

Professor Stephanie Fahey

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International)

Monash University

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RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA

On Thursday 8 May 2008, Professor Stephanie Fahey, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) presented the Keynote Address at the Annual General Meeting of the African Think Tank.

Introduction

In early March this year I found myself eating dinner in a lodge on the lower slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, the night before I began a six-day climb of the mountain. The walls of the dining room were covered in dozens and dozens of bits and pieces of memorabilia left behind by previous climbers – flags, t-shirts, posters and more. Written across one t-shirt in black pen was a quote from Mahatma Gandhi which read “we must be the changes we want to see in this world.”

This got me thinking about how tertiary institutions in Australia perceive their role as educators, innovators and developers not just in Australia, but internationally and how we think about and actively make contributions beyond monetary gains back to the communities in which we operate. How do we lead by example in this – as Gandhi would have us do?

As Australia's most international university, Monash thinks a lot about international engagement. With a campus in South Africa, Monash also thinks a lot about Africa.

The question then becomes, how do we leverage the international reach and the resources of Monash, to actively engage with Africa in a way that not only brings the benefits of that engagement back to Monash, but which takes the benefit of Monash's international reach and resources to benefit Africa and Africans? What is the approach that Monash has taken and how can it bring us into greater collaboration with other organisations and institutions (such as the African Think Tank and AFSAAP), with industry, business and government in Australia and overseas who all share a similar interest in and passion for Africa?

A good starting point for discussion is a consideration of the driving factors for international engagement and the historical background of internationalisation in our region. I will discuss the importance of context in defining and delineating how we approach international engagement in the various areas in which we operate and how this applies to our engagement in Africa. I will highlight the ways in which we engage internationally across our Africa portfolio and the areas where Monash and the African Think Tank can look forward to collaboration.

International Engagement - The Driving Factors

Across the world, the globalisation phenomenon continues to drive economic development and social interaction, revolutionising business, industry, management, information flow and communications technology, the more rapid flow of capital and the free migration of people.

International engagement has become a necessary condition for the fulfilment of the role that higher education has to play in this new 'global era': for the higher education sector, internationalisation has become an integral part of the search for quality and relevance in terms of teaching, training, research and its contribution to the societies in which it operates.

What does this mean for international education and the professions? Looking at the higher education sector today, some of the changes to the existing knowledge economy are indeed challenging thinking on the role of higher education institutions. Students are the new drivers of change for more flexible educational delivery platforms – not the universities. New jobs will be dependent more on research skills than knowledge and we must equip our students for their role as global citizens.

Since the mid-eighties the emphasis of Australia's international education sector has predominantly focused on the recruitment of full fee paying overseas students, establishment of offshore campuses, creation of twinning schemes and proliferation of exchange agreements. This is the 'traditional concept of international engagement.'

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the international higher education sector has been undergoing a radical transformation where the emphasis on overseas student recruitment as a definition and representation of an 'international university' is becoming secondary and outdated as new forms of international activities take root. The changes are rapid and the competition fierce and it is within this rapidly transforming and competitive environment that universities need new ways of thinking about international engagement and what it means to be a 'truly international university'. I believe there are three important elements that form the core of international research and international education: mobility, collaboration and contribution.

The Importance of Context

However, before I explain these elements more fully and apply them to the Monash approach, it is worth noting that rethinking international engagement is not a straight-forward, homogenous process that is equally applicable to every region in which a university chooses to operate. Differing social, economic, political and cultural conditions are also responsible for shaping the way in which universities engage in a region, the manner in which that engagement is conducted, the initiatives they choose or are able to implement and the level at which they do so. The upshot is that the way in which we approach international engagement when interacting with the Asia Pacific region for example, has fundamentally different preconditions and drivers than is the case when we apply our thinking to the context of Africa and our engagement with that continent.

Just over a year ago I presented a keynote speech on rethinking international education engagement in the Asia Pacific region to the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council Conference. In it, I identified six trends in international higher education in the region: rapid developments in technology which reshape and diversify traditional modes of learning; the emergence of international education hubs in the region including China and India; demographic change and the issue of ageing populations; the rise of research super-funding from rapidly growing regional economies; internationalisation of the student experience; and the rise and importance of international rankings in the thinking and operation of regional universities.

These trends have contributed to recent large investments in the Asia Pacific region to education, research and development. For example,

- The Malaysian government aims to double to 100,000 the number of foreign students at local tertiary learning institutions by 2010.
- The Singapore government is pouring millions of dollars into creating an education hub for Asia, the Global Schoolhouse. It aims to triple the number of foreign students to 150,000 by 2012. Part of its strategy involves attracting 10 world-class universities to Singapore within a decade.
- China is spending billions of dollars to improve its higher education infrastructure to cope with anticipated large increase in the number of overseas students. China is fast becoming one of the most popular study abroad destinations for students of developed countries (AEI Industry Seminar, 2007). According to figures released in late 2006, there were 140,000 international students studying in China.

China and India recognise that non-linear growth can only be achieved through technology and science. To back its strategy, the Indian Government has made a series of multi-million dollar announcements about scientific research over the last 12 months and is taking steps to build scientific and economic linkages with other governments and global businesses such as the cooperative agreement with the US signed in 2004 and encouraging investment from the world's leading companies such as GE, Microsoft, IBM, and Intel (PMSEIC, 2006). In the five years to 2004 China added almost 400,000 personnel to its researcher skills base, a 74% increase (PMSEIC, 2006).

However, not all of these trends apply to the same extent to Africa as they do in the Asia Pacific region. In 2006, the world's output grew 4.8 percent, reaching nearly \$59 trillion. Low- and middle-income countries grew on average faster than high-income countries, increasing their share of global output from 34% to 41% (African Development Bank, 2005). Unsurprisingly, China and India (the big spenders on R&D and higher education development) led the charge, dominating growth. Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa however saw their shares stay the same, demonstrating no growth at all. Poverty traps, exclusion from global markets, internal conflicts, resource constraints, poor policies, and market failures continue to limit growth and poverty reduction in Africa (African Development Bank, 2005).

In the context of higher education, lack of economic growth, investment and the associated inability to participate more fully in the knowledge economy is reflected in the fact that Africa has the least per capita access to higher education in the world – 100 students per 100,000 compared with 5000 students per 100,000 in the USA (Seddoh, 2003). The trends that we see in the Asia Pacific region when it comes to international engagement and higher education, therefore apply in a different way and at a different level to many developing nations in Africa. Our approach to international engagement in Africa should rightly take this into account, if we are to have any success in developing engagement with Africa that is meaningful and successful for both our continents.

The Good News....

Whilst the role of education as central to development has traditionally been under-recognised (despite its status as an implicit priority in the Millennium Development Goals), there is now growing recognition that Africa can only strengthen its economic performance through considerable investment and use of new knowledge (Commission for Africa, 2005). A new economic vision for the region should focus on the role of knowledge as a basis for economic transformation (UN Millennium Project, 2005). Doing so will entail placing policy emphasis on emerging opportunities such as renewing infrastructure, building technical capabilities, stimulating business development, and increasing participation in the global economy (Stern et al., 2005). These areas should provide a firm foundation upon which to base development investments and international partnerships (Juma, 2006).

Monash South Africa was established in Ruimsig, just outside Johannesburg in 2001, as a long-term commitment by Monash to the future sustainable development of South and Sub-Saharan Africa, through the provision of education. From its early stages as a Greenfield site, to a thriving campus of more than 2500 students in 2008, the infrastructure and resources provided by Monash South Africa provide educational, recreational and support facilities not only for the students who attend the campus, but for members of the broader community and community groups who undertake short courses at the campus or use campus facilities for community-based activities.

In 2001, the decision to open a campus in South Africa required some explanation. In 2008, the good news is that the idea of knowledge as a basis for economic transformation in Africa is one that is gaining traction in Australia. Austrade's Chief Economist Tim Hardcourt reported in January this year that Australia's trade with Africa has grown by more than 10 per cent per year over the last five years, which is faster than Australia's trade with any other continent. Australia is also investing more in Africa due to the world-wide resources boom and Africa's willingness to open its doors to foreign investment. A corollary of this is that the emerging resources boom in Africa also represents significant potential for Australian exporters in mining, mining-related technology, infrastructure and skill formation in the African higher education sector.

Beyond this, Sub-Saharan Africa has a number of commonalities with Australia, including aspects of our colonial history, a similar climate and resource-based economy; and participation in international sporting leagues. All these areas provide opportunities for collaboration and investment between Australia and Africa.

Africa, it seems, is now back on the radar of Australian exporters (Harcourt, 2008) and the key enablers of this investment include:

- Australia's South African connection, where our two-way trade totals over \$4.2 billion and export growth averages almost 17% per year;
- Improvements in Africa's environment for resources exploration and investment resulting from fundamental improvements in terms of fiscal policy, foreign debt and inflation under the structural reform policies led by some of stronger African economies; and
- An influx in capital from all corners of the world to take advantage of the continent's revival in resources. According to the World Bank, exports from Africa to Asia tripled in the last five years, making Asia Africa's third largest trading partner (27 percent) after the European Union (32 percent) and the United States (29 percent). And Indian and Chinese foreign direct investment also grew, with China's amounting to \$US1.18 billion (\$A1.34 billion) by mid-2006.

There are growing niche markets for Australian trade and investment across a wide range of African states and regions. The Australia-Africa Business Council, with branches in the various states, has been actively forging reciprocal arrangements with numerous bodies across Africa. AABC held a very successful Trade, Investment and Resource Conference in Botswana in 2005.

This investment interest is now being seen at the political level in Australia, where renewed interest in Africa by a new government, combine to generate the recently announced review of policy in relation to Africa. The Australian Government also has an important role to play in fostering the establishment of similar regulatory environments in Africa as we have in Australia. This would assist Australian companies who have investment strategies for Africa.

A number of Federal funding schemes are being developed, or existing funding schemes are being broadened to incorporate African nations as eligible countries. In March this year, AusAID piloted its first round of Australia Africa Fellowships. Australia Africa Fellowships (AAF) are a component of the Australian Scholarships for Africa program. They are for short term study, research and professional attachment programs in Australia delivered by Australian organisations.

The Australian Scholarships for Africa program aims to promote sustainable development in Africa. The program includes postgraduate level Australian Development Scholarships in addition to the Australia Africa Fellowships. Australian Development Scholarships provide opportunities for people from developing countries to undertake full time undergraduate or postgraduate study in Australia.

Other programs include the Africa Regional Small Activities Scheme administered by AusAID. This scheme supports community based activities being implemented by non-government organisations that promote sustainable economic and social development across areas including education and training, environmental awareness, natural resource management, promotion of women's activities and skills development and employment for youth. Universities can access this scheme for projects where there is not the capacity or expertise within local NGOs to undertake the core tasks of a project.

Rethinking International Engagement, seizing opportunities and leading by example

So within this context of globalisation and increased recognition of the importance of education in development, we can now return to the three important elements which I believe form the core of international engagement (mobility, collaboration and contribution) and we can look at how Monash is equipping our future generation of leaders with the relevant skills and values to contribute to society, possibilities for collaboration and also (we hope!) leading by example in providing educational opportunities beyond monetary gains.

Mobility

I believe mobility is about creating opportunities for students and staff to travel beyond their borders. It is about nurturing 'global citizens with global outlook'. It is critical in today's highly competitive environment that we provide platforms and opportunities for our students and staff to move with minimal difficulties beyond their borders, immerse themselves in a foreign culture and develop key communication skills to survive in an increasingly 'globalised' world.

Some examples of mechanisms that encourages opportunities for staff and student mobility includes joint academic appointments between partner universities; standardised degree structures; and mutual recognition of degrees and units within degrees.

At Monash we attempt to pursue this through our offshore presence in South Africa, Malaysia, Italy, and soon in India. We pursue this also through our strategic international alliances. Monash actively engages industry and has a global network of research alliances and strategic partnerships. We pursue short-term stints with government, businesses and multilateral organisations through our internship programs to help improve student employability. We encourage staff exchanges and fellowships to broaden and deepen educational content and links. We strive to create opportunities for our higher degree research students to spend considerable time overseas at our campuses, centres and partner institutions. We encourage our undergraduate students at Monash South Africa to travel to Monash Australia for a semester and our Australian students to travel to South Africa.

Collaboration

Collaboration is about forging new partnerships based on collaboration and mutual respect that produces 'win-win' outcomes to ensure that relationships going forward are sustainable.

Some examples of mechanism to promote new and sustainable partnerships include joint research projects and joint research academies; dual badged PhDs with co-supervision across borders; global undergraduate degrees where semesters are offered by universities in different countries for one degree either via student mobility or virtually; and greater collaboration with industry in R&D, curriculum design and delivery, internships and scholarships.

At Monash, we encourage joint development and teaching of curriculum on our campuses, centres and institutional partners. We strive to leverage on ICT to add value to our international curriculum. We pursue joint research collaboration with governments, businesses and universities. We are currently developing the first joint venture research academy in India with the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. The joint venture focuses solely on research and consultancy with research clusters and PhD students working in areas of Advanced computational engineering,

simulation and manufacturing; infrastructure engineering; clean energy; water; nanotechnology; biotechnology and stem cell research.

The newest of our collaborative initiatives is the Monash Africa Research Initiative (MARI). MARI will be established as an initiative of Monash University in collaboration with other universities within Australia and Africa, and with universities beyond the borders of those two countries. The Initiative will focus on research on Africa, initially with special emphasis on those areas with commercial, historical and migration ties with Australia.

The aims of the initiative are:

1. to support research on Africa and Africans;
2. to serve as a portal whereby international media, government institutions and the corporate sector can access Monash and other Australian expertise on the complexities and dynamics of Africa;
3. to forge links with similar institutions throughout Africa and internationally;
4. to help coordinate cross-institutional research and postgraduate supervision in African Studies within Australia and through linkage agreements with institutions across the globe;
5. to provide an institutional framework for mobilising untapped human resources within African migrant communities in Australia.

The idea behind this collaboration is that of MARI as a *centre of gravity*. In the military context a centre of gravity is a “source of strength”, a characteristic, capability or locality that enables a force to accomplish its objectives. In the Australian higher education sector, we hope that MARI will become the centre of gravity for Africa in this country, providing a single lens through which universities, government, industry, business and independent policy and advice organisations can focus their thoughts about Africa, its emerging issues and challenges, its sustainable development, capacity building and the role of African communities outside their home continent and devise ways in which we can contribute to workable, sustainable solutions.

To achieve this and to become a truly international initiative, MARI will establish research projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, integrate research activities across Australia and build key links with international centres specialising in Africa. Australian researchers who already have African experience and are involved in research on Africa will be invited to participate in MARI.

MARI's structure will provide new opportunities for collaborative networks across a range of disciplines. In some areas this is already the case, for example, environmental sustainability and

international development and economic analysis (MIDEA) or language policy, planning and ethnography. African migrant communities also have a role to play in this initiative, as these communities retain strong ties to their home communities in Africa and can contribute much to the greater understanding of the issues which Africans face both at home and when settled abroad.

MARI presents an exciting opportunity for Monash and the broader network of Africa researchers and thinkers in Australia to link with institutions such as the African Think Tank. MARI will be able to provide organisations such as the African Think Tank with a pool of researchers able to conduct research on areas of priority identified by ATT. This research will be readily available and can be used to inform thinking on and in the development of a variety of activities, initiatives, reports and recommendations by the African Think Tank. We hope that in our collaboration with the African Think Tank we can create a platform for the generation of ideas, and the identification of strategies through which we can address emerging issues in Africa and contribute to helping Africa meet the challenges those issues pose.

Possibilities for collaboration are not, however, restricted to research. Opportunities exist for Monash, the African Think Tank and other organisations such as AFSAAP and the Australia-Africa Business Council to work together to lobby government and funding organisations to increase their focus on Africa and their support to research, education and business engagement there. We can also work together to provide support, education and training to African migrant communities in Australia and to raise the profile of these groups in the areas in which they reside and with local, state and federal governments.

Contribution

And finally contribution. Contribution is not only about equipping our future generation of leaders with the relevant skills and values to contribute to society but universities leading by example in providing educational opportunities beyond monetary gains.

It is about making a contribution to global well-being with pressing issues such as climate change, international security and economic inequality.

Our campus presence in South Africa (and Malaysia), is not about generating an additional source of income for Monash Australia. Our aim is to embed both campuses within their national higher education system and help raise a new generation of leaders with the unique Monash 'international' experience and perspective.

Recently we launched a new scholarship program in South Africa, the Monash University Fund for Education in South Africa, or MUFESA. With the help of businesses we aim to raise \$10 million in

scholarships to provide opportunities for South African students. In fact we are in the process of administering the first round of these scholarships now. An essential element of these scholarships is to provide financial assistance to South African students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are committed to having an impact on South Africa. University graduates in Africa comprise 0.4% of the continent's population, but account for 40% of its emigrants. Through MUFESA and other scholarships programs available at Monash South Africa, Monash aims to foster an academic class of young leaders who remain in Africa and use their learning and skills to further the sustainable development of their home country.

Contribution does not have to be restricted to the provision of scholarships and bursaries. This year we commenced a three-year partnership with the Oaktree Foundation. Oaktree is an Australian, youth-led aid and development organisation with a mission to empower developing communities through education in a sustainable manner: Schools 4 Schools their newest initiative. A unique and innovative program, S4S partners schools in Australia with schools in South Africa and is empowering communities to deal with the challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS, crime and drugs. It does this by partnering with the GoLD (Generation of Leaders Discovered) Program, which delivers peer-led education programs on the ground in South Africa on behalf of Oaktree.

Monash has made a financial commitment to Oaktree of over \$55,000 per year over the next three years, in order to facilitate the expansion of the GoLD Program and Schools for Schools into Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. This particular contribution reaches beyond university students into high schools and communities both in South Africa and in Australia. In this way we hope to provide education and leadership training for high school students who may or may not attend university, but regardless of whether or not they do, have skills at the end of their high school years which increase their employability and their ability to contribute back to their home communities in other ways.

We hope that through these three key elements of international engagement, Monash can bring its unique view of internationalisation to bear for the benefit of students, researchers, business, industry, government and communities both in Africa and in Australia, across a variety of sectors.

Conclusion

It has been said that to guarantee its relevance, higher education should be viewed in relation to its external environment and not as separate from it (Seddoh, 2003). This is the underlying philosophy which guides the Monash approach to internationalisation and to how we operate in and with Africa.

My colleague Adam Shoemaker commented recently that "since its inception, Monash has subscribed to the conviction that a tertiary institution should have a cogent human rights and social justice

mission – that, in addition to seeking the best of education, research and discovery, it should also make a real and tangible improvement to the world outside the campus. This informs the kind of place we are and which we want to be. It affects our structure, our global reach, our self perception.” (Shoemaker, 2008).

There is no doubt that the highly competent human resource capital which universities provide can be used in partnership with external public and private institutions and organisations in making a genuinely useful contribution back to the communities within which they operate. Far from being a one-way flow of benefits, the understanding, knowledge, experiences and friendships gained and made through interaction with the communities in which universities operate, provides enduring benefits to researchers and students at both the academic and personal level.

Whilst our international engagement with Africa may seem small compared to the contributions of some European and American universities, Monash’s long term commitment to Africa is evidenced by the physical presence of our campus, and our continued work towards creating in Australia a space in the higher education sector focused on Africa.

Our aim for this space to be a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, cross-continental, shared and collaborative space, we hope will foster the momentum to ensure that the appropriate level of attention and resources are devoted at the government level, to Africa and African research. Integral to the success of these initiatives will be the ability for us to work collaboratively with organisations such as the Africa Think Tank, and I look forward to the opportunity to develop a strong and mutually rewarding relationship between the African Think Tank and Monash.

About The African Think Tank

The African Think Tank was established in 2006 as a non government, non-political, non-religious and non-profit organisation to support self reliant, integrated, sustainable and flourishing refugee communities and community organisations in Australia.

For more information on the African Think Tank, please visit <http://www.att.org.au/about.html#.html>

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