LEADING THE TRANSITION FROM DONOR-DRIVEN TO PARTNER-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

Lessons on the transition from the Canadian College Partnership Program (CCPP) to the Education for Employment (EFE) Program

By

Paul Brennan, Senior Partner, InnovEd ODT Canada

For

World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
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& Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan)

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2005 and 2008, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC, now known as Colleges and Institutes Canada or CICan) undertook an in-depth review of its twenty-year Partnership Program funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in order to realign it with the new realities of partner-driven development assistance and to invest the lessons learnt from their previous experiences into a renewed program.

The new program, eventually called the Education for Employment (EFE) Program, would make significant changes to how the Association and its network of over 130 member colleges, institutes, Cégeps, polytechnics and universities with a college mandate carried out development assistance. These included:

- Focusing on five countries and one region from the over 50 countries where association-funded programs existed;
- Working in a more integrated manner with ministries, institutions and employer associations on a few priority sectors or themes to facilitate a lasting transformation;
- Moving from Canadian institutions selecting their partners abroad to international institutions selecting their preferred Canadian partner from submissions;
- Maintaining an institution to institution capacity-building approach while enriching the foundation of the partnerships based on colleges/institutes' core competencies.

This transition was not an easy one, especially for an association accountable to its Canadian members, most of whom were quite happy with the existing model. In addition, there were approximately 100 overseas institutions wanting to continue partnerships with Canadian colleges and institutes who would be displeased if they were not in the reduced number of focus countries. The challenge was to transition from a long-lasting, tried and true mode of operation that colleges/institutes were comfortable with to an innovative program with an approach that better suited the emerging realities and new development paradigm.

Leading the transition successfully took courage, leadership, engagement of all partners in a true dialogue, and a constant balancing of values pertaining to sustainable development with those that anchor a responsive membership association. How this was achieved and what lessons remain relevant for today’s context is the focus of this case study.

The paper will review the historical context, and then identify three key lessons for achieving more sustainable development while leading a national association in a decentralized educational Canadian context. Finally, the case study will briefly look at some of the initial results of the EFE approach and what relevance it has for development cooperation in the present era.

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1 ACCC changed its name to CICan in 2014 to reflect a growing diversity in the naming of its member institutions, from colleges, institutes of technology, polytechnics, Cégeps, community colleges and university colleges, naming dependent on provincial ministry decisions. This case will refer to ACCC and to CICan as “the association”.

2 In 2013 CIDA was subsumed under Global Affairs Canada (GAC), as one of its divisions. This case will use the CIDA name as it is still well known and was in use at the time when the events in this article occurred.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Created in 1972, CICan is the national not-for-profit association created by Canada’s public colleges and institutes to advocate on their behalf at the national level, stimulate knowledge exchanges and collaboration across provincial/territorial education boundaries, and undertake joint initiatives in the national and international spheres.

In 1979, the Association received its first financial support from the recently-created Partnership Branch of CIDA to explore the potential for colleges to undertake international development projects. Colleges and institutes got involved in cooperation projects with both CIDA bilateral and partnership funding in the eighties allowing them to learn how to engage with international partners from developing countries. At the time as they felt that involving their faculty, staff and students in international cooperation would help them develop into better professionals and global citizens.

In 1991, a Fund for Collegiate Institutional Cooperation (FCIC) Program was set up and then regularized with two larger grants known as the Canadian College Partnership Program (CCPP), which lasted until 2007. It allowed colleges to engage in three to four-year partnerships with an overseas institution of their choice, with the goal of improving the partner’s capacity to deliver new and more relevant education and training programs and services for youth. Colleges submitted proposals on a yearly basis and the most relevant were selected by a committee that included representatives from CIDA, from colleges and later from major partner countries.

Canadian colleges/institutes had to be willing to invest themselves in these partnerships, usually to the tune of at least 25% of the value of the Canadian Government’s contribution, the general principle of CIDA’s Partnership Branch. This ensured commitment to development goals as opposed to only chasing contracts and revenue. Canadian student engagement in the projects was a key requirement, allowing Canadians to learn more about development issues at a time when they were not that well-known. Such student participation was funded under the CCPP and did lead to many young Canadians with new global perspectives and a new perception of their own country upon return.

From 1991 to 2007, CCPP allowed participating Canadian colleges and institutes to engage in 631 projects with 734 overseas partners in 105 developing countries. The Canadian Government contributed a total of $120 million and the colleges about $32.5 million (both in-kind and actual dollar contributions).

The project content featured the complete range of colleges’ own programs and expertise in a number of sectors including agriculture, health, natural resources, manufacturing, IT, business, tourism and engineering, to name but a few. Services included sharing new pedagogical approaches to focus on student applied learning needs above all, updating or creating new curriculum that was relevant to their community and job opportunities, and learning how to lead a community-responsive institution.

Projects often included building capacity to train the existing workforce, to develop entrepreneurship and small business development services and to be able to reach out and engage poorer and vulnerable populations, including more girls and women, in relevant education and training.

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3 For a fuller history of this period please refer to the ACCC and CIDA publication “Education for Employment: A 40-year History of CICAN International Partnerships”, by Paul Brennan. Published in 2012.
Several CIDA-funded evaluations, including the final one done by the firm Universalia, concluded that there was real value for the investment, as the results achieved were often greater than promised, in good part because Canadian faculty were dedicated to achieving positive results and because it set up an institutional partnership that often went beyond the immediate project outputs and contract.\(^4\)

Universalia reported clear evidence of the CCPP having contributed to changed approaches to teaching and learning, better employability of graduates, and new partnerships with surrounding communities.\(^5\)

Many member colleges and Association staff were satisfied with the program and were hoping for yet another renewal. The CCPP had allowed colleges to get their feet wet internationally, to get their faculty and students abroad to better understand development and inequality issues, and to understand their own institution and country in a new way. International directors at colleges were able to develop priority countries around which they built several projects and exchange activities. The mode of the CCPP was viewed as “very responsive” to member interests and priorities, as well as contributing to effective development and responsive education.

The major issue was that spreading such modest projects around the globe in so many countries and institutions was not producing systemic and sustainable transformations within the many recipient countries. Some projects did manage to leverage broader system changes, but the majority made local institutional differences for some time, later fading as the weight of the knowledge-based approach and predominant ministry rules squashed the emerging new ideas in one corner of the country.

In a context where achieving sustainable goals and results was gaining in prominence globally, some Association staff, international partners, and Canadian colleges/institutes began to question whether there was not a better way of doing things.

If there was any hesitation to fully engage in these reflections and improvements, the Universalia Evaluation of 2004 confirmed their urgent need. While recognizing the many results attained and that the CIDA contribution was very good “value for money”, it outlined four major recommendations for significant improvement:

- The objectives of any new CCPP type program needed to be much more closely tied to the priorities of developing countries and much more demand-driven;
- The program should aspire to have more concentrated impacts at the national, regional and/or sectoral levels in selected developing countries by focusing the projects in fewer countries and sectors;
- ACCC should aim to become increasingly well-known and have a respected role and valued niche in technical and vocational education and training in selected developing countries;
- ACCC should clarify its theory of change and be guided by a clear and coherent program rationale, framework, strategy and results.\(^6\)

\(^4\) “Evaluation of the Canadian College Partnership Program” for CIDA, done by Universalia in 2004 (Geraldine Cooney as Team Leader of a group of eight evaluators)


These recommendations were in line with the emerging global consensus on how to undertake international development in a more sustainable manner. Discussions among all donors and recipient countries led to the 2005 “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness” and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action. The Declaration set out five common principles for achieving effective development: Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Results and Mutual accountability.

The Accra Agenda for Action set out more elaborate guidelines for implementation of the five general principles that resonated with NGOs and membership associations:

1. Strengthening Country Ownership over Development
2. Building more Effective and Inclusive Partnerships for Development
3. Delivering and Accounting for Development Results

The political context in Canada also changed with the election of a Conservative Government in 2006. The new Government indicated early on that concrete deliverables would matter even more than in the past, and collaboration with the private sector in Canada and abroad needed to be enhanced.

As Michelle Veilleux, Deputy-Director of the CIDA Division that was funding CCPP and then EFE, summarized in an interview: “This was all part of the transition among NGOs, associations and CIDA from a charity approach to development to a partnership one requiring sustainable results. It was a difficult transition to make after so many years under another mode. Colleges had learnt a lot from their CCPP projects, but it was time to move on.”

In addition, many countries around the world were starting to pay more attention to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). As the numbers of graduates from primary and secondary schools around the globe significantly increased as a result of the UNESCO-led “Education for All” campaign, beginning in 2000, the question became how to transition those graduates into employment or self-employment. University studies could not be the only pathway available anymore and the jobs available required practical skills beyond basic education. Building programs at the upper secondary and post-secondary level that could focus on the education to employment transition became a rising priority.

What lessons were learnt from this major transformation which might be relevant today?

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7 http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm
8 “TVET” was the term most often used internationally, including by UNEVOC, but it was much less used in Canada as colleges had realized that “vocational” carried a lower-level training connotation that needed to be discarded. Interestingly in Québec, vocational had been translated as professional education, which was more acceptable.
10 See The International Institute for Educational Planning’s report in 2004 on this point, adding to the employment argument that TVET also contributed to enhanced competitiveness and productivity for developing countries.
LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: Aligning membership, donor and overseas partner priorities must be based on finding common values & objectives, with the partner driving change

A multi-party endeavour in development cooperation will always face tensions between the overseas partner needs, the changing priorities of the donor community and the capacities and interests of the implementing agencies. In this case, there was the added dimension of having a national membership association whose primary mandate was to meet the needs of its diverse members in Canada. Reconciling and balancing these different perspectives and interests in a productive manner is an art. How were these dealt with in this case?

As mentioned above, the global agreement of the day called upon all actors in development cooperation to review their own practices in a comprehensive manner. For the Association, the ownership principle became the first to tackle.

By asking deeper questions about ownership, some discordant voices felt encouraged to speak up. Marie-Josée Fortin, then Manager of the CCPP and eventually the director of EFE, remembers one of their closest overseas partners, Papa Kane, ILO Regional Director for West Africa who knew many of the CCPP partners in francophone Africa, telling her that “the CCPP projects were very good but were still driven mostly by Canada, led by Canadians with most of the funding going to Canadian institutions and experts.” This perspective took her aback at first, but upon further reflection, she had to admit that he was right.

Canadian colleges chose their partner institutions abroad, in the countries and economic sectors that corresponded to their strengths. They developed project proposals largely on their own after a field visit and submitted them to a selection committee in Canada made up mostly of Canadians. Over 50% of the project budgets was indeed going to the Canadian college or institute and association management. Responsibility for reporting to CIDA on results was essentially in the hands of Canadians. As one Canadian college’s international director put it: “Which partner institution abroad would not agree with the suggested design and project when a Canadian institution arrives with a potential $300,000?”

Resolving the misalignment of the CCPP with the new principle of partner ownership

The Association set up an internal Steering Committee to lead the reflections and exploration of a new mode of operation. It was made up of Gerald Brown, President & CEO; Bernard Lachance, VP for International Partnerships and former DG of Cégep régional de Lanaudière; and Marie-Josée Fortin, Manager of the CCPP. Other experienced partners were brought in occasionally: Papa Kane Director of the ILO in western Africa; José Palacios, Rector of the University of Atacama in Chile; and Pierre Racicot, retired VP of CIDA who brought the important donor perspective. Paul Brennan joined the committee when he replaced Bernard Lachance as VP in 2007.

Weekly meetings were held to determine how to consult all partners that needed to be involved. The committee decided to undertake a series of consultations on the issue with both its membership and overseas partners in different parts of the world, including countries where there was already a significant concentration of CCPP projects.

This was a significant undertaking that required resources to bring together a large number of partners. It was felt that a redesign of the program was well worth the costs and CIDA staff agreed to allow the
The consultations involved asking all partners a series of similar questions regarding what to improve:

- What were the main lessons from the CCPP and bilaterally-funded development projects regarding sustainable transformation?
- What were the institutions and learners of the overseas partner countries most interested in learning from their Canadian college partners?
- How might a renewed future program be better aligned with the principles of the Paris and Accra declarations, particularly regarding ownership and sustainability?
- How can the program be better aligned with the core mission and capacities of Canadian colleges and institutes in skill provision and workforce development?
- What were CIDA’s and potential partner countries’ current directions and priorities?

The consultations were held in four overseas locations and reached over 400 participants.\textsuperscript{11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Programs Involved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dakar, Sénégal</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>CCPP &amp; CCNB bilateral in Burkina Faso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar es Salaam, Tanzania</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>CCPP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copiapo, Chile</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>CCPP &amp; Centro Minero Benjamín Teplitzky</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanoi, Vietnam</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>CCPP &amp; Vietnam-Canada Community College Project</td>
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Consultations provided a visible signal that the Association wanted to explore significant changes in programming with its overseas partners. Participants included not only institutional partners but also the ministers concerned, senior civil servants and representatives from employer groups. From Canada, senior leaders from CIDA participated: the VP of the Partnership Branch; Director of the Institutional Partnership division; senior managers for regions based in Ottawa; and Ambassadors for Canada and Heads of Aid in each region.

Additional consultations were held during the Association’s annual conference and a CCPP Partners Forum held in Montréal in 2007 for those who had not been able to attend overseas. These many consultations also allowed the Association, in consultation with CIDA staff, to whittle the list of the top fifteen countries of interest down to six. Countries selected were those keenest on the new approach and that had plans (even if preliminary) headed in the direction of system and institutional transformation, in partnership with the employers of their country.

\textsuperscript{11} Taken from “Education for Employment: A 40-year History of ACCC International Partnerships”, Paul Brennan. Published by CIDA and ACCC, 2012.
One example is illustrative of a true consultative approach in developing the new EFE programs. The Minister of Sénégal for Technical Education and Vocational Training, the Honourable Moussa Sakho, in a subsequent letter accompanying his proposal for an EFE program in Sénégal, wrote:

*The conception of this project, which was developed by my ministry and supported by your experts, has taken into account the lessons learnt from the Senegalese-Canadian Forum that we jointly organized in Dakar in November of 2005 and which brought together our educational institutions, as well as our private sector partners. This project fits perfectly into our new national strategy for the reform of our sector. In addition, it is complementary to what other technical and financial partners are undertaking with us.*

In addition to the Minister’s endorsement, the business and professional associations for the selected priority economic sectors in Sénégal -- agriculture & agri-foods, maritime & ports, and construction -- formally supported the new design and proposal. This was critical to any attempt to better align education and training to actual employment and self-employment opportunities.

The conditions for a more open dialogue were created by sharing CCPP lessons, by a constructive external evaluation, by the new globally-adopted principles adopted in Paris and Ghana and a by a genuine attempt at inclusivity. The discussions involved five different types of participants (governments from both sides, institutions from both sides and employer groups from a few partner countries) with a common aim.

Despite the extensive efforts to involve all stakeholders in the process of jointly defining a new program, there was some resistance to change, as expected. Several participating Canadian colleges and institutes expressed concerns that the emerging new design would undermine their decision-making power. They gradually understood that broader principles and objectives were involved, that were evidence-based and agreed to globally. By listening to the discussion and feeling welcome to raise their questions, most colleges/institutes began to embrace the new paradigm. Some of the larger ones had already moved to that framework within the bilaterally-funded projects that some were implementing on their own.

The Association summarized this emerging, integrated strategy graphically in 2008 in the following manner, illustrating the support to be provided at the policy level (A) to ministries, at the institutional implementation level (B) with an average of twelve institutional partnerships in three sectors per country, and at the network level (C) of critical partners like employer and community groups. This was very different from a series of one-to-one institutional partnerships around the globe.

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12 Taken from Annex IV of the EFE Program Proposal to CIDA, submitted August 3rd, 2007 (my translation)
The new EFE design was on its way to responding to the first recommendation of the Universalia Evaluation, becoming more demand-driven and responding more closely to the priorities of partner countries. Now the more challenging part – implementation.

The Association’s leadership proposed to have the overseas partner choose its Canadian partner institution by coming to Canada and interviewing the institutions who had expressed a desire to work with them. This made some Canadian colleges uncomfortable at first as they were accustomed to choosing ‘their’ country and overseas partner and to leading the design process, albeit in close consultation with the partner institution. But again, that approach kept the leadership in the hands of Canadians and there was no longer room for this in the new approach to partnership. Marie-Josée Fortin said that she would often reinforce with members that the international partners now had to truly be in the driver’s seat in all key aspects.

This design decision sent a clear message to the overseas partners that this was a serious shift towards local ownership. Many explained that for the very first time in all their development experience, they had the opportunity to create their own terms of reference for what they decided were priorities, and then identify which partner with what expertise and approach would be most suitable for their needs.
Mozambican partners would later note that “We felt like the leaders of the process for the first time. Canadians have understood. But we had to change as well.”\(^\text{13}\) This was a major step forward.

This radical departure in how the Association managed its major development cooperation program was made possible by keeping its members informed and involved and organizing training sessions across Canada on how to develop a proposal in the new mode. As Gerald Ingersoll, Chief Learning Officer and Head of International at the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) put it: “The key was ACCC equipping the members with training and information to facilitate the transition. Membership was involved from the beginning and felt supported in the transition.”

Based on objective evaluations at multiple levels of what leads to sustainable development results, the new EFE re-balanced the relationship between ownership and partnership, with more ownership abroad whilst maintaining partnership as the main mode of cooperation.

**LESSON 2: An integrated approach, with institutional partnerships at the core, would lead to more results and greater sustainability.**

Universalia had also recommended that the Association clarify its model of change, explaining why it would lead to more sustainable results than in the past. Not many NGOs or associations take the time to elucidate their model of change, and to then assess and adjust it based on actual results a few years later – ACCC was now committed to this.

As the Universalia evaluation noted, a few institutional partnerships sprinkled over many countries seldom led to sustainable system or country transformation. An innovative institution cannot often maintain different ways of working and teaching within a system and ministry that is pulling in a different direction. Gradually the old ways with the old rewards for compliance reassert themselves.

For example, even with a larger investment of a bilateral project following a partnership project in the mining sector in Chile, the new applied mining department in a Chilean University, created with good practices and employer engagement, eventually failed and was closed down because of the weight of a university approach to education and a lack of support from subsequent ministries of education. How could smaller institutions with $300K be expected to make sustainable systemic changes?

The Association could contrast the limited CCPP results with those from a few of their partnership programs in larger countries that tended to involve ten to twenty partnerships per country. These were: the Canada-China College Linkage Project (CCCLP) worth $7.5 million and involving thirty-two Canadian and Chinese colleges/institutes; and the Canada-India Institute-Industry Linkage Project (CIIILP) worth $8.4 million involving twenty-two Canadian colleges/institutes. In this model, evaluations had shown sustainable results being achieved such as the use of Canadian-developed competency-based education with close links to industry becoming the norm in the expanding college system in China.

The experiences of co-designing and managing large bilateral projects aligned with national priorities helped smaller countries like Tunisia to set up and expand its new network of polytechnics (Instituts

\(^\text{13}\) Taken from an evaluation of the selection process by Mozambican institutions of their Canadian partners in 2010.
supérieurs d’enseignement technologique or ISETs) and to expand the vocational training capacity in Morocco’s Centres de formation professionnelle (CFPs). The Association design team remembers the Tunisian Deputy Minister for technical and professional education explaining to them where the Canadian project would fit within the large chart on his wall of all their projects contributing to system reform (including their own, those of the French, the World Bank, etc.).

The PRICAT (Tunisia) and PRICAM (Morocco) projects allowed Association staff to see the positive impacts of managing a country program with fifteen institutional partnerships, each contributing to the same overall system transformation that was already in process in each of the countries. The new ISETs and CFPs improved their functioning and service to young people in both countries because both ministries were involved in the leadership and management of the projects and were intent on adapting and adopting the positive lessons across the system.

**How does this translate to a CIDA Partnership Branch responsive funding mechanism for multiple countries?**

The Association’s leadership decided that the number of countries they were involved in had to be reduced to permit the development of a critical mass of partnerships in a few countries. This selection process would need to consider the countries where members had historically been the most active as well as the twenty focus countries CIDA had identified as their priorities at the time.14

Another critical selection factor was clear evidence that the country truly wanted a transformation in its technical education system and had begun planning for this. If ownership was a main criterion for sustainability, then a country, or even institution for that matter, had to want to develop and “own” the transformation that it desired.

The Association asked the remaining nine countries on their priority list to attend their Annual Conference in 2007 to present to Canadians what their current priorities were with respect to technical and applied education reforms. These presentations allowed the Association and members to assess country readiness and make the final decision on which six countries or regions would be selected for on-going focus.

All three African countries selected (Senegal, Tanzania and Mozambique) had existing plans for transforming their TVET systems. Senegal had elaborate plans; Tanzania had identified its priorities in initial plans; and Mozambique had a large World Bank project supporting their system transformation. The EFE project was not imposing TVET transformation but facilitating their journey.

In addition to government and education institutions, there was a third partner group that was not often included in the design of education projects, but that was critical to the success of any efforts to better align education to employment: employer groups, both for large and small businesses. Though the “why” of engaging employer groups was clear, having all partners embrace and respect their participation was not as easy.

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Just as sustainability of results required limiting focus to a few countries, sustained engagement of employer groups would similarly require focus on a few important economic sectors in a given country. So, as part of the project, governments were asked to identify three emerging priority economic sectors where access to qualified personnel was a serious constraint to growth. The corresponding employer association would become an integral part of the planning and project.

As Elaine McNeil, Head of International at SIAST (now Saskatchewan Polytechnic) with broad experience in many partnership, bilateral and multilateral projects, commented: “It was critical to involve employers as well as ministries of industry, the economy and labour, to put pressure on an often-antiquated education system not in tune with society’s needs.”

Next, ministries and employers were asked to identify three or four leading institutions serving each of the identified economic sectors. Experience in previous programs had shown that sustainable results usually happen when institutions with some leadership and capacity are strengthened, acting as models for the other institutions in the system. Choosing the institution most in need is not always the best choice for sustained and systemic change.

These various elements became the building blocks of an integrated Association strategy for change and sustainable results. A 2008 ACCC graph placed learners at the centre and more clearly identified employers and employer groups as one of the three critical actors to make sustainable change happen for learners, along with the critical contributions that each needs to make to the process.

THE VIRTUOUS EMPLOYMENT TRIANGLE

Some of the EFE projects even provided support to employer or industry associations to improve their capacity to provide institutions and government with better labor market information on upcoming employment needs in their sector. EFE projects funded the Canadian Human Resources Sector Councils
in IT, Tourism & Hospitality, Mining and Agriculture to partner with their equivalents in EFE countries, extending the institutional partnership mode in a new and creative manner.

This helped to meet the Accra guidelines for “Building more Effective and Inclusive Partnerships for Development” and created a clearer model for integrated transformation, albeit more complex to implement. The employer-led “pull” combined with a bottom-up “push” via the educational institutions supported by ministry level policy were both critical to success.

Adding a new partnership voice -- employer associations and community groups -- helped to ensure that change would happen learners would benefit from relevant education for in-demand jobs. They engaged with the institutions and faculty on a regular basis to detail the competencies needed by future graduates to find meaningful employment in the sector. They also helped to press ministries to move faster with enabling policy, including allowing individual institutions greater autonomy to respond to needed changes.

The Universalia evaluation noted that an institutional partnership approach indeed produced results that were often impressive and that frequently exceeded targets. This was due to the collaboration and growing synergies between local and Canadian institutions that had similar educational mandates and values, albeit in very different contexts. Participating Canadian faculty generally viewed themselves as colleagues there to accompany evolution rather than to prescribe change. Importantly, Canadian students and faculty reported deep learning as well. In short, according to project reports, institutional partnerships often went beyond the planned results of the project.

An example of this can be seen in twelve Québec Cégeps responding to the lack of adequate equipment that they found in their Senegalese partner institutes. Existing project budgets for equipment could never meet the huge need institutions had for up-to-date equipment that would give students the chance to learn on industry-standard technology. The Cégeps involved decided to launch a call to their network of 48 Cégeps for donations of equipment to Senegal. They covered the costs of getting all of the donated equipment to the port of Montreal, and the Canadian and Senegalese governments took care of the transportation costs to Dakar and then the local institutions. The impact was significant and directly benefitted Senegalese students.

This outcome was not planned in the project but grew out of the commitment of institutional partners to help each other. There are numerous examples of additional contributions to projects because of strong long-term institutional partnerships. Niagara College maintained its close links with polytechnics in South Africa and Brazil well after institutional project funding ended, to the point where Niagara students even did their internships in Brazil and South Africa. One-way partnerships gradually transformed into two-way relationships of mutual support and collaboration.

One of the few regrets that colleges expressed in interviews was that CIDA had made it known that it would no longer fund the participation of Canadian students in overseas development projects. As Darren Schemmer, VP of Partnerships Branch at CIDA at the time, explained:

*CIDA was very much in favour of the partnership mode of delivering assistance, but our funding should no longer be about your membership and students getting experience abroad, but rather about building the capacity of partners abroad.*
Many colleges and institutes continued to involve students at their own expense because of the extraordinary learning opportunity it offered their students about development and global citizenship.

**LESSON 3: Leadership that is self-critical, responsive and visionary is needed to ensure relevancy and sustainability.**

Gerry Brown, President of the Association at the time of the CCPP-EFE transition, highlighted the following lesson: “As soon as a program or initiative is up and running, a leader needs to turn his attention to what will be the next challenge or opportunity that will be coming soon.” He is firm in his belief that leaders must take the time to reflect critically, analyze new trends and gather around them intelligent people who will contribute to questioning the status quo and imagining the future.

He was very responsive to membership needs and had been chosen as CEO a few years earlier to refocus the Association on the priorities of its members. Many of those members had been quite satisfied with their CCPP projects over the years and had developed special knowledge and partnerships in particular countries, garnering excellent short-term results. For example, the smaller Collège communautaire du Nouveau Brunswick (CCNB) had developed a series of CCPP projects in Burkina Faso and Mali, while its English equivalent New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) had developed a strong partnership with many institutions in Cuba. What would they say when they discovered these countries in which they had invested scarce resources over many years were not among the six chosen?

Several colleges and institutes were anxious about the emerging changes, and in particular the smaller or medium-sized ones who were loath to abandon long-time relationships. Fundamentally, the many proposed program changes in support of the Paris and Accra Declarations put the Association at risk of alienating some members.

Gerald Brown would later explain that he chose to chair the transition committee himself because he was convinced that transformation was needed, CCPP represented the Associations’ largest international project involving over 50 members, and there was still strong interest in the Association brokering opportunities for its membership. The way to resolve the hesitations would be to discuss the differing points of view, anchoring the conversation on common objectives and values. Creating the time for senior leaders to step back, review, analyze and imagine new paths forward was prioritized, just as much as the external engagement of members and partners.

The process of change was very consultative, and gradual to allow all voices to be heard in the shaping of future program iterations. No member would be left with questions unanswered or without support from the Association to make the difficult transition. An example of such support was offering to connect them with potential partners in the countries of focus.

A leader must also constructively engage with its partners at all levels. This had to include dialogue with CIDA and the new government. The Honourable Beverly Oda, a former educator from the Oshawa region, became the minister responsible for CIDA. During her first three missions abroad, she had heard that strengthening access to relevant education and training was critical to achieving sustainable economic and social development. She returned to Oshawa and called the President of Durham College, Gary Polanski, whom she knew well. “Who could do this kind of work in the skills and institutional
“strengthening area?” she asked. He pointed her in the direction of his national association. Luck does sometime play a role in transformation, Mr. Brown would comment.

This led to meetings between Minister Oda and Gerald Brown, followed by meetings with Association board members. These meetings allowed Minister Oda and her staff to better understand what colleges and institutes were doing abroad and their impressive results to date. It allowed Association leadership to better understand what the Minister and senior civil servants saw as their new priorities.

Through its constructive engagement with the government, the Association was able to adapt and align its emerging new approach with the priorities of the new Government so show how EFE projects would meet their government priorities, be more partner-driven and sustainable, and meet the new international commitments. It was also focused on providing youth with skills for employment, as the college system was doing in Canada.

As Jos Nolle, then Head of International at Niagara College, summarized: “Colleges are used to adapting quickly to changes in the labour market, so this was similar, adjusting to clear changes in the development domain. We are pragmatic and we learn quickly.” And while smaller projects in non-focus countries did have great meaning, it was clear that the context had changed internationally and colleges needed to adapt, according to Jos.

Similarly, meeting the needs of the colleges and institutes who were struggling with the new priorities was a leadership opportunity Gerald was keen to meet head-on. The Association ran a number of orientation and training sessions for its membership across Canada to equip them all with the same information, as well as tools and support to be able to take part in the new EFE Program. Partnerships between experienced and less experienced colleges and institutes were encouraged.

It also provided training in how to seek other types of funding from the various International Funding Institutions, Banks and Foundations for countries that were no longer of focus for Canada and CICan. CCNB obtained funding from La Francophonie and UMEOA in Burkina Faso and the region, and the Marine Institute of Newfoundland and Labrador from the Asian Development Bank in three countries of Asia.

In leadership roles, language matters. Part of the challenge was finding a name for the new type of more responsive program, highlighting the desired results rather than who was administering it in Canada, as the CCPP did. After much reflection, debate and playing around with options, the program was branded as an approach that related to the core competency of colleges/institutes in Canada and that would likely resonate abroad: Education for Employment.

Universalia’s evaluation recommended that “ACCC should aim to become increasingly well-known and have a respected role and valued niche in technical and vocational education and training in selected developing countries.” Education for Employment aimed to accomplished this.

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15 The development section of the Union monétaire des Etats de l’ouest africain, or the West African Monetary Union agency, which had some development assistance responsibilities in the education domain.
INITIAL RESULTS OF THE EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT (EFE) PROGRAM

The first EFE program was for three countries of Africa (Sénégal, Tanzania and Mozambique) and approved by CIDA-Partnership in October 2008 with an investment of $20 million from the Canadian government and close to $5 million from host governments and local partner institutions. The table below summarizes some of the shorter and medium-term results of the program:

Education for Employment Fast Facts (CICan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education or training programs newly developed or fully revised</th>
<th>54</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students trained and currently enrolled in new full programs</td>
<td>2,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter modules or courses developed to upgrade the existing workforce</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees or self-employed equipped with new competencies</td>
<td>1,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Employer &amp; Labour Associations engaged with education sector</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African &amp; Canadian employers and entrepreneurs working with institutions</td>
<td>3,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers of educational institutions trained in entrepreneurial leadership</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers better able to provide applied education with skills for jobs</td>
<td>700+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions offering new programs and services relevant to employment</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government officials with increased skills on how to engage with industry</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian colleges and institutes engaged in supporting African partners</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate the EFE program results but to give a taste of what was achieved and of the challenges remaining. While seemingly impressive, the results seemed to some at CIDA to be lower than might be expected for a $20 million investment. As TVET reform experts often note, transforming entire education systems from a knowledge-based, supply-driven system to a competency-based\textsuperscript{16}, demand-driven system cannot be accomplished in one five-year period.

The openness of the national governance systems to such transformations and decentralization of some power and responsibilities from the ministry to the institutions varied in each country. Association staff talk of one partner country changing relatively fast, another progressing well but more slowly and one still struggling with the changes to be made.

The voices of some of the key African partners provide some qualitative flavor to these quantitative results. Richard Rugimbana, head of the Tourism Confederation of Tanzania, provided this assessment of the fundamental change before and after: “Before, education institutions could not adequately train students to meet our needs. Through EFE, I now know that is no longer the case”\textsuperscript{17}

Saliou Diouf, Director of Technical Training at the Senegalese Ministry of Professional Training, Learning and Crafts, spoke to the relevancy of the approach: “The biggest strength of the EFE approach is that the results were achieved by our people, based on our country’s specific needs, culture and economic realities.”\textsuperscript{18}

A key challenge was assessing whether or not the partner country and institutions were truly in the driver’s seat given the contracts were still between CIDA, the Association and Canadian institutions,

\textsuperscript{16} Competency-based programs include three components: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (soft skills)
\textsuperscript{17} Taken from Education for Employment: Fast Facts by CICan
\textsuperscript{18} Taken from Education for Employment: Fast Facts by CICan
meaning the reporting and financial accountabilities remained mostly with Canada. This conundrum would remain for some time to come.

Paule Racine, Head of International at Cégep FX Garneau at the time and later Senior EFE Advisor and Coordinator for the EFE in Mozambique warned: “So many donors were present in Mozambique that it overwhelmed their capacities to lead. They were in the driver’s seat but not sure where to drive to. The overall capacity of a country and its institutions to determine their own needs and to lead must be considered. One size does not fit all.”

In light of the new EFE approach being adopted, two other bilaterally-funded EFE programs of the same approximate value for the Caribbean region (twelve countries of CARICOM) and for the Andean region (Bolivia, Peru and Colombia), were co-designed by CIDA and Association staff and approved in 2010-11. Based on the results described above, funding was also received in 2014-15 for second iterations of the promising EFES in each of the original three African countries, but this time from the three bilateral desks at CIDA. Kenya was added as a fourth African country in 2016 and the Pacific Alliance countries (Colombia, Peru, Chile and Mexico) received more modest but targeted EFE support in 2017.

As Michelle Veilleux of CIDA summarized: “At the time, CIDA, be it the Minister or managers or officers, were all very satisfied with the design and the results of the first program in Africa. That is why CIDA did fund, later, a number of EFE programs elsewhere in the world.”

Pierre Racicot, Vice-President of CIDA in that period, commented that:

“ACCC and its affiliated institutions have developed undeniable expertise in the field of capacity development and institutional partnership. In fact, I think that ACCC’s latest initiative, the Education for Employment initiative, is on the cutting edge of progress in this field, integrating the lessons learned from a rich past and the latest significant trends in international development.”

**Education for Employment** gradually became known in the focus countries and eventually amongst other donors as an effective approach to development. The Asian Development Bank invited the Association to present the Education for Employment approach at its Annual Skills Forum for Asia-Pacific, and subsequently funded a publication on the relevancy of the Canadian approach for developing countries of Asia.

Responsible leadership not only meant anticipating and preparing for the next challenge, but also diversifying funding sources to increase impact and reduce dependency on CIDA. Once the EFE was up and running, the Association actively sought out new funding arrangements and sources for EFE programs.

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The World Bank co-funded parts of the EFE program in Mozambique, the Department for International Development of the UK and the Inter-American Development Bank added funding to the EFE for the CARICOM region and, as the EFE approach became well known at the Asian Development Bank, it led to contracts for the Association to work in China and Indonesia on similar projects. Drawing on the deep industry connections built in-country, the Association also signed agreements with a few large multinational companies to collaborate on the implementation of the EFES and their hiring of graduates from the new programs.\(^{21}\)

**CONCLUSION**

What next for the EFE-style program now that it has been implemented in more than 20 countries in just over a decade? In the words of Gerald Brown: “Leaders should be looking at the post-EFE phase, with perhaps EFE as an approach or subset of something more relevant to today’s challenges.”

Alain Roy, current VP for International Partnerships at CICan, and his team have been asking the following questions regarding the EFE approach: What has been learnt about how and when country education and training systems change in a sustainable manner? What are the key requirements for sustainable institutional transformation? How can institutions transition from development partnership to a two-way partnership between equals? What are the potential new funding sources, such as Development Impact Bonds to support this type of change? And, how do the comprehensive Sustainable Development Goals for 2030\(^{22}\) and Canada’s more recent Feminist Development Agenda\(^{23}\) impact the Association’s own approach and priorities?

The following figure shows how CICan currently relates EFE to many of the SDG goals. It becomes a way of helping countries attain their specific contributions to the SDG goals. Of note is the increased prominence now given to climate action and gender equality objectives.

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\(^{21}\) Agreements were signed in Mozambique with oil and gas companies Anardarko, Shell and ENI, so that trained Mozambican graduates would be hired instead of expatriates

\(^{22}\) See the goals and indicators for each at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300)

On the implementation front there is a major obstacle to seeking other funding sources for new types of EFES. Most of the development banks use a traditional Technical Assistance Consultant mode of delivery, where international experts (individuals or firms) are hired via calls for tenders by the Bank or the country to deliver diagnoses and solutions to complex development problems. As one expert working on an ADB project in Vietnam put it, “we are like flying doctors coming in briefly, writing out a prescription for the cure, and then coming back later to find out the patient has not taken the medicine, and repeating the cycle”.

The institutional partnership mode of delivering assistance, with true national ownership at its core, has proven to be very effective in creating the basis for longer-term relationships and exchanges between equal partners and sustainable results. Though it may be more challenging to select an institution than an individual consultant with academic credentials and mandates, the EFE approach shows us it is worth the effort. Accessing the expertise of an entire organization and building-multi-layered partnerships could be a very valuable path to achieving more lasting impact.

With the global context changing so rapidly and the support for development assistance and multilateral action under siege, the Canadian development sector will need all the proactive leadership it can muster to come up with more effective ways of reducing poverty, providing unemployed youth with meaningful employment and supporting the ascent of girls and women to a more equal status.

The time available to leaders for analysis, learning and innovation has often been reduced so much by the growing demands of project management and financial survival that it is challenging to find the time to do so. Hopefully this case study has shown the value of taking the time.
LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FOR THIS PAPER
(With their responsibilities at the time)

From Association member institutions:
Jos Nolle, Director of International at Niagara College
Paule Racine, Directrice de l’international au Cégep FX Garneau
Gerald Ingersoll, Chief Learning Officer and Head of International, New Brunswick Community College
Elaine McNeil, Head of International at SIAST, now known as Saskatchewan Polytechnic

From ACCC and CICan:
Gerald Brown, President and CEO, Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)
Marie-Josée Fortin, Manager and then Director of the CCPP and the EFE, ACCC & CICan
Alain Roy, current VP of International Partnerships at CICan
Camille Khoury, Senior Program Officer for CIDA in Mozambique and then for EFE Mozambique at CICan

From Overseas Partner Governments and Associations:
Papa Kane, Director of CIADFOR and Regional Director of the ILO in West Africa (from a previous interview)
L’Honorable Moussa Sako, Ministre de l’enseignement technique et la formation professionnelle de la République du Sénégal (from a previous letter)
Saliou Diouf, Directeur de l’enseignement technique au Ministère de l’ETFP du Sénégal (from a previous letter)
Richard Rugimbana, Head of the Tourism Confederation of Tanzania (from a previous interview)

From the Canadian Government:
Pierre Racicot, Vice-President, Africa and the Middle East, CIDA (via a previous interview)
Darren Schemmer, Vice-President, Partnerships Branch, CIDA
Michelle Veilleux, Deputy-Director, Institutional Partnerships, Partnerships Branch, CIDA

The author wishes to sincerely thank the above people for their time and insights into this case study.

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