International Higher Education Partnerships in Ethiopia:

A Comparative Study of two Partnership Programs

By

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that this dissertation, entitled "International Higher Education Partnership in Ethiopia: A Comparative Study of two Partnership Programs", is my original work and has not been presented for a degree to any other university, and that all sources of materials used in the dissertation have been dully acknowledged.

Signature_____

Date_____

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This dissertation has been submitted for examination with our approval as supervisors.

Supervisors' Name: Petra Angervall (Prof.) Sign:_____ date: _____

Teshome Nekatibeb (Assoc. Prof.) Sign_____ Date_____

Abstract

This study explores the intention underlying the North-South higher education partnerships and how these partnerships have been formed and functioning. The study focused on the experiences of local stakeholders of the partnerships between universities in Ethiopia and Norway. Two cases (Language and Health partnership programs) were selected and examined to compare the two cases to find out the major rationales, map out the partnership development process, and examine the positioning of partners. Concepts drawn from 'internationalization rationale' and 'mutuality lens' were used as theoretical guides the study. The study employed a qualitative comparative case study design and used interviews and document analysis as methods for data collection. Staff and students were selected as participants, using purposeful and snowball sampling techniques. The study showed that in Ethiopia, there is a loosely-defined policy space that underlies international higher education partnerships, at both national and institutional levels. The study indicated that although the two case universities of Ethiopia have followed an open approach to respond to various partnership possibilities, they have often accepted partnerships with the Northern partners. In both cases, factors related to academic growth and development, resource dilemmas and opportunities, societal development, and gender equity were found to be the major rationales driving the local partners to establish international partnerships. Of these, the interest for academic growth and development was recognized as the most dominant rationale. The study also mapped out important themes related to partnership development, starting from initiation, through to building and from operation to monitoring and evaluation. The study also indicated that at various stages of the partnership development, the two cases have manifested aspects of mutuality in terms of equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity as well as aspects that counter to mutuality. The study also showed that comparatively, the Health partnership exhibited more asymmetrical patterns of relation, in favor of the foreign partner. Comparison of the two cases also revealed that the partnership development has been shaped not only by structural obstacles, manifested as inequalities in academic and research capacity, resource scarcities in the local partner, and the criteria and interest of funding bodies, but also by other contextual factors embedded in a particular partnership program, including pathways, modalities, activities, and individuals involved. This, generally, suggests the need for more thoughtful discussions between partners on both structural and contextual variables as ways towards balancing the positioning of partners.

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Acronyms and Abbreviation

CCEPS:	Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies
CIDA:	Canada's International Development Agency
DF:	Norwegian Development Fund
DT:	Dependency theory
EFDRE:	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
ESDP-IV:	Fourth Education Sector Development Plan
ESDP-V:	Fifth Education Sector Development Plan
EU1:	Ethiopian university-1
EU2:	Ethiopian university-2
GTP II:	Second Growth and Transformation Plan
HEIs:	Higher education institutions
HEP:	Higher Education Proclamation
HERQA:	Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency
HESC:	Higher Education Strategic Center
MOE:	EFDRE Ministry of Education
MoST:	Ministry of Science and Technology
MoUs:	Memoranda of Understandings
MPhil:	Masters of Philosophy
NOMA:	Norad's Program for Master Studies
NORAD:	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NORHED:	Norwegian Program for Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research for Development
NU:	Norwegian university
NUFU:	Norwegian Program for Development, Research, and Education
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SIDA:	Sweden's International Development Agency
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa
VLIR-OUS	Flemish Interuniversity Council
WST:	World system theory

Chapter One
Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Following the recognition given to higher education for poverty reduction and enhancing national development in the late 1990s, African higher education has reignited interest globally, and that development partners have restarted their support to the sector through partnerships (Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Teferra, 2014). Consequently, North-South[1] Higher Education partnership has become increasingly seen as a means of revitalizing African higher education through human and institutional capacity building (Kot, 2015; Teferra, 2014). In line with this development, *partnership initiatives*[2] involving African higher education has been proliferated in the subsequent last two decades (Kot, 2014; Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Teferra, 2011, 2014). This shows that the formation of higher education partnerships, especially between African higher education institutions (HEIs) and their Northern counterparts, has become an ever increasing trend and is likely to continue further the same way (Kot, 2015).

Ethiopia has not been an exception to such a trend. Many Ethiopian HEIs have engaged in partnerships with their Northern counterparts in the recent years following the expansion of the North-South higher education partnerships,(Semela & Ayalew, 2008; Teferra, 2014). These partnerships are often supported by the development partners including embassies and bilateral and multilateral agencies. For example, embassies and development agencies of Sweden, Norway, USA, UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium are among the most important players that have provided financial and technical supports to higher education partnerships in Ethiopia (Ibid). Hence, this study focuses on examining international partnership experiences of Ethiopian higher education stakeholders using two partnership programs formed between universities of Ethiopia and Norway.

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1 The global North and South denotes the socio-economic and political divide, which were often referred to by developed and developing countries respectively.

2 Examples of partnership initiatives: Africa-US HE initiative, Africa-Nordic partnerships, Scandinavian partnerships, European Union-African Union partnership in HE, Southern Canada-Africa HE partnership, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Austrian Partnership Program in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR), University Commission for Cooperation with Developing countries (CUD, Belgium), Irish-African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (IAP), Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in HE (NUFFIC), and the United Kingdom's Education Partnerships for Africa (EPA) (Kot, 2015;Teferra, 2014).

Norway has for a long-time committed funds for supporting higher education in Africa, including Ethiopia, even in the time when "support for African higher education was out of favor"(Teferra, 2011. p.3). NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) has been a longstanding partner in providing financial support to Ethiopian HEIs and research organizations (Semela & Ayalew, 2008). Norwegian and Ethiopian HEIs have been engaged in partnership through different initiatives with NORAD's funding: NOMA (Norad's Program for Master Studies), NUFU (Norwegian Program for Development, Research, and Education), and recently through the NORHED (Norwegian Program for Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research for Development). The NORHED partnership program in Ethiopia, which involves the Norwegian and Ethiopian HEIs, intends to build higher education and research capacities in Ethiopia and thereby enhance sustainable conditions for societal development and poverty reduction.

Many scholars argue that North-South partnerships involving African higher education have been situated within the framework of historical, political, and economic relations of domination and subordination since Africa's independence in the 1960s (see Altbach, 2007; Ishengoma, 2016; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Teferra, 2008). In the post-independence histories, African higher education has faced multifaceted constraints, including lack of resources and capacities even for meeting basic demands of higher education let alone supporting advanced research and training. This has predicated sustained relations of African HEIs with their Northern colonial counterparts for support in wide areas including higher education (Teferra, 2008). Thus, African higher education has remained reliant on financial resources and human capital (professors and administrators) of the former colonial powers. As a result, their structure, organization, and culture remained heavily rooted in Western epistemologies (Andriansen & Madsen, 2019; Arnove, 2009; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). Hence, the Northern colonizers constructed and molded African higher education in such a way that African institution and their intellectuals continue to operate within the colonists' general sphere of influence (Teferra, 2008).

This relation, often informed by the dominant capitalism development discourse, has stepped into development aid programs (Samoff & Carrol, 2004). The development aid program, however, has been criticized since it has been constructed and controlled by international donors and agencies of, predominantly, former colonials, with the marginal role of the African side (Ishengoma, 2016; Moyo, 2010; Teferra, 2014). In most cases aid programs are often viewed as a means of external

imposition and prescription on to the recipients, in favor of the funding bodies and tend to distort the recipients' priorities, leading them to demonstrate compliance with the conditions and thus remain dependent (Moyo, 2010).

The relationship in aid program is often described by economic, political, and social inequalities and dependencies between post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the dominant national powers (Europe and North America) (Altbach, 2007; Arnove, 2009; Moyo, 2010). This aid relationship, according to Altbach (2007) and Arnove (2009), has sustained colonial relations in a more nuanced form. That is, the 'colonizer-colonized' relation has continued as 'core-periphery' relation, where the former colonies are situated at the periphery while the dominant national powers at the core, dictating the relations (Ibid). This approach of indirect control (neo-colonialism) has been extended and maintained through export and acculturation of ideologies of the cores that support their economic and political goals, establishing cadres of local elites within peripheries who serve the interests of the core actors, and constructing 'legitimate' knowledge and educational reforms to be applied in the peripheral institutions (Altbach, 2007; Arnove, 2009; Hayhoe, 1989; Leng, 2015; Weinrib, 2012).

Based on the above arguments, North-South partnerships involving African higher education can be situated within these broader-historical relations of economic, political, epistemological domination and exploitation of the region, both during the colonial and post-colonial era (Weinrib, 2012); so that the possibility for the mutual-relationship can be questioned at its fundamental level. This perspective stresses on asymmetrical aspects due to structural inequalities and historical patterns of dominance, having the propensity of benefiting the North and handicapping leading the South to remain dependent while undermining the positive i.e. growth expected (e.g., improvement in capacity, knowledge, publications) that may benefit both parties as regards the collaboration.

However, this picture can also be understood as a more complex phenomenon, as in the case of partnerships between universities of Ethiopia and Norway. Ethiopia and Norway had no colonial ties, and that their historical-political contexts differ from the one sketched above. Unlike other African countries, Ethiopian higher education had never been under the complete domination of colonizers. Ethiopia had resisted "the forceful imposition of colonial culture, language, and curriculum" (Semela & Ayalew, 2008, p.163), compared to many African countries, and the

Western influence in its education system had been relatively limited. Of course, it had adopted the Western (esp. UK and USA) education system voluntarily not through direct colonial intervention (Teferra, 2014; Zewde, 2002). Moreover, in spite of the limited role of the global South in knowledge production in general and in Ethiopia in particular, it is argued (Leng, 2015; Wienrib, 2012) that there were also paths, although limited, open for addressing local issues through research cooperation programs. Instances of such programs were supported by bilateral agencies of Norway, Sweden, and Canada (Ibid). Leng (2015) and Weinrib (2012) state that the development cooperation programs supported by NORAD, and SIDA and CIDA have been operating to satisfy local needs and capacities. Nossum (2016) and Teferra (2016) also state that Norway, by employing NORHED program, appears committed to providing the Southern institutions with the opportunity to lead and manage the North-South partnership programs. In this sense, the neocolonialism and dependency embedded asymmetric framework may not exactly fit with partnerships involving the Norwegian and Ethiopian HEIs.

In short, asymmetries between the Northern and the Southern HEIs have been frequently cited as the principal obstacles towards nurturing mutual and genuine relationships for partners to view each other as interdependent actors (Altbach, 2007; Bradley, 2007; Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). Yet, this doesn't mean that the North-South academic relationship is solely shaped by structural positions, or that such partnerships have no contribution to the Southern partners (Weinrib, 2012). While it is argued, for instance by Arnove (2009) and Wallerstein (1976), that the world system—operating within a particular economic, social, and political structure—reproduces asymmetries across different social and economic organizations, others (e.g. Giddens,1990; Herath, 2008; Scott, 2000) argue that the world order is not fixed but fluid and dynamic that may be transformed into new configurations. A change of a bipolar global system to a multi-polar system signals such possibilities. Within this context, this study tries to examine and comparatively understand the patterns of relations in the partnership with the prospect of both symmetrical and asymmetrical aspects.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Partnership as a concept often presupposes a positive and collaborative relationship based on mutually reached agreements from which all parties in the partnership gain benefits. It lies on the

premise of mutual influence, co-ownership, joint decisions, mutual respect, trust, and mutual benefits. It is argued that through real negotiation and consensus, partners can form complementary relationships where they can 'give and take' without one dominating the other (see Helms, 2015; Jamil & Haque, 2016; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Leng, 2015; Wanni, Hinz, & Day, 2010). Partnerships are seen as schemes that can serve a common good. On the basis of these premises, many Southern HEIs, including Ethiopian HEIs, have established partnerships with their Northern counterparts (*see section 5.2*).

However, the degree to which such North-South higher education partnership reflects a pattern of relationships with equitable participation and mutual influence remains uncertain. With a risk of simplification, broadly, two images, positive and negative, prevail in the literature on North-South higher education partnerships. While there are arguments on the prospects that North-South higher education partnership can manifest symmetry and mutual influence (Jamil & Haque, 2016; Koehn &Obamba, 2014; Leng, 2013, 2015; Marginson & Wende, 2006; Mwangi, 2017; Nossum, 2016), an array of literature also report inherent power asymmetries that obstruct nurturing of mutual partnerships (e.g., Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Barnes & Brown, 2011; Gore, 2008; Gutierrez, 2008; Ishengoma, 2016; Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). The former argument is overly optimistic about the partnership premises and focuses on the benefits, depicting international partnerships as venues for higher education development. Studies in this category report partnership programs in which the Southern partners have substantially participated in the partnership development as well as in the decision-making.

Whereas studies in the latter category are skeptical of the partnership premises and tend to show a gloomier picture. These studies view the North-South partnership as a more subtle form of power imposition and a means of legitimatizing the role of development agencies of the North in directing the relationship. For example, Obamba and Mwema (2009) state, the discourse of North-South partnership "…seem to conceal the underlying dynamics of power and resource inequalities amongst partners… misleading to the impression that partnerships are necessarily neutral and mutually beneficial…" (p.356). Altbach (2007) contends that North-South higher education partnerships established on the basis of unequal exchange in resources and capacities have the potential risk of undermining the contribution from the South and promote a world academic monoculture (see also Robertson & Verger, 2008). Other scholars (e.g. Boshoff, 2009; Ishengoma,

2016; Menashy, 2018; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Teferra, 2014) also argue that such partnership programs have been operated within a neocolonial structure, which has perpetuated resource dependence of African universities on the global North and promoted dominance of Northern interests which distort local agendas. Based on these studies, there exist an inherent underlying inequalities of power dynamics and resources between the Northern and the Southern partners leading the Northern partners influence in initiating, controlling, and dictating the relationship.

Notwithstanding the inherent asymmetries, one can argue that partners can open possibilities to minimize the risk of losing the Southern partners' influence over the partnership through real negotiation and consensus, and so that the partnership can be beneficial to both parties (Gutierrez, 2008; Jamil & Haque, 2016; Koehn & Obamba, 2014). Nossum (2016) and Teferra (2016) contend that there are practical promises that progressive trends are emerging in the North-South partnerships in which some countries like Norway and Sweden encourage the Southern higher education to take the driver's seat in leading and managing partnerships. Helms (2015) and Wanni et al. (2010) suggest that giving emphasis to mutual respect and recognition of the contributions of each partner would benefits the partnering groups and the partnership could promote fair play in the partnership. Based on the arguments of these scholars, although power relations are there, what matters most is how actors from both sides make deals and negotiations within the existing power relations that would ascertain co-ownership and mutual benefits (Ibid). Such an argument in favor of the possibilities of mutuality seems to appear over-optimistic on the partnership premises and tends to downplay the role of issues of structural power in shaping the relationships.

On the other hand, studies skeptical of the partnership premises also tend to overestimate the hegemony of political and economic structures in shaping the partnership dynamics. These studies have largely been framed within dependency, world system, neo-colonial, and center-periphery lenses that tend to see economic and political factors as the core issues, while overlooking the local context of the Southern partners. Such studies tend to preconceive partners' economic, political, and socio-cultural positions, and that they tend to support results claiming asymmetric patterns of relationships in the partnership, in favor of the North.

However, as Koehn and Obamba (2014) argue, there are opportunities and prospects for the North-South higher education partnerships to be, at least, 'near-symmetrical'. It should also be noted that

international higher education partnerships do not necessarily be formed and operated in the same way, and exhibit the same patterns of relationships. They may vary from asymmetrical patterns of relationship—unidirectional whereby one partner controls, directs and dictates the relationship more than the other—to symmetrical—whereby both partners can work in a relationship which is mutually beneficial, mutually owned, and socially just (Johnson & Wilson, 2006; Robertson & Verger, 2008). In this regard, Koehn (2014) contends that North-South higher education partnerships "can be predominantly asymmetrical or symmetrical" (p.56). For example, while asymmetry was exhibited in a research partnership between Jimma University of Ethiopia and Flemish Inter-university Council (VLIR-OUS), with a tilt in balance of power in favor of the Northern partner in decision-making, reporting, and allocation of tasks and responsibilities. The partnership practice between Moi University of Kenya and VLIR-OUS reflected many aspects of symmetry (Koehn &Obamba, 2014). This calls for the need for understand the partnership development process and the positioning of partners as complex and sensitive to the contexts and situated practices in view of the possibilities of both mutuality as well as imbalances that may obstruct the relationships.

It is also claimed that the boundaries of a partnership—what is possible within the partnership—are shaped by the relative positioning of partners, in a way a partner in better position tends to take a leading role in directing the relationship (Waerdt, 2008; Wanni et al., 2010). Thus, exploring the dynamics of symmetry/asymmetry or searching for the whereabouts of power in the partnership is helpful—or even necessary—in order to understand why a particular partnership takes the form that they do—and their likely consequences (Robertson & Verger, 2008).

Yet, there are a few studies in partnership power relations and positioning of partners from the perspectives of stakeholders of the Southern partners. Many of these studies are made based on the Northern perspectives and by the Northern scholars (Bradley, 2007; Court, 2008; Koehn & Obamaba, 2014; Kot, 2015; Obamba &Mwema, 2009). While, studies based on the Southern viewpoints, regarding how far the Southern voices are included in an open dialogue and negotiation to build and maintain a partnership that can work within and challenge the tenacious asymmetries of power, are scarce, which calls for an African-centered perspectives (Ibid). This underlines the importance of studying the experiences and perceptions of African higher education stakeholders, their rationales and how far their needs are entertained, and their positions, issues of

symmetry/asymmetry, in the partnership. These are vital in shaping the overall partnership dynamics and the attendant success.

Particularly, although many HEIs of Ethiopia have engaged in partnerships with their Northern counterparts, including the Norwegian HEIs, they still seek to further expand their higher education partnerships. Nevertheless, there are a few studies, aside from agency-sponsored evaluation reports on the dynamism of the partnerships (e.g., Jávorka, Allinson, Varnai, & Wain, 2018; Pain, Silkin, & Carneiro, 2018). Even among the available studies, for example, Francisconi, Grunder, and Mulloy (2011) focuses on the status of international partnerships in Ethiopian universities and Busse et al. (2013) deal with the effectiveness of a particular partnership, and Butterfield, Tafesse, and Moxley (2016) map the processes and outcomes of partnerships focusing on institutional capacity building. The partnership experiences of Ethiopian HEIs pertaining to their rationales and how the partnerships are formed and maintained are not widely researched, especially from the local stakeholders' point of view. Hence, examining the partnership from the point of view of Ethiopian higher education stakeholders is crucial for understanding the partnership development process that entertains and ensures the local ownership—which has frequently been claimed undervalued. What is more, "though many Ethiopian universities have engaged in partnerships…they are not as successful as they would like to be in building and sustaining effective partnerships" (Francisconi et al., 2011, p.10). One of the challenges seems to be lack of experience and clear strategy on how to establish and maintain the partnership (Ibid). This calls for a systematic inquiry of the partnership experiences focusing on cases for illuminating practical as well as theoretical lessons relevant to better understand when and under what conditions partnerships foster desirable and symmetrical patterns of relationship (Coburn & Penuel, 2016); so that other institutions can learn from and initiate, build, and maintain productive partnerships.

Thus, this study mainly focuses on the experiences of Southern partners in North-South higher education partnerships involving two Ethiopian universities (hereafter referred to by the pseudonyms EU1 and EU2) and one Norwegian university (referred to as NU). Particularly, the study focuses on two cases of partnership programs (EU1-NU on Language and EU2-NU on Health areas) to understand how these partnerships are formed and functioning and the patterns of

relationships exhibited vis-à-vis issues of mutuality. Specifically, it attempts to answers the following basic research questions.

1. What are the major rationales behind the establishment of these international partnerships?
2. How are the partnership programs formed and become functional?
3. How do the local partners explain their experiences and positioning in international partnership programs?
4. How similar and different are the two partnership cases with regard to partnership rationales, development, and overall patterns of relationships shaping the partnership dynamics?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study aims to investigate and expand understanding of how international partnerships between universities of Ethiopia and Norway are developed and maintained. Particularly, two partnership programs (referred to by Language and Health partnerships) are taken as examples, in order to get deeper insights into the issues in each case and then to compare them to see if and why they differ from each other.

Specifically, this study tries to:

- identify rationales of the local partners for establishing the partnerships with their Northern partners;
- explore and map out the practices of partnership formation and development;
- explore the patterns of relationships in light of the positioning of partners in the partnership;
- Compare the two partnership cases with regard to rationales, development processes, and patterns of relationship shaping the partnership dynamics.

1.4. Scope of the Study

HEIs in Ethiopia have been engaged in many partnership programs with institutions in different countries of the North. This study was limited to international higher education partnership experiences of two Ethiopian universities (EU1 and EU2) with their Norwegian partner (NU) with a particular reference to the two cases of partnership programs (named Language and Health partnerships). The study focused on partnership rationales, how they were formed and maintained,

the positioning of the partners in the partnerships, and how these contribute to shaping the overall relation patterns, and then compares the two cases.

It employed a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design. Given that this study was delimited to the experiences of stakeholders of the two selected Ethiopian universities, the major data sources are staff (administrators and instructors/researchers) and graduate students of the local partners as well as relevant documents. Purposeful and snowball sampling techniques were used to select study participants, i.e., staff and graduate students who had participated in the partnership programs in the two universities (EU1 and EU2). Data from staff and students were collected through semi-structured interviews, and data from the relevant documents were secured through document analysis.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Although the literature on international higher education partnerships is abundant, it is clear that most of the researches represent the Northern institutions' perspectives (Court, 2008; Koehn &Obamba, 2014; Kot, 2015; Wilson, 2012). As this study focuses on the experiences of stakeholders of the Southern partners on issues of partnerships, it serves as a complement to the current literature. Besides, since the study focused on Ethiopian higher education stakeholders (staff and students), it fits the purpose given that "…Africa-oriented partnership projects are increasingly being funded" (Wilson, 2012, p.9) and that it would provide valuable insights for international funding agencies and for Northern partnering institutions.

Moreover, the findings of this study are supposed to contribute for understanding the major rationales of Ethiopian higher education stakeholders that underlie the formation of international partnerships and the intricacies related to issues of power relation in the partnership. These eventually may assist stakeholders of HEIs, especially in Ethiopia, who are interested in engaging in such practices when they plan their strategies for initiating, building, and maintaining international partnerships. It could also provide policy and decision-makers with valuable insights on the development of partnerships to fine-tune policies and strategies regarding international higher education partnerships.

This study, without ignoring structural conception of international partnerships, adds the contextual-embedded aspects for better understanding the complex and dynamic nature of the partnership and tries to show the possibilities of mitigating the problematic consequences of structural asymmetries. It provides implications of the findings, as intertwined with the partnership perspective, particularly for advancing symmetrical or near-symmetrical relations in the partnership. For example, through comparative analysis, the findings suggest valuable lessons to be considered in regards to approaches, modalities, and activities in the partnership that encourage the participatory role of the Southern partner. The findings of the study can also be used as a starting point for further study in the area by other academics and researchers.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

This study was limited, mainly, to the experiences and views of the local partner (Ethiopian stakeholders) in international higher education partnership programs. It did not include the views of the Norwegian partners, and that it is not possible to know if the Norwegian participants in these programs have different views from those of their Ethiopian colleagues. Studies that include the experiences and views of participants from both parties may result in a different finding. Another limitation of this study was that it focused on the process of partnership development, with little attention to the outcomes. Studies that included all the input, process, and outcome aspects could have resulted in a more comprehensive picture of the partnership.

Scheduling and getting many of the interviewees as per the schedule was a major challenge. Because of their tight schedules, it was difficult to make an appointment with some of the participants. They often tell me to call them again the next day, a weak after, with no specified time. As a result, my interview schedule became a bit disorganized. At times, I had four individual interviews per day, while at other times I ended up interviewing no one or only one person within a whole week. As a researcher who needs their cooperation, I had to be flexible with their timing and had to knock at their doors again and again until I get the time that suits them. In this regard, I found my knowledge of the local context very helpful for overcoming these challenges. Yet, it was not possible to get graduate students in a group for focus group discussion because of their tight schedule at different times and difficulty of getting their convenient time and place that suits

most. For this reason, a focus group discussion which was originally planned couldn't take place, and thus data from graduate students were secured through individual interviews.

Another challenge is related to my being a student in the program which is running in partnerships between Addis Ababa University (AAU), Ethiopia and University of Gothenburg (UoG), Sweden. The two universities follow somewhat different formats for the dissertation. In this, I had to go through a kind of middle way, taking a part from both, in an attempt to conform to the requirements of the two institutions and to convince academics of both parties.

1.7. Organization of the Study

This dissertation was organized into eight chapters. The first chapter was the introductory chapter that presented the background, problem, objectives, significance, scope, and limitations of the study. Chapter two is a review of relevant literature. This chapter highlight theoretical and empirical experiences regarding international higher education partnerships, which serve for developing the conceptual and analytical basis for the study. Chapter three discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework that informs the study. It has two sections: the first section discusses internationalization rationale and concepts from mutuality lens which are relevant to guide the study; while the second presents the conceptual framework that serves as an analytical venture for exploring and comparing the experiences of the two partnership programs. The fourth chapter presents the research methodology employed; the research paradigm, design, sampling procedure, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis. The fifth chapter explained the study's context. The sixth chapter was devoted to data analysis of the two cases separately. The chapter begins with a section that presents policy contexts for international partnership programs. Then the next two sections presented the results and analysis of case one and case two, with respect to the rationales behind the formation of the respective partnership programs and how these partnerships were formed and developed with the analytical interest on aspects of symmetry and asymmetry. Chapter seven presents a cross-case comparison and discussions of the most apparent themes emerged with respect to the rationales, partnership development process, and the positioning of partners in the partnership. Chapter eight is the final chapter, which synthesizes the summary, reflections, and implications of the study.

Chapter Two

Research Literature

2.1. Globalization and Higher Education Partnerships

In recent decades, globalization in combination with the advancement of Information Communication Technology (ICT), has tremendously accelerated the speed and broadened the dimension of global interaction and interconnectedness through rapid global mobility and flows of people, knowledge, capital, cultures, and ideas across traditional political and geographical boundaries (Appadurai, 2000; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999). This has profoundly reconstructed the patterns and dynamics of interactions and interests of actors in higher education (Obamba & Mwema, 2009). Thus, currently, higher education operates in a complex and dynamic global environment, where global changes heavily influence the interests and strategies of HEIs towards internationalization as well as formation of partnerships with other foreign institutions (Boeren, 2008; Bordogna, 2017).

Globalization has no single definition and is open to multiple interpretations. Many scholars (Giddens, 1990; Knight & DeWit, 1995) agree that it is concept tied to the flow of technology, goods, knowledge, people, values, ideas, and messages across borders, so that it tends to challenge and transcend traditional notions of space, time, and power affecting multiple areas of social interaction. Held et al., (1999) also depict globalization as the widening and acceleration of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of social life. The widespread technological progress, especially ICT, has led to the progressive reduction of barriers (space and time) to interpersonal relations and worldwide connections (Appadurai, 2000; Giddens, 1990). Thus, local undertakings are often shaped by those occurring many miles away (Held et al., 1999).

As globalization is a contested concept, it can better be understood from three scholarly perspectives: hyperglobalists, skeptics and transformationalists. Although there are overlaps, these perspectives are useful not only to reveal the different lines of thought but also to expound some of the present misconceptions. The Hyperglobalists perspective prioritizes economic globalization—disciplines of the neoliberal market economy. They see globalization as defining a new world era dominated and influenced by the global marketplace (Appadurai, 2000; Crossley & Watson, 2003). They have a convention that economic globalization constructs and shapes new

forms of social organizations that would replace the traditional role of nation-states as the primary economic and political units of world society (Held et al., 1999; Tikly, 2001). They argue that the era of the nation-state has come to an end as globalization diminishes nations' sovereignty as well as the political power of nations (Appandurai, 2000), with the prospect of societies converging and becoming similar in nature and operation (Crossley & Watson, 2003).

The Skeptics, on the other hand, reject the hyperglobalists notion of powerless nation-states. They argue that globalization is an exaggerated myth, which tends to conceal the continuing international influence of the nation-state, particularly the developed ones, in the world economy (Held et al., 1999). Although they recognize the influence of global agencies and agendas across all societies worldwide, they argue that the degree of influence and the local responses to it are varied owing to contextual (economic, political, cultural) differences (Appadurai, 2000; Crossley & Watson, 2003). They maintain that global trade is operated mainly in the interests of the dominant Northern national governments working in collaboration with multilateral organizations. Thus, from the perspective of skeptics, globalization is linked with the sustained economic dependence and marginalization of the poorer Southern nations.

Transformationalists assert that globalization presents a profound and unprecedented patterns of social, political, and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and world order and that this new world is more interconnected and uncertain (Giddens, 1990; Held et al., 1999). "Transformationalists do not envisage any particular future world scenario…" (Herath, 2008, p.54) but they envisage new configurations and hierarchies of power relations across all societies and nations. They don't envisage the demise of nation-states' power, but they foresee that governments and societies can adapt themselves to this unprecedented change and be transformed in ways that recognize the increased influence of global agencies and agendas-(Ibid). This notion presumes that the intensification of global interconnectedness and interdependence does not necessarily marginalize the role of states. Rather, as Law (2009) argues, states (e.g. Japan and China) can respond to challenges of globalization by revising their development strategies, modifying their institutions, adjusting their relations, and enhancing their international competitiveness while maintaining cooperation with other states. According to Law (2009), "instead of being maneuvered by globalization …"(p.270), nation states can use globalization as an impetus to reform their

education systems which maintain nation-specific political and cultural traditions while also recognizing culture of others.

In general, each of the three perspectives recognizes the effects of economic, technological, political, and cultural dimensions as well as the implications of globalization. Based on the three perspectives, globalization results in integration, interconnectedness, and transformation as well as structuration and stratification (Lizarraga, 2011). Hyperglobalists and transformationalists have a convention that global economic competition does not necessarily result in zero-sum outcomes and they favor global integration, while skeptics are doubtful and they defy such integration (Herath, 2008)., Based on the transformationalists perspective, the traditional asymmetric relation in North-South higher education partnership may not be maintained and there may be a possibility that such relation be transformed into ways that address the hierarchical relation and that recognize a relationship of mutual influence. However, skeptics argue that globalization hasn't brought about a significant restructuring in the global relations and that despite increasing internationalization, North-South inequalities have not been changed (Herath, 2008). They argue that globalization has reinforced the marginalization of developing countries (ibid). Thus, it could be concluded from this perspective that the formation and operation of North-South higher education partnerships tend to be controlled more by the Northern institutions.

Globalization is regarded as an important framework for understanding internationalization in general and international higher education partnership in particular (Altbach, 2007; Chan, 2004; Gopinathan & Altbach, 2005; Knight, 2004, 2005). Knight (2005) and Chan (2004) agree that internationalization is a response to the impacts of globalization. In this sense, international higher education partnership is also a response to globalization, as it is an integral part of internationalization. Globalization, accelerated by ICT, "has created a powerful international context of instant communication, expanded knowledge, and scope for large scale partnership…" (Court, 2008, p. 106).

The effects of globalization on higher education are well documented (Altbach, 2006, 2007; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2004, 2005; Knight & de Wit, 1995; Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007). Cognizant of its effects, Altbach and Knight (2007) described globalization as "…the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement" (p.290). Altbach (2006, 2007) argue that globalization compels higher education to

become actors in the international system. Similarly, Chan (2004) states that globalization forces, coupled with the advancement of ICT, have influenced higher education to undergo remarkable changes of massification and commercialization, which has led HEIs to engage in continuous competition for funds and student recruitment. In this way, globalization has led to the formation of more linkages across borders so that HEIs are now able to compete in the global market (Ibid).

With globalization, higher education has become economic-oriented, emphasizing the production of highly skilled workforce and knowledge, both of which serve as the basis for economic growth and competitiveness. Regarding this, scholars (Knight, 2005; Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007) comment that with the growing emphasis on the production and use of knowledge as a means for creating wealth, the higher education has become a means for attaining economic goals but with little regard to fostering interests of individual student and societal growth. Related to this, important global trends including: massification of higher education; change of higher education from a public good to a utilitarian good; diminishing government funds attributed to increased commercialization, privatization; and diversification higher education; and educational reforms such as increasing public demands for accountability and efficiency, accreditation, and international competitiveness have become evident in higher education (Altbach, 2007; Knight, 2005; Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007). Thus, internationalization, including international partnership, has become an important trend to respond to these new challenges and opportunities and to foster intercultural understandings and skills of students that enable them to work in a global world, and thereby increase their international competitiveness (Chan, 2004; Knight, 2004, 2005). This linkage of higher education to economic growth underlines two interdependent directions of globalization in higher education, collaboration and competition.

Although the effects of globalization on higher education are clear, it is argued (e.g., Knight & DeWit, 1995; Marginson & Wende, 2007) that the impacts and the associated responses to it are manifested in varied forms across different nations and HEIs, owing to their different historical, socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts. For example, Tedrow and Mabokela (2007) argue that higher education of developing countries are more vulnerable to globalization forces than the developed ones which are often reflected in the influence of multilateral organizations. For example, structural adjustment and reforms in educational policy including privatization are meant to principally reproduce western values with little consideration of the local concerns and culture

(Ibid). Altbach (2007) contends that due to intense competition, globalization reinforces inequalities between HEIs in centers and peripheries, where those at the center grow stronger and become more dominant while the peripheries remain increasingly marginalized.

On the other hand, it is argued that globalization not only intensifies competition but also enhances collaboration among universities. Scott (2000) argues that these complementary forces can reorder the status quo and may lead to a new social hierarchy, forms of inequality, and global relations. He states that "Globalization can [also] address…inequalities between North and South and those within nations… because it is restless, even subversive, force" (Scott, 2000, p.5). Based on this notion, globalization may promote interdependence and collaboration in North-South higher education partnerships.

To sum up, cross-border relation within the global higher education landscape is constituted by vertical and horizontal differences amongst nations and HEIs on the one hand, and by the changing cross-border flows between them, on the other. The vertical (resource and capacity) and horizontal (language, culture, and academic tradition) difference shape power relations in cross-border relations (Marginson and Wende (2006)bid). Cross-border relations in HEIs also involve global flows: flows of faculty and students, information and knowledge, technologies, policies, resources across national borders (Knight & DeWit, 1995; Marginson & Wende, 2006). These flows have both lines of communication and lines of influence which may or may not be mutual. Herein, developed nations and leading HEIs have a better power to pull these flows towards goals and may benefit more than their counterpart developing countries and HEIs. However, the transformative character of globalization imparts certain dynamism, instability, openness, and unpredictability to the global higher education landscape and that the global flows may undergo continuous changes and may result in reduced power inequality HEIs (Marginson & Wende; 2006; Scott, 2000). Partnerships are dynamic and vary in contexts in addressing the challenges of balancing relations may mean that, they could disclose asymmetrical or symmetrical tendencies (Koehn & Obamba, 2014). Hence, it is imperative that this study is sensitive to contexts and bases in which a particular partnership is formed and functions.

2.2. Theories for International Education Cooperation

In the international higher education research field, Marxist-oriented theories, dependency and world-system theories, and their relatives such as center-periphery and neo-colonialism theories have been used extensively to explain power imbalances that exist between institutions in developed and developing countries (Altbach, 2007; Arnove, 2009; Hayhoe & Phillips, 1989; Teferra, 2014). These related theories were developed in response to the failure of many international development programs, informed by the capitalist development theory (Arnove, 2009). The central tenet shared by these theories is that politically and economically weak countries are dependent upon the more developed ones because of the latter's domination and exploitation. Hence, international development cooperation are seen as mechanisms for sustaining the asymmetric political and economic world system.

The *Dependency Theory* deals with the influence of developed nation-states through their economic and political power on the development of underdeveloped states. According to this theory, the world is divided into core or developed and periphery or underdeveloped countries, whereby the core countries continue to grow, dominate and exploit the peripheries, while the peripheries become dependent on the core and also tend to stay stagnant in development terms (Fagerlind & Saha, 1989; Maswana, 2009). Based on the dependency theory, the status of the underdevelopment of peripheral nations is attributed to their inequitable and asymmetric economic and political relations or unequal interactions with the core nations (Ibid). This implies that the peripheral countries remain dependent on the economy, technology, and expertise of core countries. Such a dependency eventually impedes their development and they can hardly go out of the vicious circle. In short if the countries at the core dictate and manipulate the economic and political rules, it is likely that they benefit more from this interaction and that their development takes place at the expense of those at the periphery.

The *World-system Theory is* based on the structure of world-system which is sub-divided into three regions, core, semi-periphery, and peripheral—for understanding societal changes and the nature of relations among nations (Wallerstein, 1976). World system theorists argue that the global order is a complex construct and that the world economic relations and development can no longer be described in a distinctly divided core-periphery model, in the form of the theoretical assumption put forward by dependency theorists; instead they added an intermediary (i.e., semi-periphery)

category (Chirot & Hall, 1982; Maswana, 2009; Namkoong, 1999). Semi-peripheral nations are still subjected to exploitation by the core but not in the same degree as in the periphery. Based on this theory, the position of each country within the world socio-economic system is not fixed neither to core nor periphery, rather there is a possibility for the semi-peripheral countries to move up and hold core or move down and hold peripheral position depending on how they respond to the global realities (Maswana, 2009). This theory acknowledges the significant roles the semi-peripheral countries play in determining their positions; for example China and India have maintained their positions in the world economic and political structure acting in part as a peripheral zone for core countries and in part as a core country for some peripheral countries (Leng, 2015).

Drawing from Wallerstein's (1974) work, Arnove (1980) adopted a world-systems analysis of comparative education for understanding educational trends around the world (cited in Arnove, 2009). This has informed thoughts in higher education with regard to the relationship between developed and developing countries. As Arnove (2009) argues, in the international economic order, externally introduced educational reforms, in many cases, has failed to effect structural change in society; rather it contributes to the perpetuation of existing stratification within and between countries. International aid agencies and leading universities in the North have promoted policies and relationships that are not beneficial to the recipients but are essentially beneficial to dominant groups in the core (ibid).

The dependency and world system theories underline that international partnership in education, including higher education, between the developed North and the developing South are shaped by asymmetrical and unequal world economic, political, and social systems (Pfetsch & Landau, 2000), whereby the Northern institutions play the dominant role in controlling and dictating the relationship, that is likely to provide greater benefits to them than to their Southern counterparts. It is argued that inequalities between the developed North and the developing South in their educational resources, research capacity, and technology tend to reflect and maintain hegemonic relations in higher education partnerships (Altbach, 2007; Canto & Hannah, 2001). In the post-World War II period, educational planning and development in Africa became increasingly dependent on the expertise and resources of the Northern scholars (Leng, 2015). Universities at the North play the dominant role in giving directions and producing knowledge while the

peripheral African universities produce little that is original, which had led to the marginalization of local knowledge over the years (Altbach, 2007).

As Altbach (2007) states, the dependence of the Southern HEIs has continued to be prevalent, as the existing inequalities in North-South higher education have been reinforced by the changing global circumstances. As echoed by Koehn (2014), "economic and epistemic asymmetries between the North and South are…difficult to overcome and could intensify amidst expanding globalization" (p. 53). Altbach (2007) further argues that, in the contemporary globalization era characterized by high level of international interactions amongst institutions, HEIs at the periphery—those challenged by shortage of resources and qualified staff and weak academic tradition—are dependent on those at the core which are prestigious with full array of resources (funding, infrastructure), highly qualified staff, and strong academic tradition for advanced training, research, and communication of knowledge, while the powerful universities are dominating over the weaker ones in the production and distribution of knowledge (see also Boshoff, 2009; Ishengoma, 2016; Holm & Malete, 2010). Such dependence of the peripheral HEIs has continued challenging their international partnership experiences, as the initiation, validation, and control are largely owned by the foreign partners (Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

Based on dependency theory, it is institutions of the more affluent countries that tend to significantly influence international higher education partnership—and thus, gain the benefit at the expense of those of the poorer South. Whereas the world system theorists are skeptical of dependency theorists' view of core-periphery dichotomy as a zero-sum interaction, rather it acknowledges the possibility of mutual benefits. They transcend the simple core-periphery dependency, arguing that dependency stems from a system of lop-sided relations between different strata or horizons in the world system (Leng, 2015). This perspective seeks to comprehensively map out the multi-faceted nature and sub-structures of the global financial and political economies. Here, compared to the dependency perspective, the world-system perspective appears to be more flexible for understanding the complexity of academic relations.

In sum, the theories discussed above commonly contend that the failure of international academic collaborative programs to transfer knowledge from the Global North to the Global South is largely due to the inherently asymmetrical political and economic system, which has been dominated by

the North since the colonial period (Altbach, 2007, Arnove, 2009; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Galtung, 1980). Based on these theories, unequal political and economic structure that had historically been produced in the colonial era has continued to be reproduced and reinforced by post-colonialism, post-independence economic activities, and global circumstances (Altbach, 2007; Pfetsch & Landau, 2000; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). These theories can thus contribute to explain power asymmetry in North-South international academic relations.

However, these Marxist based theories often tend to limit the understanding of international higher education partnerships as largely a reflective of historical political and economic relations of domination and subordination. They consider political and economic factors as primary determinants, overlooking other factors (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1989). This assumption may lead researchers to cling to economic and political structure and to verify cation of asymmetrical relations while tending to undermine the local contexts of the politically and economically weak partner and thereby the possibility for symmetrical aspects. Particularly, these theories may not be sufficient enough for the study of higher education partnerships between Ethiopia and Norway for Norway has no colonizing history and Ethiopia had never been colonized. Also, it is argued (e.g.Weinrib, 2012) that unlike in other Western countries, educational assistance by NORAD has focused on addressing the development needs of developing countries. Thus, it appears that the mutuality lens (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1986b) fits well to examine with issues of symmetry and asymmetry exhibited in the partnership programs involving institutions of Ethiopia and Norway.

2.3. Emergence and Concept of International Higher Education Partnership

The concept ”partnership” emerged in the last few decades in response to power asymmetry embedded in development cooperation between the developed North and the developing South (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Gutierrez, 2008; Mason, 2011; Obamba, 2013). Obama (2013) states that a partnership has gained prominence as a strong critique against the asymmetries embedded within the development aid, ‘problem-solving’ approach, manifested as a one-way financial and technical assistance from the global North to the South in the 1960s to 1990s.

Development cooperation has been criticized for unbalanced power relation i.e. overwhelming power possession by the donors, resulting in the distortion of recipients’ priorities, leading them to be dependent on donors in terms of borrowing and duplication of policy from the North rather

than mutual policy learning and knowledge sharing (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Gore, 2008; Mason, 2011; Moyo, 2010; Obamba & Mwema, 2009). In response, the idea of partnership has become the dominant global framework for organizing and transacting international development affairs among countries since the OECD report entitled: "Shaping the 21st Century: The Role of Development Cooperation in 1996" (King, 2008; Obamba, 2013). This report proposes 'global development partnership' as an approach that emphasizes donors to work in mutual collaboration and consultation with multiple local stakeholders while empowering them to take equal responsibility and accountability for setting and achieving their own development targets (ibid). Then, the partnership agendas are articulated in international agreements, such as in the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* and the 2008 *Accra Agenda for Action.* The Paris Declaration suggests foreign aid to be transparent, accountable, aligned, harmonized, and effective. The Accra Agenda, on the other hand, emphasizes on improving local ownership, inclusiveness, and accountability (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Gore, 2008; King, 2008; Obamba, 2013).

Since external supports without active involvement of local actors are likely to fail to bring about development activities and to bring about the desired outcome, there has come a view that a 'partnership' has to equally emphasize local ownership or 'country-led development' (Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Teferra, 2014). This has led to a shift in perspective from the notion of development cooperation—external 'prescription' of 'best practices' on to the recipients—to the notion of 'partnership'—a relationship based on the principles of local ownership and equity (Mason, 2011). This shift has gained momentum owing to the contemporary postmodern approach to knowledge that rejects the philosophical search for absolutism and universalism while acknowledging the plurality of truth—and hence the rejection of the regulatory perspectives on the relationship embedded in modernity (Ibid).

As enhancing local ownership of development is linked to knowledge production through research and education, a partnership involving higher education has increasingly considered as critical for promoting national development (King, 2008). Especially after the shift in the position of World Bank with regard to higher education in recognition of its role in economic and social development, higher education partnership has been viewed as venues for development and capacity building of the South (Oliphant, 2013). Interest for revitalizing African higher education

through partnership has grown; and that many HEIs of Africa have forged partnerships with universities in the global North (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Teferra, 2014).

Currently, the concept of partnership as a paradigm for development cooperation is widely accepted as a relationship based on the principles of local ownership, equity, participation, respect, and mutual benefit (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Mason, 2011; Obamba, 2013). As a result, within the context of development cooperation, partnership in higher education is now referred to as "cooperative agreements between HEIs or between HEI and other organization to coordinate activities, share resources, and divide responsibilities related to a specific project or goal" (Kinser & Green, 2009, p. 4).

Positioning partnership as a panacea for the unbalanced relationship in development assistance, Samoff and Carrol (2004) conceptualize partnership as an approach that goes further than external technical support or foreign aid. They state:

> To be something other than foreign aid, a partnership must involve a collaboration that can reasonably be expected to have mutual (though not necessarily identical) benefits, that will contribute to the development of institutional and individual capacities at both institutions, that respects the sovereignty and autonomy of both institutions, and that is itself empowering, enabling both partners to specify goals, chart directions, create appropriate governance strategies, employ effective administrative routines, and focus human, material, and financial resources on high priority objectives (Samoff & Carrol, 2004, p.115).

This definition emphasizes on mutual benefits in terms of capacity building, collaboration and participation of both parties in formulating goals, governance, and administrations, and the importance of autonomy. Otherwise, external funds which lead to unbalanced relations is likely to become undesirable and unstable (Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

Partnership, according to Boeren (2008) refers to "…shared interests, common understanding and long-term relationship" (p. 81). Boeren analogizes a partnership with a sort of 'marriage' whereby partners willfully establish a relationship based on their shared interests and understandings in order to complement each other and to achieve more than they can achieve if they are alone. Boeren further states that the relationship tends to be successful and long-term if both parties support and approve the partnership arrangements.

A more comprehensive definition of educational partnership is given by Wanni et al as:

> …a dynamic collaborative process between educational institutions that brings mutual though not necessarily symmetrical benefits to the parties engaged in the partnership. Partners share ownership of the projects. Their relationship is based on respect, trust, transparency and reciprocity. They understand each other's cultural and working environment. Decisions are taken jointly after real negotiations take place between the partners (Wanni et al., 2010, p.18).

Based on above assumption, partners are expected to work collaboratively, share ownership of the partnership, and make joint decisions based on mutual consent and negotiations in order to get mutual benefits. In fact, the benefits that each partner gets may not necessarily be exactly identical due to the inherent differences in the needs and priorities of each partner. Partnerships, grounded on mutual respect, trust, transparency through open communication and negotiations in the overall partnership development process tend to be successful and likely to evolve over time. Wanni et al. (2010) further suggest that partnerships go beyond the concept of borrowing best practices or replication of policies, embedded in the development aid discourse, and thus focus on knowledge sharing and constructing a relationship of 'mutual learning'.

In sum, the term partnership is defined differently although they share some common aspects. For the purpose of this study, international higher education partnership refers to formal agreements established between HEIs at their various units (department, school, college, university) to work collaboratively on programs related to higher education functions (training, research, or community services).

2.4. Higher Education Partnership Activities and Areas

As the range of purposes of partnership expands, so does the diversification of the partnership activities including: joint research; staff and/or student exchange; collaborative teaching; curriculum development; joint conferences, workshops or seminars; training (student internships, staff training or professional development); and community/development projects, etc.(Kot, 2011)

The types of partnership activities are determined by priorities and purposes of actors in the partnership (Wilson, 2012). For example, Higher Education for Development (HED) model that advocates human and institutional capacity building through higher education partnerships between US and developing countries supports partnerships involving research and innovation; faculty and staff development; curriculum review and development of academic programs;

community outreach and technology dissemination activities; and renovation and upgrading of teaching-learning and research facilities and infrastructure (Alemneh & Cornick, 2012). Based on the study by Samoff and Carrol (2004) on the Africa-U.S. higher education partnership, collaborative research was the most (49%) popular partnership activity followed by faculty exchange (39%). A longitudinal study by Morfit, Gore, and Akridge (2009) on U.S.-African higher education partnerships identified collaborative research, curriculum development and faculty training, and public service as main partnership activities undertaken for the purpose of bolstering human and institutional capacity. In the survey of higher education partnerships in the UK, joint research projects were identified as the main type of partnership activities, followed by projects related to staff professional development (Wanni et al., 2010). Kot's (2011) analyzed the partnership activities between University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Lubumbashi and found that collaborative research (24%), institutional infrastructure (21%), and professional development for staff members (21%) were the top three priorities for their future international partnerships at both institutions. Based on these studies, joint research appears to be the most widely employed partnership activity.

Moreover, as per the interests and priorities of the partners, partnership activities may involve various categories of academic fields such as natural and computational sciences, social sciences language, law and governance, engineering and technology, health, agriculture and veterinary, business and economics, and education. For example, the U.S.-Africa partnership programs assessed by Morfit et al. (2009) focused on areas such as information and communication technologies, health, democracy and governance, economic growth, workforce development, education, and agriculture which correspond to the objectives of economic development and poverty reduction. In another instance, the majority of UK-Africa higher education partnerships involved health sciences (28%), science and technology (17%), and agriculture and rural development (12.5%) (Kubler, 2005, cited in Kot, 2011).

2.5. Rationales for International Higher Education Partnership

Jeptoo and Razia (2012) argue that international partnership in HEIs is built around the main strategic rationales and objectives which institution is seeking to achieve. Rationale for international higher education partnerships emerges from the driving factors pushing HEI or its

stakeholders to establish a partnership (DeWit, 2002; Knight, 2004). Given that the rationale for partnership dictates the kind of benefit from the partnership (Knight, 2004), rationales are related to benefits that partners expect to gain as a result of their involvement. Although rationales and benefits are interrelated, they are not necessarily the same; because rationale reflects the expectation of an institution from the partnership, while benefits reflect how far the partnerships have responded to these expected needs (Leng, 2015).because either all what are expected may not be realized or some of what are realized may be beyond the expectations.

Knight (2004) observed that the type and priority of rationales vary from country to country, from institution to institution, from stakeholder to stakeholder, and from time to time. Although partners may have mutual interest, their rationale may not necessarily be the same. For example, Habermann (2008) argues that the Northern partners are often pressurize to establish partnership with the South to get funding and permission to do research in South; while the Southern partners hope that they get benefit from the prestige and resources of the Northern partners, in terms of opportunity for capacity development and financial and technical support. Koehn and Obamba (2014) argue that African HEIs prefer capacity building as a priority rationale for international partnership. Similarly, capacity building is also identified as a core impetus of HEIs in Ethiopia and Kenya for establishing partnership with their partners in Belgium (Ibid).

The rationales from the UK perspective are often associated with staff development in which staff are provided with the opportunity to work abroad, conduct research, teach courses, and develop curricula, which could, in turn, help them develop specific skills and new experiences in different academic culture (Wanni et al 2010). These rationales from the African perspective are important in attracting funds for staff capacity building (in teaching and research) which can hardly be attained by individual institution alone) (Ibid). They further state that African HEIs are also motivated to increase access to education for students, introduce new degree courses, improve quality of education and enhance research outputs (Ibid).

Grant (2014) identifies different driving factors for higher education partnerships from USA and African perspectives. He indicates that enhancing international prestige, preparing students for a globalized world, internationalization of the curriculum and improving quality were the top priority rationales of USA; while knowledge production, resource acquisition (e.g. journals,

periodicals, and databases), student development, and alliance formation were the major rationales from the African side (Ibid). In some cases as Samoff and Carrol (2004) observe the rationales for African HEIs' engagement with the USA ranges from institutional capacity building to broader goals of national development. They point out that such rationales as the development of the institution and its infrastructure, improvement of international access, and benefit from high academic standards and advanced research facilities are parts of the latter. Alemneh and Cornick (2012) and Morfit et al (2009) also indicate that the Africa-U.S. Higher Education Initiatives often target addressing development challenges in SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa) through human and institutional capacity building activities, including improving academic programs and curricula, enhancing faculty and staff capacity, expanding applied research capabilities, and reinvigorating community outreach and engagement.

From both the Northern and Southern perspectives, Grant (2014); Stinson (2010); and Wanni et al (2010) found internationalization as one of the most pressing drivers of international partnerships. Samoff and Carrol (2004) and Koehn and Obamba (2014), on the other hand, argue that internationalization is the highest priority rationale for the affluent partners, as it provides them a competitive advantage to attract international scholars, students, and projects; while the highest priority rationale of African institutions is mainly related to capacity building. Yet, other institutions of both the North and the South are driven by the desire for capacity development. In this regard, Bradley (2007) contends that capacity building opportunities for Northern and Southern researchers and institutions are essential aspects of many North-South research partnerships. Bradley (2007) further argues that a partnership could also serve to enhance the capacity of Northern researchers, as they learn from their Southern colleagues on how to map different cultural contexts.

According to Bradley (2007), motivating factors for North-South research collaborations include: improved funding, increased recognition, and scientific advancement through pooling one's knowledge with others, gains from experiences in terms of apprenticeship for researchers, and benefit from the skills of partners and tacit knowledge through working in proximity. Partnerships are also emerged as an area of interest to arrive at acceptable solutions to common global problems (e.g. global warming, terrorism) that are mutually shared by everyone across the globe (Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Teferra, 2014). Likewise, Sutton and Obst (2011) have underlined the

importance of international partnership for research and knowledge production for solving global problems (e.g. issues related to environment, health, energy, human right, inequality, migration, peace and security problems) that cannot be addressed by a single country. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) also state: "Much of the best research of the world can only be carried out through international collaborative efforts, given the size and complexity of the issues and/or the cost of materials and the investments of time and personnel needed ..." (p.26).

2.6. Symmetry/Asymmetry in Higher Education Partnership

The issue of symmetry/asymmetry is one of the most serious concerns in higher education partnership for it influences and shapes the functioning boundaries— "what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities"—of the partnerships (Wanni et al., 2010, p.11). According to Waerdt (2008) and Wanni et al. (2010), the power relations between partners predicts the distribution of their roles and responsibilities and thereby the relationship dynamics in such a way that the partner with more power, in case of an asymmetric relation, tends to take a leading role in initiating and establishing the partnership, and dictates specifics of relationships. Regarding this, generally, two contrasting images prevail in the literature. A body of research literature depicts more of asymmetrical patterns of relations in favor of the northern partners (e.g. Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Gore, 2008; Gutierrez, 2008; Ishengoma, 2016; Kaguhangire-barifaijo & Namara, 2012; Obamba, 2013; Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Olsson, 2008; Samoff & Caroll, 2004), while the other one depicting partnership programs as venues for participation and mutual influence of both parties (e.g. Koehn & O bamba, 2014; Leng, 2013, 2015; Leng & Pan, 2013; Mwangi, 2017; Nossum, 2016). The first category of research seems to be skeptical of the partnership premises and focuses on debates about the inherent asymmetries in the partnership that have prevented the Southern institutions from truly owning and influencing the program. While the second body of literature is optimistic about the possibility of establishing consensual and mutual collaborations based on equitable participation that results in mutual benefits.

The scholars skeptical of the partnership (e.g. Gutierrez, 2008; Habermann, 2008; King, 2008; Menashy, 2018; Obamba & Mwema, 2009) define the North–South partnership in terms of power asymmetries and material dependences. They claim that the efforts to establish mutual relationships have frequently been challenged by issues of inequalities in economic, scientific,

material, and infrastructural resources that are available to scholars in the North but are scarce to the South. Gutierrez (2008) contends that there is an unfair distribution of responsibilities between partners in the North-South partnerships, which reflect the reproduction of colonial domination structural power asymmetries, and resource inequalities. He states that in the North-South research collaboration:

> …research agenda setting, activity planning, fund management, data interpretation, results dissemination (through publications and conferences) and basic research components are taken on by Northern researchers, while their Southern counterparts are in charge of data gathering and more applied research components (Gutierrez, 2008, p.21).

Gutierrez (2008) further claims that the partnership ideology—the belief on the possibility of mitigating power asymmetries without mitigating resource asymmetries—has failed to put into practice (also Brinkerhoff, 2002).

Owing to the inherent asymmetries in resources and capabilities between institutions of the North and the South, it is often times cited that unequal power relation remains a major challenge in international higher education partnership and that the more powerful partner dominates and unilaterally determines the direction of the relationship (see Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Gore, 2008; Gutierrez, 2008; Kaguhangire-barifaijo & Namara, 2012; Mason, 2011; Obamba, 2013; Olsson, 2008; Samoff & Caroll, 2004; Wanni et al., 2010). Hence, in many international partnerships, it is the Northern scholars who determine partnership agendas and priorities, design the partnership, make decisions, and manage the operations. As King (2008) argues, despite the pervasive discourse of local ownership, partnership agendas are mostly set by the Northern partners. Such an unbalanced power relation may also result in tension and frustration among members of the dominated partners, and hence affects partnership functioning (Ashman, 2001).

Waerdt (2008) in his study of international partnership in the Yemeni education argues that the conceptualization of partnership is merely an instrument for promoting top-down global governance instead of promoting local voices in a truly open dialogue that has ownership at its core. Waerdt views the partnership in Yemeni education as a mechanism for mediating the western-dominated global development agenda to the Yemeni education sector (ibid). Ishengoma (2016), in similar study on the partnership between Tanzanian HEIs and their northern partners, indicates that the partnerships are constrained by power imbalances that give more powers to

external funders to set agendas that hardly fit with local needs. The partnerships lack of reciprocity due to resource dependence, and conflicting agendas and interests, Ishengoma further argues that most of the partnerships are not reciprocal as the southern universities have very little to offer to the northern partners in terms of financial, human or technological resources—structural limitation exacerbating inequalities (ibid).

There are also research studies that are more optimistic about the partnership promises. In this regard, studies (Leng, 2013, 2015;Jamil & Haque, 2016; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Nossum, 2016; Olsson, 2008) confirm that that in spite of the inherent asymmetries, there have been partnerships that are built on mutual respect and equitably share ownership and mutually benefit. As Nossum (2016) states, many partnership programs between the Norwegian and African universities have engendered long-lasting mutual respect and genuine relationships where African partners are given a substantial role in designing and managing the projects.

According to Olsson (2008), although asymmetry in North-South partnership may not be easily avoided, some aspects of mutuality could manifest in terms of partnership programs supported by Swedish SIDA. For example, while the Southern institution gets material support and research training of staff while the Northern researchers get access to situated perspectives and enjoy visiting countries with different settings.

Leng's (2013, 2015) study on Cambodian university partnerships with French, USA, and Japanese universities indicates that most of the partnership programs have manifested mutual patterns of relationships in terms of equity, autonomy, solidarity, and participation. The study by Leng and Pan (2013) also depicts that partnership programs between universities of Canada and China have manifested the four characteristics of mutuality i.e. equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity.

To sum up, international higher education partnership is a dynamic and complex phenomenon whose pathway is convoluted and unpredictable (Obama & Mwema, 2009). In the context of development cooperation, partnerships have been promised to pacify the external imposition by the Northern partner by involving shared ownership between partners, both in success as well as in failures. Practically, however, this leaves us with uncertainties. On one hand, there are claims regarding the challenge of exclusion in the intrinsic power asymmetry in many North-South partnership practices, leading to a one-sided external direction and prescription, favoring the

powerful partner while leaving restricted spaces for locally responsive needs. On the other hand, there are instances in some partnership programs where partners mutually define common goals and negotiate roles and relationship in a way that they recognize and accept equity and responsibility, irrespective of differences in their political and economic positions.

2.7. Important Elements in International Higher Education Partnership

The central premise behind forging partnership is often ascribed to an approach emphasizing symmetry, which is different from the traditional asymmetrical development cooperation models and which has been adopted by most Northern institutions and donors in their relationships with the Southern counterparts following the era of decolonization (Shuguang & Xianjun, 2015). A partnership is supposed to improve the participation of beneficiaries in all activities, pool scientific and financial resources, expand access to and sharing of scientific capacity and information, create complementary and synergetic effects that produce mutual benefits, and enhance human and institutional capacity in both South and North partners (Helms, 2015; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Obamba, 2013; Teferra, 2014; Wiley & Root, 2003). However, initiating and maintaining genuine and symmetrical educational partnerships is not a straightforward simple process (Wanni et al., 2010).

Although it may not be instructive to take what others mentioned as 'principles' as normative frameworks, it is noted that there are important features that are shared among many partnerships, and are useful for understanding the dynamics of partnership. In this regard, Koehn and Obamba (2014) state, "While each transnational higher education partnership is embedded in unique institutional traditions and a particular policy framework, there are shared features…" that are responsive to "…societal needs, financial constraints, and the value of transnational collaboration" (p.23). The authors underline the importance of ensuring local ownership, equal decision-making, balanced distribution of roles and responsibilities, mutual benefit, and building trust for advancing symmetry at various stages of partnership development (ibid). Recognizing the uniqueness of each partnership practice, other authors (e.g. Helms, 2015; Mason, 2011; Wanni et al., 2010; Wilson, 2012) have identified principal elements that are worthwhile for initiating, executing, and maintaining symmetrical and successful partnerships. Wanni et al. (2010) list major principles to guide the formation and development of partnerships between the UK and African universities.

These include shared ownership; trust and transparency; understanding each partner's cultural and working context; agreed division of roles and responsibilities; regular communication; strategic planning and implementation; commitment; enabling institutional infrastructure; monitoring and evaluation; and sustainability. As cited in Mason (2011), the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries has set guiding principles which mostly overlap with what is stated by Wanni and his colleagues. They include joint decisions on setting objectives, mutual trust, information exchange, shared responsibility and benefits, transparency, monitoring and evaluation, increased research capacity, and building on the achievements. Helms (2015), on the other hand, suggests transparency, accountability, staff engagement, quality assurance, strategic planning, cultural awareness, access, equity, capacity building, and negotiation or open discussion as effective practices for desirable international partnerships. Similarly, Mason (2011) identifies "…fairness, transparency, accountability, and moral responsibility" (p. 453) as principles to guide the northern partners. Bailey and Dolan (2011) also mention respect, trust, reciprocal obligation, equality, joint decision making, shared responsibility and accountability as features of genuine partnership.

Below, some of the major elements that deem relevant for conceptualizing partnerships are discussed.

Ownership

The issue of local ownership is intertwined with the dynamics of partnership, as the essence of partnership is to respond to historical asymmetries in development-related initiatives in which discussions on 'national ownership' and 'country-led' or 'demand-driven' development take a central place (Mason, 2011; Samoff & Carrol, 2004;Weinrib, 2012). According to Koehn and Obamba (2014), local ownership is an important feature of a partnership. Waerdt (2008) also suggests that local ownership should be a prerequisite for a partnership. Furthermore, Weinrib (2012) adds that local needs should be the starting point in North-South partnership development, so that a Southern partner would own the project, formulates the objectives and takes the responsibility to manage it.

Scholars (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Helms, 2015; Wanni et al, 2010) warn that a partnership without shared ownership risks failure—tends to remain on paper and fails to live up to its name and

expectations. In a partnership without co-ownership of engaged parties, "…efforts of the collaboration will be futile and benefits of the partnerships will be obscured" (Kaguhangire-Barifaijo and Namara, 2012, p.7)

The fundamental principles to co-ownership are shared rights, shared roles and responsibilities, shared accountabilities and commitments, the participation of the local partners in setting partnership agenda and goals (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Helms, 2015; Mason, 2011; Wanni et al., 2010). In this regard, Mason (2011) states that partnerships based on shared roles and responsibilities could also envisage a shared sense of ownership. Mason (2011) further suggests that as much as partners share responsibilities to the success of the partnership programs, it is important that they share accountabilities to the failures.

If there are vertical and horizontal differences between partners, roles and responsibilities may not necessarily be shared equally. But what Fowler (2000) and Helms (2015) value as more important is that the distribution of roles and responsibilities need to be based on mutual agreements and consensus made after open discussions and negotiations. Similarly, Brinkerhoff (2002) and Wanni et al. (2010) underscore the need for agreed upon and equal division of roles and responsibilities among partners in which individuals can be involved on the basis of their capabilities and skills and comparative advantages of each party.

Koehn and Obamba (2014) and Wanni et al. (2010) feel that a deliberate participation of the local partner, especially in the initial stages in terms of identifying partnership agenda and formulating partnership goals, are crucial for ensuring local ownership. Koehn & Obamba (2014) further advise that local partners should actively participate in deciding partnership framework, developing a plan of action, formulating objectives, and in the management and delivery of the project. In other word, limited participation of the local partner in agenda-setting may result in a partnership program which is inconsistent with the local priorities.

Decision making and commitment

Many scholars also emphasize on the importance of mutual decision-making for advancing equity and mutuality between partners starting from initial agenda-setting and objective formulation through budgeting and resource allocation to project implementation and final reporting (Helms,

2015; Brinkerhoff, 2002; Wanni et al., 2010). Helms (2015) states, "Active participation by faculty in decision making—particularly on academic matters—is important not only to gain their buy-in and support but also to tap their expertise and ensure the program remains on track" (p.12). Contrary to this, Samoff and Carrol (2004) also argue that the southern partners feel that their voices are often inadequately heard in the partnership development. Such a failure by members to feel part of the decision-making process is likely to erase their sense of ownership and thereby impair the functioning of the partnership (Ibid).

There are also studies (e.g. Kinser & Green, 2009; Morfit, et al., 2009; Taylor, 2016) which underline the importance of partner's substantive commitments to the partnership arrangements and agreed upon frameworks for improving interconnectedness and for sustaining the relationships. These scholars emphasize on commitments at various levels (from junior staff to senior management) for maintaining the partnership. Wanni et al. (2010) argue that partnerships work better when they are initiated by enthusiasm from the bottom, and are moved forward as well as supported by high-level officials. They (Ibid) further argue that even if the initial drive to a partnership may come from any of the academic staff at any level, the commitment and support from senior management to the partnership is important for maintaining the relationship, since partnerships initiated without their consent and commitments are likely to end up with constraints of the required resources and communication (also Morfit, et al., 2009; Taylor, 2016; Wilson, 2012).

Trust and transparency

Trust and transparency are also considered as bases for mutuality and collaborative action in partnership projects (Bordogna, 2017; Helms, 2015; Mahanty, Yasmi, Guernier, Ukkerman, & Nass, 2009; Parker, 2010; Stinson, 2010). Trust is developed, although it needs time, through integrity, fairness, and honored commitments (Helms, 2015); face to face meeting and mutual respect (Wanni et al., 2010); knowledge of work and reputation of each other's; and, shared information and resources, transparency and openness (Mahanty et al., 2009).

According to Helms (2015), delineating and communicating relevant information pertaining to: description of the program, policies, and procedures; educational services and specific program activities; memorandum of understandings; documents pertaining to governance, management

structures, and staffing; records related to finance, facilities, and infrastructures help to ensure transparency and promote trust. Wanni et al. (2010) state that transparency in reporting and financing are helpful to quell doubts about the ways in which funds are being used; otherwise, embarking on expenditures without prior discussion and agreement may lead to ambiguity and conflicts.

Partners who openly discuss their motives, negotiate on the goals of the partnership and develop clarity on their roles and responsibilities in terms of access to resources, contributions, managerial and budgetary issues, are likely to promote trust with each other (Helms, 2015; Morfit et al., 2009). Thus, communication, especially face-to-face contact where partners can negotiate and jointly design activities that suit the contexts, can lead to increased levels of concern among partners (Bordogna, 2017). A frequent communication is also crucial for understanding cultural and working context and potential constraints each partner that may influence the partnership program. In this regard, Parker (2010) states that lack of knowledge about the working context of the counter partner may lead partners to miscalculate the capacity each other that, in turn, may lead to wrong decisions on the scope of partnerships. Thus, open and regular communication and negotiation among partner members, starting from initial stage of partnership development, are helpful to anticipate and reduce potential conflicts, asymmetries, and misunderstandings among partners, and thereby could nurture friendship and trust to run the partnership (Parker, 2010; Stinson, 2010).

Mutual respect

Mutual respect has also been depicted as an important tool for promoting mutuality in the partnership. Leng (2015) and Mwangi (2017) particularly, state the importance of respect and recognition of the northern partners to the needs, expertise and experience, and working culture for promoting autonomy of the local partners.

In symmetrical partnerships, partners often recognize the needs, commitments and contributions to the partnership, expertise, working culture, and benefits they obtain, and seek to learn from each other (Helms, 2015; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Teferra, 2014). While in asymmetrical partnerships, the contributions of the affluent partners are often linked to initiatives for fixing the problem of the local partner in a way that reflects the notion of external support, rather than being seen as a means of complementary functions and of empowering the locals in their improvement (ibid).

Teferra (2014) comments that the benefits the northern partners obtain from the partnerships are undervalued, although their very engagement in global issues may generate knowledge capital for them (also Bradley, 2007).

2.8. Higher Education Partnership Development

This section reviews the development of higher education partnership, its components and complexities at various levels in order to identify conceptual insights on how partnerships advance to develop an analytical model for inquiring through and explore issues of symmetry and asymmetry in this study. Various studies suggest different activities and processes that underlie partnership development. For example, Koehn and Obamba (2014) have identified seven stages of the partnership development process: initiation, planning, integration, management, capacity building, sustainability, and evaluation. Each stage manifests both asymmetrical and symmetrical tendencies (Ibid). Taylor (2016) proposes nine stages that help to understand the process of partnership development in more detail, including articulating motivation, strategy and planning, identifying partners, making contacts, building links, formalizing the partnership, deepening and broadening, embedding, and sustaining (p.50). He also identifies particular characteristics and institutional commitments required in each stage (Ibid). Stuart, Walker, and Minzner (2011) identify four stages of partnership development: initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Wilson (2012) proposes another four stages: initiation, negotiation, implementation, and conclusion. Others (Wanni et al., 2010) have discussed interrelated activities in the partnership development process such as institutional need assessment, partner selection, negotiating, securing funding, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The review of these studies suggests that stages are not distinct from one another, rather they are closely related and sometimes overlapping. In addition, the stages listed and discussed by different authors vary in levels of detail. Hence, for the purpose of this study, four broad stages such as initiation, building, operation, and monitoring and evaluation stages were discussed to conceptualize partnership development processes in general terms. The process of establishing a partnership often starts with the identification of needs and priorities that motivate partner institutions get involved in the partnership, select a partner that can ensure their demand, and develop initial understanding of each other (Fowler, 2000; Kinser & Green, 2009; Stuart et al.,

2011; Sutton & Obst, 2011; Wanni et al., 2010). Bordogna (2017) argues that these "initial conditions play a vital role…with no amount of relationship-building able to compensate for mistakes at initiation" (p.5). In other words, it is important for partners to openly discuss and communicate with each other to identify and understand their rationales and felt goals; the contributions of each partner to the partnership that may reflect commitments of financial resources, personnel, or time; differences in resource allocation as well as cultural and contextual differences that may facilitate or challenge the partnership process; and risks and tension points before establishing the partnership,(Fowler, 2000; Kinser & Green, 2009; Wanni et al., 2010). This process minimizes the risk of misunderstandings and conflicts, and allows partners to propose initiatives that align with their institutional demands and strategies. Equal or proactive role of the local partners in the initiation process is imperative to ensure local ownership and promote symmetry in the partnership (Koehn &Obamba, 2014).

An important phase in the partnership development after initiation, as emphasized repeatedly in the research literature, is the partnership building process. At this stage, partners are expected to further discuss and negotiate so as to come up with agreements on issues pertaining to goals; share of rights, roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities; commitments; plan and procedure of the partnership implementation; mechanisms to address conflicts; expected benefits; and means and frequency of communication, evaluation, and reporting (Helms, 2015; Fowler, 2000; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Stuart et al, 2011; Wanni et al., 2010). Fowler (2000) underscores the significance of an ongoing negotiation and dialogue between partners to reach a consensus on the framework of the partnership. In the negotiation process, as Fowler (2000) states, both parties should communicate well and have adequate information about each other in order to avoid unrealistic expectations that may result from misunderstandings. Negotiating on the rights and obligations of each party is also recognized as a means of addressing obstacles related to power imbalance (Fowler, 2000; Wanni et al., 2010). Fowler (2000) further underlines that negotiation promotes transparency and that even the noticed power difference can be consciously accepted and its influence can be monitored.

In this kind of partnership design, the project is often expected to be put into practice based on agreed-upon frameworks and in compliance with the set ground rules. This is the operational stage that involves a range of collaborative activities and interactions among partners (Stuart et al, 2011).

Bordogna (2017) contends that as "operational activities have the potential to transform… international partnerships" (p.14) positively or negatively, it is, mainly, the interactions of operational members that underpin the success of partnership programs. Thus, this stage is important to examine how operational members actually interact with each other and the implication of the interaction on the partnership with respect to commitment to what has been envisaged as an outcome and whether this affects reciprocation, trust, resource exchange, and benefit. This stage also helps to explore who does what, including who provides resources, and controls them (McQuaid, 2000).

The fourth stage emphasizes on monitoring and evaluation of the partnership development progresses and is executed more at the final stage of the partnership project (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2010; Wannie et al., 2010). Regular monitoring and evaluation is meant to assess priorities and benefits, check progress, evaluate the success, pinpoint strengths and weaknesses, and provide feedback used to address problems as they arise for making the necessary adjustments in order to sustain the partnership (Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Sutton & Obst, 2011). Symmetrical partnership evaluation, according to Koehn and Uitto (2015), is inclusive i.e., it calls for participation of stakeholders of both parties, and provides participants with mutual-learning experiences

2.9. Challenges to International Higher Education Partnership

Along with all the opportunities of a partnership "…comes a multitude of challenges, ranging from identifying appropriate models for collaboration, finding partners, and negotiating agreements, to managing cultural differences and expectations, to evaluation and assessment" (Helms, 2015, p. 4). No matter how well planned it may be, a partnership cannot bet without challenges; it may be constrained by different factors like personal ambivalence, lack resource and power imbalance, and variation in cultures and agenda (Helms, 2015; Sutton & Obst, 2011). Other barriers to the development of symmetrical relationship include geographical constraints, linguistic diversity, difference in the conceptualization of the relationship, and resistance to sharing ownership and responsibilities (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Helms, 2015).

Owing to differences in their nature, partnerships are plagued by various challenges. For example, Bozeman (2009) identifies "differences in goals, lack of attention to details, excessive

bureaucracy, cultural differences and poor communication" (p.29) and imbalance in resource contribution as detrimental factors to partnership at various stages. Hall and Sivakumaran (2013) contend that issues related to language and cultural barriers, lack of mutual goals, and imbalance logistic supply are critical areas that have to be navigated before establishing a partnership. Heffernan and Poole (2005) also emphasize on communication structures, mutual trust, and commitment among partners as main factors for either advancing or regressing the development of symmetrical relationships. They further argue that effective communication to develop shared meaning and exchange timely information using formal and informal means which may develop trust among partners (ibid).

Similarly, but more comprehensively through review of previous studies, Ayoubi and Massoud (2012) identify obstacles to partnerships: "… selfish behavior of the partner; mistrust amongst partners; financial obstacles; cultural issues; historical barriers; differing in objectives and missions; imbalance; poor communications; time and resources; quality obstacles; and student factors" (pp. 339-340). Tedrow and Mabokela (2007) add differences in goals, cultures, and power as major obstacles to partnership.

Challenges related to issues of resources and power are cited frequently (e.g., Ayoubi & Massoud, 2012; Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Obamba, 2013; Samoff & Caroll, 2004; Wanni et al., 2010). Baskerville (2013) underlines that adequate financial base predicate the success of partnerships. Unbalanced access to finance between partners impedes implementation of partnerships (ibid), and such imbalance in resource—and thereby power—is a common challenge in North-South higher education partnerships. In the partnership programs of U.S.-Africa universities, Samoff and Caroll (2004) observe that while "the U.S. partners receive most of the money…control the principal decisions, from conceptions through design and implementation, the African partners have little say over" (p.147) such matters.

As a result, power asymmetry remains as the principal obstacle to successful partnership (Bradley, 2008; Haberman, 2008; McQuaid, 2000; Obamba & Mwema, 2009). McQuaid (2000) states that one partner may have a greater legitimate claim over its counter partner, due to its greater involvement, and thus may control resources. For instance, asymmetry in research partnership is manifested "…in the form of inequitable access to information, training, funding, conferences and publishing opportunities,… [and] influence of Northern partners in project administration, budget

management, and in setting research agenda" (Bradley, 2007, p.2). Owing to such an imbalance of power, the northern and southern partners may face different challenges. As Olsson (2008) notes through examining the Swedish research cooperation, while the Northern partner risks from poor communication and less predictability of costs, the Southern partner risks of becoming more of an assistant than a partner, having limited influence over the research agenda, and losing influence over data and property rights.

Differences in goals and expectations are other challenges of the partnership. It is difficult to establish a mutually beneficial partnership between institutions whose goals hardly align (Hall & Sivakumaran, 2013; Mihyo, 2008). McQuaid (2000) argues that partners with conflicting priorities or hidden agenda may end up with fight over control of an issue and may end up with failure of the development partnership program. Others (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Mihyo, 2008; Sutton & Obst, 2011) emphasize on lack of clear goals or lack of mutual understanding of the expectations as a major cause for the failure of partnerships. Bailey and Dolan (2011) argue that if partnerships are poorly conceptualized by partners, they may promote dependency, and end up with more harms than benefits. Sometimes, partnerships are founded on false assumptions as if both partners have similar understandings of the partnership, which may result in the development of over-ambitious and impractical proposals (Sutton & Obst, 2011). In order to overcome these constraints and for developing and sustaining the partnership, as Bailey and Dolan (2011) suggest, it is important to ensure partners have similar understanding about the partnerships they propose. Similarly, Baskerville (2013) suggests, from the outset, partners should be clear about the type of partnership, its realistic goals, and expectations to avoid misunderstandings and the concomitant later confusions. In short, ease of communication and clarity on expectations and intended benefits amongst partners are supportive of successful partnerships (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2012). Conversely, poor communication may result in dilemmas and misunderstandings, hostility and conflict, and difficulty for mutual learning.

Differences in cultural and working context are also viewed as other pressing challenges in the partnership formation (Tedrow & Mabokela, 2007). Helms (2015) states that when individuals from institutions with different backgrounds and cultures get together, they may enter into conflicting perceptions, needs, and arguments. Boshoffs (2010) indicates that language and cultural divisions are the major barriers to regional South-South research collaboration of countries

in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as they use three languages, English, French, and Portuguese. Thus, cultural and language differences can be sources for tensions in the partnership (also Hall & Sivakumaran, 2013).

2.10. Summary

In this chapter an attempt has been made to review theories and research that underlie international higher education partnerships so as to provide a base for the development of conceptual and analytical frameworks.

Central to this review is the ideas that reflect how globalization affects higher education and the response of higher education stakeholders to globalization through internationalization and international partnership. It also outlined some major theories that have been used to explain power relations in international education cooperation and their limitations in terms of determinant political and economic structures. The chapter also highlighted the emergence of the concept of partnership in response to the distortions and asymmetries embedded within the traditional 'problem-solving' approach of international development cooperation which focused on the one-way flow of financial and technical assistance from the global North to the South. In this review a detailed analysis of various motives governing different stakeholders of higher education in their dealing on international partnerships and the challenges encountered in putting the partnership premises in to practice were illuminated.

In this review attempts were made to conjoin various experiences related to international higher education partnerships, ranging from the one which tends to be demand-driven and that provide the local actors with high levels of autonomy to the one characterized by hegemonic systemic reproduction attributed to the inhibiting dynamics that come through epistemological, financial, and material dependency (Weinrib, 2012). In fact, as evidenced in many studies; it would be simplistic to expect all parties to have equal positions when forming partnership in the latter case (Gore, 2008; Gutierrez, 2008). As the concept "partnership" suggests mutual cooperation, it is imperative that this study is mainly informed from with prospects of the collaboration and symmetry partnership without disregarding the issues of asymmetries. The next chapter is, thus, about theories that help understand both those underlying inhibiting as well as enabling dynamics pertaining to collaboration and mutuality.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

3.1. Main Theoretical Concepts

As stated in the preceding chapter, political and economic differences are not the only determinant forces in shaping patterns of international partnerships (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1986a). It can even be argued that structural inequalities in the era of globalization should be seen as non-essentialist, dynamic, and changeable, not possessive characteristics of individuals or actors (Caruana & Montgomery, 2015; Scott, 2000). Although different actors may take up dominant or subordinate roles within global hierarchical power structures, their roles, however, are not static and the political and economic world-system is not an entirely deterministic explanation of social order, as societies are heterogeneous and are subjected to constant change (Scott, 2000). From this point of view, a particular collaborative program should not only be considered through a critical awareness of historically embedded political and economic relations that constitutes asymmetric relations, but also through the lens of mutuality (Hayhoe, 1986b, 1989; Leng, 2013).

Thus, instead of clinging to the simplistic notions of the Northern partners directing (setting the agenda, managing, and controlling) the partnership, it is important to think of an alternative approach that opens up an analysis for understanding the patterns of North-South higher education partnership with the prospect of symmetry or mutuality. Most importantly, this study focuses on NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) supported partnership programs, where NORAD imagined a partnership between Norwegian and African HEIs to be grounded in a notion of mutual influence and responsibility (Nossum, 2016). Thus, mutuality lens (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1986b) appears a more suitable theoretical frame to understand how these partnership programs are formed and maintained with respect to issues of symmetry and asymmetry, and that this study uses it as a main theoretical framework.

The study also uses internationalization rationales (DeWit, 2002; Knight, 2004) to explore the major motives, expectations, or compelling reasons of the local partners in establishing partnerships with their Northern partners. Here, it is assumed that exploring the major rationales could serve understanding about the basis for initiating and establishing partnership programs. Yet, rationales can't reflect the full account of relationship patterns, and that mutuality lens (Galtung,

1980; Hayhoe, 1986b) is used as a main theoretical frame for further understanding the patterns of relationships between partners with respect to symmetry/asymmetry. The mutuality frame is used as a lens to examine the manifestations of equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity in the partnership development and to comparatively examine the two partnership programs with respect to the partners' positioning and the role they play in shaping the partnership dynamics.

3.1.1. Rationales of internationalization

Internationalization, as Knight (2004) defines, is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (p.11). Rationales are driving factors pushing HEI or its stakeholders towards internationalization (Ibid). Rationale explains why academic institutions take part in internationalization activities (Tamrat & Teferra, 2018) and guides the internationalization process the institutions engage in (Knight, 2004). Thus, it is often reflected as main strategic objectives or policy statements that institutions intend to achieve through internationalization activities (Jeptoo & Razia, 2012).

According to DeWit (2002) and Knight (2004), internationalization activities are driven by four generic rationales: economic, academic, socio-cultural, and political. In fact, these categories are broad and overlapping (Knight, 2004). Owing to different stakeholders with different interests, the type and priority of rationales may vary from country to country, from institution to institution, from stakeholder to stakeholder, and from time to time (Ibid). These typologies of different rationales can also account for international higher education partnership rationale, as international higher education partnership is basically conceptualized as manifestations of the larger global phenomenon of internationalization (Chan, 2004; Sutton & Obst, 2011), and it is one of the approaches of internationalization as demonstrated in such activities as research cooperation, student and staff exchange and joint trainings (Chan, 2004; Knight & DeWit, 1995).

According to some scholars, Altbach et al., 2009; Chan, 2004; DeWit, 2002, 2010; Knight, 2004), economic rationales are linked to demands for economic growth and competitiveness in the labor market, and for financial incentives. With the growth of economic interdependence, countries are increasingly in need of improving their scientific and technological competitiveness by producing research innovations and skilled professionals. To develop a highly skilled workforce and maintain

competitiveness, according to Jeptoo and Razia (2012), HEIs are pressed to diversify their funding sources through international partnerships. Moreover, financial incentives, for example, attracting fee-paying international students, patent and intellectual property rights, franchise arrangements, foreign or satellite campuses, and online delivery are international commercial activities in which HEIs are engaged in for generating income (Altbach et al., 2009; Knight, 2004; Kot, 2015; Sutton & Obst, 2011).

Academic rationales are related to the aims and functions of higher education, including strengthening institutional capacity, incorporating international dimension to research and teaching, raising institutional status, enhancing quality to achieve international standards, and extension of academic horizon (DeWit, 2002; Knight & DeWit, 1995; Kot, 2015; Qiang, 2003; Sutton & Obst, 2011). As Knight (2004) states, HEIs have given emphasis to the integration of international elements into teaching and research in order to increase international competence of faculty and students to prepare them to work effectively in both, domestic and international and intercultural contexts. HEIs are also motivated by the need for building their capacity through either pulling resources and expertise together or through support by the international partner (Kot, 2014; Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Oliphant, 2013). In so doing, they are trying to position themselves within the emerging global systems as this has an added impetus for further networking and for competing for student recruitment and fund (Altbach et al., 2009; Chan, 2004; Knight, 2004; Sutton & Obst, 2011). Related to this is interest in enhancing academic quality and achieving international standards by employing international activities (Jebtoo & Razia, 2012; Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

Socio-cultural rationales are related to improving intercultural understanding, national cultural identity, citizenship development, and social and community development (also DeWit 2002; Knight, 2004). In response to the homogenizing effect of globalization, HEIs are forced to preserve and promote their own national cultures and languages while also emphasizing on using foreign languages and cultures (Jeptoo & Razia, 2012; Qiang, 2003). Related to this point is the importance of fostering intercultural understanding and communication skills of individuals that contribute to their social and professional development.

The political rationales, on the other hand, are related to foreign policy, national security, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, and national and regional identity (DeWit, 2002; Jeptoo & Razia, 2012; Knight, 2004). In this regard, higher education international activities are seen as vehicles for improving diplomatic relations, national images, geopolitical ties, and as a means of promoting the political systems (Ibid). According to Baskerville (2013), international higher education partnerships are grounded on answers to questions pertaining to motives like: What do partners expect to derive from the partnership? Why do they propose to work together rather than carrying out the programs by themselves? Why do they prefer to form partnership with the partner rather than with another? Thus, it is important that internationalization rationales are adopted to be used as a framework for this study to explore the rationales that derive the local partners to form the partnership.

3.1.2. Mutuality in Higher Education Partnership

This study uses the mutuality lens, as conceived by Galtung (1980) and later refined by Hayhoe (1986b) to explain the patterns of relationships in partnership in light of the positioning of partners, and how that shapes the partnership development process and outcomes. Mutuality is viewed as a key dimension and essence of partnership, as the concept of partnership is normatively linked to collaboration based on mutually beneficial processes and outcomes (Brinkerhoff, 2002). Brinkerhoff (2002) further views mutuality as "…equality in decision making as opposed to domination of one or more partners" (p.23) and interdependence as opposed to dependence. Similarly, Galtung (1980) views mutuality as the opposite of imperialism (or dominance relation).

According to Galtung (1980), imperialism is a type of relationship whereby one society dominates another through four structural violence mechanisms: exploitation, penetration, fragmentation, and marginalization. In contrast to these, he proposes four structurally-oriented goals of international relations that work to reduce power differentials and which promotes mutuality in an international cooperation (Leng & Pan, 2013). These are equity against exploitation through vertical division of labor between researchers in the center and periphery; autonomy against penetration that sets up artificial foreign knowledge standards; solidarity that leads to domestication of foreign knowledge against fragmentation that leads to competition for the foreign inputs; and participation against marginalization of peripheral participants (or researchers) that forces them to play a subordinate

role in the knowledge production (Hayhoe, 1986a,1989; Leng, 2015). These aspects, as to Galtung (1980) and Hayhoe (1986b), can reduce the effect of imperialism (domination) embedded in international aid programs which have been contributing to the failure of knowledge transfer from the North to the South and the vice versa and against marginalization of the knowledge from South.

Hayhoe (1986b) has adapted Galtung's concept of mutuality and used it as a framework in her study of international cooperation in Chinese higher education during the 1980s. Drawing the four values of mutuality from Galtung (1980), she examined how the interaction process in cooperation programs between the universities of China and that of the developed countries supported equity, autonomy, solidarity, and participation on the one side, and exhibited patterns of exploitation, domination, fragmentation, and marginalization on the other. Then, she suggests that, although this framework is an ideal type, provides a relevant analytical framework to study the interaction process in educational cooperation between developed and developing nations in comparative terms if such interaction is in conformity with or tends to transform the global order (Hayhoe,1986b,1989). This frame is, therefore, useful for this study, as it involves understanding of comparison in the patterns of relationships exhibited in the partnership programs which support mutuality on the one side and conformity with the traditional asymmetry on the other side.

For Hayhoe (1986b), Gultung's structural-oriented goals of international relations: equity, autonomy, solidarity, and participation together make up the concept of mutuality in the partnership (see also Leng, 2015; Mwangi, 2017). Hayhoe summarizes the concept as follows:

> Equity suggests aims and forms of organization that are reached through full mutual agreement. Autonomy suggests a respect for the theoretical perspectives rooted in a peripheral culture that would require center participants to gain a thorough knowledge of this culture. Solidarity suggests forms of organization that encourage maximum interaction among peripheral participants and growing links between them and their fellow researchers. Participation intimates an approach to knowledge that does not stratify in a hierarchical way but assumes the possibility of a creative peripheral contribution from the very beginning (Hayhoe, 1986b, p.535).

Leng (2015), in his study of the Cambodian universities partnerships, also refined the framework to fit with the Cambodian context in the following way. Equity suggests that "aims and forms of partnership programs between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterparts...are mutually decided". Autonomy as a mechanism in which "both…participants are willing to learn

about and show respect for each other's culture, values, system of knowledge…." Similarly, solidarity meant to suggests that "Cambodian participants are connected with one another within and outside their own institutions [and]…to institutions in other Southern countries...." Participation referred to "Cambodian participants [who] maintain good communication among themselves as well as with their foreign counterparts…involved in the decision-making process…contribute to knowledge production, to the same (or accepted) degree as their foreign counterparts" (p.97). Drawing from this, the four aspects of the mutuality lens are of particular importance for this study.

Equity underlines types of partnership programs and their objectives that are formulated by partners collaboratively with joint agreement and consensus (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1986b). Equity supports the basis of non-coercive collective agreements and arrangements of partnership, leading partners to have equal positions in the decision-making process. According to Leng (2015) and Wanni et al. (2010), partnership arrangement based on joint-decisions and equal standings tend to reflect the needs of both parties and promote co-ownership. This kind of partnership arrangement contributes to collaboration and mutuality as opposed to domination and subordination.

Equity also emphasizes the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among partners with consensus and mutual agreement. In the context of mutuality, North-South higher education partnerships are viewed as 'alliances among equals', with shared rights and responsibilities, joint determination of goals and activities, collective decision making, and mutual trust (Helms, 2015). As a matter of fact, partnership may not necessarily require exactly the same degree of involvement of both parties in each decision or activity, but it requires roughly equivalent overall distribution of responsibilities and roles in making decisions- throughout the partnership development (Helms, 2015; Koehn & Obamba, 2014; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). Although partners might differ in responsibilities, resource capacities, and status, partnerships need to be seen as a relationship among equals fundamentally (Ibid).

Partnerships that are based on equity offer opportunities for partners to contribute their expertise, skills, and other resources as needed, and results in benefits for both parties (Brinkerhoff, 2002,

2003). This implies that partnerships from which partners generally benefit fairly equally tend to be more enduring and successful (Ibid).

The concept *Autonomy* explains that partners respect values, norms, and working cultures of each other in their interactions in collaborative activities (Hayhoe,1986b; Leng, 2015). This requires that the northern partners give due respect to and seek to learn the expertise, cultures, and systems of knowledge of southern partners (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe,1986b). Galtung (1980) emphasizes on bringing partners into direct contact with each other in informal and formal meetings as ways to learn culture of each other, cultivate mutual respect and trust, and develop personal relationships, which are the basis for building and sustaining institutional relationships. Such open dialogues and frequent communications promote transparency and can even help to curb 'we/they' dichotomy among partners so that they develop mutual trust (Ibid).

Autonomy also assumes recognition of each partner's commitment and contributions to and benefits from the partnership that reflects mutuality (Mwangi, 2017). The outcome of autonomy reflects deep knowledge and understandings about each other that can lead to further dialogue and engagement beyond a superficial level (Ibid).

Solidarity suggests forms of partnership programs that encourage strong interactions between partners, and that facilitates further interconnections amongst the southern institutions as well as participant members (Hayhoe,1986b; Leng & Pan, 2013). As Leng (2015) states, maximizing the interactions between partners contributes towards enhancing knowledge transfer and mutual support for one another and lessening the external influence of aid agencies on the partnership. The outcome of solidarity reflects engaged and sustained relationships between partners and the formation of further linkages and collaborations. Further interconnections between the Southern partners create opportunities for partners to experience horizontal relationships.

Mutuality tenet of *participation* assumes that the southern partners engage fully in all the partnership activities and contribute to knowledge production (Leng, 2013, 2015; Hayhoe,1986b). It also suggests that the engagement of partners in the partnership is horizontal, based on reciprocity, not hierarchical or stratified based on restriction and power imposition (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Mwangi, 2017). In this sense, although partners may differ in resources, expertise,

experience, and status, the southern groups are supposed to participate throughout the partnership development including decision making and knowledge production. Thus, the outcome of participation reflects mutual involvement in objectives, processes, and outcomes resulting in a two-way transfer of knowledge and experiences, rather than unidirectional flows (Hayhoe,1986b; Mwangi, 2017).

In a symmetrical partnership, according to Koehn and Obamba (2014), the Southern partners are given the participatory role in designing the partnership project that responds to the local needs and challenges to be addressed. It is frequently argued that partnership programs that are initiated and designed by the Northern partners, or by external funding agencies, are less likely to address the priority needs of the southern partners (e.g. Koehn &Obamba, 2014; Leng, 2015; Teferra, 2016). While partnerships in which the Southern partners proactively involve in initiating and planning would likely incorporate partnership agendas and activities that are in line with the local needs.

Mutuality lens has been used—and its utility is demonstrated—by scholars (e.g., Hayhoe,1986b, 1989; Leng, 2013, 2015; Leng & Pan, 2013; Mwangi, 2017; Shuguang & Xianjun, 2015) for studying international higher education partnerships. For example, Leng and Pan (2013) have analyzed the degree of mutuality in two partnership programs in higher education between Canada and China, and they found that the partnership programs have manifested the four characteristics of mutuality. They also recognized human relationships among partnership participants are crucial in fostering and sustaining mutuality. Leng (2013, 2015) has used the mutuality lens in his comparative study of Cambodian universities' partnerships with universities in France, USA, Japan, and South Korea to analyze power relations based on the Cambodians perspectives. He found that the different partnerships have manifested aspects of mutuality in various degrees based on experience and role of human agency. As he observed, due to lack of experience, there was a relatively low level of mutuality in partnership programs with Korean universities, especially with regard to decision-making (Ibid).

Mwangi (2017) also used the mutuality lens to study partnership power dynamics and the positioning of partners. She argued that mutuality is attainable at structural (e.g., societies, systems), institutional, and individual levels; it is a useful framework for approaching

collaboration between HEIs with sensitivity to the contexts of differing cultures and values (Ibid). She further underlined on the importance of mutuality frame to understand how partners negotiate and navigate issues of power in the partnership to understand their positioning, and how their positioning impacts engagement and outcomes of the partnership. Her study indicates the existence of power differentials between the U.S. and southern university partners that positioned them differently within the partnerships. She observed that although the U.S. partners, in most cases, had a desire for mutuality, there was lack of complete mutuality in practice. As she concluded, the positioning differential has played a role in setting a tone and foundation for partnership development and engagements (Ibid).

The present study involves examining how the partnerships are formed and functioning, and what patterns of relations between the northern and southern partners are exhibited with respect to issues of mutuality. Thus, the mutuality lens is useful to provide a framework against which the manifestations of aspects of mutuality in the partnership programs would be examined empirically. To have a complete understanding of the patterns of relationships with respect to both symmetry and asymmetry, this study involves both falsification as well as verification of mutuality aspects in the partnership development.

3.2. Conceptual Framework

The framework used in this study (see Fig.1) illustrates the presumed relationships amongst the major issues in focus. This conceptual framework is developed based from inferences informed by the theoretical and empirical studies on international higher education partnerships and the theories discussed above (internationalization and Mutuality lens). The *first* inference was that international partnership in higher education is built around the main rationales or the benefits an institution seeks to achieve, which type and priority may vary from institution to institution. Responding to global trends being the main rationale of HEIs for international partnership, specifically, they may be motivated by economic, academic, socio-cultural, or political related factors, or by a combination of some or all of these. As institutions are likely to have differing objectives and demands, it may not be easy to identify categories of rationales that drive Ethiopian HEIs to engage in international partnership. Thus, this framework was used to inform the study in terms of rationales for local partners to engage in international partnerships.

The *second* inference was drawn from the assumption that the rationale for partnership is a base for the initiation and establishment of the partnership. This serves to make an inquiry how far the identified rationales of the two partnership programs have contributed to shaping their initiation, formation, and outcomes. The *third* inference was made from the view that the partnership development process may involve initiation, building, operation, and evaluation stages. This served as a conceptual model to map out the processes and experiences of partnership development and, along this it inquired how the partnerships are formed and functioning and examined which partner plays what roles.

The *fourth* inference was derived from the thought that international higher education partnerships may manifest symmetrical or asymmetrical patterns of relationships. These patterns can better be understood through examining the positioning of partners as they engage in the partnership development process using the mutuality frame. Thus, this analytical frame helped the researcher to inquiry how participants of the local partners experience the partnership development process so as to identify emerging patterns of relationship vis-à-vis mutuality in terms of equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity; and also, to inquire if and how these patterns shape the dynamics of the overall partnership.

This conceptual model was, thus, a synthesis of the partnership programs, rationales, partnership development stages, and aspects of mutuality; it showed the presumed relationships amongst them to be examined being sensitive to contexts surrounding each case of the partnership program. This analytical model, therefore, served as a backdrop against which the participants' interpretations of their experience as they engage in the partnership development process (initiation, building, operation, and evaluation stages) with respect to mutuality that was explored in each case, and analyzed comparatively between the two partnership cases to synthesize their similarities and differences.

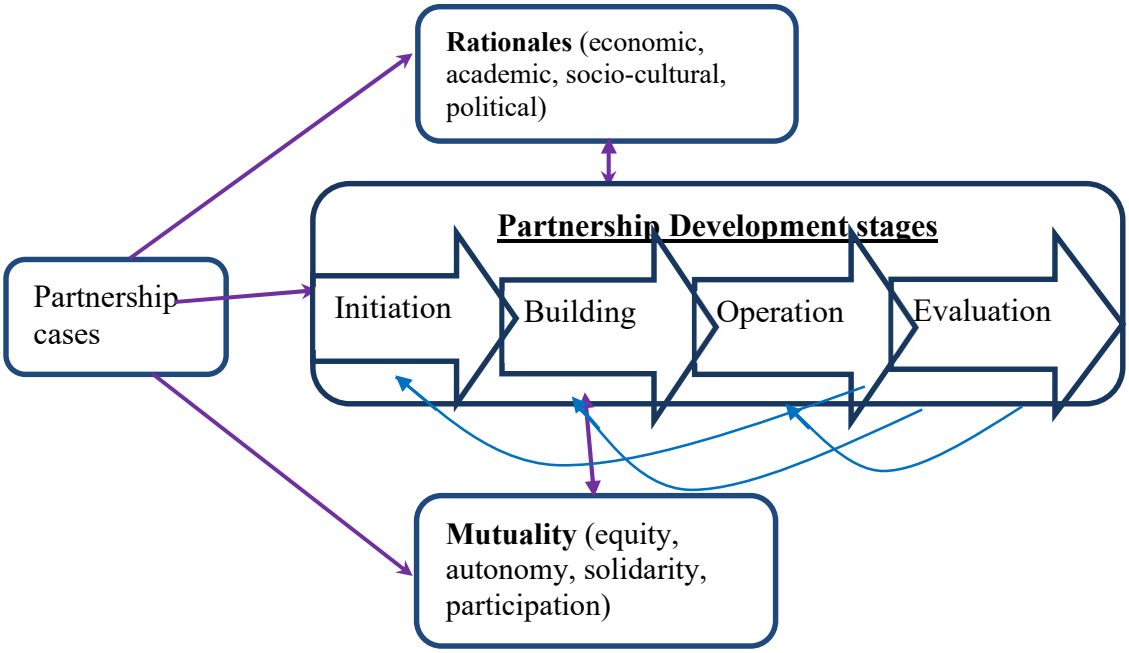

Fig.1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Adapted from DeWit (2002), Galtung (1980), Hayhoe (1986), Knight (2004), Koehn & Obamba (2014); Leng (2015); Wanni et al. (2010)

Chapter Four

Research Methodology and Design

4.1. Research Paradigm

This study takes the ontological position of constructionism, which considers realities as "… social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors" (Bryman, 2012, p.33). Constructionists view social realities as the outcomes of interaction of individuals with their world (Ibid). Based on this perspective, a researcher can 'construct' knowledge and understand social events, processes, or activities (e.g., partnership in this study) through interacting with the research setting. Accordingly, in this study, I have tried to develop understandings about the formation and functioning of international partnerships in higher education, as constructed by the participants who have engaged in the partnership.

Constructivists believe that different individuals construct meanings differently (Cresswell, 2014). Consistent with this, I approached this inquiry with the assumption that staff and students who have participated in the partnership hold subjective meanings based on their experiences often shaped contextually and socially. Hence, I employed a qualitative research approach—that fits well with the constructionism ontology—in a way, I entertained the voices of individuals and tried to capture multiple and subjective views on the particular partnership programs under study. This approach has enabled me to develop more insights into the specific contexts of the two partnerships programs.

Epistemologically, this study took interpretivist position, which is appropriate to understand and interpret the nature of social reality in terms of actors/participants (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2000). Interpretivism epistemology, with a stance of seeking to see through the eyes of research participants is very much in tune with the qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Thus, qualitative research has helped me capture research participants' views and interpret the meaning they hold about their partnership experience.

Given that interpretive qualitative research requires understanding the context from the perspectives of those who experience it (Jones et al, 2006), the approach also fits with my personal intent which is supported by scholars' (e.g. Koehn & Obamba, 2014) suggestion for an in-depth

African views and voices on the contexts and challenges surrounding the partnerships involving African higher education as inputs for advancing symmetry and mitigating problematic consequences. Hence, I used this epistemological position to understand the patterns of relationships exhibited in the partnerships from the perspectives of the Southern partners—those arguably seldom heard.

As this study intended to involve in-depth understanding and exploration of the participants' views regarding the rationales, partnership development, and patterns of relationships between partners, it employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is appropriate for such studies whose purpose is exploring the issue in-depth (Creswell, 2014; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006) and for understanding social realities from the point of view of participants (Bryman, 2012; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Hatch, 2002). As this approach is also useful to answer 'what' and 'how' questions (Patton, 2002), it helped me not only to explore partnership rationales, but also to understand how the partnerships were initiated, built, and operated, and what patterns of relationships were exhibited.

Other reasons why I employed the qualitative approach were its appropriateness for collecting data through face-to-face interaction with the participants in their natural setting; to use different data sources and data collection methods, i.e., interviews with staff and students and document analysis; and to understand the formation and development of partnership based on what the participants experience and the meaning they held about their experience (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

In brief, this study was based on the conviction that realities with regard to the problem under study (i.e., partnership rationales, development, and partners' positioning) are largely constructed by partnership participants as perceptions of their experiences, and that my interaction with them and with the research setting through qualitative interviews and document analysis was so crucial to understand and interpret what and how they perceived their partnership experiences. Moreover, I have learned from the literature and thus felt that the failure of many North-South higher education partnership projects has been attributed to positivist thinking—a paradigm which tends to ignore the local contexts, values, and cultures of the peripheral world, all of which are the interests of mine. These beliefs, assumptions, and interests are congruent with the constructionism ontological and interpretivism epistemological stances, or worldviews—the paradigmatic

orientation which this study. Guided by this paradigmatic orientation, I have employed a qualitative research and tried to uncover the contexts surrounding issues of rationales, partnership development process, and patterns of relations in two cases of partnership programs formed between universities of Ethiopia and Norway, from the viewpoints of faculty and students of Ethiopian universities.

3.3. Research Design

Under the umbrella of the qualitative research approach, the study employed a comparative case study design. A comparative case study design combines a case study—to build an in-depth and a holistic understanding of the issue under investigation and to closely examine each case taking its unique context into account (O'leary, 2004)—and a comparative study—to analyze and synthesize similarities and differences between the two cases (Goodrick, 2014). Comparative Case Study, sometimes called 'Multiple Case Study', is designed for the purpose of comparison by considering two or more cases sharing common characteristics using more or less identical methods (Bryman, 2012). Thus, comparative case study design suited such a study of the experiences of two partnership programs, each was treated as a case in order to explore and understand each case separately and then to compare the two cases of partnerships in terms of rationales, partnership development, and patterns of relationships.

A case study is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 2009, p.42). Its focus was on the specified case(s) which the researcher selects to explore and understand in-depth. A case may be a program, an institution, an event, an activity or a process with delimited boundaries (usually spatial and temporal) for which a researcher is interested in for detailed analysis (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2011). This study, therefore, took a partnership program with its stakeholders and bounded system as a case, in an attempt to build an intense understanding of issues of rationales and practices that shape the partnership dynamics.

With the intention of better understanding the issue under investigation and to pinpoint the differences and similarities between the two partnership cases, this study employed a comparative study. Comparative study entails an examination of two or more entities or events by putting them side by side and looking for similarities and differences between or among them (Crossley &

Watson, 2003; Goodrick, 2014). Comparative study seeks for an explanation of similarities and differences or to gain a deeper understanding of social reality in a different context in each case (Bryman, 2012). The logic behind comparison is that "…we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations" (Ibid, p.72). Taking this logical assumption into account, this study involved a comparison between the two cases of partnership programs.

3.4. Setting and Case Selection

In an attempt to understand the local partner's experience in international higher education partnership in Ethiopia, this study focused on the partnerships with the Norwegian higher education for the reason that Norwegian HEIs are among those which have had long (more than 28 years) partnership experiences with Ethiopian HEIs (*see more 5.2.*). Plus, such partnerships can represent the North-South relations which lead to a question of inequality and asymmetry, whilst Norway consistently claims humanitarianism and welfare ideology—which conflicted with the Western neoliberal ideology—as its main rationale for its development assistance (Weinrib, 2012). Yet, it was not known how far this claim practically conforms to and opens up spaces for the Norwegian HEIs to form symmetrical relationships with universities in Ethiopia.

Two Ethiopian universities (EU1 and EU2) were selected as a focus of the study to understand their partnership experiences with a Norwegian University (NU). In this respect, they were not taken as cases by themselves but as aspects of the context. The reasons for the selection of these universities were the following contextual commonalities and differences: These universities are amongst the 'first generation' universities in Ethiopia with long-time international partnership experience and were recognized to have played significant roles of staff training of other local universities (second generation and below) as a result of the NORAD supported partnership programs (Jávorka et al., 2018); they are public universities, as international partnerships in Africa mostly involve public universities (Samoff & Carrol, 2004); and they have long been engaged in partnerships with the Norwegian universities (Nossum, 2016).

Specifically, the study focused on two partnership programs formed between the two selected Ethiopian universities (EU1 and EU2) with a Norwegian university (NU): One was formed between EU1 and NU focusing on language (hence referred to as Language partnership) and the

other was between EU2 and NU focusing on areas of health (referred to as Health partnership). These two programs were selected as cases from 11 partnership programs between Universities of Ethiopia and Norway which were active at the time of sampling (Jávorka et al., 2018). In a comparative case study design, it is important to use criteria for selecting comparable cases (Mwangi, 2017). Accordingly, criteria related to their similarities and differences were used to select the two cases of partnership programs. These criteria were important to understand how the partnerships are formed and sustained and what pattern of relationships exists and compares across the different partnership contexts. Related to their similarities, both of these partnership programs involved 'first generation' universities (EU1 and EU2); they focused on capacity building of the local partner in their respective fields; they were funded by NORAD under NORHED modality; and they were running at the same period of time, from 2013 to 2018. Thus, these cases were comparable, as they shared common goals (Goodrick, 2014) and had commonalities in terms of their data sources and constructs, or issues to be studied (Steiner-Khamsi, 2002).

Although the two partnership programs shared such similarities, they also varied in areas of partnership (one is on Language and the other is on Health) and in institutional contexts (e.g., in capacity and experience) that may account for differences in the two partnership cases in terms of rationales, formation and development of process, and relationship patterns. These similarities and differences conveyed an inherent assumption that the two cases of partnership programs may or may not manifest similar relationship dynamics. Thus, it was found interesting to examine and compare the two cases in order to learn from experience of each and from which other institutions can learn and draw important lessons to be considered and practiced in initiating, building, and maintaining a relationship, as Ethiopia is still seeking to further expand its international higher education partnership.

3.5. Sampling Procedure

The major data sources were administrative, and academic staff (instructors and researchers), and graduate students who have participated in the partnership; and relevant documents. Here the administrative staff members were those academic staff in managerial positions including vice-presidents, directors, deans, and department heads who have participated in the partnership development process.

This study employed purposive and snowballing sampling techniques to select participants for the interviews. In the purposive sampling method, sample units are deliberately selected for they are expected as salient to the study in providing rich information (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011). Thus, administrative staff participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the assumption that they can provide rich information as they were expected to be aware of the policies, procedures, and arrangements for the development of the partnership and as they were assumed to play important roles in scrutinizing and approving the partnership programs.

The snowball sampling technique was used to select academic staffs (instructors and/or researchers) with long experiences in establishing of partnerships and graduate students who have participated in the partnership. In this regard, participants were selected in such a way that first, I contacted with few participants relevant to the research questions, and then I requested these participants to propose me other participants who, they felt, have had more experiences in with partnerships. With my limited knowledge about participants, I selected academic staff and student participants through nomination beginning with the coordinators. In this process, I first contacted the coordinators; then asked them for referrals of names and any available contact information (phone number and e-mails) of instructors and/or researchers who have had better involvement in the partnership programs. This helped me to make contact with them so as to get the necessary information regarding their experience in the partnership programs. I followed the same procedure to get access to graduate students (PhD and Masters). The coordinators, through interviews, not only recommended me and gave me the telephone and e-mail addresses of many potential participants with better experiences in the partnership programs, but also offered me relevant documents, rich contextual information about partnership programs and relevant data regarding my research questions.

Following this procedure, i.e. using the purposive and snowballing sampling technique, I managed to interview 47 participants. Nine of them were academic managers engaged in administrative works (five from EU1 and four from EU2); 16 of them were academic staff (instructors and/or researchers), (10 from EU1 and six from EU2); 18 of them were PhD students (nine from each) and four of them were Master students (all from EU2). Of these, 15 (33%) were females: one administrative staff from EU1; four academic staff, two from each the EUs; 10 students, five from each partnership (see Table-1).

Table 1: Summary of study participants

Language partnership				Health partnership			
Participants	**F**	**M**	**Total**	**Participant**	**F**	**M**	**Total**
Administrative staff	1	4	5	Administrative staff	-	4	4
Academic staff	2	8	10	Academic Staff	2	4	6
PhD students	5	4	9	PhD Students	4	5	9
				MPhil Students	1	3	4
Total	8	16	24		7	16	23

Of course, it was difficult to categorize some participants into a single group as they have been engaged in different functions in the partnership. For example, the administrative staff also worked as academic staff, an most of them (especially Deans and Department heads) have been directly participating in the partnership operation process, either before or after they assume their managerial position. In this regard, three of the EU1 administrative staff participants have also been working as teachers, advisors, and researchers in the partnership program; and two of the EU2 administrative staff have participated in some collaborative tasks such as in workshops and curriculum review activities. Moreover, as most of the PhD students were also academic staff members, they had participated in the early stages of the partnership development process before they started their PhD study. In this regard, all nine of the EU2 PhD student participants had participated in the early stages of the partnership development (especially in need identification and planning), and three out of the nine EU1 PhD student participants had participated in the partnership development process.

Moreover, relevant documents were selected on the basis of their contemporaries at the time of establishment of the partnership programs under study. As the partnership programs which this study focused on were established in 2013 and have run for a period of five years, the documents used for understanding the contexts and underlying policy basis were those which were published or prepared before or during this period. Accordingly, documents dealing with government development policies, strategies, and plans, such as the Second Growth and Transformation Plan, the Fifth Education Sector Development Program, The Higher Education Proclamation, number 650/2009, and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy and the strategic plans of the two case universities were selected for the document analysis.

3.6. Data Collection

Document analysis and semi-structured interviews were used as instruments to collect rich and detailed information, The following section explains data collection methods and provides a summary of the purposes of collecting each subset of data, data collection methods, and sources of data (Table-2).

Table 2. Summary for purposes of collecting each subset of data, methods, and data sources

Purposes	Data collection method	Data source
Highlighting policy contexts	Document review	Government policy and strategic plans, including the Second Growth and Transformation Plan, the Fifth Education Sector Development Program, The Higher Education Proclamation (2009, and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2012), and Strategic plans of EU1 and EU2
	Semi-structured interview	Administrative staff participants
Establishing an overview of the partnership programs	Document review	MoUs, agreements, partnership proposals and implementation plans, progress reports, websites
	Semi-structured interview	All interview participants
Exploring rationales and identifying the prioritized one	Document analysis	Partnership agreements and partnership proposals with a detail implementation plan
	Semi-structured interview	All interview participants
Map out partnership development process and examine the partner's positioning in the partnership	Document analysis	Institutional strategic plans, MoUs, agreements, partnership proposals and plans, annual progress reports, minutes, websites
	Semi-structured interview	All interview participants

3.6.1. Document analysis

Documents including national policies and strategic plans and institutional strategic plans that are used for understanding the contexts and the underlying policy basis were collected from the internet. Other relevant documents such as Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs), partnership agreements, partnership proposals including detail implementation plan, narratives of annual progressive reports, and minutes of meetings were collected from the partnership coordinators and from websites of the respective universities. I was fortunate that I have got easy access to these

documents, as the coordinators had already made them ready for the Mid-term Review Team. These documents were useful for me to gain written evidence, text data ready for analysis with no need of transcription (Creswell, 2014).

Accordingly, the documents were analyzed and important information was secured regarding policy contexts, partnership purposes, partnership areas and activities, funding sources, rationales (declared ones), roles and responsibilities of each partner, partner contributions and commitments, achievements, challenges, and other issues which the partners agreed upon. These issues used for understanding and capturing a complete picture of the major concerns of the study; the rationales, the formation and functioning of the partnerships, and the patterns of relationship with respect to partners' positioning in the partnership.

3.6.2. Semi-structured interviews

In this study, the interviews were made using an interview guide developed on the basis of the research questions (see *Appendices A-D)*, consisting of a mix of structured interview questions (Merriam, 2009). While the more flexible list of questions or issues guided the largest part of the interview for in-depth exploration of the study topic, a more structured section was also employed when specific information was desired. I also used follow-up questions or probes to elicit more information, descriptions, and explanations from the participants. Accordingly, rich and in-depth information were secured about participants' viewpoints regarding: the overall contexts surrounding the partnership programs pertaining to policies and procedures, strategies and priorities for international partnership, rationales to forge the partnerships, how the partnerships were formed and functioning, and how the local partners saw their experience in light of their positioning in the partnerships. Moreover, as the typology of data collection such as "…rank ordering (which comes first?), comparing (what's the same or different?) along with direct questioning" were adapted for use in the interviews (Hatch, 2002, p. 96),. The rank ordering question was used for participants to rank their perceived priority rationales for establishing partnership with the northern partners.

Prior to participating in the interviews, participants were provided with information and a consent letter outlining the expectations of their participation, and permission was obtained from each participant. An interview with each participant took between 45 and 80 minutes, during which they

were asked to express their opinions and reflections regarding their personal and professional experiences as participants in the process of developing the partnership program. All the interviews were made in Amharic. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face at locations and time that were convenient for the interviewees, and the rest were conducted through telephone. With the consent of participants, many interviews were digitally recorded. Where the f participants' declined recording, interview data were taken through note-taking.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

In studies involving human participants, an ethical protocol is required to ensure participants have full information to make informed decisions to participate in the research (Bryman, 2012). In view of that, this study took into consideration major ethical issues on which the participants showed their consent before approaching them for data collection. Accordingly, I contacted each potential participant through either e-mail, phone call, or face-to-face, and then I gave them an informed consent form detailing all the ethical aspects and request for participating in the interviews. I also gave them copies of the support letters which I got from the Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies (CCEPS) that informed them of institutional approval of the study. This conversation with the participants about informed consent was found to be important for open and respectful information exchanges.

The consent form (see Appendix-G) describes the title, objectives, and significance of the study, the type of information sought from them, and the time it would take to complete the interviews. The form also informed potential participants about ethical issues considered. In this regard, they were informed as their identities (address, names, etc.) were not to be used in the study and instead codes would be used to ensure anonymity; as all the information they would provide would be kept confidential in a secure location; and as they were not obligated to respond or talk about issues on which they were not comfortable, and even to withdraw from their participation at any time. Accordingly, I have got each participant's consent before starting the data collection process. Moreover, before I began the interviews, I requested participants if they were willing their interviews to be digitally recorded, and got permission from many of them. During the conversation about the content of the consent form, some participants also wanted the identity of their institution not to be revealed. Accordingly, all what had been promised before the interviews

were guaranteed; for example, partnering institutions and participants were anonymized by using codes (see Appendix-F).

3.8. Data Analysis

The data analysis involved two phases: in the first phase, each case was explored separately and in-depth; and in the second phase, a cross-case analysis and discussion were conducted, including synthesizing similarities and identification of differences among the two.

As the data were qualitative, data analysis started at the time of data collection as I was concurrently transcribing interviews, organizing and summarizing them, understanding meanings, and identifying emerging themes. The data were interpreted using thematic analysis, which involved constructing an index of central themes and subthemes, identifying emerging themes through reading and rereading, and categorizing them simultaneously (Bryman, 2012). Thus, data from documents, interview transcripts, and notes were carefully and repeatedly reviewed to dig up themes and subthemes in each case. Then data that are assumed relevant to these themes and subthemes were coded (Merriam, 2009).

Here, the basic research questions provided the guiding basis for identifying and establishing the central themes, particularly the rationales, partnership development process, and the positioning of partners. Moreover, concepts drawn from the theoretical frames and the literature also provided the guiding basis for identifying themes and subthemes. For example, the four generic rationales of internationalization (DeWit, 2002; Knight; 2004) provided a guide for theme identification and coding in the analysis of partnership rationale; while the mutuality frame (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1986b; Leng, 2013, 2015; Mwangi, 2017) and concepts taken from literature in partnership development provided a guide for theme identification and coding in the analysis of partnership development and positioning of partners.

In the analysis of partnership rationale in each case, first, I made a document analysis to explore the declared (intended) rationales in the text; then followed an analysis of interview data to explore the perceived rationales; and finally, of the results from document and interview analyses were integrated. In the document analysis, first, relevant documents (Partnership Agreement document and Proposal/including detail implementation plan) were coded to identify “data that strike as

interesting, potentially relevant" (Merriam, 2009, p. 178) associated to rationales. As rationales are understood as drives or motives (interests, compelling factors, intentions, or expected benefits) behind engaging in or forging international higher education partnership (DeWit, 2002; Knight; 2004), texts (statements and/or phrases) in the document that signify these motives or drives were annotated (coded) as rationales. Accordingly, intentions, interests, and expectations declared in the documents emerged into themes. Then, these themes were compared with—and thus, based on their relatedness, clumped into—the major themes or rationales (see themes and major themes in Appendices-H & I).

A similar procedure was followed in the analysis of the interview transcripts that the participants described as rationales. Then, the results obtained from the analysis of the documents and interviews were integrated and supplemented to each other, and thus provided a detailed account of rationales in each case. For identifying the dominant or priority rationale, the frequencies—the number of texts in the document that signifies each theme and major-theme—were counted (Appendices-H &I). This was also supplemented by responses to the rank ordering question in the interview. Finally, the two cases were compared with regard to the salient rationales emerged, and that the differences and similarities between the two cases were explored and synthesized.

In the analysis of the partnership development in each case, data secured from the document analysis and interviews were coded with respect to themes—partnership initiation, building, operation, and evaluation processes. The coded data from the documents and interview transcripts complemented each other and provided a detail description and explanation of each case regarding the partnership development process. Then a cross-case analysis was made whereby results of the two cases were synthesized along with the thematic groupings that emerged across the two cases and then compared between the two cases. Finally, a thorough constant comparison (Yin, 2011) was made to understand partners' positioning, and that data were coded with respect to constructs that emerged from mutuality frame—equity, autonomy, solidarity, and participation. Accordingly, differences and similarities between the two cases were identified and synthesized.

3.9. Ensuring Trustworthiness

The collection and interpretation of accurate data to produce findings that truly reflect the issue studied is an indicator of the quality and acceptance of a research, including qualitative research

(Yin, 2011). However, the meaning of validity (correctness of data and generalizability of findings) and reliability (consistency of data) with the connotations of 'measurement' are not directly applicable to qualitative research. Instead, 'trustworthiness' (establishing confidence in the findings) is a better way for describing, and assessing the quality of qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Thus, establishing or ensuring trustworthiness is required for a qualitative study to be acceptable. To establish trustworthiness in qualitative study, different methods are suggested, for example, triangulation, participant validation, thick data, and long-term interaction with participants (Bryman, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011).

Accordingly, in an attempt to triangulate this study, converging evidences were collected from different data sources (such as staff with managerial positions, instructors and/or researchers, graduate students, and documents) using two different methods, document analysis and semi-structured interview. Such multiple sources of information are more trusted to provide comprehensive perspectives than a single source of information. Moreover, multiple data-gathering instruments are helpful for further triangulation.

Guides for interviews were given to advisors, colleagues, and other experts in search of their comments. Accordingly, their comments were considered in making the necessary modifications in the guides for establishing evidence of dependability and credibility (Bryman, 2012). For each basic question, rich and thick data were collected from the different groups of participants. Such detailed accounts of the research question served as a base to make judgments about the possible transferability of findings.

With the consent of the participants, many of the interview responses were recorded for retrieval and better understandings. Moreover, as much as possible I have tried to avoid my personal perspectives in the qualitative findings by using participants' own words and taking verbatim from their speeches. Self-reports and actual language of participants were found important when ensuring the findings as they were based on explicit sets of evidence.

Chapter Five

Context of the Study

This chapter presents brief contexts surrounding Ethiopian higher education within the changing global circumstances. The first section presents a brief description of Ethiopian higher education: its brief historical developments, policy changes and reforms, and associated expansion issues and challenges. The second section highlights the Ethio-Norway bilateral educational cooperation that underlies higher education partnerships of the two countries. The third section highlights the policy contexts underlying the international higher education partnerships in Ethiopia, followed by brief profiles of the partnering institutions in which is the last section.

5.1. Ethiopian Higher Education System: Brief Review

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa after Nigeria, with an estimated population of over 91 million (Bishaw & Lasser, 2012). The country has experienced economic and social challenges as it is one of the poorest countries with its economy largely dependent on agriculture, which accounts for about 47% of the national income and 90% of the country's exports (UNESCO, 2015). Over the past recent decades, aiming at reaching middle-income status by 2025, the government has embarked on a rapid, multi-pronged poverty reduction strategies and programs. It has made many policy reforms and institutional restructuring in most of its development sectors. Promisingly, the past few years have been characterized by strong and broad-based economic growth, averaging 10.8% increase per year during 2003/04–2012/13 years (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016).

In the last few decades, the country has invested heavily in education (Kvil, Nilson, & Thorsen, 2015). For example, during the years 1999/00 to 2008/09, the share of public education expenditure from the total government expenditure increased from 11.28% to 23.6%, and that of higher education expenditure from the total education expenditure increased from 10.21% to 22.6%. This indicates that the country has given emphasis to and tried to bolster its educational system, including the higher education subsector in order to provide the workforce with the knowledge and skills required to keep up the economic growth.

Ethiopia had a two millennia-old indigenous education, linked to its Orthodox Church and Islamic Mosque (Zewde, 2002). This traditional education had been the predominant form of education producing the elites of the country for many years. However, modern Western-style and secular higher education in Ethiopia has a short history of about seven decades. It was introduced in 1950 with the establishment of the then University College of Addis Ababa, currently called Addis Ababa University—remained the only university until the opening of Alemaya University (now Haromaya University) in 1985 (Semela, 2006). In two decades, following the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa, about half a dozen specialized technical colleges were also established to offer professional training in the fields of agriculture, engineering, public health, and teacher education (ibid).

As Ethiopia did not experience colonization, unlike other African countries, its higher education system had not begun as a foreign implant imposed by a direct colonial influence and imposition. In fact, although Ethiopia had "…managed to resist the forceful imposition of colonial culture, language, and curriculum", it had voluntarily adopted a Western education system at the end of the 19th century through Western teachers invited for assistance (Semela &Ayalew, 2008, p. 163). Since then, Ethiopia has also been incorporating the Western education system through various ways like missionary schools, local elites who studied in Western universities (Zewde, 2002), and various internationalization activities (Semela & Ayalew, 2008). Its higher education was also a voluntary adoption of the Western higher education model, particularly of the UK and USA in the 1950s (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016). Yet, Ethiopia has historically been trying to resist the Western influence, for example, by signing contracts with foreign teachers and experts that forbid their involvement in religious, political, and other matters (Zewde, 2002).

During the post-revolution military government (1974–1991), there were reforms that swiftly took over the Western-style education and geared towards realigning the education system along the Marxist-Leninist ideology (Semela, 2014; Zewde, 2002). Of course, this influence of communist ideology in Ethiopian education came to an end soon, with the collapse of the Communist bloc. During this command system of the socialist regime, there was no private higher education; the education system was highly centralized by the state with no or little say by the academe (Assefa, 2014). Undeniably, there were some positive developments during the era. For instance, with an emphasis on universal polytechnic education to enhance integration into the world of labor, a

handful of junior colleges were set up (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016), which have laid foundations for some of the Universities today (e.g. Arba-Minch and Jimma Universities). Yet, expansion and development of higher education remained very slow until 2000s. This could be, partly, due to the civil war and political unrest during the 1974 to 1991(Assefa, 2014), and partly attributed to lack of international support to African higher education, including that of the Ethiopian higher education.

Later, following the development of Education and Training Policy (ETP) in 1994, a number of reforms and programs have been introduced. Especially over the last two decades, given the recognition of the role of higher education in the knowledge economy, there have been tremendous reforms and expansion of higher education sector to enable the country to make meaningful contributions to reducing poverty and transforming the nation to a middle-income country by 2025. Since the early 2000s, some existing junior level institutions have been elevated to full-fledged public universities, and other new public universities have been established. Then by the year 2013/14 (*year of establishment of the two partnership programs which this study focuses on*), the country has got 33 full-fledged public universities compared to only two by the end of the 1990s (MOE., 2015b). Recently, the number of public universities has grown up to 44. The number of private HEIs has also shown a sharp increment, mainly in diploma and to some extent in degree level (Semela, 2006). Up to the end of the ESDP-IV (2014/15), the number of accredited private HEIs reached to 98, covering 15% of the total enrolments of ESDP-IV period (MOE., 2015a).

Accordingly, in both public and private HEIs, the total undergraduate enrollment in all programs (regular, evening, summer and distance) has increased from 420,387 in 2009/10 to 755, 244 in 2014/15; and similarly, postgraduate enrolment has increased from 14,272 in 2009/10 to 33,915 in 2014/15 (FDRE National Planning Commission, 2016). Along the expansions of HEIs, there were major reforms and programs including the subsequent Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs—*so far four phases, ESDP I-IV, from 1998 to 2014/15*), enactment of Higher Education Proclamation (HEP) in 2003 and revised later in 2009 (serve as a legal basis for establishment and function of HEIs and bestows them a semi-autonomous status), and establishment of Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) and Higher Education Strategic Center (HESC) in 2003 that provide system oversight. Other reforms and subsequent changes introduced in Ethiopian higher education include cost-sharing, privatization,

new and diverse fields of study, quality assurance system, emphasis on science and technology fields, and others. With respect to higher education, the ESDP-IV emphasizes on the expansion and improvement of the governance system, improving the quality of graduates, sustainable development of research capacity, and technology transfer in priority sectors.

Despite the far-reaching expansion of HEIs, Ethiopian higher education has continued to suffer from a number of challenges such as shortage of skilled faculty, resource constraints, poor infrastructure and working conditions, passive teaching methods, poor research culture, limited research fund, limited leadership capacity, and the concomitant declining overall quality and standard of education and research (Deuren et al., 2013; Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; MOE., 2015a).

To sum up, given that higher education systems around the world have gone through considerable reforms and policy changes over the past three to four decades in response to such factors as globalization, the increasing economic role of knowledge, the rise of information technology, and reduced public funding, so do these factors have impacted Ethiopian higher education, resulting in considerable reform initiatives and policy changes as of 1994. The reforms and policy changes have been intended for ensuring access, equity, relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of higher education, so as to contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth in the nation. These reforms have resulted in the massive expansion and thus better access, albeit attention to be paid to overall institutional strengthening and quality standards has come to be seen as having critical importance.

In view of that, an international partnership has become increasingly recognized as an instrument for institutional and faculty strengthening and improvement in the quality of training, research, and service of higher education in Africa, including Ethiopia (Teferra, 2014, Semela &Ayalew, 2008). Here, the absence of colonial ties—and a relatively limited impact of colonial culture—in Ethiopia and its historical cautions about the possible unhealthy foreign influences on its culture, language, politics, and religion appear to be important considerations for examining its higher education linkages with foreign partners. Altogether, it is also important to consider that Ethiopian education isn't completely free from foreign influences.

5.2. Ethio-Norway Relation in Education

The relation of Ethiopia with Norway has a long history manifested through missionary work, development aid, and politics (Norad, 2015a). Their ties were strengthened through visit of Emperor Haile Selassie to Norway in 1958 and the reciprocal visit of King Olav to Ethiopia in 1966 (Ibid). In fact, areas of collaboration were limited to infrastructure development such as support for the development of the Ethiopian Navy (1955 to 1965) and establishment of Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) in Ethiopia—a biomedical research institute established by University of Bergen in collaboration with the Norwegian and Swedish Save the Children and the Ethiopian Ministry of Health in 1970) (Vikum, 2017).

However, in spite of these long-time ties of Ethiopia and Norway, their relation was not upgraded to bilateral agreement until the overthrow of the Dergue regime. Norway opened its Embassy in Addis Ababa in 1992, and began its Official Development Assistance the following year. Their first bilateral cooperation agreement was signed only recently in 1995 (Norad, 2015a), after four years EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) came to power. The agreement was on strengthening human rights and democratic institutions. Since then the bilateral relation between two the countries has expanded, focusing on areas related to climate change, humanitarian issue, democracy and good governance (ibid).

In fact, the tie between TPLF/ EPRDF and the Norwegian development assistance went back to 1982 in the form of relief assistance by the Norwegian Development Fund (DF) to Relief Society of Tigray (REST) setup by Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Waters-Bayer, Tostensen, & GebreMichael, 2006) which, at that time, was fighting against the Dergue regime. Then, the projects evolved into socio-economic development supports to alleviate poverty and improve food security, mainly through agriculture and natural resource management in dry land areas (Waters-Bayer et al, 2006). Most of Development Fund works for many years have been in Tigray region. Later in 2003, it also gave attention to pastoral livelihood in Afar region (ibid). For the period 2003–06, Development Fund support to Ethiopia reached 68 million Norwegian Kroner (NOK). The support was also extended to educational institutions (e.g. Mekelle College of Dry land Agriculture and Mekelle University), focusing on prevention of environmental degradation, food security, HIV/AIDS prevention, animal health, dry land rehabilitation. According to Waters-Bayer

et al. (2006), this support was relevant to the MDGs including poverty reduction, gender equity, environmental sustainability, and combating HIV/AIDs in dry lands of Tigray and Afar regions.

Norway has given emphasis to support the Ethiopian education sector. For example, through budgetary support from NORAD, many Norwegian NGOs (e.g. Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Digni, Right to Play, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian People's Aid, and Save the Children Norway) were working for improving educational access and quality in Ethiopia (Norad, 2015a). Given Norway's commitment to the global education agenda with doubling of its budget from USD 200 million in 2013 to USD 400 million in 2017, Ethiopia became one of the four target countries for Norwegian educational support (Kvil et al., 2015). The reasons that Norway has chosen Ethiopia were: Norway's emphasis on reaching those who don't have access to quality education; Ethiopia's willingness to invest in education, in view of education for all; and Ethiopia's education emphasis to access, equity and quality—all of which are the interests of Norway's global commitment to education (Kvil et al., 2015; Norad, 2015a).

"Higher education and research are priority areas of Norway's development cooperation policy" (Norad, 2014, p.7). Norway has had a long-time commitment in supporting higher education and research in developing countries through NORAD's funding, even when development fund to higher education was in decline (Teferra, 2016; Weinrib, 2012). For example, Addis Ababa, Jimma, Hawassa, and Mekelle Universities have been partnering with Norwegian HEIs with the supports from the Norwegian Embassy for the last 20 years (Joseph, 2016). NUFU (Norwegian Program for Development, Research and Education) had been the primary means of Norway's support to universities of the global periphery over the past 25 years, until 2012, focusing on academic research and training of individual researchers. NOMA (Norad's Program for Master Studies) was also another program running at the Southern institutions through partnerships between Norwegian and southern HEIs. Recently, in 2012, NOMA and NUFU were replaced by NORHED (Norwegian Program for Capacity Development of Higher Education and Research for Development), aiming at strengthening the capacity of higher education in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) and contribute to more qualified workforce, increase knowledge, evidence-based policy and decision-making, and gender equality (Nossum, 2016). The partnership projects may combine different capacity building elements like research, PhD and Master's education, and supply of institutional infrastructures.

NORHED manages partnerships between HEIs of Norway and LMICs (including Ethiopia) through an open competitive award basis, primarily funded by NORAD. NORAD also provides seed fund competition for partners to develop joint-proposal for partnership. In this regard, in the period 2013-2018, Ethiopia was one of the five countries which received the largest budget share of NORHED (Norad, 2014; Norad, 2015b). In this period, "Ethiopia has the largest number of institutions (10) taking part in the implementation of NORHED projects 3" (Norad, 2015b, p. 12). Moreover, recently, projects on the quality of primary education proposed by Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa Universities have got acceptance of NORHED's support from 2016-2021 (Norad, 2016).

NORHED's (Norwegian Program for Capacity Development of Higher Education and Research for Development) project focuses on areas of education; health; natural resource, climate change, and environment; humanities, culture, and communication; capacity development; and governance (Norad, n.d.). In NORHED supported projects, Norwegian policy also gives particular emphasis to gender mainstreaming, reaching those that have been excluded from quality education, and anti-corruption activities (Ibid).

From the Norwegian perspective, Norway's interest to partner with the southern countries is to assist them to develop higher education based on local priorities (Breidlid, 2013). Accordingly, the NORHED program is intended to establish long term, demand-driven, and mutually collaborative relationships (Norad, n.d.; Nossum, 2016). It follows a five-year funding cycle. It has set out criteria that support transparency in selecting partnership projects. Some of the criteria include relevance to local national development needs; relevance to local institutional strategies and priorities; expected results and outputs; feasibility; gender issues; cost-effectiveness; and scientific quality (Norad, n.d.). Many of these not only helped to promote transparency but also reflected that NORHED modality has given due emphasis, at least in principle, to the needs and priorities of Southern partners.

3 In the NORHED project (2013-2018), Addis Ababa University, Jimma University, Arba Minch University, Dilla University, Hawassa University, Makelle University, Wolaita Sodo University, St. Pauls's Millennium College, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, and International Potato Center were partnering with different universities in Norway, including University of Oslo (UiO), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), University of Bergen (UiB), Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), Telemark University College (HiT), and Molde University College (HiMOLDE) (Norad, 2015b).

Ethiopian and Norwegian HEIs have been in partnership for more than 25 years (Nossum, 2016). As Nossum (2016) states, many Ethiopian faculties who get trained in the partnership programs are contributing to strengthening their home institutions. A recent evaluative study (see, Jávorka, Allinson, Varnai, & Wain, 2018) on NORHED revealed that partnerships between HEIs in Norway and Africa have shown positive results in terms of building the capacity of African higher education, including Ethiopia. Although such success stories were reported, there were also debates and disagreements between the two nations that Norway had frequently interrupted its cooperation with Ethiopia at various times for various reasons. For example, it stopped in 1998 because of Ethio-Eritrea conflict; in 2000 because it shifted its focus from bilateral to region agreements such as stability, peace, and reconciliation; and in 2014 because of its accusation of Ethiopian government for violating human rights (Norad, 2015a).

Stokke (2005) argues that the Norwegian development policies and practices, as informed by historically entrenched humanitarianism and welfare ideology, are different from the other dominant Western donors (also Weinrib, 2012). Stoke further states that the support of Norway has strongly been tied with social welfare systems, economic self- reliance, context-sensitive support, and arms-length intervention in the development processes (ibid). Similarly, Hydén (2016) states that altruism has been the main reason behind the participation of the Nordic countries' in international cooperation. Ishengoma (2016) has also credited these countries as ideal donors, arguing that their research funding seems far less driven by hegemonic political or commercial interests. This conflicts with the leading neo-liberal ideology of other Western donors the dominant global development ideology tied loans, demand-side restrictions, increased privatization, and drastic cuts to key social services (Winrib, 2012). However, it has not yet been well known if and how far the claim —i.e. Norway's separation from the mainstream development paradigm—conforms to and opens up spaces for the Norwegian Universities to support symmetrical relations with universities in Ethiopia.

5.3. Policy in International Higher Education Partnership in Ethiopia

This section discusses on the policy contexts or policy spaces that underlie international higher education partnerships in Ethiopia. For this, documents dealing with government development policy strategies and plans such as the Growth and Transformation Plan II [GTP II], the Fifth

Education Sector Development Program V [ESDP V], Higher Education Proclamation, number 650/2009, Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, were reviewed.

Accordingly, development as well as strengthening of international partnerships in the higher education sector have been given due consideration in the government policy documents and strategic plans. For example, international higher education partnership was one of the areas that were given emphasis in the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) document (FDRE National Planning Commission, 2016). The GTP II document dictates that "a framework for national higher education institutions' international partnerships and collaboration will be developed" (FDRE National Planning Commission, 2016, p.189). The intention for the development of this framework was also echoed in the Fifth Education Sector Development Program (ESDP V, 2015-2020) (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2015a). The Higher Education Proclamation, number 650/2009 (FDRE, 2009) also calls for universities to conduct joint research with national and international institutions, research centers, and industries. Yet, the proclamation lacked detail objectives and mechanisms for addressing issues of international partnerships in higher education.

Another policy document, 'Science, Technology and Innovation Policy' (Ministry of Science and Technology [MoST], 2012, pp. 4-5, 18-19) also advocates the necessity of strengthening international cooperation geared towards rapid technology transfer and adaptation that contribute to the development of the country. It states strategies such as "strengthen exchange of professionals and scientists through South-South and North-South cooperation initiatives motivate joint research programs with international partners" (p.19). It promotes expansion of such collaborative activities as joint-research, joint ventures for manpower training, expertise assistance, and searching for international funding partners for research projects.

The Fifth Education Sector Development Program (ESDP V, 2015-2020) (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2015a) has given more emphasis and strategic focus to internationalization and international partnership. In the ESDP V document, developing "…international collaboration/ internationalization" of higher education has been stated as one of the strategic focus in this grand education plan (see MOE, 2015a, p. 112). This plan has given emphasis to expanding international partnerships. The plan presumes that "collaborations between Ethiopian and international

institutions will be extended so that international dialogue and exchange can advance the breadth and quality of academic programs and research in institutions and enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning" (MOE, 2015a, p.110). Furthermore, the document has set out such specific targets as increasing joint academic programs and joint research projects to be undertaken in partnership with international partners, share of research funds to be secured from international sources, and student mobility through international exchange programs (MOE, 2015a, pp. 110, 112). It also underlines that each university is expected to strengthen collaborations with international institutions, establish international liaison offices, and develop an international partnership strategy.

To sum up, the review of the national policy and strategic plan documents provided important insights. These documents have reflected interests and policy basis that underlie internationalization and international activities, including international partnerships. It was noted that internationalization and international partnership in higher education has already emerged as a policy issue in Ethiopia. Yet, the policy and procedures have been only loosely defined, and the development of a comprehensive and well-articulated written policy framework and procedures for international partnership remains to be realized.

5.4. Profiles of the Partnering Institutions

This study focuses on two partnership programs established between two Ethiopian universities (EU1 and EU2) with a Norwegian university (NU).

EU1 is one of the public universities in Ethiopia. It was founded in 1950, and it is one of the biggest higher learning and research institutions in Ethiopia. At the time of partnership establishment, the University had 10 Colleges, five Institutes, and six Research Institutes which were meant to predominantly conduct research. It was running 70 undergraduate and 293 graduate programs, 72 of which were PhD programs. It had more than 51,500 student population and more than 2400 academic staff. Of the academic staff, about 44 % of them were assistant professors, associate professors or professors; and 43.8% of them were lecturers.

EU1 has been one of the main partner of NU universities in Africa; it has extensive research and training collaboration with NU in a wide range of fields, including biology, computer science,

education, medicine, and public health. However, this study focuses on one partnership program established between the respective Linguistic departments of EU1 and NU. The partnership program was in the area of language and thus referred to as Language partnership. The partnership was active at the time of data collection. At the time of the partnership establishment, the department of Linguistic in EU1 had two full professors, four associate professors, seven assistant professors, 19 lecturers (most of them were doing their PhDs), and two technical assistants. It was running seven programs (2 PhD, 3 masters, and 2 bachelor degree programs).

EU2 is also one of the public universities in Ethiopia. It was established in 1952 as a 'College of Agriculture' though it was only in 1999 that it was upgraded to a university. It is one of the leading universities in Ethiopia and at the time of partnership establishment, it had seven colleges, and one institute and was, running 170 programs (27 PhD, 64 Masters, and 79 undergraduate programs). It had more than 43 000 students.

Although EU2 and NU have been engaged in partnership programs in different fields such as health, education, and natural science fields, this study focused on the partnership project on capacity building of EU2 in the areas of health, established between the health college of EU2 and the health institute of NU. The partnership was active at the time of data collection. At the time of partnership establishment, the health college of EU2 (a partnering unit in EU2-NU partnership) had 5472 (4672 undergraduate and 800 graduate) students. It had 246 academic staff; of which, only four (1.6%) of them had PhD degrees; 63% of them were Masters and medical degree holders, and the rest were first degree holders. It had 43 30 graduate and specialty academic programs in various health fields.

NU is one of the oldest which was established in 1811and is largest of Norwegian universities. At the time of partnership establishment, it had eight faculties, two museums, and two centers of excellence. It had 61 first degree and 105 master's programs. It had more than 27, 000 students out of which about 2800 of them were PhD students and 3300 academic staff. The Language department (a partnering unit in EU2-NU Language partnership) in this university had five master's degrees and two bachelor's degree programs. The department also had Text Laboratory and Digital documentation unit for providing technical support for research and graduate students. It had about 60 academic employees and 40 PhD students. The Institute of Health (a partnering

unit in EU2-NU Health partnership) had seven master's programs and one bachelor program in health fields. It had more than 200 PhD candidates, 1200 medical students, and over 300 academic employees and four technical employees.

Chapter Six

Results and Analysis

This chapter presents the results and analysis of the two cases separately. The first section presents an overview of policy drives in international partnership related to the two local institutions (EU1 and EU2), and serves as a basis for the subsequent detail analysis of the two cases. The second and third sections are the main parts of this chapter which present the detail descriptions of Case one (Language partnership) and Case two (Health partnership) respectively. Each of these sections explores the rationales that drive the establishment of the respective partnership programs and presents detail accounts of how these partnership programs were formed and how they have been functioning, with a particular emphasis to symmetry/ asymmetry relationships between partners. The findings on the partnership development process were framed into four major themes: initiation, building, operation, and evaluation processes

6.1. Policy Contexts for International Partnership

As described in section 5.3 above, it appears that international higher education partnership in Ethiopia has emerged as a policy issue on national level. Consistent with the interests in the formation and expansion of international higher education partnerships reflected in national policies, procedures, and plans, the two case universities (EU1 and EU2) have Office of External Relations responsible for coordinating and supporting the formation of international partnership programs at various units of the institutions. These institutions have also reflected their interests and intentions for establishing and expanding international partnerships in their strategic plan documents (see, EU1's Strategic Plan, 2015/16-2020/21 and EU2's Strategic Plan, 2016-2020). For example, in EU1's strategic the interest for international partnership was well addressed under strategic issue 9 (p. 32) and strategic theme 3, particularly under strategic objectives (pp. 41- 43). The strategic plan document (p. 34) highlighted the intention of EU1 to forge new partnerships as well as strengthening the existing partnerships with international partners. This plan (p.43) also emphasized the strategic interest of institutions to identify international partners on issues of common interests to exchange experience and jointly deliver training and community services.

Similarly, EU2's Strategic Plan also reflected the interest of the univesity in international partnerships; for example, under its strategic goal 4 (p.34) which states "internationalization and institutional collaboration" as one of the five strategic goals; and under its strategic objectives (pp. 34-35), stating the intentions to enhancing internationalization and institutional collaborations with international partners. It also highlighted the intention of increasing the number of international research and training partnership projects, exchange programs, winning external funding, increasing the number of international students, and attracting world-class faculties (p.35).

It was noted that the formation and development of international partnerships was the strategic interest at both institutions. Yet, the two institutions didn't have well-articulated written policy and procedure regarding international partnership formation, depicting rationales and goals, priorities (geographic, thematic, etc.), and mechanisms for selecting partners and activities. Regarding this, all administrative staff participants underscored the importance of written policy and procedures for establishing and managing international partnerships in an organized and coordinated approach. In view of that, as administrative staff (ADMB from EU1 and ADER from EU2) replied that the preparation of policy and procedure were already in progress in their respective universities.

Concerning the strategies and priorities of the two case universities for international partnership formation and development, it appears that both EU1 and EU2 followed a flexible and open approach, i.e., without such geographic or thematic restrictions. Some administrative participants expressed their concerns that setting priorities (geographic, thematic, type of partner) in policies, "… would limit or restrict the institutions' chance of partnering with various partners in various areas" (ADKR from EU2). And that various partnership opportunities with "…various institutions in a variety of themes as far as they are related to the core missions of the institution" were welcomed (ADBR from EU1). As participants (ADBR, ADKR, and ADER) further mentioned, partnership projects were supposed to consider the institutions' research priority thematic areas. In practice, however, this was not as such rigid as far as the proposed partnership projects obtained their running costs from external sources.

In conclusion, the two institutions (EU1 and EU2) have had strategic interests in establishing and expanding international partnerships, although they remained to have a clearly articulated written

policy and procedures. Thus, the establishment of the two partnership programs appears to be premeditated and deliberated, at least, at the institutional (university) level. Partnership programs that were established based on deliberate and strategic intentions were likely to address institutional felt needs and demands (Sutton & Obst, 2011).

Another important point highlighted in this section and which was valued by participants in both institutions was an opportunistic, not targeted, approach—a kind of flexible approach with no geographic or thematic restrictions—that opened up opportunities for the local institutions to partner with various institutions in diverse areas. Moreover, it was apparent in both EU1 and EU2 that partnership projects which could secure their running cost from an external source were oftentimes welcomed.

6.2. Case One: The Language Partnership

6.2.1. Overviews

The Language partnership program was established in late 2013 between the Linguistics Department at an Ethiopian university (EU1) and a similar department at a Norwegian university (NU). The program was planned to run up to 2018, in a period of five years although it is extended up to 2019 due to delays in some activities. It is funded by NORAD through NORHED modality. It was active at the time of data collection.

The major aim of this partnership project, as the different documents (e.g., agreements, partnership proposal, annual reports) state, was to increase the knowledge and capacity in teaching and research at EU1 so as to develop resources for disadvantaged spoken and sign languages, and to provide "…opportunities for children and adult speakers…" of these languages to use them in education, and thereby to contribute to the democratization efforts and for the development of the nation (Ethiopia) (agreement, p.1). It is also intended that staff and graduate students at the Linguistic Departments of EU1 would develop competence to be able to do research and produce resources (orthographies, dictionaries, glossaries, corpus, primers, etc.) for marginalized and disadvantaged spoken and sign languages. These objectives, as the Mid-Term Review document (Jávorka et al., 2018, p.14) states, were in line with the purpose of NORHED program, which is strengthening the capacity of higher education in LMIC to contribute to: "more and better-qualified

graduates…more knowledge…evidence based policy and decision-making…and gender equality". To realize these objectives, PhD education, MA curriculum design for sign language, joint-research, and community service were planned as the major partnership activities.

The project initiation started in late 2010, using the then existing relationship between the linguistic departments of EU1 and NU through NORAD supported research partnership that were run from 2002-2006. In October 2011, staff members of the Linguistic Departments of EU1 and NU made further meetings and discussions on the preparation of a partnership proposal. Then they collaboratively developed the proposal and applied to NORAD for funding. In November 2013, the project won NORAD fund, and that EU1 (grant recipient) and NORAD (grant provider) signed a grant agreement, amount to a total of 17,500,000 NOK for running the project.

The PhD program has been offered at home institution (EU1) with occasional student visits to the foreign institution (NU). The major activities were being carried out by members of both parties. At the time of data collection, 11 PhD students were following their education, most of whom were staff members of EU1. Many joint research works were completed and published; about two peer-reviewed books and many journal articles were published till 2017; and a Curriculum for the MA program in Sign Language was designed. Moreover, language resources (orthographies, dictionaries, glossaries, grammars, corpus, and primers) were developed for some disadvantaged languages so that they could be used for educational purposes and for further studies. For example, one language (*Aari*) was introduced as mother tongue education with its orthography designed by the project members. Capacity building training was offered to many local educators and authorities on new linguistic knowledge that aimed at promoting the disadvantaged languages (e.g. Gurage, Aari, Sidama, Kambaata).

6.2.2. Rationales

The major rationales behind the formation of the Language Partnership that emerged through the document analysis (*see the summary in Appendix-H*) and interviews were related to academic, economic, socio-cultural and gender equity. In the document analysis, what has been interpreted as the "academic-related" rationale was the most frequently cited (60 times), while the "socio-cultural related" rationale was the least frequently cited (24 times). Consistent with the frequencies this category of rationale recurred in the documents, in response to rank ordering question in the

interview; all (23) of the participants ranked academic-related rationale as the first priority that EU1 considered in establishing this partnership. This reflects EU1's high interest in academic growth and development and it could be interpreted as the most important factor driving EU1 to engage in international partnership.

Academic related rationales

In the documents, academic-related rationales manifested in terms of intentions of: building staff capacity for teaching, research, and community service; enhancing research outputs; improving educational quality and meeting international standards; and improving international experience in teaching and research. Similarly frequently mentioned by the interviewees as rationales to establish the (Language) partnership included interests: to grow in academic capability (institutional and individual); actively engage in joint-research and enhance research output; for international exposure; and to improve educational quality and at international standard level.

Of all the declared rationales on the basis of the document analysis (Appendix-H), staff capacity building (cited 27 times) appeared to be the highest priority. As a reflection of the motives for staff capacity building, the proposal (e.g., see pp. 6-7) states the expectation that staff and students of EU1 would acquire competence and resources that would enable them to develop language resources and standardize disadvantaged languages and sign languages to be used in education and in the society (also in the agreement, p.1). As the proposal (pp. 7-9, 11) states, many of the languages in Ethiopia are poorly researched and lack necessary resources (orthographies, grammars, dictionaries, primers, etc...) that facilitate the use of the languages as medium of instruction, the country needs qualified professionals and researchers, who could contribute to addressing these problems. Particularly, it was underlined in the proposal that the local partner (EU1) has a shortage of staff having the knowledge and competence to develop "…orthographies, written language systems, structural and grammatical analyses" (p.7); and that the need to address these appeared to be an important factor that drives the local institution to establish partnership with an international partner.

An interest in the development of staff's academic capacity was also frequently mentioned among the interviewees. For example, "institutional and staff capacity building" was mentioned by all of the academic staff participants as one of the rationales of their institution to establish this

partnership. Moreover, the need for "qualified staff with the required number" was also one of the frequently repeated responses in the interviews regarding rationale. In this regard, an academic staff (ACAN) commented that although Ethiopia is a "multi-lingual nation and there is a national need for mother tongue education, it couldn't be realized in many of the languages as they are under-researched and don't have the necessary resources due to lack of skilled professionals" in the area of language research. This was echoed by other participants too. For some, this partnership was thought to contribute to addressing this shortage of professionals in teaching and research through offering PhD and MA programs, with the support of the foreign staff in teaching and supervision. An administrative staff (ADZL) said:

> As it is known, HEI has three core missions: training, research, and community service. The accomplishment of these missions is contingent on an institutional and professional capacity. But the capacity of our universities to execute its missions is far behind. Thus, I believe that ways and practices that help to address such challenges to be searched out and utilized. And I believe that establishing such partnerships with institutions, like the [NU], with a better capacity help our institution address its needs (ADZL, August 10, 2018).

In his opinion, this partnership was in place to assist the effort his institution in the production of skilled professionals, who would, in turn, scale-up research in his institution and training capability. Other academic staff participants (e.g., ACDR, ACAL, ACFD, ACBY, ACYG) also had similar opinions in that through partnerships, their institution could make use of the foreign partner's skilled staff to enhance the capability of local staff'. A participant was quoted as saying (ACDR): "…the major expectation of our institution from this partnership is getting NU's support to train PhD and MA students and to conduct research in linguistics, especially in disadvantaged and sign languages" so as to improve the EU1's capacity to develop and standardize the languages to be used in education and by the society.

Here, in the documents and interviews, the status and capacity of foreign partner (NU) were frequently mentioned positively and were valued to bring about the capacity development of the local partner (EU1). For example, as stated in the proposal (p.4), the NU's staff members had "…strong linguistics profile, with excellent research competence"; and that collaboration with such am institution is supposed to improve the knowledge and competence of EU1's staff and students and thereby contribute to enhancing EU1's institutional capacity. In view of that, as the proposal (pp.21-24) states, the NU staff, in collaboration with the EU1 staff, were supposed to

strengthen the existing PhD and MA programs and develop a new MA program, provide lectures and supervision to PhD students, conduct joint-research, offer capacity building trainings and workshops to local community stakeholders (local educators and authorities in linguistics areas), and provide technical advice to the local partner.

Likewise, participants also viewed working in partnership with the Northern institutions (like NU), which is with better academic status and with highly skilled and experienced professionals, as an opportunity for enhancing the academic and research capacity of their institution. For example, one of the academic staff described the issue saying:

> Perhaps you know Norwegian universities, their world status as compared to ours. They are by far in better status in many aspects: better publication and training capacities, highly skilled staff who have better access to state-of-the-art educational materials and infrastructure, research funding, and academic atmosphere. Whereas the capacity our university in providing training and research is far lower and lacks many things. So, by working with them, we can get access to many things, we can share and get better experiences in research, supervision, and training… It is also a good opportunity for our students to be advised and taught by these experienced foreign staff. All these are important to improve capacity of our staff and institution to manage trainings and do research (ACBN, July 15, 2018).

Another participant added:

> Our department is supposed to play a pivotal role in solving problems related to linguistic capacity in our country through training and research. In order to do this, first, we need to build the capacity of our staff. To build the capacity our staff, we need better expertise… It is good that we are co-advising our PhD students with foreign professors. We are learning a lot from this. So we establish this partnership in order to get advantage of the foreign partner's better expertise and experience in the area (ACSH, August 10, 2018)

These participants had the expectation that working in partnership with an institution having better expertise would bring improvement in academic and research capacity of students and staff of the local partners that the local partner may not achieve otherwise. They also view working with NU staff as a means of broadening their supervisory capacity of PhD advisors.

Engagement in joint-research to enhance research output was identified as another academic-related rationale. As frequently stated in the proposal, the disadvantaged and sign languages in Ethiopia were poorly researched and needed reforms and standardization, and that the formation

of this partnership was also driven, partly, by the intention of enhancing research outputs in these areas. The proposal (p.11) states the expectation that researches would be conducted on selected disadvantaged and sign languages by staff members of both parties and graduate students and that publication would be produced and orthographies, grammars, glossaries, dictionaries, and premiers would be developed. It was also planned to do research so as to understand and document the structure of Ethiopian sign languages (p.11).

The participants also viewed this partnership as an opportunity for them to engage in joint-research. All the academic staff participants replied that their interest to involve in joint-research and improve their research capacity was one of the rationales behind their engagement in this partnership. Most of them expressed their beliefs that joint-research with highly skilled foreign researchers would provide them with the opportunity to learn a lot from and increase the chance to publish their works in internationally recognized journals. In this regard, an academic staff (ACDR) commented, "If you work joint-research with them, you may get a better chance for your work to get accepted for publication. This is because they are familiar with and closer to the system."

The interest of the local partner to improve international experience was also noted as another academic-related rationale. Regarding this, the proposal (p.13) gives emphasis to exposure of PhD students and staff to an international academic environment through working with foreign staff, visiting foreign academic environment, and participation in conferences. The proposal (p.5) also states that many of the NU staff members have long experience of working in North-South partnership programs; and that the local academics and students are expected to obtain better international experience as a result of working with these experienced members.

Several interviewees also mentioned interests in expanding international experience. For example, one administrator said:

> Internationalization through international partnership and cooperation is a strategic interest of our university. It encourages us to establish and enhance international linkages, like joint-research, experience sharing, staff and student exchanges… so that our staff and students will have international exposure and improve international experience (ADZL, August 10, 2018).

Another administrative staff (ADBR) valued international partnerships in terms of incorporating international dimensions to domestic education programs and in developing the competencies of staff and students that would enable them to extend their experience beyond borders. In his words,

> You know, we are living in an era of globalization that requires us to develop global thinking and competency. And, I think, our engagement in internationalization and international collaboration will contribute to improving our staff and students' competence so as to properly respond to this (ADBR, March 15, 2019).

Another administrative staff also highlighted the strategic interest of EU1in expanding international partnerships with the intention of building its capacity, improving international experience, and raising its international standard (ADMB).

Participant ACBN also underlined the role of international joint-research for enhancing international experience as follows:

> If you engage in joint-research, you may get a chance to participate in international conferences for the presentation of your research work. There, you will experience a diverse academic environment and you will have a chance to interact with internationally recognized scholars that will improve your international scholarly experience (ACBN, July 15, 2018).

Related to this, the opportunity for the local staff to work with their foreign colleagues and students to be trained and supervised by these foreign staff were viewed as a means of improving international experience. Most of the local staff and students acknowledged the skills and experience of their foreign partners and showed strong interest to learn from and improve their international experience. This was illustrated by ACBY's comment as follows: "… [NU members] are highly skilled and are…in better status than us, and that we need to learn from them…I think we need to track them and adopt their work." ACBY considered this type of partnership as a means for acquiring international academic experience at home without the physical mobility of students and staff that might decrease the chance of brain drain. To quote what he said:

> Through partnering with prestigious international institutions, our institution can gain better capacity to offer quality education that, nearly, address students' and staff's need for international experience, without the need to move abroad for their education, which in turn reduces the risk of brain drain that has plagued our country (ACBY, July 23, 2018).

The interest to enhance educational quality and international standards of the local partner was also identified positively in both the documents and interviews. For example, the proposal indicates intentions for enhancing "existing MA and PhD courses…and language technology tools" (p.19); for ensuring the "relevance of programs and new graduates to local, and regional needs and the labor market" (p.15); and for participation of PhD students in international conferences that could provide them with the opportunity for their research to be inspected by international academic community and "fellow researchers" (p.13).

Regarding educational quality and international standards, several participants expressed their opinions that international partnerships could bring about a learning experience that would be valuable for improving the quality and standard of their institution. They stressed that they can learn best practices from their international partners that can be put into practice in their institution in order to enhance educational quality and standards. Graduate students also expressed their high interest to have access to pursue their education in foreign institutions for they expect that they would pass through high quality and internationally standardized education systems and that they would have internationally recognized qualifications.

Economic related rationales

Economic-related rationales were cited in about 49 texts/statements in the analyzed documents (see Appendix-H) and also ranked as a second priority by most of the participants, and thus was interpreted as the second priority rationale of EU1 to establish this partnership. In both the analysis of interviews and documents, this rationale was expressed in terms of interests in funding/financial support for running research, training, and community engagement, scholarships, conferences; to improve infrastructural capacity and better access to educational resources; and to contribute to economic growth by improving labor force.

Various documents (e.g., agreement, pp.2, 11-12 and proposal, pp.6,12) cited the expectations of local partners (EU1) for funding for running the project, including joint-research, PhD training, workshops and short-term training, conference participation, publication fees, scholarship, especially for female students.

The interview further revealed that academic related rationales were very closely tied with economic-related rationales, as many of the local partner's academic problems were linked to financial and material scarcities. For example, one administrative staff (ADZL) said: "Education and research capacity usually go with economic capacity." He argued that a high level of material and financial investment was required to offer quality training and research. ADZL further elaborated:

> Although our rationale to forge international partnership is driven primarily by our interest in academic growth, I think, it cannot be seen quite separately from our economic motives. This is because many of our academic capacities are challenged by economic-related factors. You know, if you want to capacitate your educational infrastructure, you need resources, financial as well as material; if you need to engage in high scale research projects, you need funds, and so on. So, to be honest, our expectation for financial and educational resource assistance is very high, although we are not motivated by money for the sake of money, but for the sake of academic development (ADZL, August 10, 2018).

An academic staff also said, in response to what his institution expects from the partnership,

> The focus of this program is to develop the capacity of our Linguistic Department in research and teaching. To do this, we don't have the necessary financial capacity and expertise. So the first thing we expect from this partnership is that we can secure financial resources and expertise of our partner institution (ACAN, August 31, 2018).

Based on these participants, it is natural that their institution was interested in getting such assistance as financial and material that were too scarce to enable them to carry out their academic functions—carrying out advanced training (PhD and MA levels) and producing knowledge—and to respond to the socioeconomic development needs of the nation. Furthermore, participants stressed that the financial and material motive was not an expected output as such, but a required input for, the local institution in its capacity building efforts.

In the interviews, several participants talked about lack of budget for research and community service and for supporting PhD dissertation and Master's thesis writing, implying that they were important derivers for the formation of international partnerships. For example, participant (ACFD) claimed that it was difficult even to think of doing research that demands a high level of costs without external funding sources. Participant (ACAU) also claimed that financial and material resources were critical factors for graduate students to work quality research. He commented: "Our institution has limited access to research funding even for our PhD education.

It allocates only 25 thousand Eth Birr for a PhD research with which it is difficult to do a dissertation with the required quality" (ACAU). According to ACAU, searching for such a partnership opportunity was an important means of addressing these limitations that his institution was facing. In support of this, another participant (ACBY) added: "As we cannot afford the required resources, we need to search alternative mechanisms. The partnership with Nowadays, was found to be a good alternative to secure the required resources".

In relation to this, many participants expressed their high appreciations to NORAD's financial assistance for accomplishing the training and research works. For example, ACSH said, "We have got the opportunity to participate in many international conferences. This could have not been possible without their financial support". ACDR added: "We have published a book for they covered the publication cost". "I have got the opportunity to do fieldwork, which I had not done for many years because of financial constraints" (ACYG). Also one student (STAW) described: "For example, I have got the opportunity to go to America and present my paper at an international conference. It is through their financial support that I did it". Another student added:

> In addition to the travel cost and subsistence allowance, I have got the opportunity to travel to Warsaw and present my paper at an international conference. Following that my paper has got acceptance for publication. All these were because of their support (STEM, September 04, 2018).

The second aspect of economic-related factor emerged was related to infrastructural support and better access to educational resources. This was evident in the proposal which states the intentions to establish language technology in EU1 (pp. 8, 11), to improve and expand Phonetics and Multimedia Documentation Lab of EU1 (pp.5, 12), and to produce the necessary language resources (dictionaries, corpus, primers) (pp.7,9) all of which can contribute to improving the infrastructural capacity of the Linguistics Department of the local partner.

The opportunity to access educational resources (like libraries, labs, etc.) of the foreign partner was also identified as an important motivating factor for the local partner to establish this partnership. Many participants raised that the required educational resources in their department were either lacking, or were scarce, and they had high value to this partnership with the expectation that it would provide them with the opportunity to access some of these basic resources from NU.

In the document it was also stressed that the intentions to contribute to economic growth as was another factor. For example, it was justified in the proposal (p.8) as it is was difficult to bring "about development…without respecting…and developing the linguistic and cultural dimensions in nations like Ethiopia". The proposal (p. 15) also dictates the need for ensuring the "relevance of …new graduates to local, national and regional needs and labor markets"—reflecting the interests for enhancing global competitiveness.

The interview also revealed that the project was supposed to produce skilled manpower for solving the problem of the country through research and training, which, in turn, would contribute to the economic development of the nation. Participants (e.g., ACBY) mentioned that this type of partnership can reduce brain drain through limiting international mobility of students. They felt that this, in turn, would contribute to improving the human capital of the local institution that could ultimately play a vital role in reducing poverty and bringing national development. One participant also justified the difficulty of realizing the development of the country without due consideration to its linguistic development (ACAL).

Socio-cultural related rationale

Based on the document analysis (Appendix-H), socio-cultural related rationale was stated in 24 statements and/or texts and it was also ranked as least priority by most of the participants. This rationale was manifested in the form of interests to address social and community needs, to build social networks and connections, and to ensure child rights and development.

As frequently stated in the proposal (e.g., pp.5, 7-8,12-13), provision of appropriate community service by offering training and workshops to community members (local educators and zonal education authorities) was one of the focuses of the project to contribute to addressing societal and community needs. The proposal also emphasized on educational provision in the mother tongues as a way to address national needs and promote societal development (pp.7, 10, 12). In this regard, it was common to hear participants (e.g., ACAL, ACYG, ACDR, ADZL) talking about the need for their department to work to respond to the societal needs of educational access in the mother tongue. As to ACAL, this partnership enabled his department to "work with the local community members or stakeholders of the disadvantaged languages". S argued that working with and offering training to local stakeholders can contribute to the development of languages.

Building social networking and connections was also identified as a socio-cultural related rationale. Concerning this, one participant (ACFD) replied that such partnership programs can provide an opportunity for furthering individual and institutional linkages with international scholars and institutions. Participant ACFD further explained, "If you don't have previous linkages with the northern institution or scholars, you have less opportunity to be involved in joint projects". The proposal also indicated plans to form and enhance different connections and further networking, e.g., networks of researchers and staff members of partner institutions for joint-research and co-supervision of students (p.8); "networks of researchers in sign language, … in disadvantaged spoken languages…and local educators and authorities…for the exchange of knowledge and the use of material" (p.29); and collaborative linkages with other institutions (p.17).

Related to child rights and development, the proposal (p.8) highlighted "respecting the linguistic and cultural rights" as important aspects of the development of the nation. The partnership project also emphasized providing children with the opportunity to exercise their right to learn with their mother tongues which eventually could contribute to their personal cognitive development. As justified in the proposal (p.10), children's "cognitive development can be jeopardized" if they are denied to learn through their mother tongue; and thus, it advocated children's right to attend schools in their mother tongue (e.g., pp.28-29).

Interest to gender equity

As frequently cited (14 times) in the document, this partnership project also intended to address gender inequality in the local partner (EU2). One important justification the proposal (p.9) states was that "…the number of female students and staff is low". As a means of alleviating this, the project "encourages female participation through scholarships…and support" at PhD and MA levels (p.28). The proposal further stressed on improving the underrepresentation of female in EU1 through accomplishing such tasks as identifying female staff who can join the PhD program and further supporting them; using "special scholarship and recruitment for women and support for PhD" (p 21); and earmarking many MA scholarships to females that "eventually lead to qualified female PhD candidates" (p.9). Gender equity in enrollment to this project was highly emphasized. As stated in the proposal (p.13), the project "aims for as many women as men". It was also

identified that gender equality was planned to be assessed in relation to partnership implementation and outcomes (p 28).

6.2.3. Partnership initiation process

Although EU1 did not have a set of strategic priorities regarding the selection of the foreign partner, it oftentimes makes partnerships with the northern institutions. In this regard, many interviewees considered partnering with the northern institutions as important, even more than partnering with the southern institutions. For example, one administrative staff explained this as follows:

> Most of the time, we make partnerships with the northern institutions. One reason is that we want to maintain and improve our academic and research quality and standards. The other reason is we want to widen our opportunity of obtaining substantial funds for running the partnership project (ADBR, March 15, 2019).

Participants had high value to partnering with the northern institutions for they believed that working with high profiled institutions would improve academic and research capacity and quality of local partner. Also, they expected that such partnerships would likely secure the running cost of the partnership project from external agencies.

Based on the interviews and document analysis, institutional as well as individual (faculty members') links in previously existed partnership programs contributed to the initiation of this partnership program. As stated in the proposal, prior to this partnership, there was a NORAD supported partnership program between EU1 and NU in which faculty members of both parties participated. And it was this previous contact which served as an instrument for the initiation of the current partnership. This was also reiterated in the interviews. For example, one participant's (ACBN) response to the question as to how the partnership was initiated is described as follows:

> Our relationship with the [NU] professors started earlier in a research partnership where we worked together. So the conversation about the possibilities of developing this project was started at that time. They informed us about NORHED's announcement of a call for the application of a proposal for funding. Then, we contacted them and started discussing on the areas of partnership and the possibilities of joint proposal application for funding (ACBN, July 15, 2018).

Another participant (ACDR) also said: "I knew some of the [NU] professors since 2006, while they were here working with Ethiopian languages". He further said that, although not official, there was a prior awareness and understandings between members of partners about each other's interest on the possibilities of collaboration. This eventually led to the initiation and development of this partnership.

Awareness and mutual understandings between members of the partnering institutions were further advanced through consultative meetings and planning workshops conducted in Addis Ababa. These workshops and consultative meetings were organized by the Norwegian institution (NU). Here, it was NU that covered costs for NU staff's visit to EU1 for consultative meetings. Participants had high appreciations to the role NU played in facilitating such conversations by organizing the workshops and consultative meetings. This was described by one participant as follows:

> Following the NORHED's call for funding, the NU representatives, sponsored by NU, organized a workshop on preparation of application proposal in Addis Ababa, where members from many Ethiopian universities, including our university [EU1], participated and acquired knowledge in proposal preparation. After the workshop, our staff members got the opportunity to make contact with NU members, discuss the project and sketch the proposal, which has eventually been modified and submitted to NORHED. First, we [jointly] applied for seed money that we couldn't win. Latter, we modified our application proposal as per the comments NORHED gave us, and then finally we were able to win the grant (ACDR, July 11, 2018).

As stated in the proposal (p.4), "these workshops and meetings have been instrumental for the present project application, which builds on the discussions and project sketches…" The participants also underlined that these workshop and meetings provided members of both parties with the opportunity to get to know each other, communicate more, understand each other's interest, and to be able to make consultative discussions about the preparation of the partnership proposal and application. Such conversations and discussions, according to several participants, have helped them to learn each other's interests and expectations, resources, experiences, and the contributions each can offer to the partnership. The workshop was also important for empowering the local partner to develop the proposal.

Prior relationship between staff members at the two institutions was also noted to have significant contribution for partners to make initial contact, facilitate communications and mutual understandings, and make consultative discussions regarding the partnership agendas. In this, participant ACBN said: "Since we knew them for a long time and we have met frequently, when we search for partners, it is [NU] and its faculty members that we think of we can work with". Also, in addition, the contribution of NORHED's called for application for funding was so crucial for partners to decide the establishment of the partnership and then to prepare the joint proposal/plan. Accordingly, this partnership was initially started with the conversations between senior staff members having prior relations from both parties; then, it was made institutional following the call for application for funding.

Analysis of documents and interviews also revealed that the EU1 faculty members have played a substantial role and participation in the identification of needs and collaborative activities. The EU1 members (e.g., ACBN, ACAU), who participated in need identification and proposal development, appreciated that their foreign partners (both NORAD and partner institution [NU]) encouraged them to identify agendas and design projects according to the local needs and priorities. As they said, they were given autonomy and opportunity to focus on issues of local relevance and identify their own institutional needs and incorporate them into the project proposal. To quote ACBN's response, "They requested us our interests and needs. We told them and discussed about these with them. They accepted us with slight modifications. They supported us in putting these issues in proposal form".

In support of this, documents (e.g., NORHED's guideline by Norad, (n.d) and the agreement document, p.2) indicated that a focus on the 'Southern needs' is one of the NORHED's principles. These documents further described that NORHED emphasizes on the southern needs and ownership and is committed to employ the modality in which the southern partner hold the lead.

6.2.4. Partnership building process

As the documents (partnership proposal and agreement) and interviews indicated, the partnership building process involved developing a partnership proposal and formalizing the partnership by signing agreements. First, members from both EU1 and NU collaboratively developed the partnership proposal—detailing, among other things, partnership agendas/areas, goals and

expected outcomes, collaborative activities, roles and responsibilities, and implementation plan. Then after, the proposal got NORHED's approval for funding and representatives of EU1 and NU signed agreements, signifying their commitments to the partnership project. In the process, "Both the Ethiopian and [the] Norwegian universities have been fully included…from the first workshop and meetings in Ethiopia in 2011 to proposing project ideas and writing proposals for discussion" (proposal, p.13). As to the interviews (ADZL, ACBN, ACDR), the EU1 staff members participated in identifying and then prioritizing the partnership agendas; faculty members from both the EU1 and NU collaboratively developed the draft partnership proposal; and institutional leaders also participated in giving feedbacks for further modifications of the proposal, in vetting the processes, and in signing the agreements.

Interview participants also underscored the worthwhile contribution of the Norwegian staff in the proposal development and modification. Especially, participants highly praised the contributions of the NU staff's better knowhow and experience for winning the NORHED's fund. In this regard, participant ACDR said, "They [NU staff] have helped us a lot as they are well aware of NORHED's priorities. Their inputs were so crucial in technical issues, in considering the NORHED's priorities, and in budget breakdowns."

Regarding the distribution of roles and responsibilities, participants (e.g. ADZL, ADTY, ACBN) replied that although most of the tasks were collaborative, the division of roles was based on discussions and agreements with NU members. Based on such agreement, as the proposal (p.5) also states, the major responsibilities of EU1 were hosting and managing the project, offering courses, co-supervising PhD students, conducting joint-research, and facilitating—and taking part in—networking activities with local language educators and authorities. Whereas the major responsibilities of NU were assisting EU1 in managing and coordinating the project, offering courses, co-supervising PhD students, conducting joint research. Members from both EU1 and NU were also assigned in different collaborative activities (e.g., in proposal development, research, networking, training, curriculum design) based on their fields and qualifications.

The agreement for sharing roles and responsibilities was also based on the general presumption that the local staff was to be assigned to take a leading role in tasks that they could do; while the foreign staff was to take the lead in those tasks that the local partner could not do (ACBN).

Accordingly, in consideration of their higher profile and experience in the area, members of NU were supposed to empower and support EU1 staff through sharing their experience, offering capacity building training, providing access to a laboratory (of language), and assisting them to develop language technology (proposal, pp.5-6). This indicates that the EU1's relatively lower expertise and capacity has forced EU1 to seek for support from partner (NU). For example, the participant ACSH said, "…it is our institutions' capacity to be developed. The foreign partners collaborate with us; support us, empower us, and help us accomplish the project to develop our capacity." Other participants (e.g., ACSH, ACEM) also expressed their high appreciation to the NU member generosity and willingness in giving precedence to the local partner throughout the partnership development process. Although this could be seen as positive outlook for the relationship, one can argue that this might lead the local partner to develop a sense of dependence.

Although the partnership planning and arrangements were based on discussions and agreements between members of partners (EU1 and NU), these agreements were made also with consideration of NORHED's requirements and interests. The NORHED criteria and procedures were claimed to have influenced the role and negotiating power of the local partner in the partnership building process. As the funding body, NORAD invited partnered universities (of the South and of Norway) to submit a collaborative project proposal and apply for fund. This was linked with criteria that can be regarded as 'conditionality that the proposal needed to fulfill to be selected and awarded the grant. Some of the major criteria that were considered for selecting the proposal, as indicated in NORHED guidelines for proposal application and selection (Norad, n.d. pp. 10-11, 17) and also in the proposal, included: relevance to NORHED's overall objectives; enclosure within NORHED thematic areas; relevance to needs of local institution, policies, and priorities at national and/or regional level; capacity and competence of the institution to coordinate and implement the project; clarity of result framework (outcomes and indicators), risk analysis, and implementation plan; inclusion of gender equity; human rights and equality (especially excluded groups such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities); sustainability; and cost-effectiveness. NORHED also required the local partner to be responsible "…for the planning, implementation, reporting, and monitoring of the project" (agreement, p.2). These criteria and associated procedures appeared to have contributed to influencing the negotiation processes between partners. Some of them were in favor

of the local needs and can promote equity and mutuality between partners, while others appeared to have distorted the selection of priorities of the local partner.

In favor of the local partner, for example, a requirement for relevance of a project to the local needs would ensure local significance and institutional demands. A requirement for the local partner to be responsible for the planning, implementation, managing, and monitoring of the partnership program would also provide the southern partners with the opportunity to play a substantial and balancing role throughout the partnership development process and thus to promote local ownership. There was also a requirement for the scholarship granted students to sign commitments to serve their institution (EU1) after graduation. This was also recognized as it would contribute to building the EU1's capacity and to "reduce brain drain" (ACSH).

NORHED required the proposed partnership project to focus on thematic areas, including "education; health; natural resource, climate change, and environment; humanities, culture, and communication; capacity development; and governance"(Jávorka et al., 2018, p.15). In this regard, most of the participants believed that the major focus and major activities of this partnership project were relevant to address the immediate problems of the local community. For example, one participant, who was acting as both academic staff and administrator at the time of data collection, explained:

> Of course, NORHED requires us to align our interests and proposals with either one of its themes. I think there were about six themes… which were actually so broad that it was not as such difficult for us to identify issues that align with our needs. For example, one of the themes was about 'Media and communication and humanities'…in which linguistic capacity building [the focus of this project] can be included (ADZL, August 10, 2018).

Another participant (ADDS) also said that even though NORHED has thematic priorities, it was not as such rigid, as it was possible to link a wide array of partnership agendas to these themes. This means that the thematic areas of funding body were broad enough to include the local institutional needs and priorities in the partnership project.

Moreover, several participants (e.g. ACAU, ACBN, ACDR, ADZL) mentioned that they have identified the partnership agendas that were in line with the needs and priorities of EU1. They

underscored that the partnership project was up to the needs and benefits of local partner as it focused on building its capacity. For example, one participant said:

> The major issues to be addressed by the project and the project activities are all for our own interests and benefits. Even I didn't see any issue or activity that is to the benefit of the Norwegian partner. I can say that the project is totally for our own institution's needs and benefits. Our [NU] colleagues are supporting us…helping us address our problems (ACAU, August 31, 2018).

Yet, some participants remarked concerns that some issues (e.g., gender equity issues), which should not have been considered as the local partner's priority, were included in the project mainly because they were amongst NORAD's major priorities. Participants also mentioned that, although it was not evident in this partnership, other NORAD requirements, for example, 'to focus on specific thematic areas' and 'to partner with Norwegian institutions' have the potential to influence of the priorities of southern partner.

Participants commented that the emphasis given to gender equity through recruiting equal number of female PhD candidates didn't take the actual context of the local institution into account, as the actual number of female MA holders available in EU1 was very small let alone those who were suitable for PhD candidacy. Their main argument was that although the issue of gender equity was in line with the needs of EU1, it was not reasonable to take it as a priority, especially, through employing a 50% female PhD student recruitment. As ACAU said:

> Of course, the issue of gender equity in our institution is to be addressed. But how? Is it through recruiting an equal number of female PhD candidates? If so why partnership? Why don't we make it without waiting for a partnership? It is because we don't have adequate number of female staff, let alone those who fulfill the criteria to be PhD candidate. I think…in reality, the priority we need to address through partnership is improving our capacity through training of our staff (be it male or female), research, and community service. And I think, this issue [recruitment of equal number of PhD candidates] wouldn't have been included in this project, had it not been helpful for the selection of our proposal for funding (ACAU, August 31, 2018).

As to ACAU, the reason that the local partner included and planned to address this issue in this way was, mainly, with the interest to win the competition and securing funding. He argued that the root causes or gaps related to this issue were not well identified or were not well discussed

with the foreign partner members. Otherwise, this issue would have been planned to be addressed in a different way.

Participant ACSH also voiced a similar opinion, saying: "Although the foreign partner encourages you to design a project that meets your needs and priorities, also you need to consider the funding body's priorities so as to compete for and win the funding. Or else you may lose competition" (ACSH August 10, 2018). In his opinion, the priority of the local partner might have been compromised in an attempt to entertain the priority of the funding body (NORAD's) so as to secure funding. ACSH further said regarding gender mainstreaming that although the members of the local partner were given the autonomy to entertain their own needs, yet, they took note of the strong Norwegian drive for gender equity and that they were urged to include it for fear of losing fund.

To sum up, it appears that the partnership arrangements and planning took place based on thorough discussions and agreements between representatives of both parties. Members of both parties were represented during the partnership building process. Participants of the local partner felt that they have had a substantial say in setting the partnership agendas and major collaborative activities and in the formulation of objectives and expected outcomes. However, it was also noted that agreements and thus partnership arrangements were also in consideration of NORAD requirements and the expertise and capacity of the two partners (EU1 and NU). Consequently, there appeared concerns that the local partner might have compromised its urgent priority, in consideration of the needs of NORAD. Moreover, the NU's better capacity has positioned it to assume roles of assisting and empowering the local partner.

6.2.5. Partnership operation process

As the analysis of interviews and annual progress reports (of 2014/15-2016/17) indicates, the major tasks of the partnership project such as PhD training (course offering and advising), joint-research works, and short-term training to local community members were carried out with the participation of members from both partners. The project was hosted, mainly, in the EU1. But also, PhD students and the local faculty members visited the foreign institution (NU), where they shared experiences, participated in public lectures and research conferences, and got access to educational materials (participant ACDR). The interview and progress reports revealed that many EU1 faculty

members have participated in the operation process (as teachers, co-advisors and researchers), which could be considered worthwhile for ensuring local ownership. It was also revealed that many joint-research works were completed and published; and language resources (orthographies, dictionaries, grammar, corpus, and primers) were developed for some Ethiopian languages so that they could be used for educational purposes and for further study.

Accordingly, this partnership program has been contributing to capacitating the local partner. For example, as to the 2015/16 progress report, "various activities have been conducted which strengthened the capacity of [EU1]" (p.2). The interview and the progress report further disclosed that most of the PhD students were staff members of EU1, which, upon graduation, would add to its teaching and research workforce, as participants (e.g. ADZL) said. Other academic staff (e.g., ACYG, ACDR, ACFD) also underlined the value of working with the experienced NU staff in different activities of the partnership as co-advisor of PhD students, in joint-research works, in international conferences, and in workshops for improving their international academic experience and thereby their capabilities in teaching and research. They said that their engagement in such partnership activities has helped them "…acquire academic knowledge and research skill and experience for addressing linguistic related problems in Ethiopia, including disadvantaged and sign languages"(ACYG). All these were assumed to feed into the realization of the capacity building objective of the partnership.

Most of the participants who have been participating in joint-research said that their engagement has helped them build their research skills and increase their publications. Students (e.g. STMT, STAD) also underlined that their engagement in this partnership and the foreign staff's support have helped them improve their research capability and that they have published their work in a reputable journal as well as in edited books, which they couldn't have done it without this partnership.

PhD students have visited and spent some periods of their study in the foreign institution (NU). In this, almost all student participants had due recognition for what they experienced from their visit and stay in NU. They said that they got a suitable academic learning environment with state-of-the-art educational resources (library, lab, and internet), met face-to-face with their foreign advisor, visited other Norwegian universities, and attended international conferences and

workshops that enabled them to acquire and develop international experience. For example, one PhD student described his stay in NU as follows:

> The academic environment there [at NU] is so different; it is suitable for us to work more, grow more. Really, it helped me understand how I can build up myself as a scholar, as an academic, as a researcher. Those trainings, seminars, and conferences I participated on and discussions, formal and informal, which I made with my foreign professors, were really important for my academic growth (STMT, September 04, 2018).

Another student added:

> When you go there, you will find yourself amongst scholars coming from different parts of the world. That lets you see yourself…your academic status, and lets you think and be aware of to what extent you need to work to be academically competent in a global world (STAD, September 04, 2018).

Regarding the financial administration, as to both the data from interviews and the document, NORAD disbursed the money directly to the partnering institutions (to both EU1 and NU) as per their share stated in the proposal, upon written request by the local institution (EU1). As stated in the proposal and also mentioned in the interviews, about 47% of the fund was allocated to EU1. The agreement document also states that the local institution is given the responsibilities for managing and administrating allocation, accounting, and reporting the transactions of the finance it received from NORAD. By some participants (e.g., ADDS, ACBN, ACDR), such financial allocation was recognized as it gave the local partner the autonomy in managing its own share. But, another administrative staff (ADBR) had a different view, arguing that yet the local partner had no autonomous control of the fund. He insisted, "Although the money is kept in our account, yet it is their money. It is under the control of the funding body. You can't do anything without their consent with it other than what is specified in the plan". This argument is consistent with what was stated in the agreement document article-II, No.4 and also in the progress report in that any financial spending requires NORAD approval.

As it was also noted in the documents (proposal and progress reports), although the financial allocation was made as per the financial needs of the project stated in the proposal and agreed by the parties, slight alteration or flexibility in the annual budget allocation was possible as required. In support of this, participant ACDR said that even significant budget deviations can get an approval of NORAD if the reason is well justified by the recipient (EU1). Further, ACDR

mentioned a budget obtained for infrastructure that was not initially included. The partnership program was also extended further by a year funding period to complete the delayed activities. Such flexibility was considered important to adapt or respond to unanticipated challenges they may face.

Another issue disclosed here was an emphasis on transparency in financial transactions and reporting practice. This was because, "NORAD is intolerant for corruption and requires the financial transaction to be transparent" (ADTY). The issue of transparency in financial transaction was also thoroughly discussed in the document (Minute); and it was indicated as there was no possibility of misusing the money as summarized below:

> First, a coordinator submits a request for money to the college by stating the reason and details. Then, the college approves, after checking the project document and ensuring that the request is as per the plan. Those who took the money are required to settle all transactions, provide receipts for items and services purchased. All the accounting is made by professionals as per the financial law and procedures of the University (extracted from Minute of Annual Meeting, 01 December 2014).

One administrator (ADDS) also mentioned that they were using "…NORAD report format. The fund of the project was secured in a separate ledger account. The system was electronic and any transaction was recorded, in which one could easily check the balance and expenditure with direct reports from the system".

Such practices of periodical auditing and reporting could be considered important for promoting transparency and trust between partners. As to participant ADTY, this was a good practice he wished EU1 adopts and incorporated into its regular financial administrative system. On the other hand, participants (e.g., ADDS, ADZL, ACDR) viewed such practices as a source of mismatch in working systems and as an additional burden to the local partner, that resulted in some inconveniences e.g., delayed in disbursements from NORAD due to delays in external auditing. It appeared that the local partner forced to conform to the NORAD format and financial administration system.

Another point the participants talked about was the importance of communication and information exchange practices for the partnership development. They mentioned that there were frequent and ongoing face-to-face meetings, discussions, and negotiations between partners. There was "no

problem faced due to lack of clarity regarding what to do, when, and by whom…especially, the communication among the coordinators and the department head is more frequent and the contact is so close" (ADDS). ADDS further said that all project participants have got a copy of e-mail conversations and they have had access to the necessary information. Another interviewee (ACFD) added, "As participants are assigned in different research groups and networking, they have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, discuss, and communicate through e-mails". Moreover, many participants viewed annual meetings as an important means in which members from EU1, NU, and NORAD participate and discuss about the partnership progresses and the challenges to be addressed.

As stated in the 2016/17 Progress report (p.8) and also reiterated in the interviews, although there was a frequent turnover of coordinators on EU1 side (the current coordinator being the fourth one), this didn't affect the partnership development process. This was because, as ACDR said, the substituted coordinators were well aware of all the progresses as they have been actively participating starting from the inception to the operation process of the partnership. The existence of such regular communication and information exchange practices were valued to promote transparency and smooth functioning of the partnership .

Regarding how members of the local partner see their interactions and relationships with their foreign colleagues, most of them expressed positively and had due respect to their colleagues. As ACSH said, "Our relationship is so smooth and based on mutual respect. They [foreign member] respect our expertise and needs, and we respect theirs too". The word "friendly" was frequently mentioned by the interviewees to refer to their interactions with their foreign faculty members. Here is a brief description of one participant's response regarding his interactions and relationships with his foreign colleagues:

> I have a close contact with many of them [members of NU] … and established a very good friendship. My relationship, especially with the coordinator is like a family circle. She knows my home. I know her home. We have joint publications. She created access for the presentation of my publications in international conferences. Currently, we are doing joint-research (ACDR, July 11, 2018).

As to ACDR, their personal relationship has grown up through time and was well entrenched. As the 2015/16 report (p.2) also states, their relationship, both personal and institutional, "…was

getting stronger by the day". Such personal interaction was recognized important for building mutual understanding and was a base for the development of trust between partners (Mahanty et al., 2009). Hence, it appeared that EU1 members, owing to their long relationship experience, have developed trust on to Norwegian professors, as expressed by one participant as follows:

> I know them [the NU staff], as I worked with them for long. They are not like others who try to direct you…prescribe you. They are so humble and they came to support you genuinely. First, they try to listen to you and understand you, and then they share with you their experience. Most of the time, they give you the chance to take a lead (ACBN, July 15, 2018).

The above response also implies that the EU1 members viewed their Norwegian counterparts as different from other northern partners, whom they have ever partnered with, which played a dominant role. Many participants sought for further relations with their Norwegian colleagues.

Most of the participants expressed their high appreciation and interest to learn working culture from the NU faculty. Especially NU professors' punctuality and dedication to their work and plan, and the way they treated students were highly valued by both staff and students. One student (STEH) commented: "They are so devoted to assisting you to succeed in your work; they are so punctual and scheduled; they really care for your work". Most of the students also highly appreciated the autonomy and respect they are given. The response "They approach you like a colleague" was frequently mentioned in the interview with students. For example, student STAW said, "Oh! The respect they give us is quite different from what we practice here [in home institution by local staff]. They approach you like a friend, not like the way we are doing as an instructor… [laugh]". Another student added. They do not dictate you… I mean…they are a kind of people who help you by trying to understand your idea and encourage you to do by yourself, rather than just telling you to do this way or that way (STAD, September 04, 2018). It seems that students felt comfortable with the way their NU advisors treated them as they didn't dictate them.

Similarly, staff participants had a common view that their foreign colleagues often gave them priority to get benefit from the collaborative work. This point was well illustrated as follows:

> While I was working joint-research with my foreign colleague, she gave me the opportunity to present the work at the conference and also to be the first author of its publication, although she has contributed a lot in it (ACFD, July 11, 2018).

ACSH added, “We have published books where editors were assigned from both our staff and their staff, but they often let the first editor be from our staff member”. Other faculty members also mentioned that they were given equal roles in the research process starting from problem identification through designing and data collection to analysis. What is noted here was that the foreign partner was attempting to enhance the autonomy of participating individuals and institution in the South.

In response to how they conceptualize the term ‘partnership’, most of the interviewees referred to phrases such as ‘collaborative work for common goals’, ‘mutual relations’, ‘mutual benefits’, ‘equal participation’, ‘balancing contributions’, and ‘reciprocal relations’ and phrases such as, ‘knowledge transfer’ and ‘share of professionals’ were also mentioned, though infrequently. However, regarding how they saw the relationship they experienced in this partnership project in relation to their conception, there appeared a slight difference between EU1 members at higher administrative positions and those members at operation (instructors and researchers). Those at the administrative positions preferred to call the relationship as ‘partnership’, arguing that both parties participated in the capacity building project and possibly benefited out of the relationship. When one of the administrators (ADBR) argued the possibility of the foreign partner’s benefit from the partnership, he said, “There would be no reason for the foreign partners to participate and expend on matters which are not benefiting them” although their expected benefits may not be explicitly described in the project. He further said:

> By the way, we [the local partner] have many things that can be considered by the foreign partner as comparative advantages. We have many potential research areas, our climate with diversified creatures, unexploited natural resources, and others. All are seeking the attention of the foreign partners. Even their [foreign partners’] participation in such practice is a benefit; it could serve as an internship for some of them. They even may use this [partnership] as a means of promoting their academic service (ADBR, March 15, 2019).

In his opinion, partnership projects also offer many opportunities and benefits to the foreign partner that should have been given recognition by both parties.

Most of the academic staff participants, however, preferred to call this relationship as ‘support’ or ‘assistance’ rather than ‘partnership’. For them ‘partnership’ involves balancing contributions for addressing the needs of both parties and for obtaining mutual benefits. But, they remarked that this

relationship was, primarily, aimed at addressing the local needs and priorities for the benefit of the local partner. They didn't consider this type of relationship as 'partnership'. As one participant said:

> Of course, we may say that there is participation and engagement of the partner members in the partnership development process. Yes, our Norwegian colleagues are participating voluntarily and are helping us address our needs. But, where is mutuality in needs to be addressed, in goals to be achieved, and in benefits or outcomes to be obtained? They all are up to the local partners (ACAN, August 31, 2018)

Another participant (ACFD) further commented:

> This project is about capacity development of our own institution, not theirs. The [NU] members are assisting us to realize our capacity development goals…. It is all for the benefit of ours, not theirs. Yeah, it is quite clear. Of course, it can be argued that our partners have got the opportunity to do research here…develop more knowledge. Their visit here could be an opportunity for them to learn and get experience (ACFD, July 11, 2018).

Another participant (ACAU) also explained that the reason why this type of relationship is termed as 'partnership' instead of 'assistance' is:

> I think the term 'assistance' is not preferred to be used; because it is thought to imply a relation of domination. But, the relationship we experienced in this project is quite gentle, peaceful, and enabling. Yet, I feel that 'assistance' is its appropriate name (ACAU, August 31, 2018)

In his opinion, although his institution has not been dominated by the foreign partner and he felt comfortable with the relationship he experienced, the term 'partnership' could not properly denote this relationship. He insisted that this relationship was mainly a unidirectional support. Other participants also expressed their appreciation for the support and assistance no matter it was named 'partnership' or 'assistance'. For example, ACDR said, "Personally, I am comfortable with the support and I think many of my colleagues are happy too. I also believe that we need to further build on this type of support for the future".

Other findings emerged in this study were some challenges the partnership faced and that tended to obstruct its operation process. These included obstacles related to bureaucratic constraints, weak financial administration systems, and other institutional and individual factors. One of the challenges frequently mentioned by participants was the bureaucracy of the local university.

Participants claimed that there were unnecessary and time taking ups and downs in order to get acceptance of the partnership project at the university level. For example, "in order to get the President's signature, you need approval from the Office of External Relation and from Legal Office…, which kill most of your time" (ACBN). Participant ADZL added: "After NORAD released the money to the university's account, we have waited for about two months to get it into our College's account and then into a ledger account of the project. The process was really cumbersome".

Another challenge was the weak financial administration system of the local institution and its mismatch with the NORAD's requirements. As per the agreement, NORAD was supposed to release the next disbursement after it received the audit report of the previous disbursement. But, the 2016/17 progress report stated that as EU1 couldn't make the audit on time, there were delays on disbursements that hindered the project implementation. As participants claimed and reiterated in the progress report (p.9), there was a time when they waited for more than two years for the project to be audited and to get the next disbursement. There was also a delay of disbursement for some students to do fieldwork, as students (e.g. STMT & STWU) claimed.

Another point of contest was that NORHED required the overhead cost to be not more than 7% while the overhead cost as per the university's system was 12%. This resulted in an extra burden on project participants as it required them "…to exert a lot of effort, other than the academic, and to convince the responsible bodies to ensure that the overhead cost conforms to the NORHED requirement" (ADDS). Another challenge, as one administrator (ADBR) mentioned, was the absence of budget for running procurement related tasks. As he said, since support staff members were not being paid for the project's procurement work (as NORAD doesn't allow this), they were not doing with a sense of responsibility and resulted in delays.

It was also noted that support and encouragement of institutional leaders were sought for running the partnership project. Yet, participants claimed that the university (EU1) officials lacked commitments and concerns. As ACFD replied, although officials talked a lot about the importance of partnership, practically they were not supporting such practices. "They are number one in creating obstacles and delays" (ACFD). ACDR also sadly expressed:

> When you start the project, many people, including the leaders say, 'yeah, it is good! It helps us and so on'. But at the time you win the fund, things will be different… Things stick at various points. I don't know… sometimes, the project is seen as a personal issue, rather than institutional. When people know that you won the grant, they think that you are entitled to own the money (ACDR, July 11, 2018).

Another issue raised was related to individual's emphasis on personal rewards that may compromise broader institutional goals. For example, "one staff member has refused to continue in the project, although he was promised to get the laptop after a while", ACDR said.

This case study also showed that this partnership has brought about further interconnection opportunities with other institutions in other countries and also with other local institutions. For example, as the Progress report 2015/16 (p.2) states, partners (EU1 and NU) in the Language partnership have made connections with Masaryk University, Czech Republic on Text Corpora of Ethiopian Languages, and the other with Hargeisa University on Somali corpus. These partners established a 'Text Corpora Partnerships Project' which has brought additional benefits to the existing partnership in terms of financial support and participation of EU1 members in the workshops. For instance, members from EU1, NU, and Masaryk University participated in the workshop on electronic text corpora. Some students of EU1 were also offered sponsorship and attended training at NU (2016/17 progress report, p.6.). Such opportunities for partners to engage in scholarly communities were created due to further interconnections established by the Language partnership program.

6.2.6. Monitoring and evaluation process

Monitoring and evaluation has been in place in formative and summative approaches to trace the progress and to provide feedback. As the interviews indicated, coordinators have continuously monitored the partnership progresses and have made consultative discussions and communications for ensuring the smooth running of the project. Besides, as it is learned from the documents (progress reports and minutes) and also from the participants (e.g., ADDS), the partnership project was being monitored through progress reporting by the coordinators, followed by discussions involving representatives of partnering institutions and NORAD on regular annual meetings. As one participant replied:

> Coordinators of EU1 and NU, jointly, prepare the annual narrative progress report, which is then compiled by EU1 coordinator and submitted to NORAD. Feedbacks on the report are also collected in annual meetings and discussions involving representatives of partners and NORAD (ACDR, July 11, 2018).

The annual progress report detailed, among other things, progresses, challenges, and successes recorded during the budget year. Annual meetings were valued important to "…develop common understandings amongst actors about the progress and challenges and for suggesting remedial measures and decisions for addressing challenges and for further improvements in the future work" (ACBN). Members of both parties were given the opportunity to actively participate in such practices. As it is observed from the minutes, representatives of students have also been participating in these meetings.

On a summative basis, there were Mid-Term Review and a final project evaluation managed by an external team. NORAD has already conducted a Mid-term Review (see the report by Jávorka et al., 2018), which assessed the preliminary results, effectiveness, and efficiency of the program and provided recommendation for the next phase. This is valued important for the improvement of the project. For example, ACDR said, "The report [of Mid-term Review] has been sent to us by e-mail. From the report, we have learned a lot and have got important suggestions".

As it was revealed in the interview and the progress reports, information collection for evaluation and reporting was based on the performance indicators and report formats that were, basically, set by NORAD. Of course, some of the participants did not raise objections to these indicators. Even one participant (ACDR) expressed his belief that the indicators and formats, although too detailed, were comprehensive and helpful to assess "…not only inputs and processes, but also outputs and the achievements of the intended outcomes". Yet, another participant (ACBN) raised his concerns that there was minimal participation of EU1 in designing evaluation indicators and reporting formats. "We often use the performance indicators, contents, and formats already set by NORAD" (ACBN). As to ACBN, the EU1 members were so reluctant in setting and in determining evaluation indicators and contents.

Interview participants also raised concerns that these evaluation indicators and progress reports focused on the outputs and outcomes to the benefit of the local partner. "There is no evaluation

indicator or content concerning the outcomes in the side of the [NU]" (ACBN). This conformed to the objective of the partnership, which was capacity building of the local partner.

6.3. Case Two: The Health Partnership

6.3.1. Overviews

The Health partnership was established in 2013 between the Health College of EU2 (an Ethiopian University) and Health Institute of NU (a Norwegian university). It was planned to run up to 2018 for a period of five years, but it has extended up to 2019 since it could not be completed within the time frame. It was funded by NORAD through NORHED modality.

This partnership program, generally, aimed at securing highly qualified human resources in the area of health, with high scientific and evidence-based knowledge that contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life in Ethiopia. Specifically, it intended to: improve the capacity of the local partners' (EU2) staff in research and teaching; strengthen educational and training programs; improve systems to enhance institutional capacity for knowledge dissemination, quality assurance, and research; and advance equal opportunities for female staff in EU2. To realize these, the major planned activities were PhD and MPhil (Masters of Philosophy) trainings, curriculum design for MPhil, and short-term trainings.

This partnership project was initiated by individual professors from EU2 and NU who knew each other while working together in a certain partnership program. In October 2012, following officials' exchange visit, the two partner universities (EU2 and NU) signed a general Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for working in various collaborative activities. Then, in late 2012, representative partners members collaboratively developed applications and secured seed grants. Using this grant, they further developed the partnership proposal and, in 2013, they won the NORHED's main grant, amount to a total of 18,000,000 NOK for running the project.

Accordingly, at the time of data collection, the PhD program was underway in a 'sandwich' modality in which 12 PhD students of the local partner (EU2) were following their education. About 15 MPhil students have completed their elective courses at NU. The PhD program (offering the degree, course offerings, and research supervision) was being fully managed by the foreign partner (NU). Moreover, as indicated in the progress reports, capacity building training and

workshops in different areas, e.g., Research Methods, Pedagogy, Project Management, and Budgeting and Reporting were designed and being offered through the joint efforts of partners and professional support by NU's faculty that benefited EU2's staff and students.

6.3.2. Rationales

Similar to the case of EU1, factors related to academic, economic, socio-cultural and gender equity emerged as rationales of EU2 for international partnership. Economic, academic, and socio-cultural related factors emerged in the document analysis (see Appendix-I*)* as declared rationales also emerged in the interviews as perceived rationales, whereas interest in gender equity was barely mentioned in the interviews. Based on the document analysis, what has been interpreted as academic-related rationale could be regarded as a high priority, as it was cited most frequently (57 times); economic related (cited 45 times) was a moderate priority; and socio-cultural related one (cited 14 times) was a low priority rationale. These frequencies cited in the document also conform to the priorities given to these emerged rationales in response to the rank ordering question, in that academic-related rationale was ranked as first priority by most (21) of the participants and as second by only one participant; economic-related rationale ranked as second priority by most (21) of the participants and as least by one participant; and socio-cultural rationale ranked as least priority by all (22) of the participants.

Academic related rationale

Academic-related rationales were manifested in terms of the improvement of human resource capacity in research, teaching, and community service; interest to improve educational quality and international standard; interest to internationalize teaching and research; and enhancing research output. Of these, human resource development in EU2 was most frequently cited. Similarly, human resource development as part of capacity building has also been given due attention in the interviews, as many have reiterated the need for building capacity to fulfill the required skilled manpower. Most of the participants mentioned the need for increasing the number of qualified academic staff who could manage graduate training and research through graduate training (in PhD and MPhil).

As an indication of interest in human resource development, "capacity building in health research and training" and "improving staff competence" were frequently cited in the documents

(agreement and partnership proposal). For example, as the proposal (p.8) states, to respond to the government's call for "an increase in the number of health professionals", the local institution was in need of capacitating itself by fulfilling qualified staff who could conduct advanced research and training in health areas. As the proposal (pp.8-9) further describes, since there was lack of qualified staff in the local institution, partnering with an institution with better capacity and international standing would have a potential to strengthen the capacity of the local institution to carry out its training and research. In view of that, this partnership was designed to build the capacity of the local partner through training of staff (in PhD and MPhil).

Most of the participants also claimed that their institution had a shortage of highly qualified staff who could manage the graduate training and research while the foreign partner had a better capacity to do so. Thus, they expected that partnering with such institutions would address this scarcity. To quote what one of the participants said related to this:

> To improve its [local institution's] capacity, it is necessary to partner with an institution with a better capacity. By the way, our partner institution is a world-class university. It is about 200 years old; whereas ours is… it is like we are on opposite ends. So it is a privilege for us to work with such institution, for we can make use of its expertise and resources (ACAB, July 15, 2018).

Administrators (e.g. ADDN, ADDG) also expressed their expectation that partnering with NU would help to capacitate EU2's staff. They viewed this partnership i.e., working with NU, as a means of producing more and competent PhD and MPhil graduates which could not be realized independently on local expertise and/or resources. All the PhD student participants (who were also staff members of NU2) also replied that the major reason for participating in this partnership was their high interest to follow their studies in an internationally recognized university. Several of them labeled this kind of partnership as 'a golden opportunity' for them to grow academically as they will pass through a high standard education system. As such, interest in academic growth and development was recognized as a key deriver behind the formation of this partnership.

Another academic-related rationale emerged, in the document analysis and during the interview, was the interest to improv educational and research quality and raise international standard of the local partner. Regarding this, participants frequently praised the status of the foreign partner and they had the expectation that partnering with such a prestigious institution would contribute to

improve quality and standard of their institution. As one administrator (ADDN) said that "When you partner with a highly prestigious university, you will have a greater chance to learn and raise your academic quality and experience. For example, our PhD students are publishing research articles, which they wouldn't have done here. This adds up to the quality" (ADDN, September 07, 2018)

ADDN further mentioned that as PhD candidates were required to pass through the rigorous admission criteria and to fulfill international standards by publishing their research, this was important to raise not only academic profile of individual researcher but also the standard of their home institution. Similarly, many students replied that they were very much curious to pass through the European education system which they believe would raise the status and acceptance of their qualifications. An academic staff (ACJN) also added that even such practices as the selection of PhD candidates based on the NU's admission criteria, the revision of courses, and the adoption of the NU's PhD programs and training have important contributions for improving quality. As also stated in the proposal, the accomplishments of the different partnership activities were expected to improve the quality of training and research and to raise the standard of the local institution.

Interest for obtaining international experience by the local partner (staff and students) also emerged as another factor related to academic rationale category. Concerning this, it was found that both the participants and the documents have given emphasis to experiencing foreign academic environment, working with highly skilled foreign staff, participating in international conferences, increasing international research collaborations, and increasing joint publications by both staff and students. As an illustration of participants' high value to international exposure, one PhD student stated:

> Oh, it was my dream to get such a chance—to follow my study abroad. I was very much eager for… just getting the experience of the foreign academic environment. You know the respect we give to those who have a qualification in any foreign university, let alone in a European one. Beyond that, I was so curious to know what makes them this much different from us, what…and how they are doing things… I mean to experience what academic culture and system they follow… (STTM, October 06, 2018).

In addition, one MPhil student expressed his high value to international exposure, although he has felt disappointed for he couldn't continue his study. He said, "…at least I have visited the foreign academic environment which many of us are eager to experience it" (STFN). This was also reiterated by other MPhil students (e.g., STFR, STIB, & STTN).

During the interviews, it was often talked about the strategic interest of the local institution (EU2) in internationalization activities, including strengthening international partnerships in research and training to improve international recognition. Especially, administrative staff (ADER, ADDG, ADKR, & ADDN) seemed to have high interest in international recognition and experience. For example, one of them (ADER) mentioned that EU2 "aspires to be among the premier university in Africa and renowned in the world by 2025"; and that it was committed to improve its international visibility by expanding its sphere of engagement in various international activities, including joint-research and training programs, staff and student exchange, and joint conferences and workshops in wider disciplines with renowned institutions. ADER further said that his institution has given emphasis to exposing staff and students to changing global trends and developments to enable them compete in the dynamic global scientific environment. Another administrator (ADDG) also said that EU2 was committed to internationalization activities to respond to the global realities. He argued that "health-related problems are global problems" that his institution alone couldn't solve and that it requires engaging in global collaboration.

Interest in increasing research capacity and output was also emerged as another academic-related rationale. In this regard, in the document lack of research capacity and experience of the local institution were frequently cited and referred as a justification for building its capacity PhD and MPhil education through the partnership. For example, the proposal (p.9) states such challenges as: "poor quality and quantity of research output…limited staff in research…lack of staff for advising and mentoring students…" Hence, this (Health) partnership was assumed to contribute to addressing such problems through PhD and MPhil training. "The project is expected to increase the capacity and quality of staff for research and education, enhance capacity and participation in research of graduates…" (proposal, p.7).

PhD students also expected their engagement in this partnership as an alternative to increase their joint publication with international scholars. Most of them claimed that following up their study

in the Sandwich program in NU and were supervised by renowned international professors which provided them the opportunity to get their research work published in reputable journals. Regarding this, highlighting the potential of joint-research for improving research capacity and joint publications, one administrator (ADKR) commented that the absence of joint-research that involve staff members of EU2 and NU in this partnership project would limit its capacity building goals.

Economic related rationales

Economic-related rationales, as declared in the documents as well as perceived by participants, were those related to interest for an external funding source, access to better infrastructure and educational resources, and interest for economic growth. Scarcities of financial and educational resources were mentioned as the major problems to be considered in order to realize the capacity building goals of the Health partnership, whereas interest in economic growth was sporadically and only implicitly reflected. This motive appears to be implicit, as it is mostly built upon academic and socio-cultural rationales. As an implicit reflection of interests for enhancing economic competitiveness, for example, one participant (ACAB) mentioned the importance of "healthy citizen for national development". The proposal (p.10) also dictates the need for ensuring the relevance of educational programs and new graduates to local, national, and regional needs and labor markets. The proposal further describes the importance of building the capacity of the local institution for producing skilled human resource who can take part in the poverty reduction and development of their country.

As indications of motives to secure external funding, the proposal cites "inadequate research fund", "financial constraint", and "lack of funding for PhD training" (pp. 8-9). In view of that, the 2016-2020 strategic plan of EU2 has given due attention to expanding of external funding opportunities through partnering with an international partner.

Most of the participants talked about the financial scarcities in EU2 and they considered partnership projects as sources of financial support for EU2. This was clearly addressed in statements of an administrator (ADKR) as follows:

> Many funding grants are not given to projects that run unilaterally. It is when you design projects bilaterally or multi-laterally that you get funding opportunities. For example, if you

> want to win NORHED's grant for running a certain research or training project, you need to propose this project jointly with one of the Norwegian HEIs. This is also true for wining grants from other funding bodies (ADKR, September 16, 2018).

Another participant (ACJN) added that factors related to financial and material support were the primary rationale of his institution for forging international partnerships. ACJN argued that financial and other material resource feasibility was the first issue to be considered for proposing and running high-level projects. He further said that it was in response to the call for proposal application for funding that they started discussions on the collaborative activities and developed the proposal. To quote his response:

> I think external funding appears to be a base… I mean, usually, it is with the expectation of getting funding from a certain external body that we think of forging a partnership project with other institutions. Maybe I don't know… but as far as my knowledge, our college has never been engaged in an international partnership that is funded internally. You know, if we need to propose and carry out partnership projects that need a high level of cost that our institution couldn't afford, we need to wait and search for external funds (ACJN, October 16, 2018).

In support of the above argument, many participants appreciated the contribution of seed funding grant, which was obtained from NORAD, for developing the project proposal. Participants also expressed the value of external funding for the local partner to enable them to run advanced research and PhD training. According to the participants, it was usual for the local partner to search for the opportunity of partnering with a well-recognized institution, in view of securing funding. All these show that financial resource was one of the important impetuses for the establishment of this partnership

The interviews also revealed high expectations of staff and students of the local partner for financial and material support. As one participant (ACAS) commented:

> When individuals hear you talk about a project or that you got funding, they expect you are running excess money. And then ask you: "why don't you include us in the project? Please let us participate in the fieldwork… in data collection, and the like…." In fact, in reality, it is those who run the project that they are living a better life. So they see in that lens (ACAS, August 29, 2018)

Especially, graduate students disclosed high expectations for educational material access and financial support from the partnership project. When one of the students (STTM) explained how much financial incentive was so important for his study, he said:

> At least, when I think about selecting my research topic, I will consider and think of the relevance of my research problem rather than bothering more on the financial feasibility. You know, I remember when my colleagues and I selected research problems for our Master's work; much of our concern was financial feasibility at the cost of the significance of the topic and our interest because of the limited financial resource to be allocated. I think, as you are also doing your dissertation, you also know how much finance determines your work…unless you get an external sponsor (STTM, October 06, 2018).

The importance of financial resource for running their research work was also mentioned by several students (e.g., STAT, STFD, STCH, STGD, STMG, STIB, STTN). As the local institution can't allocate adequate budget for student's research work, participants expected that such a partnership project would address this limitation.

Inadequacy of the necessary infrastructure and educational resources for research and teaching also emerged as other important factors that forced EU2 to establish partnerships with the foreign partner. As the interviews indicate, EU2 had a shortage of the required educational resources (like lab, libraries, etc…) and that international partnership activities were expected to present EU2 members with the opportunity to access some of these needed resources from the NU. The document analysis also revealed such a lack of infrastructure and educational resources for research and teaching. For example, in the proposal (p.8) it was stated "inadequate research infrastructures…lack of data repository system…absence of research training center…" as major challenges that EU2 faces, and that the formation of partnership was supposed to address such constraints. In line with this, it was proposed to establish "Center for Research Methods and Data Repository Systems" (proposal, p.6) that are assumed to improve institutional research capacity, knowledge dissemination and management. Further, in the proposal it was stated that the partinership was an opportunity for staff and students of the local partner to get "better access to libraries and ICT" (p.11) of the foreign partner.

Socio-cultural related rationale

Based on the analysis of documents, socio-cultural rationale category seemed to be the least frequently cited rationale, compared to the academic and economic-related rationales. This rationale was manifested in terms of interest in improving social networking and connections and for responding to social and community development needs. In relation to interests to social networking and connections, the proposal considered strengthening of international collaboration in education and research as an expected outcome (pp.10,13). Similarly, interview participants replied that their engagement in international partnership activities would enable them to build personal connections and networking with international scholars and for furthering institutional linkages and connections. Concerning this, one participant (STCH) said, "Your engagement in such international partnership activities further pulls another partnership opportunity… It is also a venue for friendship and social network."

In relation to the interest of the local partner (EU2) for social and community development, the proposal states that EU2 issues relevant to societal and community development should be emphasis through "ensuring education relevant to societal needs…producing professionals who are responsive to the development needs of society… empowering the community to address their development needs…working with partners and stakeholders to improve the lives of society" (p.22).

Interest to gender equity

In the documents analysis, ensuring gender equity (cited 23 times) also emerged as one of the rationales driving the establishment of this partnership. As indicated in the proposal, underrepresentation of female academic staff (only 13.8% in 2012/2013) was one of the "core problems identified through need assessment" (p.8). It was further identified that their representation in a leadership position was very low. Thus, the proposal describes "mainstreaming of gender issues and improving women's participation" (p.4) as one of the intentions of this partnership program. Ensuring "equal opportunities for female staff" (pp.6,7,11) and "gender balanced staff" (pp.9,11) in the local partner (EU2) were also stated as expected outcomes. The proposal further emphasizes on improving female participation on training and research activities in EU2 through increasing the number of female staff and engaging them in leadership positions.

It was expected that "gender and women's Health Center" (p, 7, 12) and "a special leadership program for women" (p.7) would be developed based on NU's model; and an equal number of females and males would be enrolled (p.12). The proposal (pp.10-11) further indicates that the proportion of females in staff and students and in all the outcomes i.e., publications, qualifications, graduations, and conference participation, should be seen as indicators of program success.

6.3.3. Initiation process

Regarding the initiation of this partnership, evidences from the document analysis and interviews showed that the partnership emerged out of the prior personal relations of two faculty members. This summarized by one participant's response as follows:

> Prior to this partnership, there was a capacity building partnership between our institution [EU2] and the U.S. institution, where I, from our institution, and one professor from the U.S. side (now a coordinator of this partnership in the Norwegian side) were members. This professor, at that time, was an employee of the U.S. institution. Later, she went to Norway and became the [NU's] staff member there too. It was during this time that I established a personal relationship with her and had got a chance to discuss about our interests in working in such partnership projects and about the possibilities of securing NORHED's funding. Then, we discussed the issue with our respective officials and initiated them to meet and discuss with each other. Fortunately, we succeeded. The [NU] officials came to our country and visited [EU2]; in return, EU2 officials went to Norway and visited [NU]. Following this exchange visit, in October 2012, the two universities signed a general Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for working in various collaborative activities (ACAB, July 15, 2018).

Here, although a 'Memorandum of understanding' was signed at the institution or university level, the proposing units were the health college of EU2 and the health institute of NU, and that the partnership was established, basically, at a college level. As an interviewee disclosed, in his institution, partnerships can be formed and operated at any level or unit (department, school, institute, college, etc.) of the university but it also requires approval of the university.

Another participant (ADDG) who participated in the early stages of the partnership development went on describing the initiation process:

> After MOUs and in response to NORHED's call for application for seed grant funds, we [selected members from partner institutions] developed an application and applied for the competition for the grant. In late 2012, we won and secured the grant. Then, using this

> grant, we identified our institutional [EU2's] needs and developed the partnership proposal; and again in 2013, we won the NORHED's main grant (ADDG, July 17, 2108).

The contribution of the seed money was used for conducting institutional need assessment and for developing the partnership proposal and the application for NORHED's main grant. The proposal document states that "[t]he NORHED Seed Funding enabled [EU2] to spearhead a comprehensive and extensive needs assessment" (p.3). The interviewees also confirmed that the seed grant was used for covering costs for travel, accommodation, data collection, and meetings during the need assessment and the development of the partnership proposal and application for funding.

Another important finding was the role of prior personal relationships or human contacts for the initiation of the partnership. Based on the interviews and document analysis, personal relationships and mutual interests in developing a partnership of the two members served as a springboard for further contacts and conversations between senior officials of the two institutions. Consequently, the two institutions identified developing a partnership as one of their mutual interests, and then they began to see the potential advantages of the relationship. Following this, representatives from the two universities signed MOUs for developing partnership programs on a wider range of collaborative activities.

It was further noted that personal relationship was not the only reason for establishing the partnership, but it seemed to have served as a catalyst for starting the negotiation and for signing the partnership agreements. As indicated in the proposal and the interviews, the establishment of this partnership boded well to the strategic plan of the local institution as it was looking for potential partners. For example, participant ACAB said, "…this partnership is not established all of a sudden. It is the institution's [EU2's] strategic interest." The strategic plan of the institution has also given attention to the expansion of international partnerships. This implies that partnership opportunities were deliberately sought out by the local partner.

In fact, EU2 had no policy and procedures for specifying mechanisms and priorities regarding the development of international partnerships. Of course, the strategic plan reflected its interests and intentions to further its international partnership practices. According to the administrators (ADDN, ADDG, ADKR), EU2 didn't have specified set of priorities, and it followed an approach that was open to various options and partnership possibilities with no geopolitical and thematic

restrictions. Nevertheless, although the local partner had no strategic preference to partner with the Northern or Southern partners, several participants mentioned that most of the time they have been partnering with the Northern institutions for they can offer funding.

The study also highlighted the value of frequent contacts and consultative meetings between members of partners for furthering mutual understandings and consensus among leaders in both parties. As to participant ADDG, a series of meetings, exchange visits, and contacts were made during the initial partnership establishment. He (ADDG) further underlined that these meetings were important to broaden the liaison amongst the higher officials and senior staff within institutions, and also to develop awareness of the opportunities what each partner could offer the other. The proposal (p.3) also reported the occurrence of seven meetings between EU2 and NU officials since 2011 that contributed to promoting mutual awareness and facilitating the establishment of the partnership.

As the proposal and interviewees (e.g. STTM, STCH, STGD, STFD) indicated, a comprehensive and extensive need assessment was undertaken. This assessment included identification of gaps to be addressed, opportunities, and risks; proposing of major collaborative tasks; and establishment of baseline data. Although the assessment focused on the needs of the local partner, it also involved assessment across the partner institutions pertaining to understanding each other's education and research programs, administrative and academic systems, teaching and research infrastructures, human resources, and gender issues for identifying opportune areas for collaborations (Proposal, pp. 3-4). Accordingly, two areas, "research and research education in Health" (p.6), were proposed as partnership agendas to build the capacity of the local institution (EU2) in research and education in health and medical sciences.

Most of the participants said that NU members have given precedence to the demands of the local institution; and that during the need assessment members of the local partner were provided with ample opportunities to identify and propose partnership agendas that fit well with their institutional needs and priorities. To mention a response from one PhD student (STFD) who participated in the need assessment, "They [NU members] just gave us a chance to identify our own institutional needs by ourselves." Accordingly, it was the selected members of EU2 who participated actively in the need assessment and who proposed issues to be addressed by the partnership project. In

addition, other members, including key stakeholders and institutional leaders of both parties participated in through providing inputs and feedbacks. In an attempt to identify and address the local demands, inputs were also sought out from key stakeholders of the local institution. For example, as the proposal (p.3) describes, "Relevant stakeholders: Kebele Health Extension workers; Federal, Regional and District Health Officials; various community partners; and staff and faculty members of [EU2]" participated in the presentation and discussion of need assessment results.

6.3.4. Building process

The interviews and documents showed the partnership proposal development and the planning process, including the decisions on the partnership goals and expected outcomes, major activities, scheduling, and share of roles and responsibilities, were based on consensus and mutual agreements between members of both parties and also with consideration of NORHED's priorities and requirements. It was further noted that representatives from the local partner participated in this stage and most of the participants expressed their beliefs that the partnership program has the prospect of addressing the local needs and demands. With the intention of addressing the needs of the local partner, members from both parties have reached consensus and agreed to take forward the capacity development of the local institution (EU2) in the area of health (proposal, pp. 3-6).

Participants (e.g. ACJN, ACAB) claimed that the distribution of roles and responsibilities was based on discussions and agreements between partners for ensuring complementation, also with consideration of qualifications and experiences. Based on such agreements, as the proposal (p. 4) indicates, the local partner (EU2) was responsible to play a leading role in the planning and monitoring of the project. Besides, as the proposal document (p.4) describes, EU2 assumed such responsibilities as handling complaints and resolve conflict (if any), convene meetings related to project management and project review, and reporting (both progress and financial transactions) in consultation with NU. Whereas the Norwegian partner (NU), as it was viewed as more experienced, was supposed to provide support and served as a mentor to the local partner (EU2) in the project i.e., mentoring students and faculty members (proposal, p.3). As to the participants (e.g., ACAB) and the proposal (p.6), NU was also given a responsibility to admit PhD candidates of EU2 as per NU recruitment criteria and procedure, offer courses, supervise PhD students, share

experience to EU2, offer capacity building training, and provide educational material access to EU2 staff and students. Members from both EU2 and NU were also assigned to participate collaboratively in different activities, including proposal development, scheduling, budgeting, managing, course offering (of MPhil program), short-term training, and curriculum design. It appears that NU, owing to its better status and experienced staff, was assigned to carry out the major tasks, while EU2 was assigned in relatively limited roles and responsibilities. In this, although efforts were made to promote mutual influence by providing the local partners to take the leading role in managing and monitoring the project, partners' difference in their expertise and capacity seemed to have an obstacle to symmetrical distributions of roles and responsibilities. This means that partners' capacity difference tends to lead them to shoulder asymmetrical roles in the overall partnership development process.

Based on the interviews, the local partner had fully participated in the development of the partnership proposal. Regarding this, one of the PhD students who participated in the need assessment and proposal development reported:

> First, the selected staff members from our institution identified the partnership agendas through need assessment and developed the draft partnership proposal. Then, the draft proposal was presented in the discussion meetings where inputs were taken and modified accordingly. Here, other faculty members and institutional leaders of both parties have also participated through providing valuable feedbacks for further modifications. Finally, institutional leaders approved and signed the agreements (STTM, October 06, 2018).

Most of the participants also expressed their beliefs that the partnership proposal entertained the needs of the local partner, arguing that the focus of the partnership was on building the capacity of the local institution. For example, one of them said, "This partnership was designed, basically, to address our institutional needs through PhD and MPhil trainings in the area of health, curriculum design, and other short-term capacity building trainings. Our partners are supporting us to address our needs" (ACFK). Another participant (ACAS) also stated, "The government consistently called for increasing the number of health professionals. Thus, it is reasonable that this project was in place to produce highly quality professionals who could contribute to further production of professionals in health areas". All of the academic staff participants also unanimously mentioned that the local partner had no adequate number of academic staff, with the required qualifications, who could manage research works and teaching for an ever-increasing student population. They

also said that due to inadequate research funding and infrastructures, most of the academic staff lacked adequate experiences and competencies for conducting research, disseminating results, and advising graduate students in their research work. The proposal also mentioned such a shortage of academic staff and infrastructure and resource constraints, which this partnership supposed to address. Thus, this partnership program appeared to be consistent with the needs of the local institution, as it was meant to address these gaps through PhD and MPhil trainings and thereby increase academic staff both in terms of number and competencies.

As it is already mentioned, the partnership arrangement and planning process was also in consideration of NORHED's criteria and priorities. In this regard, several participants (e.g. ACAB, ACAS, STTM, STFD, STGD, STCH) acknowledged that the Norwegian partners (both NORAD and NU), in most cases, provided them with autonomy to focus on their own local needs and priorities when designing the project. They also viewed most of the NORHED's requirements and priorities and associated procedures as neutral that did not compromise the priorities of the local institution. Even some of the NORHED's criteria were considered as supportive and enabling that the local partner included the local needs and priorities in the partnership. For example, as the NORHED's guideline indicates (Norad, n.d.), NORHED required the partnership projects to be relevant to the needs and demands of the Southern partner; the Southern institution should to take a leading role in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the partnership program; and students granted scholarships should sign commitments to serve their institution (EU2) after they completed their study. All these requirements were recognized by the participants as they were in favor of the local partner that entertained its own needs and promoted local ownership of the project. It was also found the project was a fortune that 'Health' was one of the NORHED's sub-themes (Norad, n.d.), clearly matched with the needs and demands of the local partner. This means that the partnership agendas—as they focused on research and training in health fields—linked with both the local needs and NORHED's thematic priorities.

In spite of agreements and consensus in most cases of the partnership arrangements, there were some instances of contestations and differences among partners with regard to the priorities and emphasis they gave to some issues of the partnership. For example, the interview revealed worries about the employment of 50% female recruitment procedure to address gender inequality which, somehow, influenced the local partner to compromise its priorities. In this regard, participant

ACJN argued that although gender equity was already the concern of his institution and that actually his institution was trying to address it using different affirmative actions, the reason it was planned to address it by recruiting 50% female PhD candidates was, mainly, to conform to NORAD's priority and emphasis. He insisted that this (50% recruitment) was not the appropriate means of addressing the issue. As he commented:

> Of course, consideration of better enrollment access to female sounds good. But, I think its implementation should, at best, be aligned with the local partner's priority and intentional plan, if the local partner has to be the primary beneficiary. You know, in our context where there is urgent need for health professionals while there is scarce female candidates for graduate programs, such interventions to increment of female enrollment should have been implemented in the early elementary, high school, and undergraduate levels, rather than in tertiary level where we ought to have given priority to training of professionals using the available candidates, irrespective of gender equity, to capacitate our institution that, in turn, could contribute to addressing such issues (ACJN, October 16, 2018).

In his opinion, this female recruitment procedure would have been a suitable strategy to address had it been employed in the lower levels of education rather than in the graduate levels.

Another participant (ACFK) also said that his institution's adherence to this recruitment procedure was to appeal to the funding body (NORAD) and secure the fund. He insisted that had this procedure been intentional and accounted for the felt needs of EU2, it would have been institutional or implemented throughout other programs of the university. His further response below shows how EU2 members have emphasized on adjusting their needs and priorities with the donor's requirements for winning the fund competition.

> I remember, during the need assessment, many gaps and needs were raised and discussed. Many of us said the institution lacks this, lacks that…many lacks… were mentioned...many purposes were proposed. But, we finally agreed to focus on refining the areas and specified the purposes of the project that were in line with the interest and requirement of NORAD and the partner institution. Had this not been so, the project wouldn't have been selected (ACFK, August 29, 2018).

A PhD student (STTM) who participated in the need assessment and proposal development added that although members (of need assessment) have identified local needs and priorities, they have

given much attention and consideration to what NORAD needs and requires from EU2 for fear of losing the fund expected to be obtained from NORAD. He said:

> Honestly speaking, our focus was, mainly, to win the fund by writing the proposal that appeals to them by emphasizing on the requirements and issues in which we thought they are interested in. In fact, this doesn't mean that we were totally ignorant of our needs, but that much focus was given to winning the fund (STTM, October 06, 2018).

Although participants have acknowledged their high level of participation in the identification of partnership agendas and in the development of the partnership proposal, they also raised concerns on the limited involvement of the concerned bodies in decision makings regarding certain partnership activities. An interesting example was that one of the major partnership activities, the MPhil program (Masters of Philosophy in Health Sciences Research), remained impractical for it was designed without the involvement and agreement of academic units (departments) or members who have engaged in the collaborative work (see the detail under 'operation' section 6.3.5.). Based on the participants, the idea about the MPhil program was conceived and agreed between coordinators of the two partner institutions' (EU2 and NU), without communicating well to the operating units and members. In this regard, this partnership was established and has been operating at the college level where the two coordinators, who played a substantial role in initiating the relationship, were heads in their respective institutions. It appeared that the partnership development was, basically, top-down and that the partnership building process was not well-grounded in the operating department level.

6.3.5. Operation process

Many of the partnership activities were carried out as per the plan and others were in progress. For example, the 2017 progress report (pp.2-32) describes that the PhD program was running smoothly. About 12 PhD students have completed their course work in NU and they were doing their dissertations. A curriculum for the MPhil program was developed and about 15 MPhil students have taken a six months course at NU. Many capacity-building short-term trainings (in andragogy, research, and gender) were offered. In this regard, it is noted that the NU staff members were in charge of most of the major activities, for example, PhD student supervision and course offerings to both PhD and MPhil students (participant ACAB). Especially, the PhD program has been fully managed by the NU staff.

In this regard, most of the academic staff replied that although they adequately participated in the need assessment and proposal development, their role and participation during the operation process were limited to a few tasks, such as course evaluation for credit transfer and pedagogical training. Later, some of them who had been engaged in such tasks were registered as PhD student. To mention what ACFK replied regarding their participation in the operation process:

> What I remember is at the beginning period; some of us participated in group tasks. Groups comprised of members from both partners were made and assigned to work on themes such as andragogy, curriculum review and design, gender. We started working on these themes, but this did not last long. Personally, I was assigned and participated in one group where we evaluated curricula for credit transfer. Other tasks related to PhD and MPhil programs including research supervision and short-term training were carried out by the foreign staff (ACFK, August 29, 2018).

Moreover, participants raised concerns that the operation process involved a limited number of EU2 members in limited activities. From EU2 side, "...it is solely the coordinator who is taking part in the operation of this project" (ACFK). Such practices where most of the activities were carried out by the foreign partner with limited involvement of the local partner might have limited the knowledge transfer to the local partner and thus affected the capacity building goal of the partnership.

Such limited participation of the local partner in the operation process was linked to three reasons, as the interview revealed. One reason was the lack of local academic staff members who have the required academic rank to manage the PhD training. Regarding this, ACAB said, "Since we don't have professionals who can run PhD training, our main goal was to address this using Norwegian professors to manage the training". This means that although the local partner, at least in rhetoric, were provided with the opportunity to direct the partnership in view of mutual influence, the limited academic capacity of its faculty members emerged as an obstacle against equitable participation. The second reason was that the MPhil program, which was thought to involve the local staff, was not yet operational.

The third reason mentioned by the participants was linked to the limited type of partnership activities that could have involved the local staff in lower academic ranks. Especially, several participants (e.g. ADKR, ACFK, ACBS, ACJN) complained on the absence of 'joint-research'

activity. They claimed that had joint-research been part of the project, it could have been possible to involve many academic staff members from EU2, and thus improve the EU2's level of participation as well as the exchange of knowledge and experiences between partner institutions. They viewed joint-research activities as much more conducive, compared to other activities such as PhD and MA training and capacity strengthening training in providing the local faculty with a better opportunity of participation in the partnership development process. As to ADKR, such limited participation of EU2 members due to the absence of joint-research activity tended to undermine the research-capacity building goal at EU2.

Based on the agreement document (p.2), the NORHED modality advocates the local partner (EU2) to be responsible for the administration and management of the partnership project, including resource and financial allocation, monitoring, and reporting of the progresses and financial expenditures. In this regard, each partner institution had its own budget share, which was stated and agreed in the proposal and implementation plan. Accordingly, NORAD disbursed the fund to the partner institutions based on their share and they "…are entitled to manage their share as per the planned activities" (ADDN). In ADDN's opinion, this type of arrangement contributes to promoting the local partner's role in control of resources. Whereas others had a different opinion arguing that all the financial administration was under the funding body's control. For example, ADER said, "Even though you got the fund in your account, yet it is their money. You are not entitled to allocate it without what is stated in the plan". ACAB also added, "Your expenditure needs to be in the budget line and you need to report to NORAD."

Regarding the budget distribution, participants (e.g., ADKR, ACJN) claimed that a larger proportion (79%) of the budget (also indicated in the agreement and proposal) went to NU and managed by NU staff. The reason for this, as to participants (ACAB and ADDG), was that the major activities of the project such as training of PhD and MPhil students were carried out by NU staff with minimal involvement of the EU2 members. Plus, the professional pay for the NU staff was more costly compared to payments to the local staff. Another reason for this imbalanced financial spending, according to (ADKR and ACFK), was attributed to the limited type of partnership activities involving the local partner members. As ADKR commented:

> …rather than being limited to the trainings that are to be carried out by the foreign institution, it should have been good to think of joint-research projects to be done in local institution. This could have balanced the financial spending …which contribute more on institutional capacity building (ADKR, September 16, 2018)

Another important point noted in the operation process was related to challenges faced by the implementation of a new MPhil (Masters of Philosophy in Health Sciences Research) program. This (MPhil) program was planned to be offered in both institutions where students could take the course work (to be managed by the NU staff) in NU and the thesis work (to be managed by the EU2 staff) in EU2. And the degree was to be awarded by the home institution (EU2). However, this couldn't be put into practice for the reason that there was no operating academic unit or department that owned the program. "When we came back after we completed our course work in Norway, no one cared for us. None of the departments was interested to host the program" (STTN). Department heads refused to host the program for they thought that it was not relevant and not related to the programs in their department. As one participant replied in this regard:

> Although we agreed with our partner [NU] and sent our students to Norway to take the courses, in the meantime, when we tried to get an approval of the curriculum, we faced challenges. Departments refused to host the program. At one time, they said 'the program requires the approval of the Ministry of Health'; at another time, they say 'it is not relevant… and not related to the programs in the department. Although about 15 students have completed their 6 months course work in Norway, they couldn't continue their studies here. In fact, recently, the curriculum has got approval by the senate and one department is willing to host the program, yet none of the students are interested to continue in this program. This is because they have already started their study in other programs and some of them have already completed their studies. To admit new students, we need extra funds for the coursework in NU since the fund allocated for it is already used up (ACAB, July 15, 2018).

Several participants remarked that the failure of this program was linked to two major reasons. One was the lack of discussion and agreement on its relevance amongst members of the local institution during the partnership building stage. The other one, which is linked to the first, was the top-down partnership arrangement that gave little attention to the participation of the operating academic units and members in decisions regarding the detail partnership contents and activities. As one participant (ACGG) commented:

> The main problem was that the department which was supposed to host the program did not fully engage in the design of this [MPhil] program, or not aware of the issue in detail. The responsible body didn't own the issue from the very beginning. I think the idea is initiated by the head of [NU] and then accepted by [EU2] head. You know, we [local staff] have the habit of saying 'ok' for issues our foreign colleagues brought us before we critically examine their value. It is after the program is adopted that the issue of ownership i.e., which department should host the program is raised. You know…the problem is that it is not well communicated to the concerned body (ACGG, September 17, 2018).

In his opinion, the MPhil program was conceptualized and designed at the College level by the respective heads without the involvement of members of operating units (departments). In support of this, one administrator (ADKR) commented, "The coordinator should have consulted members of the operating department before he agreed with the NU coordinator and start implementation". This response was also shared by other participants (e.g., ACAS, ACBS, ACFK). These participants did not believe in the relevance and urgency of this (MPhil) program, arguing that it was not different from the already existing MSc programs in the College. For example, ACBS said, "designing a new master program, especially this (MPhil) program was not urgent to be part of the partnership project. It is not different from the already existing programs". Rather, supporting and strengthening the existing programs should have been sought out, as participants further suggested. On the other hand, the coordinator insisted on its relevance for addressing gaps in research arguing that it was a research-driven. But, academic staff participants' (e.g. ACBS and ACFK) comment in this regard was that joint-research would have been better than the MPhil program for addressing the gap (in research skill and experience) identified. They further argued that the joint-research activities could contribute not only to strengthen the research capacity and experience of the local partner, but also to solve the health problems of the society. This divergence in responses between the coordinator and other faculty members indicates that the decision regarding the design of the MPhil program was made with little or no discussions and consensus amongst EU2 staff members.

This implies the need for communicating the details of the partnership to the concerned bodies in order to ensure common understanding amongst members of the local partners before the commencement of the operation process. Participant ADKR commented that there should have been more frequent contacts and communication amongst members of the local partners during the design of the partnership that would have contributed to troubleshooting of misunderstandings

between the coordinator and some faculty members. In fact, in another instance, it was reported that various communication mechanisms including face-to-face discussions and performance reporting were in place for information exchanges between representatives of the two parties. As one participant (ACAB) said, frequent face-to-face contacts and discussions have been in place, as members of partners worked together in budget utilization and rearrangement, monitoring and evaluation of the progress, addressing possible challenges, and providing the necessary support in the implementation process. The presence of such continuous communication would likely result in a common understanding of challenges and issues related to implementation and could contribute to the development of trust and transparency between partners.

It was also noted that participants were not happy with the leadership role of the EU2 coordinator. They claimed that some irregularities, including failure of the MPhil program and lack of partnership activities involving the local partner that, in turn, resulted in minimal participation of the local members and unbalanced fund distribution, were linked to the coordinator's weakness. As to one administrator (ADKR), the contribution of the partnership project in building the capacity of his institution was not as he expected, relative to other previous partnerships that contributed to institutional infrastructure development. He said, "Promises like institutional system building, data repository, and MPhil were not actualized". He thought that the reason for this was linked to the leadership problem of the coordinator in EU2 side. "Now, he [the coordinator] is in sabbatical leave. How can he manage it while he is not here?" (ADKR). It seems that the overall partnership development process and its success rested mainly on—and is highly influenced by—the coordinator's commitment and role. Such dependence on individual coordinators has implications for partnership development. In this regard, ADKR suggested the partnership to be closely tied to the institution and to involve many members, rather than being dependent on one or a few individual coordinators.

In response to how participants saw their interaction with their foreign colleagues, most of them viewed their relations as generally enabling, friendly, and full of mutual respect. Especially, several students (both PhD and MPhil) mentioned their high appreciation and recognition to the autonomy and freedom they were given by their foreign advisors and instructors both during their stay in Norway (NU) and at their home institution. As an example, one PhD student's (STCH)

appreciation to his interaction with his foreign advisors and what he experienced in his stay in NU is summarized as follows:

> It is quite different from what I know and expect. You are considered as staff. We are given an office equipped with the necessary materials. The relation is horizontal. I can't say that my relationship with my advisor is 'advisor-advisee'. It is like a friend… so smooth, so caring. They always keep our interests; their influence is constructive and positive (STCH, September 17, 2018).

He had high appreciation for the Norwegian professors for their unreserved support and contribution to academic growth and development of students. Other PhD students (e.g. STMR, STMN) also responded that the opportunity of being taught and supervised by international faculty members helped them to appreciate and acquire different ways and approaches in teaching and research which they may not have acquired had they been taught and supervised by local staff only.

Reminding the EU2's need for increasing qualified workforce for running graduate level training and research, one participant (ADDN) said that many of the faculties who were engaged in running this program as teachers and advisors were NU staff members, whom he acknowledged that they were highly experienced and skilled professionals. He further said, "Working with these faculty members is a benefit for our staff members. And it is also a great opportunity for our students to be trained in such internationally recognized institution" (ADDN). This idea was also supported by all student participants who frequently mentioned that it was a privilege for them to pass through the Norwegian education system.

Although most of the participants viewed their relationship with almost all their Norwegian colleagues and advisors as positive, some participants (ACGG, ACJN, STTM, STAT) expressed their feeling that the NU coordinator was somewhat different from the other Norwegian faculty members and they were not happy about her. For example, ACGG said, "I think... I don't know, maybe she has been acculturated to the U.S. style [Laugh]. She has been a staff in a U.S. institution... [Laugh]... you know, she is a bit different from her colleagues..." A PhD student (STTM) who participated in proposal development also suspected that the decision regarding the MPhil program would be linked to her influence. Another participant (STAT) also commented on

the coordinator as she was a bit rigid, and that many of the PhD students were not free to raise issues with her as they could with other NU professors. As she said:

> For example, she was disappointed for we [PhD students] commented, in the presence of NORAD officials, that the fund we get for our research is insufficient. Later, although we were told to request reimbursement for the extra cost we spent, we couldn't dare to do so for we are afraid of her (STAT, October 06, 2018).

According to study participants many of the challenges that the partnership faced were related to the limitations of the local institutions. As mentioned by participants (e.g. ACAB, ACFK, ACGG) and cited in the progress reports, these challenges included delays in procurement, auditing, and reporting due to sluggish and bureaucratic financial administrative system of EU2. As to ACAB, equipment (e.g. ICT equipment, plagiarism software) has not yet been purchased, although the project lifetime was about to end. He felt afraid that the fund may be returned to the donor. As ACGG said, this sluggish and time taking bureaucracy was not appealing to the foreign partners and he recommended this to be improved.

Inconveniences were also mentioned linked to differences in work traditions between institutions. For example, ACAB mentioned the admission process for PhD students at NU as time taking and strict and resulted in delays in enrollment which in turn affected the annual budget allocation. ACAB further mentioned such issues as a tiresome reporting system, time taking visa application and approval process, and inconvenient NU's payment system for the accommodation of NU staff in Ethiopia.

The inclination of individuals in EU2 towards personal benefits was another point that the interviewees mentioned as challenges. They said that there was a tendency that the partnership project being viewed as a source of income by many EU2 members. As ACGG said,

> …for example, there was a training on Scientific Writing (I-III) in which many members have started attending with the expectation of some financial incentives; because, it is usual to get incentives on such occasions. Unfortunately, there was no such incentive in that training, and that many of them quit the training. And it was difficult to get trainees who can complete the training... (ACGG, September 17, 2019).

Another participant (ACAS) explained:

> When individuals hear you talk about a project or that you got fund, they expect you are running excess money. And then ask you: "why don't you include us in the project? They asked you to let them participate in the fieldwork… in data collection, and the likes…. In fact, in reality, it is those who run the project who are living a better life. So they see in that lens (ACAS, August 29, 2018).

In her opinion, what these individuals have adopted from the previous international partnership projects has influenced them to be inclined to short-term financial benefits. This was because, as she said, it was usual that those who participated in international partnership projects and those who stayed abroad for their study used to have better financial status.

Such inclination was also echoed in one of the participants' response: "You know, I have gone through ups and downs in designing this project and secured the fund, but I am not allowed to get hard currency when I went Norway for work." (ACAB). In this regard, he and also another participant (ADDG) suggested the need for a benefit package for individuals to recognize their contributions in bringing grant. These comments were reflected not only the inclination of individuals towards financial benefits but also the absence of policy and procedures with clear strategies and mechanisms regarding international partnership development.

Several students also talked about the necessity of finances and funds for their work. They said that the research funding for their dissertation was not sufficient and did not get their expectations. The response of one student below summarizes their high expectation of financial benefit and disappointment

> To be frank, what was in many of our minds was that when we go abroad, we will come with some money that contributes to addressing our financial shortage. But in this project, it is unthinkable. The money we get was not sufficient even for our subsistence. Everything there is so expensive. And we were kept back from many things. The worst thing is the moment we get this scholarship our institution deducted our salary by half and cut all of our allowances. That reduced our previous income by more than 60%. That was not fair! It should have been well thought out (STGD, October 05, 2018).

All these responses indicated the high interest and expectations of individuals towards their own personal financial benefits. Such a high expectation of individuals for short-term financial benefit seems not healthy, as it may distort the long-term benefits that the institution may gain from the partnership.

Participants were also asked to describe how they conceived the term 'partnership' and how they related it to the experience they have gone through the development process of this (Health) partnership. For most of them, the term 'partnership' differs from what they experienced in this project. Most of them saw their foreign partner as a 'supporter' or 'assistant' of their institution, not as a 'partner'. They felt that the term 'partnership' didn't appropriately denote the 'Health partnership project' arguing that its main intention was capacitating the southern partner. For instance, ACJN argued, "I don't consider NORAD or NU as our partners. They are our 'supporters' or 'assistants' because they are assisting us to build our institution's capacity. Our institution is the sole beneficiary of the project". In his opinion, the term 'partnership' was not appropriate to denote this type of relationship, as it had, virtually, no or little contribution to the foreign partner. Similar opinions were also reiterated by other participants. For example, one participant (STIB) said that this relationship was mainly for the benefit of the local partner with no substantial benefits to the foreign partner.

> Those activities planned in the project are to contribute to improving the capacity of our institution, not that of [NU]. PhD and MPhil students are ours. Short-term trainings are to build our staff's capacity. I don't remember any plan or expected outcome for the benefit of [NU] (STIB, August 29, 2018).

Another participant (ACBS) said:

> For me, in a partnership, partners collaboratively work to realize common goals and obtain mutual benefits. But the goal of this project is capacity building of [EU2]. So it is our institution that benefits out of it. It is the need of [EU2] to be addressed, not the need of [NU]. Our foreign colleagues are supporting us to realize our goals. To be partners, I think, there should have been intended benefits that NU expected to obtain. Of course, individuals may get financial benefits, and also they may get the experience of working in a foreign environment. But these are not comparable to the benefit that the local partner gets (ACBS, August 29, 2018).

For one administrator (ADKR), partners are supposed to be equally benefit from the outcomes and mutually accountable; and each partner can negotiate and put forth priorities with no hesitation, or with no fear of losing financial support. But, he doubted that this relationship fulfilled all these. He expressed his feeling that this relationship was inclined to be a unidirectional assistant to the benefit of the local partner. He also said that his institution was not free to negotiate and even it

compromised its priorities for fear of losing securing funding. “It is like donor-recipient. The moment you receive money, you will hand over your influence” (ADKR).

As to ACJN, denoting this project by the term ‘partnership’:

> …may be politically correct because maybe officials prefer to use it. I think it is with the intention of doing things smoothly. Yeah, terms like ‘patron-client’ or ‘donor-recipient’ are not liked, even by the southern side, the southern politicians. But, for me, I don’t see any use of the term. The reality is [laugh] they are supporting us, and we need it. Here, I can be a witness that they aren’t dominating us in favor of their benefit. Norwegians are different. It is we who are benefiting (ACJN, October 16, 2018).

Regarding this, the coordinator had a different opinion; he said that the term ‘partnership’ appropriately designated the relationship in this partnership. He argued that this relationship “… involved exchange of knowledge on both sides. In some areas, we had a better experience, for example, in community health from which they could learn and get experience.” He further said that working in the southern atmosphere by itself is a benefit for the NU staff as they can get real research problems that interest them. He thought that the NU staff’s engagement in research would be valuable for their professional development, for professorship for example.

Another point noted in this study was the growth of further interconnections between partners and with other institutions and partnership projects. For example, the 2017 progress report indicates that the Health Partnership has established a linkage with a partnership project called “Norwegian Partnership Program for Global Academic Cooperation” (p.2-3) that supported academic partnerships and student mobility between HEIs in Norway and selected developing countries. In this linkage, some PhD students of EU2 and other local institutions and PhD students coming from two Norwegian institutions have participated in collaborative research projects in Ethiopia. Because of this linkage, PhD students of EU2 have got research funds from the Norwegian Research Council. Such further interconnections have brought additional supports. The 2016 progress report also indicates that “new MOU between [EU2] and [NU] was signed in April 2016 … aimed at advancing the [EU2’s] systems for administration and finance management” (p.3). The present partnership has also helped EU2 to form a new partnership; for example, with one local and another Norwegian institution “focusing on paramedics, prosthesis, and radiation

technology education" (2017 report, p.8-9). This demonstrates the growth and strengthening of interconnections between Ethiopian and Norwegian partners.

6.3.6. Monitoring and evaluation process

The interviews and document analysis showed that the partnership has been monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, and adjustments have been made accordingly. As the progress reports (e.g., the 2017 report) indicate, the local partner (EU2) collects and organizes annual performances of the partnership project and reports to NORAD. There was also a formal annual review meeting involving partner institutions (EU2 and NU) and NORAD where they discuss the progress, including financial and audit reports and the challenges faced during the partnership development process. There was also a visit by members of NORAD and EU2 "to have a closer understanding, see the progress…, discuss challenges and problems faced and draw possible solutions" (Site visit report, April 2014, p.1). Moreover, partner institutions were conducting regular annual planning meetings as well as consultations as needed (ACAB). All these were considered important for obtaining formative feedbacks about the progress of the partnership and for making the necessary adjustment measures for future improvements.

Here, the local partner has actively involved in this formative evaluation process, as it is noted by one participant as follows:

> We [the local partner] are actively participating in the day to day monitoring activities. We frequently communicate and discuss with the NU coordinator on matters of planning, progresses, and challenges. We have also evaluation meetings every end of the budget year where we discuss on the overall partnership progresses, inputs, and outputs and we get feedbacks for improvements. Important decisions are made during this time (ACAB, July 15, 2018).

Besides, there was also a summative type of evaluation in the mid-time and final stages of the partnership project lifetime. As it is indicated in the interview and also the Mid-term Review report by Jávorka et al. (2018), this type of evaluation was conducted by external experts sponsored and managed by the funding body (NORAD). It assessed the project's progress focusing on its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability (see Jávorka et al., 2018). It also provided recommendations for improving the remaining program period and lessons for the future program design and implementation.

While many of the participants viewed the evaluation and reporting practices as a means of learning and they valued for obtaining feedbacks and taking remedies. Others also raised some concerns; for example, one participant (ACAB) described the reporting system as "tiresome and time taking activity" and different from what is practiced in the local institution's academic work. He suggested it to be condensed and manageable. Another participant (ACJN) also said: "…indicators for certain issues (e.g., impact) are vague. I don't think there is a common understanding in this regard". As he claimed, the report format outlined impact indicators which he described as premature to measure the impact of the projects', as understanding the impact requires time and thorough investigation. It seems that these participants were interested to have more voice and inputs in making amendments to the indicators and report formats.

Chapter Seven

Cross-case Comparison and Discussion

In this chapter, the main findings are presented and comparatively discussed through some of the most apparent themes that have emerged in the two cases. Accordingly, this chapter discusses the major rationales, the partnership development processes, and the positioning of partners across the two cases of partnership programs.

7.1. Main Rationales across the Two Cases

As discussed earlier, although there was no written policy and procedure regarding the formation and development of the international partnerships at the national and institutional levels, both EU1 and EU2 have strategic interest in expanding international partnerships. To realize this, they followed an opportunistic approach i.e., without thematic or geographic priorities or restrictions. Moreover, they have longed-for a partnership that could help them secure external fund and resources required for running the project. With this background, this section explores the major rationales that necessitated the formation of the partnership across the two cases. The rationales explored in this section have provided a useful entry point for examining and understanding the complexities and patterns of relations in partnership development in the next sections.

According to DeWit (2002) and Knight (2004), engagement of HEIs in an international partnership may be driven by academic, economic, socio-cultural, or political-related factors, or by a combination of some or all these factors. In this study, rationales emerged in the document analysis and based on what participants perceived as rationales are, in most part, related to these rationales. Accordingly, factors related to academic growth and development, resource dilemmas and opportunities, societal development and ensuring gender equity emerged as rationales of the two local partners (EU1 and EU2) for establishing their respective partnerships. Here, political-related factors didn't emerge in both cases of partnerships. This may be due to the study's focus on the relationships at an institutional level, not at the national level (Knight, 2004).

As the study shows, factors related to academic growth and development appeared to be the highest priority rationale of the two local partners for establishing the partnership programs. This might be for the reason that the main objective in the two partnership programs was capacity building of the local partners so as to enable them to carry out their core functions (teaching, research, and community service)—which is more related to academic rationales (Qiang, 2003). The two partnerships were focusing on capacity building are consistent with the high emphasis given to the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia (Tamrat & Teferra, 2018).

7.1.1. Rationale related to academic growth and development

The driving factors emerged in related to academic growth and developments included staff capacity development, quality improvement, improvement of international experience, and enhancement of research capacity and output.

Partnership as a means of staff capacity development

In both cases of the partnerships, staff capacity development appears to be the most dominant rationale that drives the local partners (EU1 and EU2) to establish a partnership with their foreign partners. This conforms with the high emphasis given to the capacity building of the local partners through graduate programs. In view of this, the shortage of qualified staff for running advanced training and research and the need to address this issue through working in partnership was frequently stated in documents in both cases and also commonly viewed by participants of both EU1 and EU2 as justifications for establishment of the partnerships. In both cases, the partnership proposals have described increasing PhD graduates as one of the major expectations. Participants were persuaded that working with their foreign partner would add a capability to the local partners and contribute to staff and students' academic growth and development. For example, participant ACBN from EU1 expressed his belief that staff and students who studied in such programs with inputs from experienced international scholars would accrue substantial academic and professional benefits to the local partner which couldn't be possible by the local institution. Similarly, ACAB from EU2 underscored the contribution of the foreign partner staff's support in producing skilled academics with international standards. In both cases, partnerships were viewed as potentially contributing to building the capacity of the local partner by producing highly skilled graduates through post-graduate and graduate training which otherwise the local partner could not

accomplish independently by the local expertise and/or resources. Consistent with this, previous studies (e.g. Lizarraga, 2011; Obamba & Mwema, 2009; Wannie et al., 2010) have regarded partnerships as a means of achieving something that couldn't be possible alone.

Although the two cases revealed many similarities regarding staff capacity development rationale, as discussed above, nuances were also noted between the two cases. For example, unlike the Health partnership program, the Language partnership have given more emphasis to building the local faculties' supervisory capacity, as the local faculty's engagement in the co-supervision of PhD students which was considered as a major step towards this. The Language partnership had also given emphasis to building the capacity of the local community stakeholders, while the Health partnership appears to have given little attention to it.

Partnership as a means of quality improvement

Raising quality and standards of education and research in the local partner was also emerged as an important driver in the two local partners. Participants from both EU1 and EU2 had a common expectation that their respective partnerships would enhance the quality and standard of their institutions in their academic and research functions. The two partnership programs were perceived to have beneficial spill-over on the quality of education by spurring conformity to international quality standards and by easing the development of programs with involvement of foreign staff (Seeber et al., 2016; Zeleza, 2012). For example, the foreign partners' engagement in revision and development of curricula was recognized, by participants, as a means of improving the relevance and quality of educational programs and graduates to local and regional needs, and then to adjust to international standards. This is also stated as the expected outcomes in the partnership proposals in both cases.

Interest in quality was also reflected implicitly in both cases. For example, one can argue that improvement in staff and student capacity, enhancement of research outputs, and improvement in international awareness would, in turn, contribute to improve academic and research quality. This partly shows that these driving factors (rationales) are closely related and overlapping, and the distinction amongst them is, sometimes, unclear (Knight, 2004).

In this regard, the two partnerships appeared to have given relatively different levels of emphasis to quality enhancement. This could be owing to differences in modality they followed. In the

Health partnership, entry and exit requirements of the foreign institution that PhD students of EU2 need to fulfill were highly valued for ensuring quality graduates with international standards. For example, a participant (ADDN from EU2) underscored, "PhD students are required to publish a research article which is rarely practiced in home institution"—that would contribute to enhancing quality, conforming to international standard. Such issue was not reflected in the case of the Language partnership, as the PhD training was, basically, managed by the local partner as per the requirements of the local institution.

Partnership as a means of acquiring international experience

The partnership programs were also viewed as a means to improve international awareness and experience of staff and students in teaching and research. As to scholars (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Seeber et al., 2016), engagement in international activities fosters staff's and students' international experience that enables them to be able to work in—and respond to—global and culturally diverse environments. Consistent with this, participants expressed their institutions' interest in international partnerships for developing staff's and students' competencies that help them respond to and work in a global world. For example, participant ADER from EU2 underscored "exposure of staff and students to international academic activities" as a means for his institution's adjustment to the changing global trends. ADBR from EU1 also said, "…our engagement in international partnership will contribute to improving our staff and students' competency so as to properly respond to the influence of globalization".

Most of the participants in both EU1 and EU2 had interests in international exposures through engaging in such activities as academic exchange and visit, working with the foreign staff, and participating in joint-research and international conferences. They viewed such activities as opportunities for experiencing foreign academic environment and culture, making links with internationally recognized scholars, and thus improving their international scholarly experience and competency. This, in turn, was valued for improving their institutions' international orientation in teaching and research to respond to the changing global realities (Knight, 2004; Kot, 2015).

Here, it is also noted that, compared to other participant groups, administrative staff in both EU1 and EU2 appear to have given relatively more emphasis to rationales related to international

experience and orientation. This might be linked to their intimacy and familiarity to their respective institutional strategic interests to internationalization.

Partnership as a means of enhancing research capacity and outputs

The local partners also viewed partnerships as a means of enhancing their research capability and outputs. Regarding this, several participants highlighted concerns of poor research status and capacity of the local partner and the need to address these issues through partnerships. In fact, it was more frequently mentioned and thus appears to be relatively highly emphasized in the Language partnership. This was because, in the Health partnership, the intention in related to enhancing research capacity and output was basically through PhD and MPhil training. In the Language partnership, in addition to PhD training, emphasis was also given to the joint-research projects for producing more publications and language resources. In line with this, all the EU1 academic staff participants reported engagement in joint-research as one of their main rationales behind their participation in the partnership; and they saw joint-research as a venue for building their research capacity and producing more publications. For example, one academic staff (ACDR) stated, "If you work joint-research with them [foreign staff], you will get a better chance for your work to get acceptance for publication." Joint-publication was also frequently mentioned by PhD students as benefits, indicating that it is one of the factors shaping this partnership.

7.1.2. Rationales related to resource dilemmas and opportunities

In both case studies, addressing resource dilemma (securing fund and access to educational infrastructure and materials) appeared as the local partners' second top priority rationale for partnering with their northern partners. It is further noted that the priority given to resource-related factor was very close to that given to academic growth and development. This maybe, as participants described, many of the local partner's academic-related problems were tightly linked to financial and material scarcities. As to ADZL from EU1, the material and financial investment was a pre-requisite for proposing and realizing training and research. Similarly, ACJN argued financial and material resource feasibility as the primary issue to be considered for proposing and running partnership projects. Based on the participants, resource-related factors in the local partners are inseparably linked to—and are required to address—academic-related factors.

Partnership as an opportunity for securing external fund

As the study shows, scarcity of financial resources for running academic and research functions was one of the most prevailing factors compelling the local partners for establishing partnerships with their northern counterparts. Expanding external funding opportunities through international partnerships was the strategic interest of both EU1 and EU2, as stated in their respective strategic plans. As a justification of the urgency of external funding for his institution's engagement in international partnership, participant ACJN from EU2 said, "…as far as I know, our college has never been engaged in an international partnership that is funded internally". This was also apparent in the case of the Language partnership. This implies that the local partners' involvement in international partnerships appears to be dependent on the existence of external funding opportunity.

Participants from both EU1 and EU2 viewed international partnership as a means of securing external funding for running PhD training and advanced research and for covering costs for graduate students' research works. Here, participants underlined that funding is not something that the local partners expected as an output, but an input for running academic functions and bringing about academic development. This seems different from what is likely apparent in the northern partners. This means that aspects of rationales related to profit-making or earning income through, for example, recruiting international students and selling research products, which are considered as the common drivers of the northern partners (Knight, 2004), appear to be not apparent drivers of the southern partners (EU1 and EU2) for international partnership.

Another point revealed in both EU1 and EU2 was the tendency of viewing the partnership project as a source of income by some members of the local partner. This finding is in accord with the previous studies (e.g., Ishengoma, 2016; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). Such individuals' inclination towards personal financial benefits may not go with and tend to erode the larger and long-term institutional academic goals (Wilson, 2012). In this regard, there appears a slight variation between EU1 and EU2 participants' in their expectation of financial incentives. Compared to the EU1 members, many members in EU2, especially graduate students raised their concerns related to the adequacy of finance allocated for their research work. Students also complained that their institution deducted their salary during their stay abroad; whereas, PhD students of EU1 didn't raise any such claims; rather they were appreciative of what they obtained. This may be because of their low expectation in connection with the modality in which they spend most of their time at

home institution, and because there was no such practice of salary deduction. Besides, some faculty members in EU2 had shown interest in getting compensation fees for their engagement in the project.

Partnership as a means of improving infrastructure and access to educational facilities

Interests in infrastructural support and better access to educational facilities also emerged as important drivers in both EU1 and EU2 for establishing partnerships. The two partnership programs intended to improve the local partners' infrastructural capacity. For example, the Health partnership intended to develop a database for "data repository and knowledge management" to strengthen the capacity of "Center for Research Methods in Health Sciences", as stated in the proposal (p.7). Similarly, in the Language partnership, the local partner (EU1) expected the foreign partner's support for strengthening its infrastructure, e.g., to establish language technology laboratory.

The study also shows access to better educational facilities of the foreign institutions as another motive for the local partners to establish and participate in such partnerships. Participants of both EU1 and EU2 frequently talked about the scarcity of educational resources in their respective institutions and they have high value for obtaining access to state-of-the-art resources, e.g., laboratories, libraries, research journals, ICT, etc. which are available in their partner institution. This is consistent with Lin's (2002) view that resource constraints motivate members of a disadvantaged group (in this case the southern partner with scarce resources) to form links with advantaged groups (the northern partner) to get access to better resources. Also, other previous studies show that such resource-related motives for running academic functions is one of the primary drivers of African HEIs to engage in international partnerships with their northern partners (Samoff & Caroll, 2004; Teferra, 2014).

7.1.3. Rationales related to societal development and gender equity

The local partners' interest in expanding social networking and connections and responding to the local societal and community needs have also emerged as rationales behind the formation of the two partnership programs.

Partnerships as a means of expanding social networking and connections

In both cases of the partnerships, those academic staff members who participated in international partnership projects were believed to have better personal linkages with international colleagues that would increase their chance of initiating and establishing new partnership projects. For example, one participant from EU1 said, "Your engagement in international partnership increases your contact and personal relations with international scholars who have an interest in collaborative projects… maybe in joint-research or staff exchange. Then you may apply for funding" (ADBR). This was also echoed by a PhD student in EU2 who appreciated her "friendly relationship" with her advisor and her stay in Norway for enabling her "know many international scholars and develop social networking" (STGD). It is also acknowledged by participants in both cases and also in their progress reports that the partnership projects have brought about further interconnections and partnerships.

International partnership is, thus, viewed as an important means of extending an individual's social networking as well as institutional linkages that would increase the chance for new partnership formation. Moreover, graduate students had high value to their exposure to the foreign academic environment on account of the partnership programs as ways to learn and acquire experiences of the valuable academic tradition of the foreign institution. They also expressed their high value to their engagement, especially as a student in NU, for raising their social status and recognition upon their graduation from a world-class university. Consistent with this, Zink (2016) observed that interest to social status and job prospects is one of the most important drivers of graduate students in Africa to navigate opportunities to international academic experience.

Partnership as a means of addressing local societal and community needs

Generally, the two partnership programs have predicted to addressing the societal and community needs of the local partners. However, it seems that the Language partnership has given relatively more emphasis to this, as compared to the Health partnership. In the Language partnership, several participants talked about the need for responding to the societal needs of educational access in mother tongue. The proposal (p.7) also gave emphasis to "helping the society solve language-related problems" and thus facilitating educational provision in mother tongue. There were also practical measures; for example, capacity building training and workshops were offered to local community stakeholders (local educators and zonal and regional leaders). These training were valued not only as ways of developing the disadvantaged languages but also as means of

capacitating the local community members. Such practices, however, were rarely mentioned by participants of EU2.

Partnerships as a means of addressing underrepresentation of females

The document analysis in both cases also showed that a partnership was seen as a means of addressing underrepresentation of female staff and students in the local partner. Female's underrepresentation was recognized as a salient problem in local partners, and that emphasis was given to improving the participation level of females. In view of that, the partnerships in both cases intended for addressing this problem by employing special female recruitment procedure, by offering female scholarship opportunities, and by appointing them in a leadership positions. Here, it is noted that interviewees have seldom talked about addressing gender-related issues as rationales for partnership formation. Rather, they were listened claiming that stipulation of 50% female recruitment procedure was not sensitive to the local context where there were very few female staff. Here, the declared intention to addressing this issue of gender seems to be because of the funder's interest.

7.2. Partnership Development across the Two Cases

As discussed above, recognition of the need for capacity building (institutional and staff) to secure resources for running institutional tasks; expectation that research outputs can be enhanced and that quality and standard can be improved through working with international partners; acquiring international experience; having interest for social networking and expanding institutional links, and responding to societal needs emerged as the most important motives of the local partners that underpin the formation of partnerships with the northern partners. With this background, this section is a comparative analysis and discussions of the partnership development process across the two cases. It maps out the main aspects of the partnerships at various stages (i.e., initiation, building, operation, and evaluation), with a particular emphasis to symmetry /asymmetry.

7.2.1. Main aspects in the initiation process

In the initial stage of the partnership development, participants from the two local partners have stressed the need for identifying and understanding their partner and to have mutual consciousness about the areas of collaborations. Moreover, in both cases highlighted were contacting and

recognizing partner's interest, identification of needs and priorities to be addressed, and proposing collaborative activities. Further, communications and consultative discussions were also underlined for developing awareness and understandings of each other. The partnership initiation process involved, more or less, similar procedures and practices in both cases, although with slight variations in emphasis and degree of involvement.

Regarding the identification and selection of partners, the two local institutions (EU1 and EU2) did not have strategic priorities. Participants from both EU1 and EU2 had a common view that setting priorities would restrict their opportunities, and they preferred to follow open options to respond to various possibilities of partnering with institutions that can entertain their needs. Nevertheless, although both institutions had no clear strategic priorities and preferences for selecting a partner, mostly, they have been partnered with the Northern institutions to which they had prior links. The reason they frequently partnered with institutions to which they had prior links maybe because of the long-standing friendship and/or institutional contacts that tend to catalyze further relationships (Taylor, 2016). Their frequent partnering with the Northern partner was linked to two reasons: one was for ensuring external funding for it was mostly when they partnered with the Northern partner that they secure funding. The other reason was their expectation that working with the Northern partner, owing to their better status and experience which would give them a better opportunity to learn a lot and to realize their capacity building goal. This is in accord with the previous studies in that HEIs often seek for partnering with institutions having a better status and visibility in view of better access to additional resources, quality training, and networking opportunities (Habermann, 2008; Kim & Celis, 2016; Wilson, 2012).

As the study shows, prior institutional and personal or human relations and NORHED's call for application for fund contributed to the initiation of the Language partnership, whereas the initiation of the Health partnership was attributable to prior personal relations and NORHED's call for application. In both cases, prior personal links served for stimulating initial connections with partners. It was the faculty members who had prior links with members of the foreign partners who started initial contacts and initiated official conversations between partners. These members were then appointed as coordinators in their respective institutions, as they were assumed to play a better role in facilitating and leveraging the relationships. This indicates the crucial role of the individual

faculty members, who had prior personal links, not only in initiating the partnership (Taylor, 2016) but also in taking forward the process (Bordogna, 2017; Gieser, 2016).

Here, both prior institutional and personal links served as a seed stock for the initiation and emergence of new partnerships, especially, for partners to have initial awareness and understandings of each other's interest to work in partnerships and sign memoranda of understandings. However, it is noted in both cases that it was in response to NORHED's call for the application that partners decided to make a detail need assessment, identified and set partnership agendas, and developed the partnership proposal. This indicates that although prior links are important at the very start, a call for external funding appears to be determinant for deciding proposal development and thus for forming the partnerships. Participants also underscored that securing external funding is the prerequisite to put memoranda of understandings into practice and for running the project, which otherwise would be left on shelves. The absence of an international partnership project that has ever been financed by the local institutions also gives insights about the significance of external funding, as also observed in other studies (e.g., Koehn & Obamba, 2014;Wilson, 2012).

The other important points emphasized by the participants were exchange visits, frequent communications, and consultative discussions both within and between members of partner institutions for furthering understandings of each other's interests and needs, expectations, experiences, and contributions to the partnership. In this regard, participants had appreciations to the contributions of the Norwegian partner and the funding body (NORAD) in facilitating such opportunities by organizing workshops on proposal development and consultative meetings in the case of the Language partnership; for granting seed funding for need assessment and proposal development in the case of Health partnership; and for covering expenses for exchange visits and meetings in both the Language and the Health partnerships. Such meetings and discussions were valued to have contributed to broaden the liaison and to grow consensus among faculty members between partner institutions, a point observed important in previous researches (Taylor, 2016; Wanni et al., 2010).

Partnership programs that are initiated with the substantial involvement of the Southern partners seem more likely to address their capacity building needs (Koehn & Obamba, 2014). In this study,

participants of the local partners described that they were given the autonomy to assess and identify their own institutional needs to be addressed in the partnership. Most of them felt that the local partners have played a substantial role and participation in the initiation process, although the degree varies between the two cases. As such, the two partnerships seem to have demonstrated a practice different from the traditional partnerships involving African universities which are often initiated externally by the Northern partners and donors (Samoff & Carrol, 2004). Even so, they were in the hands of the funding body, not the least in regards to understandings of funding.

7.2.2. Main aspects in the building process

As the two case studies show, partnerships may be initiated and exist at any academic level or unit (individual/group, department, or faculty/college) of the university or at institutional/university level (Taylor, 2016; Wilson, 2012). In this regard, the Language partnership was established and operating at a department level involving members of one academic unit, whereas the Health partnership exists at a college level involving multiple academic units. In both cases, the partnership establishment has required and involved institutional ratification or formal acknowledgment signed by university officials.

In many aspects, both cases followed a similar partnership building processes. Yet, a slight difference was noted in approaches between the two partnership programs. It appears that the development of the Language partnership followed a bottom-up path, whereby the partnership was formed and operated at the department (operating unit) in which members were adequately represented in the partnership development process, starting from initiation through design to implementation; whereas the development of the Health partnership followed a top-down path, whereby the design of partnership activities took place at the college level with minimal participation of the allegedly operating units in certain partnership activities. And that the role and level of participation of operating members in EU2 in the planning process were relatively lower, compared to that of EU1.

In both cases, it appears that generally there has been demand-driven agenda setting and planning procedures and practices that tend to ensure local ownership. Most of the participants expressed their beliefs that the partnerships have entertained the needs of the local partners. They described that the local stakeholders were given the autonomy to identify issues of local relevance; faculty

members from both parties participated actively in the proposal writing process; and institutional leaders engaged in giving feedbacks for further modifications of the partnership proposal/and plan, in vetting the processes, and in signing agreements. As such, members from both parties participated and have their input in the partnership building process. Such involvement of both parties is viewed as an important aspect of symmetrical partnership design (Koehn &Obamaba, 2014).

The two case studies revealed that the partnership building or planning processes occurred also with the consideration of NORHED's requirements and procedures. Although NORHED didn't participate directly in the construction of the partnership, project formulation and execution, its requirements were found to have influenced the partnership arrangements, including partners' role in setting agendas, goals and activities, and in sharing roles and responsibilities. Several participants viewed most of the NORHED's criteria as favoring local priorities and promoting equity and mutuality in the partnership. For example, NORHED emphasizes on local relevance of the partnership project and the Southern partner to take a leading role in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the project. These are considered as worthwhile in balancing roles between partners (Teferra, 2016).

However, participants also raised concerns that some of the NORHED's criteria were more loyal to the donor's interest that may lead to the distortion of the local partners' priorities. Plainly visible in the two cases of the partnership was a concern that NORHED's focus on gender equity has influenced the local partners to include the impractical female PhD student recruitment procedure as part of the partnership project for fear of losing the competition for funding. Participants (e.g., ACAN from EU1 and ACJN from EU2) argued that although gender issue was in line with their institutional needs, the way it was tried to address (i.e., recruitment of 50% female PhD candidates) was not contextually feasible—as female staffs (with MA degree) were in scarce. For example, a participant from EU2 said, "… there was an instance that a female staff whose age near retirement was recruited…" because of scarcity (ACJN).

Since gender equity, particularly in academic and researcher positions, is a salient problem in many African HEIs, including Ethiopian HEIs (Ministry of Education[MOE], 2015b; Teferra et al., 2018), it sounds commendable that NORHED focused on supporting the Southern institutions to

recruit and train female with males graduate students in equal proportion. In this sense, one could argue that NORHED's requirements and associated incentives would positively influence the local partners (EU1 and EU2) to follow and use such recruitment (of females) procedure. However, this was applied only in projects supported by NORHED. As to the participants, had this recruitment procedure been valued by the local partners, it would have been integrated into the institution (University) and employed across all its programs. However, this recruitment procedure appears to have remained as a loose appendage to these particular partnership projects in order to get access to NORAD's funding, rather than to bring about genuine policy shifts at institutional level. Although the Norwegians had given the local partners the autonomy to identify their own needs and priorities, the local partners were well aware of Norwegian's strong drive for gender equity in African HEIs and they tended to respond to it at the cost of their felt needs and urgent priorities, which participants felt they would have brought about the most difference. This resembles the influence of conditionality-tied funding in setting the partnership agendas and activities (Ishengoma, 2016).

The two cases also revealed that the distribution of roles and responsibilities was with consideration qualifications and experiences. Accordingly, the allegedly better profiled foreign staff, for the most part, were assigned to play mentoring and assisting role, including empowering the local staff through experience sharing, offering capacity building training, and providing access to educational facilities and materials. The local partners have been positioned relatively at 'lower' qualification and experience for they need assistance from foreign partners'. It appears that the apparent difference in qualifications and experience has continued to determine partners' positioning and thus challenge efforts towards equitable distribution of roles and responsibilities (Gutierrez, 2008; Menashy, 2018).

Although there were similarities between the two cases as discussed above and also with regard to the procedures they followed, yet the two cases appeared to have some differences in balances in distribution of roles and responsibilities between partners. This difference was mainly linked to partnership modalities and activities employed by the two programs. In the Language partnership, the major collaborative activities were PhD training, joint-research, community engagement, short-term training, and MA curriculum design. The PhD program was hosted in the local partner (EU1) where professors from both EU1 and NU jointly run course offerings and supervision. The

local partner members, like their foreign colleagues, were also assigned to participate in all other collaborative activities. This reflects a fairly balanced distribution of roles and responsibilities between partners.

Whereas the major collaborative activities in the Health partnership were the 'sandwich' PhD and MPhil programs, short-term capacity building training, and curriculum design for MPhil program. This (sandwich) model was a kind of scholarship offered to EU2 students to follow their education in NU while maintaining links with their institutions. Thus, NU was assigned to run the whole PhD program i.e., admission, course offering, supervision, and awarding the degree, This was because EU2 didn't have staff with the required qualification for offering PhD training. Moreover, in this partnership, unlike in the Language partnership, there was no a joint-research activity that could have involved local faculty members and that could have contributed to research-capacity building at EU2, as participants commented. Thus, the local partner members, compared to their foreign colleagues, were assigned to participate in limited activities, reflecting asymmetric role distribution. This suggests that the partnership modalities and activities could take into account the capacity of the local partner to facilitate a fair distribution of roles and responsibilities.

7.2.3. Main aspects in the operation process

A comparison of the operation process in two cases indicated that it depended much on the initial partnership conceptualization and building stage. An interesting illustration is that the MPhil program (in the Health partnership) that was proposed without adequate involvement and agreement of the operating department or its members has got obstacles in its implementation and remained impractical. This is because, as to participants, the program was not well communicated to the operating members. The interview also revealed divergence and lack of consensus among members of the allegedly operating department and the coordinator on the relevance of the program. Consistent with this, Sutton and Obst's (2011) argue that a partnership program that is established without similar understandings amongst members on its details tends to be unsuccessful.

Unlike the Health partnership, no such a failure or debate was reported on the Language partnership. This might be because of the adequate level of participation of operating members in all the details of the contents and activities during the partnership building process. It is evident

that, unlike the Health partnership, the Language partnership was initiated and built at the department level, where the operating members actively participated in the process and there were clarity and understandings within and between partner members. This implies the importance of the involvement of faculty members, who were supposed to manage the day-to-day activities, in the early conceptualization and design of the partnership contents and activities for ensuring common understandings (Helms, 2015; Wanni et al., 2010).

The study also showed that the participation level of the local partners in the operation process depends on the distribution of roles and responsibilities in the early partnership building process. The participation level of the local partner in the operation process in the Health partnership seemed to be relatively lower than in the Language partnership. Given that the focus of the partnership was capacity building of the local partner, minimal participation of members of the local partner might limit the knowledge transfer and thereby undermines the capacity building efforts in the local partner (Ishengoma, 2016; Koehn &Obamba, 2014).

Moreover, a slight distinction was also revealed between the two cases regarding the roles the local partners played in the recruitment of PhD candidates. In the Language partnership, the recruitment and approval of the dissertation title was primarily carried out by the local partner, although with consideration of the interest of the foreign partner. Nevertheless, in the case of the Health partnership, although the local partner participated in the recruitment process, candidates were scrutinized on the basis of the NU's admission criteria. On one hand, the Language partnership, compared to the Health partnership, appeared to have given a more influential role to the local partner which can be understood as enhancement of local ownership. On the other hand, selection and admission criteria of the foreign partner were applied in the Health partnership which was perceived to have contributed to ensuring quality and raising international standards, as compared to the Language partnership.

Regarding the financial administration, unlike in the traditional North-South partnership model that places control of the project finance often in the hands of the Northern actors and institutions (Ishengoma, 2016; Teferra, 2014), both partnership programs seemed to have followed and operated a slightly different model that tended to give the local actors the opportunity to play a role in financial administration and management. In this, NORAD disbursed the money to the

partnering institutions (Ethiopian and Norwegian) as per the financial needs of the project stated in the proposal/plan and agreed by the parties, upon written request by the recipient institutions (Ethiopian). Then, the recipient was given the primary management and administrative responsibilities for allocating its share of money, accounting, and reporting the transactions to NORAD. For the most part, such efforts, where the local partner receives the fund and participates in its management, were positively valued by participants from both EU1 and EU2 in bringing about some level of equality in fund distribution and control. Participants from both EU1 and EU2 also highlighted the flexibility in the annual budget allocation for promoting smooth financial administration. They said that NORAD, unlike some other donors, allows budget deviations whenever necessary and justified by the local partner. In both cases, there were instances where partners were able to get a budget for some activities and purchase of materials that were not included in the plan. Moreover, both partnership programs were extended for one year in order to complete the delayed partnership activities.

Yet, the issue of financial administration and control remained a point of debate; some participants in both cases argued that although the tradition of delegating the Northern partner (NU) as gatekeeper (Weinrib, 2012) was nonexistent, the project finance was yet under the control of the Northern funding body. As one administrator from EU1 said "…yet it is their [NORAD] money…. It is under their control" (ADBR). For some participants, the local partners have limited role and autonomy in this regard, as all the allocation was as per the plan and the accounting and reporting were in conformity to NORAD's format. The documents (in agreement and progress report) showed that the local partners were required to report the financial transaction, verified through external auditor, to NORAD. On one hand, this showed that the budget control fell more into the donor and tends to leave the local partners in a dependent position, as it was commonly observed in previous studies. On the other hand, such practices that prevented the diversion of funds could be considered as an important means of minimizing the risk of corruption and of promoting accountability and transparency in budget utilizations.

The study also showed unbalanced fund distribution between partners, in favor of the foreign partner. This implies there was more asymmetry in the Health partnership than in the Language partnership. In the case of the Health partnership, a larger proportion (79%) of the budget, compared to 63% in the case of the Language partnership, remained in the foreign partner. This

difference between the two cases might be linked to the reasons that in the Health partnership, the major activities were basically managed in the foreign institution by the foreign staff whose remuneration was costly compared to that of the local staff. The other reason was the absence of joint-research that could have involved more local faculty members, as participants (e.g. ADKR from EU2) commented.

Such unbalanced influence in budget administration and management and inequitable access to funding between partners is a common impediment observed in many North-South partnerships (e.g., Bradley, 2007; Ishengoma, 2016; Jamil & Haque, 2016; Menashy, 2018). For addressing such imbalances, Jamil and Haque (2016) recommend delegating management and financial responsibilities to the southern partner.

There were also challenges and tensions, noted in both cases, related to the financial administrations that obstructed the operation process. Although they were interlinked, some of these were related to the local partners' internal problems while others are tensions linked to differences in institutional systems and working culture. The former included undue bureaucracies and weak financial administrative system of the local partners that resulted in delays in procurements and implementation. This may be a reflection of the rigid procurement rules and systems in universities of Ethiopia (Teferra et al., 2018). Related to the later are inconsistencies between the practices and systems in the local institutions and NORAD's requirements. For example, overhead cost, auditing practices, and financial transaction and reporting systems that NORAD requires to be employed were commonly mentioned as difficult for the local partners to fully employ and integrate into their system. It is reported that the local partners' unfamiliarity to external auditing has led to the delay of disbursements, and thus to considerable prolongation of the project period.

It is argued that a partnership coordinator plays a champion's role in negotiating, designing, interacting, and decision-making in the partnership (Wilson, 2012). In this study, in both cases, the staff assigned as coordinators were carrying out most of the responsibilities of the partnership and act as contact persons on affairs relating to the partnership development process, starting from initiation through design and operation to evaluation. Here, participants from EU2 complained that the limitations and failures related to the minimal involvement of the local partner in the Health

partnership were linked to the EU2 coordinator's leadership qualities and commitments. Thus, it appears that individual personalities involved also influence the nature of the partnership development process and its success (Bordogna, 2017; Koehn & Obamba, 2014).

In response to how they conceptualize the term 'partnership', most of the participants of both EU1 and EU2 have been found to have, more or less, similar conceptions. Phrases, such as 'collaborative work for common goals', 'mutual relations', 'mutual benefits', 'equal participation', and 'reciprocal contributions', were frequently mentioned to refer to the term. However, a difference was noted between administrative and academic staff in how they see the relationship they experienced in relation to their conception. Most of the administrators preferred to call the relationship as 'partnership' arguing that both parties are participating in the project and both can possibly benefit out of the relationship. Many academic staff participants, on the other hand, viewed the relationship as 'assistance' or 'support' rather than 'partnership'. And they didn't view their Norwegian colleagues as 'partners' who work as equals for mutual benefits. For them, a partnership involves complementary contributions for addressing the needs of both parties and for obtaining mutual benefits. However, as they argued, this partnership was about building the capacity of the local partners and supporting the local national development efforts, with little or no concern for the capacity of the foreign partner. They viewed this relationship as a benevolent relationship planned to assist or support the allegedly low profiled southern partner and staff, rather than as opportunities for building the capacity of both parties, as also commented in previous studies (e.g., Koehn & Obamba, 2014). Yet, most of them view the relationship as generally positive, enabling, and beneficial to their institution in their effort towards capacity building. This appears to be, partly, a reflection of a sense of dependency of the local partner on their foreign partners. This tends to undermine the promise of mutual influence in the partnership.

7.2.4. Main aspects in the monitoring and evaluation process

This study shows that both cases of partnerships follow similar monitoring and evaluation systems and practices, in both formative and summative ways. In formative basis, there have been ongoing consultative discussions and meetings between coordinators, progress reporting by coordinators based on performance or evaluation indicators, and annual meetings of representatives from partnering institutions and NORAD. In summative basis, mid-term and final evaluations have been

conducted by or under the direct supervision of NORAD. These monitoring and evaluation practices are valued, by participants, as important to explore gaps, to trigger remedial measures, and make necessary adjustments for the subsequent works.

Symmetrical partnership evaluation is inclusive, emphasizing the involvement and perspectives of all parties (Koehn &Obamba, 2014; Koehn & Uitto, 2015). In this study, the formative monitoring and evaluation practices was found to be, in most part, inclusive for partnering institutions. The study indicates in both cases that members of the local partners have participated in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes through discussions, reporting, reflections, and suggesting feedbacks. Participants from both EU1 and EU2 appreciated the opportunity given to members of the local partners to reflect and further discuss the progress reports prepared by coordinators based on evaluation indicators. Besides, although the summative evaluations (e.g., Mid-term Review) were carried out by an external evaluation team on behalf of NORAD, the local partners have got the opportunity to participate through providing the necessary data and commenting on the evaluation results.

Yet, there were concerns that information collection and progress reporting were based on report templates and performance indicators, predominantly, designed by NORAD. It appears that the local partners had a relatively limited role in determining indicators and the contents of the evaluation and reporting formats. This was well illustrated by the response of one participant from EU2 as follows:

> What contents to be evaluated and in what formats to be reported are already indicated in the template provided by NORAD and are incorporated in the plan. It is based on this template that we compile the progress reports. Then, of course, we reflect on these reports on the possibilities of scaling up strengths and addressing challenges and taking necessary measures for further improvements (ACAB, July 15, 2018).

This was also echoed by participants from EU1 (e.g., ACBN) who said, “We are using the format and performance indicators they [NORAD] provided us”. Such formats and indictors are likely to be preoccupied with NORAD’s expectations. Evaluation indicators and templates designed by donors, with minimal inputs of the local partner, seemed to narrow opportunities for conducting contextually and locally-based evaluations (Koehn, 2013; Koehn & Uitto, 2015).

Asymmetrical tendency i.e., Northern-driven evaluation criteria was also manifested by the imbalanced attention given to the assessment of partnership results or benefits of the local partners. Also, indicators or expected benefits on the side of the foreign partners were outside the scope of the partnership evaluation, and even not considered in the proposals or implementation plans. Such ignorance of "costs and benefits to Northern higher education partners…" is a reflection of asymmetrical patterns of evaluation (Koehn & Uitto, 2015, p.4). Ignorance of the contribution of the partnership to the foreign partner in evaluation and reporting undermines equity between partners (Mwangi, 2017).

7.3. Positioning of Partners in the Partnerships

This section is a discussion on patterns of relationships in the partnerships related to aspects of mutuality. It centered on how the local partners described their experience in the partnership dynamics with respect to their positioning as well as factors that influenced their positioning. After a constant comparative analysis of the qualitative data, the major findings were organized around themes of mutuality i.e., equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity, in which the two cases were compared. As these themes are broad, the findings are closely interconnected and sometimes overlap. Yet, they serve to demonstrate the experiences of partners and their positioning in the partnership development process.

7.3.1. Equity as mutuality

It is noted that NORHED advocates for a North-South higher education partnership program that promotes mutuality and equity between partners. This study reflected both important aspects of equity as well as challenges counteracting equity, with certain variations across the two partnership programs. With regard to the former, the Norwegian partners emphasized on overcoming power differentials through a participatory relational structure by providing the local partners with the opportunity to play equal role in initiating, planning, and management decision-making process. Consequently, representatives of the local partners have played significant roles in initiating and designing the partnerships that respond to the local development needs, and that both cases of the partnership programs, in most part, were recognized to have local relevance and local ownership.

In both cases of partnerships, the local partners have included their voices in setting partnership agendas and major collaborative activities, in the formulation of partnership objectives and expected outcomes, and in the distribution of roles and responsibilities. This kind of collaboration, which also involves the Southern voices, can be considered as a crucial aspect of mutuality (Habermann, 2008; Ishengoma, 2016; Koehn & Obamba, 2014). Participants in both cases also expressed their beliefs that arrangements were made based on discussions and mutual agreements between members of both parties. To quote what ACAB from EU2 said, "All arrangements and decisions are based on mutual agreements." ACBN from EU1 also claimed, "High emphasis is given to mutual agreement and collaboration throughout the partnership." Such mutual agreements and collaborative decisions on matters of the major partnership arrangements and practices are recognized as important aspects of equity (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Hayhoe, 1986b).

Another aspect of equity that EU1 faculty members acknowledged was that their Norwegian colleagues gave them precedence to be included as first author and editor in joint publications. Participants (e.g., ACSH) expressed their appreciation to this, comparing it with the other partnerships they participated in before, where the Northern partner did not credit them in publications. This seems to be different from the collaborative practices oftentimes observed in research partnerships involving the Southern and the Northern scholars in which the financially poor senior scholars from the Southern institutions tend to be engaged in the role of research assistants or as local facilitators to the Northern researchers (Jamil & Haque, 2016; Halveson, 2016; Zeleza, 2005).

The study also reveals different challenges that clouded such efforts that attempt to ensure equal standings in the partnership. For example, although the goals and major activities in the two partnership programs were mutually reached, these goals and activities in both cases were intended to build the capacity of the local partners while there was no explicitly stated goal to the benefit of the northern partner. Owing to the perceived capacity differences between partners, such types of capacity building partnership projects often give emphasis to the local partners with the support of the northern partner (Andriansen & Madsen, 2019). However, partnerships are supposed to be beyond assistance and one-way transfer (Samoff & Carrol, 2004) and gear towards "a common goal enhancing shared learning and mutual benefit" (Alemneh & Cornick, 2012, p.1168).

Related to this is an unbalanced perceived benefit; in that, participants considered the local partners as the main beneficiaries of the partnership programs, while the foreign partners as 'supporters' of the locals to realize their benefits. Several participants of both EU1 and EU2 have mentioned a range of benefits, for example, academic growth and development, financial and material resource, enhancement of research capacity and outputs, and new international linkages and collaborations that the partnership programs brought to the local partners, but not to the foreign partner. The evaluation and monitoring practices also emphasized on assessing the results and benefits obtained by the local partners, not by the foreign partner. This seems to undermine the contribution of the partnerships to the Norwegian side, reflecting asymmetric tendencies. Of course, administrative staff from both EU1 and EU2 argued that the partnerships were also beneficial to the foreign scholars in terms of, to the least, providing them with access to work in the southern academic environment and to get international experience. This is consistent with Teferra's (2014) observation that both the Northern and Southern partners perceive the Southern partners as the predominant, if not, the sole beneficiaries, although there are also gains by the Northern partners (also Bradley, 2007; Jamil & Haque, 2016). As to Teferra (2014), the benefits of the Northern partners from such partnerships are often belittled; "Even without regard to the immediate and visible benefits" (p. 22), the very exercise in the partnership generates knowledge capital for the North.

Although the Norwegian partners didn't show a desire to place themselves in a dominant position during the partnership development, the study shows in both cases of the partnerships that they were perceived to bring knowledge, skills, and expertise to the partnerships (Mwangi, 2017). On the contrary, the local partners were perceived to have lack of these skills and expertise, and were viewed to have limited contributions like bringing knowledge of the local environment and context and hosting the partnership program. As participant (ACBY) commented, "…they [foreign partners] are by far in better status than us, and that we need to learn from them…track them and adopt their work." This participant views the foreign partners as knowledgeable and better experienced and deserve to act as patron and mentor to the local partner. Such perceptions of what the foreign partners could and what the local partner could not contribute to the partnerships tend to undermine the role of the local partner and reflect unequal power dynamics between the local and the foreign partners (Ishengoma, 2016; Mwangi, 2017; Teferra, 2014).

Another point noted to have implications for undermining equity was a consideration of the foreign partners as a source of resources and expertise for building training and research capacity of the local partner. Participants of both EU1 and EU2 had high appreciation of their foreign partner's support and they wanted this kind of relationship to continue and to be further expanded. Implicated to this appreciation and seeking further relationship is a sense of dependency among members of the local partners. It seems that the local partners regarded their Norwegian counterparts as 'supporters' whom they might approach for assistance (Leng, 2015). On this, Andriansen and Madsen (2019) warn that international partnerships have a risk of leading to the academic dependency of African HEIs.

Some of the NORHED's requirements were noted to have influenced the negotiating power of the local partners and thus challenged equity in the partnership. As discussed in the previous section, gender mainstreaming, for example, was strongly attached to the NORAD's funding. This gives an impression on the funding body's influence on equity. The direct or indirect involvement of funding agency was found as a challenge to equity in North-South higher education partnerships is also cited in previous researches (e.g., Koehn, 2013; Koehn &Obamba, 2014; Menashy, 2018; Shuguang & Xianjun, 2015; Teferra, 2014). In this regard, Shuguang and Xianjun (2015) advise partners to engage directly with one another in designing the projects, rather than through a third-party (i.e., funding body), in order to foster equity between partners.

7.3.2. Participation as mutuality

It is argued that active participation of partner members starting from the early initiation and planning stage of the partnership helps to gain their buy-in and support and to tap their expertise to ensure the partnership program remains on track (Helms, 2015). Abandoning their active involvement in the partnership development tends to erode their sense of ownership and thereby impair the functioning of the partnership (Helms, 2015; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). The two case studies reveal that members from the local partners have involved in the partnership development process, although with various degrees. A slightly higher degree of participation of the local partner was seen in the Language partnership program, compared to that of the Health partnership. In the Language partnership, members of the local partner were able to fully engage throughout the partnership development process. As to the interviews and documents, members of both the local and the foreign partners were fully included, starting from the first meetings through

proposing project ideas and developing the proposal. However, the participation level of the local partner in the case of the Health partnership was relatively limited. Particularly, the participation of faculty members was found to be marginal at the later operation and monitoring stages. The local partner during this time, as the EU2 participants (e.g., ACFD) claimed, was represented solely by the coordinator, while the foreign partner was fully in charge of the operation process.

This difference appears to be linked to, as discussed in the above section, differences in approaches (or pathways) of the partnership development, modalities, activities, and capacity of the local partners. It seems that the partnership that followed a bottom-up approach could provide the operating faculty members with better opportunities to engage in the partnership development process, compared to the partnership that followed a top-down approach. It also showed that the 'at-home' modality (i.e., partnership hosted at the home institution, e.g., the Language partnership) provided the local partners with a relatively better opportunity of involvement in the partnership, compared to the sandwich modality (e.g., the Health partnership). Moreover, the major activities of the Health partnership have been run mainly by the Norwegian side, with minimal involvement of the EU2 side due to its lack of qualified staff; while the Language partnership program has been run jointly with the involvement of both parties. Compared to the EU2, the EU1's relatively better staff capacity in managing PhD training has enabled it to play a substantial role and participation in the operation process.

Another important point noted was that the presence of joint-research in the Language partnership which has brought up an added advantage for the involved local faculty members. Here, participants considered a research-driven partnership activity as a good practice in providing a better opportunity for many faculty members of the local partner at various levels of qualifications to participate, and thus to foster equal participation in the partnership. Joint-research activity was also considered important to facilitate and strengthen faculty members' interrelationship and contribute to research capacity building in the local partner.

Moreover, capacity building in the Health partnership, predominantly, focused or limited to the local partner, i.e., its major partnership activities centered on building the capacity at the local partner institution. In addition to such activities, the Language partnership, however, involved capacity building beyond the local partner institution. For example, through community

engagement, it involved local stakeholders (language educators and regional and zonal leaders). Hence, it was found that the participation level of EU1 and its stakeholders was relatively higher than that of EU2, and that compared to the Language partnership, the Health partnership exhibited more asymmetric patterns of participation in the partnership development process.

7.3.3. Autonomy as mutuality

As discussed previously, in both cases, faculty members from both sides had prior personal relationships, and that these faculty members were generally aware of each other's context, interest, and potential contributions. Using this relationship and awareness, they were able to initiate and establish formal institutional partnerships. The local partners recognized that the Norwegian side gave considerable attention to the local partners' needs and interests and they were in support of the partnership objectives and activities that respond to the needs of the local society. They frequently expressed that the Norwegian faculty did not try to impose their own interests and prescribe solutions. Rather, the Norwegians were recognized for their emphasis on empowering the local partner to address their own problems by themselves. Faculty members and students had also a high appreciation for their foreign colleagues and advisors regarding the respect and autonomy they gave them in their collaborative activities. Consistent with this, Leng (2015) argues that partnerships that are founded on pre-existing relationships often contribute to promoting autonomy and mutuality, as members from both parties can freely raise their views and negotiate during the initiation and building processes (also Mwangi, 2017).

Yet, in some other observations, autonomy encountered with certain challenges. For example, there were concerns that the partnership programs tend to conform to the financial administration system, reporting and procedures set by NORAD which participants in both EU1 and EU2 labeled them difficult to integrate into the local contexts. It seems that emphasis was given to NORAD's norms and practices, with little efforts made to include the local practices and systems. Relating to this, it is argued that autonomy requires the working cultures and norms and inputs from the local partners to be included in the partnership (Leng, 2015). The practice observed in this study, however, tended to undermine and put the local norms and practices at a disadvantageous position, which appears to be problematic for ensuring autonomy in the partnership development.

Autonomy emphasizes that both partners engage in mutual respect and learn each other's culture and systems (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1986b). In this regard, the local partner members expressed their strong interest to learn and acquire knowledge and experience from their foreign colleagues whom they described as better experienced while the foreign partners were perceived to have lacked interest to learn from the local partner and to gain knowledge and experience. The local partners were, mainly, perceived to play a role of "…facilitating the collaborative activities" (ACBY). For example, graduate students of EU1 visited Norway and participated in research conferences and have got exposure to the academic culture of the Norwegian partner, while there was no such a visit from the Norwegian side. These reflect more of a unidirectional transfer of knowledge from the Norwegian side to the Ethiopian side (Habermann, 2008) that undermines autonomy and thereby mutuality (Hayhoe, 1986b). This seems to reinforce a type of relationship that positions the northern partner as "knowledge provider" and the southern partner as the "knowledge receiver…which run counter to mutuality" (Mwangi, 2016, p. 53).

7.3.4. Solidarity as mutuality

The study also demonstrates aspects of solidarity in terms of strengthening interconnections between partners and in bringing additional supports to the partnership programs. Both cases of partnerships have contributed to the development of the local partners' further interconnections with other institutions in other countries as well as with other local institutions. For example, the Language partnership has created opportunities for further research partnerships or connections with other partnership projects involving other Northern and Southern HEIs. Similarly, the Health partnership has created partnerships with other partnership programs where some PhD students of EU2 and other local institutions and PhD students coming from other Norwegian institutions have participated in joint-research project. Moreover, the local partners in both cases were also encouraged to establish partnerships with other local partners and they have already established such linkages where they collaborated in training, workshops, and conferences. Such connections have brought about additional benefits to the existing partnerships and partners in terms of financial support and participation in scholarly communities. Such growing interconnections and further linkages within the local institutions and other foreign partners demonstrate aspects of solidarity (Leng, 2015).

Herein, the personal relationship between faculty members in the Language partnership was seen as a stronger compared to that in the Health partnership. Participants in the Language partnership had more frequent interaction and their contact time was relatively longer, as they have been working in joint-research and co-advising. As one participant described, their relationship has grown up to the "family hood" (ACDR). While the interaction amongst participants in the Health partnership appears to be relatively loose, as only a few faculty members of the local partners were participating in the operation process. In this regard, participant ACFK commented that "there is little contact between faculty members" of the two partners, although PhD students (of EU2) "…have established a strong personal relationship with their Norwegian professors". Moreover, in the Language partnership, EU1 faculty members have established and strengthened interconnections with the local community members. The local educators and regional and Zonal leaders have been engaged in the project in regard to awareness creating workshops and meetings with the community members in language issues.

Chapter Eight

Summary, Reflection, and Implication

This chapter summarizes on the major findings of the study and, provides reflections, and conclusions and implications. It starts with the basic research questions and highlights the major findings for each research question. Then, it presents reflections on key findings in relation to the broader research contexts and theoretical concepts. Finally, the main implications are brought forward.

This study focuses on two cases of international partnership programs (Language and Health partnerships) formed between universities in Ethiopia and Norway. It investigates how the local partners have experienced the partnership development processes with regard to the following guiding research questions:

1) What are the major rationales for establishing these international partnerships?

2) How are these partnership programs formed and functioning?

3) How do the local partners view their experience in these partnership programs in light of their positioning?

4) What are the similarities and differences between the two partnership cases with regard to rationales, development, and overall patterns of relationships?

8.1. Summary

8.1.1. Policy drives and rationales

As the study shows, there is a loosely-defined policy regarding international higher education partnership in Ethiopia, at both national and institutional levels. In fact, although lack of clear policy and procedure have been apparent at a national level, some national policy documents and strategic plans have reflected interests and policy drives that underlie the formation and expansion of international higher education partnerships. It is noted that Ethiopia has planned to establish a 'national policy framework' for international partnership in higher education, although it is not yet

realized. Further, it has set out targets with regard to increasing joint academic programs, joint-research projects, external funding, and exchange programs through partnering with international institutions. Such efforts could serve as a policy space that encourages HEIs to develop institutional policies and procedures for international partnership formation and development. In this regard, the two case universities (EU1 and EU2) have strategic interest in strengthening the existing and in the formation of new international partnerships. Hence, the establishment of the two partnership programs appears to be deliberate and premeditated. Yet, the two universities did not have written policy and procedures, depicting rationales, priorities, and mechanisms for establishing and sustaining the partnerships. They followed, as participants claimed, an open and flexible approach to widen partnership possibilities with different institutions in diverse areas.

The main objective in the two partnership programs was capacity building of the local partners so as to enable them to carry out their core functions. A focus on capacity building, in both cases, is consistent with the high emphasis given to the expansion of higher education in Ethiopia. Furthermore, themes that are related to academic growth and development, resource dilemmas and opportunities, and societal development emerged as major rationales of the two local partners (EU1 and EU2) for establishing their respective partnerships. From these rationale categories, those that are related to academic growth and development emerged as the highest priority in the two local partners.

Particularly, related to motives in academic growth and development, participants in both EU1 and EU2, considered international partnerships as a means of staff capacity development; improvement of quality and raising international standards; acquiring international awareness and experience; and of enhancement of research capacity and output. In relation to resource dilemma and opportunities, they viewed partnerships as a source of financial and material resources required for running their functions; and as a means of strengthening infrastructural capacity and access to educational facilities available in their partner. Moreover, concerning societal development, they felt that partnerships as a means of expanding social networking and institutional links; and as a means of addressing local societal and community needs.

The study also shows that these major rationales were not mutually exclusive, but were closely related to each other in many aspects. Especially, clearly discernible was the close linkage between

academic-related and resource-related rationales in that, motives for acquiring the required resources meant for realizing academic growth and development. Given that the local institutions lacked the required resources and skilled staff to carry out their academic and research functions, motives related to addressing or complementing such scarcities were quite interlinked with motives related to academic capabilities and knowledge production. In this regard, participants from both EU1 and EU2 underlined that although their institutions were not in need of money for the sake of money, securing fund that addresses their financial limitation was a base and an input for realizing the capacity building goals of the partnership projects. In both cases, an international partnership was viewed as a means for the local partners to supplement resources, skills, and knowledge required for further academic growth and development, to discover innovative solutions, and to respond to the present global challenges.

These show that the local partners were oriented more to acquiring scarce resources required to carry out research and training, not for profit making. Consistent with this, previous studies also indicate that profit making by exporting educational services is less common for the southern institutions compared to the northern institutions as they are relatively in a better position to compete for attracting fee-paying students and patenting (Lizarraga, 2011; Knight, 2004). This implies that certain motives and preferences of HEIs to establishing partnerships appear to depend on their academic and resource contexts.

8.1.2. Partnership development process

On the basis of the experiences of the local partner in the two partnership programs, this study tries to map out important arrangements and practices in the partnership development process that the participants emphasized. The study shows that the two cases of partnerships have followed, more or less, similar partnership development processes and practices, but also with certain variations in the degree of involvement and balance between partners at various stages of the partnership development. In both cases, having the general know-how of the why of partnership formation appears as the first important step for the formation of the partnerships. In this, capacity building in training and research was recognized as the major reason for partnership formation in both cases.

How are the partnerships initiated?

The study shows that prior to institutional and personal links and NORHED's call for application for funding have contributed to the initiation of the Language partnership, whereas prior personal relations and NORHED's call for application have contributed to the initiation of the Health partnership. Prior links (personal and/or institutional) were important for making initial contacts with the potential partners and for developing awareness and understanding of partners' needs and expectations and thus for catalyzing partnership initiation. In both cases, although prior links helped for identifying and understanding partners, it was the call for external funding that determined the development of proposal and thus the establishment of the partnerships. Participants have stressed on the significance of external funding, which the local partners could not afford, for establishing and running the partnership. The Norwegians' financial support was also highly valued for running the exchange visits and consultative meetings that facilitated understandings between partners. This implies that the initiation and thereby the formation of partnerships hinges on the availability of external funding.

The study also shows that although the local partners don't have strategic priorities and preferences for an international partner, they often look for partnerships with the Northern institutions. This is because local partners expect that they would secure funding from the Northern partner or funder; and they expect working with the high profiled Northern institutions would provide them better opportunities to learn from and improve their capacity. This means, besides the funding opportunities, the foreign partners' status is also considered worthwhile for building the capacity of the local partners.

In both cases, representatives from the local partners have played a substantial role in the initiation process, although in various degrees. Unlike the traditional partnerships which are often initiated externally, such types of partnerships that are initiated with the involvement of the southern partners exhibit aspects of symmetry and are more likely to address the local needs.

How are the partnerships designed and built?

After partners had awareness and consent on general area of collaboration, and agreed to develop the partnership, the next task was building the partnership. The themes recurred as an important partnership building mechanism which includes setting partnership agendas and activities, formulation of aims and expected outcomes, setting procedures and required resources, and

sharing of roles and responsibilities. These, as participants in both cases underlined, require the involvement of members of both parties based on ongoing negotiations and consensus. Participants also emphasized on the importance of external financial support as well as partner members' commitment, time, and effort for partnership building.

Another lesson from the two case studies is that partnerships may be initiated, established and exist at any academic level of the university, but their formation requires institutional approval. For example, although one of the partnership programs was established and exists at a departmental level and the other at a college level, in both cases, the partnership establishment became formal only after the university officials signed the partnership agreement.

With regard to symmetry/asymmetry in the partnership building process, the two cases reveal both similarities and nuances. In both cases, generally, there have been agenda setting and planning procedures and practices attempting to address the local needs and to promote equity. In most part, NORHED's procedures and criteria have encouraged the local partners to play a participatory and balancing role in the partnership building process and to ensure local ownership. It is recognized that the local partners were given the autonomy to identify partnership agendas having local relevance; faculty members from both parties participated in the preparation of the proposal, and partner representatives and leaders engaged in scrutinizing and fine-tuning the partnership proposal and in signing agreements. In this way, members from both parties have played parts and had their own inputs in the partnership building process, although with variations across the cases in the level of participation of the local partners.

Yet, the study also reveals concerns about the funding body's influence on the relevance and urgency of certain partnership activities to the local priorities. Participants claimed that some of the NORAD's criteria and interests, for example, towards gender equity have influence on the local partners to incorporate the 50% female recruitment procedure—which they described it as impractical—in view of securing funding. This is also a reflection of the consequences of interest for external funding in connection with resource scarcities in the local institutions.

The two case studies also show that the distribution of roles and responsibilities was often based on discussions and consensus. One could argue that such a consensus promotes mutuality between

partners (Leng, 2015). However, this also partly justifies the opposite, as the consensus and agreements were also in consideration of partners' capabilities and experiences, which have influenced the balance of role distribution. It is noted that the foreign staff members, due to their alleged better skills and experience, were assigned to play mentoring and assisting role of the local staff. This indicates that the relative lower capability of the local members has positioned them in need of their foreign colleagues' support and thus undermines symmetrical distribution of roles and responsibilities.

However, the comparative assessment also shows a variation between the two cases in the balances of distribution of roles and responsibilities between partners. This is linked to differences in their partnership modalities, collaborative activities, and capacity and experience of the local staff. For example, the sandwich modality (in the Health partnership) gave more roles to the foreign partner in running the program, compared to the program hosted in home institution (in the Language partnership). Another difference was related to the partnership activities. Compared to the training-driven activity, the research-driven activity has involved more members of the local partners in various qualification levels and thus encourages the local partners' role and level of participation in the partnership. For example, the presence of joint-research in the Language partnership was valued to have involved more local faculty members, compared to the Health partnership that didn't employ joint-research. Moreover, capacity building in the Health partnership was limited to building the capacity of the local partner, while the Language partnership involved capacity building beyond the local partner, involving local community stakeholders.

The study also shows that the local partner (e.g., EU1) that has qualified staff for running partnership activities have assumed roles and responsibilities comparable to its foreign partner. This has contributed to balance role distribution and thus to promote equitable participation. A relatively better staff capacity of EU1, compared to that of EU2, has enabled it to take an advantageous position in role distribution and thus better level of participation. Thus, compared to the Language partnership, the Health partnership exhibits more asymmetric patterns of role distribution and level of participation in the partnership building processes.

How are the partnerships operating?

After having reached agreements on partnership agenda such as, plans and procedures, and share of roles and responsibilities, partners began the operation process. The study reveals that the distribution of roles and responsibilities during the partnership building process has, in turn, determined the role and the participation level of partners in the operation process. Accordingly, the participation level of EU2 in the operation process was relatively limited compared to that of EU1. It is also noted that the participation level of the local partners in the operation process also depended on the partnership modalities, activities, and local partners' staff capacity.

The study also reveals that the involvement and agreement of faculty members in designing the partnership details who are supposed to run the project contribute to the success of the operation process. An Important point to note is that in the case of the Health partnership, the involvement of the operating unit was overlooked in the design of certain partnership activities and there was misunderstanding between the operating members and the local coordinator on the relevance and detail plans of these activities. This, in turn, has impeded the operation process (Baskerville, 2013; Sutton & Obst, 2011; Wanni et al., 2010).

Regarding the financial administration, NORAD disbursed the fund to both parties and gave them the opportunity to play the management and administrative roles in allocating and accounting their share. Such efforts were valued important, by some participants, for promoting some level of equality in fund distribution and control. Yet, further analysis shows that the project finance remains, mainly, in control of NORAD, while the local partner has limited role and autonomy in regard to control and allocation. Imbalance in fund distribution in favor of the foreign partner was also reported in both cases. Comparatively, it seems that more of asymmetrical fund distribution was practiced in the Health partnership since its major activities were managed by the foreign staff whose remuneration is costly.

The study also reveals interrelated challenges related to the administration and management of the partnership. Some of these were related to the local partners' own problems, for example, institutional bureaucracies, weak financial administrative and procurement systems, and some individuals' curiosity to personal benefits that may jeopardize the long-term institutional academic benefits. Others were related to tensions owing to differences in institutional systems and working culture between the local partners and NORAD. For example, participants claimed that auditing

practices, overhead cost, and financial transaction and reporting systems that NORAD brought into the partnership are difficult to integrate into the local partners.

Another important point recognized in both cases is a key role of coordinators throughout the partnership development process. It was noted that the success or failures of the partnership relied much on these individual coordinators or personalities (commitments, leadership skills, and experiences). For example, participants claimed that the limitations (e.g., the failure of MPhil and marginal involvement of the local partner) in the Health partnership were associated to EU2 coordinator's weakness and reluctance in designing the partnership activities that suit the capability of the local faculty members. Such dependency in partnership development and its overall success on individuals also appears to be tied to the lack of clear institutional strategies and procedures for guiding and structuring the partnership.

Most of the participants of the local partners in both cases took their partnership experience as positive, enabling, and full of mutual respect. They have high appreciations for the respect and autonomy their Norwegian colleagues and advisors gave them in their collaborative activities. They upheld such academic culture as supportive for their institutions and were interested to adopt them. They also appreciated the Norwegians' egalitarian desire and efforts to overcome the power differences through participatory relational structures that gave precedence to the local actors. This appears different from the experience that often occurs in North-South partnerships where the Northern partners desire to play the dominant role, while relegating the Southern scholars as local facilitators. Yet, several participants did not consider their Norwegian counterparts as 'partners', but as 'supporters' and source of resources. They viewed the partnership as a benevolent relationship envisioned to assist the local partners, not as opportunities for capacity building of both parties. This has implications for undermining complementarity and mutuality between partners.

How are the partnerships being monitored and evaluated?

In both cases, monitoring and evaluation were carried out in both formative and summative basis. These practices were recognized useful for exploring gaps, getting feedbacks, and making necessary adjustments. The formative monitoring and evaluation practices were, in most part, recognized as inclusive of both parties. However, asymmetrical tendencies were also reported in

both cases. For example, the summative evaluations were carried out by an evaluation team on behalf of NORAD, while the local partners' involvement being limited to delivering data and comments on the evaluation results. Participants also claimed that the evaluation and progress reporting were based on performance indicators and report templates primarily designed by NORAD. As the study also indicates, the monitoring and evaluation practices primarily focus on results or benefits of the local partners while overlooking those on the side of the foreign partner. All these could be considered as manifestations of asymmetrical patterns of evaluation that tend to undermine the contribution of the partnership to the foreign partner (Bailey & Dolan, 2011; Koehn & Uitto, 2015).

8.1.3. Partners' positioning in the partnerships

The study shows, in both cases, that the Norwegian partners have made efforts to ensure they were not dominating the local partners by giving them the opportunity to play a substantial role in the partnership development process. It is discernible that partners, through recognizing power differentials and giving attention to ways of mitigating the same, promisingly tend to go beyond and promote aspects of mutuality in terms of equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity. Nevertheless, power differentials or structural obstacles (manifested, for example, as inequalities in staff capacity and experience, resource scarcities in the local partner, funding body's criteria and needs) have challenged efforts to mutuality and position partners differently, in favor of the strong Northern partner. Comparatively, the Language partnership exhibits a stronger degree of mutuality than the Health partnership does. This difference is linked to contextual factors embedded in the particular partnership programs, including partnership development approaches, modalities followed, activities employed, and individual personalities involved. This implies that the patterns of relations in light of partners' positioning are shaped not only by structural variables, but also by other contextual factors embedded in the partnership programs.

With regard to equity, the study indicates that NORHED advocates the partnership modality that positions the local actors to take a lead in initiating, designing, and managing the partnerships as a way to achieve equal standings between partners and to promote mutuality. Although the degree varies across the two cases, the local partners have played a role in identifying and setting partnership agendas and collaborative activities, in formulating objectives, and in distributing roles

and responsibilities. This means that inputs from the southern partner representatives are included in determining the contents and the nature of the partnership. Most importantly, participants underlined that these arrangements were made based on discussions and mutual agreements between members of both parties. Such mutual agreements and collaborative decisions on matters of major partnership arrangements and practices conform to the notion of equity that emphasizes on consensus and agreements between partners regarding the partnership goals and forms (Hayhoe, 1986b; Leng, 2015). The involvement of local partners in the partnership arrangement was also recognized to promote co-ownership.

The study also reveals some challenges that tend to relegate the local partners to a disadvantageous position in the partnerships. For example, the needs and requirements of the funding body associated with resource constraints in the local partners, have undermined the negotiating power of the local partners on their priority areas. The study also revealed unbalanced perceived benefits in that the local partners were viewed as the main beneficiary of the partnership while downgrading the gains foreign partners. Moreover, the foreign partners were viewed as more experienced and knowledgeable who deserve to be mentors and patrons of the local partners. All these are believed to be the reflection of inequitable positions between partners that undermine the contribution of the local partners (Leng, 2015; Teferra, 2014).

The study also shows that the local partners have participated in most parts of the partnership development, although in varying degrees across the cases. For example, in both cases, the local faculty members and PhD students have published their joint-research works on international journals. Such a contribution of the local partners in knowledge production reflects the mutuality tenet of participation (Hayhoe, 1986b). Relatively, a higher degree of participation of the local partner was observed in the Language partnership program, compared to that of the Health partnership. For instance, unlike the Language partnership, the Health partnership which followed a top-down path and a sandwich modality, did not employ joint-research, and involved the local partner with relatively limited staff capacity has positioned the local partner to play a relatively minimal role and participation.

Autonomy of a partner emphasizes that both partners engage in mutual respect and learn the needs, working cultures and systems of each (Hayhoe, 1986b). In this study, the local faculty members

and students were highly appreciated the respect and freedom the Norwegians have given them. The partnership development practices, in most part, have given precedence to the local actors. Participants widely recognized that the local partners were given the opportunity to identify partnership agendas and activities that respond to the needs of the local society, although the extent they utilized this opportunity varied across the cases. These conform to the notion of autonomy in the partnership (Hayhoe, 1986b).

However, this study also reveals that while the local partners have a strong interest to acquire knowledge and academic experiences from the foreign partners whom they valued as high profiled academia, the foreign partners were perceived to lack a desire to gain knowledge and experience from their local counter partners. There were also concerns that the local partners were required to conform to the accounting and reporting system and procedures of NORADs but gave little emphasis to the local practices and systems. Participants claimed that the performance indicators used for monitoring and evaluation were designed by NORAD with a fewer input from the local partners. All these point to the tendency of a unidirectional transfer of knowledge and practices that appear to be problematic for ensuring the mutuality tenet of autonomy in the partnership development (Mwangi, 2017).

The two cases also demonstrate aspects of solidarity, in varying degrees, in terms of strengthening interconnections and of bringing supports to the partnerships (Leng, 2015). In both cases, linkages with other international partnership projects were established in which they collaborated in training, workshops, and conferences and from which the partnership programs were able to get additional resource support. In addition, it is believed that the partnership programs have created the opportunity for the local partners to form new partnerships with other local institutions. Such a progress in interconnections and further linkages between local and foreign partners demonstrates aspects of solidarity (Leng & Pan, 2013). Here, the Language partnership demonstrates relatively stronger degree of inter-personal relationships than the Health partnership. Members of local partners in the Language partnership had longer and frequent interactions, as they have been working with their foreign colleagues in joint-research and co-advising activities. This has contributed towards fostering solidarity amongst members. On the other hand, the interaction between members in the Health partnership appeared relatively loose; only a few faculty members (mainly the coordinator) of the local partners were participating in the operation

process. On the contrary, as the Language partnership involved community engagement, local faculty members have also strengthened interconnections with the local community stakeholders.

8.2. Concluding remarks

In the era of globalization, the future of the North-South relation is uncertain and a new configuration of North-South relation is likely possible (Held et al., 1999; Scott, 2000). It is equally likely to assume that the North-South asymmetric power relation may continue to exist in the future (Ibid). In view of the broader geopolitical context of the North-South relations, one can argue that partnerships involving the Norwegian and the Ethiopian HEIs would be guided and shaped by the inherent existing power relations. Structural power asymmetry seems unavoidable (Olsson, 2008), even though contextual-historical differences may give ground for improved interactions and collaborations. In recognition of the inherent power differentials, however, one can presuppose a relation on the basis of fundamentally equals could spring up eventually (Helms, 2015; Robertson & Verger, 2008). This study, although its scope was limited to two cases, provides a window for understanding how the stakeholders of Ethiopian higher education have been negotiating and realizing partnership opportunities. The two case studies disclose various manifestations of power inequalities as obstacles to partnership development but also aspects of mutuality that are valued to redress the effects of asymmetries and to maintain the relationship.

Although Ethiopia doesn't have a well-articulated policy on international higher education partnership, it has given emphasis to the formation of new partnerships and the expansion of the existing ones. Consistent with this, the two case universities (EU1 and EU2) have strategic interests in international partnerships. Academic growth and development, as core goals of capacity building, have emerged as dominant drivers of these two universities to establish linkages with an international partner. This seems to conform with the country's emphasis on the expansion of HEIs (Tamrat & Teferra, 2018) which underlie the contribution of higher education to the overall development and poverty reduction efforts of the country..

The two universities' interest in the formation of partnerships with the Northern partners has also coincided with the dependence of the country on external funding and resources for running its training and research functions and development activities. Owing to their limited resources and capacity, stakeholders of Ethiopian higher education prefer to partner with the Northern

institutions that have proximity to international donors. This apparently indicates a sense of dependency and assistance mentality amongst these stakeholders. It seems that local participants feel that they are getting assistances of, whom they view as, strong Northern partners. They view such partnerships, mainly, as benevolent linkages (Habermann, 2008), not as mutually beneficial ones. It is observed that the two partnership programs—their objectives, expected outcomes, and performance indicators—were all intended for the benefits of the Southern partners. These findings point to the persistence of academic dependence of the weaker institution on institutions with abundant resources and advanced research and training capacities (Ishengoma, 2016; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Teferra, 2014).

It is widely argued that structural asymmetries shape the nature and patterns of the North-South partnership programs, in favor of the Northern partner (Bradley, 2008; Gutirezz, 2008; Ishengoma, 2016; Janjua, 2008; Koehn &Obamba, 2014; Menashy, 2018). Consistent with this, the two case studies exhibit various structural asymmetries, including inequality in resources, academic capacity and experiences, and budget tied with the funding body's criteria and interests. These have presented obstacles to mutual collaborations as they have contributed to undermining and constraining the role and the participation of the Southern partners and academics in the overall dynamics of the partnership development. For example, as discussed earlier, the scarcity of resources, external financial support have determined the formation and development of the partnerships as well as the selection of international partners (often to be the Northern). The difference in academic and research capacity was another structural factor that has contributed to shape the purposes of the partnerships to be oriented to capacity building of the allegedly weaker partner. This capacity difference has also contributed to imbalances in roles and responsibilities and financial distributions, in favor of the Northern partners. The study also indicates the influence of the criteria and interests of the funding body ('conditionality') in determining certain partnership agendas and activities. All these match well with Koehn and Obamba's (2014) concern that such inequalities in resource and in knowledge capacities between the Northern and the Southern partners both produce and reproduce structural power that often hinder the construction of symmetrical partnerships. Hence, it is undeniable that there exist such entrenched power structures that tend to obstruct mutuality (Kaguhangire-Barifaijo & Namara, 2012; Menashy, 2018). This

may also continue to affect the formation and development of partnerships between the Northern and the Southern partners.

Within this given problem, however, it is equally possible to argue that there are also technical and context-specific factors on which partners can make adjustments to reduce the effects of structural obstacles and encourage the role of the Southern partners. In recognition of the power differentials, members of partners can navigate ways by which power asymmetries can be somewhat counterbalanced and the relationship can pursue in a less patronizing way (Jooste, 2015). A lesson from the two cases can be drawn that there were practical adjustments the Southern partners could make in partnership creation and arrangement that can help to redress the inherent power differentials and that can facilitate engagement of both parties on a mutual basis. For example, the Southern partners have got the chance to play a participatory role in the partnership development. It should also be noted that this study has exhibited various promising practices and arrangements that have, actually, facilitated equitable participation and mutuality at various phases of the partnership development. This implies that structural asymmetries are not the only factors, but there are also other context-sensitive factors that contribute to shaping the North-South partnership dynamics. To illustrate this, the next paragraphs reflect on how the choice of partnership modalities, approaches or pathways, and activities and individuals involved have contributed to either redressing or reinforcing the effects of structural asymmetries in partnership development.

International partnerships are expected to address the demands for internationalization on one hand while they ought to be directed towards the local societal needs, on the other hand (Andriansen & Madsen, 2019). The choice of partnership modality is, thus, to be in consideration of the balance of these issues. This study shows that a kind of ‘at-home’ partnership program that involves graduate trainings promotes the participation and ownership of the Southern partner, compared to the ‘sandwich’ partnership program that involves scholarship abroad. Of course, qualifications obtained from the Northern institutions are valued to raise academic quality and standard and social recognition of graduates. Obviously, one cannot undervalue the international experience that the Southern academics could get form the scholarship in the Northern institutions through the ‘sandwich’ partnership programs. However, an international standard is, sometimes, elusive and it would be simplistic to assume all international scholarship opportunities as standardized, as qualifications abroad may not exactly fit with and relevant to the local problems (Mamdani, 2016).

In this perspective, 'at-home' partnership modality—offered at the Southern institutions with the involvement of the foreign academics—sounds laudable. This modality cannot only provide students at home with international experience, but also can facilitate knowledge production within the South that are relevant and responsive to local needs while having connected with the international experience.

A partnership can be formed because agreements could be made between higher officials of institutions. at the top, or individual faculty members, at the bottom and may influence the academic unit or the institution to form the partnership. One can argue that no matter how the partnership program follows a top-down or a bottom-up pathway of development, what matters most is how well the program is grounded in the academic unit and in its members who engage in the partnership development. For example, one of the case studies shows that the partnership activities which were initiated and conceptualized at the top, with little knowledge of the concerned academic units or its representatives, remained unsuccessful. This suggests that the partnership arrangement and decisions regarding the activities and detail contents also require the involvement of the operating members, as the actual interaction and collaboration take place at the bottom by the individual members (Bordogna, 2017; Gieser, 2016). Here, the study provides a lesson to consider a balance between top-down and bottom-up arrangement and priority setting for the smooth functioning and the success of the partnership (Hudzik, 2015).

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Leng, 2015; Taylor, 2016), this study shows that links among faculty members serve as a launching pad for the emergence of a partnership. Moreover, individual faculty members could shoulder much of the roles and responsibilities for creating and pursuing the partnership and taking the relationship onwards (Gieser, 2016; Hudzik, 2015). Inter-personal relationships, involving different individuals with their own perspectives and experiences at various levels, have a significant influence in shaping the partnership development (Gieser, 2016). This study has displayed the significant role of individual coordinators in determining the interpersonal dynamics and in directing the overall arrangement and patterns of interaction in the partnership. This, partly, reflects the autonomy the partnership arrangement gives to the individual coordinators (Weinrib, 2012). At the same time, it may also lead the relationship at risk of depending much on the leadership qualities and personalities of individuals (Wilson, 2012). Based on this study, one can conclude that individuals involved in the partnership also contribute to,

either, redressing or reinforcing the effects of structural asymmetries. The role of individuals in transforming the partnership, positively or negatively, is also recognized in previous studies (e.g., Bordogna, 2017; Gieser, 2016).

It should also be noted that employing a variety of partnership activities widens the involvement and roles of the Southern partners in the partnership development process. Moreover, a research-driven activity, compared to a training-driven activity, in the partnership is recognized to have involved more number of local faculty members at various levels of qualification. Hence, the diversity and type of partnership activities are also important issues to be taken into account in the partnership arrangement in redressing or reinforcing structural asymmetries.

Overall, structural asymmetries in the North-South higher education partnerships are inherent and their effects are clear (Brinkerhoff, 2002). As this study discloses, asymmetries in academic and research capacity and resources tend to lead the Southern partners to a relatively disadvantageous positioning in the partnership development process. Yet, inequalities and differences can also serve as a basis for complementarity and collaboration; in due course, and partners and interpersonal relationships in the partnership may, positively or negatively, influence the degree of mutuality. Mutuality in a partnership, as the two case studies reveal, is contingent on the extent of the practical efforts partners make to reduce the effects of the inherent structural asymmetries. A single approach cannot be a solution for reducing the effects of asymmetry for all types of partnership programs. A partnership program is thus required to be grounded in the idea of mutuality, all at once resisting the dominating and dependence mentality. Since asymmetry is inherent and is likely to continue, partners are required to recognize its sources and work together to reduce its potential effects if a partnership has to move forward to mutuality.

8.3. Theoretical reflections for future research

This study employs concepts from internationalization rationale (DeWit, 2002; Knight, 2004) as an analytical frame for exploring partnership rationales. The study also uses the mutuality lens (Galtung, 1980; Hayhoe, 1986b) for analyzing the formation and functioning of the partnership and the positioning of partners in the partnership.

In most part, as DeWit's (2002) and Knight's (2004) argue, understandings of economic, academic, socio-cultural, and political rationales of internationalization helped me explore international higher education partnership rationales that were declared in the documents and perceived rationales from interview participants. In fact, some aspects of emerged rationales do not directly fit with these categories and were interpreted slightly differently. For example, the study explores rationales related to human rights and gender equity although this framework has barely discussed about them. Thus, this framework seems insufficient to capture specifics linked to the particular partnership programs. This may be because these rationale typologies refer to internationalization which is broader in scope relative to the international partnership.

The mutuality lens consists of interrelated concepts, including equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity. According to Hayhoe (1986b), equity requires that partnership arrangements and setting of partnership agendas and objectives are based on consensus and agreements. Participation requires that the Southern partners participate in all activities throughout the partnership development. Autonomy entails that partners respect and recognize each other's interests, cultures, and contributions. Solidarity entails the growth of interactions between partners and further links with other partners (Ibid). In this study, this framework was found helpful to capture various aspects of mutuality in terms of equity, participation, autonomy, and solidarity and also aspects that run counter to mutuality. The two cases manifest aspects of mutuality with variations in the degree of mutuality between them. The variations are attributed to factors embedded in the context of the particular partnership programs intertwined with the inherent structural asymmetries between partners. Mutuality lens was, therefore, found to be a suitable analytical framework that enables the researcher to understand not only the effects of structural power relations, but also the contexts surrounding the particular partnership programs in shaping the patterns of relations.

This study, through comparing the case studies against the mutuality frame, explains context-sensitive and structural-related factors that account for differences in the degree of mutuality across the different partnership programs. Thus, it presents ways of investigating and comparing other similar partnership programs in the future. The framework is also found helpful to capture the role of individual participant in initiating and maintaining the partnerships.

The comparative analysis that depicts nuances in the degree of mutuality across the two cases also hints that partners, through recognizing the inherent structural inequalities and negotiating more, can navigate ways and establish, at least, a 'near-symmetrical' partnership (to use Koehn & Obamba's, 2014 term), whereby the needs and voices of the allegedly weak Southern partners can be entertained. This also implies that mutuality frame was found to be useful to entertain such promising practices of challenging the inhibiting power asymmetries in an attempt to promote mutuality through considering the partnership arrangements and practices that privilege the Southern partners as a compensation to their potentially lower structural advantage, owing to their allegedly inexperienced capacity and limited resources.

As there are arrays of studies, which are informed by the neo-Marxist theoretical perspectives, that often suffer from the presupposition of unidirectional patterns of relations on the basis of political and economic structural positions of actors, it appears that this mutuality frame opens up spaces to see aspects of mutuality that help to challenge effects of power differentials and to promote two-way transfer and mutual influence by being sensitive to local contexts surrounding a particular partnership program while considering the potential effects of structural asymmetries. The finding in Language partnership indicates such possibilities or spaces towards mutuality in spite of the seemingly structural obstacles and restrictions. The finding has also implications for studies informed by structural theoretical perspectives that suggest radical reconstitution of economic and political relations as a sole solution to addressing the inherent power asymmetries that place the Northern partner at an advantageous position in directing the relationship.

This type of study, as it emphasizes on the analysis of the North-South partnership development with respect to whether it is shaped by power differentials or through two-way and mutual influence, benefits from the use of mutuality frame. This is because the frame enables the researcher to explore the interplays between the potential influence of partners' structural inequalities and the efforts towards mutuality in shaping the partnership development. The focus of the study, in searching for both the positive (i.e. what fits) and the negative (what doesn't fit) with the mutuality frame (Hayhoe, 2007), is also found helpful for providing a complete picture of the patterns of partnership development vis-à-vis symmetry and asymmetry. This framework was also found to be useful to avoid the risks of both downplaying and overestimating the role of the power embedded in political and economic structures in shaping the partnership dynamics. In

a way, it helps to understand nuances sensitive to contexts and reveals both aspects of mutuality' and also practices that run counter to mutuality that undermine the role of the Southern partner.

In sum, this mutuality framework is found instrumental to comparatively analyze the variations in partnership development with regard to power differentials or asymmetries favoring the Northern partner on one side, and aspects of mutuality that work to reduce effects of asymmetry and domination on the other side. This, in turn, is a tool to develop a complete insight regarding the patterns of relations vis-à-vis symmetry/asymmetry.

8.4. Implications

Based on the key findings of this study, the following implications are forwarded

Articulation of policy frameworks and priorities: Although different national policy documents have given emphasis to international partnership formation and expansion, yet, there is a loosely defined policy framework at both national and institutional levels. Thus, governmental and institutional efforts are required to develop well-articulated policy frameworks for initiating, establishing, administering, and properly coordinating international partnership activities. Although participants claim that the local institutions follow an opportunistic approach that welcomes various options, it is discernible that they oftentimes partner with the Northern partners for they can easily secure external funds and for they view better profiled Northern partners as more worthwhile for local capacity building. Such emphasis on running costs and high profiled partners has implications for the strategic priorities and approaches to be considered in developing international partnerships. It is also imperative that local institutions use the existing loosely-defined policy space and develop their institutional policies and procedures, depicting priorities (in partner, areas, activities), strategies, and mechanisms for establishing and managing international partnerships. Moreover, findings from the different participant groups (administrators and faculty members) show variation in priorities they gave to rationales, for example, in regard to international experiences. This suggests the need to set institutional priorities that address concerns of different stakeholders, as these have implications for the initiation and formation of the partnership.

Committing local resources to partnerships: The fact that academic-related rationales (the need for staff capacity development, quality improvement, research output enhancement, and

international experience) emerged as the most dominant drivers of the local partners for participating in international partnerships has an important implication for international institutions and other organizations seeking to establish partnerships with the local institutions (EU1 and EU2). However, the scarcity of financial and material resources has remained as the major compelling factors driving the local partners to partner with their Northern counterparts. International partnership projects, in both cases, have entirely depended on assistance and supports provided by the foreign donors and partners. As this may lead the local partners to be reactive to the external initiatives that tend to compromise the local priorities, participants suggest internal funding sources as ways to position the local partner to be able to negotiate on an equal basis. Thus, it is important that the local institutions seek out and design alternative mechanisms for obtaining internal sources of fund and other required resources for international partnership initiatives, instead of only waiting for the call for proposals for funding by external donors. For example, gains through overhead cost from the previous partnership projects may be considered to be reinvested for further partnership initiatives, as some participants suggested. Institutions may also establish strategic linkages with other local organizations that have the potential to provide funding.

Sensitivity to local contexts to ensure local ownership: As the study indicates, although most of the NORHED's procedures and associated criteria are recognized as commendable for favoring the needs and participation of the local partners in the partnership, there are also concerns about the influence of the funding body's needs in distorting certain local priorities. The study indicates that the Norwegian intent to positively influence the local partners to bring about policy changes in gender equity remained impractical due to contextual infeasibility on the part of the local partners. This suggests that open discussions and detailed negotiation between partners be in place with regard to the relevance and urgency of the partnership activities, in a way that take the actual local contexts into account if the demands and priorities of the local partners are to be entertained and promote local ownership.

Identifying or selecting partnership approach, modality, and activities that facilitate mutuality: From the two case studies, it was noted that pathways of partnership development, partnership modalities, partnership activities, and academic and research capabilities of partners have contributed to shape the patterns of relations between partners. It was also noted that the local

partners, at least in principle, were given the autonomy and opportunity to take a proactive role in the partnership development process. In such a situation, the positioning of the local partners in the partnership depends on how much the local partners have made use of the opportunity in selecting the partnership pathways and in identifying the partnership modalities and activities that fit with the capacities of the local faculty members so as to promote a balancing role throughout the partnership development process. In this regard, lessons drawn from the Language partnership suggest that employing a bottom-up pathway of partnership development, "at-home" partnership modality, and a joint-research activity, in addition to graduate programs, would increase the role and participation level of the local partners and to promote mutuality. Moreover, the study suggests that the research-driven activity operated within "at-home" modality provides the local partner with a better chance to engage and thereby reduce imbalances in fund distribution between partners, rather than the training-driven activity operated in a sandwich modality.

In addition, in such instances where there is an egalitarian desire by the Northern partners in recognition of power differentials, the local institutions may also make benchmark and organize discussion forums and seek for partnership initiatives that encourage the participation and role of the local partners to ensure mutual influence.

Involving operating academic unit in the initiation and design of the partnerships: Comparison of the two case studies also suggests the need for involvement of operating members (who take part in the day-to-day activities) in the early partnership conceptualization and planning stage for building common understandings in details which otherwise may result in misunderstandings and failures. It further suggests emphasis be given to understandings of partners' needs and contributions and details of the prospective partnership activities through thoughtful and frequent human contacts and face-to-face interactions.

Employing working procedure that pay attention to the working cultures and systems of the local partners: The study also reveals tensions due to mismatches in working systems and cultures and the funding body's criteria and procedures brought to the partnership, which participants view them as difficult to integrate into the local partner. Thus, it is important that partners openly discuss on such matters and give recognition to the different working cultures. For example, the practices and norms pertinent to the local partners to be considered as ways of promoting mutuality, instead of only conforming to the working procedures and systems set by the funding body. Analysis of

the monitoring and evaluation practices also suggests inclusion of inputs from the Southern partners as indicators and in reporting formats of the partnership for promoting symmetry.

Moreover, problem related to the administrative system of the local institutions emerged as one of the challenges in the partnership operation. This requires further commitments of higher officials of the local institutions to alleviate unnecessary institutional bureaucracies and to improve the financial administration and procurement system.

Employing mechanisms that balance individual and institutional roles: The study also highlights the key role of individual coordinators and of their leadership in the overall success or failure of the partnership. Concerning this, participants suggest the partnership programs to be more of institutional and involve collective actions, rather than to be reliant on few individuals whose undesirable personalities would likely jeopardize the functioning of the partnerships. Institutional roles and commitments are also recognized fundamental for maintaining the relationships and for realizing the long-term and broader institutional goals (Wanni et al., 2010). Thus, it is imperative that institutional procedures and mechanisms be in place to maintain the balance between institutional and individual roles in partnership development.

Embedding the principles of mutual benefit in the partnership: While the local partners view their partnership experience as positive and enabling, they also view their foreign counterparts as 'supporters', not as 'partners', and the partnership as a benevolent relationship imagined to assist the local institutions, not as a mutually beneficial relationship. All the partnership objectives, expected outcomes, and performance indicators refer to the benefits of the local partners while overlooking the contributions to the side of the foreign partner. However, participation in and exposure to the Southern academic environment by themselves are claimed to have contribution to the professional development and international experience of the Northern partners. Thus, it requires that such contents that potentially benefit the Northern partners be recognized and clearly stated in the proposal, for example, in terms of objectives and expected outcomes. The monitoring and evaluation systems and practices need also consider indicators and contents that assess results, costs, and benefits on the sides of both parties, instead of being limited to the Southern side.

Institutional support and encouragement system: The study also reveals the inclination of some individuals towards the short-term financial and material benefits that may risk long-term institutional gains. This is also linked to lack of support system or encouragement schemes for faculty members who take part in international partnership projects. Such issues can be addressed through the provision of institutional support system or encouragement mechanisms as part of individuals' academic work. This can also serve as recognition of their contributions to the establishment of international partnership projects and thereby encourages them to keep up with their engagement in the partnership activities.

Further research: This study is mainly based on the perceptions of stakeholders of the Ethiopian side, and it is not possible to infer the Norwegians view in such partnerships. This suggests the need for further research that includes the perspectives of participants from both sides. Since this study is limited to two cases; it is not possible to make inferences about all the partnerships between universities in Ethiopia and in Norway. Thus, to get generalizations about the whole picture of the Ethio-Norway relations in higher education, I suggest future research that covers representative number of cases. Moreover, this study focuses on the process of partnership development on the basis of a process framework—that give little attention to partnership outcomes. This suggests the need for future research that considers both processes and outcomes so as to get complete understanding about partnership and to develop insights of how the process shape the outcomes and the impacts.

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Appendices

A. Interview guide for academic staff (instructors and researchers) who participated in partnership development

1. May you tell me your role and contribution in this partnership?
2. What are the rationales for your institution to establish this partnership? What are your personal rationales to engage in this partnership?
3. What is this partnership about (purpose, agendas, activities)?
4. Do you believe this partnership (its purpose, agendas, activities) is in line with the demands and priories of your institution? How?
5. How was the partnership initiated? How was it started?
6. How do you see the conditions the foreign partner (funding body and institution) require your institution to fulfill with respect to the demands and priorities of your institution?
7. How do you describe the process of negotiations, agreements, and consensus building?
8. How do partners share their roles and responsibilities?
9. How do you describe your institution's level of participation in: setting partnership agendas and goals; planning and budgeting; managing and decision-making, etc.
10. How do you see issues of complementarity and interactions between members of partners? How do you explain your relationship with members of the foreign partner?
11. How do you describe the mutual respect between partners? Do you believe the foreign partner respects the needs of your institution, and recognizes its expertise, contributions, and complementary functions?
12. How do you explain the degree of transparency and trust in the partnership?
13. How do you describe higher officials' level of commitment for promises and agreements?
14. Does the monitoring and evaluation practice involve participation of both parties? How relevant is it for getting feedbacks, mutual-learning, and risk-sharing (mutual accountability)?
15. What benefits did your institution get from this partnership? What personal benefit do you get?
16. Which partner do you feel benefits more from the partnership? Why?
17. What makes this partnership differ from the partnership you have been part of, if any?
18. What are the major challenges or conflicts, if any, that affect this partnership? What strategies or practices have been employed to address such challenges?
19. What does partnership mean to you? How do you view this relationship with respect to your conception of partnership?
20. Overall, how do you view your partner institution in this partnership?
    a) As a source of resources and/or expertise for your institution to build its capacity? Why?
    b) As a beneficiary by strengthening its own teaching, research, and service capacities? Why?
    c) As a contributor of expertise and effort that will complement and build upon existing resources? Why?
21. How much are you satisfied with the overall process of this partnership?
22. What do you recommend for establishing a successful partnership for the future?

B. Interview guide for administrative staff (vice presidents & directors, deans, department heads)

1. Is there a policy guideline or procedure regarding international partnership development? Do you think your institution requires such guidelines?
2. What are your institution's priorities in partnerships?
3. To which institutions (Northern or Southern) does your institution give priority to partner with? Why?
4. What are your institution's rationales to forge international partnership with the northern partners?
5. How do you see the partnerships with respect to the demands and priorities of your institution? How far are they strategic?
6. How and who initiate the partnerships? How are the agreements negotiated?
7. How do you see the conditions the northern partners expect your institutions to fulfill for establishing the partnerships with respect to the needs and priorities of your institution?
8. How do you see the role and participation of your institution in partnership development (initiating, building, operating, monitoring)? What are your roles?
9. How do you see the respect and recognition of the Northern partners to your institution's needs, expertise, and contributions?
10. What factors, if any, are challenging establishing and sustaining of partnerships of your institution with its Northern partners? What strategies are used to address these?
11. How do you view the Northern partners' role and contribution in the partnership? As partner/ supporter/beneficiary?
12. How do you view your institutions share of ownership and overall influence in the partnership?
13. What does partnership mean to you? With respect to your conception of partnership, how do you view your institution's relationships with its northern partners?
14. What do you recommend for establishing a successful partnership?

C. Interview guide to be made with graduate students

1. What are your motivations for participating in this partnership project?
2. What differences do you see between your study experience in this partnership and your previous experience?
3. How do you describe your interaction and relationship with your foreign advisors instructors?
4. What challenges or problems have you faced in your study in relation to this partnership? How are these challenges addressed?
5. How do you evaluate the level of commitment with respect to the promises and your expectation?
6. What does partnership mean to you? How do you see this relationship with respect to your conception of partnership?
7. How do you view the foreign institution in this partnership? As supporter or as partner? Why?
8. What benefits do you get from this partnership?
9. Do you feel you are benefited as much as you expected? If not, why?

10. What strengths and weaknesses have you noticed? What do you recommend to establish a successful partnership project?

D. Rank ordering question to all interview participants

Considering #1 the highest and #4 the least, please indicate the level of your institution's priority rationale to establish international partnership

_____ Economic (Related to financial and material resource incentives, access to educational resources and infrastructures, economic growth and competitiveness, labor market, etc.).

_____ Academic (Related to the international dimension of research and teaching, capacity building for teaching and research, institution profile and status, enhancement of quality and international academic standards, etc.).

_____Social/cultural (Related to social and community development, expand international networking, promote one's own culture & language, etc.).

_____Other rationales (please specify): _____

E. Documentary analysis

Main points (questions) to be considered in the document analysis

1. Are there policy guidelines and /or procedures reflecting interests or intentions for establishing international partnership? Are these intentions reflected in the institutional strategic plans?
2. What are the interests, priorities and objectives of the funding partner?
3. What are the conditions the funding body requires the southern partner to fulfill for establishing partnerships?
4. What procedures are followed in developing the partnership project proposal and applying for funding? Who prepares the proposal? At which level are the partnerships signed and operated?
5. Was there a need assessment? If so, who participates? What are the identified needs and priorities?
6. What is the partnership about (its purposes, areas, activities, duration, funding source, etc.)?
7. What are the rationales (declared ones as described in the form of intentions—aims and goals, problems to be solved, planned activities, etc.) for establishing this partnership?
8. Which category (economic, academic, socio-cultural, political) of rationales are most and least frequently cited?
9. Is the partnership (agendas, activities) in line with the demands and priorities of the institution, as described in its mission and strategic plans? Is it strategic or deliberate?
10. How was the partnership initiated, build, operated, and evaluated? What practices and procedures have been employed in the process? Who participated in the process?
11. What are each partner's roles, rights, responsibilities, and commitments/promises in the partnership development process?
12. What means of communications and reporting mechanisms are proposed and used for information exchange?
13. What activities are accomplished and what are not?
14. What challenges are there that affect the partnership development? What factors contribute to failure or delay of activities, if any? What mechanisms are used to address such challenges?
15. What are the major institutional and individual benefits obtained?

F. Study participants, pseudonym, group, sex

Partnership program					
Language			Health		
Pseudonym (Code)	**Participant group**	**sex**	**Pseudonym (Code)**	**Participant group**	**Sex**
ADBR	Administrative staff	M	ADKR	Administrative staff	M
ADMB	Administrative staff	F	ADER	Administrative staff	M
ADTY	Administrative staff	M	ADDN	Administrative staff	M
ADZL	Administrative staff	M	ADDG	Administrative staff	M
ADDS	Administrative staff	M	ACAB	Academic Staff	M
ACBN	Academic staff	M	ACAS	Academic staff	F
ACDR	Academic staff	M	ACBS	Academic staff	F
ACSH	Academic staff	M	ACFK	Academic staff	M
ACFD	Academic staff	M	ACJN	Academic staff	M
ADBY	Academic staff	M	ACGG	Academic staff	M
ACYG	Academic staff	M	STMR	Student	F
ACAN	Academic staff	M	STMN	Student	F
ACAU	Academic staff	M	STDW	Student	M
ACEM	Academic staff	F	STAT	Student	F
ACAL	Academic staff	F	STGD	Student	F
STAD	Student	M	STFD	Student	M
STAW	Student	M	STTM	Student	M
STMT	Student	F	STCH	Student	M
STEM	Student	F	STMG	Student	M
STGT	Student	M	STFN	Student	M
STMI	Student	M	STIB	Student	M
STEH	Student	F	STTN	Student	M
STTS	Student	F	STFR	Student	F
STWU	Student	F			

G. Consent form

Addis Ababa University
College of Educational and Behavioral Studies
Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies

Informed Consent Form

Dear: _____

My name is Kitaw Kassie Engida and I am PhD student at Addis Ababa University (AAU), Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies (CCEPS). Currently, I am working my dissertation entitled: "International Higher Education Partnership in Ethiopia: A Case Study of two Selected Partnership Programs". My supervisors are Professor Petra Angervall from Gothenburg University, Sweden and Dr.Teshome Nekatibeb (Associate Professor) from AAU, Ethiopia

Generally, this study focuses on exploring and expand understanding on how international partnership between selected Ethiopian HEIs and their counterparts in the North are formed and how they are functioning from the point of view of local stakeholders. Given that studies in international higher education within the Ethiopian context are limited, this study will contribute to fill in this gap and help the academic communities gain a deeper understanding of North-South higher education partnership in Ethiopia. It will also contribute knowledge and practical lessons to your institution and other HEIs in Ethiopia on how to initiate and establish a partnership program that best suits to the needs and entertains the voice of the local stakeholders and to foster a mutual relationship that can work within the inherent power relations.

Thus, you are kindly invited to participate in this study. Interview questions will be provided to you about your experiences in the partnership you have participated in regards to the rationales behind the formation of the partnerships, on how the partnerships are initiated, build, operated, and evaluated, and how you view the positioning of your institution in the partnership relative to the foreign partner. Here, you are not forced to respond to questions on which you feel uncomfortable and you can withdraw from the interview at any time. All the information you will provide me will be kept confidential and kept in a secure place where no one can access to it. Only my supervisors will be allowed to see the data. Moreover, your identity (name or address) will not be used in any published materials, instead codes will used to anonymize your identity.

The whole interview may take 50-90 minutes. If you are willing, I may use a voice recorder to record your responses. But if you don't feel comfortable, I will try to capture your responses through writing. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. Please sign below if you agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____ Signature: _____Date: _____
Consent to audio/Video recording (participant): _____ Date: _____
Principal investigator: _____ Date: _____

H. Summary of the declared rationales (Language Partnership)

Themes emerged as rationales from the document	Major themes
To build staff capacity in training, research, and community service (27)	Academic (60)
To enhance research outputs (15)	
To improve educational quality and raise international standards (11)	
To improve international experience in teaching and research (7)	
To improve infrastructural capacity and access to educational resources (lab, libraries, ICT, etc…) (22)	Economic (49)
To improve access to funding/financial resources (for research, scholarship, training, conference, etc.) (22)	
To contribute to economic growth (by improving labor force, competitiveness, etc.) (5)	
To respond to social and community development needs (12)	Socio-cultural (24)
To improve social networks and connections (9)	
To ensure individual right and development (3)	
To ensure gender equity (14)	Cross cutting (14)

I. Summary of the declared rationales (Health Partnership)

Themes emerged in the document as rationales	Major themes
To build human resource capacity in training, research, and community service (24)	Academic (57)
To enhance educational quality and raise international standards (14)	
To improve internationalization of teaching and research (12)	
To enhance research outputs (7)	
To improve infrastructural capacity and access to educational resources (lab, libraries, ICT, etc…) (21)	Economic (45)
To improve access to funding/financial resources (for research, scholarship, training, conference, etc.) (16)	
To contribute to economic growth (by improving labor force, competitiveness, etc.) (8)	
To improve social networks and connections (9)	Socio-cultural (14)
To respond to social and community development needs (5)	
To ensure gender equity (23)	Cross-cutting(23)

J. Summary of priority rationales as ranked by participants

Participants	Rationale Typology			
	Academic	Economic	Socio-cultural	others
EU1 (23)	- All (23) ranked it as 1st priority	- 22 ranked 2nd - 1 ranked least	- 1 ranked 2nd - 22 ranked least	-
EU2 (22)	- 21 ranked it as 1st priority - 1 ranked it as 2nd	- 21 ranked 2nd - 1 ranked as 1st	- 22 ranked it as least	-