Co-operation in veterinary education between sub-Saharan Africa and the developed countries: experience of the University of Zambia *

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Summary: As is the case with many other veterinary schools in sub-Saharan Africa, the development of the University of Zambia (UNZA) Veterinary School has been supported largely by aid from the developed countries in the form of general expenditure grants, staff training scholarships and technical assistance. The three major pillars of the policies which have governed interactions between UNZA and donors have been bilateralism, “projectisation” (the supplying of aid within the framework of specific projects) and donor management of aid. These have been blended according to the resources endowed by the donors and the negotiating position of UNZA. The authors discuss the effect of the consequent diverse policies on the development of the UNZA school. It is recognised that high dependence on donors by veterinary schools in sub-Saharan Africa will continue in the future. However, the emerging political and economic integration in the sub-region and in the developed countries, as well as the trend towards early specialisation in the veterinary profession in the developed countries at a time when countries in sub-Saharan Africa still require generalists, will mean that co-operation within a bilateral framework will become less desirable. It is therefore recommended that veterinary schools in sub-Saharan Africa evolve mechanisms for collective aid negotiations and utilisation of aid. Conversely, co-operation between donors in multi-donor supported schools will be essential to minimise rigidity in projects, which tends to undermine the cohesion of multi-donor funded schools.


INTRODUCTION

Co-operation in veterinary education between the countries of sub-Saharan Africa and the developed countries of the North has a pervasive effect on the development of the livestock production and animal health industries in sub-Saharan Africa, as such

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co-operation determines the quality of the specialised manpower which is the driving force for the modernisation of these industries. A “new world order” is currently taking shape, and countries in the North and in sub-Saharan Africa are at economic and political crossroads which will lead to fundamental changes in co-operation relationships. The breakdown of the East-West political barriers in the North and increasing economic integration in Europe and North America will almost certainly reduce the flow of aid to sub-Saharan Africa during the period of political and economic equilibration in the North and will later result in a cartel-based approach to co-operation with countries in the African sub-region. Simultaneous with this re-orientation in the North, the “wind of democratisation” in sub-Saharan Africa is likely to leave in its wake governments which will be more ideologically homogeneous. It can be hoped that these governments will be better placed to implement regional development programmes which are recommended as essential to the development strategies of the sub-region (6).

In addition to these large-scale political and economic changes, future co-operation in veterinary education between the developed world and the countries of sub-Saharan Africa will be influenced by a deepening qualitative rift in the veterinary profession between the two regions. In the North, the profession is drifting towards early specialisation, reflecting the evolution of the animal health industry into distinct sectors. As a result of this, recommendations for changes in veterinary education in the North are tending to produce graduates with specific clinical competence in a class of animals or a single species (4, 1). However, for a long time to come, veterinary personnel markets in the South will demand “generalists”, albeit with emphasis on training in food animal medicine, preventive medicine and animal husbandry (3).

There is therefore an imperative need, at present, to examine the policies which have influenced co-operation in veterinary education in the past, with a view to re-adjusting these policies to suit the changing circumstances. This paper describes the aid to the University of Zambia (UNZA) Veterinary School from the time of its inception in 1983 to 1990, and discusses the impact on the development of the school of the underlying policies of the various donors. An attempt is then made to use the UNZA experience as a test case for formulating general recommendations for future co-operation in veterinary education between the developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the official views of either UNZA or the various donors.

THE AID TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA VETERINARY SCHOOL

The UNZA school was built using a US$26 million Japanese Government aid grant to Zambia. This grant was followed up by a Japanese funded bilateral technical co-operation project administered by the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA) and complemented by the Japanese Overseas Co-operation Volunteers (JOCV) and Japanese Government training scholarships. The first seven-and-a-half-year phase of the JICA project commenced in 1985. Other long-term donors to the school included the Republic of Ireland (through its Higher Education Development Co-operation Agency – HEDCO); Great Britain (through its Overseas Development Agency – ODA, and the British Council); and Belgium (through the Flanders Association for Development Co-operation and Technical Assistance – VVOB, as well as a link with
the University of Ghent). Occasional donors have included the Danish Volunteer Services, the (West German) Committee of Protestant Churches for Services Overseas and the Dutch Government.

The contributions to the general expenditure (equipment, supplies, maintenance, etc.) of the UNZA school from within Zambia and from foreign sources during the period between 1984 and 1990 are shown in Figure 1. The profile of the general expenditure support for the school has some features which are characteristic of the support for many emergent African schools, most notably:

a) The school is extremely dependent on donors.

b) The contribution from internal sources (expressed in “hard” currency which reflects the purchasing power of the contribution more accurately) is static or declining.

![General expenditure grants to the University of Zambia Veterinary School](image-url)
Two contributing factors to this are the high rates of inflation and the related shift of the internal budget towards staff emoluments.

c) There is one main "godfather" donor (Japan, in the case of Zambia). This is a particular characteristic of new schools.

Figure 2 shows the contribution of Zambia and the various foreign donors to the academic staff of the UNZA school. The high donor dependence and the presence of a "godfather" donor are also evident in the staff profile. Other features of general interest include the following:

a) The number of nationals on the staff of a new school takes a long time to increase. Therefore, if the objective of the donors is to assist in developing a local staff base, the
support for staff development must either precede the establishment of the school or last longer than the support for infrastructure development and curriculum establishment.

b) There is a relatively higher internal contribution to staff recruitment. Most of the staff recruited using internal funds are from Third World countries.

c) Donor recruitment of staff is almost always exclusively from the donor country, and the emoluments as well as other benefits for the staff are set to match or better those for similar personnel in the donor country. Hence the unit cost for donor-funded staff is usually much higher than for recipient-funded staff. It is therefore more valid to consider numbers rather than expenditures in evaluating donor contributions to staff.

d) Staff from occasional donors predominantly consist of young people (volunteers in many cases) at the beginning of their academic or professional careers.

Figure 3 shows the contributions to teaching staff development scholarships. The Zambian contribution is again very small, mainly because local post-graduate training opportunities are virtually non-existent while the high cost of training outside Zambia is out of reach of the UNZA budget. The cost of donor-funded training is very variable and is largely determined by the donors in the same way as staff recruitment. Hence, comparisons are again more meaningful if made on the basis of the number of staff trained rather than the amount of money spent on the training. Staff training is another popular area supported by occasional donors.

**Fig. 3**

Sources of post-graduate training scholarships for academic staff for the University of Zambia Veterinary School, 1984-1990
AID POLICIES: ROOTS AND EFFECTS

Although the various donors to the UNZA school differ in the way in which they relate to the school, some of their policies have some common characteristics which are also found in other aid-supported schools.

Bilateralism

Bilateralism confines aid-supported activities – to variable degrees – within the donor and recipient countries. The evolution of bilateralism in co-operation arrangements between the developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa has been fostered to some degree by the strong sense of patriotism in newly independent states in the sub-region. This has created the urge for multiple national institutions even where the need has not been unequivocally established. However, bilateralism also has roots in other, hidden political and economic considerations on both the recipient and donor sides.

All long-term aid to the UNZA school is bilateral. Under the Japanese aid policy, all staff recruitment and training, and almost all utilisation of the general expenditure grant, has to be in Japan. This has been possible to implement because of the substantial Japanese human and material resource base. However, problems have arisen where there is incompatibility between veterinary education and general university systems in Japan and Zambia. This has made it difficult, for example, to utilise the aid for formal training of technicians, as no such training exists in Japan. Zambian students have had to learn Japanese as a prerequisite for post-graduate courses in Japan and the effectiveness of Japanese staff recruited for the UNZA school has on occasion been constrained by a poor command of spoken English.

The bilateralism of the other long-term donors to the UNZA school has some innovations to the standard strict format. Under the British aid, any member of staff can be funded for study visits to Great Britain if such visits are deemed to be beneficial to the school. This has made it possible to use staff from third party countries as “couriers” between the donor and the recipient in situations in which the donors or the recipients would have no personnel to release. The Belgian aid policy included a provision for funding short-term training (up to three months) of Zambian counterparts in any country within Europe. The Irish aid, while it lasted, contained the greatest degree of flexibility: general expenditure and staff recruitment grants could be used outside Ireland (preferably in Great Britain) if suitable staff, equipment and supplies could not be found in Ireland. So far, the latter has been the only donor country to allow donated funds to be used (to a very limited but effective extent) by the school to recruit staff from other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The strong dependence on bilateral aid by the UNZA school has meant that, during the formative years, the school has not developed any strong linkages with the other schools in the region. For the same basic reason, the other schools in the region have not attempted to form similar links. Consequently, the foundation for future regional co-operation is weak. Internally, bilateralism has impeded the development of a consolidated strategic plan for resource development, due to the restriction of the freedom of choice. For example, compatibility of equipment from different donor sources has been difficult to ensure, and future problems in maintenance and provision of spare parts can therefore be envisaged.
"Projectisation"

Aid is commonly packaged in the form of "blue-printed" projects which define the scope and duration of the aid activities within the framework of the agreed objectives. The need of donors to plan precisely the schedules of implementation of aid activities, to maximise the impact of aid with the given resources, and to easily monitor and evaluate aid outcomes, has had a major influence on the formulation of the project protocols.

All long-term support to the UNZA school has been conceived from the outset in the form of specific projects. The Japanese technical co-operation project had the initial objective of supporting three of the five departments in the school. The Irish and the British each supported one of the remaining two departments. The Belgian aid was directed towards supporting the development of the Ambulatory Clinic.

"Projectisation" of the functions of the school in the above manner had two major negative effects on initial development. First, since the resource endowments to the projects by the different donors were not matched and UNZA was not always in a position to bridge the gap, the development of the school became unbalanced. Most notably, the Japanese-funded departments developed at a much faster rate than the other departments. Secondly, "cultural" polarisation of education began to emerge as the departments started to adopt the education traditions of the donors. These shortcomings were recognised with time and the various donors attempted to minimise the problems by modifying policies. The Japanese broadened the scope of general expenditure grants and the training scholarship to cover all departments in the school, although they were not able to greatly change the original targeting of staff. The Irish and the British completely liberalised support policy so that even staff recruitment could embrace all departments. In effect, this converted the aid into general contingency aid reserves which were used for plugging gaps in resources at the school. The Belgian project is interesting in that a project with a very narrow focus was accepted in the school at a time when the negative effects of this approach were already well known. In part, this occurred because of limitations in the scope of activities which the donor felt able to support. However, the annual reviews of the project suggest that, on the recipient side, there was inadequate internal consultation during the formulation of the project.

Donor management of projects

Following the general rule in aid-funded projects, the management and administration of the UNZA school projects is the responsibility of the donors in consultation with the Dean of the school. This arrangement is generally dictated by the need of the donor to monitor utilisation of project resources. However, on many occasions at the UNZA school, the devolution of the administration of aid undermined the functional cohesion of the school, partly because the central administrative mechanisms within the school itself were not fully mature and therefore not assertive enough. This problem was most pronounced in a situation where the donor project managers had no previous experience of working with a developing country.

Negotiating position

The UNZA school has sometimes found itself in a situation of such dire need that the ability to deeply scrutinise the quality of the aid on offer has been unconsciously compromised. This has mainly occurred in relation to staff recruitment in "take it or leave it" aid situations commonly associated with occasional donors. For example, the
recruitment policy of the UNZA school is that all teaching members of staff should have an MSc post-graduate qualification or its equivalent. However, in the early days, a case was advanced by a donor that the first veterinary degree awarded by some continental European veterinary schools is equivalent to an MSc degree, and on this basis the school accepted, in principle, that these graduates could be appointed as lecturers across the whole spectrum of the curriculum. The lecturers which the school has recruited in this category have made a significant contribution to the sustenance of academic programmes through a willingness to take on major teaching and curriculum development responsibilities at times of critical shortages of more senior staff. However, this has not stopped the recurrence of the debate on whether the European degrees – despite unique qualities – impart an academic omni-competence which enables graduates to take on these responsibilities without further training, or whether the status quo should be accepted simply because it is expedient under the circumstances existing within the school.

AID PROFILES AND POLICIES FOR THE FUTURE

The foundation building phase for most African veterinary schools is almost over and future aid will be directed at building and strengthening the superstructures. However, some aspects of the aid profile are likely to persist. The lessons which have been drawn from past experience in donor/recipient interactions will therefore remain valid:

- It is likely that schools will continue to be highly dependent on donors; veterinary schools take a very long time to reach maturity. The implication of this for donors is that such support requires a very long-term commitment. Otherwise, schools which have been established at such a high cost to donors will join the large herd of “white elephants” which abounds in sub-Saharan Africa. This can be vividly seen by considering the likely effect of Japan withdrawing aid from the UNZA school.

- Institutional cohesion must be maintained in multi-donor funded schools. This will require more “on-site” donor co-operation especially at the time of inception of new donor-funded projects, selecting donor project managers with experience in the developing world and moving away from narrow focus projectisation towards general facilitation aid.

- Bilateral restrictions on the use of donor funds should be reduced to take into account the fact that aid recipients may have needs outside the resource base of the donors, and to increase the cost-effectiveness of the aid, especially in the area of staff recruitment. For example, a fifth of the funds used to support a single member of staff from Great Britain or Japan at the UNZA school can attract very senior and experienced staff from Third World countries such as Nigeria and India which have surplus personnel. Furthermore, flexibility in bilateralism will facilitate long-term strategic planning for the development of complementary material resources. It is noteworthy that some donors have already started to relax approaches to bilateralism. The aid from the Netherlands to the Veterinary School in Mozambique includes staff recruitment from other countries. In Tanzania, aid from Denmark is used for staff training and short-term staff recruitment outside Denmark, if necessary.

- There should be a willingness to make fundamental policy changes during projects, to accommodate new experiences or correct faults in initial project objectives.
- The negotiating ability of the recipients should be improved, if necessary, by establishing standing groups of veterinary education consultants — within professional associations such as the World Association of Veterinary Educators — which can be called upon by recipients to review and advise on the acceptability of aid packages before they are implemented.

As noted in the "Introduction", future co-operation in veterinary education between sub-Saharan Africa and the developed countries will take place in a changed political, economic and professional environment. This will mean that some forms of co-operation based on direct transfer of material and human resources from the developed countries to sub-Saharan Africa will no longer be possible and, in addition, new areas worthy of donor support will emerge as the schools mature. These will include:

- facilitation of South-South co-operation in such areas as staff mobility, curriculum and teaching resource development, and quality control
- management and leadership training for the veterinary academics who will take on resource management from the donor project managers
- modernisation of teaching methods and technologies
- training in teaching and learning skills for lecturers
- strengthening the research and post-graduate training capabilities of schools.

In many of the above activities, there will be a need for collective approaches by the donors and recipients. In this regard, it is encouraging to note that efforts are already being made to strengthen the structures for collective action by donors and recipients in higher education. Those most likely to have a profound impact in sub-Saharan Africa are:

- the Working Group on Higher Education commissioned by the Task Force of Donors to African Education with the support of the World Bank and the Ford Foundation
- the resurgence of the Association of African Universities
- the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (CHESS)
- the increasingly recognised regional University groupings such as the Inter-University Council of East Africa and the Association of Eastern and Southern African Universities.

CONCLUSIONS

It is absolutely essential for the future growth of veterinary education in sub-Saharan Africa, that the needs of the region should be loudly voiced not only at the above higher education fora, but also at other platforms where issues pertaining to the development of animal agriculture in the region are addressed. Therefore, there is an urgent need to form an Association of African Veterinary Schools cast in a similar mould to the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) or the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC). The EAEVE is being used as the umbrella under which studies aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of veterinary education systems in the European Community are being conducted, and under which
strategies for implementing the recommendations of such studies are formulated (for example, see [2]). Similarly, the AAVMC is greatly facilitating the implementation of the Pew National Veterinary Education Programme which is designed to help the North American veterinary colleges in the process of aligning themselves to meet the needs of the 21st Century (4). A recent study on animal agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa (5) has recommended that education in animal agriculture at the university level in the region needs to be reviewed to determine (among other things) how education institutions can best co-operate and collaborate to achieve common and individual goals in the most cost-effective manner. Against such a background, the case for the formation of an Association of African Veterinary Schools should be easy to defend.

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Résumé : A l'instar de beaucoup d'autres écoles vétérinaires d'Afrique subsaharienne, celle de l'Université de Zambie (University of Zambia, UNZA) doit en grande partie son développement à l'aide fournie par les pays développés sous forme de contributions aux frais généraux, de bourses pour la formation du personnel et d'assistance technique. La coopération entre l'UNZA et les donateurs reposait jusqu'ici sur trois axes majeurs : l'aide bilatérale, l'aide liée à des projets spécifiques et la gestion de l'aide par les donateurs. Ces trois méthodes ont été adaptées aux ressources des donateurs et à la capacité de négociation de l'UNZA. Les auteurs décrivent les effets de chacune de ces orientations sur le développement de l'école de l'UNZA. Certes, reconnaissent-ils, les écoles vétérinaires d'Afrique subsaharienne continueront, à l'avenir, de dépendre en grande partie des donateurs. Cependant, comme l'heure est à l'intégration politique et économique aussi bien au niveau de la sous-région que des pays développés, et que la profession vétérinaire évolue vers une spécialisation précoce dans les pays développés alors que l'Afrique subsaharienne a encore besoin de généralistes, la coopération dans un cadre bilatéral est de plus en plus dépassée. Il est, par conséquent, recommandé aux écoles vétérinaires d'Afrique subsaharienne de forger des mécanismes de négociation et d'utilisation collectives de l'aide. De la même manière, une coopération s'impose entre donateurs lorsque les écoles bénéficient d'aides multilatérales afin d'atténuer la rigidité des projets qui tend, alors, à compromettre la cohésion des écoles à donateurs multiples.


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Resumen: Como muchas otras escuelas de veterinaria de África subsahariana, la Escuela de Veterinaria de la Universidad de Zambia (University of Zambia, UNZA) ha recibido el apoyo de importantes contribuciones de los países
desarrollados, tanto en subsidios para cubrir los gastos generales como en becas para la formación del personal y en asistencia técnica. La cooperación entre la UNZA y los donadores se centraba hasta ahora en tres aspectos esenciales: la cooperación bilateral, la ayuda en relación con proyectos específicos y la gestión de estas ayudas por parte de los donadores. Éstos tres aspectos se adaptaron tanto a los recursos de los donadores como a la capacidad de negociación de la UNZA. Los autores describen los efectos de cada uno de estas orientaciones en el desarrollo de la escuela de la UNZA. Señalan que si bien, por una parte, las escuelas de veterinaria de África subsahariana van a seguir dependiendo en gran medida del apoyo de los países desarrollados, el marco bilateral en estas políticas de cooperación está necesariamente superado por la tendencia actual a la integración política y económica – tanto en esta región como en los países desarrollados – así como también por la evolución de la profesión veterinaria, que va hacia una especialización precoz en los países desarrollados mientras en África subsahariana se siguen necesitando profesionales generalistas. Recomienzan así la creación en estas escuelas de mecanismos de negociación y de utilización colectivas de la ayuda recibida. Por último, observan la necesidad de una cooperación entre los países donadores cuando éstos son varios en ayudar una escuela, de modo de paliar una rigidez que podría comprometer la cohesión de los proyectos.


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REFERENCES


