



Chapter 11

International Collaborative Research: Voices of Global South Researchers

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11.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters of this volume first sketched the societal and higher education contexts of Japanese and South African universities, with the intention of detecting a scope for partnerships, and then offered some case studies of fruitful collaboration between Japanese and South African universities. This penultimate chapter relates the lived experience of Global South researchers (from Ghana) of such partnerships. International collaborative research (ICR) is becoming increasingly important in academia. Researchers worldwide seek to create connections with each other to collectively explore issues of common importance. In the wake of the mass exploration of issues related to the Global South, it is vital that the voices of researchers in this part of the world be heard to

avert possible pockets of colonisation in academic research in the name of ICR.

This chapter was composed based on the individual experiences of four academic researchers—two women and two men—working at one of the public universities in Ghana. These researchers have engaged in ICR at both individual and institutional levels. With a minimum of 12 years of teaching and research experience, most have been actively engaged in research work after graduating from their master’s programmes in various fields. Their research interests include teacher education, curriculum design and evaluation, ICT, educational technology and human nutrition and dietetics. The least number of publications by these academics is currently six, which is by the academic with the lowest rank (lecturer) among the four. The highest number of publications is slightly over 60 and is by the highest-ranking member of the four, an associate professor who is the dean of a faculty. All academics have had short- or long-term education abroad in Germany, the Netherlands and Finland.

In this chapter, we seek to provide insights into how Ghanaian academic researchers establish links and conduct collaborative research with researchers or institutions from the Global North, what drives the ICR process, the factors that hinder the process of ICR and how these challenges are being overcome. Additionally, the elements that keep these four academic researchers interested in ICR and the unique issues that should receive considerable attention in ICR studies have been explored.

11.2 How Does It All Begin?

11.2.1 Striking Acquaintance in ICR

Helen Keller once said, “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much” (Burn 2018). Indeed, great things are achieved when people come together to work for a common goal. ‘Cooperation for the common good’, an inherent concept in social capital theory (Graham 2016; Bhandari & Yasunobu

2009), is gaining popularity in the academic research arena as the world becomes smaller and smaller with the advent of advanced technology for human interaction. Since the 1990s when social capital theory was introduced in academic debates (Bhandari & Yasunobu 2009), researchers have become more open to voluntary associations or partnerships with colleagues across different continents. Funding agencies and research councils are no exception as they have also realised that the collaborative research approach yields more responsive, sustainable and multi-perspective research outcomes and impacts (Fransman, Hall, Hayman, Narayanan, Newman & Tandon 2021; Fransman, Newman, & Bharadwaj 2019). Together, researchers seek to explore concepts, theories and philosophical assumptions in different contexts to advance knowledge and society in general. These associations or network relationships are formed as academics engage with each other on issues of common interest, build trust and share and exchange resources for the good of all members involved (Ball & Juneman 2012).

As indicated by Ball and Juneman (2012), there are various opportunities for networking relationships. Conferences, workshops, seminars and network platforms are popular media for direct networking with potential Global North researchers (GNRs). The ICR experiences of the four researchers in Ghana have in the past involved researchers from advanced countries such as China, England, Finland, Japan and the United States, thus presenting a heterogeneous group of researchers. The research collaboration usually begins with a GNR initiating the link directly with colleagues in Ghana who are in the same professional networks as them. Examples include the staff and student-mobility-network project (North-South-South network) of the University of Helsinki, Global TIES for children based at New York University and the Africa-Asia Dialogue of researchers based at Hiroshima University. In some instances, the request for ICR is not communicated directly. It emerges gradually from several interactions concerning co-hosted or jointly organised conferences and international summer schools, which then

transform into stable working relationships and subsequently, research collaborations at the individual level. Sometimes, these network relationships are not properly formed and, hence, may fail with time (Ball & Juneman 2012).

The referral system, popularly known in Ghana as ‘who you know’ and recently rephrased as ‘who knows you’, is a very effective means of linking up with fellow researchers in similar interest areas. In this context, it is implied that researchers are linked up with potential research collaborators through colleagues with whom they are already acquainted and who may trust their abilities or professional output. The institutional level ICR of the four academics has been done through such means. Specifically, they have been referred through old classmates, work colleagues, supervisors and mentors. These known links have established networks that have yielded collaborations with researchers from Asia, America, Europe and Australia.

Publications make researchers visible globally, especially when the publications are available on online professional platforms, either in part or in full. Online professional platforms such as Google Scholar, Research Gate and Academia.edu present avenues for prospective GNRs to seek and link up with Global South researchers (GSRs) based on the expertise that GSRs exhibit through their publications (Lepori, Thelwall & Hoorani 2018; Manca 2018). All four GSRs whose accounts were used in this chapter are members of some of these professional platforms and have had GNRs link up with them out of interest in their online publications, which include journal publications, policy briefs, reports and book chapters.

The accounts of the four GSRs on the forms of communication during ICR suggest that before 2020, discussions of possible research collaborations were held through face-to-face meetings during the design or planning of conferences, seminars, workshops, network projects or at the point of data analysis of ongoing research or staff exchange. Either way, the volume of e-mail exchanges usually preceded or followed face-to-face meetings. Voice

calls were used to supplement these methods when prompt clarifications were needed. To date (December 2021), e-mails still play a major role in ICR activities. As a result of COVID-19 and its restrictions on movement (Almahasees, Mohsen, & Amin 2021), WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams and Zoom have become popular means of enhancing communication between GNRs and the four academics from the Global South. ICR relationships usually develop based on the processes that researchers use to express, agree on and realise common goals. The higher the shared sense of importance of the research and level of commitment, the higher the chance of sustaining the group once the network is formed. It is common knowledge among the four GSRs that the African continent is a fertile ground for research. Hence, involvement in ICR that aligns with one's interests could broaden one's network. This knowledge induces a high level of commitment and a sense of need to make constructive input in the ICR groups that they join, as new links could be formed if one's contribution to the previous ICR is appreciated. Most of the collaborations engaged in by the four GSRs have been initiated by GNRs or institutions and are funded by funding agencies based in the Global North. The form of contribution or input required of the four GSRs is usually communicated to them at the very beginning and may be modified depending on how the research evolves.

11.2.2 Defining the Role of the GSR

Although there are many issues to investigate, it is only logical that the research projects in which the four GSRs have been involved are tied to their areas of specialisation and research interests. Consequently, the research themes have centred on teaching approaches, educational technology, curriculum design and development, education and gender, inclusivity in education, and human nutrition and dietetics.

In terms of who leads a research project, it is understood that in research, the principal investigator (PI) leads the team. Next in the line of authority is the researcher with the longest working relationship with the PI, who may not necessarily have the most experience in international collaboration, for

example, but understandably so, the most known and trusted by the PI. Usually, the PI comes from the institution or country that is funding the project. The GSRs whose accounts were used in this chapter have close to no experience in leading ICR, especially those involving GNRs. The experience thus far has to do with ICRs among African institutions. Two of the four GSRs have obtained funds from local institutions to conduct research in the country. However, they have not engaged GNRs in that research because they are of the opinion that the issues under investigation are specific to the local context, and thus, GNRs may not be interested. Additionally, the funds are not adequate and may not be appreciated by GNRs who have access to larger sums of funds. A few attempts by one of the four GSRs to obtain appreciable amounts of research grants for research that had a global outlook failed. One of the four is of the opinion that access to foreign research grants is political, as it appears to him that aside from meeting the selection criteria, funding institutions usually prefer to fund research works that have PIs from their institution or country. Two experiences or views are recounted below: the first GSR sheds light on why he finds it difficult to secure funds to lead ICRs, and the second sheds light on the nature of his role and its challenges:

For research projects that come with funds, my perception on that is ... what is the word? Hypocritical. Yes, I want to say very hypocritical because it appears some years back, donors or funders had something in mind, sometimes even who to give a project to, sometimes it appears they had that also in mind already; so it becomes very difficult. It becomes very difficult unless you are in very good standing with them or you are in their circles. So, if the people you're in competition with in bidding for the funds are strong in terms of being within the circles of the funders, it becomes very difficult for the GSR to get the funds. So, sometimes, I think that you need some gurus, some names, people with known identity and are ready to collaborate with you in order to get some of these funds, and in so doing, they have to be the PI; but without that, it's becoming very difficult;

it is increasingly difficult for these collaboration funds to come.

Sometimes I feel that, of course, the company or the industry that is providing the intervention, you know, seems to align more with him, the PI, and sometimes I just draw back when we do not seem to agree on an approach. I just draw back until he (PI) hits the wall, then I come in. I think these things happen because of their mindsets. So, yes, they are seeing an African professor and, in spite of what they have seen and read about you, they still have their reservations, which happens quite often with me. Normally, it's difficult to handle some of these issues, and I think sometimes it is also a big barrier because if you are not careful, you may not be able to work freely.

The common thread running through these two accounts is that, given the opportunity and conducive or supportive environments, GSRs could contribute more to ICR. Their comprehensive accounts suggest that when they join an ICR team, they often employ similar strategies of engagement in their bid to carve a niche for themselves in the international world of research. This means playing the underdog until adequate experience is gained, trust is built and identity is formed in each ICR team. This typically involves welcoming nearly all roles assigned to them and carrying them out while figuring out which roles bring out the best in them, allowing them to stay authentic to the research community. These accounts suggest that the requests or roles assigned to the four GSRs are often those that they can execute. In a few instances where they felt slightly incapable of some of the tasks assigned, they either found colleagues to help or gave subtle hints to the team to help.

One such instance, which is commendable, was that of a team working on an experimental study. Upon receiving a series of cry outs about the challenge with laboratory analysis by the GSR, they decided to organise a workshop in Ghana where they all came together to conduct the analysis. Such instances where team members rally behind each other to

upgrade their competence to get the job done are motivating. This illustrates how networks share resources or work as a cohesive unit to achieve set goals (Graham 2016; Jones & Harris 2014). Further, it was opined that such approaches tend to make the four GSRs feel valued beyond the research, which produces a good level of commitment and encourages freedom of expression on their part in the ICR team.

Contrary to this experience, a case is recalled where the PI's response to one such request was not encouraging, although there was a considerable amount of email correspondence during the project. An account of one of the four GSRs suggests that she had experienced an instance where the clarity of the nature of research left her working in a maze. The email from the GNR stated exactly how much the funding agency would pay and the period to get the work done. To help the GSR in question be more effective and efficient with the work she was doing, perhaps a couple of virtual meetings or voice calls—instead of emails—to discuss in detail the specifics of the research would have served the GSR better. The bottom line is that clear, detailed and consistent communication during collaborative research influences the four GSRs' level of commitment and desire for continuity. This may not always be positive, as frequent communication may also be perceived as a disruption, since several factors are competing for researchers' time. It is advisable for ICR teams to decide on communication or meeting patterns collectively at the formative stage of collaboration and use them as part of the protocols that govern their interaction.

So far, the main role of the four GSRs has been to collaboratively contribute to the research work after the research focus has been established. They help shape the idea using their backgrounds as GSRs to provide their individual country contexts for better interpretation and understanding. The four GSRs enjoy such collaboration compared to the ones where they play the role of validating the instrument, collecting data and passing them on or going further to analyse them alone before passing them on. The latter feels as if a GSR is paid just to do a job. One misses an opportunity to learn from

others in the team. The four GSRs are of the view that they would better appreciate the collaboration if they were invited to contribute to the research from its inception, regardless of whether it is funded or not, as the sense of collaboration is better felt in such instances. One researcher who has played the sole role of data collector and processor in an ICR project in his early career years recounted his experience, which is unique to early career researchers and should be viewed in that context:

There was one instance where I was given a questionnaire by a collaborator to determine whether it fits our context, even though I was not part of the initial research conceptualisation. I was to collect, clean, and send it to the GNR to analyse the data and subsequently write the report without any input from me. However, I enjoyed this collaboration because I was going to be rewarded financially, and from this one, there would emerge another collaboration. That was when I was a research assistant, not a lecturer.

Inherent in the accounts of the four GSRs' role in ICR is the idea that the power of the financing institution or agency often strongly determines or ultimately influences the structure and nature of the relationships that develop. These relationships are often strongly hierarchical, placing the PI, who has secured the research funds, in a position of power to drive the entire research team. In other words, funders' requirements are one of the forces that drive the ICR process. What might the other factors be and how do these drivers influence the ICR process?

11.3 What Drives the ICR Process?

From the accounts of the GSRs, the drivers of the ICR process include the research objectives, funders' requirements and the individual experiences, contexts and geographical locations of the members of the ICR team.

11.3.1 Research Objectives and Funders' Requirements

The four GSRs share the view that the study objectives, coupled with the funder's requirements, in cases where the research is funded, are the most influential drivers of the ICR process. Every researcher sets out to achieve certain objectives through their research. These objectives determine, among others, the research site, population of interest and nature of the analysis. These, in turn, determine the kind of expertise the PI needs to bring to the research team, the medium the team members operate through, the frequency of meetings, how resources will be shared and utilised and the timelines for conducting the study.

In bidding for research grants, agencies and institutions consider proposals when choosing which research to sponsor. If the research objectives indicated in the proposal align with the funding agencies or institutions' mission, vision or social/corporate responsibility plans and they award the PI or research team the funds to conduct the study, the selection criteria have already been met by the winning team. Upon winning the grant, the funder's other conditions or requirements must be met. These selection criteria and requirements for accessing grants may include persons or institutions that may apply, gender balance and cultural diversity of the research team, scheduled reports and accountability for funds used to achieve the research objectives. Together, these criteria set the stage for processes such as defining the roles, the kind of power structure that will guide the team, the communication patterns that will be employed and the kind of changes that will be effected in the research budget. Whether the research objectives, together with the funders' requirements, drive the ICR process in a healthy and sustainable manner largely depends on the individual experiences and contexts of all the ICR team members.

11.3.2 Individual Experiences and Contexts of Team Members

The diversity of any research team either overtly or subtly shapes the ICR process. Researchers come on board with perceptions and working experiences from diverse endeavours and settings, which inform how they work as team members to achieve the research and team goals. The PI's working experience, for example, influences how they run the team's affairs, that is, whether they fully disclose all relevant information to the team, how they conduct meetings, how records are kept and how data are managed. Sometimes, the PI's views, inclinations and previous experience may lead to collaborations that are exploitative to the team members. This happens when the PI chiefly directs members of the team to do the work with very little direct input from the PI, yet, at the end of the day, all the reports will project and acknowledge the PI as having done most of the work. Among the research team members, there may also be some form of exploitation where one or more researchers tend to be more committed and experienced. In such circumstances, the committed and experienced members end up doing more work, serving as the quality control for the team. Such team members may also present much work in ways that exaggerate their role concerning authorship and reporting to funding institutions or agencies. The individual experiences of each team member can, therefore, bring about a cycle of exploitation.

The experiences of each team member can also bring out the qualities of other members that influence the process of collaboration. Inexperience may lead to the development of mentoring relationships, leadership and communication skills. For example, experienced researchers or collaborators may provide enormous guidance to the PI and the team on how to successfully carry out the collaboration. Inexperienced researchers may learn to lead a team by improving their communication skills, such as not talking over others but rather waiting for their turn and discontinuing the use of interrogative tones when commenting on other people's work, learning to use a subtle approach, which is more suggestive and supportive.

Understanding the circumstances under which each team member is operating is also important, as it influences the member's contribution to the group and helps team members be sensitive to the needs of each other. A typical scenario is the nature of support systems available to the four GSRs, whose accounts were used to develop this chapter. According to the GSRs, every lecturer in their institutions is entitled to teaching assistants who are fresh bachelor-level graduates serving the country for one year. This support, although greatly appreciated, is problematic and influences the smooth running of affairs for the four GSRs as they engage in ICR. The challenge is that, after months of painstaking training by the four GSRs, the teaching assistants complete their service and leave just when they have had a good grasp of the job. Having the same assistant for longer periods would serve these GSRs better, as the assistants would then be able to use the knowledge and skills they have developed on the job for the benefit of the GSRs. They would be able to take care of the mundane tasks of the GSRs, freeing up their minds and time to engage in ICR.

11.3.3 Geographical Locations of ICR Team Members

Working as a team from different parts of the world can be challenging, but technology makes it possible and even easier. The lack of physical proximity requires careful management so that the research and ICR team's objectives are attained in the best possible way. For example, if team members are in parts of the world where Internet connectivity and electrical power supply are unreliable, the ICR process will be affected negatively. High costs of Internet data will have the same impact. Consequently, regular attendance at team meetings and an uninterrupted flow of interaction during meetings will be a challenge for GSRs in such locations. The four GSRs always make provision for Internet data regardless of the cost, as they view access to the Internet as essential to their day-to-day work. However, they are all too familiar with situations where poor Internet connectivity or power supply interrupts their ICR meetings. This is especially disruptive to the team

when the one with the connectivity issue is playing a vital role in the meeting when the interruption occurs.

The four GSRs' solution to the connectivity issues has so far involved subscriptions to multiple telecommunication companies so that they can switch between networks when one fails. This is only possible in places where multiple telecommunication companies are present. In the case of devices running out of battery power, the GSRs simply disconnect from the team meeting until power is restored. Location, therefore, dictates the resources that are available for ICR, and all members, especially PIs, should create an environment that allows for open communication about members' resource advantages and limitations so that the team can find solutions that will drive the process to the advantage of all.

11.4 What Hinders the ICR Process? How are the Challenges Being Overcome?

Every venture has its unique challenges, and engaging in ICR is no exception (Geller, Patel, Niak, Goudar, Edlavitch, Kodkany & Derman 2004). Identifying these challenges is a step in the right direction in finding sustainable solutions. The challenges discussed here are common to at least three of the four GSRs. These include the knowledge gap and limited access to data analysis software, timelines, accountability, power relations in ICR and communication.

11.4.1 Knowledge Gap and Limited Access to Data Analysis Software

A researcher's educational background and exposure play a vital role in their ability to contribute to a research team constructively. Often, the four GSRs try to develop their research ideas around methods or tools that they are confident using. These are usually the methods and tools that they utilised during the master's or doctoral thesis work and not necessarily those they were taught during these programmes. The four GSRs learn about other analysis tools as they engage

in research work after a thesis. Three of the four GSRs were of the view that they needed to gain more knowledge and skills in data analysis, particularly using more efficient and modern software. Considering the level of technological advancement in the Global North, it is very likely that GNRs have had more opportunities to develop a range of knowledge and skills pertaining to data analysis. Unlike GNRs, three of the four GSRs usually join an ICR team with a need to upgrade their skills. It is the four GSRs' 'can do' spirit that makes the difference, but there are times when data analysis is a real hurdle to the successful and timely completion of an ICR study. Although these collaborations become a learning ground for some GSRs, they are not always wholly deemed commendable, as they may set back the study. For example, one team used STATA to analyse quantitative data, and the GSR was not familiar with the software. This meant that the GNR had to perform most of the analysis, while the GSR in question struggled to learn to use that software. Such occurrences can become a hurdle to the GSR and induce dissatisfaction on the part of the GNR, which often demotivates the four GSRs and weakens their desire to lead a funded ICR.

Limited access to data analysis software is partly due to limited access to a wide variety of software by several university instructors. The university where the four GSRs work does not have a culture of purchasing and making available software to improve the research capacity of its academics. The cost of doing so is also quite high for individual researchers. Hence, most academics try to conduct their analysis using very simple and easily accessible tools, such as Microsoft Word and Excel. This challenge of not being able to purchase licensed data analysis software such as NVivo, SPSS and STATA limits the opportunity for GSRs to learn how to use the software. This means that GSRs are likely to engage in analysis methods that they are not confident using when they join ICR teams.

To bridge the knowledge gap, the four GSRs have been striving to use all research opportunities to learn about unfamiliar analysis tools. Sometimes, they rely on colleagues

who have access to software to guide their learning. At other times, they learn through the opportunity created by the ICR when funds are allocated to purchase licences. Improved access to online journals and books is also helping the GSRs to keep abreast with research being conducted internationally. Some universities have subscribed to journal databases that allow staff and students easy access to articles in academic journals, although access to e-books remains a challenge to the GSRs.

11.4.2 Timelines

Does the GSR want to hear the clock ticking? Certainly not. They say 'time and tide wait for no man', and academics are very conscious of the importance of time and opportunities. Although they are conscious of seizing the opportunity to progress in their careers, this is sometimes daunting for the four GSRs. As much as research is time-bound, especially when it is funded by persons or organisations other than the researchers themselves, researchers do well to work within the stipulated time. However, there are factors that constrain project timelines, including processing delays encountered when seeking ethical clearance in Ghana, the commitment of research participants in making themselves easily accessible to the research team and difficulties in collecting data from people without compensation. These must be reflected in the work plan to make completion as feasible as possible.

Other factors, such as the competing social responsibilities that are particular to the Ghanaian culture and the implication of the GSRs' job prescription (particularly where the researcher's university runs different streams of programmes such as distance and sandwich modes of education) also present various challenges. The four GSRs' university has a mainstream programme, which requires that the GSRs carry out responsibilities similar to those of all academic researchers in any university. For example, every lecturer's duties are clustered into three. First is the teaching responsibility, which entails supervising the projects of bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree students

or a combination of these depending on their rank and the actual teaching of a minimum number of 12 credit hours per week, which can be broken down into a minimum of four courses worth three credit hours each. Second is the research responsibility and duty to serve the community. The university concerned here has different streams, and three of the four lecturers are with the College of Education Studies responsible for these additional streams. The number of different streams of programmes that exist multiplies their teaching role in the regular programme. This will typically involve setting questions with the scheme, facilitating workshops, coordinating marking sessions and embarking on the supervision of teaching or monitoring of examination sessions. They are likely to carry out a semester's supervision of students practising how to teach in micro settings on the university campus and, in the subsequent semester, a minimum of two weeks of supervision of the student-teacher field experience in different zones of the various regions in the country. The workload of three of these four academic researchers is therefore unique and sometimes hinders their participation in ICR.

Extending work to go beyond the official time is a regular occurrence, but it negatively affects the health of the GSRs and limits their time for family and society. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the average Ghanaian academic who is passionate about their work has not cultivated the habit of pulling the brakes to exercise, relax and just have leisure or recreational time to create a good balance or help them rejuvenate. Furthermore, Ghanaians are generally known to be communal in their way of living, taking an interest in the nurturance and care of relatives outside their nuclear family. The four alluded that any person who is in academia, especially at the university level, is viewed as a beacon of society. Hence, many people bring their social and economic issues to such people. The same is true regarding their engagement in traditional and religious activities in society. Academics are encouraged to share their time, knowledge, energy and other resources with their traditional and religious groups for the

public good. Although service to humanity is laudable, it affects one's ability to engage in rigorous research.

These are the main time-related factors that are affecting the four GSRs in meeting ICR deadlines. These limitations tend to induce some fear of tarnishing one's image should the four GSRs engage in ICR and not be able to meet the deadlines. To address this, the four academics usually sacrifice social time for work, leaving their family and friends feeling neglected. In other words, their solution to this challenge creates another problem of self-isolation. As the four have observed, this affects academics when they retire, as people, including families, tend to also neglect them in their old age. This leaves them ageing faster than they would probably have, had they been able to have a proper work-life balance. The four GSRs are very conscious of this occurrence at their university. Consequently, they are trying to achieve a good work-life balance by cultivating the habit of declining some university-related outreach work and some collaborative research work where necessary and possible, only taking up work they can manage without sacrificing family and friends. Therefore, ICR teams must appreciate the importance of sensitive and effective cross-cultural management.

11.4.3 Communication Challenges

Before the pandemic, research collaboration between the four GSRs and GNRs was limited to emails and virtual meetings, such as Skype, WebEx and WhatsApp communications. The four GSRs are of the view that daily email checks and instant responses are not yet a habit of a considerable number of focused and ambitious academic researchers in the Global South. Therefore, it is challenging to have email as the primary means of communication, as emails are either seen, read and responded to too late, or are missed altogether in the pile. Another challenge posed using email as the primary means of collaboration is the limited opportunity offered to the GSR to communicate with the GNR. One researcher shared her experience thus:

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There has been an instance where I engaged in collaboration without being fully confident of the write-ups I was submitting to the group because I did not fully understand the nature of the research we were doing. I used the same medium, email, to get further clarity, but I am of the view that I would have done a better job if there were at least fortnightly online meetings to discuss the content and progress of the research.

All four GSRs agreed that email time attracts more time and energy than it deserves. They pointed out that they were usually mindful of the cultural differences that exist to communicate in a manner that allows their identity to shine through and at the same time maintain high professionalism in the emails. Another researcher recounted her experience as follows:

For instance, there was a request for collaboration from a referral made by one of my previous international research collaborators, where my role was supposed to be chiefly data collection. The email itself came late with respect to the deadline for bidding for the grant, and the collaborators wanted a quick nod from me. After thorough scrutiny of their email to ensure that I fully understood their request, I drafted my response carefully, ensuring that my enquiries were perceived as nothing short of seeking further clarification about the research and the proposed timeframes. Interestingly, my email ended the communication on this particular proposed collaboration. I devoted time and energy to constantly checking my inbox, spam, or trash to ensure that I hadn't missed the e-mail, and nothing ever popped up.

This incident makes one wonder whether the non-response was because of the enquiries made or other reasons unknown to the GSR. In either case, a reply to the enquiries would have been in order. This reflects what sometimes happens in ICR, and it must be noted that communication in ICR needs to

come from all parties (Bagshaw, Lepp & Zorn 2007; Wagner, Whetsell & Mukherjee 2019).

Another challenge for the four GSRs regarding communication in ICR is unreliable Internet connectivity in some parts of Ghana. On the campus, Internet reception is generally good, but it is not always so when working from home or during outreach programmes. This challenge, coupled with the GSRs' email management habit, inhibits smooth communication within the team.

One way to address this communication issue is to help students cultivate email management habits at the secondary education level. Assignments, reports and assessments can be done through email so that learners have several opportunities at different levels of their education to write, read and respond to official emails timeously. Effecting this change will help learners to avoid encountering this challenge when they become employed. In terms of managing emails in an ICR team, it must be noted that varying time zones and work schedules are a major barrier to establishing permanent structures that will always work smoothly for all members. The structures must, therefore, be sufficiently flexible.

11.4.4 Power Relations and Accountability in ICR

The issue of power relations is discussed in light of the origin of research ideas and funds in the case of funded research. Whether the team is international or local, to a considerable extent, the voice of the PI steers the research. This is understandably so, as the PI begins with an idea or aim that they sell to their team to work on. Sometimes, when a researcher communicates a research idea or topic to the team, the team works together to conceptualise the entire research. Hence, power is shared among all researchers, whether it is funded or not, because all members participate right from the beginning. At other times, when the proposal has already been written by the PI, who has a clear idea of the objectives and methods that they want to use to achieve the objectives, the objectives and methods may or may not be

modified by the team. Where there is no opportunity for team members to make suggestions for consideration and possible modification of the research, the PI, rather than the rest of the team, holds much of the power. Where the research is funded, the requirements or conditions of the funding agency ascribe power to the funding agency. ICR, therefore, has the potential to marginalise the position of GSRs in relation to the entire team and could potentially introduce limited opportunities for GSRs to protect their interests (Tikly 2019). Two of the four GSRs identify a couple of relations that are exploitative and mimic colonisation in the research arena.

When it comes to collaboration that has got to do with looking for people from our side to engage in research in our context and there's some money somewhere which is coming from the West, then, to a large extent, one has to adapt their thoughts to suit what they are looking for, regardless of the extent to which you wish to deviate or bring out issues in a certain direction. (Male researcher)

The PI is very strict on results; she keeps hammering on how result-oriented she is, and thus, the need for everyone to produce results. The research is ongoing, and there is weekly accountability in its true sense, with the PI reiterating the need for results at every meeting. It is unfortunate. (Female researcher)

The kind of ICR that spells out the role of the GSR in a way that suggests that the GSR is in the employ of their collaborators is a challenge. It communicates a power structure that places the GSR in a subservient role. When collaborations take this form, the researchers' sense of ownership becomes weak. Usually, the researcher feels a strong sense of ownership about the specific role they played and not the entire research. In the experience of the four GSRs, the power structure within a team is not always overt from the onset of the collaboration. Therefore, they usually manage those situations by separating power relations from the actual work to get the work done. This, however, becomes a lesson to the GSR, who may decide against subsequent collaborations with that particular team

because of the tendency of the relation to turn into one that works in favour of modern-day colonisation through ICR.

11.5 Why Continue to Engage in ICR?

ICR has contributed to the development of GSRs' careers in several ways that have benefitted fellow academics, students, institutions and the nation at large. Increasingly, the world is feeling like one community when it comes to scientific knowledge production. Therefore, the time is ripe for researchers to engage with each other regardless of their geographical contexts. This section sheds light on the benefits that the four GSRs derive from ICR, especially for the GSRs who find themselves in limited-resourced environments.

11.5.1 Engage to Publish and Flourish

As stated earlier in this chapter, one of the main duties of an academic in a university is to conduct research and share findings through publications and conferences. The accomplishment of this duty is enhanced by one's engagement in ICR. This is because of the collective effort by all to successfully complete the research. ICR helps GSRs to publish in reputable journals, thus increasing their visibility globally, as recounted by one of the GSRs:

I think that ICR pushes us high. At the end of the day, it pushes us to know our content very well. Most of these projects are very demanding, but the output is often published in very good journals. Publications in these journals demand that the output be rich, and I think this is an advantage. So, it pushes you beyond your capability, and at the end of the day, it increases your visibility.
(Male researcher)

11.5.2 Engage to Network and Acquire Knowledge

ICR provides a platform for researchers from different parts of the world to work together as a team (Geller et al. 2004). Depending on how each research collaboration transpires, one

may form lifelong networks that will enrich one's academic career. This kind of networking is attractive to the GSR, as the system of 'who knows you' is one that drives many subsequent engagements. Researchers come on board with unique sets of experiences that can help shape their fellow researchers' knowledge and skills. The diverse backgrounds of team members present something new to learn during collaboration. The use of new software by the ICR team is an attractive element that motivates the four GSRs to continue engaging in ICR as it grants them learning opportunities that may not be available to their colleagues who do not engage in ICR. The opportunity to learn through the networks that ICR presents is thus highly valued by these GSRs. One GSR summarises this as follows:

It has helped me improve my analytical and critical skills, as well as my oral and written skills. My quantitative and qualitative data analysis skills have also improved since I have played the role of field and data manager in many of the research projects. (Male researcher)

11.5.3 Engage to Establish a Healthy Mentorship

The approach or working relationship created between researchers is a key element that drives the four GSRs' future engagement in ICR. Like any human relationship, healthy relationships have a higher chance of succeeding than unhealthy ones. It is the opinion of the four GSRs that researchers in the Global South who are relatively new to ICR usually appreciate the mentor-mentee kind of collaboration that has the potential to help them become internationally recognised. One of the four GSRs sheds light on this:

My impression of the first research collaboration request was nothing short of positive. I became acquainted with a GSR in the same field of study, with similar research interests. She had a great personality; she was well advanced in her career, very passionate about education in her field, professional in her dealings with me, and very

encouraging of my work. These attributes made it easy for me to envisage fruitful and sustainable collaboration with her. Additionally, the relationship also felt like a mentor-mentee relationship, so, the first couple of works we conducted together were mostly steered by her. The GNR has to understand that the GSR who gets involved in a research collaboration that feels like a mentor-mentee relationship expects guidance and growth that will spear them on to be able to lead research projects they conceive. I am happy to point out that we are heading in that exact trajectory. Currently, we have conceived a research project borne out of an idea I shared with her, and we have also secured funds from her country to support the project. Who would want to back out from such a healthy collaboration? (Female researcher)

The mentor-mentee relationship in ICR is usually, in the experience of the four GSRs, applicable and highly valued in situations where the GSR is an early career researcher and the GNR is an experienced researcher. The four GSRs were unable to point to experiences or known cases where early-career GNRs sought to establish that kind of relationship with experienced GSRs. In other words, the dynamics are not the same when the roles are reversed.

11.6 What Should ICR Teams Include in Their Studies?

Researchers are generally involved in research that investigates or explores topics that are of interest to them; thus, it is not realistic to push forward one's research ideas in collaborative research that is initiated by someone else. It is when there is continuity after the initial collaboration that opportunities are offered naturally to members of the team to share their research ideas, and the team will proceed if it buys into those ideas. The four GSRs are mostly limited in researching issues affecting their specific contexts or in advancing developments in their fields of specialisation mainly due to the cost of conducting robust research.

Generally, the four GSRs indicated that they have limited access to funds to conduct robust research projects. Their efforts to secure external funds often do not yield favourable responses. They believe that this is partly due to the issues that they seek to investigate. The four are of the view that most local issues that are important to them may not be perceived as important to GNRs or fund providers. Hence, teaming up with international researchers from the Global North to seek funds for research becomes difficult.

The funders' view of pertinent issues worthy of support may therefore result in the four GSRs having their research proposals and applications for grants shelved often. Some contextual issues that are viewed as having the potential to improve the lives of people in the Global South include polygamy and traditional family systems. Unfortunately, these are not on the global radar for discussion by influential bodies such as the United Nations, OECD, World Bank and UNICEF as often as the four GSRs believe they should. For example, research in Africa has shown that polygamy can help reduce poverty and distribute wealth in African society more evenly than monogamy, which has been accepted in most African societies (Ahinkorah 2021; Bisong & Orji 2020) because of the social dimension of globalisation. Another contextual issue that the four GSRs agree would benefit people in the Global South is the scientific investigation of using local foods herbs, and spices to manage health problems, such as diabetes, hypertension, post-pregnancy nutrition and COVID-19. The laboratory equipment needed to conduct some of these experimental studies is expensive and difficult for individual researchers to acquire and use. The cost of conducting robust research work, especially experimental research, is therefore a major determinant of the extent to which the sociocultural perspectives of researchers in the Global South will be heard globally.

11.7 Conclusion

Diversity makes research collaboration complex, but it also provides valuable experiences. It is essential to hear the voices of GSRs to inform subsequent research collaborations and reshape existing ones. Prospective collaborations should find creative means of managing the challenges discussed in this chapter and new ones that may arise in specific contexts. Given the challenge of limited funds, GSRs should team up within or across institutions to purchase licences and the equipment needed to carry out research.

The GNR should not view the Global South as a mere fertile ground for research but as an avenue to help in the capacity building of academic researchers in the Global South. Likewise, GSRs with similar experiences should reposition themselves to rigorously explore or create local funding and invite GNRs for collaborative work. Therefore, there is a need for collective efforts to find creative means to manage the challenges that come with ICR, as effective ICR can help to positively advance the processes of decolonisation, such as exposing and challenging power relations and becoming more inclusive of a wider range of stakeholder voices.

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