

Importance of Collaboration and Networking in Capacity Building in Basic Sciences in the Developing Countries

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Science is a low priority subject in most of the developing countries. Whenever and wherever some importance is given to science by the policy makers, usually non-scientist politicians and administrators, quick result is expected through applied research. This is not unusual, but the responsibility of scientists is to make the decision makers understand that without a solid base of scientific knowledge and manpower, no breakthrough in applied research is possible and that the base can not be created without generating an optimum quantity of quality scientists trained in basic sciences. This is a challenge for the insufficient number of scientists in the developing countries where the facilities available are also at a very low level. Incidentally most of the active scientists in the developing countries have been trained in developed countries and, thereby, have continued to collaborate with their supervisor or guide. A good number of these scientists have received financial support from various donor agencies including ISP and IFS. While IFS targets individual scientists, ISP broadened its scope to generate research groups centering around its Fellows. During the process a number of Networks have been created and most of them are functioning well in developing closer collaboration among scientists in certain regions of the developing countries. There remains much more to do and for achieving more success in capacity building a change in mind set is necessary, both among the scientists and the donor agencies. Scientists in the relatively more advanced laboratories in the south can be more generous in supporting students and young faculty with more easily accessible instrumental service and hands-on training. In complementing this effort, the donor agencies can be more open-minded in supporting collaborating scientists and networks by encouraging them with long-term support and overlooking the political boundaries usually determined by policy makers at the governmental level. After saying all these it must be mentioned that upgrading the science, including basic and applied, squarely depends on the political will of the governments in the developing which is grossly lacking in most cases. The Development Partners and Donor Agencies can impress upon the governments in the countries they operate to give more importance to basic science in the ultimate goal of scientific and technological development only which can help them survive with dignity in this knowledge-based society of the twenty first century.