

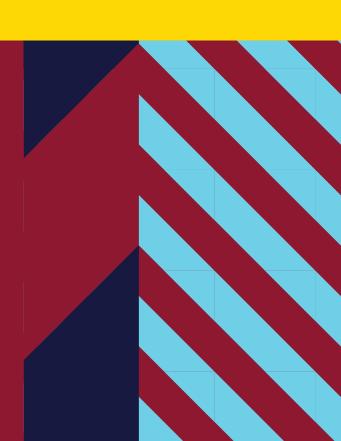
FAKULTET FOR LÆRERUTDANNING OG INTERNASJONALE STUDIER

International Collaborative Strategies in Postgraduate Programme Development and Adaptation. The NOMA Master in International Education and Development headed by Oslo University College (now Oslo Metropolitan University). Perspectives from Zambia.

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by

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Abstract

Both the vision and mission statements of the University of Zambia (UNZA) aspire that the institution be a leader or/and centre of excellence in higher education for individuals, industry and society through the provision of comprehensive and rigorous teaching-learning, research and scholarly programmes that would resolve and provide solutions to the community or/and public challenges. The achievement of this goal, however, has been daunting. The 2008-2012 strategic plan seemed to have acknowledged this dilemma as it intended to "Restore Excellence in Teaching, Research and Public Service" (UNZA, 2008). One approach devised to ameliorate this situation was to encourage collaborative training and research programmes aimed at building institutional capacities and generate and share skills, knowledge and understanding, and competencies among students, staff, institutions and nations at large. This was especially apt in resource-constrained institutions like UNZA. With the support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Universities of Zambia and Cape Town, Ahfad University for Women in the Sudan and Oslo University College (now Oslo Metropolitan University) for six years ran the NORAD's Masters Programme in International Education and Development (NOMA) project. This article historicises the international collaborative project that ran from 2006 to 2012, had shared knowledge and understanding, skills and competences and strategies which resulted in partners in the Global South developing their own versions of the programme. The processes undertaken, and the means and mechanisms to development of new programmes are presented herein.

Key Words

NOMA, Development, Education, Strategies, Oslo University College (now Oslo Metropolitan University), UNZA, Ahfad University for Women, University of Cape Town.

Introduction

In the years following Independence in 1964, Zambia, like many African states, viewed education to be pivotal to its development as a nation (Carmody, 2021: 1). At independence, the country only had 100 university graduates (Mwanakatwe, 1974). UNZA was established with the view to provide qualified human resources to develop the country. From its legal establishment on 12th November, 1965 and the subsequent commencement of academic session on 17th March, 1966, UNZA has, up today, maintained its motto of "service and excellence" with three main areas of focus; teaching, research and public/community service. The vision and mission statements of UNZA aspire that the institution be a leader or/and centre of excellence in higher education for individuals, industry and society through the provision of comprehensive and rigorous teaching-learning, research and scholarly programmes that would resolve and provide solutions to the community or/and public challenges. Meeting these aspirations, has however, been a challenge for UNZA, which for many years was the only public, university in the country. The vexing issues have included limited financial, human, skills and competences, and material resources. Owing to various competing national needs, the government has over time been constrained in allocating the much-needed operational resources to the institution. Yet the desire to have highly qualified faculties and staff for both undergraduate and graduate students and also constructive engagement of the industry and society has been high in UNZA scholarly and academic ambitions.

After consultations, the university has prescribed rigorous regulations and policies on consultancy and research activities in the institution. More importantly for the current discussion, the institution has developed collaborative training and research programmes aimed at building institutional capacities and generate and share skills, knowledge, understanding, and competencies among students, staff, and institution as a strategy to redress daunting challenges the institution faces in the academic area.

This article presents a typical collaborative training and research Masters programme: The NORAD's Master of International Education and Development (NOMA) programme. It was financed by NORAD – a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation

in Higher Education (SIU). In Zambia the programme was hosted by the School of Education in the Department of Language and Social Sciences Education. However, the lecturers were drawn from within and outside the hosting school. To note, there were other NOMA Masters programmes in different schools of the university. In the School of Education, there was another NOMA; Master in Literacy and Learning (Partnership between UNZA, Hedmark University College and University of Namibia, 2007-2013); The School of Humanities and Social Science had Master of Science in Clinical Neuropsychology (A project between Department of Psychology at UNZA and Department of Psychology – Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The School of Medicine collaborated with the University of Bergen, and the University of Malawi on a NOMA Master of Science in Epidemiology from 2010-2014 (NOMA Annual Report 2010: 18). From time to time the coordinators of the programmes held consultative meetings at different and alternating institutions.

A historical note on the NORAD's Programme for Master Studies (NOMA)

In providing a historical note on the NOMA master's Programme, it is noted that the Norwegian government has been involved in assisting African countries in the area of education in many ways. The NOMA Masters programme we are dealing with came out of the NORAD Fellowship Programme (NFP) which had existed for over 40 years and had undergone changes in line with changing political priorities in Norwegian development cooperation. The NFP provided candidates from Norway's partner countries for development cooperation in Africa, Asia and Latin America with opportunities for higher education programmes relevant for their home countries. The Programme provided diploma courses as well as two-year Masters' degree courses at Norwegian higher education institutions. Since 1962 nearly 6000 NORAD fellows had graduated with a diploma or a Masters' degree from Norway.

The vision of the NFP was that educational opportunities offered at higher education institutions (HEI) in Norway could contribute to increased competence and capacity building in the fellows' home countries. From 1998, NFP came to be managed by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU). From 2002, a few triangular South-South-North postgraduate courses (also called "Courses in the South") were established and an expansion of actors and activities added issues of good governance, democracy building and poverty alleviation into the cumulative curriculum.

Between 2001 and 2005 an agreement was entered between the Norwegian Council for Higher Education (UHR) and NORAD. The NORAD's Programme for Master Studies Agreement for the period 2006-2010 was made with SIU and NORAD. Based on policy directions provided by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), NORAD became responsible for the overall policy and the guidelines to be followed in managing the programme. Since the launching of NFP, the international scene of higher education changed considerably in both the South and the North. The critical role of public higher education in national development was emphasised around the world and internationalisation and cooperation between higher education institutions and across borders became more important.

SIU¹ was organised as a public agency under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research. SIU promoted international cooperation in education and research. To assess the contemporary role and relevance of NFP, NORAD commissioned in 2004 an external evaluation of NFP. The evaluation report, presented in August 2005 (1/2005) The Evaluation of the NORAD Fellowship Programme), recommended that most of the programme activities should take place in the Global South concentrated to a limited number of countries and academic fields of study. NORAD initiated a hearing inviting written comments of the document from all involved partners. The Report, the comments and recommendations received from stakeholders formed the basis for political decisions made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ NORAD regarding the development of the new programme, NORAD's Programme for Master Studies (NOMA). Thus, in 2006 the new programme replaced the Norad Fellowship Programme. The aim of all educational activities of the NOMA has been to contribute to build capacities in public and private sectors as well as NGOs in the South. Master programmes were to be established and developed in the South in close collaboration with Norwegian higher education institutions. Needs and priorities of countries in the South were the basis for the cooperation. To note, the changes from the NFP (1962-2005) to the new NOMA (2006-2010) were made gradually over the years.

¹ SIU was in 2018 replaced by Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (Diku) is the full name of the organisation which is the result of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU), the Norwegian Agency for Digital Learning in Higher Education (Norgesuniversitetet) and the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme becoming one organisation.

The NOMA Masters' Programme in International Education and Development

The general aim of the programme was to develop an interdisciplinary master programme that would address issues related to education, gender, HIV and AIDS and development within multicultural and multi-ethnic societies. The specific objectives were to enable the students to: acquire research skills and become independent learners; acquire knowledge and skills in the field of education within the specified areas above; acquire skills to critically reflect upon and integrate knowledge in various contexts; acquire knowledge and skills to deliver services and articulate policies and plans within institutions and outside; develop an understanding of the complex interrelation between education, gender and HIV and AIDS and development; and develop competencies in the field of praxis. The programme opted for a gender balance in the cohorts. A central focus of the course was addressing the inherent power relations between men and women, gender inequity and assumed heterosexual hierarchy. This made gender mixed cohorts necessary. Recruitment of men, who had to play an important role in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic, was considered important. The aim was for 12 students to graduate in 2009 and 12 students in 2010. The number of students was to be equally divided amongst the four partner institutions, namely, UNZA, Oslo University College (now Oslo Metropolitan University), Ahfad University for Women in Sudan and University of Cape Town (UCT).

The lead institution was Oslo University College² and the main partner institution was Ahfad University for Women in Sudan. University of Zambia and University of Cape Town were "extended" partners. With the prerequisite and requirement by the donor that Oslo University College should identify institutions and individuals to collaborate with from the Global South, these were identified from previous project associations and networks. A number of aspects were considered in developing and implementing the programme. These included identifying and recruitment of staff; recruiting, mentoring, teaching, and supervising students; developing, designing and consolidating a standard and acceptable curriculum; examination process; and devised mechanisms to resolve operational challenges in the programme.

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² The name of the university college was later, in 2011 changed after two institutions came together to become Oslo and Arkershus University College of Applied Sciences. Later in 2018, the institution gained university status and became Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) (www.oslomet.no/en/about/get-to-know-oslomet)

The first meeting of the four universities in the partnership took place in 2006 from 26 to 30 September 2006 in Sudan at Ahfad University for Women. The Project Coordinator, Professor Anders Breidlid of Oslo University College, was key in the planning of how the programme would be taught in the four universities and how lecturers from the four universities were to collaborate in the teaching with the aim to and learn from one another's best practices in teaching postgraduates. The meeting first discussed the purpose of the NOMA Masters and pointed out the importance of the programme to the four participating countries. After this discussion, the meeting broke into 2 groups to discuss the following issues:

- (a) Overall objectives of the programme
- (b) Modules
- (c) Specific objectives of each module
- (d) Needs of beneficiaries
- (e) Target groups
- (f) Areas where competence capacity building was needed (institutional and individual).

Following extensive discussions in the two groups the following modules were proposed for the two-year Masters Programme.

Year 1

Compulsory courses:

- Epistemologies and Methodologies
- Introduction to international education
- Gender HIV/AIDS and development

Electives:

- Education Management and planning
- ICT in educational context
- Human rights and diversity
- Peace education.

Year 2: Preparation, research and writing of a thesis on a selected subject.

After extensive discussions on these issues the consensus was that the programme should be housed in the Faculty or School of Education in each of the participating universities under the supervision of Deans, each free to assign at least 2 lecturers; one to be in charge of administration of the programme and the other to be in charge of the academic side of the programme. The NOMA Masters' in International Education and Development was accepted at the University of Zambia (UNZA) by the school of

education and a report was submitted to the Vice Chancellor's Office. In order to iron out implementation procedures, a workshop was held at UNZA from 27th to 2nd March 2007.

The other universities also accepted the programme in due course.

There were envisioned mutual benefits for the universities from the collaborative system. The exchange of staff between the partner institutions was meant to help maximize the quality of the programme and facilitate the development of new and critical competencies within the various areas of the Master programme. It was expected that after two cohorts of students, the Master programme would run in all the three universities in the South, possibly as a regional collaboration, thus becoming sustainable and self-sufficient after four years. The goal of this project was for the degree to be awarded by all four institutions as a "Joint Degree". Co-publishing of articles was an expected outcome of the project. The NOMA Masters programme was meant to run from 2007 to 2009, but as we shall show later, NORAD and SIU extended the project by two more intakes (2006 -2012). Institutions recruited both staff and students. The recruited student cohorts undertook specialised and standardised elective module from the participating institutions while the engaged staff lectured, mentored and supervised the students.

In what follows, the article presents the recruitment, training, supervisory, examination and research processes that were undertaken. It also elucidates mechanisms devised to address challenges such as language barrier, cultural differences, and differences in styles of teaching, essay writing and examination questions, as well as supervision.

Identification and recruitment of staff into the programme

After the signing of the memorandum of understanding, each institution was requested to select an academic co-ordinator and an assistant administrative co-ordinator to spear-head programme implementation. The selection of the co-ordinator was supervised by the relevant school and university authorities, notably Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Departments. These officers worked more like a search committee across all the schools in the Universities. Once appointed by the Dean of School, the co-ordinator was tasked to identify and recommend other university staff for teaching and supervising. Being a Masters' programme, all the relevant teaching requirements were considered. For UNZA, these included either holding a doctorate degree in a relevant discipline or be a senior academic. While the programme was hosted by the School of Education, the staff recommended and recruited also came from, especially the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. The curriculum vitae for the recommended persons were scrutinised by the co-ordinators in the involved institutions.

The international and local co-ordinators and members of staff from the lead institution, and local planning and co-ordinating committees, used to meet regularly, at least once per year, to monitor progress and direct the programme. During such occasions other teaching and supervisory members of staff were invited to share experiences, teaching techniques and materials. The recruited staff had to accept to be involved in a multicultural teaching and learning environment. This meant, among other issues, accepting to be assessed by the students after delivering a given module. The evaluation outcomes were shared among all involved staff. This was meant to standardise the teaching and training processes. To note, students' assessment of their lecturers had not been institutionalised at UNZA, but lecturers involved in the NOMA happily welcomed the idea and students were candid and unequivocal in their evaluations. They wanted only the best from their lecturers.

The NOMA programme provided some incentive to the participating staff – financial token of appreciation in accordance with extra hours of teaching. The major benefits for the staff were sharing of knowledge in seminars, teaching skills through peer observation and evaluation, and access to latest books and journals in the courses of the programme were accessed and procured during visits to the collaborating institutions.

Recruiting, Mentoring, Teaching and Supervising of students

Each institution was allowed to recruit a number of students into the programme. Various approaches were used to identify the potential students through public advertisements. To standardise this process, shortlisted applicants were subjected to interviews. The names of successful and unsuccessful candidates and their performance in the interviews were sent to the international co-ordinator for scrutiny. The recruited students moved from one institution to the other, staying in each institution for roughly about a semester to learn an approved module and pass the course work and the examination. In evaluations, all students reported that they were extremely happy with the arrangement of following modules of their NOMA programme in different universities, because this brought about exposure to different learning and teaching environments.

The participating lecturers from all the universities, visited the other institutions to observe, learn and share teaching and supervision techniques. When the students went to any one institution, the co-ordinators and other members of staff provided some orientation to the foreign students. During the orientation period, the tasks to be achieved at that institution were spelt out to both the students and members of staff.

After the first year of what could be called "theoretical", students moved to the field-work and writing up year. The students were encouraged to identify research topics of their own interest. Students from Norway were encouraged to come up with a topic that would be researched on in the Global South. Some of them did their field work in Zambia, South Africa and Namibia even though Namibia was not part of the countries in the NOMA programme that this article is about. The teaching staff assisted in developing research topics which were later approved by the international committee of co-ordinators and participating lecturers. Given the objectives of the NOMA programme in International Education, students researched on HIV and AIDS in communities, schools, and colleges.

Each student had two supervisors, one from a participating country where the student had come from and the other from Oslo University College. The supervisor from Oslo was the main supervisor and the one from the Global South. was the co-supervisor. The

two supervisors worked closely and shared notes and views. This was critical in averting the two supervisors giving contradictory advice to the students. Students appreciated the arrangement and felt that they were receiving adequate and useful feedback. Students were regularly in contact with the supervisors through all possible communication networks, such as mobile phones, emails, and skype. Since the supervisors and administrative staff visited all the participating institutions, supervisors took advantage of such visits to monitor the progress of their students. It was also an opportune time for students to present their topics and in subsequent visits, to present findings to the supervisors in seminar form.

Examination process

There were two components of the examination; the theoretical course work and the research dissertation. While each institution and participating lecturers gave assignments on agreed topics and length of work, the grades for the research component were exclusively arrived at by the supervisors and external examiners. That is, the two supervisors were also examiners and together with the external examiner jointly marked the dissertation. The students took an average of 12 to 18 months to complete the programme.

The memorandum of understanding also indicated the institution that was awarding the degree. Oslo University College, being the lead and co-ordinating international institution was given this responsibility. The award of the certificate had to take cognisance of the international demands, especially when additional supportive and descriptive documents of the degree had to be given to the foreign students. This augmented recognition of the certificates in the countries where the students had come from.

Resolving the challenges in an international and interdiscipline programme

Such an international and pioneering training and research programme could not be without challenges. These included language barriers, cultural elements, different modes of teaching and instruction (training), examination, supervising and research and accommodation for students from Norway and Sudan. Upon arrival in each country, the foreign students were oriented to some basic academic and cultural practices by the host institutions. This assisted in preventing obvious cultural shocks. Considering that all the participating nations were not native English speakers, varied methods of instructions were adopted. These included use of information technologies, such as power point presentations, group presentations of summaries of assigned readings, and seminars. It was compulsory to all students to buy the recommended books and there was a budget line for students' books. Since the supervision and teaching techniques were jointly shared during staff meetings in the participating countries, a uniform approach in marking assignments, examinations, and dissertation was adopted.

End of the NOMA Project

We have stated that the NOMA Masters'in International Education and Development was a project and projects have a life span. The project was supposed to have run from 2006 to 2009, but it was extended by two more cohorts thereby ending in 2012. A Student's Graduation Research Conference for NOMA/NUCOOP graduates was held in Sudan at Ahfad University for Women between 3rd and 5th of December, 2012. Something must be said about NUCOOP for clarity's sake. NUCOOP is short for Norwegian University Cooperation Programme for Capacity Development in Sudan. The project was also headed by Oslo University College and started in Upper Nile University, but due to military clashes between the SPLA (the Sudan People's Liberation Army) and militias, it was moved to Juba. The students were all from the new country of South Sudan. The programme tried to address issues related to education and sustainable development. It explored which knowledges count in the world-today and discussed how the epistemological imposition of the West impacts on the education discourses in the Global South.

The conference was titled NOMA/NUCOOP Student's Research Conference. Partnership in Education and Development. Landmarks on the Road. The conference was a great opportunity for dissemination of research findings. Professor Ann Hickling-Hudson from Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Australia held the first key note lecture titled: Seeking justice: Seizing transformative moments in education. Professor Jean Baxen, formerly University of Cape Town (UCT) talked about access and quality education: issues and challenges while Professor Anders Breidlid's key note lecture was about the hegemonic role of Western epistemology and its spread to the education in the Global South.. The intention of the key lectures was to help the participants concretise the gist of the field of International Education and Development. The conference was closed with a graduation ceremony party for the graduates. The conference was a huge success. The general level of the academic paper presentations and discussions were high.

Between 10th and 12th February 2014, the NOMA Project Coordinators' Seminar was organized by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU), at the Taj Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka. All international and local coordinators of the NOMA Masters at the University of Zambia attended the seminar which officially

marked the end of the project. Prof. Anders Breidlid made a detailed presentation on the NOMA Masters in International Education and Development.

In total 43 Master students received their Masters' certificate based on the NOMA programme. (See Project Fact Sheet)

Results of the programme

Apart from graduates, another product of the NOMA Masters in International Education and Development was a publication of a book, *Perspectives on Youth, HIV/AIDS and Indigenous Knowledges in Africa* (2015) by Sense Publishers.. The book is an anthology of the best researched topics by the NOMA students. It was edited by the co-ordinators; Professors Anders Breidlid, Austin Cheyeka and Alawia Farag. During the launch of the book, on Friday January 22, 2016, the Acting Dean of the School of Education paid tribute to Professors Breidlid and Farag in the following statement: "... Professor Breidlid and Prof. Farag, thank you for having picked our university and our school for partnership." Turning to Zambian graduates who had come to witness the launch, the Acting Dean said: "Past students, you have made us proud. ... Allow me ladies and gentlemen to report to our visitors that the first cohort of our local NOMA, the Master of Education in Education and Development has graduated and the second is in field work phase."

Dr. Dennis Banda in a draft of the book review, praised the book as follows:

This book can be used either as textbook, or reference material at any level of our Zambian education system and in the fight against HIV and AIDS. I strongly recommend that this book is distributed to schools and other institutions of learning and if possible a teachers' guide is developed if it is to be used as a text book in secondary schools. The book can be used as reference material in other postgraduate programmes. It is also a book that can be read for purely enjoyment as one reflects on how youths should grow with traditional and local values, attitudes and morals and use them in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Localising the Programme

The University of Zambia has benefited from the NOMA Masters project. Academic staff who were involved in the programme felt that they had undergone some form of refresher course in epistemologies and methodologies. As earlier pointed out, the NOMA Masters' project required that participating universities in the Global South introduce similar programmes in their universities. Consequently, at the end of the project, a Master of Education in Education and Development (M.Ed. Education and Development) was developed. As a multidisciplinary programme it included courses from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences such as: *Globalisation and Development* and *Foreign AID and Development*. The programme was moved from the Department of Language and Social Sciences Education to the Department of Education, Advisory and Policy Studies.

The first cohort of the localised NOMA Masters was enrolled in 2011. The initial number of applicants was ten (10), but due to challenges of obtaining paid leave from work for one or two years, only five (5) turned up for the course. They were all teachers. Since then the programme has attracted up to as many as 20 applicants when it is advertised by the Department of Education, Administration and Policy Studies in the School of Education. In the 2021 intake there are seven (7) students in their first year of course work.

Benefits to UNZA and Zambia

In the end, from 2007 to 2012 when the NOMA/NUCOOP Conference took place in Sudan, seventeen (17) young Zambian men and women had obtained their Master degree in International Education and Development. The seventeen were drawn from the 2007 intake of 4; 2008 intake of 3; 2009 intake of 5; and 2010 intake of 5. The NOMA Masters' in International Education and Development also provided an opportunity to some Zambian young men and women to read for the Master in Multicultural Education at Oslo University College. In all, about 12 more candidates travelled to Oslo and spent two years there to obtain a Master in Multicultural Education degree. Another benefit that cannot be glossed over is that the NOMA Masters' in International Education and Development contributed to the establishment of the International Link Office because the programme brought a good number of overseas students hitherto not experienced at UNZA, necessitating a creation of an international link office to coordinate, scrutinize MoUs and exchange programmes that the institution was entering into. The NOMA Master in International Education and Development coordinators from the School of Education were key in the development. Overtly, the participating scholars enhanced their knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies through this international collaboration. Also, the institutions involved evolved and adapted to contemporary and enabling academic portfolios including epistemologies, methodologies and content.

Conclusion

In the area of higher education Norway and Zambia have over the years collaborated through the NOMA programmes in training or educating personnel for various sectors of the socio-economic and political life of the country.

Collaborative teaching and research activities are critical in resource-constrained institutions of higher learning in the Global South. The seed money for collaborative programmes may seemingly be huge, but the dividends are impactful and permanent. At UNZA the NOMA Master in International Education and Development has been a success story. UNZA has learned that with commitment from faculty staff, collaborative teaching and research activities are sustainable and fundamental in improving the research and teaching capacities in an institution.

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