

Launch of the International Science & Technology Centre for South-South Cooperation

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
May 22nd – 24th, 2008

Capacity Building
by
Harold Ramkissoon,
Professor Emeritus,
The University of the West Indies



Introduction

While most countries would readily admit that Science and Technology is the sine qua non for development, the harsh reality is that a number of countries either do not have the political will or lack the wherewithal to build the requisite S&T infrastructure. The birth of the International Science & Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation gives us renewed hope that working with other players, it can inter alia, assist these S&T-deficient countries and in the process make a contribution to sustainable development. It can in particular assist with Capacity Building (CB).

What does Building Capacity mean ?

- Human Resource
- Institutional Capacity
- Physical Infrastructure (Building, Equipment, Communications: ICT Infrastructure, Libraries, Journals)
- Receptive Society (Public Relations, Media)

To What End ?

Without building capacity, a developing country will find it difficult to develop its human resources and transform its higher education system which are the prerequisites for development.

Who decides the Areas of Capacity Building ?

- Governments
- Academia
- Industry

Essentially a political issue. Governments of developing countries set the agenda since they provide the bulk of the funding. Setting up of semi-autonomous funding agencies is essential.

What are some of the obstacles ?

- Lack of political will or stability in the country
- Inadequate expenditure on S&T and R&D
- The need to convince government that investment in S&T (which includes building capacity), painful as it may be in resource-constrained countries, is the best and probably only way out of the trap of underdevelopment. And that funding from international sources is to support national investments and can never be a substitute for its primary responsibility to invest its own resources
- The need to convince governments that the higher education system is the cornerstone of any STI system and hence of national development, In a number of countries, the higher education system is a main Achilles' heel.

Capacity Building – Some Recommendations

- Areas that will assist with meeting basic needs (Renewable Energy) and in general meet the UN Millennium Goals (Haiti Experience)
- Orientation towards meeting national goals
- Institutional – strengthening of our universities
- Specific areas that are associated with development – medicine, IT, Biotech
- In research – creating a cadre of young, internationally competitive scientists

South-South & North-South Cooperation

- CARICOM / INSA / Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research / ICTP
- The German Technical Cooperation, Germany (GTZ) / CARISCIENCE / CARICOM

What can ISTIC do ?

- Coordinate the various efforts in Capacity Building
- Create or use existing regional centres to facilitate its work in general and Capacity Building in particular
- Create direct links with governments where possible. This will help with the implementation of its programme.

Building Capacity in the Basic Sciences

“For Science and technology to be able successfully to achieve the goals of sustainable development, countries need the capacity to engage creatively in science education, scientific research, the development of new technologies, and their application to economic, social and human needs.”

Science Education and Capacity Building for Sustainable Development
Shirley Malcom, Ana Maria Cetto, David Dickson,
Jacques Gaillard, Dan Schaeffer, Yves Quere.

References

- Inventing a Better Future – A Strategy for building Worldwide Capacities in Science & Technology. Inter Academy Council, IAC (2003)
- Building Scientific Capacity – Third World Academy of Sciences, TWAS (2004)