

The hidden links with Africa: Australian Universities in African Studies!

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This paper will argue that the role of education in Australia's relationship with Africa is currently driven by the Australia Awards for Africa (AAA) Scholarships program, educating in 2013 up to 1000 African students per year through to 2016, in targeted courses in Australian institutions. Apart from the obvious skills development and learning outcomes for these individual African students, the 'add-on' effect of such tertiary training will be to create Alumni back in Africa – enhancing people to people links with ongoing benefits in terms of cross-cultural exchange.¹

However, I will also argue that the role of the education sector, especially at the tertiary level, but also at primary and secondary levels, should be to educate Australians about Africa, yet there is a clear lack of capacity to do this. While the *Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade "Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa"* recommended that Australia needs an African Studies Centre to enhance and encourage this type of education development, it is now clear that the establishment of any such centre is not a priority for the Australian government at this time.² Such a centre could have been well placed to develop and inform the basis of a national education curriculum with evidence based research, current trends and research and appropriately funded scholarship on African studies. This could have had ongoing benefits to the increasing African-Australian population and their settlement issues, and also in terms of expanding business, cultural and diplomatic links with the countries of Africa. Without such a centre Australia will have to make do with the current arrangements. This paper will explore this educational capacity and more recent initiatives to enhance and re-engage with Africa.

How many countries in Africa? To ask this question immediately advises of the potential answer – that perhaps there is more than one country? This is an often made assumption based on a number of stereotypes about Africa common in Australia. Just how many countries really depends on when you are asking, and whom you ask. The African continent is a dynamic and changing political construct and contains to date 55 countries that we generally know very little about in Australia. Admittedly it is challenging for the non-Africanist to garner interest in following the ever-changing political landscape across the African continent, and yet South Africa does figure prominently in the Australian (historical) psyche, ever since Baden Powell was involved in the 'Siege of Mafikeng' and the Boer War.³ However, if Australia is to progress as a key international player – a middle power of cosmopolitan standing – and hold onto its new seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), it stands to reason that Australians should at least be more knowledgeable and aware about the countries of Africa.

The task of this paper is to examine the role of education in Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa.

To some extent this task requires me to reflect upon my own educational journey and eventual career as an academic teaching African Studies in an Australian university⁴ - from learning about Nelson Mandela's unjust incarceration on Robbin Island in apartheid South Africa, only by way of a secondary school art project with a teacher fortunately concerned with social justice issues; through to my first job as a photographer for the African Dance Troupe in Adelaide, South Australia. This latter role exposed me to the many issues facing African-Australians, but also created an ongoing interest in understanding African issues both in Africa and Australia – the dominant issues being racism and poverty – fuelled by misunderstanding and lack of knowledge and awareness. Individuals like my high school art teacher and Dorinda Haffner, the leader of the African Dance Troupe, were my inspiration. However, it was not until I was able to enroll at a university that offered topics on Africa that I was able to really explore the answers to the many questions I had about Africa. Hence the importance I now place on enhancing African studies in Australian universities, and at the primary and secondary education levels, to inspire understanding of Africa.

Previous studies⁵ have shown that African Studies has only existed in Australian universities due to the dedication of a few key academics interested in this field, and who have had an opportunity to teach a few topics on Africa. It will be shown below that little has changed over the last decade when Lyons and Dimock made this assessment. What has changed however has been the significance of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)⁶ in the context of Australia's re-engagement with the African continent soon after Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2007 electoral victory.⁷ This re-engagement strategy has seen a number of initiatives bloom such as the Australia-Africa University Network (AAUN), and the Australia Awards for Africa (AAA), and has also included the establishment of the Monash University South Africa Campus, creating a bridge between the two continents with a focus on education, although not on African Studies *per se*.⁸

Lyons, Marlowe and Harris⁹ reported that a 2011 survey of African Studies in Australian universities demonstrated that only 12 universities offered students the chance to study something about Africa. From the range of topics available only 21 had a 'pure focus on Africa,' with only a third of these examining contemporary African issues. While these numbers had improved since a 2003 survey which revealed that only 16 topics were available on specific African issues,¹⁰ the number of available topics on Africa in Australian universities remains low. As seen in Table 1 below, these are:

Table 1: African Studies courses/topics with pure African focus 2003 and 2011

University	2011	2003
Curtin	1 - Anthropology: South Africa the Politics of Memory.	1
Flinders	2 - Africa on a global stage; - African Politics Global Issues	2
La Trobe	2 - African Archaeology - Worlds of the Pharaohs, The Archaeology of Ancient Egypt	4
Melbourne	3 - Africa: Environment, Development, People - African Drum and Dance Ensemble 1 and 2 - South Africa Under Apartheid 1948-1994	1
Macquarie	8 - Seven listed topics on Egyptian history (See Centre for Middle East and North African Studies) - And African Politics and Globalisation (in Politics)	3
Monash (South Africa Campus)	2 - Africa in the Modern World - African music, musical change, social change and performance.	1
Sydney	1 - Ancient Sudan, Kingdom of the Black Pharaohs	1
RMIT	1 - Contemporary Africa	na
Victoria	1 - Contemporary Africa and Social Change	na
Western Australia	na	1
Wollongong	na	1
New South Wales	na	1
total	21	16

Sources: AFSAAP Project 2011 - as listed in Australian Universities' timetables 2011; Lyons and Dimock

In 2011 from a total of 16 Australian universities there were additionally 19 topics available with comparative perspectives on Africa identified. However, in 2003 there were at least 33 comparative topics identified that students could research an African theme. This decline in Africa related topics is a significant deficit in Australia's education sector (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Comparative Perspectives on African Studies offered in other courses/topics. 2003-2010

University	Number and Name of Comparative Topics mentioning Africa - 2011	Number of Comparative Topics on Africa - 2003
Australian Catholic	5 - Indigenous Peoples in Settler Nations - Indigenous Spiritualities - Gender in World History - European Expansion 1500-1800 - Music of the World	
Griffith	2 - Intercultural Understandings of Design - Cross-Cultural History	
New England	1 - <i>Post-Conflict Justice and Reconciliation Processes</i>	
Edith Cowan	1 - The Empire Talks Back: Postcolonial Voices	
Newcastle	1 - Indigenous Health Around the World	4
UNSW	1 - Sound, Society & Self in World Music; Comparative Management Systems	2
Southern Queensland	1 - <i>World History Since 1500CE</i>	na
Flinders	1 - History's Killing fields	3
La Trobe	1 - Genocides and the Holocaust: Europe, Asia, Africa	3
RMIT	2 - Governance and Democracy in Developing Countries - Health Issues in Development	na
Monash (Sth Af Campus)	1 - Contemporary Worlds (1 & 2)	1
Sydney	1 - <i>Plagues, Calamities, and Empires: World History 1300-1700</i>	8
Wollongong	1 - <i>Black Writing from Africa, the US and the Caribbean</i>	na
WA	na	8
Queensland	na	2
Tasmania	na	2

TOTAL	19	33
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Sources: AFSAAP Project 2011 - as listed in Australian Universities' timetables 2011; and Lyons and Dimock.

Furthermore, when examining the themes of the 'pure Africa' topics and the comparative ones available, the focus does not appear to be on Australia's Foreign Policy interests in the African region, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Mining Sector. This is noteworthy and perhaps a reflection of the lack of involvement the Australian government has in influencing tertiary area studies.

Indeed as reported by Lyons and Dimock, the apparent "gloomy assessment" of research in African studies was reached only by a lack of awareness about academics and others' teaching and research interests as they may relate to African Studies. One of the roles of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific has been to bring these 'isolated Africanists' together into this professional association to share knowledge and experiences. Over the last five years, the increasing popularity of the annual AFSAAP conferences and the rise in membership of this association demonstrates that it in 2012 it can no longer be considered 'insignificant'.¹¹

What this paper can now reveal is that there have been many "hidden" connections with Africa in Australia, and this can be seen in 1) AFSAAPs membership increases; 2) the results of two audits recently conducted in Australia; and 3) in the Expert Guide.

AFSAAP has over 200 members (this figure does not include the over 1000 AAA scholars who are members of AFSAAP). The AFSAAP website www.afsaap.org.au offers a clickable map and a list of at least 50% of its members and their fields of expertise, and this captures many individuals across the Australian academy, and easily determines expertise in any particular area. However, only 100 individuals are listed on this website, and many scholars who focus on a theme relevant to Africa are simply not members of AFSAAP. Therefore one limitation of relying on just the association's website, is that many of the academics captured in the two audits to be discussed below, do not identify as Africanists, nor are they members of AFSAAP. Furthermore, it is difficult to measure such small scale or individual efforts as they cannot easily be seen through a general search of most university websites. As a result the African focus of a university cannot be easily assessed to garner the strengths of Australian universities which may have potential knowledge exchange opportunities with African counterparts.

In the 'AFSAAP Project 2011' – the audit researchers searched for mention of 'Africa' in each Australian University. In those universities that *did not* offer any topics or courses specifically on Africa or with African case studies used as comparators, they did show other types of linkages:

- One university had at least two staff members noted as an expert on an African related issue.
- Six universities had staff identifiable as formerly trained in Africa
- One university mentions Africa as a focus within an environmental research centre.
- 16 universities have staff who have either published and / or are researching on African related topics.

- One university lists one staff member as a member of AFSAAP.

While the limitations to this above research included the fact that it does not include postgraduate research, and the university websites clearly do not list AFSAAP's members it does demonstrate an element of 'hidden links' with the continent, broadly defined as 'people to people links', but not necessarily institutionally recognised.

In another recent audit of 'connections with Africa' conducted in an 'un-named university',¹² academic staff were invited to submit a summary of what they do in Africa or in relation to Africa in order to support this university's bid for membership in the recently established AAUN. While all academic staff at this university were surveyed, it was determined that only:

- Eight Staff were collaborating with other academics in African universities to produce research on a number of different topics, including biology, ecology, water, IT, African Studies, gender and psychology.
- Seven staff were collaborating in the area of teaching, supervision and postgraduate training - and this included the areas of child and maternal health, psychology, international studies, and also leadership training of Africans in Australia.
- Five staff were involved in other collaborations and community projects, including research support, technical assistance, psychology, IT and Human Rights.
- Three staff could demonstrate direct connections with Africa mostly in the field of business.

Therefore only 15 staff members from this university identified themselves as having some connections to Africa, either through research, teaching, community or business. Yet only 4 identified as members of AFSAAP. This particular audit also demonstrates that there are 'hidden links' or connections with Africa that can be further exploited in terms generating knowledge about Africa in Australia.

It may be that the AAUN is well positioned to further enhance these links at an institutional level and build a stronger bridge across the Indian Ocean to the African continent. However, this will rely on the commitment of individuals to maintain this bridge on a daily basis, in terms of people to people connections – through research, teaching and exchange of ideas and knowledge, collaborations and partnerships. Hence there is clearly a role for AFSAAP members and initiatives such as AAUN.

Furthermore, when the media and others are interested in a story out of Africa, and they need expert opinion or advice, they often refer to the 'Expert Guide' (www.expertguide.com.au) a tool developed out of the university sector. In 2010 The Expert Guide only had two 'experts' listed under the search term 'Africa' – David Lucas at Australian National University and myself at Flinders University. In 2012 this has now expanded to 17 'experts', 10 of which are not identified as members of AFSAAP, mostly because their areas of research only include African examples, rather than a focus on African studies. Seven are however, members of AFSAAP and all individually promoting African Studies in their fields. Most of these 'experts' were not captured by the above two audits, hence it is clear the tools for measuring expertise in this education sector remain limited.

This paper has to this point established that the committed and core group of Africanists in Australia have indeed got a challenge ahead, to regenerate enthusiasm for African studies in the tertiary sector at the same time when the Australian government is also actually interested in re-engaging with the countries of Africa. Africa will always be a lower priority to Australian foreign policy than the countries of Asia, and perhaps rightly so, yet a balance is required for our national interests. Therefore, when we acknowledge that there appears to be limited capacity building or knowledge about African issues also at the primary and secondary education levels in Australia, some awareness raising is required to find this balance with the “Asian Century”.¹³

Analysing the Education Department’s National Curriculum – there is scant reference to African related studies in its Junior Primary, Primary and High School programs. If it is mentioned at all it is mostly through history topics.¹⁴ In 2009 ‘Africa’ was referred to only three times in the context of the history curriculum themes -

- 1) An appreciation of African civilisations
- 2) An overview of human migration out of Africa
- 3) Comparative studies – Apartheid South Africa

By 2012 Africa is not mentioned once. The focus is clearly on Asian engagement.¹⁵ However, in a later consultation report it was noted as a ‘high level issue’ that of the many specific areas needing attention in essential content for learning, there was a “Lack of representation about the world, particularly the Pacific Island nations, South America and Africa.”¹⁶ The official response to this dearth was as this:

“Following a scope and sequence of continents, regions and countries of study, the content descriptions have been revised to ensure a balanced, relevant and developmentally appropriate coverage of major continents and countries of the world and in particular countries of the Asia region.”¹⁷

This does not address the lack of focus on Africa. However, as with many educational outcomes at all levels, it will likely depend upon individual teachers and their commitment and passion for understanding the world, including the 55 countries which constitute Africa.

It is no wonder stereotypes and generalizations about Africa are common in Australia. To counter this, I have more recently developed a small teaching module entitled “An African Safari” – which has been delivered (to date) to two semi-rural primary schools in South Australia at year 1 and year 2 levels. Both schools had also previously embraced various fund raising activities to assist with development projects in an African country, and one school had 2 African-Australian students. The learning outcomes were focused on “Africa Today”, learning broadly about the political map of Africa – that is, it is not one country, and on the point that it is not just a place of wild safari animals thus devoid of human beings, human culture and of other socio-economic and political issues. In both cases this module was delivered as extra-curriculum activities, it was embraced by staff and students who wanted to broaden their knowledge about African countries. A similar but more advanced version of this module has also been presented at a senior-secondary school in South Australia.

I hope that similar initiatives are occurring across Australian primary and secondary schools, in particular those with increasing and larger African-Australian demographics. Indeed it is this latter change in the Australian population that should further fuel an interest in Africa in the Australian national curriculum. More importantly, as Melissa Phillips (in this volume) has highlighted, the increased numbers and increased visibility of African-Australians in Australia, many of whom are former refugees from African countries, requires that more attention is paid by Australia's educators to African affairs at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. When it comes to dealing with specific settlement issue for former refugees from Africa in Australia, the focus of the National Curriculum appears to be more on the issues of 'resilience' and settling into the Australian education system,¹⁸ but perhaps a focus on Africa for all of the students would assist with this goal. Therefore further research and curriculum design is required in this area to determine the utility and extent of similar African Studies modules delivered in line or in conjunction with the Australian National Curriculum.

The teaching module 'An African Safari' is a potential starting point from which to generate this interest in gaining general knowledge about Africa, and to get more Africa focused modules incorporated into the National Curriculum.

To be a 'cosmopolitan middle power' Australians need to move beyond the stereotypes of Africa – starving children, poverty, war, conflict, child soldiers – generated mainly through media images, the lense of charitable organisations, and limited contact with former African refugees in Australia. Indeed for many of us in Australia, this is how we know Africa.

It was not until now former-Senator Michael Foreshaw had the foresight to recommend the establishment of the '*Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*', with the emphasis on 'countries'¹⁹ that we had the opportunity to highlight to the Australian government the serious limits to the capacity of the education system in Australia to focus on – and or teach about – Africa.

As I stated in my own submission to the Inquiry²⁰ – if I am considered an expert on Africa, then the country has a very limited pool of expertise on African affairs. Fortunately this pool of expertise is expanding in Australia, with more academics identifying their interests in Africa. Yet there remains limited opportunities to study African affairs in the tertiary sector in Australia. Further compounding the issue is that the media is usually only interested in major events – such as the disasters in Africa, and coverage is sporadic and stereotyped. Obviously relying on the media for generating general knowledge about any region is inadequate, and more in-depth tools are required. And yet, without the support of the education sector such tools are going to be limited.²¹

A number of submissions to the Inquiry called for the establishment of an Australia-African Studies Centre.²² This suggestion was taken seriously by the Committee and appeared in its final report and recommendations. Recommendation 10 stated that:

- *The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations should:*
 - *establish a Centre for African Studies;*

- *invite competitive tenders from Australian universities for the establishment of the Centre;*
- *engage stake-holders and potential partners for the Centre;*
- *provide sufficient funding so that the Centre can:*
 - *undertake research, education and training functions;*
 - *engage with industry;*
 - *raise the profile of African Studies in Australia; and*
 - *provide value to both government and non-government end-users.*²³

Unfortunately the long awaited response to this Recommendation number 10 from the government was negative.

“The Government notes the Committee's recommendation and the recent efforts of Australian universities to improve coordination of educational engagement with Africa through the establishment of an Australia Africa Universities Network. DEEWR is unable to fund the establishment of a Centre of Africa Studies at this time. Mechanisms and priorities for supporting increased educational engagement with Africa and with other regions and countries will be considered in the development of the five year national strategy to support the sustainability and quality of the international education sector.”²⁴

Noteworthy here is the reliance on the establishment of the Australia-Africa Universities Network (AAUN) which was launched on 17 July 2012.²⁵ According to its website:

“The Australia-Africa Universities Network (AAUN) is a group of leading universities in Australia and Africa, connecting researchers and academics through institutional partnerships in order to address challenges facing both continents ... it will focus engagement of Australian universities in sub-Saharan Africa to enable the provision of specific expertise across areas of priority for Australia and Africa. Key objectives for the Network are:

- Provide an intelligence and advisory portal for government institutions, the corporate sector and media to access, via a ‘one-stop-shop’, a range of expertise on Africa.
- Develop institutional research partnerships on Africa.
- Develop capacity building and training programs for example in governance, public sector reform, education, mining, agriculture and health.
- Produce innovative policy solutions through position papers with key academics, non-government organisations, business and political representatives.
- Provide post-training support for African scholars, including an alumni network, linking with African communities in Australia as appropriate.”²⁶

Significantly, the AAUN was initiated by then Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hearn out of Sydney University soon after an announcement by Stephen Smith in the same location back in 2009, that there was \$8 million in the DFAT budget to support institutional links between Africa and Australia, to support Australia’s new re-engagement with Africa. Smith announced:

“... a new Australia-Africa Millennium Development Goals Research Partnerships Program. This \$8 million initiative will assist African and Australian education

and research institutions to work together to support African economic growth and progress against the Millennium Development Goals. The Program will promote research linkages and exchanges on issues such as food security, maternal and child health, climate change and natural resource management. It will also enable African institutions to draw on Australian development research expertise to build the capacity of counterpart African institutions.”²⁷

Despite the initial excitement of this budgeted win for African Studies, the \$8 million remained unspent and eventually disappeared into unspecified other DFAT expenses (and certainly was not spent on the AAUN directly). In the same time period we did see increased amounts of ODA to Africa under a number of other related schemes, so there have been few complaints about the whereabouts of Smith’s specific \$8 million.

While we may never see an Australian-African Studies Centre, it is at least encouraging to see support for the networking and consolidation of research strengths in areas significant to African studies and the African continent, and importantly in terms of the institutional partnerships between Australia and Africa. However, the success of the AAUN will depend upon committed individuals within each member university promoting African studies and research both here and in Africa. To date, it looks promising, but these linkages are breaking new water in terms of Australia’s relationships with the countries of Africa.

According to the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations’ submission to the Inquiry previously there has only been a limited focus on African countries in terms of ‘education cooperation’. For example, the international arm of DEEWR, Australian Education International (AEI) “does not have representation in Sub-Saharan Africa”.²⁸

It is clear that although it is not a big market, the ‘role of education’ is more about our ability to sell our national education product to Africans to study in Australia. According to DEEWR in 2009,

“In Australia, African students comprise less than 2.2 per cent of international student numbers. The number of students in Australia on student visas from Sub-Saharan Africa has grown from 3 733 in 2002 to 12 604 (relatively evenly divided between higher education and vocational education and training) at September 2009. Thirty countries have no or single digit student numbers in Australia, while three countries have around twenty students. Numbers for other countries include Malawi (94 students); Ghana (125); Seychelles (126); Tanzania (181); Nigeria (293); Zambia (868); South Africa (872); Kenya (2 044); Zimbabwe (2 205) and Mauritius (4 883). In North Africa, the AEI Consul is accredited to Libya and Egypt from where there are 331 and 2 080 students respectively.”²⁹

According to statistics from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship these overall numbers have remained fairly constant up until 2012, although from the four major African source countries of Kenya (476), Mauritius (407), South Africa (306) and Nigeria (296), the numbers have declined.³⁰ These numbers however do not include the increased numbers of Ausaid funded scholarship students granted visas to study in Australia, and this is where

we are now seeing a substantial increase in numbers. As Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith announced in 2010 –

“Australia has a long tradition of assisting countries with access to education through scholarships and we are committed to delivering an expanded scholarships program in Africa. In 2010, we have doubled the number of scholarships to Africa to more than 250, and made them available for the first time to five West African nations, including Nigeria and Ghana. This brings the total number of countries in Africa receiving scholarships to 19. We will continue to expand our scholarship program in Africa, with 400 awards to be offered in 2011, and 1000 scholarships offered a year across Africa by 2012-13. We have also put in place fellowships that will cover resource sector governance. This year these fellowships have been offered to 24 African officials from 15 countries.”³¹

Indeed this outcome has been achieved. When he was Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd reported that the benefits of this engagement strategy clearly supported Australia’s interests, and offers a significant financial boost to the Australian university sector and the Australian economy. He said:

“It’s estimated that the 1375 African students who come here as long-term scholarship recipients in the next three years will contribute \$130 million to the Australian economy – with \$63 million of this going to our tertiary institutions. Our Australia Awards for Africa support the work that Australian universities are also doing to deepen relations with Africa”.³²

In its report “Looking West: Australia’s Strategic Approach to Aid in Africa 2011-2015”, one of Ausaid’s main objectives was “to help build the human resources capacity of African countries, particularly in areas and ways where Australia has recognised strengths and expertise.”³³ The report clearly described the significance and benefits of a scholarship program to Australia, rather than supporting major education and training courses or programs within African countries (a method favoured by many Africans and development experts). The report stated that:

“Australia has world-class education and research institutions working across a range of fields; best practice public sector institutions and public policy frameworks; extensive experience in harnessing the development potential from natural resources; and a wealth of agricultural expertise in areas of common interest with Africa (such as dry-land farming). Recognising that human resource capacity is critical to Africa’s long-term development and central to meeting all of the [Millennium Development Goals] MDGs, under this strategy, AusAID will support development in this sector predominantly through scholarships, the Australia – Africa Partnerships Facility and volunteers.”³⁴

The latter two programs will not be discussed in this paper, and have been explored elsewhere.³⁵ Therefore the rest of this paper will focus on the Australia Awards for Africa (AAA) scholarships program which is an initiative welcomed by Australia’s African counterparts, as the Patron of Australia Awards for Africa Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated

“The Australian Government has committed to expanding Australia Awards in Africa. I support the efforts of the Australian Government fully and enthusiastically.”³⁶ This support is given despite this clear bias in favour of Australia.

The objectives of the AAA are to:

“... support long-term human resource development. They equip Africans with the skills and knowledge needed to drive change and influence policy. They also build the long-term capacity of African countries to plan for and implement reform and meet their development challenges, particularly to accelerate progress towards the MDGs.”³⁷

The AAA scheme is a component of the *Australia Awards* which cost a total of \$166.2 million in 2009, rising to \$213.9 million in 2010 and increased to \$273.21 million in 2011. Within this budget most of the funds were spent through Ausaid’s scholarships schemes, while the rest was directed through the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (see Tables 3 and 4).³⁸

Table 3 Australia Awards Total Costs 2008-2011

Financial Year	AusAID (\$m)	DIISRTE (\$m)	Total (\$m)
2008 - 2009	145.6	20.6	166.2
2009 - 2010	183.2	30.7	213.9
2010 - 2011	236.65	36.56	273.21

Note - DIISRTE - Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education funding incorporates award holder benefits, contractor service fees, promotion and other management costs.

Source: Australia Awards 2011 Annual progress report Commonwealth of Australia 2012 <http://www.australiaawards.gov.au/australia-awards-2010-update.html#expenditure>

Table 4 - Total Expenditure by Region on Combined Australia Awards for Ausaid and DIIRsT (formerly DEEWR) 2009 - 2011

Region	2009/10 \$m	2010/11 \$m
Asia	142.9	182.02
Pacific	39.0	49.65
Africa	11.4	22.98
Middle East	9.5	13.00
Europe	1.2	2.23
Americas	0.44	2.37
Caribbean	na	0.96
Total	213.9	273.21

Source: Australia Awards 2011 Annual Progress Report Commonwealth of Australia 2012 <http://www.australiaawards.gov.au/australia-awards-2010-update.html#expenditure>

While it is clear that Asia and the Pacific are the major focus of these awards, the African region is a significant beneficiary of these scholarships, remarkable given the low impact Australia can have in the African continent (See Table 4).

Ausaid’s strategy for the AAA is to provide them -

- to African students in increasing numbers, up to 1000 per annum by 2012–13
- in a range of areas that reflect the priorities identified by partner countries and where Australia has expertise
- to increasing numbers of women scholars
- to an increasing number of countries across the continent as the program expands.”³⁹

These Australia Awards are divided into two types - Development Awards and Endeavour Awards. Of the Development Awards 64% went to Asia, 20% to the Pacific, and 10% were given to African countries. The Endeavour Awards have been targeted to Asia with up to 83% of these awards granted to this region. The combined awards saw 11% or 467 awards granted to African countries in 2011, increasing significantly to meet the target of 1000 scholarships for 2013 (See Table 5).

Table 5 Australia Awards Combined 2011

Region	Development Award	Endeavour Award	Combined Awards % (and total number)
Asia	64	83	63 (2784)
Pacific	20	na	18 (771)
Africa	10	na	11 (467)
Other	6	17	8*

Note* This included 3% to the Middle East (138), and the remaining 5% percentage was held between the Americas (110), Caribbean (36) and Europe (107).

Source: *Australia Awards annual progress report 2011* (Commonwealth of Australia 2012).

In 2011, the total number of awards granted to all regions was 4413, and this also included 133 outgoing scholars on Endeavor Awards, none of which travelled to Africa. Table 6 below lists the individual African countries contributing students to the Australia Awards.

Prior to 2008/9 the Australia Awards Scholarship program was only “tiny” to Africa, and in that year only nine African countries sent students to Australia. As Makinda and Turner have asked, why has Australia increased the scholarships program to Africa by 900% since then, and why has it spread across to nearly all of the 55 African states potentially “diffusing the individual impact factor,” and how can we measure this as an effective aid policy?⁴⁰

Table 6 African countries contributing to Australia Awards in 2011

Country	Number of students
Algeria	6
Angola	2
Botswana	24
Burkina Faso	2
Burundi	7
Cameroon	5
Cape Verde	4
Comoros	2
Congo (Republic)	1
Djibouti	1
Egypt*	0
Ethiopia	19
Gabon	3
Gambia	7
Ghana	23
Guinea*	0
Ivory Coast *	0
Kenya	40
Lesotho	10
Liberia	17
Libya**	0
Malawi	21
Mali	11
Mauritius	15
Morocco	3
Mozambique	27
Namibia	12
Niger	3
Nigeria	29
Rwanda	22
Sao Tome and Principe	1
Senegal	4
Seychelles	11
Sierra Leone	10
South Africa	20
Swaziland	11
Tanzania	32
Togo	6
Tunisia*	0
Uganda	28
Western Sahara***	0
Zambia	28
Zimbabwe*	0

Africa total	467
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Note * Denotes countries experiencing major political upheavals during this period as likely cause of non-participation in Australia Awards: ** Libya was included in statistics for the Middle East and no students participated in 2011 as above: *** Australia has not recognised Western Sahara, students participated from Morocco.

Source: *Australia Awards Annual Progress Report 2011* (Commonwealth of Australia 2012).

It is quite clear that the increase in the number of scholarships offered by Ausaid through the AAA scheme, is more about supporting the education industry here, with potentially only minimal impact or benefit for African development, and the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). While this is a significantly increased initiative of the Australian government's, Australia remains a very small player in the African development field, and its increased efforts are more diplomatic than development focused, and perhaps more to do with Australia's now successful bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council.⁴¹

If we compare Australia's AAA scheme with China's strategic interests in Africa, we can see how limited our program is. For example, in 2006 nearly 22% or 2000 of Chinese government scholarships went to Africans to study in China. This increased to 4000 in 2009, and in 2012 the number was intended to benefit up to 5,500 students.⁴² Furthermore, as noted by one Chinese scholarship recipient -

"I will always value a Chinese scholarship more than a scholarship from the West. At least China respects Africa, treats it as its equal" as stated by an African Ph.D. student at Peking University. "China", he added, "shows results and concrete measures. Each year, they offer 60 scholarships to [my country], while [the former colonial power] only grants us 5."⁴³

On the issue of the effectiveness of this policy for China, Ferdjani reported that

"Some of the African students indeed perceive themselves as the future ambassadors of Sino-African relations. After all, like an East African student at Jiaotong reasoned, the scholarship students that graduate in particular "have the Chinese language skills, the degree, and mostly the knowledge about China and the Chinese. Who better can perpetuate the relations between the two parties?" Study in China means that these Africans already implement the Sino-African partnership by the simple fact of living there. They are, for the most part unintentionally, "cross-cultural" messengers in this context."⁴⁴

Nonetheless, Ferdjani argues in the report's conclusion that "there is obviously a growing influx of African students migrating to China, and this comes with important economic and diplomatic implications for the China-Africa relationship in the long run".⁴⁵

As yet there is no comparative study available on the significance of Australia's AAA (perhaps for all of the above mentioned reasons regarding the lack of capacity in the education and research sectors in Australia). A similar although more thorough assessment and report on the aid effectiveness of the AAA initiative in its current enhanced version

since 2011 should be conducted, and thus the program cannot be fully assessed at this point in time, and according to Turner and Makinda there is currently not even an official assessment method of this program.⁴⁶

The measure of success of the AAA program, I believe will be the ability of the scholarship recipients to apply their knowledge and skills gained through their studies in Australia – whether it be direct professional knowledge attained from their respective university classes, or from indirect learning skills acquired from their time in Australia. Indeed Turner and Makinda have argued that the ‘normative’ (reflecting Australians’ values and norms) and ‘performative’ (achieving value for money) legitimacy of the program can -

“be understood at two levels: the transformation of the individual scholarship recipients, on one hand, and the application of the knowledge acquired to alleviate poverty, on the other. In this case, if the scholarship recipients acquired the education expected of them, the program would have been effective regardless of whether they will directly participate in poverty alleviation.”⁴⁷

That is, as Turner and Makinda argue, the outcomes of ‘scholarships’ cannot be measured just in terms of how much they have contributed to the reduction of poverty in Africa. Any measure is going to be individually based on the scholarship recipient’s own outcomes. Indeed there is a distinction between “scholarship program effectiveness” from “aid effectiveness”. Turner and Makinda argue that:

“While it is reasonable to assess the building of dams, bridges, roads or hospitals on the basis of [standard project aid effectiveness and development criteria] ... , it would be misleading to subject a scholarship program to the same assessment method. This is largely because a major purpose of scholarships is to inculcate certain values, ideas and culture into the individuals who receive them. For this reason, scholarships result in the transformation of individuals as well as, indirectly, in the transformation of their societies.”⁴⁸

At the 2012 35th Annual AFSAAP Conference held in Canberra, November 26-28, all AAA recipients from the 2011 and 2012 cohort were invited to present their research to the Postgraduate Workshop if it could be demonstrably applied to an “African studies” context and audience. Out of over 400 scholars in the AAA system currently studying in Australia, less than a dozen submitted abstracts.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, as Turner and Makinda have argued

“If we take performance legitimacy to require the transformation of the individual scholarship recipients and their ability and, just as importantly, *willingness* to apply knowledge gained to the alleviation of poverty, then the effectiveness of the transmission of certain ideas and cultural values needs to be assessed. For example, if corruption continues, training mid-level and upper level management executives in the field of mining is not likely to alleviate poverty.”⁵⁰

Therefore, while the above anecdotal measure cannot provide a complete picture of performative outcomes of the scholarships program, it is indicative of the extent of measurement required. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that longer term scholarships are more likely to effect “attitudes” rather than the more popular short term awards, which are preferred by our African counterparts. The shorter stay can also significantly reduce the ‘aid effectiveness’ of the scholarships by not allowing enough time in Australia to develop new ideas, attitudes and cultural changes.⁵¹ Turner and Makinda have argued that if “the brevity of the courses [is] not offset by the facilitation of more enduring links, we believe that funding for the ... [AAA] program may be better spent on more traditional Masters and PhD scholarships.”⁵²

Realistically while Australia will always be a minor player and can only have a minimal impact on development in Africa, the diplomatic effect of the scholarships program does have potential for enduring and lasting effects. As I have previously argued⁵³ there may be some votes in Africa after-all. Indeed we did win the temporary seat.⁵⁴ Putting aside any cynical reflections on whether it was worth the additional \$24 million spent on the campaign to win this seat, we can conclude that it was worth the ‘re-engagement with African countries’ through a number of expanded initiatives, such as the AAA, and more recently the announcement of grants to facilitate the establishment of alumni networks in Africa.⁵⁵

If we had of been unsuccessful in the bid and failed to secure that UNSC seat, the countries of Africa would have still benefitted somewhat from our ‘re-engagement strategy,’ especially through the increased aid budget and the increased number of scholarships, despite our overall low impact, for example compared to China’s 5,500 scholarships in 2012. The question is, if we had of failed in the bid, would our ‘re-engagement’ have dwindled? With the UNSC seat only for the next 2 years, the next question is whether or not we will preserve the current levels of engagement.

Finally, in mid-2012 Ausaid announced another ‘new initiative’ focussed on Africa through its Australian Development Research Award Schemes (ADRAS). This is the first time a significant amount of targeted research money has been available for research in Africa. The purpose of the ADRAS “is to improve the quality and effectiveness of Australian aid in developing countries.”⁵⁶

The ADRAS budget specifically for Africa for the period 2012-2016, includes between \$200,000 - \$400,000 per year for projects of up to two years duration only (note: three years duration for other regions). According to ‘Ausaid’s Research Strategy’⁵⁷ a consistent 2.43% of overall ODA will be spent on this “research,” and in 2010-11 this amounted to \$106 million. Projecting to 2015-16, the overall percentages will remain the same, with slight changes within regional allocations, with more going to South and West Asia (from 10% in 2010/11-15% in 2015/16.). However, East Asia (receiving 39%) and the Pacific (receiving 32%) will remain the focus of this aid expenditure though to 2016. Africa will continue to receive 13% of the overall expenditure on research from the ODA budget in 2010/11 and will continue to do so up until 2016.⁵⁸

Given Africa’s significance to Australian foreign policy this is probably appropriate, yet the Australian academic and research community will struggle to achieve significant outcomes

with this targeted \$16.5 million investment in African research (see Table 7). The successful applicants of these Africa focussed grants had not been announced at the time of writing this paper, however, it is hoped that these targeted grants will assist the MDGs and the relevant targets set as a priority for the overall Australian aid program in Africa.⁵⁹

Table 7 Total Budget for Ausaid Development Research Awards for Africa 2012/13

Total Australian ODA .35% of GNI	Total ADRAS set at 2.43% of ODA	ADRAS for Africa 13% of total ADRAS
5.2 billion	\$126,360,000	\$16,426,800

Sources: Ausaid Research Strategy 2012-13, Commonwealth of Australia, July 2012 <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/research/Pages/adras-funding-rounds.aspx>; and Australian Budget, 2012-13, Country and Regional Programs, Commonwealth of Australia 2012, http://www.budget.gov.au/2012-13/content/ministerial_statements/ausaid/html/ausaid-04.htm

Ausaid is operating on the assumption that the ADRAS for Africa, the AAA scholarships program, the AAUN and other related initiatives, will suffice in developing knowledge and education about Africa and for Africa. While ADRAS grants may go some way to increasing research outputs on African Studies – they remain a limited but targeted solution to the government’s unwillingness or inability to establish a bricks and mortar Australian-African Studies Centre, which was ‘disappointing’ to the chair of the Inquiry.⁶⁰

While the above mentioned targeted solutions aimed at filling the gap in the general lack of capacity in Australian knowledge on African issues may work, an appropriate assessment will be required sooner rather than later. While we are waiting for the announcement of which ‘Africa focused’ researchers have won these competitive ADRAS for Africa grants in 2012, and while we wait even longer for the publication of results from any of the research, there will remain a lack of critical capacity in understanding Africa in Australia through the primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors, and for any independent research centres knowledge about Africa will continue to be driven by business interests and / or charitable connections.

The title of this paper indicated that there were “hidden links” between Australia and Africa in terms of African Studies. It has been demonstrated above that these links are not intentionally hidden, but that they culminate in the people to people links between the two continents. This paper has shown that in the case of ‘education and Australia’s relationships with the countries of Africa’ these connections are by their nature difficult to measure, whether through audit of connections or assessment of the achievement of development outcomes such as the Millennium Development Goals.

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⁴ Lyons and Dimock p.323-324

⁵ Lyons and Dimock, p. 315-316

⁶ Lyons and Dimock declared that AFSAAP had appeared to have become insignificant in the late 1990s, with little interest in either its membership or the views of its experts in the media. However, this would appear to be more as a result of a lack of media interest in African issues, and also as a result of a general lack of understanding about the complex reality of the African political climate at the time. Indeed as Lyons and Dimock reported, the notion of 'giving up African studies' because it was too depressing (a trend started by Gavin Kitching, struggling to explain the actions of the former liberation heroes now leaders of their nations turning into despots and dictators), was indeed a direct result of its own demise. This debate was pursued in the American journal, the *African Studies Quarterly*, and was noted by the AFSAAP membership, but little was changed in the Australian tertiary sector, apart from the continuation of efforts by a core group of Africanists in Australia: See Lyons and Dimock p.319

⁷ The significance of Rudd's victory and the appointment of Stephen Smith as Foreign Affairs minister has been explored in Lyons, "Australian Foreign Policy Toward Africa".

⁸ This highlights the distinction between 'doing' Africa, and 'understanding' Africa. Lyons and Dimock p. 325.

⁹ Tanya Lyons, Jay Marlowe and Anne Harris, "Violence in Africa and its Consequences: Understanding Africa in Australasia and the Pacific," in *Australasian Review of African Studies*, Vol 33 No 1 June 2012, p. 7.

¹⁰ Lyons and Dimock, p. 320.

¹¹ David Dorward, Submission Number 6 *Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade "Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*, December 2009.

¹² Tanya Lyons, "The hidden links with Africa..."2012.

¹³ Australian Government, *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*, Commonwealth of Australia, October 2012. Also, if the Asian century is also going to be embraced with additional funding to schools etc. to enhance knowledge of Asian countries and increase the uptake of Asian languages, this must not be done at the expense of other regions. While I am not advocating Africa above other regions, it is important to at least generate general knowledge about this changing and dynamic continent.

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¹⁹ See Michael Foreshaw, in Mickler and Lyons, forthcoming.

²⁰ Tanya Lyons, Submission Number 29, *Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade “Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*, 4 December 2009.

²¹ For example, during the Inquiry's public hearings in April 2010 it was noted by former Defence Minister, Joel Fitzgibbon that the issue of African languages training in Australian universities was absent, and that the Australian Defence force also did not appear to include African languages training in its specialist language courses. In terms of Australian troops being sent on United Nations peacekeeping deployments to the African region, Fitzgibbon agreed with Lyons, who was making the point, that teaching some Somali languages for example might be a good idea. See *Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade “Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa” Public Hearings*, Wednesday 28 April 2010, Sydney, <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard>, p. 50.

²² Tanya Lyons Submission Number 29; Elizabeth Dimock, Submission Number 28 *Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade “Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*, December 2009; AFSAAP Submission Number 60 *Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade “Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*, December 2009.

²³ *Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2011, p. xxxiv.

²⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *Government Response to the Report...*

²⁵ see Australia Africa Universities Network www.AAUN.edu.au

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⁴³ See Hannane Ferdjani, “African students in China...” p.26.

⁴⁴ Hannane Ferdjani, “African students in China...” p.26.

⁴⁵ Ferdjani warns that “... the idea that all African students perceive themselves as future players of the Sino-African relations is to be considered with high levels of caution.” This research was a pilot study and Ferdjani had difficulty in obtaining up to date information from Chinese officials. Hannane Ferdjani, “African students in China...” p.29.

⁴⁶ Turner and Makinda.

⁴⁷ Turner and Makinda.

⁴⁸ Turner and Makinda

⁴⁹ Using this measure of presenting their research conducted while in Australia demonstrates a potentially limited capacity of AAAs to apply their “specialized” area of studies to an African context. However, the limits of this measure are also determined by the fact most AAAs are more likely to be conducting their studies by shorter term course work rather than original research projects, with the latter being more suited to an academic conference. Also presentation at this forum was not compulsory. See 35th Annual AFSAAP Conference Program Abstracts and Papers, www.afsaap.org.au.

⁵⁰ Turner and Makinda

⁵¹ Turner and Makinda

⁵² Turner and Makinda

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⁶⁰ See Michael Foreshaw in Mickler and Lyons, forthcoming