

## Best Policies in Higher Education Funding For Efficient Operation of Universities

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**Abstract:** The importance of postsecondary education has increased significantly in the last decade. A high school diploma is no longer sufficient in the 21st century. In order to be successful in today's global economy a person must receive some form of postsecondary education. The economic stability of the state is tied to citizens who are employed and productive. In a constrained fiscal environment, policymakers also will need to consider whether there are better means of achieving shared goals, including student access and support for research. Such approaches could entail more coordination, other funding mechanisms, or policy reforms. In addition, it will be necessary to think about the implications of parity and whether funding strategies will require changes in order to reach desired outcomes. This paper is intended to provide a starting point for illustrating the various methods of funding higher education for improved performance of institutions.

**Keywords** Policies, higher education, funding, efficient operation, university.

### INTRODUCTION

The convergence toward a mixed funding system gives rise to a reversal of evolution in countries that were initially placed in different situations. Such a situation gives the impression of confusion to the casual observer. When the State appears to be withdrawing from the higher education sector and to be abdicating its responsibilities, it may, in fact, be choosing other means of action and attempting to better define its role as the guarantor of social cohesions.

Thus, the globally observed, but relatively modest, redistribution of the funding effort for higher education from the public to the private sector can mask two important phenomena: convergence toward a mixed funding system and the transformation Exploring international donors' actions and recent redefinition of their paradigms, it is possible to outline the following guidelines in order to improve the efficacy and pertinence of cooperation in higher education support [1].

### Projects in wider assessments

The assessment should take into account the macro-economic and socio-political context of the targeted geographical area and of the single beneficiaries, making private donors particularly aware of the kind of economy and the structure of the society in which recipients are located. The aim is not only the one of understanding whether their programs benefit a low income area or a middle income country, but it concerns the possibilities offered by the socio-economic environment to create a virtuous circle (understanding market demand, identifying the perspective of development of certain sectors, forecasting eventual political instability, etc.). A wider assessment must take into account covered and uncovered needs, mapping

active international programs in the same area, as well as NGOs actions and governmental policies in the field of higher education. All the stakeholders must be considered, from institutions to private sectors and civil society. Marginalized areas, both in terms of political-geographical distance from the capital city or the economic centre of the country and/or the region and distribution of minority groups, must be seen as priority fields of intervention, as far as improvements in higher education quality lead to major integration. Before thinking about creating a world-class university, it's important to understand how to enhance the pivotal role of university at local, regional and national level. Concerning this point, it's also fundamental to assess the kind of role playing by university in its country development process, and how higher education is seen in the national poverty reduction strategy. Finally, it's important not to forget that universities are systems of powers, so it is decisive to understand the degree of independence or of governmental and political undue penetration. In any case, international donors must relate with all the components, from professors to administrative managers, students' associations and institutional representatives in direction councils.

### **Coordination and cohesiveness, without homologation**

The elaboration of a program that avoids duplication is the first step to reach better coordination with and within the others actors. Better coordination means the capacity of planning and needed and referring to common goals. When UNESCO calls for coordination and cohesiveness, doesn't call for homologation. International donors' specificities assure the diversification of targets and cooperation methods, favouring aid adaptation to the context and responsiveness to local needs.

### **Preferring flexible forms of funding and long term programs**

Especially for research based projects, its crucial to guarantee a holistic and flexible form of funding, which should be easily managed from the recipients, without being tied to too strict terms of utilisation. Trust funds creation should be accompanied by agreed monitoring procedures, which would enforce co-responsibility in terms of transparency and accountability. Scholars have underlined how research development needs everywhere long term programs.

### **Favouring local community proximity to enlarge sustainability**

The key to the sustainability of higher education programs can be found in planning actions that tie, and don't cut, the link between universities and local community. This can be said concerning projects that favour equality: programs that ease university access, foster girls' participation, attendance and leadership, or enhance mentorship for low income students to have a direct impact on students' families. Proximity can be addressed while targeting the academic disciplines to be supported: focusing on development, international donors have the exceptional power to strengthen research in the subjects that recipients themselves recognise as fundamental. The crucial point is how to enlarge programs' benefit from single researchers and departments to a variety of recipients, assuring quality but also a better sharing of results and achievements. In this sense, a mixed action, that provides postdoctoral or doctoral grants as well as laboratories equipment and students formation, can bring added-value to research findings. One of the ways to avoid the politicisation of research projects achievements and partnerships is by differentiating actions, multiplying partners and recipients inside university. It is also important to try and reach less influent but valuable professors and department directors. Moreover, proximity to local community is achieved by strengthening the role of universities as spaces future leadership knowledge on local, national and international context, in a comparative and innovative prospective. Donors need to consider how the university is rooted in society and forms citizens' identity. From this point of view, fellowships, grants

and measures to address brain drain can be considered as ways to form intellectuals which are able to position themselves at the border between local and international dimension, without abandoning one of the two, but constantly mediating between different visions and perspectives with their own ambit as priority. Excellence is always a matter of exchanges.

### **The more the proximity is favoured, the more a project has chances to be sustainable**

African scholars criticise the superficial way in which certain African professors act when participating to international programs. Superficially is due to various aspects: the idea that the funding is more important than projects themselves, time shortage, targeted subjects which are not always seen as research priorities and projects drafted according to what donors want to hear. Only a project concentrated on proximity and local demand and specifically tailored for recipients, can be perceived as authentically constructive, and meet the real motivation of scholars and students. Sustainability in higher education is also achieved by a precise understanding of the actors involved and by a continuous lobby and advocacy towards them. Assuring an aware involvement of private sector, institutions and partner universities need time, concrete proposals, and a higher level of engagement by international donors, beside serious ex-post verification.

### **Centrality of local research**

Local research is the expression of what are perceived as immediate needs by scholars and society. Taking into right consideration local research from the moment of project drafting is a way to understand and respect intellectual pathways, creating the base of cooperation. First of all, international aid must strengthen and empower what has been conceived at the local level. The same can be said for curricula updating and adjustments. Too often African universities go towards a general standardisation replicating Western model, without integrating other aspects and techniques that could inspire new conceptions of university organisation and renovated curricula.

### **Deepening monitor and evaluation strategies**

For private donors monitoring and evaluation procedures have often the function of integrating program reports, useful for visibility and achievements dissemination. As a result, this type of M and E in most of cases aims at highlighting and emphasising the positive aspects, especially concerning the improvements in everyday life brought by international projects. Furthermore, evaluating real benefits belonging to higher education is not an easy process; it's fundamental to establish appropriated parameters in terms of time periods and variables considered, knowing that, as it has been said for econometrics

analysis, assessing social benefits is always a risky practice.

**M and E activities must cover all the program period, and possibly being effectuated by external evaluators.**

Organisations, networks or associations of universities could help donors in understanding how actions are perceived by the recipients, and where projects should be improved. It's that the more recipients are addressed in a direct way, the more they tend to be grateful towards donors, especially if it's the only source of funding, reducing survey's objectivity.

**Enhance recipients' participation, from the phase of program design.**

Recipients' participation in programs and policies definition is crucial for internal coherence of projects and further sustainability. Active participation can be reached if donors are open and responsive to impulses and inputs coming from scholars, students and university leadership. Participation implies mutual trust and dialogue, not confined to projects formalities, but developed in specific fora and occasions, created to exchange and discusses projects' ethic and functioning.

**CONCLUSION**

Higher education has been a favourite place to balance state budgets for a number of reasons. Higher education is less powerful politically than other sectors, such as elementary and secondary education. Typically, higher education institutions are not as well organized

politically. Moreover, higher education has lost legitimacy coming to be seen as resistant to change and inefficient, as a place where there is a lot of fat that can be cut. The sharp decline in direct public funding has led higher education institutions particularly public ones, to try a variety of means of cutting costs and increasing revenues. The arguments above clearly demonstrate the central and critical role of Higher Education in the development of countries and how funding of Higher Educational systems and institutions is a common and constant theme in the discourse of nations. Given the current funding constraints that are being experienced in most countries, which are in fact a global phenomenon and therefore not transitory, it has become imperative to look at funding options as part of efforts towards sustainably funding state universities.

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