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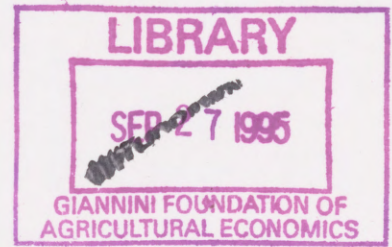
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Coordination of Donors  
in African Universities

by  
David Wield

DPP Working Paper No 32

Development Policy and Practice Research Group

Faculty of Technology

The Open University

July 1995

Coordination of Donors  
in African Universities

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## **Abstract**

Since the mid-1980s most African universities have been struggling with massive decreases in available resources. Support from external donors, after decreasing through the early - and mid-1980's, has stabilised and may even be rising. However, given the loss of government resources for core activities, donor support has assumed a greater overall significance and is increasingly needed for core activities such as teaching, staff development and infrastructure. External support is often planned in relation to policies developed by each donor agency, rather than integrated into university institutional development initiatives, with the danger that it erodes capacity-building.

This paper, reporting on comprehensive research undertaken in two African universities with high levels of donor support, seeks to illustrate the seriousness of the problem, and to analyse why it has grown. The paper suggests that it is possible, given better understanding of the issues, to improve the situation, but only if donor support is flexibly coordinated in function of university needs and plans. It further argues that successful coordination calls for a changed relationship with universities.

Finally, the paper attempts to draw out issues of general significance for higher education policy in Africa and suggests that the crisis of African universities manifests itself in complex and highly specific situations that are not amenable to simple universal policy prescriptions.

## **1 Introduction**

Universities in Africa receive a significant proportion of their resources from external agencies. In the early years of African independence much external support concentrated on the establishment of universities and the training of local staff. International support declined in the 1980s, and changed its focus towards new programmes and add-on activities, assuming in the main, that the core resources for universities came from home governments. Indeed, national governments did invest a significant proportion of their education budgets in higher education. However, as the 1980s progressed, the gradual decline in national public finance for education, already apparent in the late 1970s (Court, 1979), accelerated, resulting in a funding crisis that has affected installations, libraries, textbook provision, and material conditions of students and staff (World Bank, 1994, Buchert and King, 1995, Eisemon and Salmi, 1993, Colclough 1989). During the 1990s external support has increased in overall significance at the same time

as the ability to support core activities from local resources has decreased. But donor projects usually assume 'an institutional capacity within universities that was not always there' (Saint, 1992, 112). Donors have come under increasing pressure to support longer-term and core activities, including staff salaries, building maintenance and rehabilitation, and libraries.

Some key donors have responded by increasing core support. However, most external support is implemented in relation to policies developed in each donor agency rather than integrated into university plans and practices, leading to fragmentation of university activities. Examples of donor practices that can fragment efforts include:

- \* donor retention of fund management control rather than using the financial systems of African universities;
- \* donor retention of procurement rather than support for the rebuilding of university procurement capacity;
- \* insistence on reporting requirements with different reporting timetables than those in place in universities;
- \* use of parallel reporting systems on top of those of the university;
- \* setting up complicated evaluation and monitoring procedures that take up valuable university senior management time without leading to uniform evaluation systems; and
- \* insistence on individual project reports rather than accepting collective reports that allow universities to establish faculty - and university-based management reporting systems.

Each donor has a different style, resulting in a mass of different university-donor management arrangements. As Masuha *et al* put it:

'Each relationship is commendable as to the efforts, personal initiative and immediate intentions. Taken in their entirety however, the growing number of external relationships:

- \* increasingly obscures the institutional, operational and budgetary scenario;...
- \* complicates efforts for coordinated institutional planning and development with many of the external relations not coordinated in terms of institutional needs, priorities and timing; <and>
- \* increasingly erodes the established organisational structures with many external projects not being under regular institutional control and power



but nevertheless operating within the institutional set-up, staff and facilities, where in turn the external side often argues for an "independent" project because of the eroded institutional structure.'

(Masuha *et al*, 1992)

As more and more projects become independent or semi-independent, and more and more resource is managed outside the university, indeed outside the country, the university loses the initiative and cannot coordinate its activities. A vicious circle can ensue, with the university accepting more and more support, which is, ironically, often called 'capacity building' support. The resulting fragmentation can thus increase at the same time as donor support increases. Thus support that is given to improve the condition of higher education can often increase the crisis.

This paper uses information gathered from two universities, the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania and Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique, to illustrate and analyse the issues that arise in such situations. These universities were chosen for in-depth study because they received high proportions of donor financial resources, and both were engaged in a process of institutional transformation. The in-depth studies set out to investigate how serious was the fragmentation in universities and to gain a better understanding of how the situation can be improved. This suggests that it is possible to improve the situation but that improvement requires a strong commitment to institutional transformation in universities, and a different process of university/donor relations, where donors are willing to be coordinated in function of university's own institutional strategies and management.

## **2 The Two Universities: Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania and Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique**

The two universities studied were both established in the early 1960s, but in rather different circumstances. In 1960, Tanzania gained independence, and was the only country of the then East African Federation not to have a higher educational establishment. Some London University higher education courses were taught in Dar Es Salaam from 1961, and in 1963 a University College was formally constituted as part of the University of East Africa. 'The idea of the University College fitted well in the battle against the three big identified enemies of the nation: poverty, disease and ignorance. The University College was considered as one of the overall instruments of development' (UDSM, 1993: C1). The new campus was built between 1964 and 1970 with significant bilateral aid for the new faculty buildings.

On the disbanding of the University of East Africa in 1970, the University College became the University of Dar Es Salaam. During the 1970s the young university became a forceful and creative institution producing top-class graduates with bachelor's degrees, whilst setting up a wide range of master's programmes and beginning doctoral studies. Prominent Tanzanian academic staff members emerged to bring academic leadership to the institution. However, as the 1980s progressed, the university ran into major resource constraints. The efforts of the well-trained academic staff, in their vast majority Tanzanian, began to fragment as individual and institutional material conditions rapidly deteriorated. A vicious circle of fragmentation of academic life ensued, academic autonomy was eroded, and many senior Tanzanian staff left the university for jobs inside and outside the country. Staff felt the change from an internationally respected and globally connected institution in the 1970s. As the fragmentation grew, the budgets hit stricter and stricter constraints, and senior staff's academic survival depended on developing some autonomous activity, inside or outside the university.

'For many of the staff of the university, the sheer necessity for survival meant that all the academic activities — teaching, research and attainment of knowledge — became secondary or tertiary activities. . . . Management lacked the capability to monitor the likely impact the changes in the environment, which started in the late 1970s, were going to be on the philosophy and style of management and on the expectations and mission of the University of Dar Es Salaam ' (UDSM, 1993, C3).

Donor support to the university continued, but, with a few important exceptions, amounted to a relatively large number of small projects with short-term funding horizons. As the 1980s progressed, support grew with more departmental-strengthening programmes. But core government funding decreased relatively and with it the ability to glue together the maze of initiatives.

The previous Vice-Chancellor began a process of stabilisation of the institution and the present university leadership is committed to a process of transformation of the university.

Student numbers at the UDSM have stagnated at a little over 3,000 over the last years but pass rates are good, unlike at UEM, with almost 700 bachelor-level graduates in 1991-92. Staff numbers have been rising steadily. Academic staff numbers are around 690, but many fewer are in post at any one time (fewer than 500), around one-half with PhDs. Meanwhile, huge numbers of students are engaged in studies outside of Tanzania.

Government support to the university is not sufficient for the sustainability of the institution (Galabawa 1991). Table 1 gives the budgets over the last years. Overall, the table shows the crisis of core funding from the mid-1980s. The university believes that its requests are a reasonable indication of the real needs of the institution.

**Table 1 Budget of UDSM Requests to Government and Allocations, 1985-94 (million Tanzanian shillings)**

Year	Requested Budget	Actual Budget	% of Request	\$US m Equiv	Exchange Rate
1985/86	419	326	78	19.2	17
1986/87	503	446	89	8.6	52
1987/88	822	501	61	6.0	84
1988/89	1,235	801	65	6.4	125
1989/90	2,418	1,303	54	6.8	192
1990/91	4,802	2,004	42	10.2	197
1991/92	6,647	3,386	51	14.6	232
1992/93	9,401	3,296	35	9.9	330
1993/94*	8,000	2,900	36		

\* Estimate. In 1993/94 the budget excludes some new direct grants to students. The change is to give students responsibility for buying food, books etc. These grants will probably amount to 1.3 billion shillings, making the total to compare with 1992/93 4.3 billion shillings.

Source: UDSM Bursar's Office.

### 3 Universidade Eduardo Mondlane

Mozambique's only university, began in 1962 as an integral part of the Portuguese university system, since Mozambique was constituted as an overseas 'Province' of Portugal until the overthrow of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and Mozambican independence in 1975. The early years of independence were characterised by a dramatic fall in student numbers (from over 3,000 in 1973 to 1,281 in 1976) as most children of Portuguese settlers left the ex-colony with their parents. Only a small number of non-European children were slowly integrated into secondary education in the late colonial period, with the result that there were few secondary school pupils qualified to enter the university after independence. Total output of graduates even in 1985, a decade after independence, was just 121. The first few years of independence brought some significant changes in the

university. A pre-university year was begun to improve access of students with weaker schooling, there was a move from five- to three-year courses, and recruitment drives were begun to attract expatriate teachers from around the world. The growth of expatriate staff from 154 to 191 involved a turn-around from a primarily Portuguese to an extremely internationally diverse professoriat.

The early 1980s was a time of continued low student numbers, focusing of resources by closing courses, higher emphasis on the education of school teachers, considerable effort to update curricula, and a concerted and very successful effort to build up Mozambican staff. From 1985, student numbers increased more rapidly, allowing the re-opening of courses, mostly of five-year duration, and the slow growth of academic staff postgraduate training. These positive developments took place against the increasingly unpromising general situation of destabilisation and war, and, towards the end of the decade, dramatically lowered financial support for education as the economic reforms began to bite into the national budget.

The university currently has 21 five-year 'licenciatura' (bachelor's degree with dissertation) programmes and a seven-year licenciatura programme in medicine. With 3,482 students in 1992-1993, an increase from 2,034 in 1985, and 312 full-time academic staff in 1993, it dominates higher educational provision in Mozambique. The country's two other (specialist) higher educational institutes teach pedagogical studies and international relations.

Many of the university buildings date from the 1960s, as does much of the laboratory equipment. The increase in student numbers has led to overcrowding and strains on aged and unevenly maintained facilities. The very restricted student residential facilities create the extra problem that it is difficult to increase access to students from outside of Maputo, leading to inequalities in regional intake. Even after a period of significant staff development, more than three-quarters of academic staff have just the basic licenciatura qualification and only 5 percent have doctorates.

By 1990, the important improvements in higher education made since independence were perceived by the university leadership as being under threat:

'Universidade Eduardo Mondlane currently finds itself in a precarious situation. It faces serious problems of staff retention . . . . The university's considerable success in attracting donor funding has placed it in an unstable and unsustainable position:

it is dependent on continuing foreign assistance for the bulk of its operating budget. UEM output efficiency is low, with a drop out rate of roughly 50%.

Employers have begun to question the relevance of its training in some disciplinary areas, and its research output has fallen far short of national needs. Recent years have seen an increasing number of students to be drawn from the southern part of the country . . . . These factors combine to erode university capacity to fulfill its institutional mandate of providing the nation with trained professionals, applied research and skilled service.'

(Matos, 1993, p. 2)

Over the last three years, the university has been engaged in a process of institutional stabilisation and development. A university strategic document 'Present and Perspectives', that analysed the principle difficulties in some detail, was developed in 1991 . The document was developed in a processual manner with a short but intense debate over a period of a few months. The document contains proposals to government to delegate greater managerial flexibility in return for greater accountability. The government has responded positively, for example, by supportively agreeing to increased autonomy and through increasing funding. Donors were requested to consider more flexible, longer-term institutional support structured around strategic objectives.

#### **4 Donor Funding, Policies and Practices - Evidence From Two Universities**

Donor-University relationships in the two universities are not only highly significant to the life and working of the university, but are also extremely intricate, varied and constantly changing, distorting overall ability to coordinate university activity.

##### *Levels of Donor Support*

The proportion of donor support has been rising rapidly, so that external support is key for day to day activities in the universities. But making estimates of such support is not easy, for reasons that are highly pertinent to donor-university relations. First, the universities have in place financial systems that reflect the historical role of government as predominant funder and other funders as peripheral 'add-ons'. The universities had only recently begun to restructure financial systems around the more diverse multiplicity of financial sources. Second, much external support is not transferred to university budgets but rather is disbursed directly from donor or implementing agencies to faculties, departments and individual academics.

Best estimates suggest that the external contribution to Eduardo Mondlane University's activities is as much as two-thirds of the total in 1992, and that at



least 40% of the finance for the University of Dar Es Salaam comes from external sources.

Table 2 gives a flavour of the major financial sources of the universities, other than government. Most external support comes from bilateral and multilateral agencies. The most complete data for the University of Dar Es Salaam are two to three years old but reflect the present situation.

**Table 2 Major Donors**

UEM, 1994	UDSM, 1992
British Council/ODA	British Council/ODA
Commonwealth Fund	CIDA
EEC	DANIDA
Ford Foundation	FINNIDA
GTZ	GTZ/German Govt
Italy	IDRC
Netherlands Govt/NUFFIC	NORAD
NORAD	NUFFIC
SAREC	SAREC
SIDA	SDC (Switzerland)
World Bank	SIDA

Donor support can be rather simplistically characterised as 'key but not core' in the University of Dar Es Salaam and 'both key and core' in Eduardo Mondlane. In the University of Dar Es Salaam, there has been a long history of distrust between academics and administrators, who were seen as linked to government. The response to university deterioration was 'everyone for themselves' and donors have responded by supporting departments and individuals, rather than faculties or the university more generally. The end result is a very uneven situation (See Table 3).

Table 3 gives a rough estimate of the number of links per faculty/institute. What it does not show are the most important links, quantitatively or qualitatively, but it illustrates (Wield, 1995), that some faculties and institutes, such as Arts and Social Sciences, Education and Law, have quantitatively fewer links than others. At one extreme, the Faculty of Engineering has had a long standing faculty-wide agreement with the German and Swiss development agencies GTZ and SDC that

has provided faculty-wide institutional support. Some departments, such as Chemistry (linked to Netherlands NUFFIC and NORAD) have also enjoyed programmatic support. But much support is project-based and rather inflexible - it can only be used for specific purposes and not for the key infrastructure without which the project supported will be unsustainable. Most important, until very recently, there has been no institution-wide support for overall university development.

**Table 3 Number of External Links (Estimate)**

UDSM		UEM	
Arts and Social Sciences	30	Arts	3
Commerce and Management	2	Economics	4
Education	8		
Engineering	20	Engineering	4
Law	3	Law	1
Science	20	Science	9
IDS (Institute of Development Studies)	10	Ciuem	3
IKR (Kiswahili Research)	4	Cea	1
IPI (Production Innovation)	3	Agronomy	4
IRA (Resource Assessment)	5	Veterinary	4
Computer Centre	0	Architecture	1
Library	2	University-Wide	22
Estates	2		
DUP	1		
Central Administration	1		
Muhimbili University College	22		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>133</b>		<b>56</b>

Whilst we characterise support to the University of Dar Es Salaam as 'key but not core', that in Eduardo Mondlane University is better characterised as 'key and core', illustrated in Table 3 by the large proportion of university-wide links. The Eduardo Mondlane University has historically been more centrally managed and has received increased donor support in recent years in function of an institutional transformation plan. One major objective of the transformation plan has been to increase the amount of flexible institutional support, and to prioritise inter-

university collaborations that are multipurpose (that, for example integrate research, staff training and faculty institutional development). It has been successful in attracting some flexible university-wide support for recurrent budgets and investment, including substantial support for new and rehabilitation building, administrative restructuring and strengthening of academic management (see table 3). But such support has been very recent and many agencies are reluctant for their support to be used for university-wide initiatives and activities.

### *Continuity of Support*

Many donor practices are similar in the two institutions. Much support has involved relatively long term relationships with the universities. In Eduardo Mondlane, for example, Netherlands government support programmes have continued since 1976, and Swedish SAREC support has grown gradually since 1978. In the University of Dar Es Salaam, support from the German agency, GTZ, to the Engineering faculty, has continued since 1971, and Norad has supported Chemistry and Chemical Engineering for twelve years. But much such support is given in short term phases of two to three years, making medium-term planning extremely difficult. Much senior staff time is focused on fund-raising, and dealing with monitoring and evaluation, with individual departments very dependent on one or two donors. Thus, the strategic planning of support is made difficult and full of uncertainty even in cases where there are positive informal signs that further support might be forthcoming.

### *Fund Management*

Most funds are not managed at the universities. In the University of Dar Es Salaam, almost no external funds are managed at the university and the university had, until very recently, only a vague estimate of the extent of donor support. Externally funded projects keep their funds away from the university, often preferring that funds stay in the donor country and procurement is done there. Only in the Faculty of Engineering is there a system for local procurement. Foreign exchange accounts can now be opened for projects and programmes and some members of the academic community are beginning to gain confidence in university procedures.

At Eduardo Mondlane, more effort has been put into fund local management since the institutional transformation programme began, so that the Swedish, Norwegian, USAID, World Bank and most charity agency funds are locally managed as well, of course, as the funds from the Mozambican government. But a

large proportion of funds are still not under the direct control of the university. In 1991, for example, apart from the Mozambican Government funds, only 16 % of funds were directly managed by the university. This proportion increased to 28% in 1992 but has continued at about that level since then.

The weaknesses associated with lack of ability to control funds are numerous. For example, it constrains development of procurement capability within the university, and the building of links with local and regional suppliers. Some agencies refuse to divulge the costs associated with in-kind assistance so that the university can sometimes only guess at the value of support.

These diverse policies and practices result in bizarre situations. For example, it is possible to verify where donor support is concentrated by the large security systems in place around some parts of universities and on entrances to some rooms on a corridor. One Tanzanian academic described his experience on returning from a US university to teach at the University of Dar Es Salaam as follows:

'In January 1989, after an absence of eight years from Tanzania, I took up my present position at the Faculty of Medicine. Upon reporting for duty, I was given an office and a teaching assignment. So I strode down to the departmental office, and asked for some stationery - nothing extravagant - just a pen, a pencil and writing pad. The looks my request elicited constitute my first encounter with the Link. The head of department patiently conveyed to me that the annual department budget for purchasing such items was inadequate, and had, in fact, been used up long ago. I protested that given my salary, which had the purchasing power of about fifty US dollars, I could not be expected to provide these things myself ... At that moment the Link came to my rescue. The secretary, after being beckoned to do so, brought out one of the nicest notebooks I have ever seen from a drawer. On it was inscribed 'Kollegieblock' ... I cherished the book and used it carefully for six months. I later gathered that this was one of a few items remaining from a Scandanavian funded research project ... From then on, time after time, I have run across the Link in all sorts of places, even in the toilet! ... Those academics blessed by the Link are often seen to smile radiantly and subsequently prosper, and those with a missing Linkage tend to be perpetually surrounded by an aura of gloom.' (Hirji, 1990, page 9).

## 5 Institutional Transformation in the Universities

In the last few years, many universities have begun transformation processes and restructured their management and organisation to improve the quality and relevance of their educational provision.

In 1990, in Eduardo Mondlane University, the Rector began a process to attempt to regain the initiative after a substantial period of deterioration. A document was produced with an analysis of the situation, and ideas towards a strategy 'for institutional stabilisation and development' (Matos, 1993, page 2). A period of consultation in every department and unit led to a Strategic Plan with the following strategic objectives:

- (i) To stabilise the institution by tackling the main causes of problems affecting academic and administrative staff;
- (ii) To improve the learning and living conditions of students;
- (iii) To increase the quality of teaching, research and support services, with priority given to disciplines deemed critical to the country's present stage of development;
- (iv) To expand graduate output by improving internal efficiency and making more effective use of available capacity; and
- (v) To seek a nationally representative student body in terms of gender, class and ethnic background.

The process was positive in that:

'The outcome of this process was a coherent strategy for institutional stabilisation and revitalisation, and a considerable consensus among UEM staff, government leaders, and donor representatives that this was a worthwhile approach'

(Matos, 1993, p3).

The University of Dar Es Salaam was later to implement an institutional transformation programme, called 'UDSM 2000' (UDSM, 1993). The aim of the programme is 'for the university to renew itself' through a transformation of its management, operations and outputs. As part of this programme the university is pushing for donors to support core programmes rather than projects, and institutional development more holistically and flexibly. Some faculties, most notably the Faculty of Engineering, have developed faculty-wide strategies with improved capacity to manage their present activities and plan for future development.

The analysis of both transformation processes brought to light one key observation. As each institution began to improve its overall management and planning systems, the burden of myriad, parallel reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems became apparent. In Eduardo Mondlane, as donor support has



risen, the diversity and proliferation of reporting systems has become a serious problem for the senior management. It has acted as a major constraint on the institution's own management systems. Thus, the Rector proposed that his institution, and other African universities should improve their capacity to plan strategically and donors should support such improvements.

## **6 Reporting systems: The tip of the Iceberg**

As universities began processes of organisational change to respond to the need for clearer institutional objectives and to coordinate multiple sources of support, reporting began to appear as the tip of an iceberg revealing the danger of divergent and potentially fragmentary projects and programmes. It is at the level of reporting, monitoring and evaluation that the managerial and administrative implications of the myriad and project based nature of donor systems comes through. In UEM, most donors require annual reports for each of their projects, and many require six-monthly and sometimes quarterly reports. Some projects run for two years, others have three and four-year phasing, many require regular visits to UEM by representatives of the donor, a significant proportion have midterm reviews and evaluations, some prefer all of their university projects to be reported on as a whole, others report on a project by project or department by department basis. Some projects are directly negotiated by the university, some are part of bilateral inter-government negotiations. Some projects have formal programme implementation units, with meetings, sometimes inter-ministerial. At one level, it is natural that each donor has its own reporting requirements since it has its own internal management of donor support and its own accountability systems. However, donors are cognisant of the workload and phrase their reporting requirements rather vaguely, as for example 'in consultation with UEM', I was told. One senior administrator said 'the fax and telephone are more important than the written report'. Nevertheless, individual reports are still required in most cases.

At the same time as an increase in time spent on reports, one concern within the university is that in some cases reports are produced by the link university, so no one from UEM gets to assist with the writing of reports, and thus there is no practice in report-writing systems.

In the University of Dar Es Salaam, a relatively large number of agencies require six-monthly reports. One agency asks for six-monthly reports to include financial accounts. Another asks for six monthly reports in draft to be completed in donor country. Two others require six-monthly reports produced by a representative

based in Dar Es Salaam. One agency asks for three-monthly financial returns and an annual report on activities. Its key activity involves an annual visit to the university. One agency requires an annual report on its link, plus a report from each individual involved in an activity. And so on. The person or agency responsible for reporting also varies tremendously. The only rule seems to be that the central authorities of the university are only responsible for signing the financial statement and sometimes signing reports produced by project leaders. Since most of the funds are not managed within the university, the final responsibility for much reporting lies with the donor representative, some of whom are donor supported expatriate staff at the university.

In both universities, donors regularly change their reporting systems. Some changes are initiated centrally at donor headquarters, other changes seem to arise because of local visits or 'local agreements' on what constitutes 'good practice' for a particular project. Such flexibility produces even more uncertainty over what are the real requirements. Almost all donors have evaluation and monitoring systems, again with quite a modicum of flexibility. The most common form is the team evaluation involving site visits. The evaluation and monitoring systems, taken on top of reporting, are a particular burden on senior management time. As with reporting, the proliferation of evaluations may serve to demonstrate accountability to donors, but seldom provides assistance on processes of change that incorporate better practices.

The increase in donor support to African universities has increased reporting requirements, but this reporting has not necessarily improved managerial effectiveness. Some reporting, most particularly integrated reporting linked to clear university strategy and planning, has certainly played a key role in improved effectiveness. But most reporting has not been of this nature; rather it has led to fragmented and divided university reporting and planning of resources. The cases of Eduardo Mondlane University and the University of Dar Es Salaam give a detailed picture of two universities with relatively high proportions of external donor support, but their situation is mirrored to some extent in many other universities.

Universities have responded to these serious problems by calling for a major revision to streamline donor reporting systems in line with developing universities own systems. The Rector of Eduardo Mondlane University suggested that universities need to make changes, and that donors need to support universities by making changes of their own. Thus universities should:

'...present clear and coordinated objectives, and improve internal evaluation and reporting mechanisms. For their part, donors support should be to improve decision-making and managerial capabilities of receiving institutions, and thus should go to plans proposed by the institutions according to their priorities. The administrative burden of receiving institutions should be reduced by donors agreeing types and frequency of reports.'

(Matos, 1992a).

More specifically, UEM decided to act to:

'...minimise and seek to eliminate the overburden of administrative and managerial procedures required by each donor institution, in what regards project elaboration, its evaluation and accountability. UEM would annually organise consultative meetings to present assessments of activities undertaken in the previous year and plans for the following years, firstly at the central level and progressively at the faculty level. UEM would gradually improve those reports taking into consideration the opinions and suggestions of the partners involved, in order to reach a report which would be acceptable for all donors, thus avoiding the preparation of a multitude of different reports for each donor.'

(Matos, 1992b).

## **7 Implications for Donor-University Relations**

Universities are changing but what about donors? Donors have responded to these concerns to an extent but not with coherence. The organisation 'Donors to African Education' has a Working Group on Higher Education that has considered the concerns in some detail, and has advocated greater donor emphasis on long-term institutional development rather than individual technical assistance contracts. Indeed, the present research was conducted as a result of these discussions. However, to date, there has been no overall change in the nature of donor support from most donors.

The development of new donor relationships depends on agreement that support be integrated into strategies for university transformation. University ability to develop sustainable systems depends on their ability gradually to control the planning and implementation of teaching and research programmes, and rehabilitation of infrastructure and facilities, that make learning and knowledge creation possible and useful. Such systems include university-based reporting and consultation.

As the Rector of UEM states: 'the experience of reporting is useful for the university. Reporting is a need for the institution itself and not as a donor

requirement'. Reporting is an important means not only of accounting for past support, but also of reviewing the past to assist the coordination of present and future activities.

Thus, the implications for universities of integrating resources in function of long-term institutional development are that they should:

- \* gather up-to-date comprehensive data on donor support;
- \* harmonise internal and external funding systems;
- \* produce institutional reports and plans; and
- \* lead to discussions with donors on how their support can be best integrated into university plans.

The implications for donors include that they support:

- \* university institutional development by supporting university reporting and planning systems;
- \* coordinate their activities at university level;
- \* give management responsibility for resources to universities

And that they avoid:

- \* setting up parallel reporting systems;
- \* complex reporting systems and monitoring and evaluation systems that are not integrated into university systems.

Some donors have begun to respond. Of the seventeen agencies whose reporting requirements were studied in depth for this present research, fifteen said that, in principle, they were open to more flexible university-based reporting systems. Eleven said they could negotiate collective reporting systems that include their support together with the support of others. One agency said: 'We are promoting the use of management reporting systems within the universities'. Another said: 'We are trying to use the universities' own reporting system whenever possible'. One senior staff member argued that 'the point of departure should be the information needed by the leaders of the universities to direct and manage their institutions. They should clearly know what they need to know and why. If a donor has additional needs ... if the donor can argue the case for a particular bit of information, the institution's leaders will probably have a need for it as well'.

However, some donor agencies believe they are themselves under considerable pressure for increased accountability, as have been most public institutions in the recent monetarist period. Of seventeen agencies studied, government officials were involved in formal evaluation of eight agencies in 1993 and 1994, on top of their normal annual reporting system. One agency wrote: 'We are heavily constrained by the terms of our intermediary situation. We would like to do more than we can'. Another said: 'Our requirements are in debate within our public sector. We will probably have to report more thoroughly on results of our support'.

Nonetheless, some donors have taken note of the proposals of African universities. For example, at a conference in March 1995, the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation, took note of 'the attempts by some universities in the South to take control of their relationship with their donors and to provide guidelines for donor support coordination' and argued in favour of a move 'towards "institutional reporting" instead of donor-oriented reporting'. (Prank, 1995 p7).

Overall, there was a sense of disquiet in agencies. There was a clear sense of the need to respond to the present situation in African universities by relating support more closely to universities' priorities set out in university strategies and that their support was not as well integrated into overall institutional priorities as it might be. Nevertheless, the evidence is strong that many agencies do not translate their overall concern into practices that would put university needs to the fore.

## 8 Discussion

African universities have lived through a long period of funding restraints. Educational quality has been under severe pressure as working and learning conditions have deteriorated. The role of donors has recently increased in quantity as well as in overall significance for institutional development.

Thus, the proliferation of diverse donor objectives and conditions acts to fragment the activities in African universities, lowering their ability to manage resources and improve quality of teaching and research.

Many universities have acted to improve coordination of their increasingly diverse funding sources, but have found it difficult to convince donors to accept overall coordination. Donor acceptance of university strategies for institutional development is an important indicator of the nature of donor-university relations. Some donors are beginning to accept university management of their support and



are willing to discuss flexible use of support. However, universities might be excused in some cases for thinking that donors are not interested in the university or higher education in general but only in 'their' projects.

There is evidence from some African universities that the efforts to stabilise higher education can begin, and that it depends on support being well coordinated. The evidence in this paper shows that such coordination is essential for university development.

However, it also illustrates three other issues. Firstly, that the crisis in African universities reveals itself in complex and very specific situations that are not amenable to simple policy prescriptions. At the simplest level, EUM is very different to UDSM in history, context and organisation. The implication is that there is no one model for transforming the situation in such highly complex and extremely important organisations nationally .

Secondly, coordination is no panacea. That coordination can mean over-centralisation is a banal observation, but less banal is that coordination can lower university autonomy. And in the name of improved management and increased university autonomy much damage has occurred to academic freedom and educational quality in many countries, north and south, in recent years.

Improved coordination can mean standardisation in the name of harmonisation of donor assistance across a wide range of African universities wherever and whatever they may be. The evidence from just two universities suggests that a flexible approach is key, so that each university can coordinate its resources in function of its own priorities.

Finally, coordination has been argued for in the name of doing more with less, even when 'many countries need to increase considerably their overall expenditures on education - purely from the perspectives of efficiency and growth' (Colclough, 1995, p146). The major World Bank study on higher education (1994) has been criticised for its focus on money rather than quality (Olsson, 1995). 'The central fact about the report is that it starts from an economic premise about the scarcity of resources rather than an educational one about the content of quality' (Court, 1995, p110).

The next few years are crucial for the future of African higher education, and the nature of donor-university relations is key to that future. Donors cannot coordinate themselves. Donor acceptance of coordination is essential if Africa is to 'think out its own course and model of development'.

## Notes

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