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Candice J. Grant

Indiana University - Bloomington, cjgrant@indiana.edu

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The Promise of Partnership: Perspectives from Kenya and the U.S.

Abstract

Universities have come to be viewed as essential in accelerating a country's knowledge economy in order to maintain its global competitive edge. However, as it currently stands, the Global North governs much of the output of knowledge production through research and scholarship. International partnerships between universities offer the opportunity to bridge this gap by offering new avenues through which these institutions can better prepare students for the globalized world and build institutional capacity. This study examines the process between two universities in initiating and sustaining an international partnership and why this relationship was established. Emphasis is placed on the function of each university partner and how each perceives the other's contribution towards the objectives outlined in the partnership agreement. Utilizing a case-study approach, the study aims to chart the process undertaken to cultivate a cross-global university alliance.

Universitäten werden inzwischen als ein wesentliches Wachstumsmerkmal der wissensbasierten Wirtschaft eines Landes um die globale Wettbewerbsfähigkeit zu garantieren. Jedoch, wie es derzeit aussieht, konzentriert der globale Norden das meiste der Wissensproduktion durch Forschung und Wissenschaft. Internationale Partnerschaften zwischen Universitäten bieten die Möglichkeit an, diese Lücke zu überbrücken, bieten neue Wege an, durch die diese Institutionen ihre Studierenden besser auf die globalisierte Welt vorbereiten und institutionelle Leistungsfähigkeit aufbauen können. Diese vorliegende Arbeit untersucht den Prozess zwischen zwei Universitäten bei der Einleitung und Aufrechterhaltung einer internationalen Partnerschaft und die Gründe für den Aufbau dieser Beziehung. Hervorgehoben wird die Funktion der einzelnen Universitätspartner und darauf, wie jede der Partner den Beitrag des anderen zur Erreichung der Ziele gemäß des Partnerschaftsabkommens wahrnimmt. Durch die Verwendung eines Fallstudie-Ansatzes soll die Studie den Prozess der Kultivierung einer globalen Universitätsallianz rekonstruieren.

Keywords

international education, higher education, university partnerships

THE PROMISE OF PARTNERSHIP: PERSPECTIVES FROM KENYA AND THE U.S.

Candice J. Grant¹

Indiana University-Bloomington, USA

Introduction

With its focus on the knowledge economy, globalization has placed a special emphasis on higher education as a driver of economic growth and prosperity (Altbach, 2007a). This perception situates universities that are the primary producers of knowledge, usually located in the resource rich Global North (Altbach, 2007b), in a place of prominence. Those countries without such universities are left at a severe disadvantage. One response to the pressures of globalization on the part of institutions of higher education has been to internationalize (Stromquist, 2007). In particular, cross-national linkages between universities have become a central element of these internationalization efforts (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011). Partnerships between institutions in the Global North and Global South have come to be viewed as “a model for effective international development cooperation” (ALO, 2003, p. 7).

These relationships have the potential to facilitate a range of activities such as research collaboration, professional development, and student/faculty/staff exchange, and they tend to be viewed as fundamentally good. Yet, existing disparities of power, based largely on resource availability, between partnered institutions in different national contexts may result in unanticipated effects, such as the perpetuation of historical structures of inequality (Teferra, 2008b). A deeper understanding of the motivations of each partner to forge the relationship provides a useful entry point for examining the complexities of North-South partnerships. More specifically, it is important to identify 1.) Why each partner institution, as well as institutional actors, entered the relationship, and 2.) What institutional actors perceive that each institution contributes to the partnership. In order to delve into these complex questions, this article closely examines the case of the long-standing partnership between a university in Kenya and one in the United States.

Globalization, Internationalization, and Higher Education

Globalization and internationalization are viewed as two tightly intertwined phenomena (Egbron-Polak & Hudson, 2010; Knight, 2008). However, they are not synonymous. Although international movement of people, products, and ideas has been occurring for years,

¹ *Correspondence:* Candice J. Grant, Indiana University, W.W. Wright Education Building, Department of Education Leadership & Policy Studies, Room 4228, Bloomington, Indiana 47405; Email: cjgrant@indiana.edu

globalization represents an unprecedented acceleration of these movements that is drastically altering traditional boundaries within and between nations (Chapman & Austin, 2002; Olssen, 2004). These flows have been enabled and are supported by the proliferation of new technology. In fact, the “[r]apid progress in electronics, telecommunications, and satellite technologies permitting high-capacity data transmission at very low cost, has brought about the quasi neutralization of physical distance as a barrier to communication and as a factor in economic competitiveness” (World Bank, 2002, p. 13).

Globalization is widely acknowledged as being a multi-dimensional set of processes that influence not only the economic but also the social, cultural and political realms (Altbach, 2007a; Kälvevmark, van der Wende, & Högskoleverket, 1997; Olssen, 2004; Stromquist, 2002; Tikly, 2001). Within globalization’s neoliberal discourse and rhetoric about the new knowledge economy, knowledge is viewed as a commodity (Sawyer, 2004), and as such, a special emphasis is placed on higher education as a driver of economic development and growth (Altbach, 2007a; Moja 2004). In this discourse, “the research university is at the nexus of science, scholarship and the new knowledge economies” (Altbach, 2007b, p. 112). Teferra and Altbach (2007) claim that “[i]t will be extremely difficult – perhaps even impossible – for Africa to compete effectively in the world increasingly dominated by knowledge and information unless it consciously, persistently, and vigorously overhauls its potential and its most crucial institutions: its universities” (p. 39).

Globalization alters not only the external ways in which higher education is perceived and justified but also its internal functioning. Kälvevmark, van der Wende, and Högskoleverket (1997) note that globalization impacts “the level and content of academic and research programmes, the level and profile of graduates (especially their abilities to perform in an international and multi-cultural context), the profile of staff, the leadership, the way in which an institution is organized, its partnerships, etc.” (p. 19). One of higher education institutions’ internal responses to the pressures of globalization has been a shift in the rhetoric surrounding internationalization (Beerens, 2004). Today, internationalization is defined as “any systematic, sustained effort aimed at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets” (Kälvevmark, van der Wende, & Högskoleverket, 1997, p.19). Yet, internationalization has not always been justified under such economically-oriented language as needing to train highly skilled global workers, to build a knowledge economy, etc.

Rationales for internationalization differ across both time and space. “Interpretations have shifted according to the varying rationales and incentives for internationalization, the varying activities encompassed therein, and the varying political and economic circumstances in which the process is situated” (Callan, 2000, p. 16). The reasons for the promotion of international activity change over the years. Moreover, rationales may also differ between levels (e.g., national level and institutional level) and between cultural/social/political contexts. Knight (2008) argues that internationalization must be viewed as a phenomenon that is “universal but which has different purposes and outcomes, depending on the actor and stakeholder” (p. 15). Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between the discourses driving internationalization at Kenyan universities and at American universities.

From the perspective of American colleges and universities, improving student preparedness for a globalized world, internationalizing the curriculum and improving quality, and enhancing international prestige were the top rationales. All three of these rationales are closely linked. International activities such as study abroad or internationalized curriculum

may help students to develop cross-cultural understanding. Rubin (2009) suggests that the offering of these types of activities is driven by increased demand. She notes that “young U.S. students themselves see the globalization handwriting on the wall. To compete in today’s workforce, many know they need the knowledge, skills, and sensitivities to vie with their counterparts around the world” (p. 4). Moreover, these activities have the potential to build institutional prestige alongside strategic alliances available to a college (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In addition, internationalization efforts can be utilized as a marketing tool that can be used to attract the human resources (students and faculty).

The motivations of African universities to internationalize include a variety of factors, such as knowledge production, student development, and alliance formation (Knight, 2008). According to the International Association of University’s Global Survey, African universities cite strengthening research and knowledge capacity as their primary rationale (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2010). Resource acquisition is central to this motivation. “Having access to indicators of the knowledge frontiers, such as journals, periodicals, and databases, is a major prerequisite to undertaking viable, sustainable, and meaningful research. In much of Africa, these resources are either lacking or extremely scarce” (Teferra & Altbach, 2004, p. 38). International activities present an opportunity to access some of these needed resources, whether through partnership or through sending students/faculty members abroad temporarily.

Moreover, internationalization of curriculum is seen as a way to educate students to become global citizens and a part of knowledge societies. Ramphele (2000) observes that the “overall well-being of nations is vitally dependent on the contribution of higher education to the social, cultural, political and economic development of its citizens” (p. 13). Finally, strategic alliances are viewed not only as a rationale for internationalization but also a means of achieving it (Knight, 2008). International alliance formation, whether South-South or North-South, offers opportunities for African universities to increase their capacities and to build infrastructure (Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

International Academic Partnership

One of the fastest growing internationalization activities has been the development of cross-border partnerships between institutions of higher education (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011). The word partnership is used to describe a number of different configurations and activities (e.g., offshore programs, distance learning programs, aid programs, etc.). Nonetheless, in this paper, the term partnership is primarily used to refer to formal agreements made between two universities to engage in activities that include student/faculty exchange, study abroad, and collaborative research and/or other projects. Chan (2004) contends the primary reason for the growth of partnerships is so universities can “compete in the global and mass higher educational market. Universities have to find a way to stand out among the crowd. This is especially true for newer universities, which do not have an established reputation and a large resource base” (p. 35). However, Bradley (2007) suggests the need for further study of the motivations of researchers involved in North-South partnerships.

The need to better understand the motivations of those who pursue North-South partnerships stems from ongoing concern about the equality of partner roles in such relationships. Historically, they have enabled the Western partner to set the agenda and tone of the partnership (Edejer, 1999). Since the resources typically flow from the North to South, the U.S. partner often takes responsibility for the allocation of them (Assié-Lumumba, 2006; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). “The tilt [of power] is compounded when it is the U.S. partner that has conceived and initiated the partnership...Similarly, where conception was not a joint

enterprise and where controlling funds is not a shared responsibility, accountability, too, is likely to be one-sided” (Samoff & Carrol, 2004, p. 150). Furthermore, this asymmetry of power means that despite best intentions, partnerships have tended to promote each donor’s particular agenda or vision for higher education in African countries with little, if any, regard for the actual needs and desires of the individual universities and their surrounding communities.

For this reason, there is a need to call into question the idea of reciprocity in North-South partnerships. “While a common characteristic of cross-border partnerships is that all parties believe they are gaining something from the transaction, institutional leaders on each side may not be valuing the same aspects. Even in cross-border activities where both partners believe they benefit, collaborators may have different motivations for participation, assess the value of activities in different ways, seek different outcomes, and value the same outcomes differently” (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011, p. 4). The unique context within which each partner operates makes defining “mutually beneficial” difficult, which is why the differing rationales underlying internationalization efforts must be recognized. It would also be wrong to assume that partners receive the same benefits or even desire to receive the same benefit. The term mutually beneficial only implies that both partners derive some benefit.

In the same vein, Sakamoto and Chapman (2011) argue that “[a]s cross-border partnerships expand in number, size, and complexity, the need to more fully understand the ingredients of success increases” (p. 4). While this is true, success should not only be measured from a Western perspective. Given the asymmetries of power and the differences in motivations for the establishment of partnerships, measures of what would be considered success should be defined collaboratively with input from both partners. Furthermore, this requires that the U.S. partner engage the African partner in accountability processes, something which is often overlooked because of the tendency of U.S. partners to take the lead in North-South partnerships (Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Assié-Lumumba, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

In seeking to better understand the complexities of international partnership, this study draws upon organizational theory, specifically resource dependency theory, which suggests that “[o]rganizations are inescapably bound up with the conditions of their environment” (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 1). This theory emphasizes the importance of the context within which an organization exists. It is particularly concerned with understanding relationships between organizations. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) contend that in order for organizations to survive they must be able to both “acquire and maintain resources” (p. 2). This requires that an organization interact with other organizations. However, this interaction can create dependencies of differing magnitude based on how scarce resources are (Sporn, 1999). Thus, organizations are constantly faced with balancing act between linking up with other organizations in order to obtain needed resources and limiting dependencies on other organizations (Aldrich & Pfeffer, 1976; Ulrich & Barney, 1984). Shifts in dependence can affect the power relations between an organization and those to which it is linked.

This framework is highly applicable to institutions of higher education in both the United States and in African countries. Resource dependency theory speaks to higher education insofar that colleges and universities are organizations that are highly dependent on their external environments (Sporn, 1999). They must find ways to finance their endeavors, whether through student payment of tuition and fees, governmental funding, entrepreneurial activity, or solicitation of donations. Such resources are the lifeblood of colleges and universities. As a result, if one source of financial capital dries up, colleges and universities must act strategically

in order to find another to take its place. For example, although historically public colleges and universities in both the United States and African countries have been supported by government funding, the current fiscal realities mean that these institutions of higher education must seek out new providers of resources to fill the gap. The development of partnerships could be seen as one strategy that universities employ in response to the demands of their external environment in their quest to obtain needed resources (Chan, 2004).

Modes of Inquiry and Methods

For this study, I utilized the case study approach (Ragin & Becker, 1992; Yin, 2002). This type of inquiry has the advantage of offering a comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis. Moreover, it has the ability to “bring to life the interrelated parts of an organization while enabling us to see the interplay between the organization and its environment” (Stromquist, 2007, p. 85). In other words, it allows for close examination of the operation of particular organization within its unique context. One of the primary criticisms of the case study approach is that it lacks generalizability due to this specific focus. Thus, care must be taken not to overstate the generalizability of this kind of study, which is deeply contextual. However, Yin (2002) observes “that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (p. 10). Careful analysis of this extensive and well-established case offers insight into the diverse motivations that may prompt North-South relationships.

The primary methods utilized to study this case were semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interviews facilitated the gathering dialogic data (Carspecken, 1996). In-depth, semi-structured interviews of 30-60 minutes were conducted with 12 institutional administrators, partnership founders, current members of the partnership administrative team, and involved faculty members from both partner universities over a period of eight months in 2011-2012. Initial participants were selected using the American university's Affiliations Database to identify the primary administrator responsible for the different partnerships. Snowball sampling was employed after this initial participant selection. Key topics from the literature were used to inform the interview protocol, and with the permission of participants, each interview was recorded and later transcribed.

In addition to the interviews, documentation was collected and analyzed. The documents gathered included information relating to institutional mission and goals from institutional and partnership websites, partnership agreements, informational brochures, and relevant orientation guides for student and faculty going abroad. The documents detailed above served to cross-check information gathered through other modes of data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; van der Wende, 1996; Howland, Becker & Prelli, 2006).

The data collected in this research was used cumulatively to chart an understanding of the processes implemented to develop the partnership at both universities and in the broader perspective. Coding was completed manually to maintain consistency of the data. Furthermore, additional analytic techniques, such as Meaning Field Analysis and Reconstructive Horizon Analysis, were utilized, as needed, to aid in the analysis of both explicit and implicit meanings within the data (Carspecken, 1996). Careful and repeated review of documents, interview data, and interview notes was used to unearth key themes (Geertz, 1973). The findings and discussion are supported by excerpts taken from the interviews with partnership participants.

Research Setting

Poplar State University² is an American public university with eight campuses, located in the Midwest. Together, the eight campuses enrolled over 110,000 students as of Fall 2012. Its School of Medicine is located on the institution's second largest campus, which is in a mid-sized Midwestern city. Poplar State University has vigorously pursued an internationalization agenda since the late 1930s. Although the university as a whole has an International Strategic Plan, each campus maintains some autonomy. Its second largest campus has partnerships with institutions in over 70 countries throughout the world, including three strategic partnerships with institutions in Kenya, Mexico, and China.

Acacia Public University is a public university located in Kenya. Unlike other African institutions, it was not created from an existing institution. Instead, it was a completely new institution, with a mission focused on technological and environmental fields (Oketch, 2004). Acacia Public University has grown from an original enrollment of under 100 students to serve over 30,000 students. Today, it is comprised of 13 schools, four directorates, two institutes, four campuses, and five satellite campuses. Its School of Medicine is located on one of the four campuses. As of 2008, Acacia Public University had 54 international agreements signed (Otieno, Kiamba, & Some, 2008). Major partner countries included Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States.

The relationship between Poplar State University and Acacia Public University began with faculty in the Schools of Medicine in 1989. Three doctors in the division of General Internal Medicine at Poplar State University became interested in starting a Global Health program, that is to say a program that would help to increase access to healthcare in a part of the world that lacked it. After narrowing possible locations to three, the doctors visited each site and met with their counterparts. Acacia Public University emerged as the top contender for several reasons. First, the American doctors wanted to find a partner site where faculty members would be willing to remain on-site for year-long rotations. Secondly, Acacia Public University's medical school was still in its infancy and was eager to engage an institution that could offer experience and expertise to the newly formed school. One Poplar State University founder noted the following: "We thought there was opportunity, there was a sense that they actually wanted us, that they actually needed us, that we had something you know there was a void thereto fill. Vice versa, it was a place that we actually thought we could actually be successful."

In 1990, the first Poplar State University faculty member from the School of Medicine arrived for the first year-long rotation to serve as a member of the Acacia Public University School of Medicine department with responsibilities for delivery of care, service, training, research, and administration. The first year was spent working with Kenyan faculty members to develop a curriculum for the school. Thereafter, the division of General Internal Medicine continued to send different faculty members for year-long rotations in the newly established hospital in Kenya. Since then, the partnership between these two medical schools has evolved into a multi-institutional global health consortium with a highly visible HIV control/treatment program with over \$60 million in grants (Poplar State University, 2008).

This burgeoning success prompted wider interest in Acacia Public University at the university level at Poplar State University, and in 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed promising the development of "a special, long-term and comprehensive

² Pseudonyms were used in place of the names of all involved institutions.

collaboration.” Following the university-wide MOU, more than seven individual schools and centers, outside of the School of Medicine, established linkages with Acacia Public University. Among the participating academic units outside of the School of Medicine are Liberal Arts, Nursing, Dentistry, Social Work, Education, Informatics, University Library, Center on Philanthropy, and Center for Bioethics. These partnerships encompass a wide variety of activities. However, the scope and intensity of partnership activity vary widely by academic unit, due to both the differences in length of engagement and the availability of funding. For instance, the Medical School partnership facilitates a year-long faculty in residence program as well as medical rotations abroad for medical students and residents. The Center for Bioethics has a joint degree program. Other academic units, outside of the School of Medicine have been able to foster activities such as course collaboration and collaborative research but faculty and/or student exchange has been limited due to lack of funds. Consequently, today, the Medical School partnership lives on but on a much larger scale.

Motivations for Partnership

The diverse set of reasons that prompted actors at Poplar State University and Acacia Public University to partner with each other emerged from the interviews and the documentation. Three of those motivations were shared by actors at both institutions, and they were cultural understanding and exposure, individual capacity building/professional development, and institutional capacity building. However, institution-specific motivations for partnering also surfaced while analyzing the data. These reasons were not necessarily shared by actors at the partner institution.

The interest in creating opportunities for cultural understanding and exposure was something that interview participants at both Poplar State University and Acacia Public University mentioned as a major reason for participating. One Poplar State University administrator noted:

We are very much committed to offering our students, many of whom are born and raised in [the Midwest], opportunities for study abroad...and at the same time, we are very committed to expanding the diversity of our own student body in multiple directions, including having international students with us.

However, the opportunity for exposure to the unfamiliar was viewed as being good for not only students but also faculty as well. The partnership was perceived to facilitate experiences with different viewpoints, pedagogies, and beliefs for participants from both institutions, whether through contact with visiting scholars and students or having the chance to travel to the partner campus.

Related to the first motivation was that of individual capacity building. The original medical school partnership began with the intention of providing doctors with an avenue to work abroad as a means of both personal and professional development. Poplar State University faculty viewed the partnership as a means of furthering their own professional development as well as helping Acacia Public University faculty with their own professional development. One of the American founders explained his own experience working abroad: “There’s no one adjective that describes that experience [...] it’s formative. It’s satisfying. It’s eye-opening. It helped me to grow personally and professionally.”

Finally, there was a shared desire for institutional capacity building at Acacia Public University. Poplar State University faculty members were interested in helping with building up academic programs in Acacia Public University, just as Acacia Public University faculty and

administrators were interested in receiving such assistance. One of the Kenyan founders observed that the opportunity to partner with Poplar State University brought with it access to well-established and experienced clinicians, something from which a new medical school could benefit as it sought to develop and grow.

However, distinctive motivations also emerged from participants at each institution. For instance, while actors at Poplar State University also expressed motivations related to internal pressures, Acacia Public University participants saw a means of serving the local community. For Poplar State University, expansion of the partnership from the School of Medicine to other academic units represented an internal opportunity to encourage increased cooperation between complementary academic units. Thus, the Acacia Public University partnership became an institutional priority. For some academic units, the institutional-level support and promotion of this relationship was a significant motivator. Without it, they might not have chosen to forge a linkage with Acacia Public University. One Poplar State University administrator noted, “[The success of the medical school partnership] was the impetus. I don’t know if we would have necessarily chosen [Acacia Public University] in Kenya as our focus.”

On the other hand, Acacia Public University actors also were driven by an interest in serving their local community. Although this motivation was related to individual and institutional capacity building, those interviewed spoke specifically of a desire to undertake partnership as a means of gaining knowledge that could be utilized in their communities. One Kenyan faculty member suggested the need to “plow back what we get. The knowledge we generate, we actualize it if it is interventions we are ever to carry them out in society.”

Deterrents to Partnership

In trying to understand why actors at Poplar State University and Acacia Public University had chosen to participate in this particular relationship, reasons why other faculty, staff, and administrators did not want to become a part of the partnership also came to the fore. Participants at both institutions mentioned that one of the deterrents to participation was the lack of tangible or immediate benefit for faculty members and staff. At Poplar State University, this was perceived to be a result of the American higher education context. One American faculty member observed, “the other thing is the university [...] Academia is so silo-ed. It is not collaborative. It does not engender collaboration. It just doesn’t.” According to Poplar State University interview participants, faculty members in some academic units were less interested in working or conducting research abroad, due to either the perceived nature of their discipline and/or other university policies, such as tenure requirements.

From Acacia Public University participants’ viewpoint, particularly those who were outside of the School of Medicine, desired partnership activity such as conducting research at Poplar State University would require financial resources beyond what either university could supply. Thus, even though there might be interest in linking up with colleagues at Poplar State University, the process could be time and work-intensive because of the need to seek out and obtain external funding. Dealing with significant workloads already, some faculty members were not able or willing to commit a significant amount of their time to writing grants with no guaranteed outcomes.

A final disincentive for pursuing a relationship that emerged included individual personality differences. One Kenyan faculty member advised: “look for individuals who you can work with and move because it matters even that you are compatible as individuals. If your American partner is not somebody you can cope with in terms of personality, you probably will

not move.” Moreover, the faculty member noted that if the individuals cannot build a working relationship, neither can their larger departments or institutions.

Partner Contributions

The second piece of this study asked participants to reflect upon what they believed each partner brought to the relationship. Both Acacia Public University and Poplar State University actors agreed that Poplar State University has been able to contribute a great deal financially to the partnership, and the Kenyan medical hospital in particular, over the years.³ One Kenyan faculty member recognized: “so much of the funding we have in Kenya, comes from the US. If you think of [...] the very infrastructures that we have, the physical infrastructure like buildings and so on, it’s something we could not access without the partnership.”

However, according to study participants, this was not Poplar State University’s only contribution. In line with the stated rationales for partnership, both Acacia Public University and Poplar State University participants felt that Poplar State University has brought expertise that has helped with capacity building at Acacia Public University. This has been evidenced in the collaborative work that has been done on curriculum in different schools at Acacia Public University. One Kenyan faculty member noted, “capacity is one major resource that we are getting from [Poplar State]. I think my introduction with international scholars has very much broadened and deepened my thinking for my teaching, for my research.”

Additionally, Acacia Public University participants felt that Poplar State University has contributed unique cultural perspectives for both Acacia Public University students and faculty through partnership activities, particularly those that enabled them to travel to Poplar State University by providing a new lens through which to look at the world. One Kenyan interview participant observed:

You can see the impact on our staff in their teaching and also the impact on our students who come through the student exchange program. They look at life from different angles and they are completely transformed actually, even those students who come there for short periods.

On the other hand, actors at both institutions suggested that the major contribution that Acacia Public University has made to Poplar State University has been the opportunity for cultural understanding and exposure. The partnership provided a pathway for American faculty and students to experience Kenyan culture that might not have been possible otherwise. For Poplar State University participants, this was Acacia Public University’s primary contribution. One American administrator commented:

The majority of our students [...] have not left [the Midwest]. And for us as an urban serving university, attracting, recruiting, wanting to retain students of color, students from underrepresented groups, we must invest in getting our students out of town and helping them while they are here to have a more global experience.

Similarly, a Kenyan faculty member noted:

³ Funding has been provided not only through the university but also external funding agency grants and small private donors (Quigley, 2009).

[Acacia Public University] has definitely exposed the faculty in [Poplar State University] to the African experience because we have [...] faculty and students coming over, and working in an African environment is different from working in an American environment.

However, according to Kenyan participants, this was not the only contribution Acacia Public University has been able to make. They contend that Acacia Public University has also provided a site for study for Poplar State University wherein American students and faculty can come to study and to research in a place very different from the context from their own. One American administrator also recognized the value of having this unique site of study for Poplar State University students:

We've now had over 800 medical students rotate through the hospital and encountering things you don't see in [the Midwest]: tuberculosis, you see HIV/AIDS but not in such quantities, all kinds of bacterial, viral and worm infestations and so on, compounded by social problem. It gives people a far better capacity to deal with the kinds medical situations that they will encounter, whether it's in Indianapolis, Peru, Indiana, or New York City or Los Angeles wherever the physicians go to practice.

Moreover, Acacia Public University participants asserted that they also offer human resources to Poplar State University, particularly in the form of indigenous knowledge and expertise on Kenya. For Poplar State University faculty and students interested in the problems of Kenya, Acacia Public University faculty members are in a unique position to contribute much needed cultural knowledge. One Kenyan faculty member pointed out:

We have people [...] They know what their environment is and nobody else knows about it as much as they do. When you're talking about international research, which is often done by people from the Global North, but the field is in Global South [...] we have a lot of indigenous knowledge and ideas on what can work in Kenya and what cannot work.

Discussion

The central questions explored in this article sought to understand what the motivations were for development of the relationship between Poplar State University and Acacia Public University and what each institution is perceived to have contributed. Within the findings, individual motivations emerged as more powerful than institutional motivations in partnerships. Because it is individuals who ultimately define scope and activities, individual motivations become central drivers of the partnership. Strong institutional support for a partnership, such as the case of Poplar State University, can serve as a rationale for academic units to develop partnerships they might not have otherwise; however, the sustainability still seems to largely rely on individual support and enthusiasm for the initiative. Moreover, even a long-standing partnership can lose traction if there becomes a mismatch of individual motivations, values, and/or personality.

One Kenyan participant advised, "I think the most important aspect of [the partnership] is we developed a sense of trust and respect for each other." Without this basis between the individuals involved, the institutional relationship would not have been able to grow as it did, according to the participant. The significance of individuals within the development of partnership suggests the need to consider individual motivations separate from institutional ones.

The findings are very much in line with the literature on rationales for internationalization with the primary goal of educating globally oriented citizens for American universities and of strengthening research capacity for African universities, except at the level of individual faculty and administrators. Acacia Public University study participants were not as concerned with the institutional capacity building as with their own and how that could translate into service for their community. However, this is not to say that those individual capacities would not translate into institutional capacity. In terms of both motivations and benefits, financial gains seemed to be less important to all study participants than the development of human resources, both of students and of faculty members. One Poplar State University participant noted, “This notion that enabling an American [...] to step out of his own system of care and into another system is, just a wonderful way to educate an American physician to become a better physician in relation to his or her own community.” With this focus on the possibilities for human resource capacity, financial and status incentives only emerged as tangential benefits.

Resource dependency theory serves as a useful analytic for considering how two organizations on different continents became linked. Rather than being viewed as a random occurrence, the development of this relationship can be seen as a strategic decision on the part of actors at both institutions to acquire resources. However, in this particular case, one must define resources broadly. Beerkens (2004) suggests that within universities, resources “include all assets, capabilities, organisational processes, attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by the university that enables it to implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. These can be classified into three separate groups: physical capital resources, human capital resources and organisational capital resources” (p. 65). Indeed, on the individual level, the development of human capital resources is a central rationale for this particular partnership. At Poplar State University, this has meant offering opportunities for increased global engagement for faculty members and students alike. At Acacia Public University, this has translated into not only increased global engagement but also access to a knowledge repository that includes people, library resources, and equipment.

The strategic nature of this relationship is further reflected in the findings on the contributions of each partner institution. For instance, for Acacia Public University, the resources sought, such as increased human resource capacity, were resources that Poplar State University was viewed as being readily able to contribute via faculty expertise and access to library resources that would not be available otherwise. Similarly, Poplar State University faculty members had several different choices for partners, and yet, they chose to develop a relationship with Acacia Public University. For Poplar State University, Acacia Public University offered a completely different cultural context within which Poplar State University students and faculty could be exposed to a wholly different system of medical care. Based on these findings, this partnership appears to be the result of strategic decisions made, not just unilaterally by the institution in the Global North, but by actors at both institutions in search of acquiring specific resources intended to develop institutional and individual capacities.

As the preliminary piece of a larger study, this research only begins to delve into the complexity of international partnership, especially of relationships between institutions into the Global North and the Global South. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the application of resource dependency theory raises additional questions that need to be addressed in future research. One important issue that arises is dependence. Given the concerns about North-South relationships, there is a clear need to interrogate how each institution has managed the dependencies that naturally arise in the external search for resources and what

these existing dependencies mean for the power relationship between these two institutions of higher education.

Conclusions

This article explores the complex motivations that drive international partnership development from the perspectives of actors at each of the partner institutions. Examined through the lens of resource dependency theory, the findings of this study point to the strategic nature of the decision to pursue this relationship, on the part of both partners. Such relationships offer numerous opportunities for capacity building, collaborative research, and knowledge sharing for both partners, if done right. In this particular case, there appears to be a strong match between the stated desires of each partner institution and what the partnering institution is believed to contribute to the relationship. However, given the preliminary status of this research, there remains much room for exploration of this long-standing relationship. One direction that requires attention is the potential for the formation of dependencies that resource dependency theory suggests. Given the historical inequalities embedded within Global North-South partnerships, the creation of dependencies through resource exchange has the potential to be highly problematic for the institution in the Global South. Thus, how the exchange of resources affects the balance of power in the relationship is something that needs to be probed further.

With institutions of higher education in both the United States and African countries facing the daunting challenges of continuing to offer quality higher education while serving increasing numbers of students with less funding, colleges and universities will continue to look to their external environment to obtain needed resources. The development of partnerships is one strategic approach for coping with these pressures, and the literature suggests the development of international university partnerships will continue to increase in the coming years (Chan 2004; Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011). Within this context, it is of utmost importance that we deepen our understanding of the dynamics of such relationships.

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About the Author

Candice J. Grant is a doctoral student in the Department of Education Leadership & Policy Studies at Indiana University. Her research interests include the internationalization of higher education and the development of transnational networks through international university partnerships.