CS 1: Good Practice in Educational Partnerships Guide.

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Introduction.

This case study relates to 'Chapter Five: Development and Discourse', as well as some issues in 'Chapter One: Institutional Internationalisation Strategies'. It also connects to issues raised in 'CS 4: Leicester - Gondar Medical Link', and 'CS 7: Collaborative development of an online module'. 'Chapter Five: Development and Discourse' identified a thread of change concerning how the partners in international collaborations for development should be positioned in relation to each other. Briefly, in the models presented in that chapter, the relationships which were assumed between the partners started from an initial position which can be thought of as donor-receiver or expert-novice relationships. However in later models the southern partners were recognised as needing to have a voice in deciding what activities should be undertaken in association with their development. Yet more recently a new theme has emerged, of trying to assure complete mutuality in the positioning of partners. This case study will introduce the thinking behind this third model, and report on a recent guide to partnerships which was specifically written concerning links with institutions in Africa, but which has value beyond that.

Key learning up front

- **CS 1.1.** It is essential to be able to unpackage the general ethos underpinning the planned collaboration; that includes all the assumptions which are being made about the process of development and the role of the intended link in this, for example does it assume that addressing basic needs, or providing education for women, or researching new techniques in agriculture, will assist development?
- **CS 1.2.** It is essential to check that all partners, and all stakeholders in partner institutions, share the ethos of development which the link is based on.
- **CS 1.3.** This ethos needs to be consistently presented in all texts and images used in relation to the link.
- **CS 1.4.** It is essential to examine the ethos of funding agencies when bidding for external link funding, in order to align the intended link with the ethos of that agency.

- **CS 1.5.** Similarly it is essential to examine the internationalisation strategies of the institutions concerned, again the intended link could be reconfigured in order to accommodate any additional strategic aims the institutions have identified, for example to increase 'internationalisation-at-home' or to develop staff skills.
- **CS 1.6.** Each partner should be as aware of the motivations and overall aims of the other institution concerning this collaboration as they are of their own institution's motivations and aims.
- **CS 1.7.** In addition it may be necessary to check any national level understanding of the role of HE in development, which could be expressed in inter-governmental bilateral agreements relating to HE collaborations.
- **CS 1.8.** It is desirable to refer to the *Good Practice in Educational Partnerships Guide* (Africa Unit 2010), even for proposed partnerships which are not in Africa.
- **CS 1.9.** If the collaboration is in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, then it is essential to operationalise as specifically as possible which goals it will address, how these goals will be addressed, and how effectiveness can be measured.
- **CS 1.10.** It should be recognised that one of the highest risks associated with developmental collaborations relates to the pressures on staff in both the UK and abroad, as many funding opportunities for linking schemes do not allow funds to be used to fund the staff hours.
- **CS 1.11.** It is essential to have a continuation plan if the collaboration is to be started with external sources of funding.
- **CS 1.12.** It is essential to have long-term as well as short-term plans.

Contextual Information

Within the earliest models of university links the southern partners were often typified by perceived lacks or deficits which needed defining then filling by outside experts and institutions. However, as Crossley stated in the preface to Stephens (2009): 'Power differentials between the North and the South, and differences in expertise, experience, infrastructure and resources often generate tensions between partners that impact significantly upon progress'. Later there was a shift in ethos to an increased emphasis on recognising that both north and south would benefit from a removal of inequalities, recalling that the Brandt Report (1983), the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987), and the report of the Commission for Africa (2005) all used the concept of commonality in their titles: *common crisis; common future; common interest*. A still later step went beyond recognising common interests in world development to taking on a recognition of mutuality in all aspects of a link: a mutual ability to provide expertise; an identification of mutual benefits; and

the creation of mutual power relationships. As an example, the call for bidding for the PMI2 Connect stream of funding included this statement:

> *The overall aim of the UK-China Collaborative Partnerships scheme is to strengthen the UK China partnership. Universities are challenged with helping to develop the global citizen for the 21st Century and partnership work in this area will benefit the development of both national and international models. We encourage UK universities to engage in equal partnership with Chinese universities […].*

This is a significant step in reconfiguring the relationship between institutions, as these collaborations are seen not just as benefiting both parties in a sense of garnering common interest, but also call for equal contribution of expertise from both parties. This type of relationship reflects the ethos of the *Framework agreement on educational co-operation partnership* between China and the UK (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2010) which talks of 'educational collaboration by reflecting mutual interests, building mutual understanding and … delivering mutual benefits for both countries'. This can be contrasted with another slightly earlier higher education linking scheme between China and the UK, the *eChina-UK Programme* (Spencer-Oatey 2007), where several UK universities were linked with Chinese institutions as part of a strategic collaboration between the governments of the two countries, and which was based, in part at least, on a flow of expertise from the UK to China.

Another emerging theme can be thought of as a changed target of these collaborations, reflecting the increasing importance of what are often described as 'internationalisation-at-home' activities in UK universities, which was discussed in more detail in 'Chapter One: Institutional Internationalisation Strategies'. Internationalisation-at-home involves a recognition of a need for home students and curricula to be enriched by taking on international perspectives. This overtly recognises a need for development activities within all universities no matter where they are located, and requires flows of ideas, information, and perspectives in two directions.

The overall ethos of a partnership needs to be consistent and open, and shared by all. If, for example, an ethos of mutuality (in contrast to an assumption of dependency) is taken to underpin a link, then it is essential to ensure that no texts or images which are used to publicise the link resort to the starving baby syndrome as being an easy option for, say, fundraising.

Good Practice in Educational Partnerships Guide

This case study draws on a guide concerning creating and maintaining collaborative partnerships involving African and UK universities (and also Further

Education institutions) which was produced by the Africa Unit (2010) as a result of surveying existing partnerships. The introduction states that it:

> *does not set out to present a set of universal, objective rules to be followed and which will guarantee success … however, we believe that it is possible to identify valuable 'principles of good management and good governance' which have been the driver behind a number of successful and sustainable UK-Africa partnerships. (p5)*

It describes effective partnerships as bringing 'mutual though not necessarily symmetrical benefits to the parties engaged in the partnership' (p 18). The guide discusses issues of power asymmetries and balances in partnerships, and the concept of ownership of the partnership. The aim is to avoid 'unhelpful help' if partnerships are not driven by demand.

The Guide suggests that for UK partners the motivations for entering into partnerships with Africa include seeing this as a way of engaging with the process of institutional internationalisation; to get opportunities to carry out research; as well as providing their staff with opportunities for personal and professional development. For the African partners the motivations include access to funding, but also include professional development of staff (with a particular mention of researching) as well an institutional capacity building, for example in teaching.

Partnerships may also enable African institutions to achieve national development, referring to the Millennium Development Goals. It should be recalled, however, that 'Chapter Five: Development and Discourse' identified that it is easier claim impacts of projects, for example by simply referring to the MDGs, than to substantiate impacts with intended outcomes which are empirically measurable. That chapter identified three possible roles for university links in relation to MDGs: to link with partner institutions in order to improve training functions directly related to achieving the goals, for example skills development in teaching; in health education; or in agricultural extension. The second role relates to research, giving examples which have resulted in new drugs for treatments of HIV and other diseases. The third role, which was described as the *essential* university role, was to provide for critical scrutiny of preconceptions and attitudes. Envisaged partnerships should therefore be specific about how this link will help the achievement of MDGs.

In the research conducted to compose the Africa Unit guide the main types of partnership were identified as being 'research collaboration', with 'staff professional development' also being highly ranked, but with fewer links described as being primarily about capacity building. The comparative lack of capacity building links related to vocational and technical education and training

(the area of FE rather than HE) is described in the guide as being 'problematic' (p14), and it speculates that this may be due to comparatively less experience with partnerships in the FE sector.

The challenges encountered by partnerships identified in the guide are first and foremost about time, describing the pressures on staff in both the UK and Africa, whilst pointing out that many funding opportunities for linking schemes specifically do not allow funds to be used to fund the staff hours. A result of this is that links which are initially very productive can become dormant. Another funding issue, still related to time, is the short-term nature of most funding opportunities whereas: 'This is problematic given that capacity-building is a cumulative long-term process' p16. These issues can result in a challenge of sustainability, a difficulty sometimes aggravated by a lack of management skills.

The guide then discusses the balance between the project champions and institutional senior management, which is a dilemma discussed more deeply in 'Chapter One: Institutional Internationalisation Strategies', and also in 'CS 4: Leicester - Gondar Medical Link':

> *This is important because an enthusiastic advocate can be useful at the beginning but it is important to ensure that the partnership does not become an individual project as it will not be sustainable. In other words, while the enthusiasm of staff members is very important, an educational partnership is an institutional collaboration that needs to be embedded in the structure and the function of the institution.(p19)*

The guide suggests measures which should be taken for 'initiation, formation and development of educational partnerships', supported by case studies of existing partnerships. The guide is essential reading for anyone considering entering such a relationship and the ten principles which the guide suggests serve as good general advice. It is also recommended that the Global People (2010) website is consulted, as well as the case studies in this report which concern mutual developmental collaborations 'CS 4: Leicester - Gondar Medical Link', and 'CS 7: Collaborative development of an online module'. These, then are the ten principles:

1. Shared ownership of the partnership.

2. Trust and transparency amongst partners.

3. Understanding each partner's cultural environment and working context.

4. Clear and agreed division of roles and responsibilities.

5. Effective and regular communication between partners.

6. Strategic planning and implementation of partnership plan and projects.

7. Strong commitment across from junior and senior staff and management.

8. Supportive and enabling institutional infrastructure.

9. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of partnership and partnership projects.

10. Sustainability.

References

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