

At the sharp end: Education for sustainable development in small states

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The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions and needs... [It] is where we all live; and development is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode.

– World Commission on Environment and Development (*Brundtland Report*), 1987

Thirty years ago, the General Assembly of the United Nations tasked the World Commission on Environment and Development with formulating ‘a global agenda of change’. It was the report of that Commission, now widely referred to as the Brundtland Report, that proposed the much-quoted definition of sustainable development as: ‘An approach to progress which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs’ (*Our Common Future*, p. 363).

With it came an urgent appeal for collective action by citizens’ groups, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions and the scientific community. The Commission’s message of an integrated approach to sustainable development was addressed to governments and private enterprise, but first and foremost to people (and particularly young people) whose well-being, in the words of its chairman, is the ultimate goal of all environment and development policies.

In fact 2014 marks a number of anniversaries in education for sustainable development. The recent UN meeting on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)¹ in Apia, Samoa (September 2014), is the latest in a process going back to the 1994 Global Conference and resulting UN Programme of Action (POA) on the Sustainable Development of SIDS popularly referred to as the Barbados Programme of Action. At that time, the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) had already been pioneering an understanding of educational development in small states, with Colin Brock’s seminal work, *Scale, Isolation and Dependence: Educational Development in Island Developing and other Specially Disadvantaged States* (1984), leading the way. The Education in Small States Research Group at the University of Bristol (UK), also now 20 years old, had become a hub for much of this, operating as a network of researchers interested in educational policy in small states worldwide.

Today, as always, Commonwealth countries (of all sizes) can learn from the experiences and policy responses of smaller members: for devising education in uncertain conditions, in terms of environmental costs facing us all if mitigation and adaptation efforts are not resourced and co-ordinated on a sound footing. In

Europe too, small states and other administrative units have emerged, for example through independence in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, and through devolution in Spain and the United Kingdom. Such developments have many social and educational implications. The Bristol Research Group therefore has an interest in education and development in small states that is worldwide in scope.

The Bristol conference: Living at the Sharp End

On 17 and 18 July 2014, the Education in Small States Research Group, at the University of Bristol Graduate School of Education hosted researchers, practitioners and policy-makers from the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific on the theme of Living at the Sharp End of Environmental Uncertainty in Small Island States². This consisted of an international multidisciplinary Day Conference and a Research Planning Workshop, designed to strengthen international awareness, recognition and understanding of the small states’ experience with climate change adaptation and education for sustainable development from multidisciplinary perspectives, at international, national and local levels. The event was organised in partnership with the University of Bristol Cabot Institute and the Wales, Zanzibar and Belize-based not-for-profit research and development organisation, Sazani Associates.

More than 100 people participated in the Day Conference, which provided an opportunity to learn from the ‘sharp end’ of environmental uncertainty and climate change – that is the small island states that are some of the first to experience the effects of climate change through sea level rise, the damaging effects of extreme weather events and ground water salination (Sprague and Crossley, 2013).

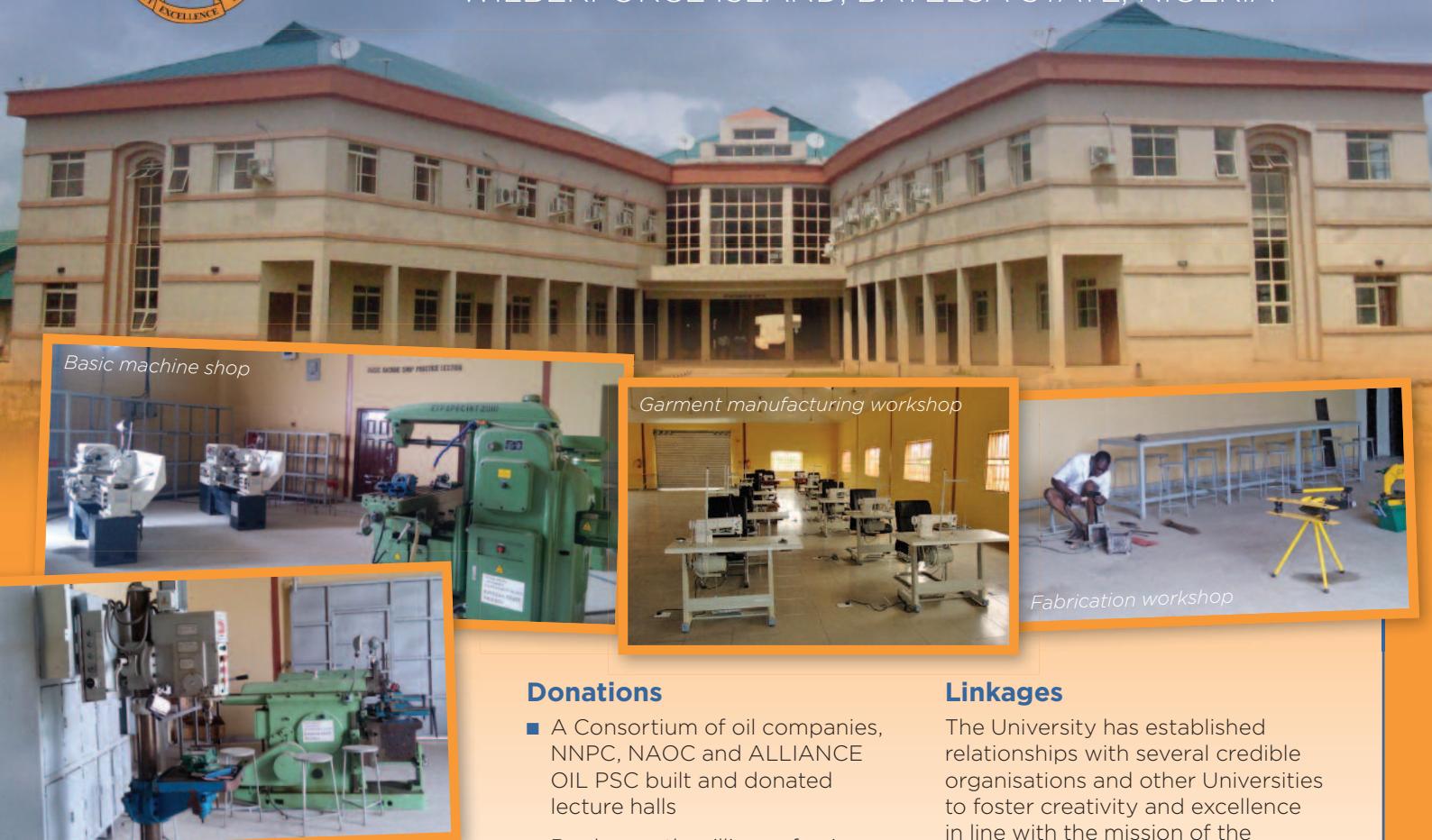
The keynote address was delivered by Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor General and Head of State of Saint Lucia. Her address (see box and following article) examined the challenges and strategies of living with environmental uncertainty from a Caribbean perspective. Through a series of plenary and breakout sessions, participants heard the realities of living with environmental uncertainty in the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean.

A delegation of 40 teachers from Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania) and Wales, partnered in Sazani Associates Global Professional Learning Communities programme, afforded the event a clear practitioner perspective to compliment the researcher presentations. Organisations including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, UNESCO and CfBT/DFID provided their perspectives. Researchers from, or



Niger Delta University

WILBERFORCE ISLAND, BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA



The mission of the Niger Delta University (NDU) is to create a centre of excellence directed towards the design of well-articulated programmes that could produce creative and innovative human resources.

The University is situated in South-South of Nigeria, in the heartland of the delta region of the Niger River, on Wilberforce Island, and is surrounded by rich biodiversity and pristine forest.

NDU's three campuses are the main campus, the College of Health Science campus and the Faculty of Law campus located at the state capital, Yenagoa.

Recent events

- The University graduated its second batch of Medical doctors and fifth batch of Pharmacists during the 2012/2013 Session
- The Niger Delta University played host to (Group D) games of the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA), in April 2013.

Donations

- A Consortium of oil companies, NNPC, NAOC and ALLIANCE OIL PSC built and donated lecture halls
- Books worth millions of naira were donated by Rear Admiral T.J. Lokoson

Facilities

- There are three research centres: Centre for Niger Delta Studies, Centre for Educational Services and the Entrepreneurial Centre
- There are nine workshops at the University: Pharmaceutical Tech, Garment Manufacturing, Fabrication/Machinery, Automobile, Electrical, Agricultural Tech, ICT, Diesel Engine and Carpentry workshops
- 21 m diving pool with office complex
- Modern digital weather station

Academic and professional accreditation

All the graduate and undergraduate programmes at the University are designed to meet international best practices and standards. Accordingly, both academic and professional accreditation exercises have been conducted with success.

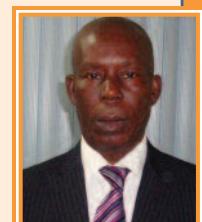
Linkages

The University has established relationships with several credible organisations and other Universities to foster creativity and excellence in line with the mission of the institution. Some collaborations are the Universities of Wolverhampton, Nottingham and University Campus Suffolk in the United Kingdom and also the University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa.

NDU is committed to providing excellence and creativity in teaching, research and development.

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working with, small island states presented findings from projects ranging from coral reef research, hydroponics, climate change adaptation and Indian Ocean women's perspectives, and projects like Schools at University for Climate and Energy (SAUCE). In all of this, the implications for sustainable development and education for sustainable development were taken into consideration.

Day two saw a smaller group of conference delegates convene. They were interested in developing ongoing international research partnerships on key sustainable development and education for sustainable development research priorities and themes that emerged from the conference itself. The day was used to initiate plans for a multidisciplinary research bid.

SIDS partnership launched

One immediate outcome of the workshop was the development and agreement of a formal SIDS Partnership, which was then

Investigating uncertainty

Education is one element in achieving a positive transition, that is, from hazardous uncertainty to greater sustainability. We can think of 'uncertainty' as a situation where the nature of things, extent of consequences, events, conditions, possible outcomes – including knowledge itself – are to a significant extent unknown.

For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) expresses degree of certainty both as a qualitative level of confidence (from very low to very high) and as a quantitative likelihood (from exceptionally unlikely to virtually certain): where 'virtually certain' is set at 99–100 per cent, 'very likely' at 90–100 per cent, 'likely' at 66–100 per cent, 'about as likely as not' at 33–66 per cent, 'unlikely' at zero–33 per cent, 'very unlikely' at zero–ten per cent, and 'exceptionally unlikely' at zero–one per cent (IPCC, 2013).

From another perspective, for the UNDP Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery 'uncertainty' is considered not in terms of the probability of the hazard, but rather the 'probability of harmful consequences resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions', while 'vulnerability' is essentially the likelihood that the event will cause harm based on the social, political, economic and physical conditions of the population or system experiencing the hazard (UNDP, 2004).

While we might not all agree on an exact formulation (at least, not for all contexts), 'uncertainty' seems to involve both:

- Lack of knowledge (for whatever reason) about the present state
- Lack of knowledge regarding how a system will change in the future

From an organisational point of view, this notion might extend beyond the lack (of quality knowledge and information) to the reasons for it; that is, that the organisation is perhaps not doing what it needs to do.

– Adapted from Dame Pearlette Louisy's keynote speech at the Living at the Sharp End conference

launched at the Third International UN Conference on Small Island Developing States in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa. This partnership, entitled Learning from the Sharp End of Environmental Uncertainty in SIDS, builds upon existing collaboration and synergies amongst members of the 20-year strong Education in Small States Research Group and participant organisations at the July Bristol conference.

The partnership involves 22 organisations, including post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions, research groups, specialists and international organisations, such as Commonwealth and UNESCO entities. As such, it addresses the intention of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and of the Major Groups' desire to see non-traditional partnerships that bridge gaps between practitioners, policy-makers, NGOs and researchers. By involving partners from the Caribbean, Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) and Pacific regions, it further addresses calls at the Samoa conference to increase learning and collaboration across the three regions. The objective of this partnership³ is to support a wider global process of learning from the sharp end experience of SIDS in dealing with environmental uncertainty and climate change through developing a wide and inclusive network for:

- Strengthening multidisciplinary relationships between academics, researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, international agencies and other stakeholders
- Better understanding the concept of environmental resilience from the perspectives of SIDS in order to bring these perspectives more firmly into the wider international debates and discourse about resilience
- Generating user engagement around the findings from multiple projects carried out by members of the partnership, including raising awareness of regional data repositories, or resource and training centres where they already exist, and exploring the possibility of developing these where needed
- Developing new research and development projects across a range of disciplines designed to contribute to sustainable development and education for sustainable development in SIDS
- Strengthening good and effective practice in education for sustainable development through the enhancement of school, post-secondary and tertiary education capacity (development of contextualised curricula and exposure to appropriate climate smart technologies and science)
- Exploring development of education, training and skills for the blue economy, including sustainability of coastal livelihoods/sustainable coastal urbanisation; disaster resilience; renewable energy and energy efficiency; and awareness of health and lifestyle issues in health promotion

The combination of academic institutions, policy think tanks and technical organisations provides an exciting and unique partnership for research and realisation of effective and active engagement with the challenges of environmental uncertainty and sustainable development in SIDS, and learning from this collective experience for the wider world. The city of Bristol will serve as the European Green Capital in 2015, thereby providing the partnership an opportunity to further showcase its work, including learning from

the collective SIDS experience, to European states in order to widen international awareness of the experience at the sharp end.

For more information about the Day Conference and Partnership, please visit www.smallstates.net. To learn more about the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, taking place in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, 10–12 November 2014, see www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/world-conference-on-esd-2014.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or areas of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Endnotes

- 1 For more information on the UN Conference on Small Island Developing States, Apia, Samoa, 1–4 September 2014, see www.sids2014.org.
- 2 For more information on the conference, see www.bris.ac.uk/education/events/2014/1002.html.
- 3 For more information about the partnership, see www.bristol.ac.uk/education/research/centres/ics/smallstates/sharend/index.html.

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Adamawa State University

A top-rated, state-owned university with fully accredited programmes

Foundation

Adamawa State University (ADSU) was established in 2002 as the 19th university owned by a state government. It is the first state government owned university in north-eastern Nigeria.

The University was established on the philosophy of 'Education for Development' with a mission to produce graduates of a world-class standard having knowledge and skills to transform the agricultural and industrial capacity of the state and the nation while contributing to global knowledge through research which has significant importance to national development and humanity.

Our Campuses

The main campus, Shuware Campus, is located on the northern fringes of Mubi town set against the backdrop of the Mandara Mountains separating Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon. This campus occupies an area of 101 hectares and houses the Senate Building, the Faculties of Agriculture, Science and Science Education, Arts and Social and Management Sciences, the Postgraduate School, the main Library, Health Centre, student hostels and major sports facilities. Closer to the city is the Lokwuwa Campus occupying an area of 19.53 hectares with the School for Remedial and Basic Studies, and the staff schools.

The largest of the three campuses is the Sahuda Road Campus, located southeast of the city suburbs on 649 hectares. This site provides facilities for agricultural training and research with emphasis on animal sciences.

Vision

ADSU's vision is to be a tower for intellectual development where men and women are trained to acquire the appropriate skills and abilities that will equip them to contribute meaningfully to the development of their immediate communities in particular, Nigeria and the world at large.

Mission

In pursuance of its vision, the University will strive to produce graduates of the highest moral and academic excellence. The University shall pursue policies that will enhance the highest standards in humanities, science, engineering, agriculture and other fields of human endeavour. Through teaching, research and community service, it will strive to contribute to the elimination of poverty, improve food security, employment generation and raw material production for industries.

Academic Development

The University has consolidated the three faculties with 14 programmes at inception to the current 24 fully accredited undergraduate programmes, and has introduced a further 30 postgraduate programmes. The Senate and the University Governing Council, in response to the dynamic and growing needs of society, have recently approved the establishment of the Faculty of Law, the College of Medicine and departments of languages and history. The academic development of the University is heading towards attaining 10 Faculties with 71 departments and research centres and academic support units at full capacity.





Developments and Achievements

■ Adamawa State University emerged as the 'Best Regional University' in the country at the 2013 edition of the Annual Socrates Award organised by the Socrates Committee and the European Business Assembly; and has been granted the right to use the trademark 'BEST UNIVERSITY'.

■ The University has attracted international scholars due to its academic integrity and drive towards providing high quality infrastructure for world-class research.



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