

**DPMN Bulletin Article on “Strategic Framework for the
Establishment of a Network of African Management Development
Institutes”**



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1) BACKGROUND

The Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF) initiated a workshop of African Management Development Institutes (MDIs) in December 2002. The workshop was directed at providing MDIs with a forum for exchanging information and views on their programmes and for enhancing collaboration. The December workshop revealed that African MDIs often confront similar problems and challenges. African MDIs have recognized this reality and the opportunity that emanates from information exchange and collective processes on an ongoing basis.

African Ministers of Public Service recognized the importance of MDIs and the need to support them at the 3rd Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Public Service. To this end, the Windhoek declaration "(re)affirmed the crucial role played by the national public administration schools and institutes and the need to develop and strengthen their ability to prepare the public servants of the future to deal with the challenges of globalisation". This commitment was taken forward at the 4th Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Public Service. At this Conference, the Ministers agreed to a continental partnership programme on Governance and Public Administration, to be championed and implemented within the fold of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The broad programme document includes a provision for the development of supportive interventions directed at MDIs, to be led by the Development Management Policy Forum (DPMF).

This proposal seeks to operationalise the commitment of the Ministers of Public Service and the agreement of the Directors of MDIs to establish a 'network' as a basis to build a platform for mutual support. The proposal provides an overall strategic framework for the operationalisation of the network and for its further establishment over a period of two to three years. The mandate for developing the proposal emanates directly from the meeting of MDIs in December 2002.

2) INTRODUCTION

The establishment and evolution of MDIs in Africa was in direct response to the institutional capability requirements of governments across the continent. Whilst the MDI models adopted and re-adapted varied from country to country, many MDIs shared a similar history and a similar set of challenges and problems. Many were established by national governments and they were often modeled on experiences in the northern countries and by post-colonial linkages with comparable institutions in the previously colonizing countries. In some instances, regional institutions were established to benefit from scale and also to promote the establishment of centers of excellence (ESAMI, CESPAM, OFPA, CAFRAD). Within the diversity and the continuous evolution of MDIs, including those established and located within Universities,

the ongoing reflection and dialogue of Directors reveal certain common threads amongst African MDIs. These include:

- *Leadership transition challenges:* Many MDIs have, in their short histories, confronted a high turnover amongst senior leadership. Whilst there are a number of reasons for such turnover, the reality is that this trend often impacts on the ongoing operations of the MDIs. In the absence of a supportive network, such transitions often become very difficult for newly appointed directors and MDI staff who have to operate in very turbulent institutional contexts.
- *Financial sustainability:* As with leadership transitions, MDIs have often been subject to radical changes in their resource base and in their funding environment. Over the past decade, many MDIs have been subject to policy perspectives that seek to drive MDIs towards more market orientation and, at the same time, ensure that they proactively deliver programmes to an under-resourced public sector clientele. Confronting such challenges, MDIs have and are beginning to recognise the benefits of cross-border and cross-institutional partnerships.
- *Reputation and capabilities:* In the context of resource and capability turbulence, it has been difficult for many MDIs to retain and/or establish a reputation for excellence. In the current global context and enhanced communication networks, many MDI are finding it very difficult to establish and retain a reputation as provider of choice. Even with the best of capacities, historical turbulences mitigate against the ability of many MDIs to sustain a reputation outside of establishing complex local, regional and international networks and partnerships.
- *Institutional sustainability and staff turnover:* Whilst seeking to adapt to a changing global context, many MDIs have found it very difficult to sustain growth of the institution and change at the same time. In part, this difficulty is often rooted in a high staff turnover and the constant collapse of any form of institutional memory. In such a context, networks provide an immense resource and can serve to ensure both institutional sustainability and institutional memory.
- *Competition and marketisation:* Many MDIs are subject to increased competition from privately established MDIs and from foreign competitors. Whilst the process might contribute towards enhancing the efficiencies of MDIs, it forces many to move away from investments into public sector training.

In addition to the above broad patterns of evolution amongst MDIs, it is evident that many are responding to the globalisation process by constructing various partnerships and by seeking opportunities to construct value based relationships. In part the search for opportunities and a framework (network) that could

enhance opportunities is driven by the globalisation of knowledge/learning. This is in a context where there is a general re-assertion of the role of the state and a general growth in regionalism and the clustering of capabilities. Within the immediate policy environment of many MDIs, there is growing recognition of the limits of private sector MDI competition and, at the same time, a commitment to finding new and more complex models and partnerships for sustainability. A core pattern in this process is a growing recognition and commitment towards the need for a regional network of MDIs.

3) RATIONALE FOR AN AFRICAN MDI NETWORK

The benefits of an African network are rooted mainly in the resource leverage and knowledge exchange potential that emanates from a strong network. Other comparable regional networks have demonstrated this potential. In particular, the Eastern European (NISPACEE) network and the Global network (IASIA) have demonstrated the benefits that can be derived from a network of MDIs. In recognition of the benefits, the Asian and Pacific Schools and Institutes are in the process of establishing a network (Miami, September 2003). Whilst the specific benefits to individual MDIs will be rooted in the specific activities and services of the `network`, the overall rationale for the establishment of an African Network of MDIs is broadly captured in three areas:

- a) Resource leverage and exchange: The framework of a network provides opportunities to leverage resources through active partnerships and exchange of resources (knowledge, capabilities, finances, etc.). In particular, a network provides a platform for the sharing of personnel and expertise across MDIs and the pursuance of opportunities through collective processes.
- b) Knowledge Exchange and Development: MDIs develop curricula, research and training material that can be used by other MDIs. A supportive network allows for the wide exchange of materials and provides a base for the collective development of materials and programmes. As many MDIs are involved in policy support to governments, this would also serve to strengthen the overall policy capabilities of governments across the continent.
- c) Institutional Development Support: MDIs confront similar challenges and problems. The framework of a network provides an opportunity to enhance exchange on institutional development issues and could serve as a basis for establishing a collective continental voice on specific continental structures and initiatives.

In the main, the concept of `network` is driven by a realization that the diverse experiences of MDIs and their existing challenges provide an immense opportunity and a vehicle for building the collective as a basis for strengthening individual MDIs.

4) VALUE ADD OF THE NETWORK

There are a number of specific 'value adds' that may emanate from the establishment of a Network of African Management Development Institutes. Many of these will evolve as the network is established and as it grows. In constructing the value-add areas, the network will also be able to draw on the vast experiences of other similar networks and from the experience of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA).

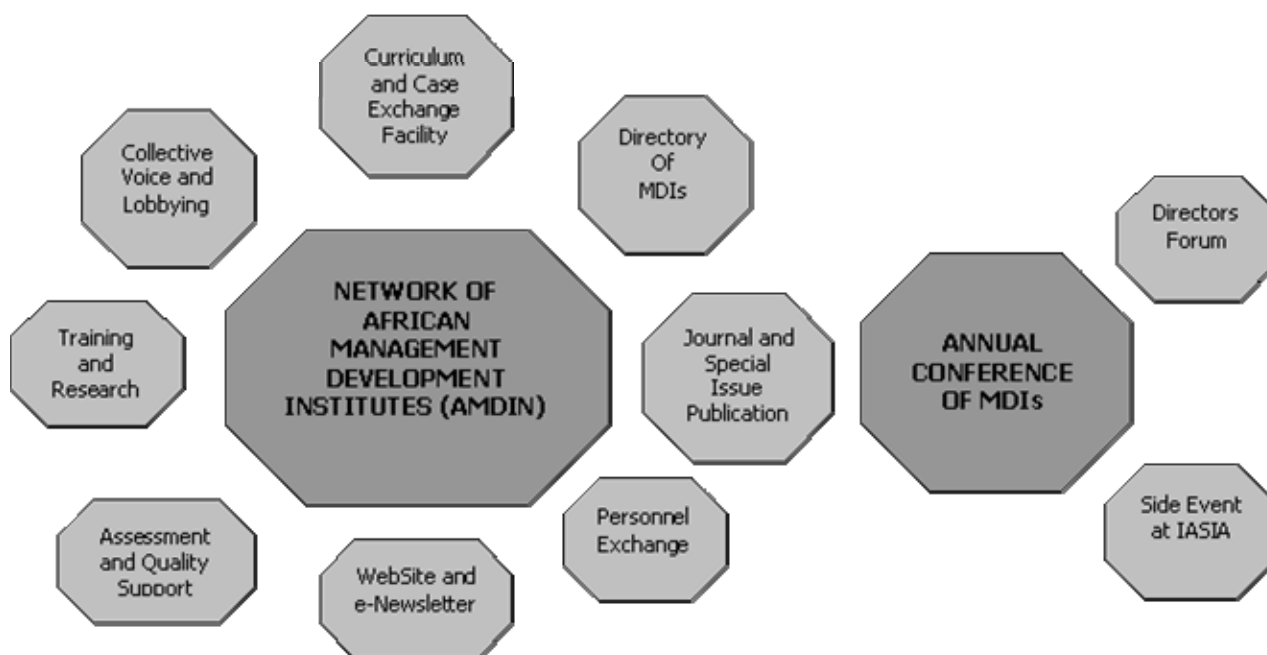
The specific activities that the network would engage in would be determined and re-determined on an ongoing basis. Much of the activities will also depend on the available resource. It is anticipated that the activities will also be phased in over a period of time and as the network memberships is consolidated and as it begins its operations. The following is directed at broadly capturing the possible activities and services that the network could engage in and the specific value-add to MDIs:

- *Annual Conference of MDIs*: Providing a space to MDI officials to reflect on current trends and future possibilities. Such a conference will also provide an opportunity for MDIs to construct value-based partnerships for the delivery of their programmes.
- *Directors Forum*: This would provide a space for Directors to exchange views on the overall management and institutional development of MDIs. In addition to being a useful forum for learning, it is anticipated that it could serve as a framework for 'peer-review' and support to Directors.
- *Side Event at IASIA*: As many MDIs attend the annual IASIA conference, it is anticipated that the 'network' could facilitate a side event that specifically targets African MDIs at each of the annual IASIA conferences.
- *Newsletter (e-news)*: The network could provide a platform for exchanging views on topical events and news on matters of importance to MDIs. This could include news on new programmes, innovations amongst MDIs, opportunities, new appointments, etc.
- *Directory of MDIs*: The network could serve as the vehicle for completing a 'directory' of MDIs across the continent _ this could include the mission, vision, objectives, broad programme areas and the relevant contact details. This will facilitate greater exchange between the MDIs and encourage the emergence of partnership programmes.
- *Curriculum and Case Exchange Facility*: The network could serve as a clearing-house for case studies, curriculum and related material between MDIs and beyond. This may be organized under specific topics and could serve as a basis for exchange between different MDIs.

- *Facilitate Training and Research Partnerships:* The network could serve as a useful vehicle for programmes delivered through a partnership of MDIs. In this case the network could tender for projects in countries where there are no MDIs and where there are regional and continental training opportunities. Where appropriate, the network could serve as a platform to initiate research projects that would be of interest to the members.
- *Facilitating Exchange of Personnel:* The network could create frameworks for personnel exchange and could serve as the vehicle for short-run and long-run staff exchange opportunities. The network could also serve as a base for communicating training and research opportunities for MDI personnel.
- *Assessment and Quality Support:* The network could also provide a platform and capacity framework for assessment and quality support work requested by individual MDIs. Over time, the network could engage in a partnership to construct an independent ranking of MDIs across the continent.
- *Journal and Special Issue Publication:* There is currently no specific all-Africa journal on management development issues. Whilst there are journals that focus on institutional and developmental issues, none of them are specifically devoted to issues that interest individuals involved in management development. In this respect, the network could, over time, serve as a vehicle for establishing a management development journal. In the short-run, this could be encouraged by negotiating special issue publications with existing continental journals.
- *Collective voice and lobbying:* The network could enhance the voice of MDIs at the global, continental and sub-regional level. In addition, the network could serve as a framework for lobbying continental structures, donors and other stakeholders on the critical challenges and opportunities afforded by MDIs.
- *Policy Communities:* As many MDIs are directly involved in shaping government policies and practices, the network could facilitate the establishment of policy communities within areas of critical challenge and need (i.e., regional integration, good governance, ethics, etc.).

There are a number of other service and activity areas that may be added to the broad range of network possibilities. However, the manner in which these are introduced and operationalised will depend on resource capability realities and the guidance of MDIs from across the continent.

The following diagram provides a broad summary of the potential services and activities of the network.



5) FRAMEWORK FOR OPERATIONALISATION

The framework seeks to provide overall direction on how the network would be established and the overall process for operationalising it. It is broadly anticipated that the process will be phased-in over a three-year period. The plan seeks to outline the framework for the overall governance of the network, the phased implementation process, the resourcing of the network (financial, human, etc.) and the initial linkages that need to be constructed.

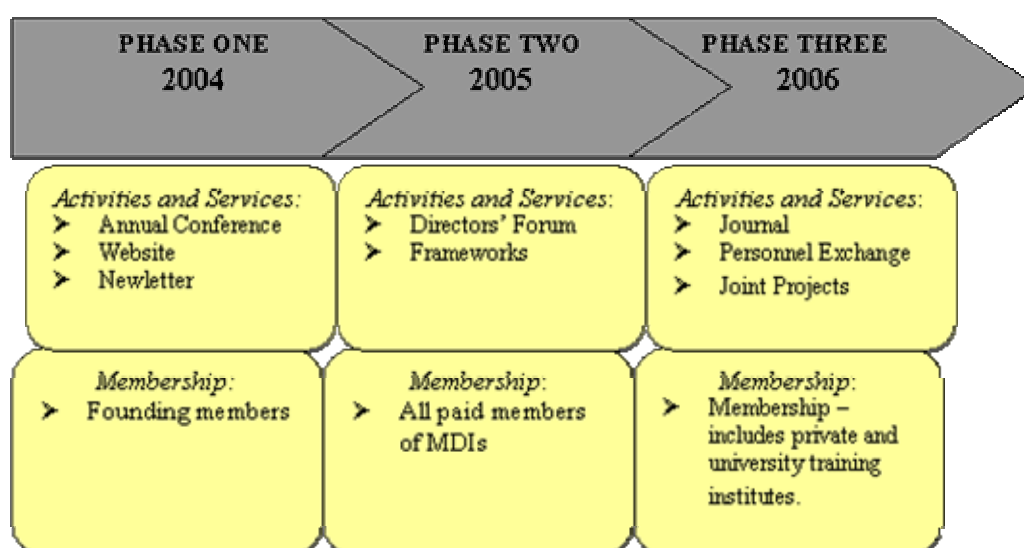
5.1 Governance of the Network

Details of the governance framework will be captured in a separate document to be presented to the founding MDIs for approval. In the main, the network will be governed through the active participation of member MDIs. Membership will, in a phased manner, be determined by the payment of membership fees for the sustenance of the network's operations. Members will then elect, for a two-year period, members of an executive committee. The overall responsible official will be a member of the Executive Committee and the Committee will be the executive decision-making body of the network. The Executive Committee will meet twice a year. One of the meetings will coincide with the Annual Conference of MDIs. Members of the Executive Committee should all ideally be heads (Director) of their respective MDIs and the Committee would be broadly representative of the AU regions. Whilst in the initial and formative stages the network

would focus on attracting traditional government MDIs, the focus will rapidly shift towards attracting other private sector and university-based MDIs.

5.2 Phased Implementation

The phasing of the service and activities of the network is driven by the reality that it would take some time before the network is able to mobilize resources and the required capacities. To this end, the initial phase of establishing the network would focus on building the membership base and on organizing the annual conference of MDIs. The second phase would focus on establishing frameworks and an implementation plan for further activities; the last phase would focus on establishing all of the activities and on broadening the membership base. The overall phasing is broadly captured as follows.



In its formation, the network would formally request the DPMF to host it and continue in the process of championing its evolution. To this end, the founding members would need to commit themselves to assisting with the establishment by contributing to the ongoing activities of the network and by providing financial support for its operationalisation through specific grants (where appropriate) and through a direct contribution to the fees agreed upon. Whilst the network will be operationalised at the continental level, a central and focused effort would be on constructing sub-regional networks and relationships within the overall framework of the continental network. This would be a crucial element of the network's work and would assist in developing regional centers of excellence.

Network Linkages

As further networks and engagements with global and continental partners is essential for the establishment and growth of the network. The establishment of the network, and thereby the establishment of an identity for the collective provides a vehicle for ensuring that the perspectives of African MDIs can be expressed in relevant global, regional and sub-regional organisations. In addition, the network can work actively on establishing linkages with similar networks and in particular the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA). In addition, as a 'legal entity' the network will be able to mobilise resources for its activities and engage donors to support the operationalisation of the network.