

Higher Education, Internationalisation and Global Development: An Irish Case Study¹

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Abstract

European engagement with development co-operation in the Global South has many modalities and there is only agreement that we do not have the answers yet. Here we present an Irish case study of inter-university collaboration with a number of Southern partners to build research capacity through partnership. We provide first a critical introduction to the internationalisation debates which frames our presentation of the various aspects of the Irish African Partnership. This is not posed as a model of best practice but simply as one approach which has developed a philosophy through trial and error. This case study is then related to the broader field of European engagements with development co-operation in the field of higher education. We stress two elements: knowledge is global and so also must be the development imperative; our approach to research building also needs to be forward looking (Foresight) and not looking backwards to what might have worked well in the past, usually somewhere else.

Keywords: development co-operation, research capacity building, Ireland, Foresight, metrics, partnership

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1. What is Internationalisation?

The term internationalisation has been deployed for over fifteen years now to describe some aspects of the global outreach of Western universities. It has been defined by *Teichler*

increasing frequency of border-crossing *(Teichler 2004:22)* Examples of this activity might include physical mobility, knowledge exchange and university co-operation, in relation to teaching and research activities. Internationalisation may also take regional forms as, for example, in relation to Europeanisation (Bologna), pan-African bodies and Latin American regional associations. While many authors seem to present internationalisation as a value-free, objective process, *Kehm and Teichler* recognise realistically that it must be tr

(Kehm and Teichler 2007:2621). This is nowhere more true than in relation to North-South/inter-university relationships where power asymmetries continue to persist.

Set in a broader context, internationalisation could - and arguably should - be seen as part and parcel of globalisation, and not just a current university policy aimed at attracting overseas students. Its interface with development must also be acknowledged, given that the latter is no longer defined in purely national terms. In parallel with the increasingly global patterns of capital flow, finance, culture and knowledge which have become pronounced over the past fifteen years, sustainable development is seen to be predicated upon effective and concerted policy at global level. Thus internationalisation must be seen as part of a broader policy v global knowledge, inter-dependence, sustainability and co-operation set the terms of engagement.

International exchange in science and research is a key characteristic of internationalisation, and has for some time been a major aspect of international development initiatives aimed at building capacity in the global South. Development agencies of countries such as Sweden, United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands have over the years supported research partnerships involving higher education institutions (HEIs) and research institutes in the South (DDRN 2009, 12). While such partnerships have had the primary aim of capacity building in the South, they have also been motivated by studies of internationalisation of higher education that have argued for the international nature of knowledge, and recommended a view that higher education research activities and outcomes should take place in an international rather than national environment (de Wit 1999, Stensaker et al. 2008, 3). It is recognised that studies of global importance such as professional education, environmental studies, climate change, food security and public health require a comparative and international dimension if they are to be meaningfully mediated.

However, internationalisation as a form of integration into the new global order may equally give rise - unintentionally - to more negative processes. In higher education globally we have seen over the last decade the so-knowle (despite all the talk about brain circulation) and ever-growing disparities between Northern and Southern institutions and capabilities. Good intentions, such as strengthening local capacity or contributing to poverty reduction, are not guaranteed to translate into good outcomes. In this context, we really do need to be very vigilant and self-critical to not confuse good intentions with positive outcomes in the Global South. There is, after all, a long history going back to colonialism, through modernisation theory, to enlightened global integration where the

The post-independence African university was, according to *Mamdani*

(*Mamdani 1993:11*). Then came

the period of Africanisation when international standards were, to some extent, traded in for local relevance. But de-racialisation did not necessarily lead to de-colonisation as

new patterns of dependence emerged. We need to consider whether the current emphasis on quality assurance and integration (*Bologna*) might not be creating new paradigms of domination. Certainly, as *Charlier and Croche (2009)* argue we can envisage a Bologna Process of Africa which is cognisant of local realities and sets its own relevant standards. There is a general belief that internationalisation and international partnerships can lead

1980s when

partnership with the stress

However, one of the most comprehensive reviews by *Samoff and Carroll* argued that

can and do play a prominent role in the development of the South (Samoff and Carroll 2004:721). The asymmetry of the colonial days is reproduced in a new guise: the South sends people to and receives knowledge from the North, much as happens in the uneven global migration flows despite the rhetoric about migration and development.

subordinate one. The progressive rhetoric of partnership cannot, in and of itself, shift dependency if it is accepted uncritically as a panacea.

Internationalisation is the conceptual frame within which we situate the study of the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (IAP, for short) which follows. We understand the term as simultaneously analytical and normative. In terms of the first category we would place internationalisation as a sub set of the broader debate on globalisation. Clearly the contemporary university is impacted in complex ways by the greater connectivity – economic, social, cultural and in terms of knowledge generation – created by globalisation. Likewise, in terms of the normative element we wish to break from the dominant North Atlantic framework of meaning where what happens in Europe is taken as the norm. Rather we

rhetoric of participation and foreground the continuing patterns of North – South inequality. The Southern university has always been internationalised, first by the open tutelage of colonisation, now through the discourse of partnership.

2. The Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building

2.1. Project Background.

The IAP (www.irishafricanpartnership.ie) was formed in 2008 as a collaborative inter-university partnership, in response to calls for proposals under the Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid (the official development assistance programme of the Irish Government) and Higher Education and Research Institutes. The aim of the wider programme (administered by the Higher Education Authority) is to promote linkages and cooperation between higher education and research institutions in countries supported by Irish Aid and in higher education institutions in Ireland, with the objectives of institutional collaboration for knowledge generation, knowledge exchange and mutual learning. Underlying the creation of the IAP in particular was a recognition that research needed to become increasingly multi-disciplinary, if it were to be seen to respond meaningfully to the over-arching and urgent global challenges of our time, such as poverty reduction and climate change, taking into account the cross-cutting issues such as gender, environment, and human rights and ICT.

A total of eight projects received funding under the Programme of Strategic Cooperation, and all share the common overall objective of poverty reduction in Africa, mediated through the enhancement of Southern higher education capabilities. However, the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building is distinctive in that it incorporates all nine universities on the island of Ireland as well as four African partner universities i.e. University of Malawi, Makerere University Uganda, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique. Its aim is enhancing the development co-operation mission of the university through international partnerships.

The project aims to establish a network of key academics from the 13 partner institutions to develop a coordinated approach to build the capacity for research. In the Irish institutions specifically, it aims to build the capacity for development research, whereas in the African institutions, the focus is placed on building capacity for research in the areas of health and education, and the cross-cutting thematic areas of ICT and gender.

Whilst the IAP does not itself engage directly in specific research work, a distinctive feature is its ability to facilitate multi-disciplinary research engagement, especially between the sciences and the humanities, in a country such as Ireland in which arguably - no single institution has yet built up a sufficient critical mass of expertise in development-related research. The IAP therefore works at one remove from implementation of actual research projects, for example by supporting the Southern partners in creating and strengthening their research support functions, in order more effectively to relate their research priorities to poverty reduction and national development objectives. Recognition of the value of incorporating community consultation processes and policy-level interfaces into research design are also emphasised.

priority areas reflect the thematic and cross-cutting priorities of Irish Aid and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Project activities are grouped around six distinct work streams i.e. a stakeholder consultation, a foresight exercise, a summer school around institutional research building, the development of a web portal and development of a set of metrics for measuring research capacity building. All work is conducted by joint Irish/African work teams.

The project aims are being achieved by means of the following:

- Promotion of research within the partner universities in Ireland and Africa
- Development of understanding of the complex issues involved in research capacity building within the partner universities
- Organising intensive international summer schools around institutional capacity building issues such as research funding, research training, research management, etc
- Identification of priority research needs in the two core thematic areas of health and education
- Development of a set of metrics by which research capacity building may be measured

- Development of a web portal which links Irish and African partners in a virtual community and which provides a vehicle for showcasing development research and information through a digital repository

2.2. Stakeholder Consultation

A comprehensive stakeholder consultation was carried out, to assess existing research capacity in the partner universities, identify barriers to future research capacity and jointly devise ways to overcome these barriers. Fieldwork for the consultation research extended over a 5 month period in 2008, and involved individual and group interviews with over 300 research and senior administration staff throughout all partner institutions.

Researchers collected data under the following headings:

- Opportunities and constraints to individual research capacity building
- Opportunities and constraints to institutional capacity building
- Research priorities in health and education
- Building research capacity through partnership
- Gender as a constraining/enabling factor within the partner institutions
- ICT as a constraining and/or enabling factor in research capacity building

With regard to the international development dimension of higher education partnership-working, key observations emerging from the stakeholder consultation included the following:

- Both North-South and South-South institutional partnerships are vital to capacity building and knowledge exchange especially in terms of PhD studentships and sandwich-type programs.
- Research should be multi-disciplinary and focused on the MDGs and cross-cutting issues such as gender, environment and human rights. There should be

greater encouragement of research engagement between the sciences and humanities.

- Development related research requires greater promotion at the institutional level.
- academic discourse, and collaborations between research academics and development practitioners should be promoted.
- Short-term training and induction of researchers needs to be more systematic, proposed activities include a pre-doctoral programme covering topics such as research methodology, research ethics and report writing.
- Institutional policies addressing gender related barriers to undertaking research and implementation of the gender equity principles are needed.

2.3. Foresight Exercise

2.3.1. *Rationale.*

Foresight was used as a tool for prioritising research areas in health and education and to sensitise researchers to the importance of a futures orientation.

The foresight exercise was conducted over a period of three workshops in Dublin, Entebbe and Maputo. A scenario planning methodology was employed and allowed participants to engage in creative thinking about the future threats and opportunities associated with research capacity building in their priority areas of interest.

During the first stage, participants were asked to identify factors which would have the greatest impact on health and education in the future. Common responses included:

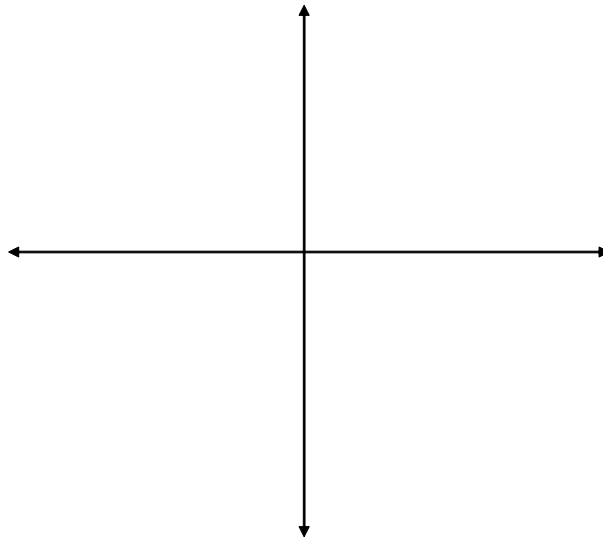
- Clean water and sanitation
- Renewable energy and bio fuels
- Food security and nutrition

- Increasing mobility
- Stable/democratic governance
- New and emerging infectious disease
- Non-infectious disease
- Education and empowerment of women

In the second stage, participants derived four future paths for development in Africa around which, parameters for research in health and education could be based. These scenarios were framed around axes of the global political economy and national, social and political cohesion. Groups were asked to consider and discuss how health and education might look within the four resultant scenarios and what the priorities in each of the scenarios might be. What resulted was the following Foresight matrix.

2.3.2 *Foresight Matrix*

Combining a global political economy horizontal axis with a national social and political cohesion/consensus vertical axis gives us four possible scenarios as outlined in the matrix below:



Capitalism Unbound' at the Makerere workshop because it was one in which globalisation takes off and accelerates and at the same time national politics remain fairly stable. It is a highly structured and regulated world which creates great dynamic growth but also more inequalities.

World B was given the title '**Back to the Future'** because the world has turned protectionist and political cohesion is at a very low level. There is less mobility of people, capital and ideas. Inevitably communities are torn apart as political vision is in short supply.

At first we focused on these two worlds as polar opposites in a way. But the participants at the Makerere workshop decided to make the grid complete and thus we build up the four scenarios in the 2 x 2 grid.

World C we call **Me First'** insofar as globalisation has once again taken off but in the context of few rules, a sort of survival of the fittest. The level of political consensus and social cohesion is low. Multilateralism is a thing of the past and regulation never took off.

We're in it Together' because while globalisation and internationalisation are still sluggish there is, at least in Africa, a return to some kind of greater political vision. Communities are knitted together by adversity and while austerity is a fact of life it is implemented fairly.

2.3.3. *Process Outcomes.*

Without going into the full Foresight methodology and process here (see full report at <http://www.irishafrikanpartnership.ie/content/research>), what is clear is how vital the international dimension is to any national development project for poverty reduction in

and participatory work constructing the Foresight scenarios. This in itself was a gain as clearly cutting-edge research needs to position itself in terms of the global knowledge economy and society.

In order to validate the research priorities derived, a further international mapping exercise was conducted. The exercise comprised the review of policy documents from organisations at the global, continental and national levels as well as interviews with individuals from organisations including Irish Aid, NEPAD and Sida. The mapping exercise revealed important areas not previously included. It was therefore proposed that the list of potential research priorities should be expanded. The longer list would then be prioritised to generate a list of four or five key topics. Groups used a combination of scoring and ranking to prioritise the list based on the following five criteria:

1. Contribution to poverty reduction
2. Contribution to community empowerment
3. Relevance to policy and practice
4. Contribution to the empowerment of women
5. Criticality/ feasibility

The main health research priorities derived from our research and workshop deliberations include issues such as maternal health, infectious disease (including HIV) and malnutrition. The increasing burden of non-communicable diseases was also highlighted. The need to incorporate gender equity and a health systems approach to research projects was recognised. There was a clear notion that any research should incorporate a capacity building element and that it should be oriented towards development outcomes. Research should also lead to a reduction in health disparities and should support and engage local communities to deal with local problems.

The main education research priorities derived were; teacher education; education for sustainable development; inclusive education; education in disadvantaged communities; curriculum reform and development and ICT and education. There was also a clear understanding that educational research should always promote gender equity and what

2.4. Knowledge for Development Web Portal

The 2021 Africa Development Report (ADP) is a key document for the African continent. It provides a comprehensive overview of the continent's economic and social development. The report is available in both English and French. The English version is available at <https://www.africadevelopmentreport.org/> and the French version is available at <https://www.africadevelopmentreport.org/fr/>. The report is also available in a virtual community platform at <https://www.africadevelopmentreport.org/virtual-community/>. The report is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the development of the African continent.

distributed to staff at the relevant departments of all 13 universities e.g. research offices, human resource departments, libraries etc.

3. Capacity Building and the International Development agenda

3.1. Attitudinal change

From its inception in 2008, the IAP has sought to stimulate the academic and research community in Ireland and in the partner countries in Africa to become more attuned to the need to re-orient research priorities more towards a paradigm of global collaboration, genuinely reflective of the inter-dependency of our planet. This implied a fresh emphasis on translational research, which can better articulate with wider developmental policy frameworks, whether at the macro level (embodied for example in the MDGs), or at the

experience and perspectives during the three-year life span of the project to date has led s partners to a deeper appreciation that the twin challenges of poverty reduction and sustainability of the environment must

- (i) become central points of orientation for our institutions,
- (ii) be mainstreamed into the day-to-day work of teaching, research and civic engagement in-country, and
- (iii) a -term North-South collaborative partnerships which reflect our growing inter-dependence.

3.2. Integrated Capacity Building: blending

An example of the latter is provided by a recent (March 2010) initiative by IAP, which was hosted by the University of Malawi (Chancellor College) in, and with participation from universities in the region together with Irish-based counterparts, Here, IAP presented an intensive programme of workshops of joint learning, covering the main research support functions, ranging from Grant-writing Skills to Effective Supervision, to Finance and Human Resources. Although these modules were specific in terms of their content, they were firmly anchored in the concept of research in the service of development. In this vein, a number of insights emerged from the reflective plenary session at the conclusion of the Malawi workshop:

- ❖ To help overcome the perception that academic research is removed from the research connects with real and defined needs in the wider community, and that plain language;
- ❖ To maximise their leverage with the policy environment; researchers need to know how government works; (after all, the policy process is more political rather than academic);
- ❖ Researchers benefit from nurturing structured dialogue with user-communities, via NGOs, and other non-state actors, and to systematically build in community consultation processes into research methodologies.
- ❖ institutions should be more prepared to accord recognition to staff who demonstrably practice sustained civic engagement;
- ❖ Researchers must look for new and effective channels of dissemination, in order -makers and partnering with civil society groups.

3.3. Integrating Capacity Building into wider Development Programmes

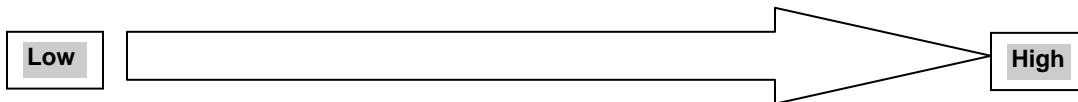
Mention was made above that Postgraduate study fellowships (which are a feature of the programmes of almost all European bilateral donor agencies) constitute an essentially individualised capacity building measure. Nevertheless, many donors and beneficiary

institutions alike have seen the value in utilising this form of support in a more strategic way to promote capacity building at institutional level. This trend has been given added impetus by the emphasis on aid coherence and effectiveness arising from the Paris Declaration (2005) ²

joint process of multi-annual programming at country level, involving major donor

Model of 'Relevance Scale' of Study Fellowships to Country Programming

<p>1. No integration</p> <p>Variable envelope</p> <p>No input by host Govt re priorities</p> <p>No structured alignment with national strategy.</p> <p>Individual cap. Building – private.</p> <p>No guaranteed re-entry.</p>	<p>2. Weak integration</p> <p>Variable envelope – no guarantee.</p> <p>Host Govt consulted re preferred priorities as resources become available.</p> <p>Loose link to national strategy, but no interface with HRD skills planning and retention.</p>	<p>3. Strong integration</p> <p>Guaranteed funding envelope.</p> <p>Priorities set by donor and broadly aligned with CSP.</p> <p>Host Govt aware of scheme in context of CSP + HRD plans..</p> <p>Fellowships meet specified skills gaps.</p>	<p>4. Total Integration</p> <p>Guaranteed multi-annual envelope.</p> <p>Dialogue + consensus with host Govt on priorities, in terms of national dev. / HRD policy.</p> <p>Fellowships meet specified skills gaps.</p> <p>Re-entry of returned Fellows assured</p>
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4. Poverty Reduction and Higher Education

What this analysis points to is a need for much greater policy coherence in the area of international development co-operation (including higher education cooperation), in order to intensify joined-up efforts towards the ultimate objective of enabling poor people to attain a better quality of life. This approach is articulated in the Irish Government White Paper (2006), which recognises that:

tion.

The challenges presented by poverty and the responses to those challenges are

The corollary of this statement is that no single measure in our present context, a higher education support strategy can be expected to lead directly to poverty reduction in isolation. Realistically, this ambition toward contributing to poverty reduction can only be realised if such sector-focused initiative were to constitute an integral component group of related projects, interventions and/or (ongoing) activities managed in a coordinated way and aiming at achieving a set of predetermined common (programme)

⁴ This is not to say that the existing IAP and its sister projects which comprise the Irish-funded support to Higher Education, does not confer developmental benefit; rather does it indicate unrealised potential for this sector-focused spending to demonstrably achieve more through better articulation with the mainstream programmes of the respective donor (in this case, Irish Aid) at country and regional level, combined with systematic tracking and follow-up.

The principal argument in favour of integrating Higher Education support into country strategies and / or national development programmes is to become more closely aligned with other complementary supports for capacity building, as part of a coherent and integrated framework, thereby releasing the catalytic potential of such investment

⁴ The definition of wh
Development Foundation www.mdf.nl

already bulging at the seams and cannot cope with any more demands, (b) that it would add further to the monitoring and evaluation complexity, and (c) that it might compromise academic freedom and independence, resulting in higher education and research becoming mere instruments of Government and donor influences.

This strategic perspective ties in rather neatly with the concerted efforts at international level towards aid effectiveness and harmonisation (ref the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action ⁵), and invites the higher education constituency of development internationally to see its comparative advantage as being an active contributor to such a -) critical stance.

5. Conclusions

Internationalisation has many modalities and international development co-operation needs to be seen in that context. The higher education sector in Europe has engaged with development research for poverty reduction in the Global South for many years. There is
ould not be. But we maybe need to
discuss much more explicitly the pros and cons of various models of engagement by
higher education with the global issues of development and poverty reduction. Clearly the
universities have much to contribute. Also it is c
needed to bring greater co-operation within higher education and between the sector and
the national development co-operation agencies and the higher education ministries. In
that spirit we have presented an Irish case study seeking to bring the Irish university
sector into an organic and planned engagement with Southern partners in Irish Aid
priority countries.

⁵ For more on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action, see http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html

intended scope, distinctiveness and expected results was not uniformly definitive across

commis

and we might be sceptical of projects which can assert confidently what their outcomes will be with great confidence and precision.

However, as a result of a process involving a combination of dialogue, trust-building

- creating a useful inter-university platform for Research Capacity Building (RCB), especially in the focal sectors of Education and Health.
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- focusing on unmet needs in Africa in niche areas where Ireland can make a difference, such as enabling institutions to develop effective Research Support functions.

We hope that in a subsequent phase of the Irish African Partnership we shall be able to successfully internationalise it, in the sense that we believe is merited.

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