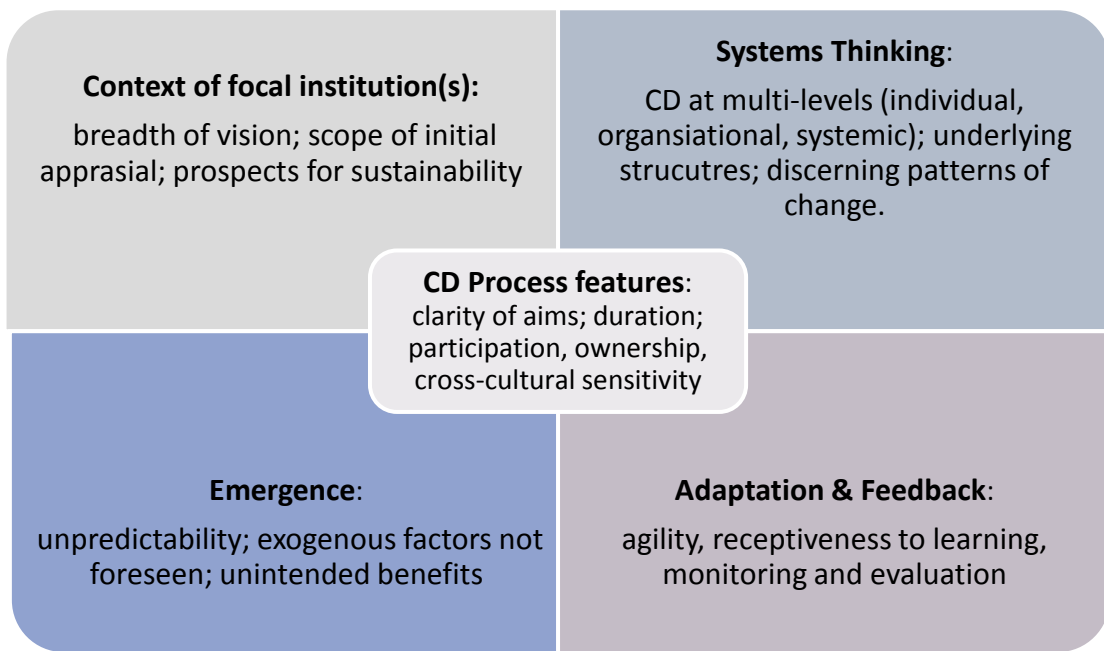
An important element of this conceptualisation was an appreciation of the potential value of understandings of complexity to the evaluation of development and knowledge programmes, and to the planning and management thereof, as elaborated in detail in Chapter 4. Allied to this were:

- an ontological standpoint of critical realism, which posits entities, relations, processes and institutions as stratified (or complex), emergent, and transformational (or adaptive)²⁷; what is noteworthy about these defining characteristics is that they are strikingly close to the descriptors of CAS theory;
- an epistemological perspective which is broadly interpretivist, employing methods of inquiry which are largely inductive by nature and exploratory in their application.

²⁶ The author had an extensive professional background as a practitioner in international development project management and evaluation, spanning thirty years, and enabling him to bring an 'Interpretive, naturalistic approach to subject matter' (Denzin, Lincoln 1998: 3).

²⁷ [According to critical realists] 'reality is stratified, emergent, transformational, systemically open, processual, and often relational...Some entities exist independently of their identification because not all are constructed from discourse' (Fleetwood 2014: 191).

Figure 7: Proposed conceptual framework for key informant interviews



Consistent with this positioning, the study evinces an understanding of phenomenon, or problem-driven, research as connecting theory with the world it is ostensibly about, placing a premium on close observation of the world and then confronting those observations with existing theoretical perspectives (and vice versa). It was envisaged that the evidence-gathering would blend historical and contemporary perspectives, attempting to map salient changes in policy and practice towards AFHECIs over time, and to compare the earlier and later dispensations emanating from those changes. The researcher also sought to ensure that the analysis of evidence would be underpinned by conceptual models extracted or elaborated from selected authoritative sources in the development literature and / or management literature, which were considered in Chapters 3 and 4.

Since an interpretivist - and therefore non-deterministic - epistemological perspective has been avowed by the researcher (see Chapter 2), it follows by implication that a positivist stance, seeking to utilise research methods predicated on linear or vertically 'layered' understandings of causality, would not be applicable in this specific study, nor for this particular researcher. This is not to deprecate the contribution to learning of the positivist tradition in research, were the subject matter, context and researcher interests substantially different from those which are treated of here; following Hammersley (2008) who pointed out the futility of asserting claims to intrinsic superiority by one methodological school over another, the author is not advancing claims that either of the two schools of methodology (quantitative and qualitative) is inherently

superior or more rigorous than the other, but favours a more situational and contextualised rationale for methodological positioning.

Accordingly, given the nature and context of the study as described above, a qualitative, exploratory and investigative methodological approach was adopted. There are several cogent grounds to support the conviction that qualitative tools of investigation and analysis are entirely appropriate here:

(i) Qualitative methods are better suited to ‘address questions about how social experience is created and given meaning’ (Gephart 2004: 454);

(ii) No particular hypothesis is to be tested in this study, thus removing the starting point of deductive logic. The multi-dimensional, dynamic and contested domains of (a) human development and (b) higher education capacity are too complex to be reduced to a pre-defined menu of variables and linear cause-and-effect relationships.

(iii) Qualitative research is better suited to subject matter which is broader and more integrative in scope, these being characteristic of an inter- or trans-disciplinary investigation such as this one. The heterogeneity of subject matter warranted the incorporation into the research design of a plurality of evidence strands (literature review, key informant ‘depth interviews’, case study archival material, and practitioner reflection). The subject matter of the study, delving as it does into ideas on the interface between the triad of disciplines presented in Chapter 1, is a near-perfect illustration of Darbellay’s description of inter-and trans-disciplinary research as the response of a ‘heterodox family’ to a certain form of intellectual enquiry stimulated by:

...a growing awareness of the multidimensional complexity of research contexts and objects, and hence also of societal issues that require the greater synergization of institutionalised disciplinary skills. (Darbellay 2015: 164).

(iv) Qualitative methods especially those which draw upon the insights of phenomenology and hermeneutics, emphasize the paramount importance of contextualising any quest for understanding of social, behavioural, organisational, economic, or other phenomena which are the object of study in the human sciences.

Qualitative researchers seek an understanding of behaviour, values, beliefs and so on, in terms of the context in which the research is conducted... their contextual approach, and their often-prolonged involvement in a setting that engenders rich data. (Bryman, Teevan, 2005: 144).

(v) Qualitative research is accommodating of attempts to fit a multiplicity of accounts into a coherent narrative underpinned by a ‘sense-making’ perspective.

Qualitative researchers seek involvement with the people being investigated, so that they can genuinely understand the world through their

eyes...Qualitative research is often depicted as attuned to the unfolding of events over time, and to the interconnections between the actions of participants in social settings. (ibid.)

Position of the researcher in this study as a reflective practitioner

In setting out to devise an appropriately robust methodology which at the same time would be sufficiently wide-ranging to do justice to the trans-disciplinary nature of the thematic material, I was aware from the outset of the potential accusation of researcher bias (see also Chapter 1 in this regard). There is no attempt to disguise the fact I am both researcher and a former protagonist, having served on the staff of both case study organisations, and was personally known to many of the informants. It was this very career path, and its unique character, that provided the main wellspring of intellectual curiosity that became an important motivation for the present study. Arguably the import of the subject matter may never have come to be recognised by researchers other than someone so close to the action; after all, over twenty years had elapsed since the demise of HEDCO, and no-one appears to have attempted a chronology of that organisation, still less an analytical critique. The researcher's insider status also facilitated privileged access to archival material that otherwise had never been codified and would have been in danger of lapsing into obscurity.

By its nature, this study permits the researcher to be immersed in the thematic material under investigation, precisely because he was. The roles that I played in HEDCO and the IAP are acknowledged to have shaped my professional profile and world-view, to the extent that it would no more be possible for me to cast aside a career-long span of lived experience than it would be to cast off my own skin. Consequently, I freely acknowledges that I am open to the charge of lacking investigator objectivity. In my defence (and without wishing to be dismissive of concerns about researcher bias), four countervailing considerations are put forward. Firstly, the epistemological stance of this study presented in detail in Chapter 2 is much more circumspect about asserting the attainability of investigator objectivity, than would be the case if the classic scientific method were being applied. Without lapsing into relativism or solipsism, the subjective eye, informed by intimate professional knowledge of the case study organisations and of the wider international development policy and practice, is conducive to both breadth of understanding and depth of analysis, provided it remains self-critical, is vigilant to the risk of unconscious bias creeping in, and is complemented by a plurality of evidence sources. Close observation of the phenomena coupled with deep knowledge of literature together aid the development of innovative and important theory (Pfeffer, 2005). Secondly, both case studies are situated in the past, one of them (HEDCO) now receding into the middle distance of historical perspective, and this facilitates a degree of historical detachment when it comes to analysis. Thirdly, my late-career status is such that I am most unlikely to be seeking a remunerated

position with any cognate implementing agency, and consequently am unusually free from constraint, obligation or institutional loyalty in assessing the evidence and offering analysis and conclusions, enabling a degree of analytical detachment to be observed. Fourthly, the research has not been financially sponsored from any external source, apart from partial fee abatement from an internal research fund in DCU: otherwise I have invested my own time and expense (or more precisely, opportunity cost), and thus the research project is above any suggestion of corporate sponsorship, and the power dynamics associated therewith.

Exploratory / preliminary phase

In Chapter 4, the salience of the exhaustive study of public sector institutions undertaken by Baser and Morgan (2008) was acknowledged. This established the ‘5 Cs’ model of core capabilities, as an analytical framework for system-level capacity performance: (a) the capability to act and commit; (b) the capability to deliver on development objectives; (c) the capability to adapt and self-renew; (d) the capability to relate to external stakeholders; and (e) the capability to achieve coherence.

This generic typology is one which has strong resonance with the present study, but needed to be adapted to the particular sub-domain of higher education institutions, while at the same time having regard to another significant theme emerging from the literature review: CAS theory. Accordingly, the researcher formulated the following six-point schedule as a plausible – but still provisional – framework for analysis of evidence emerging from a proposed twin-pronged research strategy: a series of authoritative key informant interviews, and documentary archival material relating to two highly pertinent organizational case studies. The provisional 6-point framework of analysis comprised Baser and Morgan’s ‘5 Cs’ with adaptations to the terminology, plus an additional ‘operating environment’ category. Against each of these six attributes, the researcher (based on his embedded knowledge of the domain of enquiry) posited possible corresponding indicators relating to the specific context of higher education institutions and their role in development assistance programming.

Table 6: Provisional six-point framework of analysis informing the research design.

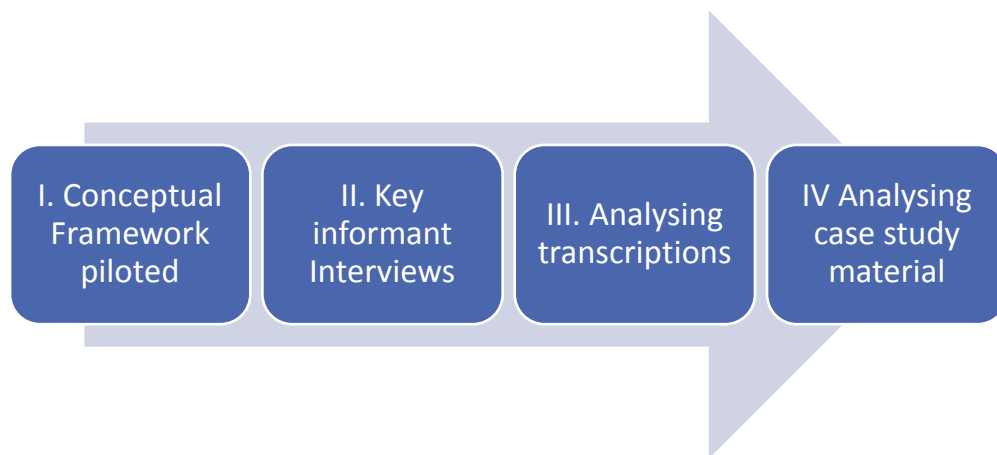
Attribute to be analysed	Indicative evidential indicators, discernible in / from:
1. Capacity Development as Process	Vision, cross-cultural communication, ownership
2. Capability to commit and engage	Actors willing to mobilise resources (financial, human, organisational); plan, decide and engage collectively
3. Technical Capability	Teaching, learning resource design, up-skilling, research
4. Capability to Network / Attract support	Linkages, alliances, partnerships, advocacy
5. Capability to Adapt	Dealing nimbly with unpredictability, emergence, exogenous factors not foreseen
6. Systemic factors / enabling environment	Donor sentiment, multilateral agency policy stance, macro-economic and political trends in-country or in-region.

Before proceeding further, this broad architecture was probed and tested in an extended conversation with a former senior colleague who had been an early pioneer of distance education and open learning in Southern Africa in the 1970s, had then been chief executive of HEDCO Ireland in the 1980s and early 1990s, and had since worked as an education sector specialist with the World Bank (with special responsibility for its West Africa programme). This background equipped him with a unique understanding of both the micro-level and macro-level context and power relations that exerted influence on the evolution of AFHECIs over the entire time span under review in this study.

The subsequent months were an important gestation period for bringing the study to fruition. Firstly, a thematic analysis was undertaken of major agencies' practitioner manuals on capacity development programme planning and management - the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), EuropeAid, DfID – UK, SIDA Sweden, CIDA – Canada, DANIDA – Denmark, and the Overseas Development Institute. Secondly, through personal reflection (adhering to the theoretical approach previously outlined) and engagement with the supervisory panel, I felt I was on sufficiently firm ground to discern the putative scope of the research in outline. Thirdly came the more concrete planning of the iterative stages through which the implementation of this wide-ranging study could proceed, in a way which would add value to existing knowledge in the area, while offering a realistic prospect of achievability within the constraints of time and resources.

This culminated in a four-stage process of research strategy implementation being mapped out (see Figure 8), which provided the basis for the candidate's application for transfer to the PhD register.

Figure 8. Research strategy - stages of implementation



Each of these inter-related stages will now be considered in more detail.

First stage – Piloting the Conceptual Framework

The extensive literature review (Chapter 4) on capacity development (seen through the prism of CAS), alongside feedback from two substantial pilot interviews (one in Ireland, one in Africa), provided a necessary route to testing the viability of the six-point provisional conceptual framework for analysis of AFHECIs (Table 6 above). For the purpose of this pilot phase, a ‘long-list’ of draft questions was prepared grouped under the six headings of the provisional framework. It became apparent that several of these draft questions contained rather too much abstract language and were too lengthy, relative to the time availability of intended respondents. For example, the need to simplify the terminology arose in relation to the differentiation between individual, institutional and systemic capacity (which assumed prior knowledge of key concepts in capacity development discourse); another was the reference to ‘programme coherence and alignment’ (which in retrospect was a specimen phrase of current ‘development-speak’). On the basis of this initial feedback, three steps followed, intended to help structure the subsequent key informant interviews, according to the process described below.

(i) The conceptual framework underwent a further iteration in the light of reflection on the pilot interviews and consultation with both supervisors, with the result that what had been a six-point framework became a five-point one, by conflating two overlapping attributes into one.²⁸

²⁸ The rationale for this was that, arising from four initial interviews, a significant degree of overlap had been identified between ‘Capacity to Commit and Engage’ and ‘Capability to Network and Attract Support’. The core element of the former is resource mobilization (domestic and international), and the core element of the latter is North-South partnership-working. The responses from informants

Furthermore, the wording of the attribute descriptors, which had derived from the more generic study of capacity development (Baser, Morgan 2008) was modified in the interests of plainer terminology, making the meaning more transparent and more relevant to our more specific theme of capacity for the higher education sector. The five-point framework thus emerging appears below as Table 7. This became the definitive framework that provided the springboard for analysis of both the key informant semi-structured interviews and the archival case study material which was systematically reviewed.

Table 7: Modified (post-pilot) Conceptual Framework on which the Interview Guides were based (revised terminology shown in capitals in square brackets).

Attributes of Aid Funded Higher Education Capacity Initiatives	Discernible through:
1. Capacity Development Purpose & Process [PURPOSE & MOTIVATION]	Vision, ownership, measures for promoting sustainability; monitoring and evaluation.
2. Capability to mobilise resources and work in partnership [FORGING ALLIANCES]	Actors willing to mobilise resources (financial, human, organisational); cross-cultural communication, linkages, alliances, partnerships (domestic and international)
3. Technical Capability [KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS]	Teaching, learning resource design, up-skilling, research
4. Adaptive Capability [ADAPTATION TO CHANGE]	Agility in dealing with unpredictability, emergence, unforeseen exogenous factors
5. Systemic factors / enabling environment [SYSTEMIC CONTEXT]	Donor sentiment, multilateral agency policy stance, macro-economic and political trends in-country or in-region.

(ii) A long-list of potential key informants was drawn up, comprising experienced and reputable mid- to late-career professionals drawn from three constituencies:

- (a) Managers of AFHECIs, with substantive career experience working in implementing agencies at international level (EP-NUFFIC Netherlands, SIU Norway, Irish Aid, EPFL Switzerland, EUA, European Commission and the World Bank).
- (b) ‘Southern’ voices comprising senior academic faculty and university managers who have been directly involved in capacity development initiatives at the beneficiary end.

indicated that in practice these tend to be inextricably linked in the case of aid-funded higher education capacity initiatives (AFHECIs).

(c) Ireland-based veterans of AFHECI work in Africa, mainly academics having first-hand experience of delivering or overseeing capacity development programmes in Africa over the 30-year time span covered by this study.

(iii) Using the framework in Table 7 above, three semi-structured interview guides were drafted, one for each of the three constituents of key informants (reproduced in Annex C, D and E).

Consistent with the inductive nature of this study, purposive sampling, a non-random technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich subjects (Patton 2002), was selected as the method for determining the population of potential interviewees. The purposive sampling technique implies the deliberate choice of a participant in virtue of the qualities the participant possesses. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) notes the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Palinkas, Horwitz, et al. 2015). All of these considerations were present in determining the overall research strategy and in the identification of the individuals to be approached as prospective participants.

As a corollary of employing this non-random technique no claims are advanced concerning representativeness (the researcher's interest being primarily on what was said, rather than on who said it). In taking this approach, the researcher found himself in agreement with Oppenheim's view of the 'depth interview':

Exact representativeness is not usually necessary, but we need a good spread of respondent characteristics so that we can reasonably hope to have tapped probable respondents of every kind and [relevant] background. (Oppenheim 1992: 68).

The time and care devoted to determining the composition of the key informant group, was rewarded by ultimately obtaining a high-quality sample of sufficient number (with twenty-seven persons making themselves available) and with a sufficient spread to confer validity; this sample spread spanned three constituencies of experienced AFHECI stakeholders of various nationalities, namely donor agency managers, Southern voices from SSA, and Irish-based veterans of AFHECI work in Africa. Table 8 categorizes these informants, according to their role and credentials relevant to the present study.

Table 8: Key Informants’ Designations and Credentials (See also Annex B)

Current Designation	Gender	Nationality	Credentials relevant to the study
A01- Public representative (member of Dáil Éireann)	F	Irish	Irish Govt Minister of State with responsibility for International Development 12/1994 - 06/1997. Overseas service as university lecturer in Tanzania 1982-86
A02 - Project Expert at the European University Association, Brussels	F	US /Italian	Senior policy officer at the Academic Cooperation Association (Brussels), Fulbright Commission to Belgium and Luxembourg, and the Directorate for Education and Culture (EAC) of the European Commission.
A03 - International Policy Officer, European Commission DG Education and Culture	F	UK	EU Commission official for international cooperation in higher education since 1992. Assigned to Tempus programme of cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe, the Mashrek region (Egypt, Lebanon and Syria) and latterly on ‘Erasmus +’.
A04 - Global Lead for Tertiary Education, World Bank (WB), and Head of WB Mission in India.	M	Mexican	Coordinator of WB Network of Higher Education Specialists. Founding Executive Director of the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC).
A05 - Executive Director, NORRAG Network (based at Graduate Institute Geneva)	M	Swiss	Network for International Policy and Planning in Education & Training. s Secretary of the International Accreditation Council for Development Studies (IAC) of the European Association of Development Institutes (EADI).
A06 - Deputy President and Registrar, Maynooth University	M	Irish	Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank (2004-2008); in this role he monitored WB education sector work in sub-Saharan Africa. Specialist in ICT in education, management information systems, and teacher quality.
A07 - Programme Director ‘MOOCS for Africa’ based at Ecole Polytechnique Federale Lausanne (EPFL)	M	Greek	Joined EPFL International Relations Dept. in November 2005. Specialist in innovative methods in higher education in Africa through novel e-learning platforms
A08 - Head of Planning and Performance Unit,	M	Irish	Former Irish Ambassador to Zambia and Senior Evaluation Specialist with UNICEF New York

A: Managers of Aid-funded Higher Ed. Capacity Initiatives.

Irish Aid HQ				
A09 - Chief Advisor, EP-Nuffic (Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education)	M	Dutch		Designed scholarships and cooperation programmes for the Netherlands, other governments and the European Commission. Specialises in capacity development, international cooperation and the internationalisation of HE.
A10 - Head of Department in SIU (Bergen)	F	Norwegian		Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education

B: Southern Voices	B01 - Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, University of Dar es Salaam	M	Tanzanian	Irish Aid Fellowship holder. Awarded PhD by Trinity College Dublin 1993. Has lectured in UDSM ever since (6 years as Head of Dept). Authored or co-authored 58 peer-reviewed papers and 1 book. Supervised 7 PhDs and 50+ Masters theses.
	B02 - Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Makerere Univ.	M	Ugandan	Irish Aid Fellowship holder. Awarded PhD by DCU in 2013. Now Director of Uganda's only postgrad programme in Social Work.
	B03 - Senior Lecturer, Agha Khan University, Dar es Salaam	M	Tanzanian	Irish Aid Fellowship holder. Awarded PhD from UCD. Lectured in DIT School of Computing 1998-2017, while also supervising PhDs in Tanzania.
	B04 - Associate Professor of Mathematics, UDSM	M	Tanzanian	Irish Aid Fellowship holder. Awarded PhD by DCU in 1997. Academic staff of UDSM. Director of Undergraduate Studies, UDSM.
	B05 - Chief Executive of UWEZO – an NGO with a region-wide E. Africa remit for education.	F	Ugandan	PhD (Ed) - Univ of Cape Town. Previously member of academic staff of Makerere University, Uganda; then Mary Immaculate College Limerick (under IAPRCB); and Univ of KwaZulu Natal, S Africa.
	B06 - Director of Prime Consult International, Tanzania	M	Tanzanian	Irish Aid Fellowship holder (Masters in Finance, DCU) 1994. Moved from academia into professional role as public finance analyst, operating region-wide.

C: Ireland-based veterans of AFHECI work in field in Africa	C01 - Lecturer in DIT (retired)	M	Irish	Volunteer Maths Lecturer in UDSM in the early 1990s.
	C02 - Director of Institute of Technology (retired)	M	Irish	Ex-Chairman of HEDCO 1995-98. Ex-Chairman of Higher Education Authority
	C03 - Visiting Professor of Education, Uni. of Ulster	M	Irish	N Ireland Minister for Higher Education & Training, 1999-2000.
	C04 - International Teacher Trainer (retired)	M	Irish	Career-long service to education in Africa (Swaziland, Malawi and Tanzania).
	C05 - Irish Aid External Evaluator	F	Irish	Education and social sector specialist in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Nigeria for various donors, Consultant to UN Women.
	C06 - Ex- Head of School in an Institute of Technology	M	Irish	Higher level technical training specialist in Lesotho and Zimbabwe. HEDCO Project Leader in-country 1998-2002.
	C07 - Professor Emeritus and Registrar of UCD	M	Irish	Ex- Chair of Irish Aid Advisory Committee 1997-2002. Chair of HEDCO 1986 – 92. HEDCO Project Leader for Jordan 1983-86.
	C08 - Senior Lecturer in Business in Institute of Technology	M	Irish	Designed and delivered training programmes in Accounting & Finance in Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi 1992-1999.
	C09 - Lecturer in DCU School of Education	M	Irish	Long term assignee as Lecturer in Maths in UDSM 1992-1996. HEDCO Project Leader in-country.
	C10 - Professor Emeritus, UCD Agriculture Faculty	M	Irish	Specialist Advisor in education and training for Agricultural sector in E Africa for Irish Aid and World Bank
	C11 - Freelance Development consultant	F	Irish	HEDCO Overseas Programme Manager 1996-2000. Formerly on staff of Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi.

On the basis of the research design described above, approval to proceed with the empirical work envisaged in the study was sought and obtained from the University’s Research Ethics Committee; this proved relatively straightforward given that the putative informants would not include children or other vulnerable groups, and were relatively senior figures with a tertiary education background who themselves understood today’s research processes and requirements.

Second stage: Conduct of the key informant interviews

This stage involved the selection of interviewees. In approaching this task, the researcher was able from his previous professional circles to carefully identify eminent individuals across the three constituencies (AFHECI Managers, Southern Voices and Veterans), while also striving for a mix of gender and nationality. Though in most cases many years had elapsed since the researcher and the prospective informants had last been in contact, their prior mutual knowledge provided an invaluable basis of trust and motivation to participate. When tentative approaches to informants began to be made, there seemed to be on their part a spontaneous and intuitive recognition of the value of the proposed study: a sense that there was a 'story' needing to be told that had no-one seemed yet to have pursued.. Thus the issue of access posed little difficulty, but what did prove problematic was the synchronisation of diaries, because almost without exception these were people with busy schedules, in some cases involving international travel and onerous diary commitments. Out of thirty-three prospective key informants approached to participate, twenty-seven key informant interviewees eventuated (including the two individuals who provided both pilot and substantive interviews). The researcher considered this level of positive response remarkably good, and views the panel of informants here assembled as being strong and authoritative.

The soliciting of voluntary participation in writing by each prospective informant was necessary (a sample of the signed Consent Form is reproduced in Annex A). Interviewees were assured that evidence would not be attributed to named individuals in the main text, and that they would be identified by name only in a master list in the Annex. The interviews themselves were then scheduled (27 in all), with an average duration of one hour, using a voice recording device. They took place in a quiet setting relatively free of interruptions (usually in the informants' offices or in the case of Africa-based individuals, via skype). Finally, the author transcribed the recorded interview material into Word format; although this task proved laborious, it conferred the advantage of becoming intimately familiar with the resultant qualitative data. Recalling Oppenheim's distinction between 'standardised' and 'exploratory' interviews, the intricate and often nuanced nature of the subject matter of the interviews for this study rendered the latter mode of depth interview more appropriate to the inductive mode of inquiry in the present study: 'the purpose of the exploratory interview is essentially heuristic to develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than to gather facts and statistics' (Oppenheim 1992: 67).

Third Stage: Analysis of the interview transcripts

Third came the analysis of the transcribed interviews, sorting and coding of the large volume of qualitative data, and interpretation thereof (see Chapter 6). For this purpose, an appropriate

computer aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) package, *Quirkos*²⁹ was selected after consultation with supervisors. It was selected because it is both rigorous in its functionality and straightforward to use; it proved to be capable of sorting and managing thematic text data, comparing themes across hundreds of different sources, and generating reports which can be exported into Word. Using the *Quirkos* package was immensely valuable in bringing structure, perspicacity and coherence to the relatively ‘freestyle’ interview responses, replete as these were with thematic and historical insights.

Although the line of questioning followed a carefully-honed structure, the relatively open, semi-structured nature was such that the questions posed therein served as prompts to elicit responses from individuals who in almost all cases were articulate, highly educated, reflective, and analytical in their thinking (qualities which made them eligible to be selected in the first place). Consequently, the transcripts were unusually wide-ranging and discursive, such that allusions to any one particular issue were liable to occur (and recur) at various points throughout the interview.

The five-point Framework (Table 7 above) was used as the basis for an initial first round of coding, using its five attributes as the initial ‘parent nodes’; these were designated as ‘Level 1’. As a follow-on second step, the conceptual content of the interview data was allowed to suggest or prompt the generation of additional ‘parent’ nodes, as well as clusters of associated ‘child nodes’, or sub-categories, of germane thematic relevance. This inductive first step was followed, in a third step, by more detailed rounds of coding, building and elaborating incrementally on the postulated Framework from the bottom up. As a result of the process, the creation of six additional parent nodes (also designated Level 1) brought the total in this category to eleven, while no less than fifty ‘child’ sub-categories (Level 2) were also created out of the same process. The creation of additional parent nodes (over and above the original five) was necessitated by the nature and incidence of observations which either fell outside the original five categories, or where the parent node was becoming overladen (encompassing multiple topics which merited separation, in order to better analyse each). The expansion of the range of parent nodes or principal attributes from my initial five (in Baser and Morgan’s generic 5Cs model) to eleven seemed at first to be excessive, but on deep reflection, I considered this to be warranted by the multi-faceted phenomenon which is the AFHECI. Also I considered that the use of the eleven-point framework would allow more granular, stringent analysis than the broader categories that constitute the ‘5Cs’ model. The same eleven ‘parent nodes’ as featured in the analysis of interview transcripts were also used as the framework for archival documentary analysis in respect of the two case studies. A third level of observations (level 3)

²⁹ www.quirkos.com/index.html

was created, comprising references to the two organisations forming the Case Studies (Chapter 7).

Accordingly, Table 9 below presents the eleven-point framework of AFHECI principal (Level 1) attributes (or 'parent nodes), in which I give my working definition of each, and the associated (Level 2) categories ('child nodes'). The order in which these are presented in the Table reflects the ranking (in descending order) of their incidence among classifiable observations in the transcripts of the substantive testimonies of key informants.

Table 9: Attributes (Level 1) constitutive of effective AFHECIs: ranking of incidence of classifiable observations by Key Informants.

Rank	Level 1 Meta-attributes ('parent nodes') -	Number of references	Researcher's definition of the parent node descriptor in the context of this study	Associated Level 2 categories ('child nodes'), in descending order of incidence by interviewees.
1	KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS *	59	'Knowledge and skills' denotes the intended, proximate deliverables of capacity development interventions, such as teaching and upskilling, learning resources, and provision of research and learning infrastructure (including ICT).	Research, Transferable Skills, Course Provision, Quality, Infrastructure, Technical Assistance & Mentoring, Professional Credentials
2	FORGING ALLIANCES *	56	Denotes a variety of collaborative relationships or linkages which may be local, regional or global in scope, sharing as their common feature the aim of nurturing capacity development for Higher Education in SSA	Organisational Fit, Institutional Capacity Development, Cohesion & Teamwork, Ownership, Feedback & Mutuality
3	ADAPTATION TO CHANGE *	55	Demonstration by Northern based programme management agencies or of Southern institutions and host governments of an agility to respond or self-accommodate to the ever-changing operating environment, and the precipitating factors in such change.	Information & Communications Technology, Pedagogy, Dynamic Change, Dependency, (Dis)-Continuity.
4	PURPOSE & MOTIVATION *	53	This is intended to articulate how informants view the teleological thrust of AFHECIs, in terms of their intended ulterior of higher-level purpose.	Sustainability, MDGs & SDGs, Relative Priority, Self-interest, Beneficence, Response to Need, Goal Orientation
5	POSTGRADUATE BURSARIES	51	Externally-funded opportunities for nationals of beneficiary countries to pursue accredited Masters, Doctoral and /or Professional qualifications, in-country and/or overseas.	Not applicable
6	PROGRAMME MODALITIES	50	Two overlapping phenomena are covered under the heading. The first relates to the structured instruments by which development funding is channelled and delivered (e.g. budget support, sector programme support,	Monitoring & Evaluation, Planning, Results Focus, Project Management Practices, Value for Money / Cost Benefit Analysis, Evidence

			basket funding); the second relates to the methods and practices that have evolved for the appraisal, management and evaluation of project interventions in the international development arena, including capacity development work.	
7	FINANCE / FUNDING	50	The level of resource provision for AFHECIs within ODA budgets of donor countries and multilateral institutions, in parallel with domestic resource mobilisation by national governments in the South, to meet the recurrent budget requirements in perpetuity.	Not applicable
8	HUMAN RESOURCES	48	Actions pertaining to policies and practices of Southern HEIs and their governments, some conducive to and others inimical to the retention and career progression of trained personnel for national / institutional capacity.	Succession, Retention, Job (in-)security, staff, shortage, gender, role clarity.
9	TIME HORIZONS	42	Longitudinal thinking rendered necessary by the usually protracted nature of the time-line required for institutional capacity development interventions to reach fruition.	Not applicable.
10	SYSTEMIC CONTEXT *	36	Embracing not just the macro-level conditions of living such as economic and political stability, but also the 'meso-level' factors such as institutional incentives, management culture and regulatory milieu.	Regional level, Private Higher Education Institutes, Systems, Demographics, Political pressure, Unpredictability.
11	PUBLIC GOOD	32	A normative category, connoting the extra-mural contribution of HEIs and their personnel to wider social affairs and the amelioration in quality of life.	Equity & Access, Civic Engagement, Multiplier effect, Cross-cultural understanding
	Total	532		

* denotes the five key attributes comprising the post-pilot conceptual framework (see Table 7).

All these tasks of analysis, classification and comparison were rendered systematic by the use of the CAQDAS software described above (*Quirkos*). It was the visual ‘clustering’ facility characteristic of *Quirkos* that enabled composite passages of rich interview discourse to be disaggregated into categories, and then patterns of associations to be discerned as the coding proceeded; this exercise served to confirm the validity and relevance of the five key thematic parameters derived from the literature review, but it also generated the six additional ones on the basis of close examination of the testimonies of the informants. This resulted in a mosaic-like picture being created, which was reflective of the diversity and considerable richness which was revealed in the interview material.

As is the nature in analysis of this kind, overlapping observations arose both within and across these levels, and these associations provided food for reflection and discussion (see Chapter 6). Some degree of alignment would have been expected between the Analytical Framework and the classifiable observations (749) emanating from the interviews (27), since the structure of the questionnaires was derived from an earlier iteration of that same framework. However what was noteworthy was the high coding density of corresponding data extracted from the transcripts as well as the consistently reflective and insightful quality of responses and observations elicited across all nodes of the Framework (to be discussed in the next Chapter).

A full visualisation of the hierarchy of classification showing the numbers ascribed to each node and sub-category is presented in a ‘tree view’ of the ‘parent’ coding categories, together with their related ‘child’ sub-categories in Annex G.

Fourth stage: Analysing Archive Material from the Organisational Case Studies.

The fourth stage comprised case-based analyses of two organisations, both Irish-originating implementing agencies promoting higher education for development in Africa, but separated by a 20-year interval. Both are now defunct. Uniquely, the author worked in a project management capacity for both agencies, for a cumulative total of twelve years, at either end of a 25-year interval. The entities concerned were HEDCO (1987-1996) and the IAP (2007-2011); the latter was a constituent project of a larger, over-arching Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes 2007-2015 (PSC).

There are many views as to what constitutes a case study in qualitative research; a risk is that in the absence of placing definitional boundaries on what the term denotes, almost any kind of research can be construed as a case study (Bryman, Teevan 2005). One definition that was found to be sufficient and yet concise is offered by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary (2009), and was chosen not least because it acknowledges that context is of importance:

Case study: An intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment.³⁰

Utilisation of the Case Study technique constitutes a well-established tool of qualitative research:

Case studies allow the researcher to achieve high levels of conceptual validity, or to identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the researcher intends to measure. (George, Bennett 20015: 19)

The inclusion of case study material here was warranted firstly because the two cases are objects of interest in their own right, and secondly for the same reasons as are given by Flyvberg: 'case studies comprise more detail, richness, completeness, and variance – that is, depth – for the unit of study than does cross-unit analysis' (Flyvbjerg 2011: 301).

The method involved in-depth thematic analysis of extant archival material from both entities to which the researcher had privileged access: annual reports and accounts, management committee minutes, field monitoring visit reports, external evaluation reports. Taken together, these illustrated the evolution of language, conceptual approach and management tools for capacity building interventions over the extended span of elapsed time in which both organisations were active.

In line with Eisenhardt (1989) and with Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008), a cross-case comparison method was utilised in a structured manner, in order to reveal the rich and important evidence that was immanent in the two case study organisations.

Cross case analysis [is proposed] as a mechanism for mining existing case studies so that knowledge from cases can be put into service for broader purposes...The researcher's imagination prompts new questions, reveals new dimensions, produces alternatives, generates models, and constructs ideals and utopias...Furthermore cross case analysis allows the researcher to compare cases from one or more settings, communities or groups. This provides opportunities to learn from different cases and gather critical evidence to modify policy. (Khan, VanWynsberghe 2008: 2)

The idea behind these cross case searching tactics is to force investigators to go beyond initial impressions, especially through the use of structured and diverse lenses on the data...Cross case searching tactics enhance the probability that the investigators will capture the novel findings which may exist in the data. (Eisenhardt 1989: 541).

The eleven-point framework was adhered to rigorously in the analysis of the two case study organisations, albeit with sensitivity to their distinctive structures and their existence in differing points of time. Echoing the work of Khan and Van Wynsberghe (2008), novel dimensions and salient features of the AFHECI phenomenon were unearthed through this cross-case analysis, and

³⁰ The developmental factors referred to here have been fleshed out by Flyvberg (2011: 301): 'A case typically evolves in time, often as a string of concrete and inter-related events that occur 'at such a time and in such a place', and that constitute the case when seen as a whole'.

resulted in the initial analytical framework comprising the 5Cs being amplified into the more granular framework comprising eleven domains, as presented in Table 9 above.

The juxtaposition of seemingly similar cases by a researcher looking for differences can break simplistic frames...The result of these forced comparisons can be new categories and concepts which the investigators did not anticipate. (Khan, VanWynsberghe, 2008: 2).

The analysis of the evidence which came forth from these complementary, sometimes overlapping sources (independently of each other) was drawn together into Chapter 8 – ‘Conclusions’.

All four modes of analysis were triangulated to identify and emerging patterns and convergences.

Problems encountered.

There was a variation in the numbers of interviewees across the three constituencies: in respect of Category A informants, 10 interviews were obtained, in the case of Category C, eleven interviews eventuated, but in the case of Category B (Southern voices), the number of completed interviews was six. One factor in this disequilibrium was simply that the personnel in ‘A’ and ‘C’ were more easily accessible, and showed an accommodating willingness to participate. Those in Category B proved to be heavily constrained in their availability and / or access to reliable internet connectivity with the requisite bandwidth to support a sustained conversation via Skype. This illustrated exactly the same logistical problems associated with poor telecommunications infrastructure in HEIs in Tanzania and Uganda (where the targeted interviewees resided) as had been encountered by many of the informants’ testimonies.

Nor were the logistical complications confined to issues of ICT connectivity. In February 2016, in tandem with a short-term work assignment in Tanzania, I had arranged to interview in person three key informants who were based there as senior academics in the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), in the knowledge that depth interviews should ideally be done face-to-face in a setting free of technical or other distractions (Oppenheim 1992). Though these were arranged in advance and some pre-interview orientation material (including the interview template) were provided to them, only one interview eventuated (one of the other interviewees having been admitted unexpectedly to hospital, while the third was prevented from reaching the appointed venue due to traffic gridlock which is an everyday occurrence in that growing metropolis).

A mix of male and female respondents was sought, but encountered the constraint of underlying gender imbalance in the groups targeted for interview. The actual percentage breakdown among the full informant group turned out to be 74% male and 26% female. Though it would have been preferable to have more female voices from all three constituencies sharing their experiences and concerns in relation to AFHECIs, a countervailing point is that historically there was (and still is) a structural pattern of under-representation of women within all three groups (senior Irish and

African academics and AFHECI managers); the resulting legacy skewed the composition of the overall populations of the three categories of people falling within the scope of the informant descriptors. This reality of gender disparity could be regarded as a finding that emerges from the research.

Finally, certain difficulties surfaced at the stage of initial pilot interviewing. As previously mentioned, the phraseology of some questions in the early iteration of the interview template was not readily comprehensible for some of the key informants, and were therefore off-putting; this became apparent at the pilot phase, and corrected. This experience in itself was a qualitative finding of value, to some extent anticipating a more substantive finding (Chapter 6) that academics and the donor personnel who manage AFHECIs inhabit divergent world-views, one using sets of terminologies that are not perfectly comprehensible to the other. Another learning point was that the draft interview guide needed modification and some simplification for subsequent interviewees; this was duly done.

Summation – Chapter 5

Preissle (2011), herself a qualitative researcher of distinction, wryly depicted qualitative research as something of a ‘bramble-bush’, on account of its plethora of intertwined and apparently tortuous strands of thought, argument and technique. While this analogy may have seemed apt at the research design stage, a viable pathway through or around the denser thickets of brambles gradually became discernible, through the iterative process of development of the research strategy described in this chapter. The suitability of the two-stranded research strategy which was eventually adopted and implemented, proved ultimately to be clearly fit for purpose, in eliciting a wealth of rich understanding and experience. This richness is to be seen in the testimonies of the range of high-calibre key informants presented in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The previous chapter recounted how and why a four-stage research and evidence-gathering strategy for this study was devised, namely: (i) piloting the Conceptual Framework, (ii) conduct of the key informant interviews, (iii) analysis of the interview transcripts and (iv) analysis of archive material from the organisational case studies. In this chapter, the findings emanating from the second and third stages of that process relating to the conduct and analysis of key informant interviews are presented in detail, with reference to the eleven-point analytical framework in Table 9; the evidence from the analysis of archival material will receive equally detailed attention in Chapter 7, using the same framework.

It is worth recalling that the initial round of coding of the interview material had yielded six new Level 1 attributes of AFHECIs, in addition to the five contained in the provisional Framework, making a total of eleven 'Level 1' attributes. Each of these eleven principal attributes, or 'parent nodes', and their associated subsidiary categories ('child nodes'), as well as overlaps occurring across nodes, will now be analysed in detail.

Knowledge and Skills

*Associated sub-categories within this node (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, with the more noteworthy ones in **bold**) are: Research, **Transferable Skills**, Course Provision, Quality, Infrastructure, **Technical Assistance & Mentoring**, Professional Credentials.*

As was seen in the review of the relevant literature in Chapter 4, the conceptualization of capacity building moved towards one of capacity development, a process that amounts to more than filling gaps in specialist expertise, or an injection of transferred knowledge and technical skills.

In the past, interactions between North and South have tended to be one-way applications of knowledge delivered by a "first-civilization" to a "second civilization." They were not appropriate to local social, cultural, economic, and ecological realities. They also discounted indigenous knowledge and accessible forms of traditional technology. (Klein 2004: 6).

In contradistinction to the notion that AFHECIs constitute a kind of refined product that can be transferred from the 'North' to the 'South', the Literature Review posited the essentially multi-dimensional character of capacity development. Nevertheless, the sharing of expertise and skills remains both an indispensable ingredient and a defining characteristic of conceptualizations of the capacity development process, and this was strongly reinforced in the content of interviewees' testimonies. Thus 'Knowledge and Skills' came foremost in the frequency ranking of principal attributes of AFHECIs. Other issues of note to emerge from the analysis of this principal attribute,

and of the associated sub-categories, were: (a) a sense of discomfiture among donors in the 1990s regarding the prevalence of expatriate technical assistance, along with a certain embarrassment about donor money finding its way back to donor countries; (b) difficulties in managing the planned transfer of skills in Southern institutions due to perceived dysfunctionalities in the wider system (e.g. the frequent and seemingly arbitrary re-deployment of the designated counterpart staff, which served only to perpetuate dependence on expatriates); (c) a plea for AFHECI's to accentuate the potential relevance to Southern partners of the non-university side of the binary system of higher education.

In relation to the dilemma on deploying technical assistance, donor countries in most of the OECD in the mid-1990s began to question the value and effectiveness of expensive long-term technical assistance as a principal modality of capacity development (Berg 1993, Jolly 1989)³¹. This shift in approach was embraced by Irish Aid, according to a well-placed informant:

“Internationally there was a move away from a programme model heavily reliant on expensive technical assistance; in Ireland’s case, the impetus for such aversion came from an OECD DAC Peer Review Report (1995). The core point of the OECD was that too great a proportion of Ireland’s ODA budget found its way back into Ireland.” [C07]

The reference here to money finding its way back into Ireland signifies not so much that the aid money was tied to the purchase of goods from Ireland (as China is alleged to behave with its ODA³²), but rather that Irish personnel were being deployed in significant numbers, and were remitting most of their earnings tax-free to external accounts). Although the practice was at that time in conformity with law both in Ireland and in the country of assignment, it acquired a mercenary aura very much at odds with the more noble, altruistic spirit of development assistance.

“There was also the practice – probably untenable - of long-term TAs being paid tax-free salaries into offshore accounts – there was no secret about it and it was regarded as standard practice at the time; but years later queries came back about that, as well as about superannuation arrangements. I wonder if there were still historical queries, who would know where all those files are.” [C11]

Interestingly, the matter came up for mention in one interview only; perhaps this silence may reflect an unspoken unease among the personnel concerned that this widespread practice had the potential to be exposed in the public domain as an ethically questionable example of tax avoidance.

According to the recollection of many Category C key informants (Irish-based veterans of AFHECIs in Africa), Irish Aid in the mid-1990s rapidly became sceptical of long term technical assistance as a modality of programme delivery within a broadly project-oriented approach. A now retired senior DFA official records that at the same time, in common with several other OECD

³¹ See also Chapter 3

³² See King 2013: 33

donors, Irish Aid extricated itself from individual project funding, in favour of operating through partner government systems, providing funding support for individual sectors such as health and education (a ‘sector-wide approach’), and later going a step further into general budget support of a multi-annual nature to the partner country’s exchequer (Murphy 2012)³³. Whatever the merits of this shift in strategy (executed incidentally without recourse to Cabinet or Dáil), informants regretted that a subtly negative characterisation of technical assistance crept into the narrative of a largely new cohort of Irish Aid officials recruited at the time (including many from an NGO background in development practice), who tended to cast aspersion on the quality and motivation of those who had served in the field as long-term technical assistance personnel. A former General Secretary of HEDCO and a Senior Advisor at the World Bank had the following to say:

“Irish Aid, in common with many others in the donor community, developed an aversion to long-term technical assistance as an instrument of capacity building initiatives which has long prevailed (the exception being specialised functions such as financial management and procurement).”³⁴

Notwithstanding Irish Aid’s desire to distance itself from a modality which it had itself fostered in the first decade of existence, Murphy (2012) retrospectively acknowledges some strengths in the *modus operandi* of the Irish style of technical assistance; writing in the context of the EU-sponsored Phare and TACIS programmes in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1990s, he opines:

What is clear is that a great deal of the money that went into the region from donors in the 1990s went down the drain...[but] where Ireland did play a role was through transfer of technical expertise...Irish consultants displayed the same qualities which suited them to development work in Africa: they did not talk down to people, they were able to put themselves in the position of those they were helping, and they did not have a particular agenda. (Murphy 2012: 151).

Such ‘aversion’ became widely shared in the donor community by the mid-1990s, following two influential analyses critical of the donor-driven rather than demand-driven nature of much technical assistance (Jolly 1989, Berg 1993).

Key informants, while recognising the need for critique of technical assistance as with any other aid instrument, considered that in their experience technical assistance had in fact been judiciously deployed in response to clearly identified needs, for a limited time duration, and as an integral component of a multi-faceted programme. Thus technical assistance, within a proper plan and needs-responsive logic of intervention, had validity:

³³ Embracing SWAPs and direct budget support ‘was the most significant change since Irish Aid was established..It happened without fanfare, but it has had a greater impact on the way the programme operates than on any other decision. And it has caused more controversy than any other aspect of Irish Aid’s work’ (Murphy 2012: 150).

³⁴ Extract from a wide-ranging ‘scoping’ interview given by Mr Paud Murphy to the researcher in Galway on 9th July 2014, at the stage of research design. Note that he is not the same Murphy as the retired DFA official of the preceding quotation.

“The rationale for the technical assistance was to contribute to the development of the [degree] programme, and at the same time to free up graduate teaching assistants to come to Ireland to do their Masters and return to hold substantive teaching appointments in UDSM.” [C08]

Interestingly, this more nuanced stance on technical assistance was common both to Category C informants (who had themselves occupied such a role), and to Category B (Southern voices):

“Technical assistance should always be needs-based, focused on long-term needs of the beneficiary rather than filling gaps in the short-term. Secondly, someone local should always be identified to work very closely with the external TA; someone who can really work very closely, learn and be trained up, not just stand by passively and watch, so that when the technical assistance leaves, things can continue.” [B06]

The point was made that sometimes technical assistance was perceived to have failed, but on closer examination, the reason for failure may have been incorrectly attributed:

“An example was my posting to a teacher training college in Swaziland in the late 1970s under the UK Overseas Service and Assistance Scheme. The official rationale for the presence of an aid-funded expat lecturer was to mentor local counterparts, but this didn't work due to rapid turnover, as five different local personnel were assigned in succession to one single post during my 4-year contract period.” [C04]

The need for external personnel assistance in Southern institutions was considered by some to continue to be warranted, on account of the enormous scale of unmet needs in Africa, combined with the legacy of under-investment and historically very low participation rates in third level (as discussed in Chapter 3):

“Because of the current population expansion and current financing pressures in so many developing countries, there's a lot to be said for experienced professionals or college personnel [from here] giving their expertise and building up a connection.” [A01]

A discussion of the Knowledge and Skills domain so far has been predicated on sectoral or disciplinary expertise (health sciences, agriculture, water engineering or such like) that relates directly to the focal area of a given programme or intervention. However the challenge for African higher education arguably consists more in nurturing non-subject-specific capabilities and integrative, transferable skills needed to strengthen institutional capacity, in all the aspects pertaining to the core features of a university system as traditionally conceived: teaching, research (and its translation into societal gain), internal organization and management, national-level quality assurance, and furtherance of an ethos of ‘civil society’ and transformative community engagement. The relevance of transferable skills (such as project management, proposal writing, communications and context-related skills) to broad capacity development processes was not overlooked by a number of informants. A Tanzanian informant, for example, who is now a senior

academic of distinction in his subject domain and a member of the senior management team at UDSM, clearly felt intimidated and insufficiently proficient in proposal writing for donor funding:

“[An obstacle is] complicated proposal-writing requirements: nowadays most bursaries for training are linked to projects; a good proposal has to be written and funding gets committed on that basis. Many organisations have very complicated requirements and it is too difficult to meet them.” [B04]

The need for transferable skills (in complementarity with discipline-specific, technical ones) emerged as one of the key sub-categories, as expressed by a number of other informants:

“[I am in favour of] Transferring expertise and knowledge re institutional governance, management, strategic planning through personal exchange, courses and so on. Supporting HEIs to be more relevant to the needs of communities and local and national levels, rather than as ivory towers.” [C02]

“I think that the whole climate change and environmental challenge is one that will increasingly demand good management skills, beyond the mere technical ones of water management and soil conservation.” [C01]

Returning to the role of teaching and mentoring as the foremost characteristic of capacity development, and with specific reference to Ireland, a number of interviewees pointed to the vacuum created by the absence of a HEDCO-type intermediary body, as a conduit for matching the available expertise in Irish HEIs with the continuing needs in sub-Saharan Africa:

“Since the HEDCO days there has been no direct focus on inter-university capacity development. At least at that time HEDCO was focused on getting different universities to link up together in terms of capacity development. Nowadays most of the links are research-based links, with universities collaborating on research projects, and some level of exchange takes place within those. But in terms of teaching, which I view as the most important area, there’s nothing... Obviously inter-university collaboration requires the dual components of research and teaching, on a mutually complementary basis. While there’s reasonable cooperation on the research side, there’s nothing on teaching side. Nothing.” [C08]

This factor will be considered further in Chapter 7.

Finally, certain of the Irish-based key informants familiar with the non-University sector offered salient reminders of the distinctive contribution on offer from this side of higher education’s binary system: it has potential to form an essential part of a variegated higher education provision in Africa, and it accords priority to skills acquisition and (self)-employability:

“The other shift I’ve seen over the years is the attractiveness of the institutes of technology from an international development angle, epitomised by DIT’s work on Mozambique Eyecare Project, which was then extended into a follow-on programme of multi-country optometry training... I think this – and probably others – constituted a good match, but of course the IoTs’ role in PSC (Programme for Strategic Cooperation) was never intended to be at the expense of the universities... Youth education is another thing that many countries want

to promote, with a view to improving employability of disadvantaged groups.” [C05]

“There’s a whole cluster of other HEIs [in Africa] across the binary system that may merit support, and they have capacity issues – would there be scope for collaboration with them which would be of benefit to both sides? If there is, how then to devise the collaborative framework that can be adapted to fit the particular needs.” [C08].

The key points that emerge under this heading are (a) that the sharing of knowledge and skills between North and South is seen as an aspect of institutional capacity development that is first and foremost Southern-led, and (b) that technical assistance, if understood in this context, is a valid instrument for AFHECI implementation.

Forging Alliances

*Associated sub-categories within this node comprise (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, with the more noteworthy ones in bold) are: **Institutional Capacity Development, Cohesion & Teamwork, Feedback & Mutuality, Organisational Fit, Ownership, Concentration on metropolitan HEIs.***

The term ‘Forging Alliances’ here relates to a variety of collaborative relationships that share a common aim of nurturing capacity development in sub-Saharan Africa. It would be tempting to refer to the range of collaborations or linkages as ‘partnerships’ as the descriptor for this node, were it not for the reality that ‘partnership’ has acquired a variety of meanings spanning two ends of a spectrum. At one end is the notion of ‘authentic’, ‘collaborative’, ‘reciprocal’ or ‘active’ partnership, whereas at the opposite end of the spectrum we find a more functional, pragmatic, or resource-dependent (Hailey 2000). So elaborate and diffuse has the term ‘partnership’ become, that it is necessary to clarify its meaning in the context of the present analysis:

An effective educational partnership is a dynamic collaborative process between educational institutions that brings mutual though not necessarily symmetrical benefits to the parties engaged in the partnership. Partners share ownership of the projects. Their relationship is based on respect, trust, transparency and reciprocity. They understand each other’s cultural and working environment. Decisions are taken jointly after real negotiations take place between the partners. Each partner is open and clear about what they are bringing to the partnership and what their expectations are from it. (Association of Commonwealth Universities 2010: 18).

Looking first at the apex level of international development programme design – the macro-level of cooperation where high level programme objectives are determined – a Brussels-based interviewee for this study provided an insider’s perspective as one who has steered deliberations between European and African supra-national institutions:

“In so many fields, the number of networking initiatives has grown and strengthened. Of course, this has created a complicated landscape because there are so many African countries, but there has been a lot more focus on this regional dimension reinforcing internal African cooperation.” [A02]

A senior European Commission functionary in charge of Europe-Africa inter-regional dialogue on research and education stressed the meticulous effort at official level to secure a consensual approach, one which will elicit approval at the level of political leadership:

“Political declarations that provide the framework for programmes or initiatives to take place are always shared; written together, discussed together, with the widest possible stakeholder group. For instance, at the Africa EU summit in 2014, all these regional initiatives were spelt out, and it was clear that the heads of state wanted us to go ahead with these. The text of what came out of the deliberations was discussed over 3 days by 150 people, 80% of whom were African. What I could see was that everything was done together – perhaps steered in certain cases but not steered deliberately, but just that someone has to put the agenda together and line up the inputs, and then the rest naturally comes out... it’s just a question of trying to facilitate the process.” [A03]

The same interviewee later talked about the openness to mutual collaboration present in academic peer circles across Africa (increasingly described as South-South collaboration):

“I’ve noticed is that in Africa at least the willingness to share is enormous, probably more so than in Europe. Good ideas get shared among academics from neighbouring countries fairly systematically, and obviously that’s very positive.” [A03]

Contrasting views were expressed about the rich opportunities and rewards of collaborative linkages on the one hand, vis-à-vis the frustrations and limitations thereof on the other. On the positive side, the advent of cost-effective on-line communications has clearly opened up new horizons for such collaboration in both research and teaching domains; the latter benefits from selective use of the medium of massive on-line open courses (MOOCs) where circumstances in African partner institutions permit:

“We put quite a lot of effort into how our academic partners in the South can derive benefit from all the educational material that exists on line - not just MOOCs (which is only one tool they can use). We started with MOOCs because it’s trendy and everyone wants to hear about it, and eager to use this tool, but there’s so much other material available on line that is even better. So they learn to use all kinds of material that exists, because in the end it’s about updating the curricula and the courses that people are teaching, and the pedagogical methods they’re using. It’s an occasion to kind of renew their whole system.” [A07]

“There’s a need to use technology more to bridge the gaps. I’m involved in a joint supervision team involving Ireland, Zimbabwe and New Zealand; we don’t travel to all these countries, we are making use of ICT – Skype, Google Talk and things like that.” [B03]

Several testimonies, especially those of personnel in Southern institutions, vented frustration at both geographical and thematic over-concentration of Northern funded linkages in certain well-known African universities. Geographic concentration is typically in those university institutions that are located in metropolitan locations and are well-established and familiar to donors, such as the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Makerere University (Uganda), Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique) and the University of Malawi. (These were in fact the African loci of the IAPRCB's engagement). The following observations came respectively from Ugandan and Tanzanian interviewees, apropos of geographic and thematic over-concentration:

“We [a leading Ugandan university] have so many research-oriented partnerships- in fact we have SIDA, NORAD, DANIDA and others funding research capacity building here and in other universities. I looked at the calls and said ‘Oh, I cannot manage all this because I would be under too much pressure to meet the donor-funded research milestones while also doing my teaching.’ [B02]

“Eligibility criteria of funding calls have become too specific and restrictive, e.g. climate change adaptation is the ‘in’ theme at present. If everyone in UDSM were to do their PhD on climate change, we would no longer be a university. A lot of fellowships are skewed towards a particular area, depending on the chosen priority areas of the donor. Maybe donors don't accept academic capacity building as a valid goal in itself – they are only prepared to fund postgraduate study if it confers an ulterior benefit for the area they want to work in at any given time.” [B04]

This last observation relating to the intrinsic value of capacity development goes to the heart of this research study, and will be picked up again in the final ‘Conclusions’ chapter.

Whilst the frustration arising from perceived inadequacies in coordination, weak harmonisation and duplication of donor-funded initiatives came across clearly from the Southern perspectives, those in strategic positions in donor organisations familiar with the higher education sector see things rather differently. The testimony of the European Commission functionary who spoke convincingly of the elaborate consultation mechanisms among officialdom at apex level was partly endorsed by the interviewee from the World Bank, though he depicted a more differentiated picture, whereby the effectiveness of coordination varied according to the political will in-country:

“When a project is being developed, as part of the narrative documentation that must be produced, there is a very key section that has to do with co-ordination, complementarity and linkages with others. Where do our priorities intersect with those of other agencies. And in some countries I've seen that working very well. In others, there's just nothing – still unfortunately a lack of coordination, potential duplication and all those kinds of things.” [A04]

Coming down to micro-level of inter-institutional collaboration, informants agreed that the prospects for sustainability of higher education linkages between Northern and Southern institutions are enhanced by genuine reciprocity and symmetry in the relationship. One salient

contribution from a Southern perspective served as a reminder that the HEDCO model of cooperation carried undertones of superiority, of which those involved at the time were unaware:

“The original model of cooperation was relevant for its time. It may have done a bit of harm to Tanzania, in making us feel we were to be helped, and once that help was over, we then worked to position ourselves for the next wave of help. That creation of dependency seems to have done a certain dis-service to Tanzania. It never progressed to the next stage to focus more on what was needed for sustainability. I think the cooperation had an element of that.” [B03]

The coordination function is a key ingredient for effectiveness, and consequently the need for a HEDCO-type or IAP-type support unit to lubricate the machinery of north-south institutional linkages was highlighted:

“The conference I mentioned earlier agreed that HEDCO had played a really valuable role. Having that central coordinating function made it much easier for people within the HEIs to establish linkages, identifying and recognising where the needs were, what the stakeholder requirements were, linking people so that needs were matched with appropriate expertise, helping to design funding proposals using the required language...the idea being that you might have subject related expertise, but not necessarily the development programming know-how.” [C08]

In summary, many of the testimonies touched on the acknowledged importance of focusing on the institutional level of authentic partnership-working, and on proceeding from individual level to institutional and ultimately system-level (as discussed earlier in Chapter 3). The informants focused readily on their experiences of mechanisms for translating *individual* capacity to *institutional*, but had much less to say on scaling-up from *institutional* capacity to the *systemic* level. The relative silence on this could suggest that institutional level actors do not see themselves as appropriately positioned or sufficiently empowered to address the challenge of scaling-up AFHECIs to system level.

The other key point to emerge related to the perceived inadequacy of the ‘donor’ side of partnership arrangements to act in a genuinely needs-responsive way, and to coordinate adequately with each other, so as to ensure a more even geographic and disciplinary spread of support.

Adaptation to Change

*Associated sub-categories within this node comprise (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, with the more noteworthy ones in bold): **Dynamic Change, Information & Communications Technology, (Dis)-Continuity, Organisational Learning, Pedagogies, and Dependency.***

From the earlier review of complexity theory and complex adaptive systems (Chapter 4), adaptation emerged alongside non-linearity, emergence and feedback as core elements of a

conceptual framework that can help us better to understand how capacity develops within organisations and large systems (Land, Hauck et al 2009; Baser, Morgan 2008). The fluidity of multiple change processes at work at different levels and at different velocities in the same organisations at the same time constitutes a milieu in which CAS is self-evidently applicable, and therefore the underlying reality that makes the attribute of ‘adaptation to change’ of such critical importance in policy and organisational terms.

If an illustration were needed of the far-reaching change experienced by the university sector in Africa in the last twenty-five years, the University of Dar es Salaam provides it, vividly exemplifying the ‘Dynamic Change’ sub-category within this node:

“The higher education landscape in Tanzania has changed massively in that time. When I left Tanzania in 1991 to take up the fellowship in Ireland, there were only two universities – UDSM and SUA³⁵. Fast forward to the present day, I think there are 49 universities. Three things have happened, which are inter-related: (i) access to HE by young Tanzanians has increased significantly; (ii) need for qualified staff has become even more acute, because most of the academic staff being employed by new universities have only first degrees or Masters – very few PhDs.... you need to offer training at that level, but Tanzania as a country has not focused on that; (iii) the influence of China has become significant, offering training opportunities to a significant number of staff as part of their involvement in universities.” [B03]

The changed institutional landscape here described is the product of adaptation, which to a limited extent is counteracting the debilitated condition in which the higher education sector across much of sub-Saharan Africa had descended during the ‘lost decade’ for higher education from the late 1980s (Mohamedbhai 2015, Aina 2010, Teferra, Knight 2008). (See also Chapter 4).

“The expansion that we talked about, whether planned or spontaneous or both, has been taking place. In the development arena there has been a kind of re-discovery of HE as a means towards social and economic development, in parallel with the emphasis that countries in the developed world are putting on HE ...in terms of the degrees that people require – translates into social and economic expansion and development that our societies are led to expect.” [C03]

As we saw in the review of the literature on the issue of in Chapter 4, the World Bank paper prepared by Psacharopoulos, Tan et al (1986), which called into question the relative merit of donor aid to higher education, exerted enduring and arguably disproportionate policy influence in the donor community worldwide (including Ireland) from the late 1980s onwards. The present research afforded an opportunity to hear directly from an authoritative senior World Bank figure on the current policy stance. He confirmed that although there were still significant voices in the Bank who are sceptical about investing in tertiary education, those voices are increasingly outweighed by “clear new evidence demonstrating that investing in tertiary education is indeed a smart investment

³⁵ Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania

for countries, societies and individuals” [A04]. He went on to elaborate on another factor in the Bank’s adaptation to a policy position which is now more favourably disposed towards AFHECIs:

“I think the largest pressure for changing the rhetoric of the Bank on this matter has come precisely from the Governments of the client countries; they are the ones that have been pushing the Bank to pay more attention to higher education. There are two potential reasons for that: firstly I would say this is due to the success of policies put in place over the years by governments to foster universal access to basic education, and secondly it is due to demographic pressures because more people are getting into the educational system, generating greater demand for HE opportunities. There is a third factor as well, namely the influence of globalisation, making many governments more aware of the fact that in order to compete globally and become more economically competitive, people with advanced skills are required and this is something that tertiary education should be providing. Those are the three factors that have pushed an evolution of the system, and consequently also an evolution of the role to the World Bank in the tertiary education arena.” [A04]

The extent to which the sceptical sentiment in donor circles towards higher education support in the ‘lost decade’ affected the fortunes and ultimate demise of HEDCO as an organisation will be considered in the next Chapter. However there is one aspect of the HEDCO case study which is germane to the present discussion, namely the view articulated by one who had served in the HEDCO secretariat that the agency did not survive because its capacity to adapt to change was not sufficiently nimble to deal with exigencies it faced at a critical juncture:

“HEDCO as an entity was of its time; it was brought down almost by what it was, and wasn’t nimble enough to change when it needed to. We were all part of that. We tried to move on (from relying on IA) to tendering for EU projects, and we were successful up to a point, but our scope of action was too narrow and we were never able to tackle that...There were always too many restrictions, and even if these weren’t real restrictions we felt we were bound by them...We never worked it out ourselves how we would really move forward if we were to change with the times.” [C11]

An experienced commentator and researcher reminded us in her testimony that reforms which some may consider to be innovative adaptation may be on closer scrutiny a case of the wheel coming full circle:

“In a 30-year span of the Higher Education for Development discourse, there have probably been many shifts, but I think many of those shifts have been swings of the pendulum – there has been an awful lot of going over and back to the same things, rather than anything significantly new... You could say that there isn’t enough thinking going into it. Or you could say the ideas are in the right zone, so we keep coming back to them; and I think it’s really the latter. It’s no bad thing that the pendulum has swung back to some extent in favour of HE – that’s good.” [C05]

One of the differences in the current era is that web-based technology is gradually enabling some African institutions with reliable internet connectivity to mitigate the adverse consequences of capacity constraints in specialist areas. Use of customized MOOCs is proving a valuable and cost-

effective resource for teaching at graduate and undergraduate levels, while on-line communications facilitate the continuous interaction necessary for sustainable research partnerships and joint programme delivery in ways which were previously impossible.

Finally, some observations hinted at factors which frustrated the capacity for the institutional adaptation necessary in a dynamically changing environment. Chief among these inhibiting factors is weak public administration in-country, epitomised in the fragmentary state of inter-ministerial relations:

“One of the things is that different ministries are dealing with different bits of the education system- you might have a Ministry of Education which didn’t deal with higher education, and that often became problematic; you had donors active in the education sector dealing with the ‘lead’ education ministry focused on primary and post-primary, but then higher education would reside with another ministry, and those donors actively involved in the education sector often didn’t have linkages with the relevant ministry responsible. They were often very poorly placed, even for the engagement with the donor community.”
[A08]

In summary, we can see from the evidence here presented that the impetus for adaptation is coming from several distinct directions – (i) analytical research on rates of return on investment in HE, (ii) demographic pressures on the ground, and (iii) nation states’ political ambition to keep abreast of globalisation. This illustrates a stochastic process at play: change and adaptation are often occasioned by a confluence of distinct forces operating more or less independently of each other, and that significant step-change may only be precipitated at or around their point of convergence.

Purpose and Motivation

*Associated sub-categories within this node comprise (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, and with the more noteworthy ones in bold): **Prioritising HE**, Sustainability, Goal Orientation, **Beneficence**, **MDGs & SDGs**, **Holistic Response**.*

Informants articulated a range of perspectives on the intended goals of AFHECIs. Key issues arising under this key attribute were (a) that an impulse towards generosity by Northern donor bodies and higher education institutions to assist their Southern ‘partners’ was inclined to overrun into a presumption that actions by the former corresponded to needs and priorities of the latter (the sub-category of ‘beneficence’ connotes this), but this attitude has since given way to a more self-critical one; (b)

The following recollection by a HEDCO Board member from the late 1980s reflected the familiar position of the Northern benevolent impulse seeking to remediate the deficit in skills, expertise or intellectual capital of a Southern ‘beneficiary’:

“We gave close attention to enabling individual academics to become more aware and more involved in networking etc. with colleagues working in the same discipline at international level, in the expectation that this will raise not only their own academic status, but that of their institutions. You’re transferring, giving and sharing expertise, helping to mitigate the isolation that impairs the contribution of many bright academics in Africa by having counterparts with whom they can interact and thereby boost their confidence and status.” (CO2)

A discernible change in the prevailing mental model of knowledge transfer was voiced by a HEDCO long-term assignee; with regard to capacity and technical assistance programming, he compared past conceptualisation from an earlier phase of his career (when he worked for another donor in Malawi) with that which he saw as currently prevailing:

“Back then [in the 1970s], capacity development was seen from the Northern / donor perspective clearly as a means to an end - the transfer of knowledge, skills and capability from the global North to South, from Europe to Africa, whereas now interactive partnership is promoted.” [C04]

To expand on this pithy observation, the informant’s contention was that the predominant ethos underlying earlier capacity-building efforts (in this case, the 1970s), bore residual vestiges with (neo)-colonial power relations; this was implicit in a perception of knowledge being transferred from ‘us’ to ‘them’. The change in perspective to which this informant alludes is likely to have reflected a confluence of various streams of discourse on international development previously discussed in Chapter 3., including the influential school of dependency theory (Brundtland 1988, Frank 1967, Rodney 1972, Amin 1970), and in the seminal concept of ‘development as freedom’ promulgated by Sen (1999). Furthermore, post-independence development discourse had as a recurrent theme a stronger Southern-led approach in setting the policy agenda and determining development priorities in-country, along with a reciprocal spirit of mutual inter-dependence and respect between North and South. Echoes of this strand of discourse surfaced repeatedly in the interviews, and converged with the previously-discussed attribute ‘Forging Alliances’; for example, one reflective interviewee, a long-term technical assistance assignee to a Tanzanian university in the early 1990s, articulated his considered view that:

“The agenda should be set in-country and should be subject to appropriate peer review, whether in-country, with the donor, or a combination of the two. As far as possible, apply the standards that obtain in the donor country to the recipient country - don’t expect the latter to show subservience. Dignity is important and it should operate both ways.” [C09]

It might have been expected that the viewpoint on purpose and motivation for AFHECIs would depend on the position occupied by the individual: for example, that implementing agency managers would tend to talk about contribution to the higher level objectives in the world of development aid programming (represented for example by the Sustainable Development Goals), whereas academics might rather tend to focus on the evolving phenomenon of the knowledge

society, HE's contribution as a public good, the ethos of HE vis-à-vis the pressures wrought by state co-option, commercialism and globalisation. In fact, while these and other factors did indeed come up for mention as influencing the directedness of AFHECIs, the viewpoints did not show a strict correlative pattern within the three sub-groups of interviewees.

Whatever their position or role, there was widespread agreement among informants that clear policy direction and guiding framework is a pre-requisite in order for AFHECIs to be effective. There was also agreement that the multilaterally-agreed SDGs, launched in 2015, have provided a more favourable contextual framework for AFHECIs to occupy a meaningful position, than was the case with the predecessor MDGs. Several informants recalled that the latter had emphasised basic education, and that consequently implementing governments and donors both abjured a whole-of-systems perspective in relation to education. A senior analyst with experience both in Irish Aid and the United Nations reflected on the prevailing orthodoxy around the time at which the MDGs were adopted:

“Over that period just prior to the MDGs, the donors started talking more and more about basic education, and in many ways they had a very narrow interpretation of that. So even in terms of our own [Irish Aid] education policy at the time...almost the whole education focus was to be on primary level. Even the structures that were needed to make that work such as teacher training were actually under-emphasized. It was all about direct support to increase the access to primary education. The approach agreed earlier in Jomtien, Thailand [Education for All Congress 1990] had a more holistic approach to the education sector. But when that then became interpreted in the MDG Development Goal 1, the more holistic ideas from Jomtien were effectively eclipsed by the huge emphasis on access. And we're still dealing with the consequential problems of that – the lack of emphasis on quality. There was a huge improvement in access but often at the expense of quality.” [A08]

As was seen in Chapter 3, an ambivalence towards HE prevailed among many donors throughout the 1990s and early 2000s and was implicit in the MDGs, which had induced policy makers and implementers to be preoccupied with statistics of school enrolment and associated quantifiable targets. Consistent with this view of the relegation of educational quality to second place, and the lack of whole-of-system thinking, a Swiss academic-cum-practitioner opined as follows:

“Often at Ministry level the first thing in the mind is quantity rather than quality; they have all these kids coming out of secondary schools who are qualified to go to university, so they have to put them somewhere. It's not a case of 'educate your graduates better', but rather take more people into your schools, rather than leaving them outside in the streets.” [A07]

One astute commentator on international development stated that “a focus on higher education has been under-represented in policy thinking around education for development, and that this needs to be rectified.” [A05]. Another informant, in the course of a pilot interview, went further in his judging Irish Aid to have “maintained an anti-intellectual bias which is largely based on a

misunderstanding of the role of higher education within the framework of wider development strategy; and in this context”.³⁶

Furthermore, because AFHECIs constitute a hybrid straddling two major policy domains, this need for clarity of policy intent applies both to the international development arena (and the relative priority accorded within that to aid to HE), and to policies on higher education and research systems and funding mechanisms in-country. Echoing the verdict of Khoo (2015) that ‘the explicit relevance of higher education to global educational and development goals has never been entirely clear, let alone subject to standard-setting and monitoring’ (Khoo 2015: 3), a retired professor from an Irish institution who worked extensively in Africa in the field on bilateral and multilateral programmes had this to say:

“Policy direction is of prime importance. We’ve seen a lot of action, but generally this has not been sufficiently policy-led, beyond the aspirations contained in the MDGs, which to some degree became a mantra. But it has often been hard to see how the MDGs carried-through to impact on the ground for the average citizen.” [C10]

In relation to clarity of purpose and agenda-setting, it was observed that the IA Programme of Strategic Cooperation (one of our case studies to be considered in Chapter 7) had fallen short of expectations, though here the alleged unclarity of expectations was compounded by the onset of exogenous factor of economic downturn:

“It’s quite possible there wasn’t sufficient clarity around IA’s expectations, and then there was the recession and the shutters were coming down even before there was a chance to clear things up.” [C04]

In a salient contribution, the same informant [C04] pointed out that a more formidable policy impediment to prioritising HE (one of the noteworthy sub-categories in this node) arises from concerns about inequity and inequality: he said “What also bothers me about higher education is the equity problem it poses for donors, because HE is populated by the elite in society”, thereby acting facilitating that same elite to self-replicate. He then went on to suggest that a compatibilist policy position was both possible and desirable: one which acknowledged that basic education continued to merit relative priority, but not to the exclusion of tertiary:

“You know as well as I do that third level was out of the equation for a while, but it’s definitely no longer out of the equation. Arguably it might have been correct to say we need to focus mainly on primary, because of the numbers and the needs and the links with poverty: I don’t dispute those arguments. But it should never have meant a complete and total shift away from the second and third levels, and I think that realisation is there now. The approach needs to be genuinely a system-wide one.” [C04]

³⁶ Pilot interview 09.07.2014.

From around year 2000 onwards, the unsympathetic stance towards higher education which had become ingrained in the mental model of many donors began to thaw, according to an Irish academic informant who took up a resident expert assignment with the World Bank at that time:

“Gradually people were starting to talk about the need for secondary and post-secondary education, the need for technical vocational education and training (TVET), and the need to do something in higher education, to balance the global push toward primary education.” [A06]

This thaw appears to have been maintained up to the present, according to the serving senior World Bank official who participated in interview:

“Now after the passage of years the Bank is much more clear that HE is a ‘must’, is something that we need to pay attention to, and that we should support it in such a way as to really contribute to the twin goals of the World Bank, which are reducing extreme poverty in the world by enabling shared prosperity. In other words, in order to reduce poverty we need to have prosperity, and that prosperity can only be achieved if you have properly educated people, and by definition the properly educated people who are so needed in the world are the products of the educational system, especially at tertiary level.” [A04]

Finally, a significant observation came across from an IA informant, in relation to a consistently high level of interest in, and commitment to, education sector involvement on the part of successive political leaders in charge of the IA portfolio.

“One of the things I would say that even though there has been a dip in expenditure on education, it is an area of involvement that still resonates with every Minister we’ve had and with the general public here in Ireland. When Minister McHugh went into refugee camps the one thing he zoned in on was educational provision in that context. Ministers can always identify with education and how it is a driver for development, partly because of our own investment in education and how we felt that was so important for economic growth.” [A08]

There is a paradox here, in that a clearly discernible policy predilection of successive ministers broadly supportive of increased engagement with education appears not to have translated into concrete operational reality. This paradox will be looked at again in the Conclusions chapter.

In summary, the testimonies confirm that clarity of purpose is clearly essential not just at the supreme level of policy-making and agenda-setting, but also when it comes to the more mundane level of programme design, planning and implementation. After a long period in the doldrums of the landscape of official development assistance, support to ‘holistic’ higher education (understood as including teacher training and the TVET sub-sectors) has been largely – though perhaps not completely - rehabilitated into donor programming.

Postgraduate Bursaries

In the early stages of the database construction, Postgraduate Fellowships was assigned as a sub-category of Knowledge and Skills; however the frequency and salience of references to Postgraduate Fellowships warranted a conscious decision to treat this important facet of AFHECIs as a stand-alone Level 1 category its own right.

Historically, donor-funded bursaries (synonymous with fellowships or scholarships³⁷) for early career accredited postgraduate study (though not postdoctoral positions) have been, and continue to be, the mainstay of the standard model of institutional capacity development within the framework of North-South development cooperation. Even so, the frequency of references thereto by interviewees was striking, as was the consensus on the indispensability of this aspect of AFHECIs.

Different schemes target different levels, as between Masters and PhD level of study, depending on expectations attached to the given scheme. In this thesis, relatively more attention is given to PhD level study, as this is of crucial importance to creating succession cadres for academia and research institutions.

All three informant categories shared a common view of the objectives and intended results of donor-funded fellowship awards, summed up as follows by an IA voice:

“There are probably three different objectives for Fellowship schemes over the years: one is building capacity in government and partner institutions, the second one is being seen to do something back here in Ireland (not just the money, but the links back into Irish institutions, which is a good in itself), and thirdly ... these students after returning home from studying in Ireland comprise a network that can be useful much more broadly when, it comes to [Ireland’s] trade and other interests.” [A08]

The manner in which bursaries are configured has however been the subject of some new thinking over the past two decades, with various donors attempting to spread their finite budget for scholarship support more widely by means of alternative options such as in-country or in-region study only, or sandwich-type arrangements whereby beneficiaries undertake substantial study or research visits in a Northern HEI; the latter mode is particularly useful in the experimental sciences, where access to specialised laboratories or other equipment is deemed important but would otherwise not be accessible in an institution in the South. A Tanzanian alumnus commented:

“OK maybe I was lucky in coming to stay here [Ireland] for 3.5 years doing a PhD, but maybe we need a different model now, with alternating rotations between here and there. Probably six months stints would not provide enough space, but maybe one year initially, then go back for a year, maybe coming back for an intensive writing phase.” [B03]

³⁷ The terms ‘bursary’, ‘scholarship’ and ‘fellowship’ are used interchangeably; in general, I favour using ‘bursary’ as it avoids potential ambiguity that may accompany the other two.

As occurred frequently during the key informant interviews, an analogy was drawn between Ireland's pathway towards HE capacity development a half-century ago and the present-day challenges facing Africa in that same respect. The following account of a doctoral fellowship linkage between Ireland and the United States in the 1960s is apposite:

“How would Irish universities in the 1960s have built their capacity? One of the things UCD did was to send people to the US to do PhDs, often sponsoring its own staff to upskill. I'm not sure where they got the money from... There was a whole set of key people who did their PhDs in the States with funding, and it's actually a very good way of technology transfer. But it's a 'leaky bucket', in the sense that some don't come back, but the ones that do come back do so having had a very different experience from the classic developing country pattern of doing a PhD in your own institution and staying there for ever.” [A06]

There is an important reminder here that many African doctorate holders are home-produced; it is commonplace in sub-Saharan Africa for the candidate to pursue a PhD in the same department of the same institution as that in which their first degree was conferred. Moreover, as pointed out by Szanton and Manyika (2002) in their study for the Rockefeller Foundation, ‘the number of locally-produced PhDs seems to be increasing and seems likely to continue growing’ (Szanton, Manyika 2002: 21), and that ‘an increasing proportion – perhaps even a majority – of students registered for the doctorate in African universities today are in fact junior faculty in those institutions’ (ibid: 18).

Another interviewee (retired from staff of UCD) turned out to have himself been an early-career beneficiary of a doctoral bursary in the US, and was able to answer the question as to the source of funding, at least for some of the Irish doctoral candidates at that time:

“To me there's a staged process involved in building up capacity. When we started building in Ireland here, we had very few PhDs, particularly in my own discipline, Agriculture. Then when we reached a certain stage of having enough people on the ground here, we were able to put solid courses together. Creating that critical mass of PhDs was made possible by the Kellogg Foundation... [which] agreed to support the enhancement of Irish universities and the upskilling of their staff. Kellogg funded the training of lots of PhDs in America in the leading colleges there which Irish people attended – Madison, Wisconsin, Texas, Ohio State. My academic peers in UCD were all sponsored to train in the US [six individual names cited] and when they came back they were the only PhDs in the Agriculture Faculty, other than people who had come in from other Science disciplines who might have trained in the UK or whatever. Any one trained in Agriculture at that time was trained in the US... So I'm the first generation of Irish-trained PhDs. I've often said that our development path has been so close to that of Africa, and there's so much we've been able to contribute because we've travelled that pathway more recently than did many other countries. But we never fully capitalised on that.” [C10]

Ireland has at least partially capitalised on this affinity with Africa by having a ‘Fellowship Training Programme’ (FTP) as a continuous feature of Ireland's ODA programme practically since its inception. Fellowship awards are targeted at mid-career professionals in ministries, parastatals,

and civil society organisations who have undertaken on completion of the programme to return home to resume work and put their acquired skills into practice for the benefit of the organisation and the wider community³⁸. It is important to point out that IA funded fellowships (apart from those embedded in HEDCO or PSC projects) were not focused on the capacity needs of higher education in Africa, but rather at partner Ministries, parastatals and civil society organisations:

“So capacity is being built more broadly, not just third level institutions... I would say that the fellowship programme was never mainly aimed at building capacity of Southern HEIs - there were occasional cases where people from such institutions came with a view to improved institutional capacity, but most would have been from across government and civil society.” [A08]

The FTP last underwent a comprehensive review in 2007, which found that the scheme was contributing to capacity development, and had a higher than expected return rate of alumni to their country of origin.³⁹ The study also identified a growing appetite to study in-region, and the generation of significant goodwill towards Ireland and IA, through the success of former fellows in achieving positions of influence and authority in their own countries on return (an example of the so-called ‘soft power’ in international relations).

Undeniably, significant private benefits accrue to the individual award holders who return home upon successful completion of their studies, typically in the form of accelerated promotion and enhanced earnings. However from a public policy standpoint, bursary provision merits support as a structured and potentially strategic mechanism of human capital formation. The expectation among donors is that the investment will release a sustained flow of societal benefits (social and economic) to the beneficiary country, through conferring higher level skills and professional expertise to individuals who in turn may be in a position to cascade those skills and expertise to others, ultimately facilitating improvements in the quality of life of disadvantaged communities across a wide spectrum of service delivery (Boeren, Holtland 2005; Samoff, Carroll 2002):

“This whole issue of the transition from individual to institutional capacity building...is a huge issue. Obviously, things like fellowships are very focused on the individual and building his or her capacity; the question of the overall institution and how that can be built over time... whether those colleges are able to improve the way in which they deliver their training...you really weren’t getting there. Partly it’s because the actual focus of the intervention was quite narrow and restricted in terms of funding and other inputs, but also the overall operational environment for those institutions was so poor that there were real challenges to building up their institutional capacity.” [A08]

The policy and practical objection to this classic graduate training model that arises most frequently is the ‘leaky bucket’ syndrome mentioned above by [A06]. The prolonged scepticism about

³⁸ Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme Guidelines – IAFTP, 2016. See www.irishaidfellowships.ie

³⁹ Annesley Resource Partnership 2007. *External Review of the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme* (unpublished).

investment of donor resources into the HE sub-sector (already discussed in Chapter 3, and above) increasingly became conflated with donor agency concerns around brain drain among returned bursary holders. Based on evidence that transpires to have been partial and anecdotal (Teferra, Knight 2008), the narrative gained momentum that large-scale brain drain was negating the investment made in postgraduate bursaries. IA was no exception to this tendency. A returned HEDCO assignee who subsequently became Minister of State for Development Cooperation in the mid-1990s after returning to Ireland had the following recollection of internal deliberations in the Department of Foreign Affairs about support to HE in Africa:

“There were tacit feelings that there had been abuses when aid to HE support had been provided previously. The main one that was highlighted was that quite a number of students who had availed of study fellowships even up to PhD and postdoc level whether in the UK or US or indeed Ireland, ended up staying in the country of study, with the result that the human capital in which a heavy investment had been made was not transferred back to Africa as had been the intention. I don’t know if there’s any way of dealing with that to be honest – you might have to incentivise people. It may only have happened that people stayed for a period of time, and ultimately went back home. Anyway, HE was out of fashion in the aid community in the early to mid-90s.” [A01]

Later evidence tended to refute the perception of high incidence of such graduate wastage. An ex-post tracer study conducted in 2008 of more than 2,200 Commonwealth Scholarship awardees who had completed study in the UK between the 1960s and the 2000s, concluded that

“In contrast to concerns regarding brain drain, we found that 88% of respondents have returned home and are currently based in their home countries.... making considerable contributions to their local communities and wider society” (Commonwealth Scholarships Commission. 2008: 1).

This survey sought to gauge effectiveness of investment in postgraduate study, and adopted precisely the kind of wide-angle and longer-range perspective that one of the key informants to the present study advocated:

“Taking a broad perspective over a long period – a true outcomes assessment based on what was done in the 1980s or 90s... would have to take into account the progress and achievements of people in the broad sense, not in any narrow short-term institutional context. The latter viewpoint might consider a returned fellow leaving their university as a failure of investment in them, whereas if that person ends up as Auditor General or as a UN delegate⁴⁰ that’s a different complexion altogether. Or a Malawian I can think of who left the university to become head of the National Roads Agency – undeniable impact in societal terms. Several others are working outside the country, but in the SADC region, in different accountancy firms or international companies; the impact of that is huge in terms of both a region-wide human capital contribution, and the multiplier value of their emigrant remittances back home. (C08)

⁴⁰ The reference here is to a HEDCO bursary holder in the early 1990s who obtained a Masters in Financial Control in DCU. He returned to serve the University in Tanzania afterwards, and has since been seconded to work as Auditor General of the country, and in that capacity was elected to the UN Court of Auditors.

Overall, the frequently-vaunted scepticism of donor-funded Fellowships as being compromised by a high incidence of ‘brain drain’ was strongly confounded by all categories of informants. A Southern voice offered the following viewpoint:

“I should state on a very positive note that capacity building in terms of acquiring PhDs has really advanced: a much higher proportion of staff with PhDs now than when I was a student. In my own Department of Social Work, 15 out of our 18 academic staff have PhDs whereas 23 years ago when I entered [my university] there were only two PhDs; then one passed away and the other retired, so we had no PhD holder on the staff for about five years. After that there was a change in the policy of the University which made it obligatory to acquire a PhD in order to be appointed Lecturer. That policy was adopted because prior to that someone could become a Lecturer with a Masters, and end up supervising and teaching graduate students at Masters level. That has changed - now you have to have PhD, and even then you have to work hard to be promoted to Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor.” [B02]

Positive findings regarding investment in postgraduate bursaries were also apparent from an External Review of the IAFTP (2007): award holders who had studied in Ireland (as opposed to regionally) felt that what they had absorbed outside the formal learning setting (alongside the technical competencies acquired) had been beneficial to capacity building. This benefit, though intangible, was a real one. The reported success of this bursary model appears to have continued right up to the most recent evidence from a study of the PSC, in relation to which one of its authors had this to say about a cohort of Tanzanian fellows sponsored in PSC Phase 1 2010-2013:

“What I found from the PSC evaluation was that there had been 14 PhDs coming through the UCD International Development Studies Initiative project of whom we met about 10. They are all back in Tanzania, and they are all super-bright and super-committed, thinking in different ways. They were a pleasure to meet, they were so engaging. Some were in Education including the Centre for Educational Research, two were in the Port Authority, others in Economics, Development Studies... I think they’re all back and in senior positions.” [C04]

Finally, one of the benefits of international scholarship programmes is the opportunity to establish and encourage international partnerships and collaborations; this can be considered as a significant feedback loop, and as such is a reminder of the relevance of complex adaptive systems in this context. This implies bringing a non-linear perspective to evaluating bursary schemes:

Your questions made me think about the need to focus on assessing what difference has come about from the initiatives back then, as distinct from the more linear so-called results-based approach now in vogue, which derives from a more general ideological conception of ‘results’ seen in narrowly defined terms.” [C08]

In conclusion, it would appear from the evidence presented above that the common scepticism about fellowship schemes for overseas postgraduate study for African candidates, which remained ingrained for many years in the mindset of many donors, is unduly influenced by the discourse of

the US experience, and is a distortion if generalised to the different context UK / Commonwealth and European-sponsored fellowship provision. Here, the academic success rate of fellows, and their subsequent return rate to their place of origin on completion of study, has been favourable. Furthermore in the long-run such investment confers significant institutional capacity gains in African partner institutions, especially where a critical mass of early-career personnel have been supported as part of a wider institutional strengthening programme (as distinct from an individual award being made in isolation). The verdict of a former HEDCO project managers conveys a consensus view among informants in this regard:

“The most important thing in the project I was involved in was the overseas fellowships for masters and doctoral training; it is evident to me that those were of vital importance.” [C09].

Modalities

*Associated sub-categories within this node comprise (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, and with the more noteworthy ones in bold): Planning, Project Management Practices, **Results Focus, Monitoring and Evaluation**, Value for Money & Cost-benefit Analysis, Self-interest, and Evidence & Data.*

Recognising the multi-dimensional character of the development process, and having regard to the five aid effectiveness principles (ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results and mutual accountability)⁴¹, it becomes clear that the ways in which ODA is delivered affect outcomes. Achieving sustainable development is not only about the volume of aid, but also about how that aid is given and managed (Kharas, Makino et al. 2011). Consequently the aid effectiveness agenda has come to the forefront of donor thinking, partly as a reaction to critique of project proliferation, fragmentation and duplication among donors, prompting serious questioning as to whether the resources being provided were exerting optimal impact, and whether deadweight effects were being imposed unnecessarily on aid recipients (Moyo 2009). The primacy of the host government as ultimate owner of the development process underpinned a fresh emphasis on inter-donor coherence and harmonization; this found expression in conscious reforms involving the pooling of donor and domestic resources (so-called ‘basket funding’), along the following lines:

“It doesn’t make sense that different donors are involved in different initiatives for establishing national-level quality assurance systems and so on. Then at least the governments need to be in the driving seat otherwise it will fail.” [A10]

⁴¹ These principles were promulgated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005, and reaffirmed in the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and again at the Busan High Level Forum (2011). See: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>

However the benefits of a consortium approach (joint venture by a plurality of donors) had certain unintended consequences:

“The problem with donor consortia (‘basket funding’) is that the contribution made by any one donor agency is not as visible, even though from a development perspective it’s absolutely the correct thing to do. But they’re not able to demonstrate to the folks back home in concrete terms that this is what our money is doing, because it’s going into a basket and being managed in a pool. The other alternative is having everyone running around after everything, which was the case for a long time and hasn’t worked. So I’ve seen a bit of progress on donor harmonisation, but also some setback.” [C10]

An Irish Aid perspective offered some valuable insights on the repercussions of this aid effectiveness agenda on AFHECIs in particular, and on education sector spending in general (the one being linked to the other):

“Overall support to education has decreased over the past number of years... it relates in a way to aid effectiveness, of which I have always been a strong proponent, but it has entailed some unintended consequences, such as this one. What happened back in the 90s in many African countries, there were to be a certain number of donors in health and a certain number in education, so that you would specialize and concentrate in certain areas, and that was seen to be a positive thing. So for example Ireland would deal with health in Zambia, and be a member of the donor group on health there, with a lead donor nominated; moreover each donor would be in one other sector only, thus limiting the number of sectors that they would become involved in. But what happened in our own decision-making was that all of those decisions were made on a country-by-country basis. In Zambia we remained in Education but went out of health, but in more countries we exited education.” [A08]

A similar dynamic was under way in the multilateral donor group, according to the recollection of an informant who was based in the World Bank in the late 2000s:

“The other big swing concerned aid modalities, because when I started it was just in the aftermath of the Paris Declaration; there was a lot of talk about alignment: global funds such as the Fast Track Initiative were all the talk: in the education sector everyone was talking about the need to align with the Fast Track Initiative, and the need to have a local education group and a sector dialogue and an approved sector plan. Over time, whether consciously or not, the Bank seemed to pull away from that.” [A06]

Returning to the self-adaptation by donors to the aid effectiveness principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results and mutual accountability, the translation of these into practice seems to have been interpreted differently by different donor countries, which is paradoxical given that donor harmonization and coherence were central to the rhetoric. Whereas IA perceives itself to have adhered to them assiduously, it sees that others have strayed:

“As part of the Paris Declaration there was a move to rationalise the number of sectors in which different donor countries and agencies engaged; Irish Aid were amongst the well-behaved students and they took this on board, they engaged in

the objective analysis and went by the findings that emerged. Consequently, they stayed with education in some countries and got out of education in others. Some of the bigger boys might have gone along with the rhetoric, but ultimately made up their own minds, as to whether they stayed or left any sector, including education. So I think if one were to look even at the primary / secondary end of the spectrum you would find IA has far less happening in those areas, now that IA has disengaged from the sector in a number of programme countries, including Tanzania.” [C04]

Concomitant with the aid effectiveness focus, there developed a concerted push by donors of OECD countries to embrace RBM (hence the prominence of the sub-category of ‘Results Focus’ in the interview testimonies). As mentioned in Chapter 4, the results based management approach and its associated planning tools (such as the ‘Logframe’) sought to bring logic, clarity and accountability into the planning, monitoring and evaluation of a project, with clearly stated goals and targets at all levels, with a focus on measurable results of projects and programmes and a set of objectively verifiable performance indicators. RBM methodology purported to facilitate comparison of actual achievements against expectation, using empirically verifiable indicators to measure progress towards each output, outcome and impact (Earle 2002). But the adoption of RBM met with resistance both internally within donor agencies and among external stakeholders: a certain rigidity of thinking on the part of some gave rise to contention on the part of others. The rationale of RBM in the context of Irish Aid was explained by a long-serving official:

“Back around 2005 they [Irish Aid] were one of the main sponsors of the Paris Declaration, and out of that one of the things they picked up on was management for development results or results based management (RBM)...They decided then they were going to bring this results focus to their development work. I’m a huge fan of managing by development results and for development results... but I know the adverse things that might have happened around it have been due to abusing it rather than using it. [A08]

While there is recognition here of the benefits of a results focus, there is also an acknowledgment that it was applied rigidly and with insufficient regard to the unpredictability and complexities of the working context. Pursuit of a results focus implies in practice the application of PCM methodologies in planning and monitoring, which are predicated on five quantitative ‘SMART’ performance indicators.⁴² But the utility value of this methodology and its associated typology of performance indicators is considerably greater in the context of programmes where tangible results are evident in the short to medium term at ‘micro’ level (e.g. water points connected, populations vaccinated or higher yielding crops trialled), as distinct from the more strategic nature of capacity development interventions. Benefits do not have to be measurable in order to be real; Fukuda-Parr (2012) argues that numbers are used by authorities to organise and communicate social priorities and create incentives:

⁴² These were discussed briefly in Chapter 4. SMART is an acronym which denotes ‘Specific’, ‘Measurable’, ‘Attributable’, ‘Realistic’ and ‘Targeted’ (Gertler, Martinez et al. 2011).

Numbers are a powerful mechanism of social communication. They have the capacity to simplify complex concepts (such as poverty), and render intangible objects concrete (such as expressing poverty as living on less than \$1 per day). This is what makes numbers such powerful tools but in the process they can in turn both interpret and redefine complex and intangible concepts. (Fukuda-Parr 2012: 6).

In reality SMART indicators will only partially capture the benefits of donor investment in AFHECIs. As a consequence, future policy choices are distorted by ‘evidence’ which may appear spuriously accurate (Cicmil, Hodgson et al. 2009; Eyben 2013). In an example of the latter, a donor agency informant stated that important summary quantitative data had been categorised in conformity with the protocols of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and published in the annual report of the donor concerned. Though this conferred an aura of authenticity, in reality the data had been rendered misleading by the manner of its categorization:

“There are reasons behind the [data analysis] oddities. There are certain ways in which DAC classifies expenditure, and spending on research is reported separately from spending on education. So we use the DAC coding system and that’s what we report against. The most straightforward calculation we would have on what is spent on education...you could take the sectoral analysis at the back of our Annual Report – those figures are based on DAC coding...this is a ‘key partner’ composite figure... and shows the amounts going directly into education bilaterally from us; this does not take into account the multilateral funding that goes into education, nor indeed any money spent on education under Humanitarian and Emergency Assistance.” [A08]

Controversy also continues to reverberate concerning both the rationale for an approach based on a ‘division of labour’ between donor countries, and the linear thinking that frequently underlay the manner of its implementation:

“An exclusive focus on primary tiers of both education and health did not serve the aid programme well, because of being exclusive and not sufficiently flexible. It seems to me regrettable that similar line of thinking characterised the donor consultations such as the Paris Declaration, leading to a change of priorities in EU funding, so as to push out anything which was perceived – wrongly in my view – to be elitist.” [C09]

In a similar way, attempts to apply a restrictive style of linear thinking to evaluating capacity development initiatives, combined with unrealistic donor expectations regarding tangible, evidence-based results of AFHECIs, would seem to be unproductive: they risk missing the point that capacity development as a process is largely intangible and immeasurable, as was discussed at length in Chapter 4. Almost all informants recognised this as a challenge; for example:

“I really don’t think you can quantify capacity development. If you did, you would be quantifying the inputs rather than the outputs.... But how could you really assess in quantitative terms the development of intellectual capacity in a country – that’s very difficult.” [A06]

The perspective of the World Bank informant on this issue was instructive, in that the contemporary practice seems to mitigate the rigidities of RBM, by seeking criteria for programme effectiveness in terms of relevance to the wider policy environment in an integrative way.

“There is always tension between a results focused approach using SMART indicators on the one hand, and the indeterminable nature of the capacity development process on the other, and the Bank is not immune to that. In fact in the development of our lending instruments there is a big push for an instrument which is relatively new for the Bank which is called Programme for Results. Basically, ... rather than linking our support to a set of specific very concrete narrow milestones at institutional level, such as expanding access from X % to Y%, the focus is on bringing a wider perspective to link this goal to whatever relevant policy initiatives that government is trying to put in place; for instance a policy guaranteeing equitable access to HE by providing funding to kids from disadvantaged backgrounds; or to take another example, a government putting in place a national quality assurance framework” [A04]

This more flexible mode of thinking within the World Bank stands in contrast to its penchant three decades ago to base their evaluations of educational investment on quantitative measures of internal efficiency or rate of return analysis (Colclough 1982; Psacharopoulos, Tan et al. 1986). Similarly, IA was acknowledged to have adopted a modulated and rounded approach to RBM strictures in its evaluative approach, one which gives due respect to the ever-changing context of the programme in question as being all-important:

“I would strongly defend IA as an entity in terms of how they perceived managing for development results and wanting it to work. They got a lot of flak internally from their own staff when it was introduced - a lot of resistance and then gradual acceptance.” [A08]

In summary, three key points emerge from this sub-section. Firstly that despite the rhetoric of harmonisation, donors – especially the larger ones - still pursue what they (or their political masters) perceive as to their national interest or advantage (hence the highlighting of ‘self-interest’ as one of the sub-categories in this section). Secondly there is agreement among informants about the relative intangibility of capacity development (compared for example with infrastructural, nutritional or healthcare interventions). Consequently, the effectiveness of AFHECIs cannot be adequately or meaningfully evaluated if a strictly quantitative results-based methodology fixated on short-term results is applied. Thirdly, that the ways in which official data get analysed, categorised and aggregated (including official data on aid effectiveness which finds its way into the public domain) may present only a partial, even misleading, picture of the larger reality. These matters lie at the heart of the present study, and will be absorbed into Chapter 8 – Conclusions.

Finance & Funding

No associated sub-categories were assigned in this instance. Although in the early stages of the database construction, Finance & Funding was assigned as a sub-category of ‘Forging Alliances’,

the frequency and salience of references to Finance & Funding were such as to warrant designation of this important facet of AFHECIs as a stand-alone Level 1 category its own right.

The evidence presented in the preceding section ('Modalities') indicated that education's share of the total Irish Aid expenditure has fallen, and the trend towards lesser focus by donors on the education sector is to be seen more generally in OECD and UNESCO statistics: a synthetic analysis of these statistics in 2015 showed that aid to education as a share of total ODA fell from 9.7% in 2009 to 8.1% in 2013.⁴³ However in what appears to be an exception to the prevailing trend, the World Bank is evincing a more favourable treatment of higher education, evidenced by its profile in tertiary level interventions (spanning both capacity development and infrastructure) accounting for a higher proportion of total spend on education than was the case pre-2005:

"About 10 years ago the tertiary education share of all World Bank's entire project portfolio in education was about 10%, and now it is about 25%. So one-quarter of all projects in terms of volume of money is channelled to HE...It is a very dynamic sector; we are constantly reviewing our projects, and there is a lot of movement within this heading." [A04]

Almost all informants spoke of the gravely impoverished circumstances which constitute the norm for most HEIs in sub-Saharan Africa, in spite of the consistently buoyant economic growth rates achieved by many national economies of the sub-continent over the past decade (with many countries recording growth rates in excess of 5% per year)⁴⁴. Chronic underfunding of tertiary education has persisted throughout the period which is the focus of this retrospective study, going back to the IMF-inspired structural adjustment prescription which was applied to highly indebted poor countries of the global South (Teferra, Knight 2008). This is illustrated by the following testimony of a Ugandan informant:

"I came here in 1994 as an undergrad student, just around the time the Government was reducing its funding of public universities as part of structural adjustment measures which were in full gear at the time. Public services were affected, and education in particular." [B02]

Stakeholders in AFHECIs (both on the donor and beneficiary side) seem to agree not only that underinvestment in third level had occurred historically, but that the more recent improvement in domestic resource mobilisation and positive economic growth was not yet translating into a sustained improvement in recurrent funding for long-term capacity development in-country. An Irish Aid official offered the following graphic depiction of the persistent under-investment in African higher education:

"In a country such as Ghana, back in the 80s and 90s, the Government would have been quite hostile towards universities: it wasn't even that they weren't

⁴³ Education Aid Watch Report 2015: available at www.campaignforeducation.org

⁴⁴ See *Economist* 03.12.2011

supportive, but actually hostile because they felt that's where the opposition was coming from, and that students were the ones speaking out against them and so on. You had periods where the universities were closed down and that was the same across a lot of Africa.... There was a deliberate under-investment in the universities- partly deliberate and partly when funding was under pressure anyway they just weren't prioritised.... Consequently, an awful lot of the HEIs are really, really stretched, and are under a lot of pressure. It's even difficult for them to protect funding for the purposes intended, because there are so many demands on funding within those institutions. There are real challenges there, and it's quite difficult to get those strong working relationships around targeted areas of support because of chronic underfunding...I've seen so many that are just hopelessly overwhelmed." [A08]

The problem identified here, namely the difficulty of ring-fencing restricted funds, can be seen as a microcosm of the larger-scale dilemma facing donors opting to disburse their funding through the mechanism of budget support, with the attendant potential for fungibility to occur. Such fungibility may be the product of relative weakness in the host's public financial management capacity, shortcomings in the level of regulatory sophistication, or the substitution effect (whereby the recipient may contrive to manage donor-sourced funds pledged for one purpose so as to free up domestic resources for another - perhaps less consensual – purpose).

Curious as to what factors might be contributing to the relative de-emphasis on education among very many donors (including Ireland), the researcher sought the perspective of informants who were in a position to judge. One, a former Minister of State in the Government of Ireland, took the view that over the eight year period when the Irish Aid budget has been static due to economic downturn, the incremental increase in mandatory contributions to multilateral agencies, as well as additional demands for humanitarian relief and reconstruction (e.g. Syrian refugee crisis and the Ebola pandemic in West Africa) combined to shrink the other segments of the ODA 'cake':

“Something that needs to be re-evaluated is the high proportion of our aid budget channelled through UN bodies. In my experience the administration costs on those can be very high because of the nature of the institutions.... [Irish Aid's] focus on UN and other multilateral bodies has gone up. We have sought a presence on those bodies and very often to get that presence, our level of donation has to be significant. Also because of lobbying by the larger development agencies, we've ended up spending very significant amounts on emergency humanitarian aid. In that context the Irish contribution is always going to be relatively small....It means that relatively speaking the funding available for bilateral aid is correspondingly reduced and when I was Minister I was quite opposed to a small donor partner like Ireland being thus constrained.” [A01]

Another factor contributing to the de-emphasis on education appears to have been as an unintended consequence of the outworking of the aid effectiveness agenda subsequent to the Paris Declaration of 2005 (discussed under the heading of 'Modalities' above). A senior Irish Aid official explained how this may have come about:

“Within a fairly short period you were seeing a reduction in the number of countries in which we had an education portfolio, simply because from that perspective we had reduced the number of sectors of engagement, and education lost out to health or whatever.... If you go back some 15 years you would have had quite a lot of technical expertise in the education sector among the donor community. That has fallen dramatically. You no longer have a cluster of 8 or 10 different donors with good technical expertise in education- you have a much reduced set of such players in-country now. Donors simply don't have the in-house education specialists they used to have, that has died off. As a result, the inter-donor sectoral dialogue had quite a strong technical support element that has become much weaker in recent years.” [A08]

A perceived ‘policy fault-line’ between international development and higher education arose as an issue in some of the conversations with informants. This fault line is mirrored in the demarcations between ministries, both in donor and beneficiary countries, and this has a knock-on effect on resource allocation decision-making. In a climate of intensified scrutiny of public accounts at national level in countries of the OECD, higher education budgets have little or no discretionary latitude to use core funding for internal costs associated with philanthropically motivated work overseas. Meanwhile aid programme administrators shy away from utilising funds from the overseas development assistance vote to help HEIs to defray such costs (except in a limited way for specifically-defined development education activity within the domestic domain).

“The fundamental problem about support to higher education is that the universities in Ireland are driven by economic targets, and therefore can't really afford to be benefactors. The Irish institutions want to be paid to do things. They would probably be quite happy to give away intellectual property for a good cause, but to give away staff time is something that they probably couldn't afford to do.” [A06]

Finally, in addition to the problem of scarcity of funding, an issue adversely affecting smooth project implementation was that of procedural rigidities and perverse incentives endemic in public sector financial management strictures: for example, Irish exchequer funds remaining unspent at year-end cannot be carried forward and have to be re-authorised, even if the delays at project level lie beyond the project managers' control. The sense of frustration was expressed by one former assignee:

“The constraints of public sector financial procedures on the Irish side do not align well with the realities facing project implementers and give rise to pressure points, e.g. supply chain delays in rural Tanzania holding up the implementation timeframe for construction component, with corresponding expenditure running beyond year-end, and thus being clawed back. A blame-game ensued between project stakeholders.” [C05]

In summary, a de-emphasis on donor assistance to the education sector as a whole is apparent over the past decade (with the exception of World Bank contributions). This trend is partly due to unintended consequences of the outworking of the aid effectiveness agenda. As a result, the sector-specific expertise which previously existed, and which well understood the intricacies of education

sector dynamics at country and regional level in Africa, has been dissipated. National governments have not taken up the slack, partly because HEIs encounter incongruities with the demarcation lines of ministerial portfolios, and with the arbitrary and / or arcane processes concomitant with public sector financial procedures.

Human Resources

*Associated sub-categories within this node comprise (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, and with the more noteworthy ones in bold): **Retention**, Staff shortage, Succession, Job (in-)security, Gender and **Role Clarity**.*

Perhaps more than any other attribute impinging on AFHECI effectiveness, Human Resource (HR) deployment and management lies primarily within the domain of in-country administrative systems and institutional-level management. Nevertheless, even though HR protocols in African HEIs are normally not subject to direct donor influence, external funding to one institution - or to one unit - can have unintended negative displacement consequences on the human resource base in others, as was observed by Szanton and Manyika:

Because of poor faculty salaries, benefits and teaching conditions, many senior professors have shifted to externally and relatively well, and more flexibly, funded project-oriented research institutes. But this means minimising their teaching activities. Others get caught up in project development or evaluation consultancies for national and international donors, agencies and NGOs operating locally and elsewhere. (Szanton, Manyika 2002: 19).

Where donors can attempt to exert influence is in relation to maximising the prospects for sustainability in their investment in human capital: for example, it is a common feature of donor-funded bursaries that candidates are nominated formally for such awards by their employing institutions, which undertake to release the individual concerned on study leave, and to absorb them back onto the payroll on completion, with the candidate giving a reciprocal pledge to remain in that employment for a period at least equivalent to the duration of study. These undertakings carry a degree of moral obligation but are seldom enforceable. Donors seem to accept this with resignation and pragmatism, as can be gleaned from the comments of an experienced manager of the Netherlands programme:

“In the end, we [scholarship provider] have very little clout. People are obliged to go back [to the country of origin] and employers guarantee that they can come back to their organisation and their salary supposedly continues to be paid during their period of study, but in the end we have no instruments to enforce these provisos... It’s the responsibility of the employing organisation if they want to send their staff for training and ultimately don’t want to make use of it; in that eventuality, our objectives are de-railed, but it’s their responsibility.”
[A09]

Both retention and succession emerged as prominent sub-categories from the interviews with Category B (African Voices) informants. One such linked his concerns about succession in his own school to an ongoing recruitment embargo; his sentiments would no doubt find an echo throughout Irish HEIs experiencing similar challenges albeit to a lesser degree:

“I’m finding the onus of running the Masters programme here too heavy a burden, cutting me off from being able to devote time to my research and publications. I have too much teaching and too much admin work. We academic staff are so thin on the ground because for some seven years past the Government is not supporting recruitment of teaching assistants, and we don’t know how what lies ahead. Hopefully that embargo will be lifted soon because it’s threatening the viability of the University. You need to have staff to take over teaching from those retiring, and if you have a gap of seven years, that’s quite long” [B02].

The latter informant, a Senior Lecturer in the Uganda’s premier university, was among several of the African voices contributing to this research study who gave accounts from personal experience of a demotivating workplace environment characterised in almost all cases by excessively onerous workloads due to overwhelming student numbers and chronic resource scarcity:

“There is a definite plus in having more PhDs in almost every unit, but those people increasingly feel under-utilized, because of excessive workload of undergraduate teaching and administration. It means that as Director of the existing programme I am not supported, and certainly there is no incentive to introduce any new programmes.” [B02]

In an apparent paradox, and echoing the exact same phenomenon as was identified more than a decade ago by Teferra and Altbach (2004)⁴⁵, the same informant made reference to the practice among some of his academic colleagues of ‘moonlighting’ involving teaching commitments in multiple institutions, thereby compounding the problem of work overload:

“There are some colleagues [in my institution] who are heading up Departments in those private universities. They are doing that mainly because the remuneration is not good in any of the institutions, public or private, and this is a way of augmenting income, but at the cost of the amount of time available to students in both places. We know it’s not a good thing, but we nevertheless do it.” [B02]

A somewhat more up-beat viewpoint was offered by a Tanzanian informant who after obtaining his Masters and then his PhD in Ireland in the early 1990s, has since been serving in his own institution. In the following excerpt, he offers a concise prescription for the type of HR culture needed in order for institutions to capitalise on the initial donor-funded formation (in this case, one funded by Irish Aid, forming an integral part of a multi-annual HEDCO project).

⁴⁵ “The general trend has been to moonlight at the newly established institutions, while maintaining bases in major public universities” (Teferra, Altbach 2004: 31)

“The individual, in order to be retained and contribute, needs to maintain motivation through continuous professional growth and development, and opportunities for research collaboration are crucial to building the institutional environment conducive to that individual motivation, with opportunities to innovate in teaching and research. Other stratagems that are important in maintaining and enhancing professional development are public service and community engagement roles, as well as consultancy relevant to one’s specialist area (otherwise this can end up being a distraction), participation in university management and outside advisory bodies.” [B04]

Another Tanzanian fellowship holder encountered difficulties with his employer on his return from Masters studies in Ireland in the early 1990s; the negative experience ultimately caused him to leave academia. In his case, the dispute revolved around the non-recognition by the employing university of a professional qualification in Accounting which the fellow had gained alongside his Masters degree in the same discipline during the tenure of his HEDCO-provided Fellowship:

“Once we arrived in Ireland we could see the emphasis being placed on professional accountancy training; most of our lecturers [in Ireland] apart from being academics were also professionally qualified with experience. We found that a professional education counted a lot in developing the accounting cadre, something which was new for Tanzania. So when we came back there was a problem, because the authorities didn’t appreciate that professional credentials were of central importance to the discipline of accounting. Contrast that with Medicine, where it’s accepted that you can’t be a doctor just by reading books, you have to do training placements in hospital alongside experienced doctors. The same is true for accountants, but it was not then acknowledged in Tanzania.” [B06]

Interestingly, this individual remained in Tanzania and went on to distinguish himself in professional practice, specialising in public finance management and delivering EU-funded and World Bank funded training programmes for public service personnel in audit and financial control functions over the following twenty-five years throughout the Eastern and Southern Africa region. It may reasonably be surmised that this individual’s contribution to capacity development (and incidentally to good governance) in Eastern and Southern Africa has been worthwhile, albeit in a different role from that which had been intended. An ex-post evaluation of this case history might (depending on the breadth of perspective taken) have produced two contrary verdicts on the effectiveness of Ireland’s investment in his early-career training. If the criterion for effectiveness had been his retention in the beneficiary institution and sustained contribution to strengthening the faculty capacity therein, his Fellowship award would be deemed an abject failure, and could have been cited – with pejorative connotations - as an instance of ‘brain drain’ from the public to the private sector. In contrast, taking a more holistic evaluation perspective, the alternative conclusion may well have been: (i) that the University had adopted an overly-rigid and ultimately self-defeating stance in failing to recognise an otherwise respected professional qualification, and (ii) that in the long run the individual’s contribution to institutional capacity building was arguably

more extensive, while at the same time contributing to an important public good – in this case, combating malfeasance in government, than would otherwise have been the case.

A feature of HEDCO's capacity development model was the assignment of expatriate personnel on long-term technical assistance contracts. In such cases the individual held dual contracts of service, one with the host institution and one with HEDCO. Former assignees recalled the difficulties which thereby arose from time to time, when role definition went awry:

“Alongside the HEDCO contract, I held a contract of service with the Zimbabwe Government (Min of Higher Education) as a line position within the College system, and subject to the authority structure. There was fear of creating a precedent. Despite the constant irksome rigidities day by day regarding procurement of perishable goods and importing technical goods, our philosophy was that the show goes on. The Ministry did not encourage or support the foreign support they were getting; there was so much in-fighting among themselves.” [C06]

“I was contracted to HEDCO so I saw that as my main line of reporting. Our project was hosted by a teacher training college, whose Principal considered himself as my line manager. As the project unfolded, increasingly Irish Aid – the funding source -exercised a controlling hand; for example, by year 3 of the project (mid-1990s), Irish Aid changed my designation from Project Manager to Project Coordinator, and stipulated that all funds would henceforth be channelled through the College Principal, despite well-founded concerns about accountability and probity. So at times three reporting lines were in operation.” [C05]

These complications when they arose necessitated delicate and time-consuming management intervention from afar, and this in turn contributed to the subsequent donor distaste for technical assistance as a programme modality (previously discussed under 'Knowledge and Skills' above). Interestingly, however, this factor is scarcely mentioned in the literature.

In summary, a key finding is that 'bonding' arrangements for bursary holders (a common stratagem to promote sustainability in institutional capacity development) are unlikely to be sufficient to ensure retention and succession of academic personnel on return to their country of origin, in the absence of a broader in-country HR strategy which is conducive to good morale, which in turn seems to be a prerequisite for staff retention and succession. Another key finding is the need for programme evaluation to be approached with a sufficiently wide-angle lens to enable unexpected benefits – and unintended consequences - to be appropriately captured and fed back into future learning.

Time Horizons

No associated sub-categories were assigned under this category.

Attempts to evaluate the impact of capacity development work have been consistently bedevilled by two factors. One has already been considered briefly under ‘Modalities’ above, namely the intangible nature of the process; the other is the extended time lapse between an investment of resources and substantive results of that investment eventuating, which may take decades. Whereas a timeframe of three-to-five years is conventionally used in planning development projects or programmes, AFHECIs require longer-term thinking and strategizing. For example, the full benefit of a strategic partnership focused around enhancement of third level staff capacity, which in turn stimulates a cascade effect in terms of new cohorts of teachers, health personnel, agriculturalists, etc., may take a decade or two to manifest itself. The mechanisms for skills transfer of this kind are highly dynamic—correlated not only with the elapse of time (requiring a ‘post-generational’ perspective), but also with the unfolding processes of rapid socio-economic structural change. Curiously, this ‘time horizon’ dynamic features little in the literature on capacity development, and for this reason, the testimonies provided in relation to this attribute were all the more informative.

One now retired but experienced field worker, reflecting on his multi-country and multi-donor experience in Africa, had trenchant criticisms to make about the adverse effect of what he referred ‘short-termism’ that underlies much of programme design and implementation for capacity development:

“A major impediment is a ‘short-termism’ that seems to permeate the thinking among both donors and host institutions.” [C05]

Short-termism is of course a product of the reality that programme funding streams are always time-bound, determined to an extent by the electoral cycle in donor countries - typically four to five years maximum. Whereas the process of developing capacity may be one of indeterminable duration, the corresponding funding envelope is not.

“The long-term nature of the stream of benefits arising from capacity building in academia extends far beyond the typical evaluation horizon, which means that they often fail to be properly captured and documented, and anyway for that kind of impact you don’t have collectable indicators.” [A03]

The reference in this quotation to ‘indicators’ needs to be explicated, as it has become a central tenet in the lexicon of development programme monitoring and evaluation, specifically in PCM. Though PCM methodology has tended in the past to be universally applied across the entire canon of development programming, certain types of intervention are more amenable than others to meeting the five ‘SMART’ criteria. The utility value of this methodology and its associated typology of performance indicators is considerably greater in the context of programmes whose theory of change envisages results that manifest themselves in the short to medium term. However according to the informants, institutional capacity strengthening in higher education is not congruent with that paradigm. A rather extreme case of unrealistic expectation of discernible

progress happening within a short time-frame on the parts of both donor and host government was cited by one former project manager in the field:

“Where capacity development for the education sector is concerned, a ten-year funding horizon is needed. The HEDCO Primary Maths Teacher Education project was conceived as a 3-year intervention; progress in Year 1 was painstakingly slow, due to logistical problems in the start-up phase. Even so, already by the end of Year 1, Irish Aid commissioned a non-routine Review (thereby needlessly jangling nerves within the project team), while on the Tanzanian side, the District Education Officer was bemoaning the fact that there had been not visible improvement in primary certificate Maths results.” [C05]

The discussion of this Time Horizon attribute suggests that the conventionally used model for programme planning (PCM) and for gauging programme impact (Results Framework) are only minimally applicable to AFHECIs, not only because the benefits conferred are largely intangible in nature (as has already been seen), but also because the period over which those benefits gestate and become manifest far exceeds the standard duration of the programme life-cycle. In this respect, a perceived ‘fault-line’ between international development thinking and higher education’s ethos came through in some of the conversations with informants.

Context

True to the whole-of-system perspective which imbues this study, ‘context’ embraces not just the macro-level conditions of living such as economic and political stability, but also the ‘meso-level’ factors such as institutional incentives, management culture and regulatory milieu, and the resources available to the southern partner (McEvoy, Brady et al. 2016; Fowler 1996).

*Associated sub-categories within this node comprise (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, and with the more noteworthy ones in bold): **Regional dimensions**, Political pressure, **Regulatory Systems**, Private HEIs, Unpredictability, Demographics.*

It is evident from Chapter 4 that throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, the institutional landscape of higher education has undergone significant change in the past twenty-five years or so. Informants of all categories displayed a keen awareness of this changed institutional landscape, with frequent references being made to the pan-African demographic surge in the eligible age cohort for third level, more extensive course provision especially at graduate level and greater diversity in institution type, with the advent of private institutions of variable quality (some faith-based), alongside the well-established state-sponsored universities.

“Enrolment figures have been shooting up with the growth of private universities. And yet considering the size of the age cohort, HE enrolment is proportionately still very small. So the pressure is going to continue to be tremendous.” [A04]

The resulting competitive market for scarce academic teaching personnel has created a new pressure point for accelerated production of PhDs, and has given rise to the need for new state institutions to oversee the necessary regulatory framework and quality assurance functions. One informant, in giving examples of this evolving national level machinery in his own country, made it clear that it would take some time for national quality assurance systems to gain credibility:

“There is now a thing called the Tanzania Commission for Universities and another called the National Council for Technical Education. I don’t know how much quality assurance they are doing, but the awareness of QA in universities is very low. I was involved in a project with the IFM [Institute for Finance Management], and one of the things it was hard to get across was the rationale for QA. The acknowledgement of the need for QA is not there at research level. A student can begin a PhD and may finish whenever – they don’t have these milestones against which to check what’s going on.” [B03]

Regional cooperation emerged as one important respect in which the context of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa had altered, with a number of high-level regional coordination networks being mentioned such as the Southern African Region Universities Association, the West Africa Research & Innovation Management Association, and the Inter-University Council for East Africa. At the lower level of individual disciplines, cited examples of growing regional collaboration and exchange included the Pan-African Centre for Mathematics, and the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa. Such initiatives are greatly facilitated by the greater ease of personal movement between countries of the region, for example among member states of the East African Community, and Réseau d’Excellence des Sciences de l’Ingenieur de la Francophonie.

“I think there are things happening at regional level within the framework of UNESCO and the AAU and SADC. I think it makes absolute sense, but there is a long way to go and needs careful coordination. So it’s not like different donors coming in to establish systems at different levels; coordination would be critical for success in that endeavour. [A02]

The regionalisation trend also blends in well with the aid effectiveness narrative, as donors perceive regional bodies to be valuable mechanisms for scaling-out and replicating the benefits conferred by individual programmes:

“We are probably seeing a more efficient use of resources now with each regional initiative, because there’s definitely a stronger wish both on the donor side and the recipient side to share information and to pool in the different initiatives together to get a bigger result and impact, which again probably wasn’t the case 10 years ago.” [A03]

The progressive easing of border restrictions in much of sub-Saharan Africa has rendered intra-regional mobility for academic and research purposes much easier than was the case in the 1980s and 1990s; but whereas technical barriers have been lowered, cultural resistance remains, as recalled by one retired assignee:

“The proposal in Burkina Faso to recruit Ghanaian teachers did not gain traction, while in Tanzania, when my position was being filled on completion, strong candidates of Kenyan origin applied, but were vetoed by College management and by the parent Ministry.” [C04]

One can discern in this observation the trace of a paradoxical prejudice operating on an intra-African axis, perhaps a hint of inverted superiority hanging over from the colonial era. It seems to be the case that a certain inferiority complex was – or is - at work, not only in the South’s way of relating to the historically dominant North, but also in South-South relations.

The growth in private sector higher education in Africa emerged as a significant sub-category, repeatedly mentioned by informants as being another sign of transformation in the sector over the past generation.

“Even if the levels of participation are still below what you find in the North; nevertheless the proliferation of private universities and other forms of HE institutions alongside the state provision has opened up third level education to an extent hardly imaginable 40 or 50 years ago when international development was ‘taking off’ as it were, towards the end of the colonial era. Now that says nothing at all about the quality – it relates just to provisioning.” [C03]

In summary, higher education cooperation at multi-country regional level is expanding, and has potential to further do so, particularly in relation to accelerating the production of much-needed PhDs through graduate training, mentoring, and networking, and to the consolidation of quality assurance protocols and frameworks. These offer opportunities for future donor support to scale-up capacity development support from institutional level to systemic level.

However an unintended consequence of intensification of donor support for multi-country initiatives and apex-level interventions (e.g. quality assurance mechanisms) is the potential dilution or diversion of the donor resources that might otherwise have been invested at institutional level. Such dilution would certainly compound pressure points that are already becoming problematic – sharp increases in enrolment, and increasing numbers of universities, including private sector ones, but with attendant concerns about erosion of quality. The creation of regional centres of specialisation for advanced level teaching and research is an attractive option to optimise scarce donor and domestic resources, but in order for this to really work, the easing of cross-border technical restrictions on personal movement will need to be matched by attitudinal change towards intra-African cooperation which would transcend existing mental boundaries.

Public Good

The earlier reflections in Chapter 3 on higher education as a public good are relevant here. Many interviewees displayed a vague awareness of AFHECIs as a concrete manifestation of public good ethos of higher education, and the four sub-categories below were seen also as manifestations of

this by extension; but for the researcher, the surprise was that it did not feature more prominently or frequently in the observations offered.

*Associated sub-categories within this node comprise (in descending order of their incidence arising in interviews, and with the more noteworthy ones in bold): **Outreach (community engagement)**, Equity of access, Multiplier effect, and Cross-cultural relations.*

The societal benefit or ‘public good’ conferred by higher education investment is widely assumed as part-justification for exchequer funding allocations, but remains largely intangible and unquantifiable.

“What you have to accept is that investment in HE is necessary for the development of any country, and we shouldn’t be shy about making that investment even if you’re unable to say at the end of any investment period that you have clear and measurable goals that you can wave on a banner and say if it wasn’t for us this wouldn’t have happened. I don’t think one is able to do that.” [C03]

“I do think though that education has been a mechanism for social mobility in a lot of developing country contexts, and is enormously beneficial for those who do well in it. But making the case for it exclusively on the basis of economic returns, which is necessary in the World Bank structure, isn’t necessarily the right way to justify education.” [A06]

A salient point was made by African and non-African informants alike, that higher education expertise contributes to public policy and decision-making, whether through paid consultancy, through honorary service on advisory panels and commissions, through membership of boards of examiners for public examinations, and so on. Furthermore the independence it enjoys (albeit limited) is an important mollifying influence on otherwise heavy-handed or authoritarian tendencies in the exercise of state power.

“The contribution of academia in a developmental state has to be seen as much wider than the raw statistics on graduates ‘produced’ or courses delivered; it ripples out into other domains such as evidence-based policy formation, media and civil society discourse, strengthening of rule of law and respect for rights and transparency in public affairs... My own [taught Masters] programme actually started in response to a recognition of the need for more understanding of the growth of the social problems we have in Uganda – it all began back to 1963 long before HIV. Of course it became much more relevant with the onset of HIV Aids during the 1980s when households were being affected on a large scale.” [B02]

“They [the donors] went in search of promoting governance-type initiatives, such as local community development, womens projects and localised projects of basic education. It’s very hard to do that without a cadre of highly-skilled people from within the host country who are able to deliver that, through having a really well-educated cohort with second level education, and ultimately a strong third level sector. Of course, some autocratic governments are suspicious of university people because they’re likely to be more critical.” [A01]

In an important observation, one astute informant stressed the potential for AFHECIs, if judiciously targeted, to contribute to the protection of human rights, combating of corruption, and promotion of active citizenship and democratic accountability. These are areas where HEIs can make a distinctive contribution through outreach and civic engagement, and in which they can be assisted by modest external support, but which would rarely if ever secure such support if the host government had sole discretion:

“One assignment I did for Irish Aid in Lesotho in 1999 was a review of a media training course with the objective of training journalists. The underlying rationale was that if the country had a strong cohort of journalists who were properly trained and had a strong ethic, they would have an independent media sector which would help democratisation and keeping the government honest. There is no way I can imagine an Education Sector Plan including a training course for journalists to be critics of the state. So there is something in the thinking there that highlights that there are things of strategic value in education that donors will support, but host governments never will. It’s a tiny example that amounted to just a couple of hundred thousand euro, but somebody was thinking about what they were doing.” [A06]

Looking at HEIs’ engagement with civil society prompts us to briefly consider where AFHECIs stand in relation to programming and advocacy priorities undertaken by development NGOs. Though this matter was not included specifically in the interview guide, a few references came up in the course of the interviews, though the tenor of these differed between Northern and Southern informants. From a Southern perspective, the strengthening of local NGO capacity was clearly central to the mission of the School of one informant (Course Director for a Masters in Social Science which is unique in Uganda), and the wider societal benefit of this mutual engagement was beyond doubt:

“There is so much support that our Department gives to NGOs in their work at community and household level... We help NGOs in the evaluation of programmes or to do proper needs assessment work at programme design stage. They come to the Department to ask for expertise. But in addition very many NGOs send their staff to avail of our Masters in Social Sector Management; actually the curriculum was designed specifically with the needs of the community and voluntary sector in mind.” [B02]

On the other side of the coin, a Northern voice perceived the lobbying power of the Irish NGOs to have in the past been generally unhelpful to the case that higher education support should feature within Ireland’s ODA. They tended at a minimum tend to equate higher education in Africa with vested interests of the elite, though such misgivings would be voiced with varying degrees of intensity as between individual NGOs:

“The NGOs have not been supportive of further or professional training, demanding that aid should be focused on humanitarian priorities. They tug Government policy in that direction.” [C01]

There is clear scope here for a rapprochement to be forged, which is why the work of the Development Studies Association Ireland (DSAI) is of key importance as a credible platform of engagement between NGO practitioners and academicians active in development-oriented research.

Summation – Chapter 6

The weight of testimonial evidence contained in this Chapter serves to vindicate the Analytical Framework as a robust basis for analysing the interview transcript material, and for generating findings that have real import for this study's research questions.

The multi-dimensional character of AFHECIs means that no single factor or constituent element – incentives, leadership, financial support, trained staff, knowledge, structure – can by itself lead to the development of capacity. This implies a need to take account of a broader range of approaches when addressing capacity development, seeing the interlocking elements as part of a 'whole-of-system' view. universally applied across the entire canon of development programming. certain types of intervention are more amenable than others

“Conceptually at least we recognize that if you don't look at the education sector more holistically, then even if what you're trying to achieve is better basic education, you won't be able to do that without being underpinned by good universities and teacher training in place. You need all of that to work together, even if your ultimate focus is on basic education, but obviously you need to take account of the broader picture”. [A08]

The opportunity for longer-term North-South and South-South institutional partnerships consists in building and consolidating the staff capacity within the African institutions to sustain good-quality locally-relevant third level programmes. One informant offered a neat summation as follows:

“Enabling factors [for CD] include motivated individuals...coherent in-country policies and connected international discourse; whatever the disciplinary area, people need to be linking up with what's happening in other countries.” [C09]

CHAPTER 7: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF ARCHIVAL FINDINGS

In this chapter, findings are presented and discussed relating to two organisations in Ireland, with reference to the eleven-point analytical framework used in the last chapter for interview testimonies. Both organisations (now defunct) fell into the category of AFHECIs, sharing a similar – though not identical – mission: (i) HEDCO which was active between 1980 and the late 1990s, and (ii) the more recent Programme of Strategic Cooperation (PSC) between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes 2007-11. These two interventions were separated by an interval of almost twenty years. The author has a privileged insight into both, having served as a staff member at two distinct stages of his career. This insider status also facilitated privileged access to archival material that otherwise may have receded into oblivion.

Section I - Case Study 1: Higher Education for Development Cooperation (HEDCO)

Origins - HEDCO's Formation and Ascendant Period.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, an early focus of Irish Aid and other donors, which endured for many years, was on matching available expertise in Ireland with identified skills deficits in Ireland's priority countries in Africa. When it came to translating this aspiration into practice, the institutions of higher education in Ireland were well placed to mobilise expertise of relevance to the overseas development work (Boeren, Holtland 2005:20). They were also enthusiastic about providing graduate courses in Ireland designed primarily for students from the 'third world' (to use the parlance of the time).⁴⁶ Accordingly in 1975, an informal cross-institutional body known as the Higher Education Consultation Group (HECG) chaired by Professor George Dawson (Trinity College Dublin) was set up, for which the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO) provided the secretariat and to which DFA gave a stamp of approval⁴⁷. Its purpose was to promote and coordinate the participation of the all-island university sector in the embryonic bilateral aid

⁴⁶ Early examples of such courses launched in the late 1970s were an M.Sc. in Systems Development in Trinity College Dublin; a Masters in Engineering Hydrology in University College Galway (as NUIG was then known); an M.Sc. in Inorganic Chemistry in University College Dublin; and a Masters in Librarianship offered jointly by TCD, UCD and the (then) National Institute of Higher Education Limerick. (Source: HEDCO Annual Report 1981).

⁴⁷ An entity with a complementary remit which was also formed with the blessing of DFA around that time was DECVO (the State Agencies Development Cooperation Organisation); however this differed from HEDCO, in that it was funded by its members, such as Coras Trachtala, the Industrial Development Authority, Institute of Public Administration, Irish Management Institute, Coras Iompair Eireann, Aer Lingus, Electricity Supply Board.

programme (BAP), pursuing practical ways in which the collective expertise of Irish higher education could contribute. The unprecedented coming together of universities from Northern Ireland and the Republic in an outward-looking venture which transcended the political divisions on the island itself was considered to be of collateral benefit (HEDCO 1996: ii).

In 1976, DFA gave material substance to its earlier conceptual endorsement of HECG by allocating what was to become an annual administration grant (a practice which continued until 1989). The justification for this was 'to involve colleges more fully in the Irish Aid programme'⁴⁸, and DFA's funding support, along with its participation on the Board, signified that HECG was in a *de facto* subsidiary arm of the official aid programme and had a mandate to engage in international development work with government support. Furthermore the existence of 'umbrella' bodies of the higher education sector, under the auspices of, or closely allied, to the apex-level of international development policy and practice, was at that time a feature of the institutional structure for ODA of certain other countries to which DFA looked for exemplars for the nascent Irish aid programme, such as Germany, Netherlands, UK, Australia and Canada. The existence of such intermediary bodies was indicative of the reality that support for higher education (including infrastructure, technical assistance, graduate training and bi-directional partnerships at institutional level) was already a well-established element of the development aid profile of these donors, and of others such as the Nordic group⁴⁹.

Official backing from DFA (both financial and otherwise) enabled the HECG to generate a momentum of activity at college level, in terms of expressions of interest, actual staff exchange visits and other collaborative linkages at faculty or departmental level. By May 1978, HECG had its own salaried Chief Executive and Administrative Assistant, a dedicated representative Council⁵⁰ chaired by the aforementioned Professor Dawson of Trinity College Dublin, and its own offices. HECG Council minutes of 1978 and 1979 report on the task of formulating a Memorandum and Articles of Association to elevate HECG into a body corporate - Higher Education for Development Co-operation (HEDCO), ownership of which was vested collectively in the subscribing institutions. However formal company registration did not materialise until early 1981, because the Memorandum and Articles required approval of the Governing Body of each of the member institutions. This time-lapse was one illustration of the constraints which HEDCO subsequently encountered, as an executive agency operating in a fluid global environment, which at

⁴⁸ HEDCO archive 1976

⁴⁹ This group comprised the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC), CIMO Finland, SIU Norway and Danida Fellowship Centre, Denmark.

⁵⁰ Board membership comprised a nominee of each University Institution on the island of Ireland, two nominees of the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions, and observers from Higher Education Authority, National Council for Educational Awards, Agency for Personal Service Overseas, and the Department of Foreign Affairs – Development Cooperation Division (2). (Source: HEDCO 1980, iii).

the same time had to manifest the strong collegiality, consensual decision-making, inclusiveness and impartiality in its way of working. (This factor will be re-visited in Chapter 8 – Conclusions).

The main objective of HEDCO as an incorporated entity was to promote the development of higher level skills and expertise in developing countries (particularly the ‘priority countries’ within Ireland’s bilateral aid programme), in response to clearly identified needs or gaps. HEDCO’s primary instrument for achieving this was institutional capacity building through technical assistance linked to counterpart training, and institutional twinning between Ireland and Africa. Its development approach was governed by the twin objectives of (a) responsiveness to the local needs and conditions in-country, and (b) the nurturing of self-sufficiency in institutional capacity in-country (HEDCO 1986, iii). HEDCO was thus the conduit for leveraging the multi-disciplinary expertise of its member colleges in Ireland, as well as of specialist bodies (such as the Higher Education Authority and the National Council for Educational Awards) and specialist research institutions (such as the Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra), in furtherance of a short-term or longer-term development endeavour, mainly in Anglophone Eastern and Southern Africa.

The nature of HEDCO’s overseas engagement took various forms: establishment of new – or expansion of existing – institutions, faculties, or departments within universities and institutes of vocational and higher education in the developing world; technical assistance for course development (mainly undergraduate) and curriculum design across disciplines considered relevant to the host country’s priorities; provision of graduate study fellowships in Ireland for staff development for teaching personnel of partner institutions (mainly at Masters level) and their temporary substitution by experienced lecturers from Ireland where necessary for continuity of teaching; commissioned research and consultancy for educational reform and policy development for ministries, curriculum and examinations councils. All these were predicated on drawing on expertise of institutions in Ireland, and this supply-side characteristic became HEDCO’s defining hallmark from the outset:

“Provided that the [overseas] work can be done by an Irish University or College of Technology, there are no restraints on the type of work undertaken, and HEDCO can work with organisations and departments in and outside of Government”. (HEDCO 1980, iv).

Furthermore, it was recognised that support for counterpart institutions in the priority countries themselves (universities, technical colleges, agricultural colleges and teacher training colleges) offered strong prospects for a multiplier effect to occur over time, based on the rationale of training the trainers, so as to enable those institutions to be more effective, self-sufficient in expertise, and dynamic contributors to societal development (Boeren, Holtland 2005; Salmi 2009; Samoff, Carrol 2002; Sawyerr 2002).

Throughout the late 1970s and most of the 1980s, HEDCO's project portfolio expanded in step with the growth of the Irish BAP. The latter continued to provide core administration grant-in-aid funding to HEDCO until 1989, although from 1985 onwards the funding model was modified to a hybrid; this comprised part administration grant and part project management fee based on a fixed-percentage (typically 9%) of the value of projects delivered by HEDCO, mainly in the four priority countries. However, the aggregate sum of net transfers to HEDCO from DFA showed incremental increases year-on-year.⁵¹

Enabled by the growing ODA budget⁵², HEDCO had begun to acquire sufficient self-confidence and credentials to bid competitively for contracts to manage, staff and implement projects of capacity building and institutional strengthening in the developing world, on behalf of, and funded by, the European Commission and the World Bank. For example, in 1983 HEDCO successfully tendered for the largest overseas technical assistance project hitherto awarded by the European Commission (HEDCO 1983: i). The contribution to overhead obtainable by HEDCO from the multilaterally-funded programmes⁵³ substantially augmented the grant aid and project fees derived from DFA sources. By pooling the domestic and multilateral income, HEDCO was able for several years to take judicious advantage of an economy of scale, while adopting an outward-looking, quasi-entrepreneurial approach in prospecting for new project business overseas.

By 1985, HEDCO's secretariat had grown from three to eight personnel, and was administering projects in over twenty countries, valued at IR£2m (€2.5m) per annum. Approximately two-thirds of the project portfolio were Irish funded, and the remaining third represented contracts awarded by the European Community, the World Bank, and United Nations (UN) agencies (HEDCO 1985, i).

HEDCO's Project-based Portfolio.

Projects for which HEDCO bore management responsibility came about in different ways, depending on the prospective funding source – whether Irish Bilateral Aid, or one of the Multilateral Institutions (e.g. European Development Fund for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, UN, or World Bank).

In the case of Irish Bilateral Aid, the project concept would originate in some instances from within the HEDCO Secretariat (arising from a field visit), or from a member college; in other instances, it would emanate from inter-governmental requests for assistance via the Irish diplomatic mission in-country. The skeletal proposal would then be elaborated in detail and costed by the HEDCO

⁵¹ In 1984, for example, the grant-in-aid from DFA amounted to IR£103,500; in 1985, IR£120,000; in 1986 IR£135,000; in 1987, IR£136,000 and in 1988, IR£145,000 (Source: HEDCO Audited Accounts 1985-89).

⁵² By 1980, the Exchequer allocation to ODA amounted to IR£16 million, equivalent to 0.2% of GNP (HEDCO 1980, v). This amount was over ten times the 1973/4 allocation of IR£1.5 million (Murphy 2012)

⁵³ The income figure for management services provided by HEDCO to multilateral funded projects in 1984 was IR£ 229,392. (HEDCO 1985: ii)

Secretariat (in consultation with the relevant DFA Desk Officer or overseas Embassy) into a formal project submission comprising project objectives, context, rationale for intervention, inputs required, implementation plan, conditionalities, and financial projections. (The inclusion of a Logical Framework matrix in the submission was not to become standard practice until 1994). The dossier would then be submitted to the inter-departmental Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), comprising officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Finance (considered to be the final arbiter in resource allocation). If approved, DFA officials would factor the requisite figure for that project into the determination of the IA funding allocation to HEDCO for the following calendar year; whilst there were expectations of funding being renewed in subsequent years, there were no firm guarantees given, beyond a year-by-year approval.

In the case of multilateral agency funding, HEDCO would not normally have any involvement in project preparation, as this would typically have been undertaken by the personnel of the multilateral funding agency concerned, or by consultants engaged for this purpose. In what was still the pre-internet era, a preliminary announcement of prospective projects for which funds had been committed would then appear in the EU *Official Journal*, or in the *Development Business* bulletin (which covered the UN and World Bank institutions). At this juncture it was open to HEDCO and other competent contracting agencies, whose credentials and suitability had been deemed admissible under a pre-qualification procedure, to write a concise Expression of Interest with a view to being shortlisted to receive a formal Invitation to Bid. The resultant Tender Proposal would comprise (a) a Technical Proposal, setting out the organisational competencies and track record of the bidder, the implementation strategy to be adopted and the curricula vitae of the proposed project team; and (b) a separate Financial Proposal with the pricing schedule and (if required) Bank references and audited accounts and other declarations regarding solvency etc.

Following contract award, formal recruitment and briefing of the prospective expert team would take place, involving HEDCO liaising with the host institution regarding logistics for residence and work visas, housing and travel arrangements. It also involved negotiation of leave of absence from the employing institution in Ireland, without jeopardy to pension and other entitlements. Other project management tasks related to the procurement of necessary materials, books, scientific equipment, vehicles or other assets (ownership of which was vested in HEDCO for the duration of the project and then transferred to the beneficiary institution), and arranging academic and professional training programmes in Ireland, duly accredited, for the counterpart staff from the beneficiary side, who were contractually required to return to their institution of origin to assume the roles performed in their absence by the expatriate assignees.

Part of HEDCO's contractual obligation to the funding authority was to submit detailed quarterly monitoring reports (narrative and financial), detailing progress, obstacles encountered and updated work plans for the subsequent quarter.

Towards the end of the project's pre-determined life-span, the funding agency often (but not always) commissioned an independent consultant to undertake a review of the project, to analyse the extent to which the original objectives had been met, problems encountered, prospects for sustainability of the benefits conferred during the project, the effectiveness of project management and implementation arrangements, and the need (if any) for continued external support. HEDCO and on occasion the beneficiary institution would have been afforded the opportunity to comment on such evaluation reports at draft stage, but the process was owned by the funder, and in the case of IA, the reports were subject to scrutiny by PAEG.

The foregoing description exemplifies a modality of aid delivery based on discrete projects, which was the norm in the years up to the mid-1990s. At that earlier time, the term 'programme' in the context of international development assistance denoted a collective group of projects. Although 'projects' and 'programmes' are sometimes used interchangeably (Streeton 2009), 'programmes' have increasingly tended to connote more than scaled-up versions or agglomerations of projects; this terminological shift is of greater import than at a merely semantic level, because it signifies a fundamental change in perspective among donor policy-makers and managers which occurred from the mid-1990s and which in Murphy's view exerted 'a greater impact on the way the [Irish Aid] programme operates than on any other decision' (Murphy 2012: 150). The onset of HEDCO's phase of decline became evident at that same time and was partly attributable to that policy shift, as discussed later in this Chapter. A telling point was made by one former assignee interviewed for this study, that HEDCO's modus operandi did not fit neatly or authentically within this more programmatic, less project-focused, aid architecture paradigm that subsequently found expression in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005):

"It [HEDCO] probably also suffered from the sector budget support approach, and that idea of funding government systems, because HEDCO's comparative advantage would have been in something like the project of support to the Faculty of Engineering and Technology of the University of Jordan [early 1980s], where an external agency was contracted [by the EC] to do multi-sectoral and multi-spectrum capacity building." [A06]

The 'Knowledge & Skills' and 'Modalities' sections of the previous chapter described how the project-based modus operandi was abruptly discarded by IA in the mid-1990s, in favour of operating through partner government systems, using 'sector-wide approaches' (SWAPs), which later extended further into general budget support of a multi-annual nature to the partner country's exchequer (Murphy 2012). The experience of HEDCO thus serves as a microcosmic example of the far-reaching implications of that decision, implemented as it was without reference to Cabinet

or Dáil (highlighting Attribute 6 of our Framework – Programme Modalities). Equally, the episode arguably serves to illustrate insufficient agility on HEDCO’s part in adjusting to a new strategic direction on the part of what was still its principal stakeholder (negatively highlighting Attribute 3- Adaptation to Change). These observations are of significance later in the present Chapter, as well as for the Conclusions of the study (Chapter 8).

Managing Relationships – bilateral level

Although HEDCO enjoyed institutional autonomy in a nominal sense, its relationship with Development Cooperation Division (DCD) of DFA, in particular, required frequent and close interaction. It was implicitly understood (though not expressly stated in any contractual instrument or memorandum of understanding until 1994) that the Department could apply a sanction by withholding funds or non-approval of new project requests if HEDCO’s performance at any stage was deficient. Much emphasis was therefore placed by HEDCO Board and Secretariat alike, on nurturing good informal relationships with the DCD, so that any problems or misunderstandings could be resolved at the earliest juncture and at the lowest level possible, in order not to jeopardise the higher-level relationships. In the first decade or so of HEDCO’s life, this back-channel mode of communication lubricated the working relationships, leaving scope for negotiated flexibility and agreed adaptation of work plans or budget provisions, in the face of altered circumstances arising in the partner institution in-country.

However in time, new incumbents taking over the helm at DCD from the ‘pioneer generation’ of officials who initially staffed the aid programme (and who were now being promoted to senior postings overseas) were uncomfortable with HEDCO being perceived to be too close to the DFA; this was not explicitly articulated, but was attributable to the Irish public service finding itself constrained to comply with the strictures of EU protocols on issues relating to competition, state aid and competitive tendering for external service contracts. This more distanced relationship increased the potential for contestation and misunderstanding, as issues of dispute which were once resolved at a lower level of the administrative pyramid, were escalated to higher levels. Most such disagreements revolved around conflicting pressures: on the one hand HEDCO aspired to managing ‘fully-fledged’ projects which comprised a number of interlocking components over a multi-annual period (typically between 3 and 5 years (HEDCO 1992: 1)); on the other hand financial allocations were authorised by IA project by project and year by year, constrained by the exchequer’s annual budget cycle. As an illustration of the Finance and Funding attribute of my analytical framework, one HEDCO project ‘veteran’ recalled the friction which used to ensue:

“The constraints of public sector financial procedures on the Irish side do not align well with the realities facing project implementers and gave rise to pressure points, e.g. supply chain delays in rural Tanzania holding up the implementation timeframe for construction component, so that expenditure was

deferred beyond year-end, and money was clawed back. A blame-game would then ensue between project stakeholders.” [C05]

Nor was friction confined to budgetary matters. Towards the end of 1993, in a move which accorded with the policy-level aspiration towards gender equity, a project related postgraduate study scholarship tenable in Ireland was awarded to one of the very few female graduate teaching assistants then affiliated to the Mathematics Department in UDSM. Upon arrival in Ireland, it transpired that she was four months pregnant; surprisingly, this was the first such case to have presented itself (HEDCO 1993: i), and HEDCO (as the managing agency) was reproached by DCD for allowing such a situation to eventuate (HEDCO 1993: ii). The initial inclination was to rescind the award because of its precedent-creating significance (HEDCO 1993: ii), but also because of doubts as to whether the study fellows’ eligibility for medical and health care whilst in Ireland extended to maternity cover (*ibid.*).⁵⁴ A letter from the serving Irish Chargé d’Affaires in relation to this case gives a flavour of the perceived dilemma in official-level ranks:

“It could be argued that this would not have arisen if a medical had been undertaken before departure [from Tanzania] which would presumably have identified the pregnancy, and that on this basis the fellowship would probably not have been granted, thus avoiding the situation that arose here. But this is likely to have resulted in the loss to the Irish Aid programme in Tanzania of a very promising, and very hard to replace, female graduate in a sector where gender constraints have been particularly highlighted...Having regard to our gender policy framework, I propose that we try to develop a strategy in this regard, one that is flexible enough to cope with individual circumstances”. (HEDCO 1993: iii).

The case was referred upwards to the Minister of State in DFA, who approved such a bespoke arrangement involving the re-scheduling and re-structuring of Masters training and a supplementary budget for her additional maintenance and incidental costs. The individual subsequently completed not just a Masters, but a PhD also, and is now an Assistant Professor of Mathematics in a private university in Tanzania, and a Coordinator of a national programme of pre-service teacher education in STEM subjects⁵⁵.

This vignette illustrates importantly the way in which specific components of a project or programme, even those that on the surface appear self-contained such as a scholarship scheme, are in fact inextricably linked in with all the other elements of the self-organising system that comprises capacity development policy and practice (a gender policy framework being one such element in this case). An emergent issue appearing to affect one component (in this case the pregnant status of a newly-arrived scholarship holder) set in motion consequential implications for other components of the project, and in turn this rippled out into the wider BAP. What is also

⁵⁴ An unspoken consideration may also have been that back then, any child born within Irish jurisdiction was *ipso facto* deemed to have Irish citizenship

⁵⁵ This biographical detail was provided by two key informants independently of each other, B03 and C09.

striking in reviewing the archive on this case, is that the perceived dilemma, and the decision it demanded, was seen to be one for the Irish side exclusively to make: the partner institution (University of Dar es Salaam) had no voice in the deliberations, even though the individual had been formally nominated by that institution. The change in understanding of the nature of genuine partnership-working that has occurred in the meantime⁵⁶, is such as to make it highly unlikely that such a decision would now be taken unilaterally. This is a significant finding to note under the ‘Forging Alliances’ rubric of our analytical framework.

Managing Relationships – multilateral level

The interaction of HEDCO with multilateral funding organisations (the EC, UN and World Bank) was qualitatively different to that of the bilateral funder, the characteristic of informality being largely absent. Project identification and design were carried out exclusively by Headquarters staff or their consultants. The contractual obligations on the implementing agency following contract award (at the end of a competitive tendering process) were explicit and legally-enforceable, and were underpinned by an exhaustive set of Standard Operating Procedures and Special Conditions forming part of the signed contract. In all cases this was counter-signed by a top-level official of the host government. Narrative and financial reports were submitted at six-month intervals, and a mid-term review performed by the in-country resident representative of the sponsoring entity, or a task manager from its head office. Stricter rigidities applied in relation to making any adjustments to project plans and budgets that may have seemed to be warranted by changes in local circumstances or personnel on the ground. A ‘force majeure’ clause was a standard feature of such contracts, but was seldom invoked because this was considered an option of last resort. All in all, HEDCO’s role as a managing agent for multilaterally-funded contracts of service was relatively perfunctory, comprising recruitment and deployment of experts, procurement of learning materials and equipment, arranging study visits and scholarship placements for counterpart staff; however the multilaterally-funded links had the advantage that the contract budgets of multi-annual duration were guaranteed – usually for a three year period; this removed the annually-recurring uncertainty about budget allocations which was a feature of the bilateral channel.

HEDCO experienced a buoyant period of growth in its project portfolio during much of the 1980s⁵⁷, due in large part to its relative success in competing internationally as the implementing

⁵⁶ Examples of deeper understandings that later emerged of the nature and expectations of development partnerships are: Irish Aid / SUAS (2006) *“Linking Between Ireland and the South - Good Practice Guidelines for North-South Linking”*; Irish Aid (2008) *Civil Society Policy*, (www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/allwebsitemedia/20newsandpublications/publicationpdfsenglish/civil-society-policy.pdf; accessed 24.08.2017), and Dochas (2013) *Guidelines on Partnerships with Southern CSOs* (http://www.dochas.ie/sites/default/files/dochas-partnerships_0.pdf; accessed 24.08.2017)

⁵⁷ By mid-1985, HEDCO had accumulated a reserve fund of IR£342,836. To put this in context, the gross project income in that year was IR£825,476 on the multilateral side and IR£424,683 from Ireland’s bilateral

agent for technical assistance contracts from multilateral funding agencies. This trend enabled both geographical and sectoral expansion, extending beyond the footprint of the Irish Government's aid presence, for example into middle-income beneficiary countries such as Jordan, Syria and Singapore. An example of such success was the award by the European Commission in 1982 of a four-year contract of technical assistance in support of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology of the University of Jordan to a total value of ECU 6.6 million (HEDCO 1982, i).⁵⁸

HEDCO's period of decline

HEDCO's fortunes began to falter from 1988 and 1989 onwards. The adverse turn can be attributed largely to cuts in the Irish Government's budget allocation to ODA in the years 1987 to 1989 inclusive, as part of a broader effort by Government to reduce current public expenditure.⁵⁹ The year 1987 witnessed the first substantial downturn in Ireland's ODA commitments since the programme began in 1974 (with the single exception of 1980): Ireland's ODA dipped to 0.226% of GNP in 1987, compared to 0.25% in 1986, thereby returning to the ODA/GNP ratio which had obtained in 1984. (Fahey 1988:100).

This reduction drew unfavourable comment both in Ireland and internationally: In its 1987 Evaluation of Ireland's aid performance, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD expressed 'concern at the fact that aid had been cut back much more severely than total government expenditure this year.' It went on:

...further reductions would severely limit Ireland's participation in the international aid effort ... and would jeopardise an aid programme which is making a valuable contribution to the development of a number of low-income developing countries. (OECD DAC 1987).

It was against this background of pressure on the aid budget that DFA decided in 1989 to terminate HEDCO's core administration grant, and as a corollary to restrict BAP funding transfers to HEDCO to project management fees only. A letter from the Counsellor in charge of Bilateral Aid setting out the financial allocations and deliverables for the respective overseas projects for that year contained a concluding statement which was both terse and far-reaching in its implications: 'It is not possible to make an allocation for an administration grant for HEDCO for 1989' (HEDCO

funding, giving a total gross project income for that year of just over Ir£1.25 million (HEDCO 1985 ii). Using a standard liquidity ratio test whereby reserves should be at least equal to creditors (Ir£18K) plus 3 months' of establishment expenditure costs (Ir£54k), HEDCO at that point enjoyed a very favourable liquidity position.

⁵⁸ The transfer of expertise was mediated by linkages between the FET University of Jordan on the one side, and five departments in four Irish universities. Project personnel comprised 22 visiting professors, 20 visiting technicians and 8 consultants; meanwhile 46 staff of FET undertook training placements in Irish and European academic institutions.

⁵⁹ "After 1987 there was a reduction in real current spending... It seems best to regard 1988 as the key turning point." (Honohan 1992)

1989: iii). In response to representations from HEDCO (both written and in person), this position was subsequently confirmed and elaborated on by the Assistant Secretary of the Development Cooperation Division, who wrote:

The Department has not shared HEDCO's view that it is an integral structure of the BAP, but considers it as an agency of the higher education sector operating in the aid sector.... We have therefore ceased to be full members of HEDCO's managing bodies and have discontinued our previous involvement in HEDCO staff / administration issues....Even if our current budgetary difficulties were not so very difficult, the recommendation in the 1985 Review – that member colleges should at this juncture contribute to HEDCO's budget – would have to be pressed again; if colleges do not adequately value the services involved, the value of continuing them at all must be looked at....As regards the BAP, our very much reduced state has limited our needs, and we do not feel that our requirements (other than on projects for which we pay fees) are greater than those we place on other agencies in a spirit of mutual cooperation. (HEDCO 1989:iv)

The comment above relating to the (lack of) colleges' monetary contribution to HEDCO was an issue which had arisen recurrently, and somewhat contentiously, over the preceding decade. For example, the above sentiments had been presaged by statements made at a meeting of the HECG Council in November 1979 (which was prior even to HEDCO's formal incorporation); the minutes of this meeting record an intervention by the then Counsellor from DFA, in which he laid down clear markers for the future in this regard, in the following terms:

DFA had a responsibility to keep a close watch on administrative expenses, and public opinion was becoming concerned. The most positive indication of Colleges' support for HECG – their own body - would be if they [the Colleges] were to contribute financially to the costs. It was difficult to see how DFA could increase its grant to HECG in 1980 – other than to allow for inflation – without a financial contribution from members...Of course, DFA was extremely happy to continue to support the HECG, but felt that even for its own independence, the Group needed to be able to call on its own funds. (HEDCO 1979:i)

The Counsellor proceeded to refer to previous correspondence from the HECG Chairman of April 1978, asserting that the Heads of Colleges had informally agreed to contribute to the costs of HECG. In response, the Chairman explained that

...the situation had now changed, and it was now unlikely that member colleges would contribute directly in the immediate future ...Colleges were not funding bodies, although they did contribute substantially to HECG's work by releasing staff. ⁶⁰ (HECG Council Minutes 24.11.1979)

⁶⁰ The minutes of the same 20th HECG meeting of 24.11.1979 also record that "In the letter to the Secretary informing him of the decision of UCD's Governing Body to form HECG as a Company limited by Guarantee, the President of UCD had specifically excluded a financial contribution [to HECG] in 1980." (Source: HEDCO 1979:1).

The decision conveyed in the DFA letters of January and February 1989, instituting new arrangements whereby HEDCO would be paid only for those projects managed on the DFA's behalf, had been mooted in 1986, at the time when project management fees were first being introduced into the funding arrangement between HEDCO and DFA. However at that juncture, HEDCO had successfully argued in favour of the hybrid model of funding (core grant plus management fees), using the rationale that HEDCO fulfilled significant functions over and beyond the implementation of projects overseas. Such functions included information and advice to DFA and to the colleges on equivalence of qualifications of prospective students from developing countries; development education and awareness-raising in the third level sector; coordinating the inputs from teacher education colleges and technological colleges as well as universities (including the maintenance of a register of academics with development-related expertise and experience); advising DFA on education-related matters arising in the multilateral institutions and programmes in which Ireland had an interest; and nurturing inter-institutional collaboration between the jurisdictions on the island of Ireland (HEDCO 1990: iii). The complete removal of the administration grant announced in January 1989 thus came as a surprise, and HEDCO's Executive protested that 'there were no preliminary discussions with HEDCO about this decision and we were certainly not expecting it.' (HEDCO 1989:v).

Thus In mid-1990, it was forecast that HEDCO would incur a deficit of IR£50,000 for that calendar year, cancelling out a surplus of similar size in 1989. (HEDCO 1990: iv).

Thereafter, the Irish Aid - HEDCO relationship was characterised by a markedly distanced, more formal, and contract-contingent stance on the part of those who by then were the incumbent team of senior DFA officials in charge of development aid (now totally different in composition to that which had been in post in the earlier formative period of the aid programme). A former HEDCO General Secretary, commented to this author that what appeared at the time to be a perplexing souring in the relationship was in hindsight the manifestation of 'an adverse movement in sentiment against any non-civil service controlled entities, which were seen [by officials] to be too independent'⁶¹. The subsequent demise of analogue organisations such as APSO and DEVCO (the State Agencies' Development Organisation) lends support to this view. The same informant also identified exogenous factors at work in the international environment, but which played out to the detriment of HEDCO during the first half of the 1990s, in symbiosis with the more distanced stance being adopted by DFA. Three such *exogenous* factors in the international environment were (i) a pervasive scepticism among many donors regarding higher education as a modality of aid programming: this scepticism took its cue from a World Bank Staff Working Paper

⁶¹ Extract from pilot interview with ex-HEDCO General Secretary, held in Galway on 9th July 2014.

(Psacharopoulos, Tan et al. 1986), which was discussed in Chapter 3 ⁶²; (ii) aversion of the donor community to long-term technical assistance as an instrument of capacity building initiatives (the exception being specialised functions such as financial management and procurement); and (iii) the donor shift away from projects and towards a programmatic mode involving SWAPs and direct budget support.

An ex-HEDCO General Secretary (aforementioned) also identified two *endogenous* factors in HEDCO's modus operandi, which in his judgement had accentuated a growing scepticism towards AFHECIs at official level. The first of these endogenous factors was that HEDCO has made 'a small number of ill-judged choices of long-term assignees whose behaviour created friction with the respective Irish diplomatic missions in-country.' ⁶³ The second was

...a lack of cohesion within the ranks of HEDCO members, some of whom were beginning to flex their muscles independently in the internationalisation arena, and in so doing were becoming HEDCO competitors, at the same time as being HEDCO members (ibid.).

HEDCO as a legal entity survived for another decade in a nominal and rather attenuated way, until its eventual cessation in 2008/9 ⁶⁴. Its stratagem for survival was its decision in 1997 to re-position itself to become a national coordination point for a quasi-commercial internationalisation venture of the Irish higher education sector. At its AGM in 1997, HEDCO's Memorandum and Articles were amended by majority – albeit divisive - vote of the member colleges (HEDCO 1997: iii). This decision provided for the creation of the International Education Board of Ireland (IEBI) as a brand name under which generic marketing of Ireland as a study destination for self-financing international students was to be actively promoted, with joint funding from central government (Department of Education & Science) and subscriptions from the collective HEIs (public and private). HEDCO's role essentially was to provide its ready-made company registration and charitable status as the vehicle for the new venture, operating under an ethos and mandate divergent from that which had prevailed up to that point. 'HEDCO – IEBI' retained the services of certain of the existing HEDCO employees giving them continuity of employment, whilst others departed under a voluntary severance package. HEDCO Annual Report and Council minutes reveal that this process of re-organisation unfolded with both reluctance and pragmatism, based on the realisation

⁶² The diminished status of higher education support programmes was evident not only in the case of Ireland, but also in the earlier dissolution (in 1984) of the Inter University Council (UK), reflecting "an anti-intellectual bias which was largely based on a misunderstanding of the role of higher education" (Pilot Interview, 09.07.2014).

⁶³ The informant elaborated thus: "The principal problem was in Zambia where the selection was carried out by the Zambia Teaching Services Commission through Irish interviews. Following these, the selections were made and in at least two cases were made against the advice of HEDCO".

⁶⁴ The website of the Companies registration office specified HEDCO as having been dissolved with effect from 18.07.2011, but the last accounting period for which returns were made was for year ending 31.12.2009. (<https://search.cro.ie/company/CompanyDetails.aspx?id=85824&type=C>; accessed 24.08.2017).

that (a) by that stage IA funded programmes managed by HEDCO had gradually dwindled to zero over the period 1992-1997, as various existing AFHECIs expired without being replaced by new ones; (b) competitive bidding by HEDCO for a series of multilaterally-funded projects (such as the EU funded Zambia Maths & Science Teacher Education Programme – ZAMSTEP) had been narrowly unsuccessful, and (c) a series of staff changes having occurred in HEDCO in rapid succession, including two changes of chief executive within a period of two years between 1994 and 1996 (HEDCO 1996: ii; HEDCO 1997: i).

In an interesting post-script to the demise of HEDCO, the Director (Academic Affairs) of the Irish Universities Association intimated to the researcher that HEDCO's eventual winding-up which took place in 2008 was viewed by the University Heads as having been "messy and expensive"⁶⁵. It transpired that although HEDCO had limited company status, Counsel opinion that the universities which subscribed to the formation of the company in the first place bore a substantial contingent liability to meet the underfunding of pension entitlements of a group of former employees (including retirees) under a defined-benefit scheme. Meeting this liability required unbudgeted expenditure by the Irish universities which coincided with the onset of the economic downturn. This experience is alive in an unfavourable way in the institutional memory of the present group of university heads, and consequently any new initiative around a management unit for AFHECIs that may be contemplated in the foreseeable future would need to distance itself from the HEDCO brand and model.

Summation of Section I

This historical profile illustrates the interplay between many key attributes of our analytical framework, which manifested themselves in the rise and fall of HEDCO as an organisation. Chief among these was the attribute of Adaptation to Change. This was initially resisted at the time in the mid-1990s when donor Programme Modalities (another key attribute) were being re-thought and fundamentally changed. When eventually HEDCO's continued existence was in jeopardy, an extreme form of adaption to change was embraced through altering the organisation's fundamental Purpose and Motivation (this being yet another of our key attributes). Interwoven throughout the story are the attributes of Forging Alliances, Finance & Funding, Human Resources, Context and Public Good. Clearly, the Framework has both descriptive and explanatory applicability to the case of HEDCO: whether the same can be said of our other case study is considered in the section which now follows.

⁶⁵ Meeting between the researcher and the Director (Academic Affairs), IUA in Dublin on 24.10.2016

Section II - Case Study 2: Programme of Strategic Cooperation / Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building 2007-2011

Background re Irish Aid Programme of Strategic Cooperation in Higher Education

Following the decade-long hiatus during which Irish Aid was hesitant about engaging with AFHECIs (except for an ongoing Fellowship programme, occasional commissions to HEIs to provide specified research and training inputs, and engagement with teachers' colleges around development education), a new departure towards inter-institutional research for development came in 2006 with the publication of a Government White Paper:

We value the linkages developed with the higher education and research institutes, and we are committed to deepening their level of engagement in the longer term... We will develop a programme for strategic engagement between Irish Aid and higher education and research institutes in Ireland. (Government of Ireland 2006: 106).

This commitment had been preceded by two exercises. The first was a synoptic 'scoping' study of existing co-operation between Irish universities and Africa under the auspices of Universities Ireland⁶⁶; this culminated in a seminar jointly sponsored by the nine heads of Irish universities on the island of Ireland in March 2005, and thereby the foundation was laid for what later emerged as the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (IAP Archives 2006: a).⁶⁷ The second exercise was the commissioning by Irish Aid of a *Desk-based Analysis of Donor Policies and Aid Modalities in relation to Higher Education and Research* (Leen 2006). Following a consultation process in which fifteen Irish HEIs made written submissions, the *Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes 2007-2011* (PSC) ensued.

Situated within the over-arching goal of poverty reduction, the PSC was intended to facilitate the 'establishment of collaborative partnerships within and between higher education institutions and research in Ireland and in countries benefiting from Irish Aid support' (Irish Aid 2007:9). The PSC was predicated on Southern HEIs having an important contribution to make to poverty reduction in their country or region, and Irish HEIs having a resource that could be tapped to strengthen their capacity to do so. The Programme was further expected to contribute to the realisation of Irish Aid's policy objectives in relevant specified sectors (pro-poor economic growth, health, education, food and livelihood security), as well as to four cross-cutting themes (gender, good governance, HIV & AIDS and environment). A feature of the PSC was that it would 'foster

⁶⁶ Universities Ireland was set up in 2003 by the university presidents to promote collaboration between the universities in Ireland, North and South.

⁶⁷ Arising from the seminar, a cross-institutional delegation undertook a field visit to Uganda, on a preliminary needs identification exercise. A 4-person team visited Uganda from 19th to 26th Nov. 2005.

collaboration between institutions in Ireland on an all-island basis' (Irish Aid 2007: 3), and in this respect it echoed the HEDCO precedent. A third objective of the PSC related to capacity building of higher education and research institutions both in Ireland and in Southern partner countries, and this was elaborated upon as follows:

All activities supported within this framework are expected to contribute to the strengthening of capacity. Building capacity can relate to the strengthening of institutions to conduct research in-country; promoting research training; capacitating local researchers to access international research; facilitating linkages with international research institutes and initiatives, and enabling appropriate peer review processes which rely on sound collaboration amongst countries north and south. (Irish Aid 2007:10)

Under the PSC, IA awarded almost €17 million cumulatively between 2007 to 2015, in three periodic funding rounds, each one having an open call for proposals (Gaynor, O'Grady et al. 2014). Eligibility conditions were progressively modified and fifteen projects altogether (mostly in education, health and nutrition) were selected for funding, generally for a three-year period. The first two rounds proceeded on schedule, but the third – due in 2009 - did not happen until 2011, due to the emergent economic downturn and cuts in the overall aid budget. The Irish Higher Education Authority (HEA) managed the programme on behalf of IA. Southern partner institutions chosen by the Irish 'lead' institution, were drawn from eighteen countries located overwhelmingly in Africa, with Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi having most prominence (ibid). One such constituent project was the IAP (value €1.5m over three years).

In addition to funding from the Exchequer, Irish HEIs also contributed to the PSC projects, mainly 'in kind' (academic staff time, premises, facilities, etc), to the estimated value of €6.7m. equivalent to approximately 28% of gross cost. Approximately 7.7% of spend was transferred to Southern Institutions, with significant increases in this respect evident in Round 3 (39.5%). Significantly, nine of the fifteen projects included the training of PhD candidates from Africa as an integral component (Gaynor, O'Grady et al. 2014).

The PSC prospectus (2007) asserted the proposed programme of cooperation was intended to 'complement the extensive range of activities, implemented in cooperation with Irish higher education and research institutes, already funded by Irish Aid' (Irish Aid 2007: 2). It also stated that the development of the programme had been 'informed by lessons learned from cooperation between Irish Aid and the higher education sector in Ireland' (ibid: 4). Both statements refer to commissioned research and delivery of training modules to meet specific programme requirements mainly in the health, HIV & AIDS and communicable disease sector, as well as discrete teacher training and management information systems advice to education sector stakeholders in one or two programme countries.

This contextualisation of the PSC was partial, in that it did not encompass the historical experience of IA's structured engagement with third level as mediated by HEDCO in the 1980s and 1990s, chronicled in detail earlier in this chapter. Partly, this may signify a lingering negative perception towards the HEDCO model within IA's institutional psyche; it is partly also attributable to the dilution of continuity in institutional memory which is a recurring challenge to the organisation, as a result of senior and middle-ranking executive personnel rotating jobs and locations with greater frequency (typically on a triennial cycle) than other departments of state. The periodic loss by IA of expertise and institutional memory has been independently identified as problematic in successive Peer Reviews carried out the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC 2003: 61 and 2009: 47).

I was surprised to learn that the PSC was not the only channel of funding from IA to Irish and Southern HEIs during the period of its existence: between 2007 and 2015, IA (headquarters and overseas missions combined) awarded an additional €4.8 million to HEIs and Research Institutes outside of the PSC programme, many of the awards going to the same institutions as were separately beneficiaries of the PSC (Gaynor, O'Grady et al. 2014: 16). Over half of these grants were awarded in health, which also attracted the highest volume of funding (€10.9 million). The next greatest number of grants was to Food Security and Nutrition, followed by Human Rights and Governance; and Education in that order. While there may have been pragmatic reasons for this apparent bifurcation of funding streams (for example to overcome certain rigidities around tender-based contract award procedures), the practice would appear to be at odds with the exhortations towards programme coherence and harmonisation contained in the Aid Effectiveness principles to which donors signed up in Paris (2005), affirmed in Accra (2008) and Busan (2011).

IA placed emphasis on monitoring and evaluation at various stages of the Programme's life: it commissioned external consultants to undertake a Mid-Term Review of the totality of the PSC in 2010, and subsequently a concluding Evaluability Assessment⁶⁸ of the Programme in 2014, the first such exercise ever commissioned by IA (Gaynor, O'Grady et al. 2014). In addition, five of the component projects within the PSC underwent external evaluations, for example one such end-of-project evaluation was done in respect of the IAP (Leigh-Doyle 2011). Consequently there exists a considerable amount of evaluative commentary across the Programme, but the monitoring function was more problematic, because of the absence from the outset of an agreed Logic Model (LM) and Results Framework (RF) incorporating performance measurement indicators. The numerous

⁶⁸ An Evaluability Assessment is a systematic process that helps to identify whether an evaluation is justified, feasible and likely to provide useful information. It does not purport to make evaluative judgements on the programme or projects in question, but rather to gauge how fit they are to be credibly and usefully evaluated. See: http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability_assessment; accessed 16.08.2017.

handbooks of development management practice⁶⁹ envisage the formulation of an RF and LM as something to be done at pre-programme planning and preparation stage; however in the case of the PSC, these had to be ‘retro-fitted’ in 2009, in common with all other Irish Aid funded programmes, as part of the organisation’s higher-level commitment to Managing for Development Results in compliance with the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action). By this time, contracts had been signed and implementation of the first phase of PSC projects was already well advanced. The retro-fit exercise proved time-consuming for both IA and beneficiaries. The Mid-term review revealed that disharmony arose between the parties in relation to expectations around measurability of impact of capacity building oriented projects:

Some reservations were expressed [by Project personnel] about the process and the extent to which it was perceived to be Irish Aid driven, and about the push for tracking beyond the output level (which is the level where most projects see their work focused). Most projects have now engaged with the PSC’s LM and PMF.... The new project reporting format and the indicators for programme reporting {are in use] by the HEA. These provide a good spread of classic research indicators such as publications and citations, and development indicators such as participation of poor people and communities and relevant thematic focus. (Gaynor 2010: 21).

In the final analysis, this broad suite of indicators which was incorporated into the PSC performance measurement framework was found by the later PSC Evaluability Assessment (2014) to be of limited utility and applicability. As was observed in Chapter 4, the logical framework methodology associated with RBM was reasonably congruent with the more tangible and measurable ‘activity’ level of project reporting (outputs and deliverables), but its competence to elicit quantified and reliable evidence regarding indirect and longer term effects on poverty reduction and empowerment of poor communities was dubious. Concluding that the Logic Model was ‘not appropriate in its current form as an evaluation framework’, the Evaluability Assessment, after its consultations with stakeholders, detected divergent views about the validity of positing causal pathways linking capacity building and meta-level development impact:

Ownership of the PSC Logic Model is not shared. There is general acceptance of the causal chain as far as immediate outcomes are concerned, but not of the top-end of the Logic Model through to higher level outcomes and goals. A view persists amongst some HEI stakeholders that it is not realistic to orient or track wider or longer-term change in three to five year projects. Irish Aid on the other hand has adopted Managing for Development Results, which emphasises the importance of longer and wider term gearing of all interventions and monitoring of emerging evidence to validate or challenge the causal pathways. (Gaynor, O’Grady et al. 2014: 17).

There are echoes here of the positivist -v- hermeneutical tension underlying the discourse on the ‘results chain’ paradigm, which was analysed in Chapter 2 – Theoretical Foundations, and in

⁶⁹ For example, United Nations Development Group (2011) Results Based Management Handbook. (<https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/UNDG-RBM-Handbook-2012.pdf>; accessed 24.08.2017).

Chapter 3 – Higher Education and the Discourse on International Development). The reference to ‘the importance [from IA’s perspective) of wider and longer-term gearing of *all* interventions’ betokens something of a prescriptive tendency underlying this donor-led pursuit of Managing for Development Results, in seeking to subject all interventions irrespective of complexity and context to the same linear mode of analysis, and elevating the logic model to a level above that of a methodological tool. An instrumentalist conception of capacity development permeates (perhaps unconsciously) the attendant epistemological outlook, one which veers decidedly towards the positivist side of the epistemological dialectic in relation to causality.

The incongruity of a linear model of performance measurement with a programme such as the PSC arose partly from the donor having adopted a purely instrumentalist view of capacity development, rather than seeing this as something that was complex in nature, and both a means to an end, and an end in itself. Partly also it arose from a plurality of motivations and expectations that surrounded this programme.

There are different understandings about the purpose of the programme, in particular the extent to which capacity building of Irish HEIs to engage more effectively in development is an objective in its own right or a strategy towards longer term Southern HEI capacity building. (Gaynor 2010: 11).

The same point was echoed by an IA staff member in his interview testimony:

I suppose the PSC had a lot of different expectations, and moreover that these were shifting over time, not necessarily clearly articulated. That keeps happening in Irish Aid with personnel changing all the time...as new people come in their expectations shift, so they may put the relative balance on one or other of the multiple aims. That may not be welcome from the point of view of Irish HEIs. [A08].

The multiplicity of objectives and expectations comprised (a) stimulating Irish HEIs to participate more actively in development, (b) inducing the higher education sector more broadly (beyond institutions) to adopt both a supportive role and a challenge function on aid policy; (c) building capacity of African HEIs to improve research, teaching and learning per se; (d) building capacity of African HEIs to improve research, teaching and learning which addresses poverty reduction and pro-poor public policy and innovation; (e) providing evidence to support policy and programme development of IA (Gaynor 2010).

The authors of the both the Mid Term Evaluation (2010) and Evaluability Assessment (2014), having listened to the various stakeholders, found that even though ‘the Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework Guidelines and proposal and report templates provided more specificity on expected features of the programme’ (Gaynor 2010: 16), multiple perceptions regarding the programme objectives and expected results still prevailed. Although these

perceptions were all legitimate in their own terms ⁷⁰, this ‘has led to misunderstandings between PSC stakeholders’ (ibid: 25). Ultimately, the divergences can be distilled down into a fundamental polarisation in phenomenological prisms between the two principal stakeholder interests in Ireland (let alone the overseas partner institutions):

Irish Aid sees its role as primarily to promote positive development change, while actors in Higher Education (HE) were more focused on producing research/improved teaching and learning and on academic outputs. A perception prevails that the HE sector does not fully understand Irish Aid (e.g. requirement to demonstrate focus on development results); that Irish Aid does not fully understand the HE sector (e.g. internal pressures and academic regimes); and that the HEA has not been a sufficient ‘bridge’ to facilitate that understanding (Gaynor, O’Grady et al. 2014: 14). ⁷¹

Other critical observations of the PSC documented by the external assessors were the absence of a common understanding of the requirements of a programmatic approach (and how a programme differed from an assemblage of projects), weak appreciation of the heterogeneity of partnership models ⁷², a lack of internal harmonisation across the programme (for example, five out of eight projects from the first phase partnered with Makerere University Uganda), and the fact that the PSC was not well known or understood across Irish Aid, on account of being siloed in a single headquarters unit which dealt with Public Information and Development Education. ⁷³

Unforeseen changes in context during the PSC’s lifetime also exerted a significant influence on its actual performance against initial expectations. Acknowledging that the PSC was ‘a product of its time’ and had no sooner commenced than found itself buffeted by the macro-level uncertainties surrounding the onset of the banking crisis and economic downturn from 2008 onwards. In this regard, the Evaluability Assessment noted:

[The PSC] was launched with a high profile and positive beginnings in 2007 but subsequent events impacted on the evolution of a fully coherent and strategic programme. The significant economic down turn, which triggered new challenges, along with several restructurings within Irish Aid and the HEA, and new priorities within Irish HEIs, led to a re-positioning of the programme in all participating institutions. (Gaynor, O’Grady et al. 2014: 2).

⁷⁰ “Different people are looking at different horizons and planning for different levels of result” (Gaynor 2010: 14) .

⁷¹ This also reflects findings in other countries. The evaluation of the Norway NUFU programme [for university capacity-building partnerships] found that the management of the programme by SIU (Norwegian Centre for Cooperation in Education) distanced the programme from both Norad [the Government agency for ODA] and the HEIs, rendering it less relevant to institutions in the South. Source: Evaluation of the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) and of Norad’s Programme for Master Studies (NOMA). Evaluation Report 7/2009. Norad 2009.

⁷² “Most project proposals discuss partnership but without defining it and without setting clear parameters or being explicit on approach”. (Gaynor, O’Grady et al. 2014: 19)

⁷³ Gaynor 2010: 35

In this observation two interesting features of the complex adaptive system ‘lens’ (as presented in Chapters 2 and 4) are exemplified concretely. One is the seminal importance of ever-changing context, as a result of which it is often futile to attempt to assess the performance of any project or programme as if it were immutably frozen at the point in time when it was designed or launched; inevitably, intervening emergent events and factors alter the scope, complexion and operational parameters, such as to render the original expectations of the project or programme unrealistic, and this is where the dimension of ‘adaptation’ merits factoring in to performance assessment exercises. This leads us to the second feature thus exemplified: the prevalence of ‘optimism bias’ (the tendency to be unrealistically optimistic), which translates into the project management literature as the ‘planning fallacy’⁷⁴, this being the tendency at programme design stage to underestimate the time, costs, and risks of future actions and at the same time overestimate the benefits of the same actions, notwithstanding the sobering and *de rigueur* experience of past shortcomings, delays and other setbacks.

Proceeding from this analysis, any perception of the PSC as having fallen short of expectations has arguably as much to do with the mindset of those harbouring ‘pseudo-comprehensive programme’ expectations (Hirschman 1967), as it has to do with the value of the PSC itself. As one experienced informant (a senior academic with a development background) observed:

“There was a project here in [University] funded by the PSC, which ran for the period of Irish Aid funding, and then stopped, so it did not meet the criterion of sustainability. A one-shot kind of operation. That was a general feature of PSC, as was found by an Evaluability Assessment: it was a funding mechanism rather than a programme per se.” [A06]

Leading up to its conclusion that the PSC was ‘not ready’ to undergo a programmatic evaluation, the Evaluability Assessment pointed to the dichotomous tension within the PSC as follows:

There is not a consistent sense across project stakeholders of this being a programme– including those in Northern and Southern institutions. There is not agreement on the core objectives of the strategy...Irish Aid is focused on planning and justifying investment relative to development results/benefits for poor people, while most stakeholders in higher education focus at the level of increased capacity for research and/or for teaching and learning and academic outputs. (Gaynor, O’Grady et al. 2014: 4)

The polarised positions conjured up by this quotation may be considered a false dichotomy, judging by much of the contemporary international discourse on development-related research. International agencies like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Bank now stress the essential role higher education plays not only in

⁷⁴ The concept of the Planning Fallacy has its origins in Psychology, and is attributed specifically to Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky in 1979. The theory has been cogently transposed into the Project Management discourse by Flyvbjerg, Sunstein (2016).

educating leaders for all sectors of society, but also in generating the research required to improve living standards that make for sustainable communities (Marmolejo 2016, World Bank / IEG 2017). Among their recommendations such agencies strongly advocate the creation of international networks, arguing that ‘international involvement helps countries guard against parochialism and remain open to broader economic, intellectual, technical, and social possibilities’ (World Bank / UNESCO 2000: 42).

Even though no further calls for proposals under the PSC appeared post-2012, the Programme has left a legacy which is broadly favourable to future AFHECIs and to external global engagement by the Irish university sector in the following respects: the evolving processes of internationalisation of higher education which includes aspects of the international development agenda (DES 2015); the establishment by several universities of academic posts in international development; the emergence of organisational structures for international development engagement at an institutional level (e.g. Trinity International Development Initiative); new development-related programmes of study at both undergraduate and postgraduate level (McEvoy 2013b); initiatives to link academics in development with practitioners, non-governmental organisations and other interested groups (foremost of which is the Development Studies Association of Ireland).

IAPRCB: Objectives, Content and Scope of Work

The IAP was a collaborative initiative of Universities Ireland, under which all nine universities on the island of Ireland came together in 2008 in partnership with four in Africa, in a pilot research capacity-building initiative, with poverty reduction as the purported over-arching goal. The IAP promoted institutional collaboration for development-related knowledge generation, knowledge exchange and mutual learning, and sought to broaden and enrich research collaboration between Ireland and Africa. IAP’s budget amounted to €1.6m., over a 3.5 year period from October 2007. The principal source of funding was IA, via the PSC (described in the foregoing section). Match-funding was provided by Universities Ireland.

The definition of research capacity building (RCB) used in the original proposal for the IAP was: ‘a process of individual, institutional and inter-institutional development which leads to higher levels of skills and greater ability to perform useful research’ (Trostle 1992). This definition highlights the need to consider RCB as a multi-level phenomenon at three inter-related yet distinct levels: the individual, the institutional and the inter-institutional (or partnership). None of these levels of RCB can be seen as self-contained and ideally all must be advanced at the same time. Thus, no matter how talented, researchers still need an enabling institutional environment in which to flourish; likewise the best research system conceivable will not produce good research without talented, skilled and motivated researchers (McEvoy 2013a).

IAP's remit was therefore to build institutional-level capacity for research in the service of development, motivated by a recognition that good evidence-based research needs to inform effective policy responses to urgent global challenges, such as poverty reduction, food security and climate change. The IAP was an analogue to HEDCO in one important respect - it embraced all nine universities on the island of Ireland, but otherwise the two entities differed in important ways. IAP had a more circumscribed focus on research capacity building at the PhD level of education (sometimes termed the 'fourth level'), whereas HEDCO's efforts were devoted to strengthening teaching capacity at third level. Furthermore HEDCO had a legal personality as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, whereas the IAP functioned as an unincorporated network (a factor which later proved disadvantageous in its attempts to sustain itself after its PSC funding allocation was used up).

In bringing all the nine universities on the island of Ireland⁷⁵ together with four universities in Malawi (University of Malawi), Mozambique (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane), Tanzania (University of Dar-es-Salaam) and Uganda (Makerere University), the IAP sought to advance effective policies and strategies for sustainable RCB within all thirteen partner universities, in the areas of health and education, with gender and ICT as cross-cutting themes. These priority areas reflected the thematic priorities of IA and the MDGs. In the Irish context, the all-island character of the IAP was seen as conferring added value, which potentially would serve to stimulate and enrich inter-institutional collaborations across both jurisdictions of the island (IAP Archive 2007: a). Project activities were grouped into five distinct work streams: (i) an extensive stakeholder consultation, (ii) a foresight exercise focused on health and education priorities in Africa, (iii) residential workshops for academic leaders on RCB, (iv) the development of a 'knowledge exchange' web portal (comprising a digital repository and research register), and (v) development of a set of quantitative and qualitative RCB metrics (IAPRCB 2011).

To elaborate on the 'stakeholder consultation': this was designed to assess existing research capacity in the partner universities, identify barriers to future research capacity and jointly devise ways to overcome these barriers. Fieldwork for the consultation research extended over a five month period in 2008, and involved over 300 individual and group interviews of staff in all partner institutions. The stakeholder consultation brought to light the mutual benefits associated with a HE partnership ethos that stresses capacity building in both North and South, but also the challenges and obstacles associated with the past efforts to achieve a mutual and sustainable partnership model (Barrett, Conway et al. 2010).

⁷⁵ University College Cork (UCC), University College Dublin (UCD), National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), Trinity College Dublin (TCD); Dublin City University (DCU), University of Limerick (UL), Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and University of Ulster (UU).

In addition to promoting discipline-specific capacity in areas corresponding to key development challenges, the IAP also recognised the importance of the Southern partners putting in place effective research support functions. Accordingly, in response to the needs articulated by the participating affiliates in Africa, the IAP initiated a sustainable ‘whole-of-institution’ effort to strengthen research management infrastructure, drawing on the collective pool of suitable expertise across Ireland and mobilising regional-level clusters of partner institutions first in Eastern Africa and then in Southern Africa. Examples of such activities were the presentation of workshops on effective proposal-writing, devising structured PhD pathways, design of doctoral training modules on PhD methodologies and research problem identification, and doctoral supervisor training. An example of the latter was a link-up between IAP and a South African educational NGO, SANTRUST, focused on inter-varsity doctoral training, towards the objective of scaling-up and accelerating the ‘production’ of PhD holders in South Africa and in the wider region.

In giving operational effect to these aspirations, the IAP was contributing to intensified inter-country and inter-institutional cooperation regionally (in Africa), with the concomitant benefit of promoting concerted all-island collaboration on the home front. In both respects, its work could be validly deemed to be strategic, because of the potential multiplier effect over time. Another strength was the ability to facilitate multi-disciplinary research engagement, especially between the sciences and the humanities. There was a recognition that research needed to become increasingly multi-disciplinary, prompted by emphasis on the MDGs (education, health, food and livelihood security, etc), and cross-cutting issues of gender, environment, and human rights. It was therefore one of the IAP’s ambitions to enable researchers representing the natural and human sciences to become more attuned to each other’s mode of discourse and contribute to trans-disciplinary approaches to the prevailing global challenges (IAP Archives 2007:b).

The IAP resonated well with concepts that were emerging around the same time from structured dialogue between the European University Association (EUA) and the Association of African Universities (AAU). These ideas focused on exploring modalities of institutional partnership to strengthen higher education cooperation between Africa and Europe. Through this dialogue, the EUA and AAU arrived at a shared understanding of RCB, seeing it as a threefold function: (a) research contributing to knowledge generation and exchange that ‘produces tangible outcomes for the benefit of society,’ (b) a capacity-building measure to support institutional development (including research training, research management, and bid-writing expertise), and (c) new pathways for formation and retention of larger numbers of young African academics within the continent (such as jointly awarded doctorates and distance mentoring). (EUA / AAU 2010).

A substantive output of the work of the IAP was to devise a composite set of indicative factors conducive to effectiveness of North-South partnerships for RCB, by synthesizing findings

generated by three work packages – the qualitative stakeholder consultation based on extensive field research in institutions in Africa and Ireland (already mentioned), the literature-based foresight study, and the quantitative rankings produced by the Metrics work-package. The table overleaf presents a synopsis of these findings.

Table 10: Factors influencing Effectiveness of North-South Partnerships for RCB: synthesis of findings from relevant IAP Work-packages

	I: Stakeholder consultation	II: Foresight study	III: Metrics
Multi-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the Intersection between individual researcher interest and commitment, and institutional support conducive to research. Cross-disciplinary platforms are needed within HEIs, reflecting the sectoral diversity of the development process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Re-invention' of Development Research to create a more integrated approach Future RCB to combine twin pillars of institutional and individual capacity; neither sufficient without the other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse modes of PhDs (structured, sandwich, RPL) Better research management and research support functions
External environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active strategy to disseminate research results Openness of access to research outputs and innovative practice Alliance between academic-based researchers and practitioners / NGOs to be fostered; 'shared language' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging the research and policy 'worlds'; understand each other's language RCB needs to be anchored in relevance to African context and local knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better IT connectivity, taking full advantage of digital networks Diversification of research income, training in bid writing Peer reviewed publications remains key success indicator for all, but presents challenges for scholars in South.
Long term perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term North-South and South-South institutional partnerships are vital for effective RCB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term partnerships essential for RCB to grow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater emphasis on training and mentoring of doctoral candidates North-South and South-South partnerships, networking and conference presentations
Focus on results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for more emphasis on translation of research into strategic policy frameworks for national development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All research should incorporate capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of young people (esp. women) attracted into PhDs and research Stronger foundational grounding in research methods

Source: IAPRCB 2011: 151

Critique of the IAP: aspiration versus actuality

North-South partnership ventures aimed at enhancing research capacity in the South have conferred important benefits (Gaillard 1994). So it was with the IAP, the strengths of which were that five (of six) objectives had been substantially addressed, all of the planned outputs had been delivered within the three-year period ⁷⁶, and several unintended benefits had eventuated ⁷⁷ (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 31). A distinctive feature was its ability to facilitate multi-disciplinary research engagement, especially between the sciences and the humanities, in Ireland's relatively small academic milieu, in which no single institution had yet built up a formidable critical mass of expertise in development-related research. The IAP therefore worked at one remove from implementation of actual research projects, for example by supporting the Southern partners in creating and strengthening their research support functions, in order more effectively to relate their research priorities to poverty reduction and national development objectives. Recognition of the value of incorporating community consultation processes and policy-level interfaces into research design were also emphasised.

The IAP was not immune to the generic weaknesses identified by Velho (2002), Bradley (2007), King (2009) which were mentioned in Chapter 4. Even the incorporation in its title of the terminology of 'capacity building' harked back unconsciously to an instrumentalist mental model of static knowledge transfer, rather than the more dynamic and participative endogenous process connoted by 'capacity development' (see Chapter 4). In addition to these generic issues, certain difficulties more specific to the IAP were recognised in the end-of-project evaluation of IAP (Leigh-Doyle 2011). Foremost among the problems in IAP were (a) its internal governance arrangements; (b) a late start resulted in an extended inception phase, such that the project took more time than expected to find its mettle and position itself to make a contribution of strategic import (as indicated above); (c) doubts surrounding the extent to which it evinced the aspirational qualities of mutuality and symmetry in the actuality of partnership-working between the Irish and African affiliates. Each of these is now considered more fully.

With regard to governance, the Evaluation found that

...[because] some problems arose during the first year concerning reporting structures and respective responsibilities for achieving deliverables, an internal

⁷⁶ 'Considerable time was spent in the first half of the project in clarifying its focus and scope, the second half was very productive and effective in ensuring outputs were delivered'. (Leigh-Doyle 2011)

⁷⁷ Examples of unintended benefits and spin-offs were (i) three African partner universities and the University of Ulster secured British Council funding for a three-year project on school-based teacher education; (ii) Queens University Belfast academic link with University of Malawi Medical School at Blantyre; (iii) exchange between Research Offices of the University of Dar-es-Salaam and Dublin City University, funded by the Carnegie Trust and the ACU; and (iv) enabling Irish HEIs to assist SANPAD (South Africa) to design and deliver pre-doctoral training in South Africa, Ethiopia and Tanzania,. In addition, numerous peer-reviewed articles appeared.

review of governance structures took place in April 2009. This review found the existing arrangements (including an advisory group that had only limited engagement with the work of the project) rather cumbersome, and recommended streamlining of the project's decision-making. Following this review, it was agreed to combine the Executive and Steering Committees, and revised and expanded terms of reference for the Executive Committee were agreed. (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 23).

All thirteen universities together with Universities Ireland and the Centre for Cross Border Studies were thereafter represented on the Executive Committee, but problems persisted:

Among the constraints mentioned [by interviewees] were that meeting attendance by some members was patchy, and that decision making in the Executive Committee tended to be centralised amongst a small group of lead members. (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 24).

On a related issue, some informants for the Evaluation also noted with regret that Southern partners were not involved in the overall administration of the project. Whether this would have been realistic to achieve in practice in a dispersed multi-stakeholder project, while at the same time complying with the strict reporting deadlines and financial procedures required by the donor is open to question. Similarly, one of the aspirations in the Call for Proposals of Round 3 (2012) of the PSC was to transition into southern-led processes for future research partnerships; however clear parameters for what would qualify as the 'Southern-led' were not explored⁷⁸, still less the practical difficulties of ensuring compliance with Irish Aid financial systems strictures if Southern institutions were the budget-holders. In a real sense, this dilemma can be seen as a microcosm of the dilemma which arose when donors were entering into budget support arrangements with Southern partner governments.

The governance-related matters, compounded by a change of personnel in the full-time Project Manager role, gave rise to the second difficulty encountered by the IAP, namely the retardation of the inception phase for at least the initial year of the IAP's allotted three-year span. Another factor was the parent programme - the PSC - had experienced "slower than anticipated start-up in putting in place structures, networks and processes" (Gaynor 2010: 29). Furthermore, three of the IAP's five work packages had encountered unforeseen logistical problems, some of them relating to staff

⁷⁸ Gaynor, O'Grady et al 2014: 6.

recruitment and induction: the Web Portal -cum- Research Repository ⁷⁹, the Foresight exercise ⁸⁰, and the attempt to devise RCB Metrics (a statistical process for setting performance indicators).⁸¹

The third problem area in the IAP was that the quality of partnership-working, in what was acknowledged to be a diverse, large and complex partnership structure ⁸², was vitiated by unreliable communications and fluctuating connectivity:

Efforts at teleconferencing of meetings with Southern partners have not generally been successful due to connectivity issues. The present arrangements were deemed not to have served the involvement of African institutions well, and... communication between northern partners has been better than among southern partners. (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 24).

The closing remark in the above quotation illustrates the truism that technical complications can percolate deeper, and adversely affect in a more fundamental way, the quality of relationship between partners. We return to this aspect later in this chapter, under the sub-heading ‘Forging Alliances’.

Summation of Section II

In a real sense, the IAP was at least as ‘strategic’ in its positioning (multi-institutional scope) and in its contribution (trans-disciplinary research engagement) as was its parent programme, the PSC, which laid claim to being ‘strategic’ in its title. In spite of the processual shortcomings and tensions at play in the modus operandi of the IAP (e.g. in relation to governance and communications issues), substantive achievement of all five work packages was evident and the results were synthesised in several publications and disseminated in numerous learning events. In many respects IAP was more programmatic and strategic than its parent programme – the PSC.

Section III - The Two Case Studies Compared

Using the same eleven-point framework elaborated in preceding Chapter 6, we now assess the comparative approaches and attributes of the two case studies - HEDCO and IAP / PSC. In doing so, a caveat needs to be acknowledged, in that the two entities differed from each other in kind and

⁷⁹ As late January 2011, some thirty months into the project’s life, the Web portal was considered to have “great potential but is in its early stages and the extent of use is probably limited just now, so the effectiveness cannot really be judged; the volume of content and profiles on the web portal is not high and needs to be updated” (Leigh-Doyle 2011)

⁸⁰ The external evaluator judged this to have been “a time consuming and its somewhat heavy methodology was problematic and not positively engaged in by all” (ibid.: 21)

⁸¹ “Metrics could be valuable in providing a snapshot of development research capacity in partner institutions; [but was] perhaps a bit too ambitious and theoretical within the context of the IAP project; and needed to be more practically focused” (ibid.: 21)

⁸² “The size and geographic distribution of the consortium made management, transparency and collective decision making difficult” (ibid: 23)

in structure, and thus it would be invalid to draw a strict equivalence between them. Nevertheless they have sufficient commonality, in terms of over-arching mission, their constituency of affiliates and their principal source of funding, to offer some validly comparative insights regarding policy and practice on AFHECIs.

(1) Knowledge and Skills

The HEDCO model was focused primarily on effective teaching and learning at undergraduate level in the Southern beneficiary institutions, with selective instances of support being provided for design and delivery of Masters courses in-country (as was the case in the Mathematics project in the University of Dar es Salaam). Expatriate technical assistance personnel were typically deployed to fill gaps in line positions for long enough to allow their Southern counterparts to avail of project-related study fellowships for postgraduate study in Ireland, in most cases at Masters level.

The PSC model differed considerably from this. The focus was placed on doctoral level ('fourth level') studies for prospective academic leaders from Southern institutions, using a variety of logistical models – some Africa-led, some tenable in Ireland, and some following a hybrid of the two (so-called sandwich doctoral pathway). Apart from this discipline-focused activity, the IAP, as a component within the PSC, also identified and responded to an unmet need for transferable skills (research management, research funding, communications, writing for academic publication, etc), which was operationalized through two residential summer schools held in sub-Saharan Africa, and the development of open access resources and support materials via a web portal.

The significant shift in the type of AFHECIs supported by Ireland, from focusing primarily on undergraduate level in the mid- to late-1980s to doctoral level in the 2010s, was mirrored in the programmes of other OECD donors to higher education, such as Netherlands and Nordic group (Smit, Williamson et al. 2013). In part, this shift of targeted focus reflects success of the earlier investment a generation previously that in the meantime enabled many African host institutions to become more self-sufficient in capacity to meet their ongoing commitments to undergraduate and masters-level teaching capacity, with lesser reliance on donors to fill gaps. In these circumstances, scarce donor support in latter years could be devoted to more strategic capacity development response in the form of doctoral level engagement.

(2) Forging Alliances

It emerged from the literature review that analytical thinking and writing about the models and approaches to partnership for capacity development were in relative infancy at the time when HEDCO programmes were at their height. Nevertheless HEDCO evinced several of the practices

that have since featured in analytical studies, with particular reference to forging institutional links (underpinned by joint agreements signed by respective heads) between HEIs in Africa and in Ireland. The ex-HEDCO General Secretary summarised the collaborative model as follows:

“Establishment of an inter-institutional link, not open-ended, but organic, in which the shared purpose was the creation on the ‘Southern’ side of a fully-functioning institution, using a combination of technical assistance as needed, staff development fellowships as needed, and provision of focused resources [library materials, equipment, subscriptions, etc.]. An example of the latter was the Hotel and Catering College in Zimbabwe to which Ireland provided support in the form of seconded heads of school, visiting lectureships, scholarships and equipment.”⁸³

In the case of IAP, endorsement and committed ‘buy-in’ were also forthcoming from the respective heads of institutions. The quest for best practice emphasised the desired qualities in an institutional partnership - mutuality, symmetry (as far as practicable) of power and decision-making among partners, shared objectives, joint monitoring and evaluation, and overall collegiality in the outworking of the administrative and other implementation arrangements (Gaillard 1994, Kaplan 1999, Fowler 2000, King 2009, Bradley 2007).

That said, an awareness of the potential for discord in the partnership was already present among the project promoters from an early stage, evidenced by the felt need to consciously incorporate symmetry and collegiality into the project architecture as much as practicable: ‘co-chairs’ were appointed from the African and Irish sides of the partnership respectively, and the plenary workshops alternated between Irish and African venues in a manner that was self-evidently balanced. The following extract from a peer-reviewed journal in February 2011 (while the project was still extant) highlights the efforts to strike a North-South balance:

Two of the four workshops to-date, which have been so central to the IAP’s international work, have been hosted by African institutions. In addition, an African institution will host a residential ‘Summer School’ scheduled for March 2010 in Malawi (dedicated to skills training in effective research management). Similarly, workshop programmes are developed and delivered by Irish-African teams. This kind of sharing has been highly rated by the Southern partners as a means of fostering ownership. (Nakabugo, Barrett et al. 2010: 97).

Nevertheless, the review of Executive Committee minutes and Workshop reports reveals that tensions between partners surfaced recurrently, exposing fault lines and rivalries between institutions on the Irish side of the partnership, as well as on the North-South axis. In this connection, Brehm’s observation is apposite, that ‘the key question for effective partnership is not the extent to which differences and tensions exist, but rather the way in which they are handled’ (Brehm 2001: 19).

⁸³ Pilot interview with former HEDCO General Secretary on 09.07.2014.

The timing of the IAP was such that its promoters were clearly in a position to draw upon the wealth of insights in the voluminous literature on partnership for capacity development. While a perusal of the project proposal (2007) indicates that some degree of understanding of fundamental ingredients for an effective partnership programme was present among the promoters of the IAP, the later external evaluation (2011) hinted that the venture may have been over-ambitious, and was clear in its assessment that the project preparation exercise could have been more exhaustive:

The somewhat broad and aspirational nature of the initial project proposal, and the absence of specific targets, performance indicators and baseline ‘problem statement’ posed a challenge for the project at the outset; addressing these issues took up time and resources in the first half of the project. (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 32).

(3) Adaptation to Change

The two case studies reveal that both entities responded to organizational challenges in different ways, and with different outcomes.

In HEDCO’s case, the declining fortunes of the agency became manifest from the mid-1990s onwards due to the multiple factors previously discussed. By 2002 it had become practically defunct as an actor in the international development arena, but continued to exist as an entity until 2009, and in so doing succeeded in salvaging employment of a (reduced) secretariat, by dint of adopting a new corporate persona as the International Education Board of Ireland (IEBI). The changed title reflected a fundamental shift in focus and *raison d’etre*, away from development cooperation project management, and towards generic marketing of Ireland as a destination for fee-paying international students (McEvoy 2013a: 68). Embracing the quasi-commercial internationalization agenda for Irish higher education, HEDCO-IEBI led the international marketing efforts directed mainly towards South and East Asia, the United States and the Gulf states. This function was subsequently subsumed into the state agency Enterprise Ireland where it now resides. Although some at the time welcomed this new direction as a successful adaptation strategy in terms of organizational continuity, an alternate perspective considered such a radical mutation as a *volte-face*.

In the IAP’s case, adaptation was evident in the diverse set of consortia in which the IAP was invited to participate towards the end of the IA funding period, and which enabled it to extend its life by almost two years. These consortia were externally-funded special purpose vehicles for promoting the continuation of that which the IAP had identified as a niche area in which there was unmet need, namely innovative forms of doctoral training appropriate to the African context and capacity building for research management in Africa. Two such consortia illustrate this point: one led by the South African NGO, SANTRUST, which delivered a suite of structured foundation

modules of pre-doctoral preparation throughout South Africa and in Ethiopia and Tanzania (funded initially by Netherlands, and later by the respective national exchequer sources) (Smit, Williamson et al. 2013). The other consortium example was titled 'DocLinks - Increasing Understanding and Establishing Better Links between African and European Doctoral Education Candidates' and was led jointly by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the African Academy of Sciences (with two-year programme funding from the European Union Erasmus Mundus).⁸⁴ Another initially promising initiative developed by the IAP for which no funding support could be found was *Brain Retain*, a virtual gateway to mentoring support of PhD students in Africa by Irish based academics, using latest IT and social networking possibilities, including the 'crowd sourcing' methodology. Philanthropic foundations that support these kinds of initiatives tend to assume (a) that long-term core funding of overhead costs is secure, and (b) that the applicant can make some co-financing contribution from own resources. The IAP's hopes that continuation funding from PSC might provide such core funding support evaporated, with the publication of the Round 3 Call in mid-2011, the eligibility criteria for which were defined in such a sector-specific way as to effectively exclude the kind of more generic, trans-disciplinary capacity development model that the IAP had come to represent. The minutes of the penultimate IAP Executive Meeting conveys the sense of terminal dismay, not least because of the Call's excision of 'higher education' from education sector actions:

The [IA] webinar session had served to confirm the exclusive sectoral focus of this new [PSC] Round on health, food security and education, and added that higher education was not considered as part of the education rubric for the purposes of the call...There was little realistic prospect of an IAP bid being successful since its role was essentially one of generic RCB...[Member X] saw implications for any continuation of the project in its present form. (IAP Archive 2011: a)

In spite of intensive grant-writing efforts during what proved to be the final months of IAP's life, continuation 'core' funding for a successor IAP proved elusive. Ironically, this experience echoed that reported by Southern informants who voiced frustration at the paradox of donors limiting their funding to a two or three year window, while at the same time expecting sustainability of the work to somehow eventuate.

The terminal-phase experience of the IAP would indicate that the key attribute of 'adaptation' or agility, though important to the effectiveness of a programme, is ultimately trumped by resource constraints and higher-level priority-setting, both of which typically lie beyond the control of the programme in question. The demise of both HEDCO and the IAP respectively at different junctures and in different contexts would tend to illustrate the validity of this general conclusion.

⁸⁴ See: <http://www.doclinks.org/>

(4) Purpose and Motivation

Both of the case study entities shared the objectives of institutional collaboration for knowledge generation, knowledge exchange and mutual learning.

Underlying the creation of the IAP in particular was a recognition that research needed to become increasingly multi-disciplinary and praxis-oriented, in order to respond meaningfully to the global challenges of our time. Both Irish and African counterparts saw the IAP as a valuable learning experience that would improve the effectiveness of their staff and (ultimately) benefit their students (Leigh-Doyle 2011). African partners hoped to benefit from resource and equipment sharing as well as accessing Masters, PhD and Postdoctoral fellowship opportunities that might exist in Irish institutions. Conversely, Irish academics were attracted by prospects of getting good doctoral students, sharing research samples and accessing student placements where necessary (ibid.).

These distinct perspectives indicated a certain divergence in expectations, and suggest that, for some partners their participation in the network was at least partly self-interested, motivated by what they could get out of the partnership rather than what they could give to it. Rather than denying the reality of this divergence, it serves rather to highlight the need to imbed a capacity development component into an AFHECI-type partnership, so as to enhance a shared understanding of mutuality that went beyond short-term extrinsic benefits to long-term intrinsic gains.

Shades of self-interest were also to be seen in the HEDCO case study, as revealed in the earlier analysis, especially in relation to tax exempt earnings by assignees. However the weight of evidence from key informant testimonies identified a generosity of instinct and an ethic of solidarity with the underprivileged (characteristic of the ‘spirit of the times’) as the predominant motivations. In retrospect, this disposition may also have carried within it a modicum of naïveté, which has given way in the present era to a more phlegmatic view of the stewardship of affairs of state by elites of sub-Saharan Africa.

(5) Postgraduate Bursaries

This programme component featured strongly in both case studies, and is seen by almost all sources as an indispensable instrument for sustainable and enduring capacity development at all three levels – individual, institutional and systemic. At the same time, such opportunities provide a valuable cross-cultural learning dimension (where the awards involve international mobility). The empirical evidence obtained for this study points to a decidedly more favourable verdict of the value of investing in fellowship awards than had been portrayed during the ‘lost decade’ of aid to

higher education in the 1990s (the latter having been unduly influenced by the overall experience of US-sponsored scholarship schemes).

The project model which was practised by HEDCO from its outset (and which had been was informed by cumulative experience of longer-established management bodies as EP-NUFFIC Netherlands and the British Council) featured the incorporation of scholarship awards as an integral component of a broader package of measures of institutional capacity strengthening, and were therefore known as ‘project-related fellowships’. This category was distinguished from individualised awards made by IA directly through its overseas missions, which accounted for some two-thirds of total IA fellowship awards in 1999, when an external review of the scheme took place. This observed:

Unfortunately, the majority of Fellows are non-project Fellows...and cannot therefore be expected to be integrated into the capacity-building efforts of programmes. It may be that they do actually improve capacity, but this may depend on an effective selection process and a large measure of good luck. Therefore I have to seriously question the value of the majority of non-project Fellowships. (Drayton 1999).

Eight years after Drayton’s review containing this pointed critique, a subsequent external review of scheme (2007) reported a deteriorating trend in the interim:

Fellowships have become more individualised and disconnected from the mainstream programmes of Irish Aid (IA) in partner countries, contrary to the recommendations of the last major Review. (McEvoy, Roe et al 2007: 13).

This instance of policy and practice illustrates the fallacy of the assumption (implicit in the optimism bias) that good practice development programming evolves on a linear progression, correlative with the passage of time. Rather, as occurred with the Fellowship Programme, a much more complex pattern is evident, resembling at best a zig-zagging dynamic that evinces serial progressive, static and regressive trends.

(6) Programme Modalities

It transpired that around the time the IAP was being conceptualized (in 2007/8), there was a raft of analogous initiatives taking place in parallel on the international stage: the existence of these only became apparent when IAP implementation was already well advanced. This indicates a lacuna in intelligence within both IA and the Irish HEI sector, due to the previous absence of Irish participation in apex-level networks on higher education in Europe and internationally, for example the Donors to Higher Education Harmonisation Group (DHG) and the European Association of Development Institutes (EADI). Once established, the IAP closed this lacuna by ensuring Irish representation at these fora, but undoubtedly the IAP and PSC learning curves could have been

accelerated, and rendered more complementary, had their design been informed by awareness of these analogues.

In its time, HEDCO fulfilled such a networking function, ensuring regular visitations to the corridors of the World Bank and Economic Development Institute (EDI), the European Commission, the Donors to African Education Group, the Association for Development of Education in Africa, and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE).⁸⁵ Forming consortia with other analogue agencies (e.g. British Council) was common practice, as was the ability to synergise complementary streams of funding support from a multiplicity of donors (e.g. the Bethlehem University Upgrade Programme 1987-1993, co-funded by the European Commission and by Irish Aid).

(7) Finance & Funding

A learning point offered by both case studies is that the organisational infrastructure necessary for the effective management of AFHECIs (such as HEDCO and IAP) has too often been assessed by donors, with reference to inappropriate monitoring and impact indicators that focus on short term outcomes whose measurability, attributability and relevance are dubious.

Donors' expectations of how quickly impact can become evident may need to be moderated; a more realistic view may need to be taken about the difficulty of attributing cause-and-effect in situations where (as is so often the case) the contribution of higher education or research is only one of many factors impinging on measurable improvement in quality of life (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 30).

From the beneficiary side, a sense of being marginalized from budget allocation decisions, coupled perhaps with unrealistic expectations of just how far a finite budget can be stretched, can often give rise to misapprehensions and mistrust. A hint of this can be gleaned from the IAP Evaluation:

The implementation of the project ... resulted in relatively high expenditure on travel and accommodation [and] the decision to confine budget allocation to five lead institutions appears to have had some negative impact on the motivation of the partner institutions to actively engage with the project, particularly the southern partners. (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 31)

An expectation of the IAP which existed in the Southern partner institutions was that a structured Irish-African research partnership would improve their prospects of subsequently attracting new international research funding. Recognising that most development research funding agencies are interested in North-South and South-South initiatives, opportunities to engage in collaborative research activities commanded a strong appeal, especially where the thematic material can be linked to development outcomes and improved quality of life. In practice, the IAP and PSC were

⁸⁵ HEDCO Annual Reports 1985-1995.

probably too short lived to allow these expectations to come to fruition. Arguably also they were not operating to the scale needed to be able to achieve the kind of critical mass of research capacity that one associates with the Scandinavian funders or the Rockefeller or Carnegie Foundations.

(8) Human Resources

A time-series profile of some of HEDCO's projects (such as that in the Mathematics Department of the University of Dar es Salaam), supported by the testimony of key informants, point to a valuable legacy having been left, and being acted out through positive and sustained contributions by the African beneficiaries of the staff development support provided a generation ago. Such contributions were seen in the teaching of successive cohorts of students, supervision of graduate research, and academic leadership at institutional level. For its part, the IAP aimed to establish and nurture a network of research-active academics from the thirteen partner institutions to develop a coordinated approach to build the capacity for research. In the Irish institutions specifically, it aimed to build the capacity for development research, whereas in the African institutions, the focus was on building capacity for research in the areas of health and education, and the cross-cutting thematic areas of ICT and gender. In addition to the legacy of discipline-specific skills and knowledge conferred through initiatives such as HEDCO and the IAP, opportunities were provided for individual beneficiaries from the South to improve their personal effectiveness, inter-personal communication skills, time management and writing capabilities – all ingredients of good role modelling as their subsequent careers in the home environment.

While the enhancement of human resources and intellectual capital in the South rightly occupied a central place in the proximate objectives of HEDCO, IAP and other initiatives, it was the *retention* and *unleashing* of this improved capacity that was a principal higher-level strategic concern, which is where the system-level factors that promote (or inhibit) an enabling environment conducive to capacity development come into play (Jones, Bailey et al. 2007).

(9) Time Horizons

Indubitably, the experiences of both case studies re-affirm the long-term nature of capacity development initiatives at third level, such that this form of international development assistance requires a qualitatively different and considerably longer time horizon than is the case for any other category of aid expenditure (with the probable exception of peace-building, conflict resolution and human rights protection).

Development of genuine mutual partnership and cooperation across thirteen universities in the Island of Ireland together with universities in four African countries is complex and requires a long term timeline. (Leigh-Doyle 2011: 32).

(10) Systems Context

In general, research capacity in Irish universities has undergone profound change in decades since HEDCO was active. Compared with the prevailing situation twenty years ago, research in Irish universities is increasingly influenced by national development plans and by European-level initiatives including the Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020 (Teasdale, Bainbridge 2012). The human capital dimension of research policy has become axiomatic, whereby high level skills provide a key impetus to broad economic growth (Government of Ireland 2005). The Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL) initiative, launched in 1998, was strongly imbued by this view. Furthermore, the establishment of Science Foundation Ireland in 2003, together with increased funding to existing foundations (much of it deriving from the EU Structural Funds) heralded the availability of significantly greater resources for research, as well as for strengthening research capacity in Irish universities.

However, this upward trend has fallen victim to the rapid onset of recession from late 2008. In fact, both HEDCO (in 1989/90) and the IAP (in 2009/10) encountered periods of major funding uncertainty triggered by sudden-onset economic and fiscal crises. Consequently, in the IAP's case, the positive funding climate which prevailed in Ireland at the outset had given way to a more subdued mood by the time the work-package results came to be analysed and written up.

Whilst the IAP itself did not engage in specific research work, a distinctive feature was its ability to facilitate multi-disciplinary research engagement, especially between the sciences and the humanities, in a country such as Ireland in which – arguably - no single institution has yet built up a sufficient critical mass of expertise in development-related research. The IAP therefore worked at one remove from implementation of actual research projects, for example by supporting the Southern partners in creating and strengthening their research support functions, in order more effectively to relate their research priorities to poverty reduction and national development objectives. Recognition of the value of incorporating community consultation processes and policy-level interfaces into research design were also emphasised.

A good example of lack of systemic cohesion was cited by one experienced informant who pointed out the conflicted expectations present within different organs of the Irish Government, torn between the Southern-centred focus on capacity development as the motivation for international partnerships involving Irish universities, and the pressure for marketisation of higher education (under the rubric of internationalization) asserting itself in the domestic policy domain.

“The Irish government has mixed thinking on that. It wants us to get international students paying international fees, in order to make up some of the shortfall in domestic government funding of HE here. So I haven't seen any successful partnerships with African universities involving co-accreditation; most of the links I know seem to be person-centric” {A06}.

This is precisely the same (unresolved) dilemma that gave rise to the teleological inversion that HEDCO underwent in the mid-1990s (from aid-centred to market-centred), a stratagem which offered only temporary respite from final obliteration.

(11) Public Good

The existence of both of the case study organisations was predicated on the conviction that higher education capacity had a vital role to play – alongside government and wider civil society – in promoting and achieving balanced socio-economic development and poverty reduction.

Although a well-functioning and accessible system of higher education is not in itself a sufficient condition for social and economic development, it is demonstrably a necessary one. (World Bank. 2000: 93)

If it is the case that HE (in common with the other levels in the education system) is an essential public good, a corollary is that capacity development for and within higher education is by extension also an essential public good.

Higher education systems do not exist in isolation – they are part of a wider social, political and economic fabric reflecting the societies in which they function and which they serve. Academia's service to the body politic in both the global North and South comprises principally its role in teaching and formation of personnel essential to the common good; but alongside this there are also: producing and disseminating pure and applied research, thereby providing the vital foundations for future innovation (Salmi 2009); community development in support of a civil society beset by social, environmental and cultural challenges (Munck 2012); input of specialist policy advice to institutions of state; setting and moderating public examinations; and promotion of societal debate and critique.

Contestation regarding the 'mission' of HEIs and their 'public good' rationale may oftentimes spill over into overloaded expectations and multiple motivations for North-South partnership working between HEIs. As well as being required to perform functions that are part of the traditional role of universities, they have to meet the demands of diverse funders in a changing global context, as well as specific local, national, and regional needs. The combination of implicit and explicit pressures and of different social functions results in a complex and contradictory reality.

Summation – Chapter 7

The review of archival documentation of HEDCO and the IAP confirmed the persistence of ambivalent views as to whether HE is a 'means' or an 'end'. After reviewing the records of meetings and reports, the reader was struck by relative absence of explicit attention to the normative understanding of HE: '...to educate, to train, to undertake research and, in particular, to

contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole' (World Conference on Higher Education 1998: 2). More attention seemed to have been devoted to pursuit of more functionalist concerns as to how HE could better serve the attainment of specific development goals in education, health, nutrition, and so on (IAP 2011: a). Although this finding is based more on what is **not** in the documentation than what **is**, the observation does resonate strongly with Khoo's sense of unease with contemporary discourse on higher education and development, on account of

...the neglect of normative and ethical dimensions of change, including the specific value of pro-poor development research and professionalism, contributions to governance, peace and democracy, the promotion of intrinsic humanistic values and capabilities, or the advancement of epistemic and cognitive justice (Khoo 2015: 9).

The incongruity of a linear model of performance measurement with a programme such as the PSC arose partly from the donor having adopted a purely instrumentalist view of capacity development, rather than seeing this as something that was complex in nature, and both a means to an end, and an end in itself.

It is tenable to infer that the originators of the PSC over-promised by advancing two exaggerated characterisations - firstly that the PSC constituted a programme (as distinct from a grouping of discrete projects), and secondly that it was somehow strategic in nature even though almost as much was disbursed by Irish Aid to the higher education *outside* the PSC than within it.

The main findings in relation to AFHECIs emanating from the empirical research sources (key informant interviews and archival based case study) are now combined and presented in Table 11 below. Once more the familiar eleven-point analytical framework is used (the iterative development of which was explained in Chapter 5 - Methodology). Although the findings under each attribute have already been fleshed out in narrative form in Chapters 6 and 7, it is considered useful to bring them together in synoptic form here, before proceeding to formulate the Conclusions (Chapter8).

Table 11: Synopsis of Findings from informant interviews and case studies combined

	Key Findings from Interviews	Key findings from Case Studies
1. KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors are averse to deploying technical assistance (once considered key to CD). • Successful skills transfer is compromised by system-level dysfunctions in-country. • AFHECIs should transcend the binary divide in HE. 	Technical assistance was an important generic feature of AFHECIs in 1980s and early 1990s, but its use had dwindled by the 2000s – by the time of the IAPRCB. It was limited to research capacity summer schools
2. FORGING ALLIANCES	Authentic partnerships need to be mutually respectful, genuinely needs-responsive, and focused in institutional-level capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multilaterally funded AFHECIs were less prone to budget shocks and uncertainties than those bilaterally-funded. • Technical or logistical complications can percolate deeper, and adversely affect the quality of relationship between partners in a fundamental way
3. ADAPTATION TO CHANGE	Change and adaptation have been induced by confluence of factors, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demographic pressures; • nation states’ ambition in context of globalisation; • analytical research on rates of return on investment in HE. 	Constant balancing act demanded between operating in a fluid global environment, while also maintaining strong collegiality, consensual decision-making, inclusiveness and impartiality within home constituency.
4. PURPOSE & MOTIVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of purpose is essential for AFHECIs to be effective • After the ‘lost decade’ of neglect, AFHECIs are being rehabilitated into donors’ programmes. 	HEDCO’s mutation in the mid-1990s (from aid-centred to market-centred), was a teleological inversion which offered only temporary respite from final obliteration.
5. POSTGRADUATE BURSARIES	Scepticism in donor circles about scholarship schemes for African candidates is unduly influenced by the adverse US experience of non-return to country of origin.	Schemes of scholarship awards seem to work best if they constitute an integral component to a broader, multi-annual package of measures aimed at Southern institutional capacity strengthening,
6. PROGRAMME MODALITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National interest or advantage underlies donor policy and practice; • Quantitative results-based methodology fixated on short-term results is minimally applicable to CD; • Official data sets can portray a partial, even misleading, picture of the larger reality. 	Each project component is inextricably linked with others in a web-like system configuration. Emergent issues appearing in one component rapidly reveal implications for other components of the project or programme.

7. FINANCE & FUNDING	A de-emphasis on donor assistance to the education sector as a whole is apparent over the past decade (except the World Bank).	By pooling the domestic and multilateral income, HEDCO at its zenith took judicious advantage of an economy of scale, while bidding for EU and WB projects overseas.
8. HUMAN RESOURCES	A broader in-country HR strategy which is conducive to good morale is essential for staff retention and succession in African HEIs	The contribution by African personnel whose further studies were sponsored a generation ago, is to be seen in their teaching of successive cohorts of students, supervision of graduate research, and academic leadership at institutional level.
9. TIME HORIZONS	The period over which the benefits of capacity development support gestate and become manifest far exceeds the duration in which the initial investment was made.	Both case studies re-affirm the long-term nature of capacity development initiatives at third level, such that this form of international development assistance requires a qualitatively different and considerably longer time horizon than most.
10. CONTEXT	Regional (multi-country) level cooperation on doctoral and research training has been expanding but has scope to further realise its potential.	Both HEDCO (in 1989/90) and IAP (in 2009/10) encountered periods of major funding uncertainty triggered by sudden-onset economic and fiscal crises.
11. PUBLIC GOOD	Though the independence enjoyed by HE varies according to context, it can exert a civilising influence as a bulwark against the potential excesses of state power.	Because higher education is an essential public good, a corollary is that capacity development for and within higher education is by extension an essential public good.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

This Chapter begins by briefly recalling the methodological process that generated the evidence-base for the main findings, which are then discussed with reference to the original research questions posed at the outset of the study. The ensuing discussion culminates in two sets of conclusions drawn from the research: one comprises fundamental conclusions relating to higher-level policy, while the other comprises praxis-oriented conclusions.

This study demonstrates that the phenomenon of AFHECIs bears the hallmarks of complex adaptive systems (CAS) to a remarkable degree. The value of CAS lies in its ability to explain how and why human systems (such as those in which AFHECIs are embedded) unfold as they do. Its analytical approach tends to view capacity as emerging from multiple processes that are complex and unpredictable, and that evince qualities of non-linearity, emergence, adaptation through feedback, and dynamic interaction of elements (Rhodes, Murphy et al. 2011). In each intervention there is the potential for new opportunities and new problems to emerge from the specific situation and the people involved in it; and these are the emergent properties of that situation.

This eleven-point analytical framework in Table 11 above is my representation of the constitutive attributes of AFHECIs, anchored in CAS theory. It is the product of an inductive methodology, the starting point for which was the '5Cs' generic framework for capacity development extracted from recent literature, which provided the basis for design of interview schemas for all three informant categories (see Annexes D, E and F), and for analysis of pilot interview material. It became evident at an early stage of the empirical phase that this generic framework, when applied to the specific and complex domain of AFHECIs, could not do justice to the analytical challenge without being significantly extended and refined. Accordingly, the eleven-point framework was developed inductively and from a grounded assessment proceeding from (i) a richness of differentiated oral testimony from the 27 high-calibre key informants, (ii) informative documentary evidence contained in the archival dossiers of HEDCO and IAP, and (iii) my own educated insights as a late-career reflective practitioner. The use of the *Quirkos* software enhanced the rigour of the entire process.

This methodological process provides a robust basis for assessing the findings and extracting substantive conclusions from them, with reference to the research questions posed at the outset of the study. In doing so, we continue to draw upon that same theoretical prism of CAS.

The cognate questions are considered first, in the same sequence in which they were presented in Chapter 1, before proceeding to the over-arching question which encompasses these.

Research questions (c) and (d):

What has been learned about the suitability of programme instruments / mechanisms used by donor agencies and national governments over the past four decades, for the purpose of creating sustainable systems and research capacity in sub-Saharan Africa's higher education sector?

Which modalities (or combinations of modalities) are likely to best support Africa's higher education systems, in their role as instruments of human and societal development?

Recognising that the development process is multi-dimensional, and having regard to the five aid effectiveness principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results and mutual accountability, it becomes clear that progress towards sustainable development is not only about the volume of aid given, but also about how that aid is given and managed (Kharas, Makino et al. 2011). Our discussion of modalities as they affect AFHECI effectiveness divides into distinct aspects: the first relates to overall aid architecture (for example the switch by donors to sector wide approaches, budget support and the 'programmatic approach'), and the second relates to the fitness for purpose of standard techniques of project appraisal, management and evaluation when applied to AFHECIs.

Taking the broad aid architecture first, the trends that have emerged since the Paris Declaration (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) suggest that support for the education sector in sub-Saharan Africa, including the higher education sub-sector, has suffered significant collateral damage from the modal shift by donors towards budget support and a narrower concentration of budget resources on priority sectors in fewer countries. The adverse consequences of this have been aggravated by the demographic pressures throughout that region, with the attendant problems of overcrowding, dilution of teaching quality and shortages of teachers and academics.

In Ireland's case, the education sector *per se* now scarcely features in the bilaterally-funded programme of support to the priority countries of Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi or Sierra Leone.⁸⁶ Ireland's overall spending on education sector aid (as a percentage of total bilateral aid) amounted to 6% in 2015⁸⁷ compared with an average of 33.4% in the five-year period 1989 – 1993⁸⁸. The sector-specific expertise in education which formerly existed both in Irish Aid headquarters and at field level has been dissipated as a consequence of the changed aid architecture, nor is there any outsourced coordinating support unit. Isolated instances of higher education and research

⁸⁶ Irish Aid Annual Report 2015: Annex 9, p.55, available at www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/allwebsitemedia/20newsandpublications/IA-Annual-Report-2015.pdf (accessed 31.08.2017).

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Irish Aid Advisory Committee (1995). *Irish Aid and Education: A Report to the Minister for Foreign Affairs*. Dublin. p. 77.

collaboration exist, ‘aligned’ with the in-country priorities for bilateral sectoral aid (which in effect makes such collaboration indistinguishable from commissioned research).

Another feature of the modal shift in the manner of channelling aid from the North was the emphasis on ‘demand driven-ness’ and ‘ownership by the South’ of programmes receiving aid funding. It was evident from testimonies of Category B (African voices) informants that in – for example - Uganda and Tanzania, higher education currently occupies a lower position in the hierarchy of domestic priorities, as measured by the proportion of total state expenditure allocated to HEIs, than was the case one decade ago. While country ownership of aid programming is laudable as a rationale, the short term pressures (such as the electoral cycle) on host governments’ priorities are asynchronous with the longer-term horizons that effective capacity development demands; if donors willingly provide aid in the form of budget support, any countervailing influence will be negligible.

A recurring theme in the evidence-gathering for this study was the necessity for an inter-generational development orientation as indispensable for strong long-term North-South collaborative partnerships which reflect ever-growing global inter-dependence, using the kind of long-range temporal perspective that is beginning to be applied to the climate change dimension of development discourse (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014).

The major shift in aid modalities that has taken place since the mid-1990s has therefore had an adverse effect on AFHECIs, both in terms of the overall funding climate, and their status within bilateral aid programming. In Ireland’s case, even allowing for the idiosyncratic categorization and reporting of official data on aid which finds its way into the public domain (see Chapter 6), this adverse course of events would appear to have been particularly pronounced.

We now consider the aspect relating to the effects on AFHECIs of project management practice over a similar time span.

Development project management, which is growing into an organised sub-discipline, has its conceptual roots not so much in development studies, but rather in engineering and construction, with their well-established techniques of work breakdown structures, critical path analysis, schedule tracking and Gantt charts, etc. (Pellegrinelli, 2011). Project management methodologies across the spectrum of development programming tend to suffer from two implicit assumptions:

- the ‘planning fallacy’ (Hirschman 1967), the idea that the time it takes to complete a project is unrealistically close to best-case scenario;
- a ‘cause-and-effect’ conceptualisation of the desired change and the pathways to attaining it. Linear thinking, exemplified in the protocols of ‘logical framework analysis’ (LFA), ‘results based management’ (RBM) and the ‘results chain’, is the default mental model

permeating conventional development project management practice; though the validity of this has been questioned (Cicmil, Hodgson et al. 2009, Eyben 2013), it remains dominant in development programme practice internationally and in the myriad practitioner manuals and handbooks on RBM, for example that of UNDP (2009).

Another essential ingredient of RBM methodology revolves around identifying indicators whereby progress or of performance can ostensibly be gauged. These tend to comprise quantitative metrics, because by definition they must be measurable in order to be evidentially admissible on grounds of veracity, accuracy, verifiability and replicability. Here again, according to the rational-analytic mental model, these characteristics confer legitimacy on decisions concerning resource allocation to the programme in question. An example of this was seen in Chapter 7, with the insistence by Irish Aid on retro-fitting a Logic Model to the already-operational Programme of Strategic Cooperation, and constraining the stakeholders in projects funded under the PSC to devise corresponding Results Frameworks (though at least latitude was given to projects to devise their own indicators).

The well-established project planning tools and frameworks are of clear instrumental value to practitioners, helping them to concretise aspirational ambitions for change, and cast them into costed operational workplans. But when, as often occurs, the Logframe or Results Framework occupies centre stage in the initial appraisal of projects, and in the evaluation of the totality of project performance, self-imposed limitations are the consequence; such that valuable project benefits and learning may be overlooked (a) because they have yet to emerge; (b) because unintended benefits have displaced the ones originally foreseen; or (c) because the project has perforce undergone adaptation to fit in with an operating environment that has changed beyond recognition. Efforts to comprehensively evaluate the contribution of higher education capacity development and learn lessons from past experiences have been constrained by these self-imposed methodological restrictions.

This study suggests that the architecture of the IAP's parent – the PSC - was defective. In spite of the adjectives in its name, the PSC was neither a programme nor was it strategic; rather it was a funding mechanism with a set of eligibility criteria and guidelines against which funding allocations were made following three competitive calls. Moreover, it seems ironic that the IAP, as one of the funded projects under the PSC umbrella, was in a real sense more strategic in nature than was its parent, for reasons that were set out in Chapter 7.

Finally, a potential pitfall in the linear mindset is that emphasis becomes so focused on the achievement of the original project plan that emergent or contextual factors of potential benefit or detriment to the whole intervention may not be grasped. This tends to blind planners to obstacles, challenges and opportunities, and to 'underplay the need for imagination, insight and the application of creative energies' (Ika 2016: 937).

For all these reasons, the conventionally used models for programme planning (PCM) and for gauging programme impact (Results Frameworks and RBM) are only minimally applicable to AFHECIs. A future challenge is to refine the impact evaluation strategies (for example those of the OECD / AHELO exercise) to the point where the quality of teaching and learning can be gauged more reliably. This is an area which calls for closer attention in future research. The critique of the default ‘cause and effect’ mental model, as having minimal applicability to AFHECIs goes some way to explaining why conventional evaluations fail to capture the totality of benefits conferred by AFHECIs: they may be looking in the wrong place and / or over the wrong span of time. The ‘minimal’ descriptor is chosen advisedly, because the commonly used programme planning tools and frameworks are of procedural, *instrumental* value, in terms of providing practical methodology to help clarify and crystallise aspirational ambitions for change into costed operational workplans. However, a complexity-based, CAS-inspired understanding of capacity development (non-linear and multi-dimensional, with emphasis on the dynamic relationships between the multiple factors and agents at play in the development process) commands powerful ontological cogency, as a way of better understanding the phenomenon of ‘capacity for development’.

Research question (b): How can improved individual capacity in Southern HEIs translate sustainably into improved institutional capacity?

The HEDCO Experience: On the evidence presented, the integrated project model which HEDCO pursued and which placed special emphasis on individual staff development within an institutional-level personnel succession plan, is shown to have paid dividends *over time*. The Mathematics Department of the University of Dar es Salaam was a case in point. Prior to the HEDCO support programme (1989), staff numbers had fallen to six due to gradual attrition, there were no taught Masters courses, and undergraduate courses took the form of service teaching with Maths being a subsidiary subject (HEDCO 1989: vi). Subsequent to the HEDCO project, Maths once again became a major BSc programme, taught Masters were re-introduced, a critical mass of six counterpart staff were educated to Doctoral level (HEDCO 1996: i); at the time of writing, the Department has a staff strength of 39, of whom 23 are PhD holders⁸⁹. In the intervening years, as the nation’s main reservoir of expertise in STEM subjects, that Department has produced many thousands of primary degree holders, a high proportion of whom have entered the teaching profession, and hundreds of Masters graduates, now working in ICT related positions and lecturing in the expanding University and vocational training sector in Tanzania and the wider region. An important success factor in HEDCO’s approach was to maintain a steady focus matching the demand (in this case, capacity deficit in institutions in the global South) with corresponding expertise and motivation to engage from the side of Northern partner institutions.

⁸⁹ Source: <http://www.maths.udsm.ac.tz/> (accessed 02.09.2017).

Enduring dividends of this kind are discernible today in Tanzania, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Uganda and elsewhere, which trace back to the multi-stranded institutional-level capacity development work carried out by HEDCO a generation ago. But these dividends went unacknowledged by the funders at the time, and so it continued until the present research study produced countervailing evidence. This obfuscation was partly because the culture of evaluation was less well developed at that time than now, but principally because of the major shift in aid modalities in mid-1990s, coinciding with a shift in donor focus towards responding to perceived basic needs in ways which were seen to yield short-run performance gains, or were more amenable to quantification of return on donor investment. Moreover, there was a tendency in the donor discourse to accentuate the advantages of the new dispensation, by denigrating, on weak evidential grounds, that which had gone before. AFHECIs were victim to this adverse sentiment. We have seen as an example of this distorted narrative the widespread misconception among donors of the alleged high incidence of ‘brain drain’ among graduates of donor-funded scholarship programmes; this has been refuted by a series of relatively recent studies as well as by all informant categories in the present study.

The IAP experience: Promoting the development of research capacity through partnership was the core mission of the IAP. Its methodological breadth of enquiry combined with a swathe of documented international practice on RCB, produced valuable insights into the factors which enable individual talents and skills to translate into institutional capacity. Its findings were distilled into a ten-point charter for research capacity, shown below in Table 12. This synthesized IAP’s three work packages (the qualitative stakeholder consultation based on extensive field research, the literature-based foresight study, and the quantitative rankings produced by the Metrics work-package):

Table 12: IAP's ten key factors for effective research capacity in 'Southern' HEIs.

1. A well-functioning Research Office which can take research from conceptualisation through to dissemination, and manage the research process across the institution.
2. Development of reliable research infrastructure, especially electronic connectivity facilitating on-line access.
3. Structured research training and postgraduate formation, with stronger foundations in research methods (quantitative, qualitative, critical thinking).
4. Development of an embedded research culture in the institution, alongside the equally important learning innovation and civic engagement missions.
5. Increase in research funding, particularly through the attraction of national and international research grants.
6. More sustained engagement with the global knowledge society, in particular through international North-South and South-South partnerships and networking.
7. Support for output of quality research publications, in peer-reviewed journals but also in policy relevant outlets.
8. Measures to boost the number of women entering and remaining in research careers with clear support mechanisms to do so
9. A well-developed process of dissemination of research findings, in particular through linkages with evidence based development policy and practice.
10. Relevance for poverty reduction and the improvement of quality of life in the context of national socio-economic development.

Source: IAPRCB 2011:154.

The interview testimonies were congruent with the ten factors identified in Table 12. Two points in particular were highlighted as priorities – (i) the need to accentuate transferable skills (e.g. research methods, writing and publishing) in complementarity with disciplinary and technical ones, and (ii) the implementation of credible quality assurance mechanisms at national and regional level.

An emerging finding relating to institutional CD is that the attribute of 'adaptation' or agility, though important to the effectiveness of a programme, is ultimately trumped by resource constraints and higher-level priority-setting, both of which typically lie beyond the control of the programme or project in question. The demise of both HEDCO and IAP respectively at different junctures and in different contexts would tend to illustrate the validity of this general conclusion. The demise of the IAP in 2011, with its attendant organisational infrastructure, the institutional memory of its secretariat and the expectations of Southern partners regarding longer-term research collaboration and exchange, is to some extent a reprise of the earlier demise of HEDCO (though the latter's demise was more prolonged). To paraphrase Wilde, to allow one to disappear can be

regarded as a misfortune; to allow two to disappear looks like carelessness. As for the PSC, its last call for proposals was in 2012, and its future is unclear at the time of writing.

The lack of consistency in sentiment of IA towards support for higher education is striking: in alternate decades, it incorporated a strong HE support component during the HEDCO era, then caused it to dissipate, only then to re-discover the phenomenon in a different guise (the PSC), following a long hiatus, which in turn is apparently being allowed to expire. This ebb and flow of sentiment, as we have seen, was largely influenced by policy shifts playing out in the wider donor environment (a de-emphasis on higher education ostensibly justified by the rate of return analyses of Psacharopoulos and Colclough in the late 1980s), and by the fact of 'higher education in the developing world [being] buffeted by many winds of change over the years' (King 2009:34). In addition, in the case of Irish Aid, successive rotations of leadership at official level sought at times to put a fresh stamp on the keynote policies of IA, without parliamentary endorsement, for example in relation to the decisive change of tack in 1997 towards budget support. What these experiences signal is recurring discontinuity in Ireland's (among others) policy stance on aid to higher education. There is an apparent reluctance – or at least vacillation – on the part of IA to commit itself for the long term to this sector. This is an impairment to Ireland's credibility in working with Southern institutions to create the kind of enabling environment for capacity development that is encapsulated in the ten factors in Table 12 above.

Yet as King (2009) points out, a contradictory tendency in the agency world ensured continuation of certain elements in AFHECIs, against the grain of OECD donor tendencies, for example the Nordic Union countries, Netherlands, Canada, and the large American foundations of Ford and Rockefeller. It is conceivable that this re-discovery of the value of higher education (HE) as an integral strand of development policy and practice was ultimately to be expected since, almost without exception, aid agency managers are themselves products of the HE system, and represent countries in which investment in higher education in past generations has conferred transformative and inter-generational benefits (Ireland being a prime example).

Discontinuity of thinking and planning has been apparent also in the Southern institutional environment, in the many instances quoted by informants where turnover of Southern counterpart staff detracted from the planned efforts to foster sustainable capacity development at institutional level, as has the fungibility or substitution effect of the external funding of AFHECIs.

A present concern is not so much that HE's share of education sector support from ODA sources has contracted, but rather that the *education sector provision overall* has been in decline relative to other categories of donor assistance over the past decade (though the World Bank would appear to be an exception to the donor trend in this regard). This trend is partly due to unintended consequences of the outworking of the aid effectiveness agenda. As a result, the sector-specific expertise which previously existed, and which well understood the intricacies of education sector

dynamics at country and regional level in Africa, has been dissipated. National governments have not taken up the slack, partly because HEIs encounter incongruities with the demarcation lines of ministerial portfolios, and with the arbitrary and / or arcane processes concomitant with public sector financial procedures.

Turning now to the over-arching research question (a).

Can a complex adaptive system (CAS) ‘lens’ assist a better understanding of the role and status of higher education capacity development in sub-Saharan Africa, as seen within the framework of evolving policy and practice in international development assistance; and if so, to what extent?

Conclusions relating to the core essence of capacity development

Capacity development may refer to both process and outcomes: on the one hand, the efforts to improve individual capabilities and organizational performance and, on the other hand, the results of those efforts in terms of capacities developed (Morgan 1998). This is one dichotomy that runs throughout the discourse on AFHECIs; the other is the means / ends dichotomy, reflected also in the ever-present tension in wider discourse between pure and applied research. Throughout the evidence-gathering work of this study, the ‘ends versus means’ tension in relation to AFHECIs was like a subcutaneous vein, rarely breaking through into the open, but maintaining an underlying current of perplexity. When prevailed upon to respond, many informants came down on the side of ‘means’, but few showed an appetite to really tease out their motivation for so doing. Meanwhile the donor reports and studies on AFHECIs consistently see them as ‘means’, and understandably so since they constitute one among many sub-programmatic categorizations, all of which by definition are ‘means’. But, to adopt an alternative viewpoint, if capacity development for higher education is a public good (as was postulated by the evidence in Chapters 6 and 7), then AFHECIs – in virtue of the public good orientation - assume the character of being ‘ends’; in which case AFHECI effectiveness would consist in the fusion of CD as ‘product’ and CD as ‘process’.

The corollary of this reasoning constitutes our **first** and perhaps the most fundamental policy-oriented finding, namely that:

Capacity development, when considered as ‘outcome’, constitutes a public or social good in itself, or in other words a substantive development outcome. The supposed dichotomy between means and ends in regard to AFHECIs is essentially a false one. This essentially resolves the long-running ‘ends -v- means’ dichotomy in which the discourse on capacity development has long been mired.

Using the CAS lens, with its integrative stimulus, reveals the futility of allowing our thinking in relation to AFHECIs to be held captive by the supposed dichotomy between ends and means. As long as donor agencies focus only on the instrumental role of CD and decline to recognise its essential outcome-centred nature, they risk a never-ending but ultimately illusory quest for ‘evidence’ of attribution to the attainment of whatever may be their ulterior objective(s). This leads to the **second** core conclusion that:

CAS represents a very good fit for explaining the challenges inherent in development programming in general, and AFHECIs in particular. The CAS perspective (with its emphasis on the dynamic relationships between the multiple factors and agents at play in the development process) commands powerful ontological cogency, as a way of better understanding the phenomenon of ‘capacity for development’.

CAS thinking tends to seek integrative and multi-disciplinary understanding of social reality, rather than one grounded in a tradition of analytical positivism. Every development intervention is unique to the specific context in which it takes place, a context which includes the various stakeholders involved. CAS theory harmonizes with the conceptualisation of capacity development as constituting not only a means to realize desired results, but also as the bedrock of effective systems, institutions and organizations that are crucial to a country’s – or an institution’s - capability to mould its own future. Cilliers’ (1998:4) insight is relevant here, that complex systems are embedded in the context of their own histories, and no single element or agent can know, comprehend, or predict actions and effects that are operating within the system as a whole. Interestingly, a recent *World Development Report* adopts a conceptual stance which resonates with this agentic nature of CAS (one which would have been inconceivable a generation ago):

Recognizing the human factor in decision making and behaviour has repercussions for the practice of development. Experts, policy makers, and development professionals, like everyone else, are themselves subject to the biases and mistakes that can arise from thinking automatically, thinking socially, and using mental models. They need to be more aware of these biases, and organizations should implement procedures to mitigate them. (World Bank 2015:15).

Consistent with this insight is our **third** core conclusion that:

CD is underlain by a structural dependence on the response of 'others' (people, governments, organisations) to whatever AFHECIs seek to do. Assumptions can be made, influence brought to bear, but ultimately these 'others' form part of a complex adaptive system in which each element has some autonomy as to how to adapt. Linearity and certainty are absent from this environment.

Praxis-oriented Conclusions

Our earlier analysis of AFHECIs, complemented by the core considerations above, lead us to draw a number of praxis-related conclusions in response to the research questions.

First, as was seen in Chapter 6, there was strong agreement among informants about the relative intangibility of capacity development, as compared for example with infrastructural, nutritional or healthcare interventions. Moreover, capacity strengthening is often embedded as a strand in multi-faceted programmes, with the consequence that any one strand is impossible to disaggregate, isolate and attribute to a single intervention (not that such disaggregation is necessarily fruitful from a CAS perspective, which favours an integrative perspective). These considerations have implication for the *evaluability* of AFHECIs, the effectiveness of which cannot be adequately or meaningfully evaluated if a strictly quantitative results-based methodology that is fixated on short-term results is applied. Evidence of this was seen in PSC Evaluability Assessment, which concluded that essentially a conventional Evaluation of that Programme would not be feasible.

Second, the rational analytic perspective which underlies the commonly used programme planning tools (Logical Frameworks and Results Frameworks) have instrumental value for practitioners, as *tools* for project planning and monitoring, and helping to instil a systematic discipline (Bakewell, Garbutt 2005). However a danger is that their ‘scientific’ image (with the emphasis on project elements that are quantifiable and time-bound) results in agencies relying disproportionately on these stratagems for decision-making about resource allocation and programme planning, and as their principal point of reference in their programme evaluation work. In other words, they have exerted an influence on development policy as a result of being elevated to a status far beyond their function as a practical tool. Systemic obstacles such as this complicate efforts to find alternatives to the dominant development management methods. The tension between learning (which benefits from open-ended reflection) and accountability (which usually emphasizes outcomes that are short-term, planned and readily observable) needs to be reconciled, and to incorporate different planning models demanded by the uncertainty of the milieu. Rather than focusing merely on the tensions and conceptual conflict between a complexity-based understanding of CD vis-à-vis one which is reliant on a form of rationalist causality that can be opaque with technicalities, the real challenge is to devise different mental frameworks for how the world is perceived and approached, and how development agencies define and reward success.

Third, AFHECIs are affected in a pronounced way by the ‘planning fallacy’ - the contention that planners systematically and consistently under-estimate the length of time it will take to complete projects (Hirschman 1967). The effect is especially pronounced in the case of capacity development projects because of their long gestation period (the medium to longer term) which far exceeds the standard duration of the programme life-cycle; their social dividends are unlikely to be captured by ex-post programme evaluations with a typical time frame not exceeding five years.

Recalling the testimony of many informants in Chapter 6, AFHECIs have been bedevilled by 'short-termism' in donor thinking. Furthermore, far-reaching policy decisions in relation to AFHECIs have in the past been heavily influenced by fickleness in donor proclivities regarding aid priorities and modalities, rather than the deliberative evidence-based policy-making which donor agencies ostensibly espouse. The conventional three to five-year time horizon for programme planning of the higher level AFHECI framework needs to give way to a steadier and more strategic stance, which evinces an appreciation of a future-oriented, intergenerational perspective, quite similar to that which is being brought to bear in the 'sustainable development' discourse around climate change adaptation, and the prospects which face the planet's next generation but one.

Fourth, the 'optimism bias' underlying donor and beneficiary expectations is not limited to the project's envisaged time-frame: as discussed under the 'Context' rubric also in Chapter 6, inflated expectations and unrealistic ambitions, such as were seen to be the case in the PSC, oftentimes show a poor appreciation that capacity strengthening is multi-factorial and prone to reversals in fortune (Jones, Bailey et al. 2007). The seductive paradigm of continuous incremental progress is contradicted by a half-century of deviations, zig-zags, reversals and revisionism in the human development project. Furthermore, testimonies reported in Chapter 6 indicated that despite the rhetoric of coherence and harmonisation, donors – especially the larger ones - still pursue what they (or their political masters) perceive as their national interest or advantage (hence the highlighting of 'self-interest' as one of the sub-categories under the Modalities rubric); this issue was seen to have arisen for example where some donor countries failed to adhere to previously-agreed arrangement to step back from involvement in sectors of work in which other donor countries had a comparative advantage.

Fifth, an organisational structure of an enduring nature is required, whereby the institutional partnerships which are central to AFHECIs can be coordinated, managed, monitored and networked on a multi-country basis (both in the North and South). Inter-agency networking also assumes particular importance, in order for the cumulative knowledge about programme modalities and outcomes to be shared across the community of peer practice. In the Irish case, the vacuum left by the demise of both HEDCO and the IAP (and its parent, the PSC) means that there is no structured conduit through which such partnership-based links with Southern institutions can find expression.

Sixth, the ways in which official data get analysed, categorised and aggregated into official reporting can be misleading, and need therefore to be interpreted with a critical eye. Thus for example (as was seen from the evidence in Chapter 6) it is not known how much IA actually spends on education-specific activity overseas, because of the 'oddities' of the categorisation of aid expenditure to the OECD Development Committee: money spent on research is separated from that spent on education; and the 'Education' category does not take account of the fund flow to

education from national ODA via multilateral channels (e.g. Global Fund for Education), or via humanitarian and emergency assistance.

Seventh, higher education cooperation at (multi-country) regional level has been expanding, but it has further potential to do so, and this potential has not yet been fully harnessed. For example, there is need to accelerate the production of much-needed PhDs through graduate training, mentoring, and networking, and to consolidate quality assurance protocols and frameworks in the South. Such areas offer promising opportunities for future donor support, and in the process to scale-up capacity development from institutional level to systemic level.

All of these praxis-focused conclusions are predicated on an over-riding imperative for donors to re-orient their theory of change in relation to AFHECIs, allowing it to be imbued by an appreciation of normative and ethical dimensions, such as a pro-poor stance on development, climate justice, upholding fundamental human rights, and asserting the ‘public good’ role of HE.

Scope for further research.

The praxis-based application of CAS to international development engagement implies a recognition of complexity and multi-dimensionality as being dominant characteristics of both development programming and capacity generation. This study offers an important contribution to extending and deepening the understanding of practitioners and policy makers, but it has also provided a strong theoretical underpinning for further work to be pursued in this area.

The nexus between higher education and development, especially from a Southern perspective remains relatively under-researched, and one senses the present-day intellectual vacuum that prevails, in contrast to the heady days of dependency theorists in the 1970s. This relative neglect is corroborated by a general consensus emerging from a 2012 assembly of development-activist academics engaged with international development from across the disciplinary spectrum⁹⁰, which concluded that

Where development is an objective, higher education investment lacks a convincing theory of change, particularly in how investments at the individual, organisational or institutional level will lead to development outcomes, and positive societal impacts. The relationship between investment in individuals and effects at the institutional and societal level is particularly poorly understood. (LIDC 2012).

The disconnect between the centrality of CD to development praxis and the paucity of personnel dedicated to CD programming within donor organisations and NGOs merits further research. Also, the re-orientation of donor values in relation to AFHECIs so as to adopt a theory of change which is imbued by ethical dimensions of praxis is another such area.

⁹⁰ Report of proceedings: http://www.lidc.org.uk/news_detail.php?news_id=149

Finally, as stated in Chapter 1, a limitation of this study was its focus on Anglophone Africa; there is scope for comparative research on AFHECIs that extends to Francophone and Lusophone Africa also.

Summation

In line with the contribution of this study, AFHECIs can now be validly posited as at once constituting both ends and means: they constitute ends in as far as they contribute, in time, to broadening and deepening the intellectual capacity in a beneficiary institution (or sub-unit thereof, such as a Faculty or Department); and they constitute ‘means’ in as far as the proximate benefits conferred on the focal institution facilitate a multiplier, or ripple-out effect, into the wider community, professional life, and into society as a whole, as skills and knowledge are disseminated, and transferable research becomes embedded in policy and practice across the various domains impacting on the normative values of quality of life and sustainable development.

The conclusions offered above are not to suggest that higher education institutions should somehow re-invent themselves as development agencies or advocacy interest-groups. But such is the urgency and scale of the twin challenges of poverty reduction and sustainability of the environment that these must become central points of orientation, to be mainstreamed into the day-to-day work of teaching, research and civic engagement in-country.

Informants in this study repeatedly alluded to the reality of a clash of cultures, between on the one hand those whose professional roles involve the management and delivery of AFHECIs, who tend to accentuate the instrumentalist contributions of higher education to social and human development, and on the other, the more ‘intrinsicist’ academician view of the idea of the university, as involving ‘an open-ended quest for understanding [that] has primacy over any application or intermediate outcome’ (Collini, 2012: 55). Translating this vision into the AFHECI context, a change of mindset is called for, whereby the hitherto instrumentalist AFHECI discourse would become suffused with a normative sense of higher education as a sustainable public good, potentially conferring a beneficial legacy of multi-generational dimension. Were this to occur, donors, higher education institutions (North and South) and wider society would stand to gain.

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(b) Archival material (unpublished)

HEDCO 1980: i	Annual Report for 1980
HEDCO 1980: ii	Audited Accounts for 1980
HEDCO 1980: iii	HEDCO Memorandum & Articles of Association
HEDCO 1980: iv	HEDCO Information Flyer
HEDCO 1980: v	Letter from Minister for Finance to HEDCO 21.02.1980
HEDCO 1981: i	Annual Report for 1981
HEDCO 1981: ii	Audited Accounts for 1981
HEDCO 1982: i	Annual Report for 1981
HEDCO 1982: ii	Audited Accounts for 1981
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HEDCO: 1983: ii	Audited Accounts for 1981
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HEDCO 1985: i	Annual Report for 1981
HEDCO 1985: ii	Audited Accounts for 1981

HEDCO 1986: i	Annual Report for 1981
HEDCO 1986: ii	Audited Accounts for 1981
HEDCO 1986: iii	Statement of HEDCO's Philosophy (pamphlet)
HEDCO 1987: i	Annual Report for 1981
HEDCO 1987: ii	Audited Accounts for 1981
HEDCO 1988: i	Annual Report for 1981
HEDCO: 1988: ii	Audited Accounts for 1981
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HEDCO 1989: iii	Letter from Counsellor DFA to HEDCO 13.01.1989
HEDCO 1989: iv	Letter fro Asst Secretary DFA to HEDCO 03.02.1989
HEDCO 1989: v	Memo from Gen Sec to HEDCO Executive 10.02.1989
HEDCO 1989: vi	UDSM Mathematics project quarterly report
HEDCO 1990: i	Annual Report for 1990
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HEDCO 1990: iv	Memo from Gen Sec to Executive 13.07.1990
HEDCO 1996: i	External Evaluation by Dr O'Farrell of UDSM Maths project
IAP Archive 2006	Report of Universities Ireland Visit to Uganda - Nov 2005
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IAP Archive 2011	Minutes of IAP Executive Committee 11.07.2011

ANNEXES

Annex A	Interviewee Consent Form
Annex B	List of key informants interviewed
Annex C	Sample text of letter or e-mail sent to prospective key informants
Annex D	Question Schema for Category A Informants (AFHECI Mangers)
Annex E	Question Schema for Category B informants (Southern voices)
Annex F	Question Schema for Category C informants (Irish veterans of AFHECI work)
Annex G	'Tree View' of Parent Nodes comprising interview data analysis (Quirkos)



Annex A: Interviewee Consent Form

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title

Higher education capacity development in sub-Saharan Africa, in the context of international development assistance policy and practice: a complex adaptive system (CAS) view.

Sole author / Researcher: Peter McEvoy – Doctoral Scholar, DCU Business School

Supervisors – Prof Ronnie Munck and Dr Malcolm Brady (DCUBS)

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

This study concerns the domain of international development policy and practice, and more specifically the status and relative priority accorded to higher education and research capacity. Over the past decade, capacity building / capacity development have begun to attract growing emphasis internationally in high-level public policy deliberations, for example on aid effectiveness, on a results-focused approach to aid delivery and management.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

One important source of empirical evidence for this study (alongside archival analysis and thematic analysis of relevant institutional documentation in the public domain) will be a series of key informant interviews with senior figures who have recognized experience of managing or implementing capacity development initiatives focused on higher education in Africa. You have generously consented to being one such informant.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)</i> | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>I understand the information provided</i> | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study</i> | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions</i> | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>I am aware that my interview will be audiotaped.</i> | <i>Yes/No</i> |

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I understand that my involvement as an interview is entirely of my own volition, and that I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

I hereby agree to be listed by name and institution in an Annex to the thesis. However, statements and sentiments of mine will not be attributed to me by name in the text of the thesis, unless with your explicit prior consent. I understand that Recordings of interviews with key informants will be permanently destroyed within three months of successful completion of the researcher's Doctoral thesis.

VI. Any other relevant information

I note and agree with the researcher's intention that as a by-product of the research study, key findings of potential relevance to future policy and practice in the area of capacity for development will be prepared on a 'pro bono' basis, for submission to the Policy and Planning Unit of Irish Aid.

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form, and I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Annex B: Key Informants Interviewed

Total - 27	Surname	First Name	ID	Contact	I/V date
CAT A: Donor Agency Managers with experience in AFHECIs	Burton	Joan	ex Minister of State, Irish Aid; ex UDSM TZ (Lecturer in Maths)	05.04.2017	12.04.2017
	Collucci	Elizabeth	Program Manager, European University Association, Brussels	06.10.2015	20.10.2015
	Lennan	Deirdre	European Commission - DG Education & Culture	06.10.2015	20.10.2015
	Marmolejo	Francisco	World Bank (New Delhi mission) and Global Lead on Higher Ed	22.10.2016	29.11.2016
	Monks	Joost	Director, NORRAG / Graudate Institute Geneva	13.10.2016	31.10.2016
	Mulkeen	Aidan	ex World Bank Education Specialist; Registrar Maynooth University	04.02.2017	24.04.2017
	Noukakis	Dimitrios	Director MOOCS for Africa, EPFL Lausanne	01.11.2016	04.11.2016
	O'Brien	Finbar	Irish Aid - Head of Planning & Performance	01.05.2016	17.05.2016
	Schroeder	Beer	Adviser to Board of EP-NUFFIC, Netherlands	07.10.2015	21.10.2015
	Tungesvik	Ragnhild	Head of Department, SIU Norway	21.09.2016	30.11.2016
CAT B: African voices ex-Irish Aid Study fellows	Massawe	Estomih	ex TCD / Associate Prof of Maths, UDSM TZ	31.01.2016	13.02.2016
	Mgumya	Firminius	ex DCU / Senior Lecturer Social Policy, Uganda	20.09.2016	08.04.2017
	Mtenzi	Fredrick	DIT / Aga Khan University, TZ	20.09.2016	23.09.2016
	Mushi	Allen	ex-DCU / Director of Studies, UDSM Tanzania	16.09.2016	04.10.2016
	Nakabugo	Goretti	ex IAP fellow /Manager, Twaweza, Uganda	03.10.2016	02.11.2016
	Sangu	Revocatus	ex DCU / Public Finance consultant, Dar TZ	16.09.2016	28.10.2016
CAT C: Irish based veterans of AFHECI work in Africa	Carroll	Pat	ex DIT, ex HEDCO TA Tanzania 1982-85	05.04.2017	12.04.2017
	Corr	Gay	ex HEDCO Chair; ex Director Galway Mayo Institute of Technology	03.09.2016	27.09.2016
	Farren	Sean	ex IAP Chair; ex Head of Education University of Ulster	20.11.2016	24.11.2016
	Gaynor	Frank	Ex British Council TA in Malawi; ex HEDCO Teacher Trainer in Tanzania - 1993-96	31.08.2016	14.09.2016
	Gaynor	Cathy	ex Univ of Malawi / Irish Aid Consultant on IAP / Programme of Strategic Co-op.	10.11.2016	30.11.2016
	Hanratty	Liam	ex HEDCO TA in Zimbabwe / ex Head of School, Galway Mayo Inst. of Technology	10.09.2016	27.09.2016
	Kelly	John	ex HEDCO chair '86-'92; ex Registrar UCD	31.08.2016	26.09.2016
	McBride	Hugh	Lecturer, GMIT Castlebar campus; ex HEDCO TA in TZ/Zambia/ Malawi	23.10.2016	05.12.2016
	O'Reilly	Maurice	DCU ex HEDCO TA in UDSM Tanzania	20.11.2016	05.04.2017
	Phelan	Jim	ex - UCD (Dean of Agriculture); ex HEDCO & IAP Boards	23.10.2016	14.11.2016
Roe	Gill	ex HEDCO staff; Irish Aid consultant re Programme of Strategic Coop.	26.09.2016	14.10.2016	

Annex C: Sample text of letter or e-mail to prospective key informants

Dear

[Introductory paragraph customised according to the status of recipient and whether previously known to the researcher].

At a rather later point in my career than would be average for doctoral research, I am currently a doctoral scholar in Dublin City University Business School, Ireland. The topic for my research study is ***Higher education capacity development in sub-Saharan Africa, in the context of international development assistance policy and practice: a complex adaptive system (CAS) view.***

The methodology is qualitative, combining (i) archival case study material relating to Irish Aid's forays into the Higher Education and Development sub-sector over 30 years past, and (ii) a range of semi-structured conversations with key informant stakeholders internationally who can bring a long-term perspective to bear on capacity development work for Higher Education in Africa. The scope of the study, as approved by DCU's Research Ethics Committee, appears on the Informed Consent Form attached.

I am approaching you to enquire about your willingness in principle to give an input to this study by way of a key informant interview of up to 40 min. via skype or other medium, sometime during the month of November?

Some indicative questions are attached (though we don't have to adhere strictly to these).

With best personal regards, and thanks in anticipation of your kind cooperation. Should you feel you are not in a position to accede to this request due to work pressures or whatever, you might kindly suggest an appropriate alternate.

Yours sincerely,

Peter McEvoy

Annex D: Question Schema for Category A Informants (AFHECI Mangers)

Capacity Development interventions in and for Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa –

Category A- Schema for structured conversations with Donor Agency personnel (North)

Attribute	Indicative questions
<p>1. Capacity Development – Purpose and Process</p>	<p>a. Do you regard capacity development support for higher education institutions in developing countries as an ‘end in itself,’ or as a ‘means to an end’?</p> <p>b. Do donor-funded interventions in the ‘capacity development for HE’ arena present particular challenges, with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o project design ? o project monitoring and evaluation? <p>c. Is capacity development for HE amenable to, and compatible with, results based management requirements of donors?</p>
<p>2. Capability to mobilise resources and work in partnership</p>	<p>d. What constitutes ‘sustainability’ in relation to aid-funded higher education capacity initiatives?</p> <p>e. What has changed for African HEIs as a result of the region-wide trend towards improved domestic resource mobilisation?</p> <p>f. What are the ingredients for genuine N-S institutional partnership?</p> <p>g. How can improved <i>individual</i> capacity in Southern HEIs (e.g. acquired through scholarship training) translate sustainably into improved <i>institutional</i> capacity?</p>
<p>3. Technical Capability to Deliver</p>	<p>h. What do you consider the highest priority for external support to HE in Africa: undergraduate course delivery? postgraduate course delivery? research capacity? distance learning? quality assurance system at national or regional level? staff and student mobility ? other?</p>
<p>4. Adaptive Capability</p>	<p>i. Higher education’s position as a component of international development programming has been contested over time. Where does aid-funded support for higher education institutions in Africa stand at</p>

	<p>present, compared with a generation ago? What has changed?</p> <p>j. How can HEIs reconcile collegiality in decision-making with agility in adapting to unforeseen changes affecting funded programmes?</p>
<p>5. Systemic Factors / Enabling Environment</p>	<p>k. What in your view are the factors that enable - or impede - externally supported programmes for HE capacity development?</p> <p>l. How can donors to HE reconcile the pressures for overall programme coherence and alignment on the one hand, with the aspiration to be responsive to the beneficiary institution's own priorities on the other?</p>

Annex E: Question Schema for Category B informants (Southern voices)

Capacity Development interventions in and for Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa –

Category B - Schema for structured conversations with ‘Southern Voice’ informants

Attribute	Indicative questions
<p>1. Capacity Development – Purpose and Process</p>	<p>a. Do you regard capacity development support for higher education institutions in developing countries as an ‘end in itself,’ or as a ‘means to an end’?</p> <p>b. Which donor sponsored your fellowship training, and under what conditions / obligations ?</p> <p>c. Is capacity development for HE amenable to, and compatible with, results based management requirements of donors?</p>
<p>2. Capability to mobilise resources and work in partnership</p>	<p>d. What constitutes ‘sustainability’ in relation to aid-funded higher education capacity initiatives?</p> <p>e. What has changed for African HEIs as a result of the region-wide trend towards improved domestic resource mobilisation?</p> <p>f. What are the ingredients for genuine N-S institutional partnership?</p> <p>g. How can improved <i>individual</i> capacity in Southern HEIs (e.g. acquired through scholarship training) translate sustainably into improved <i>institutional</i> capacity?</p>
<p>3. Technical Capability to Deliver</p>	<p>h. What do you consider the highest priority for external support to HE in Africa: undergraduate course delivery? postgraduate course delivery? research capacity? distance learning? quality assurance system at national or regional level? staff and student mobility ?</p> <p>i. Upon your return from overseas study, how did your employing institution utilise your enhanced knowledge and skills?</p> <p>j. Has the professional formation conferred through your fellowship rippled out beyond your institution? Give examples.</p>
<p>4. Adaptive Capability</p>	<p>k. Higher education’s position as a component of international development programming has been contested over time. Where does aid-funded support for higher education institutions in Africa stand at present, compared with a generation ago? What has changed?</p> <p>l. How can HEIs reconcile collegiality in decision-making with agility in adapting to unforeseen changes affecting funded programmes?</p>
<p>5. Systemic Factors / Enabling Environment</p>	<p>m. What in your view are the factors that enable - or impede - externally supported programmes for HE capacity development?</p> <p>n. How can donors to HE reconcile the pressures for overall programme coherence and alignment on the</p>

	one hand, with the aspiration to be responsive to the beneficiary institution's own priorities on the other?
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Annex F: Question Schema for Category C informants (Irish veterans of AFHECI work)

Question Schema – Category C Respondents: Irish based veterans of AFHECI work in Africa

Attribute	Indicative questions
<p>1. Capacity Development – Purpose and Process</p>	<p>a. Do you regard capacity development support for higher education institutions in developing countries as an ‘end in itself,’ or as a ‘means to an end’?</p> <p>b. Should capacity development support for higher education institutions in developing countries be considered rather as an ‘end in itself,’ or as a ‘means to an end’?</p> <p>c. Do donor-funded interventions in the ‘capacity development for HE’ arena present particular challenges, with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – project design ? – project monitoring and evaluation?
<p>2. Capability to mobilise resources and work in partnership</p>	<p>d. What has changed for African HEIs as a result of the region-wide trend towards improved domestic resource mobilisation?</p> <p>e. What are the ingredients for genuine N-S institutional partnership?</p> <p>f. Is capacity development for HE amenable to, and compatible with, results based management requirements of donors?</p>
<p>3. Technical Capability to Deliver</p>	<p>g. What constitutes ‘sustainability’ in relation to ‘higher education for development’ interventions?</p> <p>h. How can improved <i>individual</i> capacity in Southern HEIs (e.g. acquired through scholarship training) translate sustainably into improved <i>institutional</i> capacity?</p>
<p>4. Adaptive Capability</p>	<p>i. Higher education’s position as a component of international development programming has been contested over time. Where does aid-funded support for higher education institutions in Africa stand at present, compared with, say, 30 years ago? What has changed?</p> <p>j. How can HEIs reconcile collegiality in decision-making with agility in adapting to unforeseen changes affecting funded programmes?</p> <p>k. Looking back at HEDCO as a particular case of facilitating external support to HE in Africa and elsewhere, why in your view does the agency no longer exist? What can be learned from the HEDCO experience?</p>
<p>5. Systemic Factors / Enabling Environment</p>	<p>l. What in your view are the factors that enable - or impede - externally supported programmes for HE capacity development?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">m. How can donors to HE reconcile the pressures for overall programme coherence and alignment on the one hand, with the aspiration to be responsive to the beneficiary institution's own priorities on the other?n. What do you consider to be key pre-disposing factors in the 'macro' social / political / economic environment in-country or in-region, which may enable - or impede - externally supported programmes for HE capacity development?o. Are 'HE for development' programmes predicated upon the existence of minimal attributes in the enabling social / political / economic environment in-country or in-region? If so, what might these attributes be?
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Annex G *'Tree View' of Parent Nodes comprising interview data analysis (Quirkos)*

