

Introduction

I recently read an article entitled from Fad To Worse¹ about the current tendency of academic administrators and faculty members to jump on the latest bandwagon of a fad that will transform the institution, revolutionize the discipline or improve learning. Policy makers are not spared this tendency either and it is at times difficult to distinguish between the fad – with its very limited shelf-life, and a real change that will have a lasting impact. But education is a long-term investment and changing policies too radically and too often has profound ramifications on systems, institutions, but most of all people. The past 3-4 decades have seen international policy shifts that came close changing at the speed of fads and that have had at times demonstrable and devastating effects. The pendulum-like swings between policies in support of different levels of education in recent past are a prime example.

While usually defending the need for strong support and major investments in higher education and research capacities in all countries – industrialized or developing, IAU has also called for a balanced approach in support of a whole educational system, noting that sound policy must fully recognize and seek better understanding of the interconnections between different educational levels. These levels – basic and primary education, secondary schooling, vocational and technical education and higher, research-driven education are all needed if nations are to improve the level of economic development and security, improve social and health conditions of their people and achieve, in a sustainable manner, the overall goal of offering a quality of life that guarantees human rights and dignity for all their citizens.

To avoid these pendulum swings and perhaps to achieve this balanced and wholistic view of the educational process it may be useful to demonstrate in more systematic ways how the internal workings of a dynamic education system need to work together and indeed how dependent on each other the various parts are. The modest IAU pilot project on linking Higher Education and Research and EFA is based on this premise. It is our goal, even if we recognize the need for priority setting, to show that placing all our eggs in a

¹ From Fad to Worse, Joel Best, in Chronicle of Higher Education, April 14, 2006

single policy basket, may in the long run have dire consequences and furthermore that seeing the system of education in a wholistic way may in fact help us achieve the objectives we set for ourselves both in the Education for All Programme and with the MDGs.

I have been given 20 minutes so I will be very fast to leave time for discussion. My presentation is in 6 brief parts and consists of 12 slides.