Results of Workshop 5: Open Access advocacy through Academies of Sciences and other National Scientific Organisations

Introduction

The participants of the Workshop listened to presentations from experts from UNESCO, the Academy of Science for South Africa (ASSAf), the European Federation of National Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA), Network of African Science Academies (NASAC), International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), and discussed how academies of sciences and other scientific organisations can further the case of Open Access, centering on the following questions:

- How can Academies, public funders and other scientific organizations contribute to the development of an open science culture in their countries?
- To what extent can good practices of promoting for Open Access by National Academies elsewhere inspire sister organisation in the global south?
- How can UNESCO strengthen the promotional activities for Open Access of Academies in the global south in the framework of its Open Access Strategy?

Remarks on Policy

(a) To promote the case of Open Access on a national level, the broadest possible approach is preferable: learned societies, science funders, universities and academic libraries should discuss the issue with publishers – not excluding traditional ones - and the government – including ministries of finance, trade and development cooperation;

(b) Scientific Academies are good rallying points for these discussions; in Africa, however, they are often young and not yet sufficiently acknowledged as leaders in the national scientific debate;

(c) UNESCO, with its mandate in the area of OA and because of its intergovernmental character, has an important role to play, as it can bring the OA community and the governments together, also in Africa. UNESCO has valuable tools to offer, such as the Global Open Access Portal and the Policy Guidelines on Open Access;

(d) Decision makers were mostly educated in the scientific practices of the pre-digital age; there is a strong need of awareness raising directed to them. At the same time, young scholars should be more involved in policy development;

(e) In the current transitional situation, green Open Access is still an important mechanism. Policy makers must not be allowed to overlook the real costs for sustainable access that are likely to be carried largely by the libraries. Funds should be made available for sustainable platforms for repositories;

(f) The role of librarians is changing; they are in need of many new skills for the changing research environment in which they work. This will lead to them being better recognized in the research debate and being rewarded appropriately;

(g) Education is a key factor for the successful reform of scientific publishing. Education should be linked to local learning systems. Researchers with global ambitions should be encouraged not to lose their links with the local level institutions.

Remarks on Journals and Metrics

(h) 'Big deals' that commercial publishers agree with individual countries, can be important money-savers for the academic libraries in that country. Such agreements however keep the academic community ignorant of the costs of the literature they have at their disposal;

(i) Successful local journals are sometimes taken over by commercial publishers. This can raise their international profile, but can hinder local circulation;

(j) The acceptance rates of journals should be made known, as they can serve as proxy for their visibility and reputation, but also as an indicator for the vibrancy of a given field and scientific network;

(k) Any global metrics of relevance and importance of articles that undermines the measurement of local and national relevance is of questionable relevance itself;

(l) Metrics at the level of the article and of the author (h-factor) are more significant than journal level metrics. The development of metrics that measure social impact is important, but it will take a long time for consensus to emerge on methodologies. Overall, rankings that adequately capture the multiple functions of Higher Education institutions should be favoured;

Remarks on Africa

(m) In Africa the word 'knowledge economy' has quickly gained a wide appeal amongst policy makers. It can be evoked to attract them to the Open Access discussion; but it is undesirable if it would oust the broader concept of 'knowledge society' that was coined during the *World Summit on the Information Society* (WSIS);

(n) Open Access is strongly felt to be a idea that is brought to Africa from the outside. Policy makers may be reluctant to embrace it, as they perceive it as a mechanism to deplete intellectual property rights (IPRs) as an instrument for development;

(o) Much African research is not cited worldwide, *not* because it lacks quality, but because it is lies hidden in local, print-only journals with very limited circulation; also the fact that much African research is directly relevant to resolving local problems may play a role;

(p) Local journals – whether in Africa or elsewhere - are often strongly dependent on subscription fees. Open access policies should not jeopardize the financial viability of such journals that play an important part in the national scientific life. The matter is, however, complex: a big South African publisher of scientific monographs saw a marked growth in the sale of hardcopies after it had put its publications on line for free;

(q) Open Access policies should aim broadly, including inter alia data, educational resource and free and open source software. They should stress the need to cultivate a culture of sharing;

(r) Researchers in Africa are underfunded, so the article processing costs (APCs) will be a heavier burden for them than for more well-to-do colleagues. This is a real concern in Africa, even if we take into account that currently most Open Access journals do not ask

for APCs and that the willingness to offer waivers to researchers from developing countries seems great. With more and more commercial publishers converting to Open Access journals, there is a fear that under a widespread "gold" approach APCs may increase as uncontrollably as subscription fees in the past. Open Access must not work against it own principles. Current cost alleviation policies (waivers) do not benefit early transition economies such as South Africa;

(s) So, a functioning market for scientific publishing is still to be created. In such a market the researcher must somehow be made aware of the costs of publishing;

(t) In Africa, there are numerous examples of good work for Open Access at the local level. This is insufficiently known on the higher level of the institutions and on the level of national policy.

Recommendations to UNESCO:

(1) Sign the Berlin Declaration now that it has decided on Open Access for its publications;

(2) Translate the broad concept of the UNESCO Open Suite programme, into real coordinated action for Open Access, Open Data, Open Educational Resources and Free and Open Source software;

(3) Continue pro-active engagement with the global Open Access community in order to keep the information on the Global Open Access Portal (GOAP) up to date;

(4) Adopt an integral approach in the development of the Open Access curricula and toolkits that are foreseen in the UNESCO OA Strategy (para 21). Researchers, librarians and policy makers need a thorough knowledge of the functioning of scientific publishing, of the workings of intellectual property rights in the fields of science and development, of ranking mechanisms and metrics; UNESCO should consider whether it can play a role in the formulation of local metrics and local value attribution.

(5) UNESCO should use its strong convening power to further the case of Open Access. It should support the broad national debates in the Academies (see below, 9) and encourage notably similar discussions on the regional and global level, cooperating with partners such as the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC), the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) and associations of universities – such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU);

Recommendations to Academies and other scientific organisations:

(6) African Academies of Science should initiate broad national and regional debates on Open Access in their countries. They should raise awareness of Open Access issues amongst scientists in their country.

(7) The International Council for Science (ICSU) should promote the involvement of its scientific unions in its work for Open Access;

(8) The position of Academies of science in promoting Open Access and on other science and science policy matters can be strengthened by entering into a formal partnership with UNESCO. UNESCO can use the knowledge and experiences of Academies of Science to formulate model policy documents;

(9) Development agencies should emulate DIFID and consider that all research they support be published in Open Access formats;

(10) An Academy of Science from amongst the membership of NASAC, for example South Africa's ASSAf, should take the lead to develop a continent-wide initiative on awareness raising and on relevant policy measures with regard to Open Access; eventually, the issue might be put on the agenda of the European Union-African Union summit of 2014.