

The two faces of internationalization? Collaboration with African countries in the internationalization of Swedish higher education and research

Måns Fellesson¹

¹The Nordic Africa Institute, , Uppsala, Sweden

mans.fellesson@nai.uu.se

In a highly competitive global knowledge economy internationalisation of research and higher education has become imperative, leaving governments and national higher learning institutions preoccupied by best practice policy development in cross-border research and higher education co-operation and exchange. On a Swedish government policy level, this best practice has to large extent been informed by the notion of scientific excellence and science and higher education for economic growth in collaboration with actors in areas of the world regarded as economically expansive. At the same time many scientifically and politically defined global challenges threatening human development (economic growth), such as climate and environmental threats, conflicts, implications of population growth and different migration flows and not least global health threats all heavily involve parts of the world not viewed as economically expansive, that is developing countries (OECD/DAC coding). Moreover, following the prognoses of demographic development in the world, the large majority of potential students in higher education (and future researchers, read utbildningsreserv) are estimated to come from countries in the global south, not least from Africa. Accordingly, there seem to be an inconsistency in the priorities of Swedish internationalisation policy as it relates to the nature and geopolitical premises of global development and challenges. An inconsistency that potentially may have a significant effect on the extent and direction of academic relations with developing countries specifically in African and that may lead to serious limitations and deficiencies in the scope and relevance of Swedish research and higher education. The paper addresses this issue through an investigation of the policy development in Swedish internationalization on a 1) government, 2) university and 3) institutional level.

