



COMPARE Forum: The idea of North-South and South-South collaboration

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Introduction

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The idea of having a *Compare* Forum focusing on the above title was first discussed with one of the Editors of *Compare* during a PhD defence in Oslo in 2011. The PhD dissertation itself was linked to a larger project in which researchers from the North (Norway) and the South (South Africa) had been collaborating in educational research for over 10 years. Despite the fact that North-South collaboration is not a new issue on the agenda (King 1985) it is still a timely topic to explore, particularly given the recent growth and moves towards North-South-South collaboration or even *South-South Cooperation in Education and Development* (Chisholm and Steiner-Khamsi 2009). Thus, any discussion of research collaboration, whether North-South or South-South, is seen as an ideal topic for comparative education, particularly when exploring why there should be collaboration at all and if so what are some of the challenges. While it may be argued that the difference between North-South and South-South collaboration may simply be a question of geography, King (1985) reminds us that collaboration is not necessarily between equals and that collaboration at times 'appears to be a process initiated in the North, and in which the South participates, as a counterpart' (184). Ultimately, the differences go beyond simple geographic location to issues of funding and power, something that each of the contributions will touch upon in their own way. While cooperation may mean working with someone, it does suggest that one partner provides information or resources to the other, while collaboration suggests a more equal partnership in which researchers work alongside each other. For the majority of our contributors, we use collaboration as opposed to cooperation, although the literature is not always so clear on this distinction.

Ultimately, this Forum allows researchers from very different backgrounds (geographically and academically) the opportunity to explore some of the issues of collaboration between researchers/academics in the North and the South. The four contributions to this Forum

have taken different perspectives towards the issue, albeit there are some commonalities. All would see North-South or South-South collaboration as something useful, but also challenging. Ultimately all of the contributors see the need for collaboration in order to promote real North-South dialogue and understanding. For the researchers in this Forum, our active dialogue starts here.

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North-South-South collaboration: internationalising higher education, capacitating the South or furthering donor agendas?

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Introduction

There is a tendency to view North-South-South collaboration in binary terms: as a process that is driven by the North and benefiting the South. However, the reality of such collaborative efforts is much more nuanced and can be seen as a continuum encompassing the binary perspective. This brief piece attempts to illustrate some of the complexities of such collaboration by probing different perspectives on North-South-South collaboration and various understandings of the term internationalisation and by drawing on international partnerships the author was involved in over a period of a decade or so. One such perspective on North-South-South collaboration was a news release recently issued by The Southern Africa Regional Universities Association (SARUA) on June 27, 2012, after the second SARUA Vice Chancellors Leadership Dialogue on 'Internationalisation in higher education: Implications for the knowledge project in the global south'. The opening paragraph of the release states:

Southern African universities need to be more assertive about defining their own interests when negotiating international partnerships with universities and donors in northern countries. They also need to harness more opportunities to strike intra-regional and south-south agreements that can foster innovation and new knowledge.

There was also strong agreement among the vice chancellors that southern African universities needed to define their own interests 'through proactive institutional engagement and secure partnerships on terms that were mutually beneficial'. Such a perspective reinforces the view that Southern partners should not see themselves as merely beneficiaries of Northern support but as active partners in the collaboration who can contribute new knowledge to the project.

From the other end of the continuum, according to a report prepared for the main higher education lobby group, Universities Australia, as reported in the latest bulletin of University World News (December 2, 2012), 'providing education to students from more than 100 nations around the world is Australia's fourth largest export, behind iron, coal and gold but ahead of tourism, natural gas and crude oil'. According to Belinda Robinson, the Chief Executive of Universities Australia, the report 'highlighted the contribution of international education to Australia's economic prosperity'. Such a view sees collaboration as more of a one-sided approach, as primarily benefiting the provider – in this case, Australia. Both the SARUA news release and the report on Australia highlight aspects of internationalising higher education, but from very different perspectives.

Understandings and definitions of internationalisation

In a probing article on internationalisation, Knight (2004) captures these diverse understandings as follows:

Internationalization is a term that is being used more and more to discuss the international dimension of higher education and, more widely, postsecondary education. It is a term that means different things to different people and is thus used in a variety of ways. ... For some people, it means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages, partnerships, and projects; and new, international academic programs and research initiatives. For others, it means the delivery of education to other countries through new types of arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques. To many, it means the inclusion of an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching learning process. Still others see international development projects and, alternatively, the increasing emphasis on trade in higher education as internationalization. (5–6)

Definitions and understandings are often linked to what the particular purposes of internationalisation are. Two useful questions to ask are: Who benefits? And in what way?

As Knight (2004, 6) indicates, partners may need to develop a conceptual model to provide clarity on what they mean by the term so that it can guide their policies and practices. But does this ever happen? Is the understanding a taken-for-granted one? Or is it determined by donors? Knight (2003) defines internationalisation at the national/sector/institutional levels as, 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education' (2). She also distinguishes between internationalisation at home (what some may refer to as 'multicultural') and abroad.

De Wit (2002) identifies different institutional approaches to internationalisation that have emerged over the course of time:

... the activity approach which describes internationalisation in terms of categories or types of activity; the rationale approach which defines internationalisation in terms of its purposes or intended outcomes; the competency approach which describes internationalisation in terms of developing new skills, attitudes, and knowledge in students, faculty, and staff; and the process approach which frames internationalisation as a process that integrates an international dimension or perspective into the major functions of the institution. (116–118)

In a more recent paper, De Wit (2010) argues that the focus of internationalisation has been more on the internationalisation of the curriculum: ‘how can we prepare our students ... for a future career and life in an increasingly interconnected knowledge economy and society’ (10–11).

Two case studies

I now proceed to look briefly at two cases of ‘internationalisation’ or ‘international cooperation’ that I have been involved with, in relation to the above understandings and discussion. The first involves my experiences as a post-graduate student in the UK. There were 15 students registered for the MA programme in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): two were Chinese, two Malaysian, two South African, one Austrian, one Singaporean and seven were from the UK. The programme consistently attracted students from all over the globe. All of us were mature students with years of working experience. Yet such experience was not tapped into at all. For example, one of the modules in the programme was on teacher training. The content of the module on teacher training for language education was entirely UK-based. We, the international students, had rich experience and knowledge of teacher training in our own countries, but such knowledge and experience was not engaged with. A useful opportunity to internationalise the curriculum was lost and the presence of students from other countries in the programme was not used as a resource to enrich the existing curriculum. A comparison of teacher training programmes in ESOL in the different countries would have been a useful exercise, which would have benefited all the students as well as the curriculum planners of the MA programme.

The second case involves a 10-year, North-South-South project funded by the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU). The project almost did not get off the ground because of problems with funding and was characterised by continual contestation and negotiation, usually around power dynamics. We did not receive the full amount of funding we had asked for, which resulted in the team having to rework the budget. The Northern partner made suggestions about how the allocated funding was to be distributed, which was contested by one of the partners from the South. There was a threat to drop this country by the Northern partner. However, sense prevailed and the money was reallocated to each of the three countries, albeit not equally. Trust between the partners had to be sensitively built over the years, both over funding issues and about intellectual ownership, such as the first author or editor of the series of books published.

It turned out to be a productive project with eight edited book collections, a video on the project which has been widely used throughout many African countries, journal publications (often single-authored and with very little evidence of collaboration, either in a North-South cooperation or South-South cooperation) and great friendships. As indicated above, Knight's reference to negotiating understandings can work, albeit slowly. There was a great deal of capacity building in this project, but it was not a one-way exercise. Learning happened in the North as well, as attested by some of the postgraduate students who came to South Africa to do their fieldwork. Postgraduate students from the North doing research in the South had to grapple with indigenous languages and different ways of doing things. The experiences and expertise of researchers and postgraduate students in the South greatly assisted the students from the North. But, likewise, researchers and students in the South benefited from the research culture and publishing profile of researchers in the North. This NUFU-funded project is a good example of how contestation and negotiation can lead to a successful partnership in the end, where partners from the South were able to initiate and engage with the Northern partner, albeit not always equally. Despite earlier tensions, this project benefited both countries in the South: a research ethos was strengthened and researchers in the South were exposed to a publishing culture, which was not always prevalent. Bilingual materials published in both countries in the South, and made possible through this project, continue to be used in schools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, can internationalisation be seen as some kind of global good, which involves building linkages and understandings across global divides? Can North-South-South projects work towards partnerships for global good, such as peace studies, gender studies, cultural empathies and developing multilingual competences, projects that look at narrowing inequalities across nations and within nations, sustainable development projects? Universities are privileged spaces and academics are well placed to work towards the common good. The nature of internationalisation and North-South-South collaboration depends a great deal on the role individual academics play in such partnerships.

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Challenging hegemonic knowledge production through North-South collaboration

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Introduction

While North-South collaboration among higher education institutions may be a useful and necessary area for knowledge production and institutional development, what is disturbing is Samoff and Carrol's (2004) observation of a lack of innovation when it comes to the organisation and outcomes of these partnerships. Their review of the relationships between African higher education institutions and their international partners indicates that the ways in which ideas are produced and exchanged 'have focused on more rather than different' (93). For example, the lack of self-reflexivity and methodological innovation in their approach to research means that North-South collaborations still tend to perpetuate the dominating perspectives and practices that reflect 'the needs, interests, and preferences of external funding and technical assistance agencies' (94).

Our experiences as participants in such collaborative arrangements tend to confirm this. Indeed, it would be difficult to deny the view that international collaborations in higher education are based on assumptions about knowledge that show we are still suffering from what Santos, Nunes, and Meneses (2007, xxxiii) describe as 'the burden of an epistemic monoculture'. Even in our North-South exchanges we value only that knowledge that has been standardised for production, testing and consumption in accordance with the dictates of globalised politics, economics and culture (Shiza 2010). It is not the local knowledge that is concerned with enlightenment, consciousness and liberation, from a humanitarian perspective, that is prioritised, but rather that which can be 'exteriorised with respect to the knower' (Fitzsimons and Smith 2000, 31) and which affords technical control. Since southern partners are seldom in the position of steering these processes, our collaborative arrangements not only fail to achieve their professed aims of 'capacity building', 'development', 'mutual exchange' and so forth, but they are destined to reproduce structures that undermine the achievement of these goals. As Samoff and Carrol (2004) argue, the rational-technical orientation introduced by powerful interest groups in the higher education arena tends to lead to 'the homogenization of perspective and the adoption of universal verities' (106) that undermine local roles and understandings.

By now, experience should have taught us that learning and practices across North-South boundaries cannot be imposed or transferred. Rather than transporting best practices, we need to take seriously the option of generating effective practices from within the context in which we are working. In crossing these boundaries, researchers from both the North and the South should not be afraid to introduce new forms of knowledge and practice. This is easier said than done. Partnerships in higher education, like the education sector in general, are governed by top-down modes of organisation engendered by state

intervention, the dynamics of funding and the general neoliberal climate driving the 'knowledge economies' of which higher education institutions are key. Nevertheless, Huisman, Witte, and File (2006) are optimistic that 'the governance of higher education institutions is still strongly influenced by informal networks, collegial agreements and more process-oriented decision-making structures' (11). They believe that higher education institutions need 'to create institutional conditions stimulating the creativity of the professionals' (11) and this offers us the hope for the kind of grassroots innovative practices that Engeström (2001) refers to as 'knotworking', infiltrating collaborative, especially North-South, knowledge sharing in ways that high-level institutional arrangements cannot.

While innovation may be initiated at the micro-level, there are powerful macro-level forces at work to maintain the status quo. For example, it is difficult to dispute the fact that today it is a specific hegemonic epistemology that governs any collaboration between universities along the North-South axis. Such a hegemonic approach is not highly contested, not even in terms of collaboration in the social sciences and the humanities. Jones (2007) calls this hegemonic discourse 'the global architecture of education' (325), defined as a specific epistemological discourse that dominates most educational systems globally. What this in reality implies is that it is the Northern universities that are in the driving seat in any collaboration, however much the Northern NGOs and other actors insist on equal partnership in these collaborative efforts. Clearly, money makes the collaboration asymmetrical from its inception and influences the power relationships between the parties involved. This does not, of course, mean that the North has nothing to contribute beyond funding issues. Our experience from working with universities (Masters and PhD students and programmes) in Africa tells us that the North also has something to say to the universities in the South concerning issues linked to the academic culture, writing of academic articles, scientific rigour, etc. Students from the South coming to Norway often experience what one could call an academic culture shock because the cultures of learning are so different with regard to interactions between staff and students, the emphasis of critical engagement, the extent to which information technology is used and so forth. Students also experience a culture shock in terms of cross-cultural location as such. It is unquestionable that this relocation also can negatively impact upon learning.

It is in these cross-cultural learning situations that the North needs to question its epistemological monoculture and one-way street. What is almost completely under-communicated is how the hegemonic educational discourse – across the curriculum of school and university systems and across nations – has helped to promote the capitalist world-system and globalisation and defend positions of power. The privileging of Western epistemology means that the epistemological background of many students from the global South is completely marginalised, thus alienating the students in the universities even in their home countries. Beyond its alienating effect the hegemonic epistemology and educational discourse effectively prevents a critique of the present neo-colonial epistemological legacy – the hegemonic world system and its oppressive features.

This is made possible because the hegemonic epistemology and its translation into educational discourse is unrivalled across the global board. Such an educational discourse reinforces the epistemic dominance in countries in the semi-periphery or periphery, which already experience the negative aspects of the present world order. To challenge this hegemonic knowledge necessitates a deconstruction of the triad of Western epistemology-(neo)colonisation-hegemonic power and implies a decolonising of the curricula and the educational discourses globally (see Breidlid 2013).

This is no easy task in university collaborations between the North and the South, but it is necessary for the Northern partners to question if our critical thinking is critical enough. To what extent are we critiquing our own knowledge assumptions? To what extent do we realise that our knowledge transfer is also biased, embedded in a historical legacy of colonialism and imperialism? Inclusion of indigenous knowledges means that the students' own experience and home environment take on more importance. By ignoring the indigenous people's own history, cultures and epistemologies, the hegemonic knowledge privileges a particular view of the world, a view that at certain levels is seldom deemed problematic. Abdi (2006) argues that the global architecture of education represents a 'current imperialism; some might call this benign colonialism that is still underdeveloping Africa and its people' (17). Abdi also maintains that 'globalization is not designed ... to develop the African people, and its educational prescriptions are making the situation worse ...' (23).

The ways in which this recognition can be translated into university collaboration are multiple. Below we give an example from a micro-perspective based on research done within a collaborative programme in which we work.

Student experiences of North-South collaboration

As part of a research project investigating colonising tendencies in academia, and in our master's programme in particular, over a three-year period from 2009 to 2012, we conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with students who are or had been part of two international Masters programmes at the Oslo and Akershus University College. These programmes were initiated in 1998 with the view that education is the most important tool for development, broadly defined, in the South. Today these programmes are run primarily by the Department of International Studies and Interpreting at the College.

The Masters programmes have an international student exchange component and recruit students from Norway, Sudan, Zambia, Ghana, South Africa, Lithuania, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, amongst other countries.

During the interviews we asked the participants to reflect about their overall impressions of studying within the programme, with the main focus being on their experiences as students from the North or South studying in what was intended to be a collaborative study environment.

One of the interesting findings of this research was that it was common for virtually all the students interviewed to express the sentiment of having been greatly enriched by the environment and interactions afforded by the North-South exchange programme. Yet most of them could not give a clear account of what this enrichment entailed in terms of their learning. Thus, while the students could readily identify the acquisition of academic writing skills, theoretical concepts, critical reading and analytical strategies and other forms of academic knowledge and skills, knowledges that are not part of conventional formal learning at higher education institutions, such as those relating to their emotional or relational development, were more difficult for them to identify.

We believe that this is as a result of the way higher education institutions favour propositional knowledge and the acquisition of technical academic or professional skills, while largely ignoring learning as a social experience that affects the whole person. This contrast between a holistic and a segmented approach to knowledge is also how proponents of indigenous knowledges or feminist epistemologies view the relationship between their ways of knowing and those of the dominant western epistemology. It is therefore not surprising that the students' responses reflect that these social and embodied aspects of learning are under-communicated by even the exchange programmes that focus on multicultural and international education. In the Masters programme that was under scrutiny there was a serious attempt to generate an awareness of the importance of knowledges other than the hegemonic western by including Southern perspectives in the reading list and in the classroom lectures and discussions. Even though such an attempt was made, there is a sense that the whole format and structuring of the Masters programme and university experience in general tend to minimise these attempts of conscientising and decolonising the learning programme. This can also be observed from the interviews, where there was little conscious discussion of the epistemological inequalities in university education.

Nearly all of the African students interviewed, for example, mentioned specific technical and academic concepts or skills as part of the valuable learning they had acquired from their participation in the exchange. Conversely, none suggested the possibility that the unique knowledges, experiences, behaviours, perceptions and expressions that make up their 'linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires' (Gutierrez and Rogoff 2003, 30) may have contributed in a similar way to their fellow students' development. Rather than simply focusing on learning as the vertical accumulation of expertise, such North-South collaborative learning environments could offer rich opportunities for engaging in the kind of expansive learning that Gutierrez and Larson (2007) suggest adds a horizontal component of learning across social worlds. The point here is not that such learning does not occur, but rather that it is not sufficiently acknowledged. The above-mentioned research, for instance, indicates that students are confident about the usefulness of conventional, formal knowledge that is academic, but seem less able to appreciate the impact of other forms of learning that they are undergoing.

Conclusion

Pointing to perceptions of collaborative knowledge-making at both macro and micro-level we join those who call for a more radical re-evaluation of the knowledges that we produce and reproduce through especially our North-South partnerships. Unless we are satisfied with the inequalities that exist across and within our North-South divides, it is time to follow our own rhetoric and take ownership of our roles in perpetuating these situations. Rather than echoing the message that education is about developing only one kind of knowledge and the elites and elitist practices that this epistemic dominance engenders in both the North and the South, we hope that North-South partners will take seriously Chomsky's (2010, as cited in Meyer 2010, 14) suggestion that the potential for challenging educational homogenisation is greater now than it has ever been.

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Research partnerships between the North and the South: experiences from school-based health promotion projects in sub-Saharan Africa

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Introduction

Tackling the substantial challenges facing the world requires a concerted and collaborative effort to generate evidence that can be shared and translated into local action (Aikins et al. 2012; Richter, Burns, and Botha 2012). This is reflected in international declarations such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and increasingly in calls for research funding. As a consequence, the number of international research partnerships between institutions in the South and North continues to increase, whilst configuration shifts from North-South to South-South models (though these remain under-funded) and triangular North-South-South models reflect changes in priorities and understandings of partnership from both sides. Such partnerships aim to foster the crucial link between resources, expertise and knowledge in order to generate synergy (Corbin, Mittelmark, and Lie 2011).

Joining a multi-disciplinary, multi-country research collaboration with partners in the South and North as early-stage researchers¹ has been a meaningful and complex process for each of us. Although we lack extensive experience with such collaborations, we hope that our critical reflections of both the challenges and opportunities afforded by these collaborations contribute to the nascent but growing body of literature on this topic. Our focus will be on the distinction between the idea and the praxis of having an equal partnership between partners with an unequal distribution of resources and academic influence.

We begin with a description of the projects we have been involved in and subsequently focus on three issues: (1) establishing the research collaboration, (2) the partnership in project implementation, and (3) planning and facilitating capacity building.

We began our research careers by joining the later stages of a collaboration called the Adolescent Reproductive Health Network (ARNHe), which ran from 1997 to 2000 and involved several European and African universities. This network contributed to the development of capacity building of many individuals, a number of academic institutions, and also provided the impetus for four large-scale collaborations involving members of the

ARNHe consortium.² In this piece, we use the terms ‘partnership’ and ‘collaboration’ interchangeably, recognising that there is variation in how these terms are used in the literature, but with a common understanding that both terms imply an exchange of knowledge and skills, rather than transfer.

1. Establishing the research collaboration

North-South collaborative research is considered to have comparative advantage with respect to knowledge production and capacity building in comparison to non-collaborative research efforts. Establishing the research collaboration and the subsequent project development phase in many ways defines the extent to which this comparative advantage is realised. Establishing a partnership between institutions in the North and South may be driven by a wide range of factors such as common research interests and geographical focus, personal relationships and recommendations from colleagues and donor requirements (Aikins et al. 2012).

Increasingly, research funding agencies require that project proposals initiated in the North involve collaboration and capacity building among researchers in the South. Research calls may emphasise various concepts such as ‘capacity building’, ‘institutionalised partnerships’, ‘equality’, ‘gender’ or refer to either national or global policies or commitments, for instance the MDGs. The wording of these calls for proposals typically includes a range of specific requirements regarding the content of a proposal, for instance specifying the research focus that will be prioritised, which are based on criteria developed by funding agencies in the North. A consequence of these requirements is that research calls leave little room for manoeuvre among institutions in the South who may wish to prioritise building up competence on other topics and challenges. Although priority setting for researchers and institutions in the South is often driven by the national research priorities of the funding agency in the North, there has been a recent shift by some funders requiring applications to clearly anchor their proposal and research questions in the national priorities of the ‘South’ or countries in which the research will take place.

Motivations for research collaborations may also include the desire of researchers to increase their visibility and publications, requirements for different modalities of training researchers and an increased need for multidisciplinary studies. While we may not be fully conversant with the motivations of the lead researchers in the projects we have worked on, we know that in addition to professional and scientific considerations, these included the desire to contribute to the development of effective behavioural interventions to address the HIV epidemic in the African countries and building capacity in both the North and the South to carry out methodologically complex, multi-disciplinary, multi-country studies that could contribute to halting the HIV epidemic. Notwithstanding personal relationships, motivations and expectations of all partners involved in collaborations should be made clear at the outset and form part of the terms of engagement. This includes clarity with respect to the contributions of each of the partners based upon their competencies and institutional capabilities. A critical point to consider is to what

extent motivations and expectations from the partners in the South are fully acknowledged or whether they are forced to compromise their primary interests and motivations because of the attractiveness of project collaboration with partners from the North.

There is often an assumption that research collaboration will foster institutional capacity building, particularly among the institutions in the South, in the sense that the institutions in the South have something important to learn from institutions in the North. In our experience, while the 'South' consists of universities in sub-Saharan Africa, the difference between them could be similar to that between the North and the South in terms of institutional capacity and academic influence. Consequently, the term 'capacity building' will not necessarily have the same meaning for the different institutions in the South. It should not be assumed that the capacity building is only required in the South: the need for training of the emerging researchers in the North is equally important, particularly those aspiring to make the South the focus of their research. Emerging researchers based in the North undertaking work in the South within these collaborations require learning and training experiences that extend beyond scientific knowledge to developing a rich and nuanced understanding of different contexts and cultures.

2. Project implementation phase

North-South collaborations may begin with pre-existing structural inequalities, such as access to information, funding and decision making power, disproportionately favouring the North. In our experience, inequalities exist throughout the life of the collaboration but can be dealt with by negotiating joint operational plans that identify and propose solutions to potential challenges. Collaborations that fully engage institutions in the South in all aspects of the research process, including data analysis and publications, and do not simply treat them as data collection sites, are more likely to establish enduring, sustainable research partnerships. Issues to be addressed might include procedures for joint publications, reporting, budget spending and venues of annual meetings. For instance, when issues of authorship are discussed and agreed upon early in the collaboration, it will be easier to handle questions of data ownership and utilisation. While partners in the South may not have the same ability to influence the overall budgeting as partners in the North or funding agencies, operational plans allowing each partner to be in charge of the administration of their project finances and specific aspects of the research, such as the development of tools and interventions, may contribute to the smooth management of day-to-day operations.

The quality of research relationships within a partnership depends on trust and respect. This can be challenging if partners from the North express and behave as experts on the situation in a given country in the South. Much of the preliminary work at the collaboration development phase happens among the lead researchers. At the implementation phase, this shifts to the country study teams, consisting of the 'trainee' researchers among others. Without proper assessment of the existing capacity in the South, assumptions tend to be made regarding the capacity required in the South and who the requisite 'experts' are to provide it. Assumptions or lack of sufficient consideration

for sociocultural differences can negatively affect the partnership. In the SATZ project (see note 2) for example, North and South partners had different opinions and approaches regarding appropriate and acceptable content for school-based sexuality education for adolescents. Often, researchers in the North may be unaware of the challenges associated with conducting research in the South, for instance obtaining ethical clearance and other logistical issues associated with data collection and the various delays that can crop up. This highlights the need not only for frequent communication, but also for researchers from the North to spend time in the field so that they are familiar with the challenges encountered there. Factors such as race, gender and language also influence the management of implementation of the collaboration.

The implementation phase presents immense opportunity for reciprocal learning and scientific development that can be facilitated through awareness of all these factors, regular communication and interactions of the North-South implementation teams. In our experience, scheduled periodic calls and frequent verbal communication can provide updates and mutual understanding, which facilitate progress in the partnership.

3. Facilitating the capacity building

Sustainability of the research collaboration needs to be carefully and explicitly planned for at the individual and institutional levels from the inception. The capacity building mechanisms at both levels that are established must be nurtured through the duration of the project cycle, such that they have an increased likelihood of enduring after the project concludes. However, the measure of capacity building should go beyond number of post-graduate degrees achieved. Whilst an important indicator, development challenges in the South require sustained local production of and utilization of evidence. To the extent that it is possible, collaborations should therefore prioritise emerging researchers, interested in pursuing a career in research (as opposed to simply obtaining a degree) and require of them specific contributions during and after the collaboration. This also involves obligations for the partners in the South either to involve already employed staff at the institutions or to recruit persons with the ambition of future employment at the institution. For some institutions in the South, joint publications and publication of research findings are relevant measures, while for other institutions there may be basic challenges stemming from lack of experience with academic writing that should be highlighted. In such cases, frequent paper writing workshops might be a more effective means for building capacity, rather than simply including a partner from the South as the third author in publications. Partners in the South often have stronger capacity than their counterparts in the North for instance, in implementing project activities, interacting with local stakeholders and administrating large and small-scale data collections. Capacity building in the South should go beyond this to include data analysis and utilisation.

Since strong partnerships built on trust and respect are forged over time, longer funding cycles may contribute to fostering sustainability. One strategy could also be to encourage junior or early-stage researchers in the North and South to establish close working

relations, which may hold potential for sustaining collaborative efforts in the long term. Emphasis on the bi-directional exchange of knowledge and skills, rather than transfer, is crucial in this regard. It could also present a challenge when local project staff are recruited as PhD students, but often end up spending a large share of their time on data collection, field visits and administration. This may result in PhD candidates not being able to finalise their doctoral work before funding runs out. This can be resolved by establishing a planning and budgeting process that distinguishes between funding and duties for field staff versus PhD candidates.

Finally, dissemination activities should be planned for as integral to the research collaboration, such that local communities benefit from the knowledge gained as a result of the project. In the school-based research projects we have been involved with which have intervention and control groups, it has been particularly important to communicate clearly regarding what participation in the programme entails. The importance of avoiding creating unmet expectations is critical to not only sustaining research collaboration among partners, but safeguarding the goodwill of individuals and communities who give their consent to participate in research projects. Providing communities and local stakeholders with results and feedback in a timely fashion and in a popularised form should also be considered. This would increase the likelihood that the research that was conducted could have some impact in the community in which it was conducted.

Conclusion

North-South collaborations are a powerful strategy for capacity building, exchange of knowledge and skills, development of innovative solutions to local and global problems and research utilisation. These collaborations should not, however, be pursued uncritically. Given the paucity of empirical studies that have been undertaken to both document and deconstruct the collaborative process, there is a need to build the evidence base regarding the development, process, sustainability and impact of such collaborations.

Notes

1. Our academic backgrounds vary from education to sociology and public health.
2. The EU-funded SATZ project, Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health – School-based HIV/AIDS Prevention in Sub-Saharan Africa, involved four European and three African universities and ran from 2002 to 2006. The NUFU- funded projects ‘Health Systems Research’ and ‘Health Promotion in Relation to Reproductive Health in Tanzania’ (2002–2006) involved two Norwegian and three Tanzanian institutions. The LASH project (a comprehensive school- and health system-based approach to adolescent health promotion in South Africa and Tanzania, 2007–2011) involved three institutions in the south as well as two Norwegian institutions. The EU-funded PREPARE project (Promoting the sexual and reproductive health among adolescents in Eastern and Southern Africa – mobilising schools, parents and communities) is funded from 2010 to 2014 and involves five universities in Europe and three universities in sub-Saharan Africa.

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North-South-South collaboration: old ideas in new boxes?

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Introduction

The title *North-South and South-South collaboration* is a relevant issue to take up, particularly given the current global power shift taking place with the rise of new global actors, like China, in the field of development aid. We believe it is also a timely topic to explore given the recent growth of and moves away from traditional North-South linkages in terms of collaboration/cooperation (often meaning the same or similar things) towards South-South collaboration highlighted through titles such as *South-South Cooperation in Education and Development* (Chisholm and Steiner-Khamsi 2009), *South-South Cooperation: Africa on the Centre Stage* (Modi 2011), *South-South Cooperation in Times of Global Economic Crisis* (Sá e Silva 2009b) and *Is the South Ready for South-South Cooperation?* (Andrade 2009). Data with regard to funding through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) NUFU (the organisation for development aid through university cooperation) programme further serves to highlight moves away from North-South to North-South-South cooperation. Under the NUFU programme Phase I and II (before 2002), no clear records were available with regard to funding as the majority of projects were bilateral (North-South), while under Phase III (2002–2006), of the 71 projects funded 53 were bilateral and 18 were North-South-South (network) projects, and in Phase IV (2007–2012) 40 were bilateral and 29 were North-South-South (network) projects (personal communication with Jon Gunnar Simonsen, NUFU Senior Advisor, December 12, 2012). Based on this data and the recent titles above, this supports Jonathan Glennie's argument in *The Guardian* (5 October 2011), of the revival of South-South cooperation, which requires the need to think anew and, simultaneously, do away with outdated categories that have been so entwined in development aid. One may ask

if we are simply repackaging old ideas in new boxes or whether the new South-South collaboration revival is attempting to provide us with more contemporary understandings and a new way of working?

Despite the fact that several authors point out that South-South cooperation is nothing new, Jules and Sá e Silva (2008) ask if South-South cooperation is something different than North-South cooperation. These authors further consider how different disciplines approach South-South cooperation and if they include the idea of transfer, contemplating whether or not different disciplines 'acknowledge transfer and cooperation as the same thing' (Jules and Sá e Silva 2008, 45). The main point is whether or not these disciplines emphasise cooperation (working with someone) or policy transfer (passing on knowledge and ideas) in South-South relations. Those working within the development field have envisioned South-South cooperation as a policy tool to help in local, regional and national development processes (Samoff 2009). Thus, by doing so, they have used South-South cooperation as a means of carrying out South-South transfer, which explains why the expressions 'South-South cooperation' and 'South-South transfer' came to be 'used interchangeably' (Sá e Silva 2009a, 40). Yet, for Jules and Sá e Silva (2008) there is a difference between the ideas of cooperation and transfer given that not 'every act of South-South cooperation entails some kind of transfer' (46). Further, just as transfer and cooperation are often seen as the same thing, so are cooperation and collaboration, but from our point of view they entail very different conceptions of working. Thus, despite the fact that the literature cited above uses the term cooperation (often interchangeably with collaboration) we have chosen to use the term collaboration, which suggests a more equal side-by-side partnership, something we believe characterises our working relationship as opposed to cooperation, which suggests working with someone, but in the sense of enabling (making them more able to do something by typically providing information or resources that would otherwise be unavailable).

For Brock-Utne (1996) the key point to consider is not South-South cooperation, instead she focuses her attention on North-South relationships. For her, the key question is whether or not it 'is possible to establish an empowering North-South cooperation in the university sector?' (339). Her critique suggests that this is not possible given the fact that funding generally comes from the North and thus results in a 'donor-receiver' relationship, which according to her is disempowering. Without considering South-South cooperation specifically, Brock-Utne does, however, suggest some positive programmes, referring specifically to NORAD's NUFU programme, which she believes provides a more empowering relationship. For Brock-Utne, one possible explanation for her positive view of the NUFU programme could be the moves away from more or less bilateral programmes before 2002 to encouraging North-South-South (network) projects in Phases III and IV. Brock-Utne herself was involved in a NUFU project in Phases III and IV and thus may have felt this was more collaborative than her previous development aid work, which very often involved North-South transfer. We will draw upon our personal experiences of a NUFU project in the next section. For us, these critiques suggest new ways of

collaboration across power inequalities and an interactive process of negotiating values, epistemologies and knowledge in both the North and South.

Lesson-drawing in North-South-South collaboration

The essential feature of the collaboration framework is the idea of lesson-drawing through a North-South-South partnership and while collaboration can include the aim and practice of transfer, transfer, according to Chisholm and Steiner-Khamsi (2009), does not necessarily include nor encourage collaboration. For these authors, our partnership can be envisioned in Poole's (1995) understanding as:

... an association between two or more persons, or organizations who join together to achieve a common goal that neither one alone can accomplish [and] characterized by ... shared responsibility. Each member agrees to contribute resources to the partnership with the understanding that the possession or enjoyment of the benefits will be shared by all. Partners work hard to strengthen each other and to endure conflict and change, because they recognize that their shared goal extends beyond the reach of any one member. (2)

Although Samoff (2009) argues that '*partnership* is used simply to label whatever is the current pattern of interaction between aid provider and aid recipient' (128), we believe our partnership is more in line with the spirit of Poole's (1995) definition, above. Our institution-to-institution partnership involved 'funds for particular activities' between two African universities (in Sudan and South Africa) and one Norwegian University College (Samoff 2009, 128). Although this kind of partnership, described by Abdenur (2009) as *triangular collaboration*, usually comprises collaboration between two countries to provide assistance to a third, for the three partners involved in the Gender Equality, Education and Poverty (GEEP) project, our work was characterised by a shared responsibility. The goal of the project was to address key issues in relation to gender equality, equity, education and poverty in Sudan and South Africa. The programme objectives consisted of research activities and capacity-building and training. Given the parameters of the NORAD-funded programme, one drawback was that all the research and capacity-building was to take place in the South, something that all partners in the three institutions found problematic. Thus, for us this particular model of North-South-South research collaboration is problematic as it can simply reproduce the centre-periphery divide and, in doing so, it can contribute to maintaining or reproducing colonial power relations where the role of researchers in the South is one in which they become the workers in research projects and the researchers in the North become the owners in terms of what is done with the data, how it is collected, analysed and interpreted. For those of us involved in the GEEP project this was a major concern and something we have strived to avoid. This required collaboration with dialogue in which all partners needed to listen to each other. As one of the Sudan partners pointed out in a recent closing conference for the GEEP project, the importance of 'sharing ideas, challenges and information' is something she has found particularly different with the approach taken. Furthermore, we needed to avoid falling into the trap where Northern researchers were merely seeking 'lessons from the South' or a discussion of how to get more research by

Southern scholars published in international journals. Although publishing was one of the project goals, we simultaneously attempted to develop and reflect upon our diverse understandings of gender equality and feminist work within our own contexts. Our collaboration involved interactive reflection in which we attempted to engage with our differences, and more so involved reciprocal recognition that we as researchers each had something to gain from our collaboration and something to learn from each other.

Conclusion

Through the brief example provided above we believe that our dialogue was respectful of the local contexts which each of the researchers was situated in and had experience with, along with recognising the heterogeneity of the participants. In our triangular collaborative partnership we were concerned with acknowledging conflict and tension and, instead of working to avoid them, we attempted to use these as opportunities for critically challenging assumptions and implications. Ultimately, we attempted to simply avoid repackaging old ideas (North-South development aid) in new boxes (North-South-South collaboration) and instead were concerned with developing new ways of working, which went beyond the previous understanding about collaboration as ‘northern influence on the South’ (King 1985, 187). During the GEEP closing conference, our keynote speaker, Linda Chisholm, touched upon issues such as ‘shared cultural horizons’ and an ‘epistemic community’, two ideas which we think help to explain what we were attempting to achieve in the project. Overall, this paper has attempted to ‘discuss more openly appropriate forms of [not only] North-South collaboration’ (King 1985, 190), but also North-South-South collaboration.

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