



POLICY DIALOGUE WORKSHOP ON THE INTERLINKING ROLES OF
ACADEMIC COOPERATION AND RESEARCH COLLABORATION
AS A CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE GENERATION,
EXCHANGE AND CAPACITY BUILDING MEASURES

ADDIS ABABA, OCTOBER 23 - 24 2012

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Developing International Research Capacity and Capability.

Spolander, G. & Engelbrecht, L.K.



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Reference:

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Available:

<http://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=YUORtfMAAAAJ>



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- **The aim** of this presentation is to present a narrative of an example of how higher education practitioners from Africa and Europe can develop and establish:
 - good practice of academic and research collaboration;
 - which can serve as a model for higher education institutions;
 - to generate knowledge;
 - but also to define new perspectives;
 - for building up education and research capacity.



- We draw **specifically on an example** of an European Union Marie Curie Programme's International Research Staff Exchange Scheme in the field of the public health implications of neoliberal policy and management on professions and vulnerable populations.



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- **The focus** would however be not so much on the content of the project, but on the process, learning and the experience.



- **Why Marie Curie?**

- Our fields (public health within the context of social welfare) are not well represented in international research.
- Most academic developments in those fields are country specific.
- In order to develop large scale international research collaborations we needed to build a credible research team who can demonstrate an international profile, delivery and reputation.
- The Marie Curie offers an opportunity for us to develop such a team.
- The Marie Curie also has personal and institutional benefits as it enables the development and consolidation of international excellent researchers via staff exchanges and international research collaboration.



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- **Strategy:**

- The first part of the strategy was to develop a research team involving six countries (3 EU and 3 non-EU)
- The second strand of the strategy is to expand the research team to 10 countries (5 EU and 5 non-EU)
- The third strand is to seek larger international grand funding, such as Cost and Tempus.
- It could also serve as platform to secure additional funding and research opportunities.
- Through international publications and presentations, the profile of individual researchers and institutions may also be raised.



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- **The processes**

- The initial development was a result of networking for small scale research funding and joint publications between Coventry University, Social and Health Care Management (UK) and Stellenbosch University, Department of Social Work (SA),
- Through international EU staff exchange funding, Coventry University develop relationships with Calabria University(Italy) and Laurea University (Finland).
- Those relationships fostered new links with St Petersburg State University (Russia) and Loyola College (India)
- Why these institutions and individual members:
 - These institutions represent different geographical, economic, cultural and professional contexts;
 - different research experiences and expertise;
 - and the institutions and members were committed to a partnership of equals.



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- **What the collaboration has brought to the different stakeholders:**
 - advantages of international cooperation and the mutual benefits of cooperation are:
 - opportunities to participate in international research on topical issues;
 - broadening of experiences, knowledge and skills for the research team and the back office functions;
 - International recognition and prestige;
 - mutual learning, understanding and development as equals of international best practices, theories, knowledge development and dissemination;
 - developing capacity within the wider institution, support services and students.



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- **Research implementation**

- Funding is limited only to providing the institution with a set amount of allowance to enable travel:
 - this does not meet the cost of salaries and incidental expenses;
 - therefore the institution needs to look at it as an investment in staff and research development.
- The process of the research and analyses also provides seed funding, enabling the team and the institution to identify and demonstrate areas of need for future research.
- The challenges for management of the project are not only linked to the direct research team, but also to the wider university systems and structures e.g. payment of allowances and expenses.



- **Research implementation (cont..)**
 - Recognitions of differences in Universities' strategies, goals and ambitions:
 - The balancing of university strategic aims and aspirations against departmental realities of day to day academic requirements.
 - Understanding of different cultures, working practices and expectations and seeking to balance those against project delivery, research development, knowledge, skills and dissemination.



- **Research implementation (cont..)**

- Academic and personal responsibilities to research team and to employer and to the wider profession.
- Recognition and valuing of differences and diversity in academic experiences and contributions e.g. in a large scale international research one person does not have the skills for everything.
- Language and context differences should be understood e.g. Finland and vulnerability.
- Need to be creative and find continuous solutions for resource limitations e.g. internet connectivity and library facilities.



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- **Research implementation (cont..)**

- Feedback and sharing of experiences to home institutions and teams of learning, development and opportunities through press releases, staff presentations and use of material in student teaching.
- Working deliberately towards team publications and sharing the knowledge and skills such as bid writing and project management with colleagues.
- Mentoring less experience staff and team members.
- Recognition of soft skills (relationships, cultural understanding, sharing, collaboration, communication)
- Researchers' sacrifices of doing research alongside their day to day work, personal time and family life.



- **Challenges**

- How to management competing demands of an international team within the expectations of the funder.
- How to understand and align differences in competencies, academic cultures, personal and institutional expectations.
- To develop and motivate the research team and remain committed to a team goal as they only have a personal commitment to each other.
- Enabling people to work outside the parameters of a traditional line management system and structure.



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- **Challenges (cont...)**

- To be precise and concrete in expectations and recognise that different cultures have different ways of management and work ethics.
- How to demonstrate added value to home institutions and academic teams, especially in the early stages of projects where proof of publications, outcomes and deliveries are not yet evident.
- To develop excellence in research development, implementation and dissemination at a level which supports individual researchers, achieve institutional goals and gives back to stakeholders such as funders, and the communities in which we do our research, and the wider academic fraternity.

