

Ten-year funder collaborative reviewed

Susan Parker

Balancing the bold vision of the foundation presidents who initiated it with the day-to-day challenges faced by the programme officers who had to put that vision into practice was an ongoing challenge for the ten-year funder collaborative known as the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, according to a new case study.

Susan Parker is the owner at Clear Thinking Communications. Email susan@clearthinkingcommunications.com

Launched in 2000 and recently concluded, the Partnership was the initiative of the presidents of four US foundations: the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation. Three of the four had headed universities in the past, a fact that many participants said was crucial in the presidents' initial and ongoing interest in the programme. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Andrew W Mellon Foundation and the Kresge

Foundation joined the Partnership later. The founding presidents saw the Partnership as an opportunity to make a difference in higher education in Africa beyond what their own individual foundations could achieve. They sought to build from their existing commitments to encourage systemic and sustainable change.

The very strong presidential involvement had both advantages and disadvantages. While it ensured that programme officers had support at their foundations to implement the work of the collaborative, it also meant, at least in some foundations, that programme staff had limited freedom to make decisions without consulting their presidents.

The breadth and logistical complexity of the initiative also posed problems. Programme officers were at times unsure how to carry out the broad Partnership goals identified by the presidents. Staff had to work together across very different institutional

cultures and foundation strategies to develop and implement shared priorities within the broad mandate to 'strengthen higher education in Africa'.

In 2010, the Partnership secretariat closed. Its successes over the decade of its operation included a collective investment of nearly half a billion dollars in higher education in Africa, making it among the largest funder collaboratives ever established. Achieving such a scale of funding and period of working together is highly unusual, particularly given the complex logistics of working across nine countries, seven foundations and five time zones.

For more information

To read *Lessons from a Ten-Year Funder Collaborative*, go to www.foundation-partnership.org/pubs/pdf/phea_case_study.pdf

To read *Accomplishments of the Partnership of Higher Education in Africa 2000-2010* go to www.foundation-partnership.org/pubs/pdf/accomplishments.pdf

New findings from the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies

Did you know...

Between 2007 to 2009, through the worst of the recession, US non-profit employment grew fairly robustly, according to an analysis covering 21 of the USA's 50 states just released by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. Non-profit jobs increased by an average of 2.5 per cent per year during this period while for-profit jobs dropped by 3.3 per cent per year in the same states, a pattern which was true individually for every state examined.

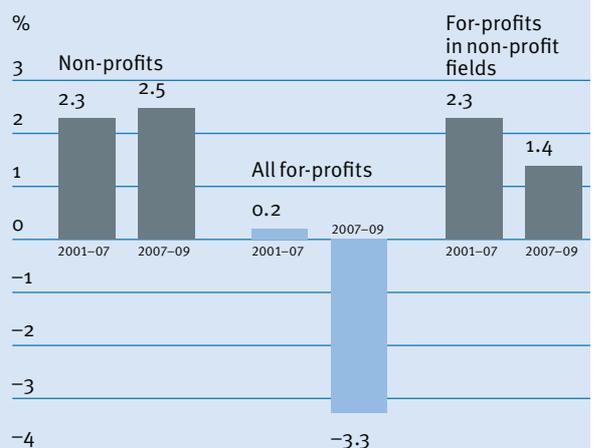
This accentuates a tendency, already apparent before the recession, for the non-profit job market to fare better than its for-profit

counterpart. However, in many of the fields where non-profits are most active, such as health and social services, for-profit jobs also grew substantially, at least prior to the recession. This suggests that the growth of non-profit jobs has more to do with the fields in which they operate than with the nature of non-profit organizations. But for-profits in non-profit fields did less well than non-profits in those fields in 2007-09, perhaps because for-profits were less willing than non-profits to stay the course as economic pressures mounted.

For more information

Nonprofits a Surprising Bright Spot in National Jobs Picture, Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies: <http://tinyurl.com/alliance45>

Average annual percentage change in non-profit employment, 21 states, 2001-07 and 2007-09



Source

Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Studies Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages data.