

who work alongside UG faculty. PADA supports doctoral students and early career faculty with training, mentoring, career guidance, and scholarship, with an overarching goal to increase the quality of PhD education in West Africa. PADA has trained 400 African doctoral students since its inception in 2014. Valuing the approach, vice-chancellors at Kwara State University in Nigeria and the University of Johannesburg in South Africa have replicated versions of the PADA diaspora model. Further, the Health Sciences Research Office of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, South Africa, targets alumni in scarce skills domains for reciprocal research collaboration, lecturing, postgraduate supervision, and sharing of laboratories. Visits by 24 Wits diaspora alumni fellows over four years have led to ongoing collaboration with six leading universities, 14 joint publications, five joint grants, postgraduate supervision, and development of a health application database consortium.

Research Chairs support scientific development in Africa through research, teaching, and creating research groups of excellence.

ARE ACADEMIC DIASPORA LINKAGES SUSTAINABLE?

External funders have strengthened several of these programs, but are the linkages sustainable? A survey conducted by the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program—which has supported 335 academic diaspora fellowship visits to African universities since 2013—found that of 103 North American diaspora fellows who were funded for up to three-month visits at African universities, 98 percent reported having visited Africa in recent years before the fellowship. This survey saw a 77 percent response rate. Of the 98 percent of respondents who had recently visited Africa, 66 percent visited for personal reasons and 60 percent visited to conduct research. Thirty-three percent had previously visited their host institutions and 35 percent had worked virtually with host collaborators prior to the fellowship.

According to a six-month postfellowship survey, 78 percent of program participants reported that they continue to stay engaged in academic activities with their host collaborator. A one-year alumni survey of 58 fellows (a 53 percent survey response rate) showed that 84 percent of fellows reported that they communicate at least once or twice a month with scholars and administrators from their host institution, and 41 percent (24 fellows) reported that they visited the host institution following the initial project visit

for professional reasons. Progress in no- or low-cost technology and connectivity is enabling ongoing collaboration.

INTELLECTUAL REMITTANCES CONTRIBUTE TO EDUCATIONAL TARGETS

African governments have mostly been interested in financial remittances from the diaspora, but intellectual remittances provide a means to meet their educational targets. In his April 2018 inaugural speech, newly appointed prime minister Abiy Ahmed Ali of Ethiopia stated that maximum effort would be made to ensure that graduates from higher education institutions and technical and vocational colleges “harvest knowledge that is comparable to their endowment of abilities.” He subsequently called on the diaspora to contribute, saying that the government would continue with unreserved efforts to facilitate their active participation in the country’s affairs and its transformation in any way that they could. In a March 2018 presidential panel at the Next Einstein Forum in Kigali, Rwanda, President Paul Kagame claimed that 80–85 percent of Rwandans who had studied abroad had come back to Rwanda due to a conducive environment.

The future of higher education is increasingly transnational. According to UNESCO, four million students (2 percent of all university students) are registered abroad, and this figure is expected to double by 2025. In this context, creating connections between African universities and academic diaspora communities interested in sharing intellectual capital and resources is a catalyst for scholarly exchange, broader academic communities, and innovation in higher education. Early findings of academic diaspora linkage programs indicate substantial leveraging of additional funds, expertise, technology, and goodwill, which is benefiting both home and host institutions. ■

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Repositioning UK Partnerships Post-Brexit

LUDOVIC HIGHMAN

Ludovic Highman is senior research associate at the Centre for Global Higher Education, Institute of Education, University College London, UK. E-mail: l.highman@ucl.ac.uk.

Following the Brexit referendum of June 2016, the implications for higher education and research of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union were not

immediately clear, and depended on how the UK government would interpret the referendum result and use it as a mandate to pursue either a “hard” or a “soft” Brexit. Two years later, the UK government’s volatile stance in the EU–UK Brexit negotiations and cabinet split over a hard or soft Brexit has in large part shaped the remaining available options for UK universities, globally recognized as beacons of teaching and research excellence, with four ranked in the top 10 (QS World University Rankings, 2019). The history, proximity, and favorable support mechanisms nurturing collaboration, both financial and technical (e.g., mobility grants, a European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System [ECTS] recognizing time spent abroad, etc.) within Europe made other European universities attractive partners. A hard Brexit would jeopardize this relationship, and the European Parliament’s Brexit steering committee concluded that while UK participation as a third country in the future “Horizon Europe” framework program was possible, it would not result in “net transfer from the European Union budget to the United Kingdom, nor any decision-making role for the United Kingdom” (*Times Higher Education*, 15 March 2018). This is problematic because the United Kingdom has always been a net receiver of EU research funds,

There has been much talk within the United Kingdom of boosting intra-Commonwealth partnerships.

exercised a leadership role on a high percentage of European Research Council grants, and has strongly influenced the shaping of the framework programs to its advantage.

It has become obvious that both sides are playing a poker game at a high level, and nothing will be agreed until everything is agreed. In the meantime, universities must cater to their current and prospective students and staff, and ensure that they remain attractive destinations. This can be achieved by continuing to offer a culturally enriching experience through teaching and research that remains open to the world. How are UK universities strategizing to stay connected to European and global partners, and to reaffirm their commitment to remain international organizations operating beyond territorial borders, regardless of—and perhaps in an attempt to overcome—the unhelpful Brexit context that risks isolating them?

WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE EUROPEAN REGION?

On the research side, the European Union’s framework

program for research and innovation, “Horizon 2020,” is the world’s largest international research funding program, with a budget of roughly € 80 billion (2014–2020). It will be succeeded by “Horizon Europe,” with a proposed budget of € 97.9 billion (2021–2027). While it is important to note absolute numbers, their sheer size makes them difficult to absorb. In terms of institutional dependence, over 40 midsized UK universities have received income exceeding 20 percent of their research income from EU government bodies. Oxford, Cambridge, University College London, Imperial College, and the University of Edinburgh have each secured hundreds of millions euro in research funds since 2014.

Beyond research and innovation funding, Erasmus+, the European Union’s all-encompassing program to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe (2014–2020) with an allocated budget of € 14.7 billion, provides a successful framework for student and staff mobility. The enrichment of the student experience is difficult to quantify but very real, as is the added value of better language skills. Alternative mobility schemes will have to be devised, and while “going global” sounds appealing, it should not be assumed that the demand exists within the UK-based student body. Intra-European mobility remains a privilege for only a minority because of the associated costs, and opportunities in Australia, New Zealand, and North America will be more expensive (and in general fail to offer opportunities for language learning), because of the distance and lack of supporting funding frameworks.

CREATING NEW PARTNERSHIPS: LOOKING TOWARD THE COMMONWEALTH AND BEYOND

There has been much talk within the United Kingdom of boosting intra-Commonwealth partnerships, because of alleged shared values and a common heritage. The Commonwealth is an intergovernmental organization comprising 53 states and home to a population of 2.4 billion previously under direct British rule. It is a far more eclectic group than the EU²⁷. While tapping into this postcolonial organization appears attractive on paper, it should not, however, dissimulate the fact that at present, 31 of those countries are very small states, often with no registered public university, and only Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Singapore are research powers on par with leading EU countries, as demonstrated by their research output and number of highly ranked universities. There is not a single university beyond those four Commonwealth countries ranked among the world’s top 150 (QS World University Rankings, 2019).

Focusing on Commonwealth countries could have limited results—beside the discrepancy in human rights values in some member countries, potentially endangering UK

staff and students working or studying abroad. The UK government has always been a strong advocate for focussing on excellence as the only basis for funding research. It would be difficult to see the United Kingdom channelling funds toward research infrastructure capacity building among other Commonwealth nations, especially in a hard Brexit scenario where the United Kingdom no longer has access to the EU framework programs and finds itself competing with the European Union from the outside.

UNIVERSITIES AS MASTERS OF THEIR OWN DESTINIES?

Based on research conducted at the Centre for Global Higher Education under the “Brexit, trade, migration, and higher education” project, at the leadership level, UK research intensive universities are keen to enter into comprehensive strategic partnerships including both research collaboration and mobility opportunities with highly ranked universities where a range of modules are taught in English, as they see these partnerships as a reflection of their own standing and reputation. This could lead to a small group of European and international universities becoming overwhelmed with requests from British universities to enter into strategic alliances, as the list of such overseas institutions is exhaustive. Large research intensive universities ranked in the top 100 in Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Scandinavia, Singapore, and the United States are all considered priority partners. This rationalization of institutional, university-wide arrangements could further push both mobility flows and research collaboration to take place exclusively between so-called “like-minded” universities located predominantly in the Western world, creating ring-fenced alliances of institutions according to research intensity and rank. This “club” syndrome has partly been avoided in Europe because of the plethora of bottom-up arrangements agreed under Erasmus+, based on individual connections, and the relative freedom academics had in setting up their own exchanges and research partnerships. In the era of the corporate university, and because of Brexit-related uncertainty, this is increasingly no longer an option for UK universities.

CONCLUSION

In the two years that have passed since the Brexit referendum, the government has clarified little with regard to the United Kingdom’s participation in Erasmus+ and “Horizon Europe.” UK universities are concerned by the high level of ongoing uncertainty. Universities have a duty toward their students who enroll for a period of three to four years—with a recruitment cycle starting a year before—and toward their researchers working on collaborative projects for which application rounds will commence shortly. Cer-

tainty is a necessity as degree programs must be taught out, and because quality research proposals require unequivocal eligibility. Universities are looking to strengthen their institution-wide partnerships with European and overseas universities in order to remain internationally oriented and push away the specter of an isolated, inward-looking island. The UK government expects its universities to feed into the narrative of a “Global Britain,” but without providing any enabling framework. ■

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The Consolidation of Chinese Private Higher Education

KAI YU

Kai Yu is the chief executive officer of China Education Group Holdings Limited, a company listed in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. E-mail: kai.yu@chinaeducation.hk.

Higher education as an industry is facing unprecedented worldwide challenges due to an increase in competition and the need for greater efficiency. In China, the private sector in higher education is witnessing a trend of convergence by acquisitions, i.e., private educational groups acquiring other private institutions.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE EDUCATION MARKET

China is the world’s largest higher education market, followed by India and the United States. The total student enrollment in higher education in China reached 37 million in 2016. A burgeoning middle-class society presents vast opportunities for the industry and higher education has become a key area for investment in China. A report by Deloitte refers to the “golden age of the Chinese education market.” There has been a rapid increase of private capital flowing into the education industry in terms of both amount and frequency. According to Deloitte, in 2015 the amount of investment in the Chinese education industry was over twice that in 2014; the total amount of mergers and acquisitions increased by 165 percent year on year; and initial public offerings (IPOs) increased by 76 percent from the previous year.

According to Frost & Sullivan, the total revenue of the Chinese private higher education industry has been in-