

# IAU – Experts Seminar

## Maputo Jan 07

*Higher Education and Education for  
All: The Case of Two Solitudes?*



# Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA)

- It's role in supporting Education for All

*including*

- Origin, current attitudes, approaches, challenges, constraints ..... *and also* opportunities





vrije Universiteit *amsterdam*

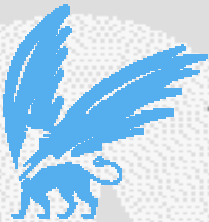
# VUA at a Glance

- **Middle sized university with reasonable coverage**
- Established in 1880
- 11 faculties; 17,000 students (55% fem.)
- 2,300 academics
- Arts, Theology & Philosophy, Natural Sciences, Dentistry, Medicine, Psychology and Pedagogics, Earth and Life Sciences, Economics and Econometrics, Law, Social Studies, Human Movement Sciences



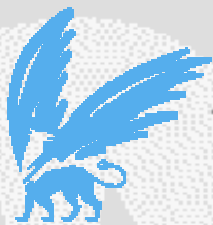
# Distinctive Origin and Charter

- Founded by prominent members of the Protestant Church
- Intended to be *free* from *both* government and church interference
  - *now very similar to other State universities*
- Original charter requires university to give some of its wealth and learning to the poor and disadvantaged of the world
  - *has kept university active in development cooperation when others have moved out*



# VUA Education Expertise Centres

- Centre for International Cooperation (CIS)
  - 25 staff
    - 18 academic; 7 support
  - Whole focus on international development cooperation
- Centre for Educational Training, Assessment and Research
  - 75 staff in 3 sections
  - Main focus on education within VUA and Netherlands



# *Centre for International Cooperation (CIS)*

Active since 1970's

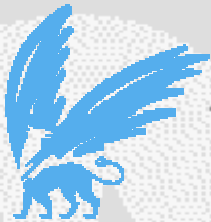
3 Thematic units:

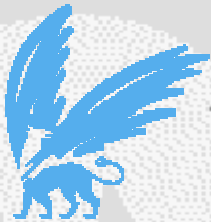
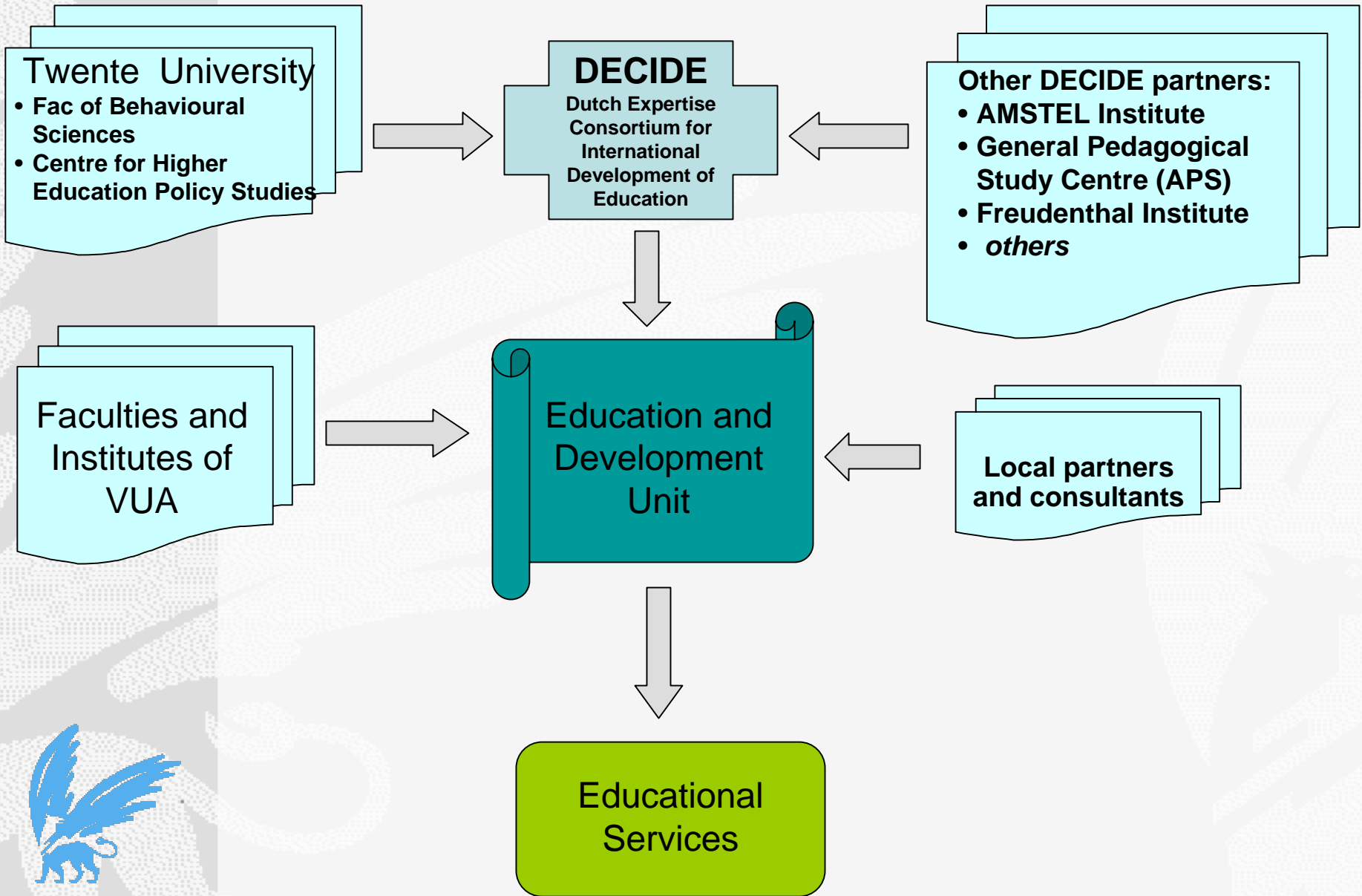
- **Education and Development (EDU)**
- Information, Communication & Organisation (ICO)
- Resource Development (RDU)



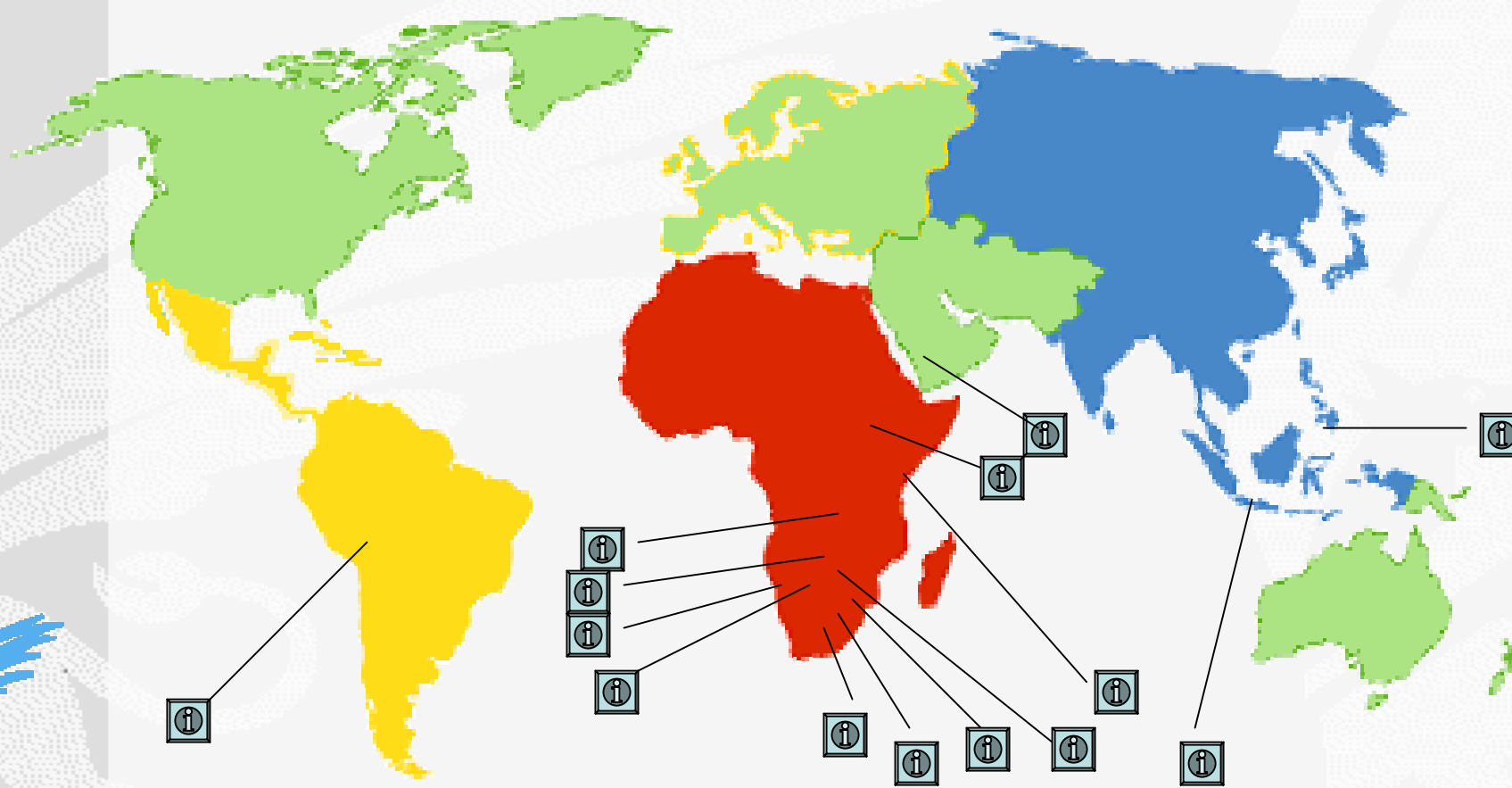
# Education & Development Unit (EDU)

- 9 professional staff
  - 5 at PhD level
- teacher education
- bridging and foundation programmes
- curriculum development
- staff training and capacity building
- science education research
- consultancy assignments
- core funding from university – funding for main projects and activities from donors





# Major Projects in Education and Development



# VUA involvement in EFA

## - attitudes and context

- Previous University President strongly supportive
  - Development cooperation seen as a goal in itself
  - No express need to link to work of faculties
    - Driven by needs of the partner institution
  - Generous university subsidy not questioned
  - 1980's and 1990's donor support very generous
    - Academic staff from faculties willing to spend time on development cooperation projects



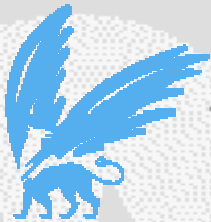
# Current situation

- Position of CIS within university less assured
- University subsidy more open to question leading to increased vulnerability
  - Faculties look enviously at the subsidy
  - Pressure to link work of CIS more closely with work of the faculties
  - Pressure to put areas of interest to VUA first and needs of development partners second
- *Publish or perish* places emphasis on cutting edge research
  - More difficult to get faculties to participate in project activities



# HEIs in developing countries

- *“Major role to play as providers of*
  - *teachers and administrators,*
  - *Research*
  - *community-based extension services”*
- World Conference on Higher Education (1998)
  - *primary mission of higher education to contribute to the development and improvement of education at all levels*
- Donor funds to HEIs reduced considerably since 1990s
  - *“as a result, HEIs in developing countries are stretched thin and have begun putting more focus on producing graduates for a workforce driven by economic demand and less focus on their role in EFA”*



# Additional challenges and opportunities

- The relationship/link between universities and Ministries of Education is often poor and weak
  - Different cultures (civil servant *v* academic)
  - Universities often prefer to mimic what they perceive to be happening elsewhere rather than to focus on national needs and locally important issues
  - Stress placed on autonomy of universities leads to lack of proper dialogue
    - New paradigm needed in which universities are viewed as (amongst others) service providers
    - Need to keep in close contact with major clients
    - Need to find out the needs and requirements of the client and to attempt to meet these



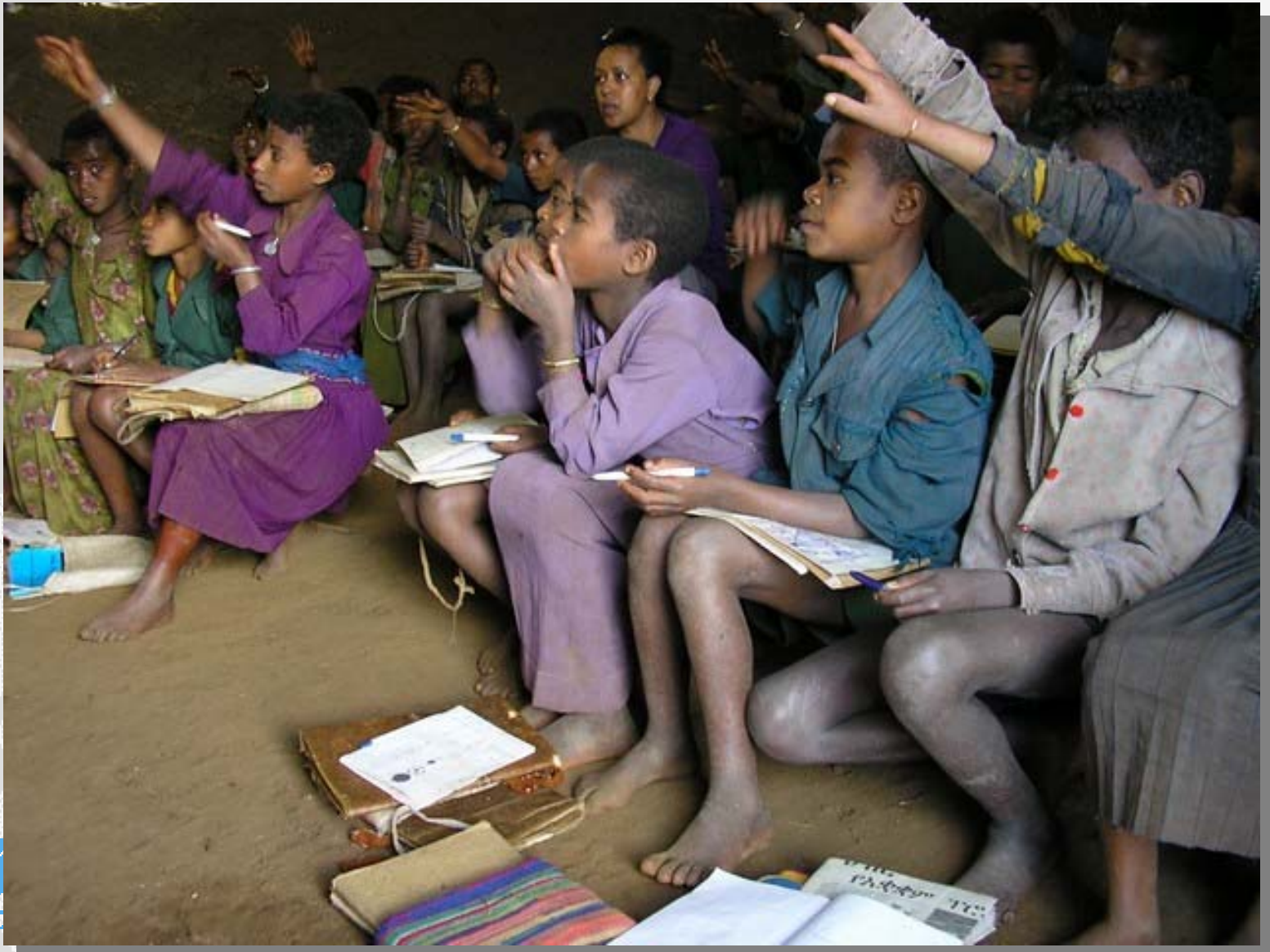
- Establishing *Specialist (Joint) Advisory Groups* can be an excellent starting point towards better dialogue and understanding
  - No powers of decision, only of recommendation
- There is an almost infinite amount of good, interesting and valuable educational research waiting (and needing to be undertaken)
  - Knowledge of what is happening inside individual classrooms is usually scarce and fragmented
  - In a resource-poor environment this form of research can represent a win-win situation
    - Affordable, requiring fewer resources than other forms of research, highly valuable to society and important for achieving EFA
    - High potential to attract donor funding

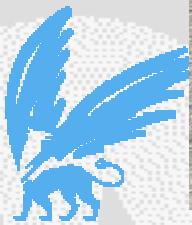


# Short Summary

- HEIs have become too distant from Education for All – partly due to external factors but also due to their own perception of their role in society
- Focusing on national and local issues and needs, and the provision of extension services, should not be viewed as being less important than cutting-edge research, but on par with it
- The cultural gap between HEIs and MoEs needs to be bridged by people with vision
  - HEIs can take the lead by establishing *Specialist Joint Advisory Groups* to promote dialogue and understanding







Thank-you !

