

Chapter 9

Pointers for Future Development

This final chapter draws together pointers for future development for actors at three different levels: central, regional and institutional level. The recommendations emphasise the facilitating role of the central government in creating beneficial framework conditions and incentives. The recommendations highlight the importance of partnership building between the higher education institutions, and between the higher education institutions and regional stakeholders. Finally, they emphasise the need for more active role of higher education institutions.

Central governments

There is a need to acknowledge across government the key role that higher education institutions can play in joining up a wide range of policies at the regional level. These policies include science and technology, industry, education and skills, health, culture and sport, environmental sustainability and social inclusion. If countries wish to mobilise their higher education system or part of it in support of regional development, the higher education policy which embraces teaching, research and third strand activities should include an explicit regional dimension. There should also be an acknowledgement that the varying regional contexts within which higher education institutions operate and the national policies, especially funding regime for higher education, have differential regional impacts. The recommendations to the central governments include the following:

- Create more “joined-up” governance (Finance, Education, Science & Technology, and Industry Ministries, etc.) to co-ordinate decisions on priorities, resources and strategic items in regional development.
- Make regional engagement and more specifically its wide agenda for economic, social and cultural development explicit in higher education legislation and encourage higher education institutions to address regional engagement in their mission statements and strategies.
- Further strengthen institutional autonomy of higher education institutions by increasing their responsibility over curriculum and the use of human, financial and physical resources and provide incentives to exercise these responsibilities through developing long-term core funding for higher education institutions to support regional engagement and providing additional strategic incentive-based funding schemes.
- Strengthen higher education institutions’ accountability to society by developing indicators and monitoring outcomes to assess the impact of the higher education institutions on regional performance; require governance of higher education institutions to involve regional stakeholders and encourage the participation of higher education institutions in regional governance structures.
- Mobilise the joint resources of the higher education institutions for the preparation and implementation of regional and urban strategies and encourage genuine partnerships where higher education institutions are

not only technical advisers for regional strategy making but also actors in the process and genuine stakeholders.

- Provide a more supportive environment for university-enterprise cooperation: regulatory and tax environment and accountability regimes that do not place an undue burden on higher education institutions and businesses.
- Continue to focus on the development of human capital through developing highly skilled graduates for the national and regional labour market and up-skilling the local labour force; Improve educational opportunities through distance learning, lifelong learning and e-learning.
- Support collaboration between universities and other higher education institutions in the region through joint degrees, programmes, research programmes, strategies and one-stop-shops for industry collaboration to improve the supply and delivery of higher education services for regional firms.

Regional and local authorities

For many public authorities operating at the local and regional level, the higher education and the individual institutions remain a “black box”. What drives academics as teachers and researchers, the way in which the institutions are governed and managed, the mechanisms of central government funding are seldom understood. This understanding needs to be supported by detailed knowledge of the research and teaching portfolio of the higher education institutions, so that when opportunities arise, the development agencies can identify the appropriate institutions or part of it to be engaged in the negotiation process. The recommendations to the regional and local authorities include the following:

- Establish a partnership structure of key stakeholders from local and regional authorities, business, the community and the higher education to provide a focus for dialogue with higher education in relation to its contribution to regional development and identify and develop leaders within the public and private sectors to populate this partnership structure.
- Mobilise the resources of higher education institutions in the preparation and implementation of regional and urban strategies for economic, social, cultural and environmental development.
- Invest jointly with higher education institutions in programmes which bring specific benefit to regional businesses and the community (e.g. translational research facilities, advisory services for SMEs, professional development programmes, graduate retention programmes, cultural facilities and programmes); Support higher education institutions in bids for national and international resources for activities that will

enhance their regional impact (co-investment/leverage); Ensure that resources provided to higher education institutions facilitate regional engagement building capacity in a sustainable (multi-annual) basis and are more than a collection of short term *ad hoc* projects.

- Ensure a fully functional human capital system with pathways between different levels of education.

Higher education institutions

The scope and extent of regional engagement of a higher education institution are largely dependent on the role the institution chooses for itself and the leadership role it adopts. Some institutions are more entrepreneurial than others not only because they develop more spin-offs, but because they have established long-term relationships with their regional stakeholders and because they have embarked on a process of institutional adjustment strengthening their management core and creating professional management systems and outreach activities. Better results can be achieved through enhanced co-operation and co-ordination between the higher education institutions in the region. The recommendations to higher education institutions include the following:

- Map the regional and external links in terms of teaching, research and third task activities of higher education institutions individually and collectively and carry out a self evaluation of institutional capacity to respond to regional needs.
- Adopt a wide agenda of regional engagement considering the whole range of opportunities for engagement whether economic, social or cultural and then engage in continuous improvement of these activities and monitoring of results.
- Acknowledge that regional engagement can enhance the core missions of teaching and research (e.g. the region as a laboratory, a provider of work experience for students and a provider of financial resources to enhance global competitiveness). Enhance transversal mechanisms that link teaching, research and third task activities and which may cut across disciplinary boundaries (faculties and departments).
- Develop senior management teams able to deliver the corporate response expected by regional stakeholders but without disincentivising entrepreneurial academics.
- Establish a regional development office to mainstream the regional agenda and to scale up the individual case studies to a system; Develop facilitators who act as gate keepers between the different networks and organisations.

- Ensure that units established to link the higher education institution to the region (*e.g.* science parks, centres of continuing education, knowledge transfer centres) do not act as barriers to the academic heartland or provide an excuse for detachment.
- Establish modern administration with human resources and financial resources management systems; Review recruitment, hiring and reward systems to include regional engagement agenda.
- Establish partnership organisations with their own staff and resources which link all higher education institutions within the region and which are able to undertake substantive collaborative projects and programmes that address regional needs and opportunities.

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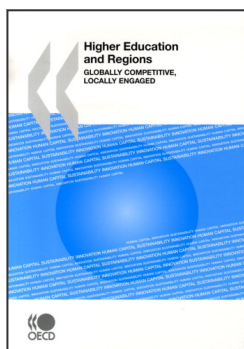
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