

Dr. Jamil Salmi

Planning for Research in Developing Countries: Challenges and Opportunities

Emerging and developing economies face significant new challenges in the global environment, affecting not only the shape and mode of operation but also the purpose of their tertiary education system. Among the most critical dimensions of change are the convergent impacts of globalization, the increasing importance of knowledge as a main driver of economic and social development, and the information and communication revolution.

Both opportunities and threats have arisen out of these new challenges. On the positive side, the role of tertiary education in research is now more influential than ever for the construction of knowledge economies. Tertiary education is central to the creation of the intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilization depend. At the same time, many countries continue to wrestle with difficulties produced by inadequate responses to long standing challenges faced by their tertiary education system. Among these unresolved challenges are the improvement of teaching and research quality and relevance, the introduction of more effective governance structures and management practices, and the need for each country to develop top research universities that can compete with the best in the world.

In this context, my panel comments will focus on the specific challenges that developing countries face in planning and funding research. After describing the difficult environment in which tertiary education institutions operate, I will identify effective strategies to plan and build research capacity in a context of limited resources. Finally, I will address the issue of size. Many low-income countries are small nations that can hardly afford to build a comprehensive research university. I will review options for regional and international cooperation available to them, so that they can contribute and benefit from advanced research.