Annotated Bibliography: NGO - Academic Partnerships

Prepared by Laura Langdon and Carmel Wallis

Introduction

This review outlines different perspectives on partnerships between NGO and academic institutions. The first section of this paper comprises publications that discuss elements of academic-NGO partnering, and the second section introduces a number of organisations that are involved in facilitating partnerships of this nature. The publications and organisations featured are primarily focused on improving development outcomes, though there are some that are included as more general examples of good partnering practice.

Publications

Buchy, M., & Ahmed, S. (2007). Social Learning, academics and NGOs: Can the collaborative formula work? *Action Research, 5*(4), 358-377. doi: 10.1177/1476750307083712

Social learning, academics and NGOs: Can the collaborative formula work? is focussed on an academic-NGO facilitated action research project in India, which endeavoured to generate understanding around social change and learning in the context of water management. In this discourse, the project directors critically reflect on the collaborative aspect of the study and challenges encountered, including those that arose through poor practice, as well as structural and cultural issues inherent to

partnerships between academics and practitioners. Through this discussion, the authors evaluate the potential for collaboration to facilitate or hinder project work. They reflect on their learning from this experience, and provide suggestions for overcoming the discussed constraints in order to enhance the outcomes of future academic-NGO research initiatives.

Delisle, H., Roberts, J., Munro, M., Jones, L., & Gyorkos, T. (2005). The role of NGOs in global health research. *Health Research Policy and Systems, 3*(1). doi:10.1186/1478-4505-3-3

The role of NGOs in global health research reviews the contribution of NGOs to knowledge generation, priority setting, resource mobilisation, and capacity development. Prepared by members of the Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH), this paper contends that academic-NGO collaboration offers great potential for maximising the benefits of research and developing effective means of addressing global health and development issues. The authors also discuss some of the constraints to NGO involvement in research, and present evidence-based strategies on how these issues may be appropriately addressed.

Green, D. (2013, August 8). *From poverty to power: Why are NGOs and academics collaborating more?* [Web blog post]. Retrieved from http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/why-are-ngos-and-academics-collaborating-more/

Why are NGOs and academics collaborating more? examines the current state of NGO and academic attitudes to collaborative research. It includes a number of links to examples of joint research projects and discusses aspects that may impact the rationale behind partnering. Green discusses some contemporary challenges, and offers advice for those entering into partnerships of this nature. He also outlines an argument that partnerships bestow different types of autonomy by leveraging partnering as a source of funding, allowing organisations to bypass government funding as a first port of call. The value of environments which facilitate deeper understanding of partnering are highlighted, and Green outlines what he perceives as the best mechanisms to allow greater collaboration.

Goodwin, S., & Phillips, R. (2011). *Researching the researchers: Policy research in non-government organisations in the human services sector*. Retrieved from http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/research/centres_and_networks/sprn/documents/Researching_the_Researchers.pdf

Researching the Researchers examines the expanding capacity for research that NGOs in Australia have demonstrated in recent years, positioning them as effective research institutions as well as service providers. The paper examines >50 NGOs in the human services sector and analyses whether or not this additional role is improving policy. Of note to the NGO-academic partnering process, the paper includes a discussion of knowledge production methods, where NGOs have assumed the role of academics or worked collaboratively with them. There is an assessment of the virtue of partnering between NGOs and academic institutions for knowledge gathering and policy production, though less about partnering for implementation/service provision itself. The discussion surrounding research legitimacy and partnering practice offers some valuable first hand insights from members of both academic and NGO community members who have worked collaboratively.

Brohman, J., Gannitsos, I., & Roseland, M. (2003). Issues of participation in a University-NGO, North-South Partnership: Internationalizing a CED program. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies, 24*(1), 89-105. doi:10.1080/02255189.2003.9668898

Issues of Participation in a University-NGO, North-South Partnership examines the partnering principles behind an international partnership and identifies potential imbalances and barriers to partnering transactionally. This paper focuses less on the individual practitioner's experiences and more on the structural and institutional problems that can occur when partnering on this scale. The case study is drawn from Mexico, involving a Canadian public university, a Mexican private university, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Research Centre. The problems canvassed include logistical and pragmatic concerns. The paper highlights the trend towards collaboration and urges more careful consideration in partnering practice, emphasising the need for participatory project design.

Hockaday, D. (2014). The servant leadership approach and humanitarian collaboration. *The Journal of Partnership Brokering,* (4). Retrieved from http://partnershipbrokers.org/w/journal/the-servant-leadership-approach-and-humanitarian-collaboration/

The servant leadership approach and humanitarian collaboration is a paper that does not explicitly focus on academic-NGO collaboration, but canvasses many of the challenges that each organisation faces in a broader discussion of partnering practice. The value of this paper is in the examination of where there is a need for collaboration in the humanitarian sector, and what obstacles still remain that prevent this from being an effective process. The concept of 'servant leadership' as being natural to NGOs is explored for its significance in partnering. The paper also provides examples where meaningful institutional change has been achieved to foster greater capacity for collaboration and improve current partnerships. Partnering is conceived of as a catalyst for greater humanitarian outcomes, in a context where the role of development actors is being redefined.

Organisations

The Partnering Initiative (TPI)

The Partnering Initiative. (2015). *About us*. Retrieved from http://thepartneringinitiative.org/about-us/

The Partnering Initiative is an organisation that seeks to motivate inter-sectoral collaboration for global development. TPI provides numerous resources on the nature of partnering itself, intended to guide participants through the process of partnering. These publications tend to focus on relationships between private and public institutions, without explicitly mentioning academic-NGO collaboration. However, many of the lessons are general enough that they apply to any partnering endeavour, while others can be extrapolated.

Resources and Publications

Tennyson, R. (2015). *The Partnering Toolbook.* Retrieved from

http://thepartneringinitiative.org/tpi-tools/toolbook-series/the-partnering-

toolbook/

The Partnering Toolbook provides an overview of the partnership process, detailing how to build the capacity for partnering in an organisation, how to approach a potential partnership, and how to manage a project through to its conclusions. This resource is primarily grounded in private-public sector examples. It provides pragmatic tools – such as templates to better communicate expectations – in addition to addressing the more abstract elements of partnering.

Prescott, D., & Stibbe, D. (2014). *Unleashing the power of business: A practical roadmap to systematically engage business as a partner in development*. Oxford, UK: The Partnering Initiative.

The Partnering Roadmap is a visual representation of the partnering cycle, spanning from before the collaboration is commenced, through to the implementation of research and output of results. The roadmap is structured around integrating private sector/business organisations into partnership with development actors, though many of the anticipated aspects of collaboration are relevant for NGO-academic partnerships. The partnership roadmap is also a more global example of how partnering can be conceptualised.

The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC)

The International NGO Training and Research Centre. (2015). *About us.* Retrieved from http://www.intrac.org/

The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) seeks to merge development practice with analysis. Specific to their work with partnering, INTRAC recently facilitated a partnership between the University of Bradford and World Vision, bringing together voices from both NGO and academic communities in order

to establish guidelines for the management of such associations. The results from this collaboration have seen an extended relationship between the organisations (along with other NGOs, the Development Studies Association and ELRHA) and some reflective papers on the status quo and future of partnering.

Resources and Publications

Aniekwe, C., Hayman, R., Mdee, A., Job, A., Lall, P., & Stevens, D. (2012). *Academic-NGO collaboration in international development research: a reflection on the issues*. Oxford, UK: Development Studies Association.

This paper is grounded in the renewed push for academic-NGO collaboration and questions the current thinking on how these relationships are managed. The review acknowledges the increasing overlap between the roles of academics and development practitioners, and posits theories about collaboration. The paper provides a summary of partnership case studies which have involved academic and NGO realms, identifying and recommending techniques to best assist those involved in such collaborations.

INTRAC. (n.d.). *Rachel Hayman: Head of research*. Retrieved from http://www.intrac.org/pages/en/rachel-hayman.html

There are a collection of resources developed by Rachel Hayman which informally outline the benefits and challenges of academic-NGO partnering. These papers focus on a variety of topics, from canvassing the current academic-NGO landscapes, to identifying how and when each body should be responsible for producing and directing research. Hayman's publications also address the meaningful implementation of research, reinforcing the benefits of academic-NGO collaboration.

Engineers Without Borders Australia (EWBA)

Engineers Without Borders Australia [EWBA]. (2015). *Curriculum & research.*
        Retrieved from http://www.ewb.org.au/explore/knowledgehubs/education

Engineers Without Borders Australia (EWBA) is a member-based, not-for-profit NGO for humanitarian engineering. EWBA operates in developing regions across Australia, South Asia and South-East Asia to foster capacity development through small-scale engineering programs, and improve community health and wellbeing. EWBA partners with Australian Universities in the delivery of curriculum and research initiatives which are intended to enhance educational opportunities for tertiary-level engineering students, while also contributing to EWBA's international humanitarian engineering and education programs. EWBA is currently partnered with the Australian National University (ANU), the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), the University of Queensland (UQ), the University of Sydney, the University of Western Australia (UWA), the University of Melbourne, and Swinburne University of Technology.

Resources and Publications

Smith, J., Brown, L., Blackhall, L., Loden, D., O'Shea, J. (2010, September). *New partnerships linking universities and NGOs on education for development engineering - case study from Engineers Without Borders Australia.* Paper presented at the Joint International IGIP-SEFI Annual Conference, Trnava, Slovakia. Retrieved fromhttp://cecs.anu.edu.au/files/IGIPSEFI_2010_JIS_et_al_submitted.pdf

This paper provides an overview of EWBA's university-based curriculum and research initiatives. It cites a range of literature emphasising the importance of global awareness and professional skill development as components of tertiary education, and endorses active learning opportunities that foster engagement with current global issues and strong educational outcomes. A number of brief case studies are presented as evidence of the successes and benefits of the EWBA's curriculum and research initiatives conducted in partnership with six Australian Universities.

In light of multiple successful engagements with universities, EWBA has developed a university partnership model with the intention of implementing more long-term collaborative projects in curriculum development, research, and student engagement. The framework is outlined in this paper, along with a number of recommendations for fostering an effective and productive partnership. The authors of this publication assert that EWBA's university partnerships demonstrate the potential of enhancing engagement between universities, NGOs and communities for the cultivation of knowledge and betterment of communities worldwide.

Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA)

ELRHA. (n.d.). *About.* Retrieved from http://www.elrha.org/

Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA) is a collaborative network that fosters partnerships between researchers and practitioners to enhance the efficiency, relevance and sustainability of humanitarian action.

Resources and Publications

ELRHA, (n.d.). *ELRHA guide to constructing effective partnerships*. Retrieved from
http://www.elrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/effective-partnerships-   report.pdf

ELRHA Guide to Constructing Effective Partnerships is intended as a practical guide for both academics and practitioners, offering comprehensive advice on initiating, scoping, formalising and sustaining partnerships. It aims to contribute to the literature by focussing on the unique opportunities and limitations that characterise academic-humanitarian collaboration. The guide provides a detailed discussion of the benefits and challenges to academics and practitioners working in partnership, as well as input from those with experience. Six case studies are included in the document as applied examples of academic-humanitarian partnership initiatives for discussion.

Development Studies Association

Development Studies Association. (2009). *Development Studies Association*.
    Retrieved from http://www.devstud.org.uk/

The Development Studies Association (DSA) works primarily with development agencies in the UK and Ireland to promote development research. It was their grant that enabled the INTRAC partnership to take place. The organisation has a membership primarily comprised of academic and development practitioners. DSA is explicitly interested in cross-sectoral development practice, and publishes the Journal of International Development.

Conclusion

The range of literature on partnering reflects the varied ways in which collaboration can be achieved. Sitting alongside academic articles which critically analyse the advantages and disadvantages of partnering are a number of outputs from organisations involved in promoting and facilitating partnership across sectors. Often developed with input from those with first-hand experience, these publications offer guidance and generalised expectations for parties entering into such arrangements. The enthusiasm for partnering as a means of more efficient development practice imparts real value to the resources that currently exist, as a template for what future collaborations can anticipate.