



U T S
e P R E S S

Gateways:

International Journal
of Community
Research and
Engagement

Vol. 12, No. 2
December 2019



© 2019 by the author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

Citation: Aldersey, HM, Abera, M, Mzinganjira, A, Abebe, S, Demissie, S. 2019. The University of Gondar, Queen's University and Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program: A partnership for disability-inclusive higher education in Ethiopia. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, Article ID 6856. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/ijcre.v12i2.6856>

ISSN 1836-3393 | Published by UTS ePRESS | <http://ijcre.epress.lib.uts.edu.au>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The University of Gondar, Queen's University and Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program: A partnership for disability-inclusive higher education in Ethiopia

Heather M Aldersey¹, Mikyas Abera², Anushka Mzinganjira¹, Solomon Abebe², Solomon Demissie²

¹Queen's University, School of Rehabilitation Therapy, Louise D. Acton Building, 31 George Street, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6, Canada

²University of Gondar University of Gondar, P.O. Box 196, Gondar, Ethiopia

Corresponding author: Heather Michelle Aldersey; hma@queensu.ca

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/ijcre.v12i2.6856>

Article history: Received 11/06/2019; Revised 04/12/2019; Accepted 5/12/2019; Published 20/12/2019.

Abstract

This article describes the development and implementation process of an innovative 10-year partnership that draws on the strengths of existing community-based rehabilitation programs to support new education and leadership development activities in Ethiopia. Current global estimates indicate that over 17 million people may be affected by disability in Ethiopia.

The national population projection for 2017 indicates that approximately 80 per cent of the population resides in underserved rural areas, with limited to no access to necessary health, rehabilitation, or social services. The University of Gondar (UoG) in Ethiopia has been serving people with disabilities in and around the North Gondar Zone since its inception in the mid-1950s. Over the years, its various units have designed and implemented numerous projects, employing alternative institutional and community-based models to promote the wellbeing of people with disabilities. Lessons drawn from these initiatives and shifts in health and social work practice informed UoG's decision to establish its Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program in 2005. Given a shared commitment to the principles and practice of CBR, the UoG is presently collaborating with the International Centre for the Advancement of Community Based Rehabilitation (ICACBR) at Queen's University in Canada to create new

disability-related education and mentorship opportunities. These include community-based research and internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate scholars through a shared Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. The two institutions, in collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation, have an overall goal of creating a disability-inclusive campus and regional rehabilitation hub at UoG. In this article, the authors discuss the unique collaborative structure of project management and implementation, and the embeddedness of university-community engagement to meet project objectives informed by the North–South/South–North partnership models. They also provide critical insights to, and reflections on, the challenges inherent in international, interdisciplinary university-community collaboration and the benefits from enhancing higher education in both Ethiopia and Canada. In contrast to shorter term or smaller projects that rely heavily on individual champions, this article focuses on larger scale, process-oriented institutional learning.

Keywords

community-based rehabilitation, disability inclusion, partnership, university-community engagement, interdisciplinary

Introduction

Given the increasingly interconnected, global orientation of higher education around the world, international higher education partnerships have become commonly accepted features of many tertiary institutions around the world. These partnerships can be structured in a range of different ways for diverse priorities and are often accompanied with myriad complexities and positive and negative outcomes. In this article, we describe the inception, development and implementation of a 10-year partnership that draws on the strengths of existing community-based rehabilitation programs to support new education and leadership development activities in Ethiopia. Specifically, we seek to answer the question: What are the strengths and challenges within a community-linked South–North collaborative partnership for disability-inclusive higher education? In particular, we discuss the unique collaborative structure of project leadership and the embeddedness of university-community engagement to meet project objectives. We also provide critical reflection on the challenges inherent in international, interdisciplinary university-community collaboration and the benefits of enhancing higher education in both Ethiopia and Canada. In so doing, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of how individuals and institutions can form and manage partnerships in mutually advantageous, collaborative ways to set priority agendas in curriculum development, research and service provision. The focus of this article (in contrast to shorter term or smaller projects that rely heavily on individual champions rather than a unified management approach), is primarily on the larger scale, process-oriented learning that we have observed over the last four years.

South–North Partnerships for capacity strengthening, research and sustainable development

Academic institutions have long engaged in North–South partnerships. Benefits of international partnerships among higher education institutions include positioning at the cutting edge of information, knowledge development, resource opportunities, policy change, and technical and social innovation (Koehn, Demment & Hervy 2008). Often, organisations

form partnerships to 'build on their comparative advantages and divisions of labour, develop integrated and win-win solutions to problems, and enhance the public good in a sustainable way' (Johnson & Wilson 2006, p. 72). North–South partnerships, in particular, are frequently framed in terms of 'development' (international, capacity, community, etc.). Historical models of development generally involved a Northern donor agency providing funding to Southern countries for projects or programs on topics prioritised by the donors (Koehn, Demment & Hervy 2008; Olsson 2008). These projects would often be implemented by a Northern actor (e.g. an academic institution or an international non-government organisation), which would hold key responsibility for reporting to the donor. This traditional model has been largely critiqued as neo-liberal and neo-colonial, reinforcing the control and power of the North over Southern communities (Martin & Griffiths 2012). Over the past three decades, the global discourse has shifted and now largely emphasises participatory, partnership-based approaches that prioritise the values and concerns of Southern stakeholders and the sustainability and local ownership of development efforts (Koehn 2012). Some scholars argue, however, that often this new discourse is not actually implemented in practice and historical, asymmetrical power dynamics continue to permeate many partnerships (Angeles & Gurstein 2000; Landau 2012).

Many scholars also challenge an ideal notion of equality or mutuality in North–South partnerships, stating that, despite partners' best efforts, mutuality is not possible because of inequality – in particular, unequal power relationships. As Angeles & Gurstein 2000 (p. 456) reflect, partnerships are rarely equal, rather 'our language and use of this seemingly egalitarian word tends to mask inequalities in resources, capabilities and accountability of governments, funding agencies, and NGOs between and within the North and South'. This fact makes 'address[ing] unequal relations between partners ... a major challenge in the discourse and practice of partnerships (Angeles & Gurstein 2000, p. 71). According to Johnson & Wilson 2006 (p. 71), inequality among partners could emanate from 'differences in a range of dimensions such as access to resources, power relations, knowledge, capacities and capabilities' as well as 'assumptions, perspectives/worldviews, agendas and expectations'. Johnson & Wilson (2006, p. 73) argue, however, that such differences should not be a challenge to equality or mutuality in partnerships; rather, 'mutuality ... makes a virtue of difference, enabling each partner to offer and gain something'. For Northern academic institutions, in particular, such partnerships offer strong opportunities for campus internationalisation and enhanced faculty competence in diversity, and inclusion of multiple perspectives (Koehn, Deardorff & Bolognese 2010). For Southern academic institutions, international partnerships offer access to resources, networks and skills not as readily available at home (Koehn 2012). The UoG, Queen's and Mastercard Foundation partnership approaches mutuality from the latter perspective, whereby all partners share similar values and complementary strengths while recognising and capitalising on characteristics unique to each organisation. This collaboration reinforces the partners' mutual commitment to supporting greater student, academic and professional mobility between the two nations to share knowledge, develop relationships and compare their practices in higher education and research.

UoG, Queen's and the Mastercard Foundation: An overview of the partnership

The UoG is one of the oldest public tertiary institutions in Ethiopia. With initial roots in Gondar Public Health Training Institute, established in 1954, UoG became a chartered university in 2004 and is currently housed in five campuses across the city of Gondar and in

its satellite town of Teda. The UoG is well known for its community-based approaches, for example, employing rural community-based team training approaches to medical education and prioritising preventative medicine and public health at a time when most such training institutions in the country focus on diagnosis and management of diseases (Yared, Amsalu & Molla 2005; Yoseph et al. 2007). Queen's University was established in Kingston, Canada, in 1841 and offers a comprehensive array of undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. Queen's prides itself on offering a positive student experience in a research-intensive environment, and has a strategic mandate to increase international presence as well as a comprehensive international plan that includes research engagement and international student recruitment and support.

In August 2015, in response to an open call for expressions of interest to participate in the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program as an implementing institution, both universities submitted independent proposals to become partners of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. At the time of initial submission, each proposal was uniquely grounded in individual institutional priorities and concerns. For example, the UoG proposed a Scholars Program that would focus on disability inclusion and would draw on the UoG Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Centre as a key resource in implementing the program. This would contribute to UoG's ultimate objective of becoming a regional hub for rehabilitation and disability inclusion. The Queen's program proposed international exchanges and the creation of a new curriculum for occupational therapy in a different geographical context (not Ethiopia), drawing on local partner priorities and Queen's strengths. The Queen's proposal was led by its International Centre for the Advancement of Community Based Rehabilitation (ICACBR). Upon reviewing submissions, the Mastercard Foundation identified common themes between the UoG and Queen's submissions – particularly the shared vision for improved inclusion for persons with disabilities on the continent of Africa and the shared strategy for achieving that vision – namely through community-based rehabilitation approaches.

As alluded to above, the universities were particularly closely linked from the outset due to similar lead implementing organisations proposed in the Mastercard Foundation Scholars expressions of interest. For the UoG, their proposed project lead was its Community Based Rehabilitation Program (UoG-CBR) office. Informed by the experiences and community interactions of the Department of Physiotherapy and the University Teaching Hospital as well as a baseline study on the conditions of people with disabilities (PwDs), the UoG-CBR program was first established in 2005. This establishment was possible through a collaborative community engagement initiative involving a range of partners – local, national and international; governmental and non-governmental; academics, researchers and practitioners. The UoG-CBR's initial efforts were originally funded by international donors – in particular, Save the Children and Light for the World. The objectives of UoG-CBR are to translate the UoG's commitment to the betterment of the wellbeing of people with disabilities by providing home-to-home disability/rehabilitation services, creating and promoting access to inclusive education, providing physiotherapy services and referrals for advanced medical treatments, delivering socioeconomic support and advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Queen's University proposed project was to be led by the School of Rehabilitation Therapy's International Center for the Advancement of Community Based Rehabilitation (ICACBR). Established in 1991, the ICACBR has promoted the use of community-based rehabilitation approaches and supported capacity development and educational enhancement related to disability and inclusion in a range of countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Until recently, the majority of the ICACBR's projects over the last

25 years were funded by Canadian international development funds. Having two academic institutions with centres focusing on implementing CBR projects is, in and of itself, unique, given that community-based rehabilitation is often implemented at a community level by non-academic organisations (e.g. non-governmental organisations or civil society organisations). Having both of these CBR centres submit complementary proposals to the Mastercard Foundation at the same time was serendipitous.

Foundation staff connected both institutions and encouraged them to draw on their strengths as centres of excellence in community-based rehabilitation to develop a proposal that would be complementary to and supportive of a standard Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program (e.g. scholarships and wraparound support for talented, disadvantaged youth at UoG) and would respond to each institution's and relevant stakeholders' needs and priorities. What followed was regular telephone calls, skype discussions and email communications, as well as two in-person collaborative project development sessions (in Gondar in March 2016 and in Kingston in May 2016). Throughout the period of project development, Mastercard Foundation staff provided continual review and feedback to the team, supporting them to ensure that project plans remained in line with the Foundation's charitable objectives. This process was truly a process of co-creation as it involved 'genuine and meaningful engagement with and participation of key people, perspectives, and ideas' in crafting the partnership and clear objectives, 'priorities and solutions' (Bilous et al. 2018, p. 166). The differences across the proposals, rather than being in conflict with each other, integrated well to the benefit of both institutions. For example, although the UoG had not originally proposed a new Occupational Therapy program, learning that Queen's had expertise and interest in the establishment of new programs in rehabilitation around the world prompted UoG to pursue this activity in the proposed partnership. UoG partners found this activity to be highly conducive to its existing goal of becoming a regional hub for rehabilitation and disability inclusion. It was also complementary to its history as the university that had established the first physical therapy program in the country. Although the merging of the two independent proposals meant a shift in geographic focus for the Queen's project, ICACBR leadership had previous experience working in Ethiopia and was open and eager to work in the country again.

These efforts resulted in the approval and funding of a three-agency partnership, the UoG/Queen's Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, in October 2016. This partnership includes what the team has termed Part A: Scholars Program (Gondar) and Part B: Fellowship Program (Gondar-Queen's) (Figure 1). Because of the process identified above, the program that was developed was truly a unified endeavour, uniting both institutions within mutually co-created priorities. As such, we use the term 'we' throughout this article. We believe the presentation of this project from a unified perspective is an important demonstration of the strong sense of co-ownership and unity held by both the management team and the institutions.

The goal of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is to develop a network of transformative leaders driving inclusive and equitable socioeconomic transformation in Africa. The Scholars Program targets students for whom barriers to access are particularly prohibitive, recruiting students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In line with its aim of contributing to social transformation, the program also seeks to recruit scholars who exhibit leadership potential and a commitment to giving back. The program offers these young people comprehensive wraparound supports, leadership development opportunities and intensive professional development support to enable them to successfully transition to dignified and fulfilling work, and to meaningfully impact the world around them. The Part A: Scholars

Program is a conventional scholars program under the Mastercard Foundation, except that it defines and uniquely focuses on disability as a disadvantage. The Part B: Fellowship Program is an example of an approach the Foundation is increasingly encouraging: deep institutional collaboration. It focuses on supporting the Part A: Scholars Program at Gondar with various capacity building activities, such as advanced training in disability, rehabilitation and inclusive education for Gondar faculty, collaborative research on disability, rehabilitation and inclusion issues in Ethiopia, and co-creation of context-based curricula and new programs at the UoG in CBR and Occupational Therapy.

A key strength in this project development process was that it supported and enabled institutional chemistry and compatibility by (a) identifying the individual institutional strengths and originally proposed activities; (b) aligning these with the UoG's ultimate vision of becoming a regional hub for rehabilitation and disability inclusion and the ICACBR's vision of a world where all people with disabilities are included in their communities and experience full human rights and equal opportunities; and (c) drawing on both institutions' interest in increased internationalisation. This project is truly a reflection of collaboration across three organisations to advance individual and collective strategic priorities. Strong institutional compatibility is necessary in a project of this duration (10 years) which could have potentially damaging transitions without a collaborative agenda, as individual members of collaborative teams may change over a project's lifetime (Bradley 2008). In the sections that follow, we describe our intentional actions to structure project leadership, management and implementation in a collaborative way and to embed our values of university-community engagement to meet project objectives. We then provide critical reflection on the intrinsic benefits of enhancing higher education in both Ethiopia and Canada as well as the inherent challenges for the partnership.

UoG–Queen's–Mastercard Foundation partnership structure

The project was intentionally structured in a decentralised, symmetrical manner, responding to each partner's individual strategic interests and incorporating mutuality at all stages of project decision making (Brinkerhoff 2002; Koehn 2012). To do this, Part A is governed by a contractual agreement between the UoG and Mastercard Foundation, whereby UoG is responsible for implementing project activities and reporting directly to the Foundation on project finances and outcomes. Although Queen's is available as a partner to support Part A's implementation when UoG deems this appropriate, the sole responsibility for Part A's success rests firmly with the UoG. Queen's University implements Part B through a contract with the Mastercard Foundation and a Memorandum of Understanding with the UoG. Although Queen's holds ultimate responsibility for reporting Part B's project finances and outcomes to the Foundation, Part B is structured as a shared process of prioritising project objectives, transparency and mutual accountability for results (Koehn 2012).

To ensure linkages between Part A and Part B, the UoG hosts one Director, responsible for both project components. This Directorship is shared with a Queen's-based co-Director for Part B. UoG hosts two full-time Managers (one for Part A and one for Part B) and Queen's hosts a full-time Manager for Part B. Collectively, these individuals constitute the management team for the UoG/Queen's Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, making informed decisions that promote open and mutual understanding and learning. Staff at each office support management. All Queen's based staff are linked to Part B, whereas UoG staff

may be uniquely tied to Part A or Part B or split between both Part A and B, depending on their roles.

Symmetrical, collaborative managerial structures in partnerships 'require building trust through face-to-face cooperative experiences that facilitate addressing arising asymmetries and conflicts' (Koehn 2012, p. 348). To do this, Part B co-managers meet weekly via Skype, Part B leadership (managers and directors) meet bi-weekly through Skype and quarterly in person (either in Ethiopia or Canada), with the Part A manager included as relevant. Each respective co-director has complete autonomy over personnel selection and daily operations of his or her office; however, they regularly communicate about and support one another in day-to-day local decisions. Part A management works directly with the Foundation to establish annual budgets and work plans, as well as on project analysis and evaluation for Part A project components. Part B management works collaboratively across Ethiopian and Canadian offices to establish project policies and communications and to propose annual budgets and work plans to the Foundation for Part B activities. All written and financial reporting for Part B, although ultimately submitted to the Foundation by Queen's, is compiled collaboratively, with the UoG co-director signing off before final submission. This layer of oversight and collaboration for Part B demonstrates commitment of the partners to transparency in issues of both funding and power (Samoff & Carrol 2004). The strong emphasis placed by the management team on cultivating interpersonal relationships through face-to-face interactions, active communication, mutual influence and joint learning has helped to develop trust between the two organisations – a critical feature often identified as the linchpin of successful partnerships (Ashman 2001; Turnbull et al. 2014).

University-community engagement: Building on strengths

Given that this project is grounded in CBR principles, both organisations place significant value on engagement with the community to meet project aims. We have operationalised this engagement through 'partnership chains' (Ashman 2001 p. 93) between North-South institutions and the Foundation (as described above). Presently, this engagement is perhaps most apparent in the curriculum modification and development efforts. Historically, it has been challenging for students with disabilities to gain an education through the UoG. The major goal of Part A of the project is to provide 450 undergraduate and graduate degree scholarships to youth who experience disadvantage – the majority of them with disability-related disadvantage. Admitting Mastercard Foundation Scholars with disabilities to existing curricula at Gondar has proven to be difficult, with the existing academic structure resistant to accommodating students with disabilities. For example, there are programs that specify, with no empirically sound basis, that applicants with any kind of disability cannot be admitted. The international partnership with Queen's and the Mastercard Foundation has encouraged UoG to reevaluate these processes and standards and bring them in line with international norms on human rights and accessibility by building on institutional and local priorities. At the same time, UoG is engaging with other institutional and community partners, such as Addis Ababa University and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, to provide institutional and national precedent for promoting curriculum flexibility and accessibility.

This push for change towards more internationally accepted norms for disability inclusion highlights an ethical tension inherent in internationalisation, whereby the international partners challenge local practice and require it to bend to foreign partner norms. This tension was also present in discussions around gender and the international partners' pressure for improved inclusion of both genders within the project. For example, the Mastercard

Foundation encouraged the UoG to take a gender-sensitive approach in their staffing of Part A and in recruitment processes for PhD Fellows in Part B. This required significant effort from the UoG to address, particularly for the PhD Fellow recruitment, given the UoG faculty complement is highly skewed towards men. These examples show how this project is not exempt from pressure to align with international partner priorities and agendas. We believe, however, that international pressure – particularly in areas such as disability inclusion and gender sensitivity – can be a useful way to affect positive change for historically disadvantaged community members or those who may typically hold less power or influence at home. It is important to note that, although the international partners helped to provide an impetus for institutional change, the UoG was an active agent in wanting this change as well. Thus, disability inclusion and gender sensitivity were already important to actors at the UoG and the international partners' priority on these issues simply helped to push UoG towards, and hold it accountable for, meaningful action.

Beyond modifications of existing curricula to become more disability inclusive, as necessitated by Part A, Part B is supporting the creation of new, disability relevant curricula at the UoG. First, the UoG is co-creating a curriculum for a CBR Management Certificate Program in collaboration with Queen's and local partners such as Cheshire Services Ethiopia (CSE) and the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD), among others. This co-creation process has involved three consultative workshops (two with partners at Bahir Dar and Gondar and one with scholars at Gondar), frequent face-to-face meetings, email exchanges and Skype conversations, getting us closer to co-produce resources – curricula, modules, delivery schedules, etc. – for the UoG-CBR Certificate Program, which will launch in January 2020. It also involved a review of existing Queen's and UoG content from other trainings/programs they have hosted over the years and decisions about how and if this content could be included; the commission of UoG experts drafting outstanding content; and editorial support from Queen's (e.g. supporting English language editing and overarching pedagogy).

The Certificate Program is mainly designed for Mastercard Foundation Scholars who, upon graduation, are expected to advance, work and advocate for the wellbeing of people with disabilities at policy, program and service levels. The Certificate Program will also be open to participation by current CBR fieldworkers who would like to develop or upgrade managerial or supervisory skills. As such, it is structured to offer significant theoretical and applied skills for community engagement, and includes embedded practica ('attachments') in the local North Gondar Zone community, working directly with families under the supervision of trained clinical instructors to promote and support disability inclusion at the community level. The co-creation process for this curriculum has been guided by a shared vision of what is needed (based upon assessments with scholars, community members and community partner organisations) and has incorporated the views of a range of stakeholders outside the academic development team (e.g. CBR practitioners, non-governmental organisations, public institutions).

Although the immediate beneficiaries of the CBR work will be Part A Mastercard Foundation Scholars, the institutional priority will be to run the CBR Certificate Program in perpetuity, long after the Mastercard Foundation funding is completed. This will offer opportunities for continued professional development, retention and connections to valuable community-based rehabilitation service providers in the community, along with an opportunity for sustainable institutional revenue generation at the UoG. As such, we have intentionally embedded reciprocity in our curricula development (e.g. consultation with

beneficiaries, potential client organisations and other universities that may create similar training programs) to pay attention to the interactions and experiences external to project concerns, with a view to long-range engagement and participation of organisations and individuals outside the scope of the UoG/Queen's partnership. This is why 'the co-creation process occurs within an evolving conceptual framework – guided by a shared vision of what is needed – in which the community is the protagonist' (Bilous et al. 2018, p. 167). To this end, in taking place in a cross-cultural context where international and local realities and priorities vied for clear expression, the curricula co-creation process (1) fostered genuine and meaningful engagement of partners, stakeholders and communities; (2) prioritised end-users' and communities' values, priorities and collective conscience; and (3) identified and integrated each partner's strengths and resources, using integrity and clear lines of communication as a guide. We managed to create a space 'where differently situated people ... work together across their own varying relationships to power and privileges opens possibilities for more critical and creative ways of engaging' (Torre 2009, p. 10).

Second, Queen's University is also supporting UoG to develop and implement the first undergraduate Occupational Therapy (OT) program in Ethiopia. This aspect of the project is at its early stages and, as a priority, the project team has engaged in extensive community consultation and engagement to inform future next steps in curriculum development. For example, we have engaged in workshops, information sessions and consultation with government and rehabilitation stakeholders (future employers of occupational therapists), as well as a formal needs assessment with people with disabilities, their families and relevant community stakeholders to best identify priority needs, supports and services that may be best filled by Ethiopian occupational therapists. The forthcoming results from this community consultation, combined with OT curriculum benchmarking against that of other African contexts and curriculum guidelines and minimum standards from the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT), will inform all decisions related to the content, format and delivery of OT education at the UoG.

The process of co-creation we adopted in designing the CBR Certificate Program informed the early planning and engagement related to the OT curriculum, thereby actively and effectively involving partners, stakeholders and the Ethiopian society so that the undergraduate OT curriculum would not only meet the expected standards of the WFOT but also reflect local Ethiopian realities. During three face-to-face meetings, both Part A and Part B staff conversed with OT professionals from Queen's who are actively engaged in supporting the curriculum development process. These face-to-face conversations, as well as the frequent and themed Skype meetings, email communications and, more recently and importantly, the national needs assessment will help the partnership to ground the curriculum design process on local realities by furnishing data on, for instance, unique Ethiopian occupational distribution, which has different OT needs from those of Canada or the West. This was one of the issues raised and discussed by OT professionals at the 2018 World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, where the proposal for a WFOT accredited OT curriculum for Ethiopia was shared with attendants. One of the challenges for the partnership thus becomes balancing the need to meet the WFOT standards to ensure global acceptability of the OT curriculum at UoG while reflecting the OT needs of Ethiopia as a less technologically advanced country with 80 per cent of the working population employed in the primary sector.

We are conscious of the possibility that the co-creation process in such 'cross-cultural contexts may exacerbate power differentials specifically because the prestige or pre-eminence

of Western models and epistemologies may silence alternative ones' (Bilous et al. 2018, p. 168). This could be the case for our project as well, as presently very few indigenous African models exist for Occupational Therapy and often models from elsewhere are applied in African contexts (Jansen-van Vuuren, Aldersey & Lysaght, under review), likely resulting in Northern approaches being factored into the curriculum in some way, making them at risk of silencing alternate local ones that may emerge. This consciousness differs for both partners – for Queen's it means they are constantly questioning our biases and trying to embed opportunities for indigenous approaches to OT come though (e.g. through the needs assessment). For the UoG, it means that they are open and receptive to international suggestions for OT, but also insist on alignment with local realities (e.g. to address role conflict with the existing Ethiopian physiotherapy profession which has functioned for years in the rehabilitation sector in the absence of the OT profession).

Both partners, learning from the experiences of North–South partnerships, engage in the co-creation process with clear and open lines of communication, transparency and reciprocity among partners, end-users and the community to foster understanding of differences in the values, traditions and priorities of each. This has promoted, from our experience, mutual learning and growth by expanding the scope of possibilities beyond conventionally accepted standards. As African OTs on the continent have reported, it is critical to find a balance between international perspectives on OT, given that it is a global profession that has one international body (WFOT), and local, contextually based considerations (Author, Under Review). Having described some of the unique features of this program, we turn now to a discussion of the benefits and challenges we have encountered so far.

Benefits of the Partnership

There have been many benefits for this partnership, and we anticipate these benefits will continue to grow over time. Here, we outline a snapshot of project benefits as they relate to capacity development and networking.

This project has continuously strengthened capacity at both institutions. Capacity development 'includes efforts to transform both the macro-level environment where institutions operate, and reform the meso-level of systems and structures of institutions' (Angeles & Gurstein 2000, p. 454). As such, it includes strengthening institutional functions (e.g. service delivery, learning); actors or agents (e.g. community leaders, organisations); resources (human, informational, financial); normative context (e.g. values, strategies, policies); and societal context (e.g. ethnicity, sex roles, religion (Angeles & Gurstein 2000)). In particular, our partnership's capacity development has centred around the concepts of inclusion and accessibility. The correspondence between the goals and values of UoG and Queen's in the advancement of rehabilitation education and the partnership's programmatic focus on capacity development have further enabled its development as an equal partnership (Angeles & Gurstein 2000). One example of how this was operationalised was related to physical accessibility to the UoG campuses.

From the early phases of the partnership development and continuing well into project implementation, we have supported institutional visits for management and experiential learning and various networking opportunities across institutions. To inform colleagues from UoG about physical accessibility to the Queen's campus, in alignment with national and provincial legislation, Queen's Physical Plant Services (campus planning) designed and delivered an 'accessibility tour' with the support of Queen's Mastercard Foundation project

staff. This accessibility tour has been delivered a number of times and has now developed into an integrated informational tour that could be offered to a range of interested parties, beyond those involved in the UoG-Queen's Mastercard Foundation project. This sharing of experience from Queen's supported UoG's 'accessibility audit' on two of its campuses. Based on the results of this audit, UoG is now building and modifying infrastructure and putting policies in place to better support the physical accessibility of the UoG campus with combined funding support from the Mastercard Foundation and the UoG's main infrastructure budget. Project-specific efforts have focused on the Maraki and College of Medicine and Health Sciences campuses in particular. However, as a result of their increased accessibility knowledge and understanding, the UoG has also embedded accessibility considerations in the designs for new campus buildings in the *Atse* Tewodros (College of Applied and Computational Sciences) and *Atse* Fasil (Gondar Institute of Technology and Architecture) campuses. These efforts are reflective of the indirect influence of UoG/Queen's/Mastercard Foundation project players. This is just one example of many, whereby intentional institutional capacity development efforts by the project have produced further systemic outcomes beyond direct project activities. This experience aligns with those discussed by Koehn (2012), who identifies that there are often unanticipated 'butterfly effect' type changes that come about from institutional partnerships, whereby a paradigm shift occurs and becomes a source of renewal and positive change.

Beyond capacity development, this project has supported and facilitated networking and experiential learning at various levels – management, administration, faculty and students/scholars/Fellows. Beyond formal procedures, these activities have created opportunities for partners to find space to develop mutual trust and respect as they have learnt and understood each other's contexts, values and priorities. There have also been many informal interactions such as visits to the Semien Mountains (the highest point in Ethiopia), cultural events, social gatherings, etc. where partners' staff were able to learn about each other. Such activities, Bilous et al. (2018, p. 173) claimed, 'build trust, confidence and reciprocity within the group enhancing the knowledge flow amongst members of the collaboration (p. 173)'.

The partnership has also enabled 20 faculty members from the UoG to study at Queen's for advanced degrees and has supported shorter term visits of six faculty members of Queen's to the UoG. These connections offer bi-directional exchange of ideas and lived/contextual experiences. At Queen's, the UoG faculty Fellows have enriched classroom discussions, often bringing new approaches and insights and contributing to Queen's stated goals of increasing equity, diversity and internationalisation on campus. Strategies have been developed between the Queen's Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program office, Queen's School of Graduate Studies and Queen's University International Centre (QUIC) to support international students and provide inter-institutional sharing of lessons learned. At UoG, visits by Queen's faculty experts in disability inclusion and rehabilitation have provided critical knowledge and support for UoG's goal to become a centre of excellence in rehabilitation and disability-related studies in East Africa. As part of supporting and maintaining knowledge mobilisation through the partnership, two faculty from Queen's presented academic papers at an international conference on inclusive education at UoG. There, they shared their professional and research experience in a context different from that of Ethiopia, which was met with a critical reception among other presenters and the diverse audience. Many of the Queen's faculty who have visited UoG remain in regular contact and continue the collaborative learning endeavour virtually. A faculty member from UoG, in turn, presented his thoughts on the partnership to a European audience at the European Conference on African Studies, stimulating rich discussion among attendees.

Finally, the UoG/Queen's partnership prompted UoG to increase its reach in the wider local and national community as regards implementation of CBR-related education and inclusive education. To implement project objectives, UoG needed to create and strengthen its network of partners. UoG already had existing collaborative systems with Cheshire Services Ethiopia, one of the oldest rehabilitation service providers in the country, and the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD). In addition to strengthening these existing networks, the program has engaged with and benefited from the resources and social and political capital of The Federation of National Associations of People with Disabilities, Addis Ababa University's Special Needs Support Unit and Mahibere Hiwot for Social Development, among others. The UoG works collaboratively with these institutions on raising awareness of the rights of people with disabilities and the relevance of inclusivity in education for national developmental ventures. It is our hope that collaboration with these networks and other community partners will enable emergent knowledge from practice to influence our project implementation decisions. Ultimately, we hope that the UoG/Queen's partnership will translate into changing of institutional structures and processes (e.g. through the creation of new programs/curricula). Often, with partnerships of this nature, community is engaged as an end point for scaling-up and translation of knowledge. In the instance of our partnership, a key focus to date has been on creating movement of knowledge from the community to a global institutional partnership to effect change at the institutional level.

Challenges to the Partnership

Just like any other, this partnership has not been without challenges. As Bradley (2017, p. 54) writes, 'even the most innovative partnership strategies cannot resolve all the tensions and inequalities that characterize collaborations'. Here, we focus on challenges related to project management logistics, tensions between individual priorities and institutional capacity development, and ethics of internationalisation.

We believe that the institutional autonomy afforded in this partnership structure is a strength. The Mastercard Foundation's model of partnership promotes reflexive learning, equality and complementarity, which simultaneously responds to the changing realities and requirements of the partnership as well as each partner and their communities. This, and the fact that partners' autonomy in its collaborative engagement is cherished, set up the partnership to be free from the unequal power dynamics that feature in many neo-liberal North-South partnerships. On the other hand, this much valued institutional autonomy comes with problems related to financial management among international, interconnected and accountable partners. Many of our challenges relate to crucial differences in management and administrative structures in our institutions. Although the Mastercard Foundation aligns with its own policies and Canadian government regulations related to the disbursement and reporting of funded projects, it does allow for flexibility in project operations to enable each project to align with internal institutional financial and reporting guidelines, whenever possible. This flexibility, although valued, created confusion and frustration at the UoG. Part A may follow slightly different rules for reporting (given that funds are administered between UoG and the Mastercard Foundation) than for Part B (which is administered through an agreement between Queen's and the Mastercard Foundation). At times, these varying policies and procedures across all three partners created pressure on administrative personnel who must understand and continually negotiate the complex and often bureaucratic institutional systems. The collaborative communication by the financial officers at both sites, with regular support and oversight of the management team to problem solve and meet the varied demands and

needs of all partners, is an ongoing and incredibly time-consuming, but necessary, task in a partnership of this scope.

Although we consider having the two linked but autonomous Parts A and B of this project critical to mutuality, this also creates operational challenges beyond the financial challenges described above. Each Part has separate and unique deliverables. For Part A it is to support 450 talented but disadvantaged youth to gain an education at the UoG and for Part B it is to build institutional capacity at the UoG (by training faculty in advanced levels, collaborative research and curriculum development) as well as different reporting relationships. We therefore find we must make clear, intentional efforts to link the two components and embed touchpoints and opportunities for communication and information sharing across Part A and Part B. This sharing of information and intentional connection of the day-to-day project activities must happen not just at the project management level but must permeate among all project staff.

Beyond financial management complexities, this project also experiences typical challenges of connecting across international borders. For example, we have placed great importance on strong communication and regular face-to-face connections with the management of this project. This can lead to frustration when internet connectivity and infrastructure (e.g. power outages) in Ethiopia make it challenging to connect at designated times. Moreover, given the time difference between Ethiopia and Canada, Gondar staff generally remain in the office after working hours and Queen's staff join work early to connect. Given the frequency of our office communications, this requirement on both sides for flexibility and changes to a typical working day length or hours, combined with the necessity to travel for quarterly face-to-face management meetings, can be a burden on staff wellbeing and work-life balance. That said, we believe that the partnership benefits strongly outweigh the work inconveniences in our approach. Indeed, the constant communication and interactions will yield long-term benefits and considerable returns as future challenging negotiations will be 'facilitated by the trust that partners have built up, as well as their ability to draw on past lessons to resolve present difficulties' (Bradley 2008, p. 681).

The next major challenge we have encountered so far in this project relates to a tension that has emerged between individual needs and priorities and institutional needs and priorities. This is primarily operationalised in the PhD Fellows training component of this project, whereby UoG faculty complete PhD programs at Queen's. This PhD program has been structured intentionally as a sandwich program, whereby Fellows complete coursework and comprehensive exams in Canada, carry out applied research and write up their dissertations in Ethiopia, and return to Canada for finalisation and defence of their dissertation. This sandwich program structure is recognised as an alternative to the problems inherent in long periods of stay for scientists from abroad. These include long periods of separation from their home environment, differing research infrastructure between North and South, and risk of 'brain drain' (Nchinda 2002). UoG faculty who, currently studying in effectively and efficiently equipped facilities and structures and passing through curricula that emphasise technology-intensive active learning at Queen's, then have to find and face solutions to existing gaps at Gondar. This may either increase their commitment to improve the UoG rehabilitation education and services or result in disappointment if they are unable to put their training abroad into practical use at home.

We have begun to receive critiques from Faculty fellows who believe their education is in jeopardy by having to conduct research and write for two years in Ethiopia, rather than Canada, due to disparities in supportive research environments between the two institutions.

Faculty fellows regularly inform project staff that they are concerned about individual advancement (e.g. grades and progress to degree) and that this can compete with and should take priority over institutional advancement (e.g. participation in Mastercard Fellow cohort events, mentoring Part A scholars, networking). Project staff on all sides are working diligently to create supportive environments such that Fellows need not choose between individual and institutional advancement. Rather, our goal is that these two are seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing, rather than tensions. We are doing this through promotion of a cohort seminar series with topics to support and reinforce learning, effectively improving individual student outcomes while advancing collective learning and community around institutional capacity development at UoG. We are also exploring research start-up fund opportunities for those faculty fellows who return to provide service to the UoG upon completion of their PhDs. In addition to incentives to return, the project holds disincentives to stay in Canada after the period of study. In particular, Faculty fellows sign contracts with the UoG to deliver a minimum number of service years to the institution after completion of the PhD or repay the scholarship funds. It remains to be seen if this partnership's outcomes will relate more to 'individual rather than institutional capacity building' (Onokerhoraye & Maticka-Tyndale 2012, p. 128).

The eventual outcomes of PhD training initiatives hold implications for the project's success. In spite of our efforts, however, we recognise that the ultimate success of the faculty capacity development component of this project may lie outside the bounds of the specific project, requiring institutional and national academic leadership, in terms of 'good condition of service, suitable career paths, appropriate remuneration and/or allowances for ... scientists' (Nchinda 2002 p. 1708). Canadian immigration laws are an additional environmental risk to this aspect of the project, over which we have no control, with easy opportunities for international students to apply for permanent residency in Canada following completion of a graduate degree.

Regarding the decision to return home or stay abroad after the completion of study, Alberts and Hazen (2005) identified three motivating factors: professional, societal and personal. With stark differences in facilities and resources for advancement in learning, research and public service in Canadian post-secondary educational institutions, Faculty fellows will have professional reasons to stay abroad after receiving their degrees. Conversely, societal factors, such as political stability and occupational mobility, are generally expected to encourage their return home, while personal factors tend to have a rather undecided role in the decision-making process. For both societal and personal factors, most of the variables lie externally to our project. The significance of one factor relative to the others depends on each Fellow. The challenge for us, therefore, is to identify and harness individually relevant ways to motivate all to return home and contribute their share to the attainment of the overall project goal. It would be programmatically and institutionally detrimental to let the logic of exit and the logic of commitment (Hirschman 1970, cited in Ellerman 2006, p. 21) play themselves out in informing each Fellow's decision.

We live in an age where 'internationalisation' is top of mind in most higher education contexts around the world. Although there are many positive benefits to increased global connectivity, it is not without ethical challenges. In particular, this partnership faces the ethical challenges of making sure that it is not just the actors from higher income countries or with control of the resources who are determining how (and to what degree) to internationalise. It also needs to consider the movement or 'brain drain' of top institutional talent and the increasing prevalence of the English language in teaching and research (Rumbley, Altbach

& Reisberg 2012). We believe that our discussion throughout this article has provided some context for and engagement with the first two ethical issues above, so we conclude by focusing on the last. Rumbley, Altbach & Reisberg (2012) identify English dominance in the academy as a key ethical implication of internationalisation. Taking Ethiopia, as a case example, they argue that there are serious drawbacks to Ethiopia's policy (and significant foreign aid support) of English as the official language of instruction in universities (although not in primary or secondary education).

Many Ethiopian students and faculty are simply not operating effectively in English, putting them at a disadvantage in both teaching and learning. Furthermore, if the aim of the country's massive push to upgrade its national higher education system is to address key Ethiopian challenges – poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, environmental degradation, public health problems, and the like – does the widespread use of a non-native language (often supported by curricula and materials from abroad) contribute effectively to the understanding of local problems or the cultivation of local solutions? (Rumbley, Altbach & Reisberg 2012, p. 17)

Our project feels the tension of this dilemma in a number of ways. First, Queen's requires a minimum English language proficiency for entry into its degree programs. It has been a significant challenge to identify UoG faculty members who meet this minimum proficiency level – particularly for entry into the Occupational Therapy program. This creates a barrier to access for many Ethiopian faculty members who meet or exceed all program requirements except for English and potentially reinforces disparities in who is or who is not afforded access to opportunities for advancement at UoG. We are developing and implementing curricula in English for CBR and OT for use by practitioners who will function largely in Amharic like the local population. Clearly, the critique of Rumbley and colleagues of Ethiopian institutions in general can also be operationalised using our project as an example. We anticipate that we will continue to grapple with challenges presented by the predominance of English in our activities throughout the implementation of this project. For example, how do we (or can we?) find a locally meaningful term for 'occupational therapy'?

Finally, an additional challenge we have encountered relates to our ability to document and report on our rich learning and adaptations in the course of implementing the project. We have identified many points of learning; however, it has been a challenge for project staff to find the necessary dedicated time for deep reflection about and documentation of learning in the process of implementation. This challenge is not unique to our partnership (see Angeles & Boothroyd 2003) and we will continue to make a conscientious effort to critically reflect on, report and share our experiences amongst the members of the partnership and with the global community.

Conclusion

As we look forward to the upcoming years of this project, we know that process-oriented learning will be necessary to move toward creative problem-solving processes that involve learning from experience (Angeles & Gurstein 2000). We have structured monitoring and evaluation plans for both Parts A and B, as well as staff at both UoG and Queen's to implement these plans, and are confident in our processes for capturing and reporting on successes and challenges of project activities. Beyond typical monitoring and evaluation strategies of recording tangible activities, outputs and outcomes, we will strive to document and understand more intangible aspects of our partnerships, such as how the joint interactions

and inherent differences among partners served as opportunities for enrichment and how learning benefits occurred bi-directionally – both in Ethiopia and in Canada. Indeed, ‘by making learning explicit, such partnerships draw attention to the possibilities for making both the learning and the partnerships more effective’ (Johnson & Wilson 2006, p. 79). In involving project management teams and staff from both ends of the process of implementing project components, as well as identifying and resolving emerging issues in open and constructive discussion, we will work to ensure that the partnership grows as an engagement where both institutions and their communities define its nature and share its benefits on equal grounds. We believe that the benefits of this process-oriented partnership approach can extend far beyond disability inclusion and higher education and may be applicable to different sectors (e.g. partnerships between local and international non-governmental organisations for community development activities) and for different thematic priorities (e.g. maternal and child health), or for other equity-seeking groups.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express appreciation to research assistant Surajo Sulaiman for assistance compiling literature and to Margaret Malone, Hélène Gregoire, Benjamin Kerman, and anonymous peer reviewers for feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript.

References

- Alberts, H & Hazen, H 2005, ‘There are always two voices’ ...: International students’ intentions to stay in the United States or return to their home countries’, *International Migration*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 131–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2005.00328.x>
- Angeles, L & Boothroyd, P 2003, ‘Canadian universities and international development: Learning from experience’, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 9–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0225189.2003.9668893>
- Angeles, L & Gurstein, P 2000, ‘Planning for participatory capacity development: The challenges of participation and North-South partnership in capacity building projects’, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 21, pp. 447–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0225189.2000.9669926>
- Ashman, A 2001, ‘Strengthening North-South partnerships for sustainable development’, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 1 March. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764001301004>
- Bilous, R, Hammersley, L, Lloyd, K, Rawlings-Sanaei, F, Downey, G, Amigo, M, Gilchrist, S & Baker, M 2018, ‘All of us together in a blurred space’: Principles for co-creating curriculum with international partners’, *International Journal for Academic Development*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 165–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144x.2017.1412973>
- Bradley, M 2008, ‘On the agenda: North-South research partnerships and agenda-setting processes’, *Development in Practice*, vol. 18, no. 6, pp. 673–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520802386314>
- Bradley, M 2017, ‘Whose agenda? Power, policies and priorities in North-South research partnerships’, in L Mougeot (ed.), *Putting knowledge to work: Collaborating, influencing and learning for international development*, Practical Action Publishing, Ottawa, ON. <https://doi.org/10.3362/9781780449586.002>
- Brinkerhoff J 2002, *Partnership for international development: Rhetoric or results?*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO. <https://doi.org/10.1086/380586>

- Ellerman, D 2006, 'The dynamics of migration of the highly skilled: A survey of the literature', in Y Kuznetsov (ed.), *Diaspora networks and the international migration of skills: How countries can draw on their talent abroad*, The World Bank, Washington, DC, pp. 29–57.
- Hirschman 1970
- Jansen-van Vuuren, J, Aldersey, HM, & Lysaght, R under review, 'The role and scope of occupational therapy in Africa', *Disability & Rehabilitation*.
- Johnson, H & Wilson G 2006, 'North-South/South-North partnerships: Closing the "mutuality gap"', *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 26, pp. 71–80. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.396>
- Koehn P 2012, 'Turbulence and bifurcation in North-South higher-education partnerships for research and sustainable development', *Public Organization Review*, vol. 12, pp. 331–55. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-012-0176-9>
- Koehn P, Deardorff D & Bolognese K 2010, 'Enhancing international research and development-project activity on university campuses: Insights from U.S. Senior international officers', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 332–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315310365540>
- Koehn P, Demment M & Hervy A 2008, 'Enhancing higher education's engagement in international development: Africa-U.S. partnerships', *Journal of the World Universities Forum*, vol. 1, no. 6, pp. 127–40. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1835-2030/cgp/v01i06/56932>
- Landau L 2012, 'Communities of knowledge or tyrannies of partnership: Reflections on North-South research networks and the dual imperative', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 555–70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fes005>
- Martin F & Griffiths H 2012, 'Power and representation: A postcolonial reading of global partnerships and teacher development through North-South study visits', *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 38, no. 6, pp. 907–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2011.600438>
- Nchinda, T 2002, 'Research capacity strengthening in the South', *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 54, pp. 1699–711. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0277-9536\(01\)00338-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0277-9536(01)00338-0)
- Olsson, B 2008, 'Symmetry and asymmetry in research partnerships: Lessons from 20 years' experience', *NORRAG News*, vol. 41, pp. 78–80.
- Onokerhoraye, A, Maticka-Tyndale, E & the HP4RY Team 2012, 'Meeting the challenges of North-South collaboration: The case of HIV prevention for rural youth, Edo State, Nigeria', *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 127–46.
- Rumbley, L, Altbach, P & Reisberg, L 2012, 'Internationalization within the higher education context', in D Deardorff, H de Wit, J Heyl & T Adams (eds), *Sage handbook of international education*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218397.n1>
- Samoff, J & Carrol, B 2004, 'The promise of partnership and continuities of dependence: External support to higher education in Africa', *African Studies Review*, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 67–199. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0002020600027001>
- Torre, M 2009, 'Participatory action research and critical race theory: Fuelling spaces for nosotras to research', *The Urban Review*, 41, no. 1, pp. 106–120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-008-0097-7>
- Turnbull, A, Turnbull H, Erwin E, Soodak L & Shogren K 2014, *Families, professionals, exceptionality: Positive outcomes through partnerships and trust*, 7th edn, Pearson, New York.

Yared W, Amsalu F & Molla T 2005, 'Successful coupling of community attachment of Health Science students with relief work for drought victims', *Education for Health*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 179–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576280500154500>

Yoseph, M, Etalem, S, Adams, S, Gardiner, A & Perry, E 2007, 'A Primary Health Care approach to the management of chronic disease in Ethiopia: An example for other countries', *Clinical Medicine*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 228–31.