

ROYAL ACADEMY FOR OVERSEAS SCIENCES

***MEETING ON “EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH”***

**Friday 5 June, 2009**

Palais des Académies — Paleis der Academiën  
salle Ockeghem — Ockeghemzaal  
rue Ducale 1 — Hertogsstraat 1  
1000 Brussels



## Programme

- 9.00 *Welcome Address and Introduction to the Meeting*  
Jean BERLAMONT, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; President of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences
- 9.35 *Evaluation of Development Research: Difficulties and Questions*  
Ivan BEGHIN, Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp; Member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences
- 9.55 *The Problem of Bibliometry*  
Georges STOOPS, Ghent University; Member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences
- 10.15 *Lessons Learned from the Rules on Ranking of Universities*  
Jean-Jacques DROESBEKE, Université Libre de Bruxelles; Member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences
- 10.35 *COFFEE BREAK*
- The Viewpoint of Overseas Countries:**
- 11.00 *Asia: Doing Development Research in Asia: Problems and Perspectives*  
BALAGANGADHARA RAO, Ghent University
- 11.20 *Africa: Vers une Recherche qui accélère le Développement en Afrique*  
François MUHASHY HABYAREMYE, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences; Member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences
- 11.40 *Latin America: Amérique latine, une quête à plusieurs vitesses*  
Isabel YEPEZ DEL CASTILLO, Université Catholique de Louvain
- 12.00 General Discussion
- 12.30 *LUNCH*
- 14.00 *The Viewpoint of VLIR-UOS*  
Kristien VERBRUGGHEN, Director VLIR-UOS & Patrick SORGELOOS, President VLIR-UOS; Member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences
- 14.20 *The Viewpoint of CIUF-CUD*  
Hugues LEGROS, Secretary General CIUF-CUD; Member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences
- 14.40 *Round Table*  
Chairman: Morgan DE DAPPER, Ghent University; Member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences  
Participants: Eric THYS, Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp; Editorial Board *Tropicultura / Agri-Overseas*  
Guest Speakers
- 15.40 *Conclusion*

## **Evaluation of Development Research: Difficulties and Questions**

**Ivan Beghin**

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There is a general consensus that evaluating development research is not an easy task. In addition to the difficulties of evaluating scientific research in general, evaluation of development research suffers specific limitations such as the need to assess relevance to development, and disagreements about simply defining development research. In this paper I shall attempt to offer an overview of the problem and its causes, as they are presently understood within the Academy.

Who? What for? A broad array of persons need evaluation of development research: the researchers themselves; people who award degrees or prizes, or who appoints or promote researchers; the funding sources; development organisations, governmental or NGO's; etc. Evaluation may be used for strengthening institutions; for accountability towards sponsors and/or public opinion; for disseminating knowledge; etc. There is thus a wide variety of situations, stakeholders, objectives to be met, etc. The main point here is that such a diversity implies flexibility in the design and choice of the most appropriate tools and criteria, in each situation and for each purpose.

Conditions for a "good" (meaningful) evaluation: Clear objectives; comprehensiveness; due consideration of the specificity of each discipline; transparency of criteria and procedures; independence of the evaluator; etc. Experience indeed shows that too many evaluations do not meet all these conditions.

Dimensions of evaluation: In addition to scientific quality and relevance, other dimensions include valorisation and performance.

One is led to the conclusion that guidelines are required to assist the people in charge of evaluation of development research. Such guidelines would not be a handbook or a manual, but leave way for adaptations as fit the local needs and conditions. They should be short and concise. The Academy, hopefully in collaboration of other interested agencies, may endeavour to write such guidelines and widely disseminate them.

## **The Problem of Bibliometry**

**Georges Stoops**

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The evaluation of individual scientists and university departments or institutes is more and more based on bibliometric criteria, the most used instrument being the Science Citation Index. This procedure is strongly contested by many specialists, even for evaluations in the North, and for developing countries is still more inadequate. There are many reasons why scientists in the South, even when doing excellent research, have more difficulties to get access to international journals, such as the often high page price, difficult access to the latest techniques, language difficulties, no tradition in Anglo-Saxon reporting style, etc...

At the other hand, the consequences of the pressure to publish in SCI-journals is mortal for development. Researchers, both in the South and the North, keep many results unpublished because not in line with SCI journals. Much of this work, however, is important for local development. Moreover, results published in SCI-journals are only available to very few local scientists, and generally not at all to extension workers, decision makers, etc., because of the insuperable price of most commercial journals. The target audience is therefore not reached. In the North many scientists are not stimulated to do or to publish basic research useful for development, as the chance to get it published in SCI-journals is minimal.

One of the main problems is the fact that for bibliometric research the SCI is the only recognised tool. Many decision makers consider only what is published in a SCI-journals as good, and all the rest as rubbish, without gradation. This is surely not the case: many national journals have a high quality, but are not accepted as SCI-journals for administrative, linguistic, commercial or even political reasons.

A ranking of the non-SCI journals is the only way to overcome this discrimination. This could be a task of the Academy in co-operation with other national and international institutes.

## **Lessons Learned from the Rules on Ranking of Universities**

**Jean-Jacques Droesbeke**

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It is well known that universities assessment and ranking serve many purposes: they respond to demands for interpretable information on the standing of higher education institutions (HEI); they provide some of the rationale for allocations of funds; they also are used to differentiate among different types of institutions and different programs and disciplines.

In addition, many public managers would like to use methods based on these tools in order to “measure the quality” of higher education institutions or programs within a particular country or region.

In view of the above, an International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) was founded in 2004 by the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) and the Institute for Higher Education Policy in Washington, DC.

In this talk, we intend to examine a set of principles of quality and good practice in ranking proposed by this group to allow the discussion on the question: are these methods useful for evaluating development research?

We will also consider the usefulness of specific methodologies (Ranking of the Times Higher Education Supplement, Shanghai ARWU Ranking, CHE Research Ranking) in trying to reply to this question. We will also examine the OECD Feasibility Study for the International Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO).

## **Doing Development Research in Asia: Problems and Perspectives**

**Balagangadhara Rao**

Professor, Ghent University

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Because the notion of ‘relevance’ is deeply context-bound, I argue that we need to broaden our understanding of development to include ‘conditions for development’. In this talk, I want to reflect on the well-known adage about ‘giving a fish’ and ‘teaching to fish’ by adding the following line: ‘create the conditions for fishing, we will fish forever’. At the beginning of the 21st century, which is also an era of rapid globalization, I want to reflect on (a) what it means to speak of development work; (b) in a continent like Asia, which has emerging Industrial giants like China and India, both of whom know extremely lopsided development. Within this framework, I want to think about what it means to speak of developmentally relevant research. Without losing sight of the hard-won understanding of developmental work acquired over the decade, I plead that we look at development as a multi-layered process. If we do so, then we can appreciate the fact that different kinds of research are relevant at different levels: what is relevant at one level need not be relevant at another level. Because of this, formulation of criteria for developmentally relevant research will have to keep these different levels separate from each other. To answer the four questions posed by the task force, I suggest that we split the global problem about ‘developmentally relevant research’ into three tractable sub-problems, each of which gives a different answer at an appropriate level.

## **Towards a Research that Accelerates Development**

**François Muhashy Habiyaemye**

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This presentation is based on research evaluation reports in Africa, as well as on exchanges with scientists concerned with such research. It goes through some of the conditions that need to be met so that research becomes a real driving force for development on the continent.

Relevance and innovation are confirmed to be very important criteria among those being used in evaluation. It is recommended to give these factors an increasing weight, according to the degree to which the research results concretely contribute to the creation of sustainable conditions for a decent living.

International support could in particular contribute to breaking the isolation of researchers through a better integration of these in networks, and to promoting mutual training between both scientists in the North and the South who do their best to solve problems specific to that part of the world.

**Amérique latine, une quête à plusieurs vitesses**

**Isabel Yépez del Castillo**

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## **Development Relevant Research**

**Kristien Verbrugghen**

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### **1. VLIR-UOS mission statement**

#### ***Sharing minds, changing lives***

The independence of VLIR-UOS coincided with a global trend towards explicit recognition of the importance of higher education for development. At the end of the 1990s a World Bank / Unesco taskforce underscored the central role of higher education as a driver of development in a global economy increasingly based on knowledge. The knowledge and information gap in the world must be closed. Universities and research institutions have a crucial role to play in this.

VLIR-UOS supports universities in developing countries in their three-pronged function of education, research and service to society, generating insight into their own region and country and enabling them to drive development. VLIR-UOS facilitates and funds academic cooperation through programmes and projects which aim at sharing knowledge and expertise between Flanders and the South. Academic quality and development relevance are key here.

#### ***VLIR-UOS cooperation model***

In its mission statement VLIR-UOS states to believe that the future of North and South is inseparably intertwined and that closing the current knowledge and information gap will play a major role in helping secure that shared future.

The university cooperation for development of VLIR-UOS is focused on supporting the universities in the South, to enable them to fully play their role of development actor in society. Within the VLIR-UOS cooperation model Flemish academics are mobilised to support universities and academics in the South. This model catalyses two-way knowledge and expertise sharing, because it generates academic benefits for the Flemish academics too. UOS is a form of international academic cooperation that enriches the developing countries and Flanders alike.

VLIR-UOS does not fund consultations or lucrative technical assistance but cooperation. The principle is that academics that have built up cooperation continue to work together academically – publishing, elaborating project proposals, participating in conferences – with or without external funding.

### **2. Development relevance**

#### ***2.1. In general***

The final objective of university cooperation for development is the sustainable, people oriented development of the countries of the South, through mutual enrichment of knowledge and by a continuous questioning between the two partners of one another and oneself. It aims at the development of expertise in both North and South on topics related to developing countries.

All project proposals are appraised against the VLIR mission statement relating to university cooperation for development, especially relating to:

1. the role of the universities : the combination of the three functions of a university;
2. the objectives of university cooperation for development;

3. the partners of university cooperation for development: VLIR-UOS wishes to cooperate with universities in the South which adopt the three abovementioned missions (functions) and which attempt to freely disseminate and make accessible the acquired knowledge.
4. the fundamental principles of university cooperation for development : solidarity and quality, attention for sustainability, interuniversity approach, multidisciplinary approach, shared interest, participation and ownership.

Partner universities are selected both on the basis of their potential with respect to university education and research as well as the emancipatory role they play within their society. Furthermore, they must pursue an active policy of cultural, ethnic, social and philosophical non-discrimination. Through and with these local institutions, one can also work together with other social actors in these countries.

## *2.2. University cooperation for development objectives*

VLIR-UOS funded projects need to be development relevant and to contribute and add value to the development programme of the country concerned. VLIR-UOS funded projects have to meet local needs and have to be aligned with the vision and strategy of the local partner institute. This requires an in depth analysis of the economic, social, cultural and political context of the region and country, of the needs and capacities of the partner institute, of the available expertise and opportunities, and of the added value of the concerned academic cooperation. Hereby, special attention has to be paid to the (government) policy in the sector of higher education, research and university cooperation.

The aim is to respond to a local, broad based development need, which can be remedied by academic cooperation with a Flemish university. A VLIR-UOS funded project can thus be considered as a developmental relevant project which strengthens the research and education capacity of (a) partner institution(s) in the South by means of generating and exchanging knowledge with as final aim to use this local capacity in the struggle against poverty in the concerned region/ country.

Summarizing, following considerations are to be taken into account:

- The objectives contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the local population.
- The sector activities reinforce the socio-economic basis and the civil society of the partner country.
- The research is oriented towards sustainable development and the interaction between social, cultural, ecological and economic factors.
- The continuity of the project is assured by the partner institution(s) after the withdrawal of the financial support from VLIR-UOS.

## **3. Selection system**

VLIR-UOS uses the method of open calls, and peer review based mode of selection of project proposals.

## **4. Impact on society**

Discussion is still going on, since already a long time, on how involvement of Flemish academics in university cooperation for development initiatives can be better valorised, by academic authorities, in the scientific career, taking also into account the social responsibility of universities as institutions, and academics as individuals. VLIR-UOS wants to launch a debate on how to measure quality, not only on the basis of scientific impact of research output, but also, and more importantly, on societal impact.

## **Evaluation of Development Research: the Viewpoint of CIUF-CUD**

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### **1. How does CUD define development research?**

There isn't one unified or unique definition of a development research at CUD. Nevertheless, we have some orientations which are obligatory to determine if a project is one about development research. Some of the orientations concern:

- The research must be addressed directly or indirectly to a development problematic which is clearly identified by countries, universities or research centers of the South
- The development research must include results about development capacity of the universities or research center in the south to reinforce themselves as actors of development
- The theme of the research must be relevant with local, regional or national strategies of development

### **2. What is a good development research?**

There is again no good answer to this question. We try to implement a continuing evaluation process to achieve the goal of the quality. This process is based upon two methods, one coming from academic world, the other one created by professionals of development cooperation.

The first one is inspired by the quality assessment of scientific work, based on quality approach and audit.

The second one is the approach of project cycle management with logical framework and indicators with continued process of follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.

### **3. What does CUD do so that countries in the South themselves produce the best possible research useful for their development?**

Different strategies are implemented by CUD to reinforce capacities of our partners to become first and real actors of their development research. Among them we can highlight:

- Better access to the financing of research
- Create a positive culture and environment in the universities to develop research (common project with IRD and UE)
- Provide training and courses on research management (trainings, masters, ...)
- Workshop about scientific writing and access to electronic documents
- Facilities to edition and publishing
- Post-doctoral and research Grants
- Support to the management and administration of research by creation of Research Commission or Direction