

Strengthening Postgraduate Environments

Capacity building in higher education: lessons from Erasmus+ CBHE projects

Wil Hout (ISS, Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Henk van den Heuvel (CIS, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

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Creating
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<https://postgradcollaborations.com/>



<https://www.africaknows.eu/>



- ❑ Since 1950s/1960s NL University units on international cooperation – commitment to contribute to a ‘better’ and ‘juster’ world
- ❑ Recently, more focus on global development issues
- ❑ **Participation in projects with institutes in the Global South:**
 - Follow trends and developments in the Global South; networking
 - Joint publications by supervisors and PhD students
 - In certain cases, project earnings for own research groups
- ❑ **Advantages – from the Northern perspective:**
 - Comparative dimensions to teaching
 - Enrichment of course syllabi
 - Development of new (more ‘applied’) training courses



- ❑ **Structural limitations and dependencies**
 - Differences in quality of pre-university education
 - Funding mechanisms differ (student scholarships, soft loans)
 - Differences in access to resources
 - Limited access to literature and software
 - Inequalities in travel arrangements, fee structures, procurement regulations
- ❑ **Agenda setting dominated by Northern partner(s)**
 - Institution in EU country develops and submits the proposal
 - Successful proposal development requires technical expertise and budgetary skills
- ❑ **But, “talking back to the Empire” may work**
 - Find your own space, build your own agenda – cf. social justice agenda in our supervision course
 - Show results, give evidence
 - Donor bureaucracies can also be reasonable and sympathetic to the work



- ❑ **Strategic interests of funding agencies – European Commission**
 - PR, goodwill - benevolent relations towards Europe (as former colonial powers)
 - Producing competent global knowledge workers ('professional PhDs'), in the interest of ...
who?
 - Self-interest: help solving "problems in the EU" (e.g. Horizon 2020)?
 - Spreading neoliberal principles related to building market for education

- ❑ **Principle of reciprocity**
 - Building capacity in the Global South in Higher Education
 - Additionally, verifiable benefits to Northern partners are expected (and have to be reported on), also regarding doctoral education



❑ **A closer look at reciprocity (from a Northern perspective)**

- Challenges/problems (e.g. in doctoral education) often quite similar - though to different extent, with different socio-economic backgrounds and different geographical histories
 - ✓ Increasing numbers of students (massification)
 - ✓ Cultural diversity issues
 - ✓ Power relations in supervisory process, sexism, racism
 - ✓ Suboptimal postgraduate environments (e.g. managerialism, bureaucracy, loneliness among PhD students, overburdened supervisors)
- Sharper contrasts and more extreme contexts in the Global South urge for more vigorous approaches dealing with diversity and inequality: also applicable in the Global North ('eye openers')



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- ❑ **A closer look at reciprocity (from a Northern perspective)**
 - Institutional arrangements differ to be able to absorb/integrate experiences, insights & best practices from North-South postgraduate collaborations
 - ✓ University units on international cooperation / International Offices: more centralised, less direct influence in core business of postgrad supervision
 - ✓ Academic staff: more direct influence, but often decentralised / in isolation



☐ **‘New’ modalities in postgrad supervision and South-North collaboration – also through European Commission funding**

- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Horizon 2020 Innovative Training Networks (ITN), e.g. the ‘ADAPTED’ project *“Eradicating Poverty: Pathways Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”*
 - ✓ European Joint Doctorates – at 5 institutes
 - ✓ Network-wide training – PhD students move between the institutes of the supervisors, participate in secondments hosted by non-academic partners, go for fieldwork in Africa and participate in the Annual Meetings of ADAPTED
 - ✓ Transferable skills training: in academic writing - publishing research findings; presentation training; advanced career development
- Yet also EU self-interests:
 - ✓ Contribution to structuring doctoral/early-stage research training at the European level
 - ✓ Contribution to strengthening European innovation capacity