THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

SUSTAINING THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC GOOD OF THE STATE-SUPPORTED RESEARCH UNIVERSITY SO TO MEET SDG4
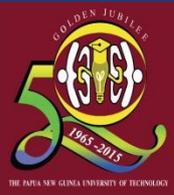
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Main Points (1)

➲ In both developed and underdeveloped nations, the "public good" aspect of public universities has been subject to increased scrutiny by both policy-makers and taxpayers, leading to diverse policy outcomes.

➲ In the neo-liberal USA and UK, the locus of HE benefit has been primarily the individual, in LDCs, it has been primarily the nation.

➲ Striking a sustainable interest-balance between individual/collective and present/future is more critical in the developing world, where needs are more extensive and resources more stretched.
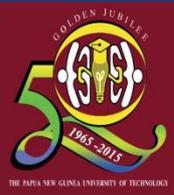
Main Points (2)

➤ The UN's S SDG 4 calls that Governments and civil society everywhere need to "insure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

➤ Public Universities are best placed to insure these outcomes in their locales, not centralized Ministries.

➤ Therefore, ODAs should support such institutions by providing both standards for access to HE in terms of program, tuition fees, and scalability, as well as promoting global accreditation standards for quality of programs provided
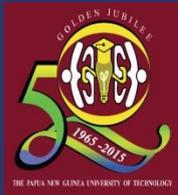
Higher Education as Public Good

Providing university education as a public good causes massive positive externalities, because:

I.   Unique role of universities in education systems;

II. Special importance of universities in a country's innovation system;

III. Contribution of universities to regional and national economy; and,

IV. Increase in access broadens income tax base (albeit with a time lag of 5-7 years).
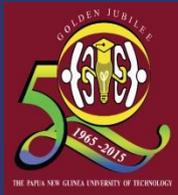
Public and Private Universities Systemic Function in LDCs

Most countries have mixed higher education systems with both private and public universities playing complementary roles. Private universities in developing countries are, nonetheless:

I. Not always true universities in the sense of being independent institutions, respecting academic freedom, and offering teaching informed by research.

II. Private universities do however tend to produce graduates with sufficient skills for specific labour markets, although global employability, critical thinking and leadership skills may not always be emphasised.
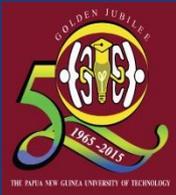
True Public Universities Defined

A true university in the public service [1] is:

I. An autonomous institution where its twin teaching and research missions are exercised independent of all political authority and economic power.

II. A place where teaching and research is inseparable.

III. A locus that values academic freedom ("The Magna Charta Universitatum — Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum" 2017)
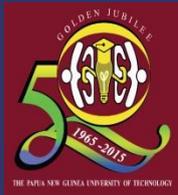
# The Third Mission of Public Universities: Service to All

According to the "Talloires Declaration On the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education" (September 17, 2005), the third mission of universities in the public service include:

I. Creation of social capital
II. Fostering social responsibility in faculty, staff and students.
III. Declare commitment to gaining "social good," which is central to the success of "a democratic and just society" in local, regional and international settings.
IV. "We carry a unique obligation to listen, understand and contribute to social transformation and development. Higher education must extend itself for the good of society to embrace communities near and far. In doing so, we will promote our core missions of teaching, research and service."
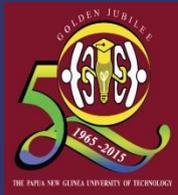
Balancing Low Cost Provision, Quality of Offer, and Access

❖ In higher education trilemma (Ansell, 2010, cited by Jungblut,13 January 2017) only 2 out of 3 can be achieved: low private cost to sponsors, low cost to state, and mass access to higher education.

❖ If quality is made cornerstone, trilemma not holding for low income countries with GER <10% since there is no time lag.

❖ Aid may be needed in transition because benefits are realized with a lag.
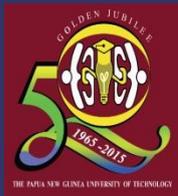
Twin Challenge: Credential Inflation (CI) and Bogus Degrees

According to R. Dore, credential inflation has affected both developed and LDCs countries, but have hurt LDCs more:

❖ CI occurs when ever-increasing, yet skill-irrelevant education credentials are demanded for first entry to professions. Once the process starts, students have to gain ever-more functionally unneeded qualifications to distinguish themselves in an increasingly crowded field.

❖ Over time, this created false demand leads to creation of shortcuts, such as low-quality, even bogus, degrees offered by for-profit providers (Florea & Gilder, 2014).

The 'Diploma Disease' Cycle (Dore 1976, p. 141)
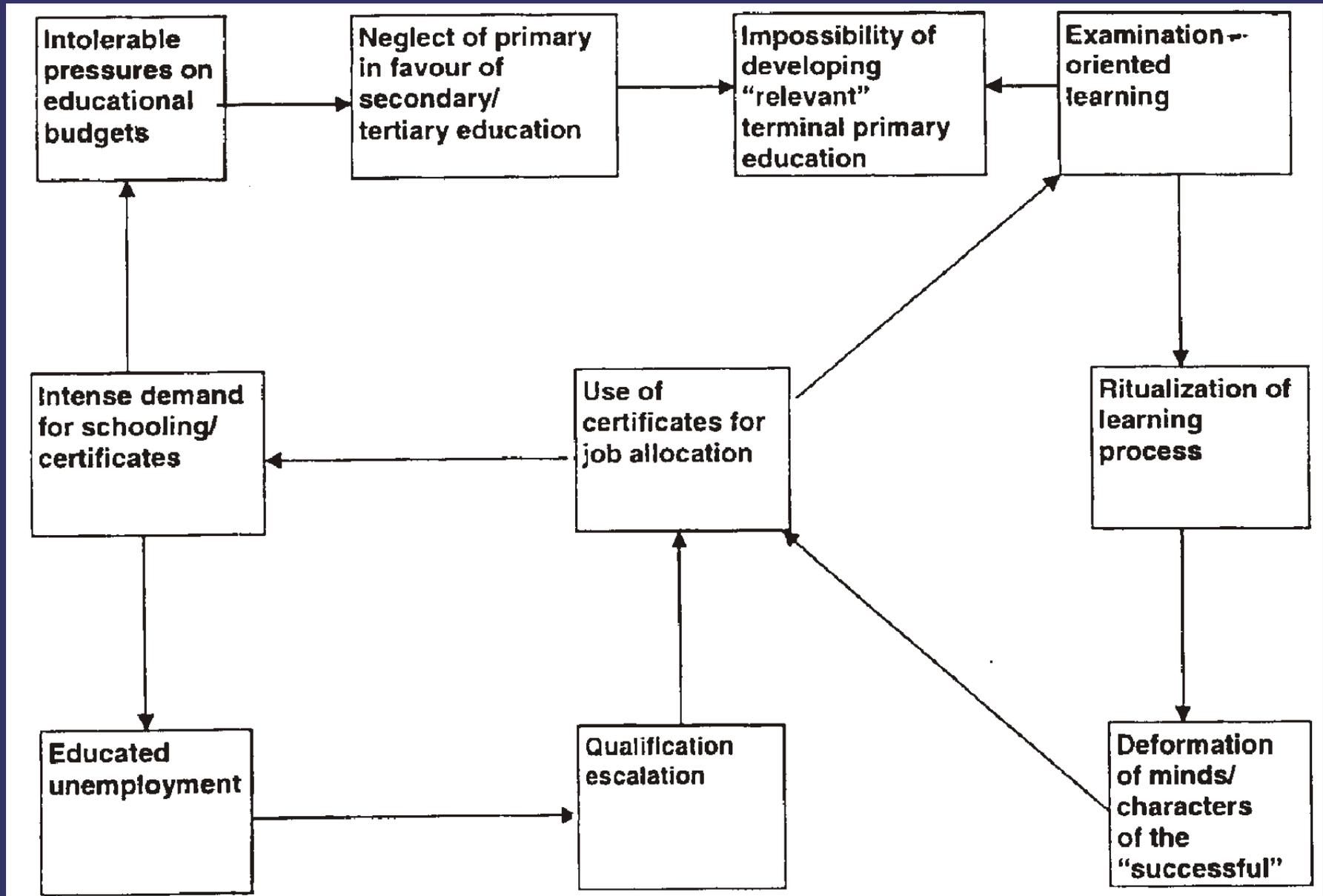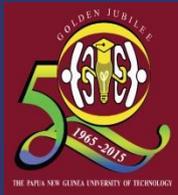
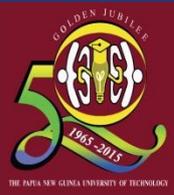# *Appropriate Aid to Universities (1)*

If university education is provided as a public good, any aid must help create necessary conditions, such as:

❖   Commitment to forward looking leadership, transparency and best practice in governance,

❖   Quality standards and international accreditation,

❖   Fostering industry-university relations, and

❖   Promoting efficiency in operations.

Appropriate Aid to Universities (2)

Such aid to universities should support the following institutional actions:

❖Increased access for deserving students through an efficient, focus and targeted scholarship scheme.

❖This is to be achieved by embrace of instructional scalability (via blended learning curricula).
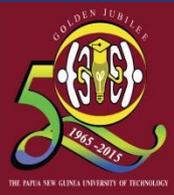
Final Remarks (1)

Given what we have argued herein, excluding universities from the Millennium Development Goals (cf. Roberts & Ajai-Ajagbe, 2013 October) was a mistake, because:

I. Universities' contribution to the growth and development of the rest of the education system can not be underestimated.
II. They train the workforce for current and near-to mid-term horizon.
III. Furthermore, public research universities specifically contribute to a country's innovation system, and therefore its long-term development prospects.
IV. Fortunately, the role of the higher education has now been recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (Three challenges, 2016 May 12). This revision provides a framework for concerted action to support the development of a sustainable and functional higher education sector by public and private development partners.
V. But the policies must be driven by grounded, qualified academic practitioners who know "the lay of the land" where they serve.
VI. Support public universities adequately and carry out agreed policies to improving the quality and delivery of the academic programs.
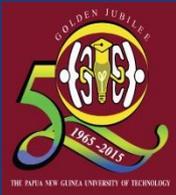
Final Remarks (2)

Calestous Juma (2017) has advocated to create a new type of innovation universities which would ensure:

I. High level coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors. While awaiting this development, however;
II. The current strategy to transform existing universities and strengthen research, community service and commercialisation activities must be given a chance.
III. The ODA should play a key role in this effort.
IV. Finally, we should do this not because it is easy, but because it is hard. Merely surrendering to the latest policy fad, or to political convenience will not, in the long term, create a viable higher education sector in PNG.

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