

CONCEPT PAPER

ENGAGING GCBI IN THE INITIATIVES WITH ACADEMIA

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to propose that the Group on Capacity Building Initiatives (GCBI) adopts the engagement of the Academia in the capacity building work of the ITU-D as a major area of focus for the cycle 2015-2018. It therefore seeks to engage GCBI in the three initiatives proposed for the Academia that are addressed in a separate paper. This engagement with the Academia would be a natural extension of the successful role the GCBI played in putting into place a new strategy for the Centres of Excellence. The engagement of the Academia into the capacity building work of the ITU-D raises the advisory role of the GCBI to a higher level in view of the role academia play in human development.

This document is therefore an annex to the paper proposing the strategic initiatives with the Academia.

2. Background and rationale

2.1 The Group on Capacity Building Initiatives was established through Resolution 40 at WTDC-10, and retained at WTDC 14. The main purpose of GCBI is to “enhance the ability of ITU Members to assist ITU-D, and to contribute to the successful implementation of its capacity building activities in an integrated manner...” In adopting Resolution 40, WTDC considered that human resources are still the most important asset of any organization, and that development and management still needs continuously to be reviewed. It further considered that “critical to the development of these skills is the continuation of ongoing training and exchange of ideas with other training, learning and development professionals”.

Section 2 (iii) of Resolution 40 (Dubai, 2014) instructs GCBI to:

“Coordinate, as appropriate, with organizations and professionals that have expertise in building capacity in areas of identified need, leveraging their expertise by either directing members to those experts or facilitating their involvement in ITU capacity-building activities”.

2.2. Resolution 169 (on “Admission of Academia, universities and their associated research establishments to participate in ITU’s work” set the ground for the Academia to get more involved in the work of ITU. One natural area of such involvement is in capacity building, which is in line with the mandate of GCBI in terms of Resolution 40. Academia act as hubs for innovation and research, and are at the forefront in extending the frontiers of knowledge. This lies at the core of capacity building.

2.3. It is also pertinent to point out that almost 50 % of the membership of GCBI are from Academia. The Chairman of GCBI, Professor Mellor, OBE, of the United Kingdom Telecommunications Academy, is ITU’s Special Envoy for Academia, together with Professor Toshio Obi of Waseda University in Japan, both nominated by the former ITU Secretary-General, Hamadoun I. Touré.

3. Activities of GCBI to date

The activities of GCBI in fulfilment of its mandate have synergies with the capacity building work that will be undertaken in collaboration with Academia.

3.1. Centres of Excellence strategy

Since its formation, GCBI was heavily involved in the development of the new Centres of Excellence strategy, and participated in the process of its implementation. The new strategy is now in place, and the process has been very successful. During the selection process, a number of Academia applied to be Centres of Excellence, and some of them were indeed selected as Centres of Excellence. However, there are a number that were not selected as Centres of Excellence but have a lot to offer to ITU in capacity building and are willing to do so. There is a need to look at the possible involvement of the Academia beyond the Centres of Excellence as selected under the new strategy. A case in point is the excellent capacity building work that was done through the University of Blas Pascal in Latin America and other universities, yet Blas Pascal was not selected as a Centre of Excellence. The engagement of such institutions in capacity building work can be seen as an extension of the Centres of Excellence strategy work that GCBI was so heavily involved in.

3.2. Prague Forum for the Academia 2014

At its 2nd meeting held in Missenden Abbey, UK, from 21 to 22 October 2013, GCBI discussed as part of its agenda, strategies to attract academia into ITU capacity building work. This discussion led to the convening of the first Forum for the Academia organized by the BDT in Prague, from 28-29 April, 2014. The Forum, under the banner “Fostering Innovation and Partnerships in Human Capacity Building: Enhanced Engagement of Academia in the International Telecommunication Union”, explored possibilities for collaboration between the Academia and the ITU Academy. In his opening speech to the Forum, BDT Director stated that “The ITU Academy and the Academia need to work together as both parties have a common objective: to build and develop human and institutional capacity for all”. The meeting shared the collaboration that had already been taking place between the ITU Academy and Academia in the development of standardised training materials such as the Spectrum management training Programme (SMTP) and the Quality of Service Training Programme (QoSTP), as well as in the delivery of trainings through the Centres of Excellence.

During this event, members of the Academia showed a lot of interest in working with ITU Academy, in developing close mutual relationships and in being members of the CoEs network. Some of the recommendations drawn at this event, which clearly indicate the interest of the Academia in ITU Academy work, were:

- To involve more the Academia and the Group on Capacity Building Initiatives in the work of the ITU Academy;
- As a way to involve the Academia in the human capacity building activities of the ITU, there is an intention to invite them to participate in such activities as the Global ICT Forum on Human Capacity Development, a biannual capacity building knowledge sharing platform.

4. Recent Developments involving Academia and some GCBI members since Prague

There have been developments since the Prague Forum for the Academia in Prague that demonstrate that, indeed, there is a role the Academia can play in supporting capacity building activities. Some of these developments are the following:

- A Cooperation Agreement and Project Document have been developed and signed between ITU/BDT and United Kingdom Telecommunications Academy (UKTA), to deliver a Masters in Communications Management degree program (eMCM). The Chairman of GCBI, is a former Chairman of UKTA and was directly involved in this initiative.
- A Cooperation Agreement and Project Document have been developed between ITU/BDT and Czech Technical University (CTU), to deliver the Spectrum Management Training Programme (SMTP). CTU hosted the first forum for the Academia in 2014.
- Discussions are currently underway with a number of Universities in Latin America to deliver SMTP.
- Discussions are currently underway with a consortium of Universities in Latin America to deliver a Strategic Telecommunications Management (STM) programme. Some of the Universities involved in this consortium are not Centres of Excellence.
- Two new standardized training programs under development, namely the Quality of Service Training Programme (QoSTP) and the ICT and Climate Change Training Programme which are being designed with the active participation of the Academia in mind, in the programme delivery.
- A report on “Skills Development, Lifelong Learning, and Mobile Technology”, has been produced and due for release. The 8 contributors to the 8 chapters in the report were all done by experts from the Academia.

5. Proposal

GCBI should make engaging the Academia its main strategic focus area for the 2015-2018 cycle. This takes on from the new Centres of Excellence strategy, which was the major focus area for GCBI during the 2010-2014 cycle. Having successfully steered that process GCBI can take on the engagement of the academia something that is value adding for reporting to TDAG, and in line with its mandate in terms of Resolution 40 of WTDC-14.

Three initiatives are proposed to engage the academia in capacity building activities. These are covered in a separate document but outlined briefly here as follows:

- a) Trends in Capacity Building publication –
This is a publication covering topical emerging issues and focusing on the capacity building and/or developmental dimension. The proposal is to tap into the research capabilities and innovativeness of the academia as contributors of articles for this publication. Given the closeness of GCBI to the Academia, GCBI is invited to oversee the development of this publication. This includes possibly establishing a selection mechanism such as an Editorial Board, to choose the best articles for publishing.

b) **Creating an Online Dialogue Platform for the Academia**

GCBI could recommend Communities of experts in specific topics, to be set up on the ITU academy platform to create an “ideas laboratory” for capacity building. GCBI members could also participate in moderating these communities.

c) **Convening a Forum for the Academia.**

It is also recommended that GCBI be involved in this meeting. It can contribute to the strategies for tapping into other academic institutions that are not traditionally associated with the work of ITU. This role would be an extension of their participation in the Prague event.

The strategy to engage the Academia is integrated into the strategy of the Global Human Capacity Development Forum. As the role of GCBI in future Global Forums is expected to be central, it is important to also integrate its role in the work of the academia at an early stage.

6. Conclusion

As GCBI derived its advisory mandate from the membership at WTDC 14, it is important that it be involved in the strategic capacity building initiatives of BDT. Its value in doing so has already been established through the role it played in making the new Centres of Excellence strategy a success. Its knowledge of the world of the academia will be valuable in leveraging the academia to engage in capacity building work of ITU.