

Difficulties of the regional cooperation in Africa: case of university and research cooperation

Pr. Alfred S. TRAORE

Coordinator of **R.A.BIOTECH**

Director of the **R**esearch **C**entre in **B**iological, **F**ood and **N**utrition **S**ciences
(CRSBAN)

University of Ouagadougou

Tel : (+226 70 40 15 58; +226 50 36 48 41)

E-mails: astraoire@gmail.com; astraoire@univ-ouaga.bf; astraoire@yahoo.fr

Presentation plan

- **Introduction**
- **Lack of harmonized academic programs**
- **Lack of qualified human resources**
- **Lack of effective and adapted facilities**
- **Financial difficulties**
- **Difficulties linked to lack of laws and policy makers commitment, favourable to regional university and scientific cooperation**

Introduction

- **universities are centres where are formed the main actors of countries development :**
(researchers, teachers, doctors, political leaders...)
- **Universities are centres for production and storage of knowledge which can set up African countries on the railways of their development and their construction.**

So, there is a big necessity to consider the development of african universities as the first priority in building a scientific viable regional cooperation.

Introduction

- **On this road many difficulties raise out and hinder university cooperation and regional collaboration. It could be mentioned:**
 - **Lack of harmonization of academic programs;**
 - **Lack of qualified human resources;**
 - **Lack of effective and adapted facilities (communication device, equipments, training and research infrastructures, etc.);**
 - **Financial difficulties;**
 - **Difficulties linked to lack of laws and policy makers commitment favourable to regional university and scientific cooperation**

1. Lack of harmonized academic programs

- Since their accession to independence, African countries have considered the south-south cooperation as the main strategy to develop higher education in Africa (MINEDAF 1961)
- But very early, i.e. from 1970, for national sovereignty reasons, each country in West Africa tried to build up its own higher education programs, against existing regional universities (Dakar, Abidjan).
- Regional universities became one state universities on nationalization.
- It was a starting point of atomization of high education in West Africa.

1. Lack of harmonized academic programs

Consequences:

- Reducing of academic motilities;
 - Raising out of many problems of facilities at national level to support a performing and relevant training;
 - Decrease of the quality of the training;
 - Numerous strikes in universities (students and/or teachers);
- ☞ This description to-day depicts the situation of most west African universities, heaving them in their regular functioning every year.

1. Lack of harmonized academic programs

Nevertheless:

- **International organisms dealing with high education and research drew the attention on the profit of regional cooperation in high education (UNESCO, 1998).**
- **Some regional political and economical regroupings (UEMOA, CEDEAO...) began to work in that vision.**
- **Programs of centres of excellence, launched by various structures in west Africa (UNESCO, AUF, CFUFAOCI, etc.) favour the regional university and research cooperation.**

1. Lack of harmonized academic programs

Advantage of harmonizing academic programs and courses of study will be to :

- Support a strong regional cooperation by sharing training costs and facilities ;**
- Allow comparison of certificates delivered by various universities;**
- Make easy regional academic motilities;**
- Unify higher education in Africa (standardization of formation levels, etc);**
- Increase the role of Africa in knowledge production for international and local development**

2. Lack of qualified human resources

- Universities in west Africa have difficulties to renew their teaching professional body;
- The ratio students/teacher are not favourable to cooperation.
- For example, in 2009, The University of Ouagadougou registered 50.000 students for only 400 teachers, corresponding to a ratio of 125 students per 1 teacher.
- Most of west african universities still do not list qualified teachers in many areas.
- Every year they need cooperation to fill this gap, appealing some teachers from outside.

3. Lack of effective and adapted facilities

- **Infrastructures in most universities in west africa are old and their reception capacity is widely exceeded;**
- **Laboratories are not well equipped;**
- **Communication means are not well performed: telephone, fax, internet, etc.**
- 👉 **West african universities hesitate to sign south-south cooperation agreements , preferring partners from he North who usually will bring some facilities for the cooperation.**
- 👉 **Therefore, it is difficult to build up a strong and viable south-south cooperation.**

4. Financial difficulties

- **Main brake to the development of the regional cooperation: small budgets to face a big need.**
- **Bad distribution of these budgets to the different priority channels (table 1: case of University Ouagadougou)**
- **A great part of the budget goes through the salaries: 67% against 33% for infrastructures and daily functioning**

4. Financial difficulties

In Africa, the budgets awarded to higher education are small and often are not in relation with the number of students.

Years	staff (Salaries)	Functioning	Investments	Number of students
2000	1.465.403	700.000	153.500	9.000
2001	1.465.403	850.000	149.371,5	11.000
2002	1.465.403	637.500	116.400	13.000
2003	2.065.304	756.805	197.962	16.000
2004	2.716.600	711.000	391.188	20.000

Table 1: Listing of the budgets awarded by the State of Burkina Faso to university of Ouagadougou from 2000 to 2004 (in thousand F CFA ; 1USD = 500 FCFA

5. Lack of favourable laws

- **Legal consensus and agreements are necessary to facilitate scientific and university cooperation.**
- **Some international organisms, such as CAMES, are working to set up a unique university area for west and central French countries in Africa in term of promotion of teachers.**
- **UEMOA which includes 8 countries is working to harmonize school fees in its space, and maybe teachers salary also : such scheme will foster a regional cooperation.**

RA-BIOTECH/W.A.B.Net: a case of successful regional cooperation

- **West African Network in training and research in Biotechnologies**
- **The network recruits per year 25 to 30 young men and women at Master 1 level**
- **So far, these students come from 14 countries: Bénin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Centrafrique, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Chad, Togo.**
- **In 6 years: some 200 students at Master level has been recruited (table 2).**

Students recruited on the behalf of W.A.B.Net for the Master degree from 2000 to 2009

Items	West Africa	Cental Africa and others	Total
Students recruited	181	19	200
Male	124	12	136
Female	57	07	64
Opt. MCB	137	14	151
Opt.PB	34	03	37
Opt. AB	10	02	12

Planning scheme of budget of W.A.B.Net per year

- **The table 3 shows the main lines of expenses to make possible a viable regional cooperation through W.A.B.Net .**

Planning scheme of budget of W.A.B.Net per year

Line of expenses	Total amount in FCFA
Cost of tickets of academic exchange	8.000.000
Hotel fees	1.800.000
Per diem	2.100.000
Cost of courses	6.750.000
Communication fees	2.500.000
Laboratories equipments (reagents, etc.)	15.000.000
Minimum Budget per year	34.260.000

Table 2: minimal expenses of RA-BIOTECH/W.A.B.Net functioning/year

Financial partners of W.A.B.Net since its creation

Many partners support W.A.B.Net through scholarships to students and equipments

- **World Banque**
- **AUF**
- **UEMOA**
- **ISP/IPICS**
- **Other national or international institutions**

CONCLUSION

- **Scientific and university cooperation will in deed contribute to sustainable development of countries**
- **Many difficulties break this result, of which the main ones is the lack of financial support and the lack of a vision.**
- **Policy makers and financing partners might be aware that they have to work together in ordor to facilitate the regional cooperation and thus save high education in Africa.**
- **Institution of annual moving meeting in Africa, gathering african governments at highest level, interested all organizations, donors and teachers/researchers to design the future of high education and research in Africa, without which no development is possible for this continent.**

***Thank you very much
for your attention !***