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## **CS 13: Staff development in India**

### **Professional development of staff: University of Kerala.**

**Author: Johnson Jament**

#### **Introduction.**

This case study illustrates several of the key issues concerning higher education collaborations relating to capacity building as discussed in 'Chapter Five: Development and Discourse', as well as touching on issues raised in 'Chapter One: Institutional Internationalisation Strategies'. Related case studies are those concerning staff development training in the UK (CS 10), the case study assessing the impact of international collaborations concerning continuing professional development of staff in Shaoxing University (CS 8), and the case study concerning the Leicester-Gondar medical link (CS 4).

#### **Key learning up front**

- **CS 13.1.** Collaborations at government level can create formalised academic linkages aimed to promote understanding between countries and enrichment of staff.
- **CS 13.2.** Government level collaborations can lead to the creation of 'Area Study Centres' which allow access to resources and resource persons from foreign universities.
- **CS 13.3.** The presence of overseas resource staff can help local staff to become engaged in publications, including production of translated texts.
- **CS 13.4.** Resources can increase the ability in the receiving country to expand provision of new programmes and courses, for example the possibility to extend provision of postgraduate courses.
- **CS 13.5.** 'Area Study Centres' can also allow academics from the donor countries to carry out scholarly activity, including research, in the receiving country.
- **CS 13.6.** 'Area Study Centres' offer two-way flows, hence in this case Canadian scholars both offer support to and learn from mutual engagement with academics within India.

## **Strategic Implications of International Collaborations in Higher Education**

- **CS 13.7.** Government level collaborations can provide internships and fellowships hence give opportunities for individuals to gain first-hand experience at universities abroad.
- **CS 13.8.** Exchange programmes can also give opportunities to build relations with academic staff in other countries, and to develop mutual engagement, for example by organising academic conferences and seminars.
- **CS 13.9.** Official support, for example from High Commissions, can aid university and research links and exchanges, resulting in close ties with the academic communities elsewhere, hence giving access to new trends and perspectives.
- **CS 13.10.** As with all aspects of collaborations, it is necessary – albeit often difficult – to try to assure continuity and sustainability.
- **CS 13.11.** Individual collaborations, for example resulting from chance meetings at conferences, can initially be productive, in this example resulting in research seminars, and academic visits, and collaborative programmes.
- **CS 13.14.** Individual collaborations can provide new international perspectives to partners, in this with regard to the education provision for children with complex needs, and enhance curriculum development and professional understanding.
- **CS 13.15.** Individual collaborations can also help to identify staff development needs.
- **CS 13.16.** Individual relationships, however, need to develop into institutional level collaborations if they are to become sustainable.
- **CS 13.17.** In this case study institutional-level links, although these can be productive, have not taken off due to the bureaucratic procedures which need to be followed, and also due to political considerations.

## **Contextual Information**

The University of Kerala is the mother university of all the other six universities in the South Indian state of Kerala. Over the years, the jurisdiction of the University has been restricted to Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kollam, Alappuzha Districts and some parts of Pathanamthitta District of Kerala State. At present, the university has sixteen faculties and forty one departments of teaching and research in addition to study centres and other departments. Teaching, Research and Knowledge extension are the mandate of each Department. The Department of Education, the Department of Sociology and the Institute of English are the focus of this case study.

The Department of Education or the Faculty of Education is attached to the Palayam (or city) campus of the University of Kerala. This is located two miles away from the main city campus of the University and adjacent to the Arts College, Trivandrum. The Department has three study centres: a) Curriculum Development Centre, b) Centre for Educational Technology and c) Centre for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties. The Department is linked with national and state level research and training organisations. M.Ed, M.Phil and Ph.D are the courses offered within the Department.

The Department of Sociology is one of the seven departments under the Faculty of Social Sciences. This is located in the Karyavattom campus of the University of Kerala. The Department oversees the undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes in Sociology, Social Work and Women's studies.

The Institute of English is one of the six departments under the Faculty of Arts. Postgraduate and research programmes are offered within the Department. The Institute is located in the main campus of the University. The *UGC Area Study Centre for Canadian Studies* (UGC refers to University Grants Commission) is a part of the research centre at the Institute. This is one of the 25 Canadian Studies programmes at Indian Universities arranged by the Canadian Government, and India's UGC has recognised and elevated this as one of four Area Study Centres in India. The Centre has focused upon promoting teaching and researching on Canada to further the relationship between India and Canada. In addition, this provides support for the staff within the University of Kerala to gain Canadian academic experience with Universities in Canada under the Faculty Enrichment Programme (FEP). This will be discussed in detail below under the title of 'Government level collaboration'. The case will also refer to 'individual level collaborations' and 'institutional level collaborations'.

Most undergraduate programmes of the University of Kerala are overseen through the 150 affiliated colleges. Of these 60 are Arts and Science colleges. The UGC has identified the University as one of the 26 institutions selected for promotion of India Studies by foreign students coming to India.

The information about the University can be viewed through the website: <http://www.keralauniversity.ac.in/about.html>

## **Data Set**

Data collected during university visits to University of Kerala and used to inform the development of this case study were as follows:-

## Strategic Implications of International Collaborations in Higher Education

Reference	Interviews	No.
<b>CS1IHD</b>	<b>Interviews with head of the departments</b>	X3
<b>CS1IAS</b>	<b>Interviews with academic staffs</b>	X4
	<b>Total number of interviews</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Documents</b>	
<b>CS1DSH</b>	Department of Sociology Handbook	X1
<b>CS1DEH</b>	Department of Education Handbook	X1
<b>CS1DIH</b>	Institute of Education Handbook	X1
	<b>Total Number of Documents</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Web resources</b>	
<b>CS1WEB 1</b>	<a href="http://www.keralauniversity.ac.in/about.html">http://www.keralauniversity.ac.in/about.html</a>	X1
<b>CS1WEB 2</b>	<a href="http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/india-inde/academic_relations_academiques/index.aspx?lang=eng&amp;menu_id=12&amp;menu=L">http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/india-inde/academic_relations_academiques/index.aspx?lang=eng&amp;menu_id=12&amp;menu=L</a>	X1
<b>CS1WEB 3</b>	<a href="http://www.canadastukeralauniv.edu.in/conferences.html">http://www.canadastukeralauniv.edu.in/conferences.html</a>	X1
<b>CS1WEB 4</b>	<a href="http://www.sici.org/home/">http://www.sici.org/home/</a>	X1

## Findings

(Figures in brackets refer to interviews, documents, web resources within the data set listed above and which can be used for verification of statements made.)

## Government level collaboration (department of Sociology and Institute of English and Canada Study Centre)

The University of Kerala has established academic relations with Canadian Universities through a Staff Enrichment Programme, which is facilitated by the Canada Study Centre at the University (**CS1IAS; CS1WEB3**). The Staff

Enrichment Programme is jointly funded by the Canadian and Indian Governments through a formalised academic linkage of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (**CS1WEB3; CS1WEB4**). The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute is a bi-national organization that promotes understanding between India and Canada through academic activities and exchanges. The institute's internships and fellowships provide opportunities for individuals to gain first-hand experience in India or Canada. Under the Staff Enrichment Programme of the institute, 8 academic staff members and 7 scholars associated with the Centre were awarded Government of Canada Fellowships and have been involved in academic activities at various Canadian Universities (**CS1WEB3; CS1IHD**).

The academic relations between Canada and India have until now concentrated in the field of humanities and social sciences and in future plan to include institutional co-operation in such fields as the Natural Sciences, Medicine and Engineering (**CS1WEB2**).

Through the provision of the Canada Study Centre at the University, staff and students are able to access resource persons from Canadian universities to deliver lectures and organise seminar events. The university record shows over 50 such resource persons from Canada have come to the Centre over the years (**CS1IDH; CS1WEB3**). The staff and some research students have been involved in the publications on various aspects of Canadian Studies, including one translation of Canadian short stories in Malayalam, the local language of Kerala. This has benefitted the Centre to offer more accessible Masters and PhD level research programmes for the students, for example, students can be supported with local medium of instruction whenever it is necessary. Not only that, academics from the Canadian Universities can now access local cultural aspects and do intercultural research more effectively, one example is given as an academic staff from the University of Alberta who was attached to the University of Kerala and was in Kerala for a year, working on his Ph.D. titled 'Tribals and their Music in Kerala' (**CS1WEB3; CS1IDH**).

The exchange programme has given opportunities for the participants to build relations with academic staff in Canadian Universities and they further developed into organising academic conferences and seminars (**CS1IDH**). In the past, some years after the establishment of the co-operation, there have been several programmes which have been organised by the Canada Study Centre. This has given opportunities for the Canadian scholars and academic staff to visit the Centre and offer support and learn from mutual engagement with academics within Kerala University. This is further connected through the Canadian alumni of Indian universities and Indian alumni of Canadian universities. The Canadian High Commission supports university and research links and exchanges between

## **Strategic Implications of International Collaborations in Higher Education**

Canada and India. They have sought to nurture close ties with the academic communities in Canada and elsewhere in the country so as to imbibe new trends and develop fresh perspectives (**CS1IHD3; CS1IHD1**). The association with the Canada Study Centre at the University has helped the participants to achieve specific goals and objectives when they were offered academic visits under the collaboration (**CS1IAS 2; CS1IAS3**). This has helped to develop resources and course materials and conference themes for supporting students who undertake Canada Study at the centre (**CS1IHD3**).

The participants of the programme were highly appreciative about their experience in Canadian universities. Their perspectives about Canada, life in Canada, and academic procedures in Canada were good learning lessons for the participants. This has provided an opportunity for the participants from India to feel academic life moving.

*Yes, I was in Canada for three months, it was very good visit ... I was invited to participate some of the sessions organised by the Canadian academic staffs. It was very pragmatic and useful. ... I also see some cultural difference in the delivery of learning. It is nice to know what is happening in the other parts of the world. I think most of the staffs would say the same ...*(**CS1IAS3**)

One of the issues participants of the programme discussed was that there is not continuity in the programme. As it is funded by the Government, they had to develop some kind of relationship with the academic staff to develop academic relations in their own.

### **Individual level collaboration (Department of Education)**

The Department of Education at the University of Kerala had the experience of individual level collaboration with a University in the UK. The collaboration was established through two individuals from the universities in both countries who met at the conference in India. This led to the visit of a professor from the UK University to deliver a research seminar on inclusive education in the Department of Education at the University of Kerala. This further developed into the academic visits from Kerala to the UK University. The cost of the academic visits between the institutions was met by the hosting institution. The individuals who developed the collaboration eventually became co-ordinators of the programme between the two universities. However, this relationship did not lead to institutional level collaboration. Moreover, this has stopped now due to the change of management within the University of Kerala, as narrated by the interviewee:

*We used to have visitors [academic] from X University in the UK. I heard that students and staffs have benefitted from this ... But this is not functioning now, because the programme co-ordinator is working in another university now ... I am not sure whether they are continuing the programme there. (CS1IHD2)*

The Department of Education within the University of Kerala has benefitted particularly from individual level collaboration. This was because of a seminar event undertaken by the British University professor which was about complex learning difficulties, in which the Department has limited knowledge and experience in terms of delivery and research **(CS1IDH; CS1IAS)**. The content of the seminar was new and transnational. This area was ignored or untouched by many educators in Kerala, India. The seminar events and the following academic visits in the UK have helped the staff within the Department to be aware of the issues and training needs of staff with regard to the children with complex needs **(CS1IDH; CS1IAS)**. The academics from Kerala, India had opportunities to visit special schools and the support given by the UK university to develop curriculum and professional understanding. Subsequently, the collaboration has helped the Department to develop its first centre of its kind, *Centre of Learning Disabilities and Difficulties*. One of the beneficiaries of the programme is currently the head of this Centre, who was academic staff member during the process of collaboration **(CS1IAS)**. Now this Centre is taking affirmative steps to benefit from institutional level collaboration with a UK University and other universities abroad. As the head stated:

*Yea, it would be nice if you (interviewer) could help us to develop some sort of relationship with a University in the UK or ..., if possible... We are very backward in this [Learning Disabilities] area ...**(CS1IAS4)***

## **Institutional level collaboration**

There is no formal agreement between the departments within the University of Kerala with others abroad **(CS1IDH)**. The University authority in the past was always sceptical about the University's collaboration with other universities especially from first world countries. This is because of the ideological position of the University in academic matters. The politically left influences within the State of Kerala have had an impact upon the University's decisions to have institutional level relationship with other Universities abroad. It is also noted that there is considerably higher level of bureaucratic procedures to be followed for any kind of institutional collaboration with other universities abroad. The Department heads had struggled with the approval procedures from the syndicate members (representatives of State legislative assembly), Senate members (academic staff) and Vice Chancellor for any level of institutional



## **Strategic Implications of International Collaborations in Higher Education**

collaboration (**CS1IDH**). However, this has scarcely encouraged having the opportunities to work with other universities.

*...you [interviewer] know the politics of Kerala, we [are] always suspicious about institutional relationship, [with] other universities especially foreign [western countries] universities. More importantly, who want to go through the procedures of the university (**CS1IDH2**)*

## **Conclusions and recommendations.**

- Students should be involved in the programme in order to maintain continuity of the programme.
- There should be a system of monitoring programmes to develop further activities.
- Institutional level collaborations are much needed in the context of University of Kerala.