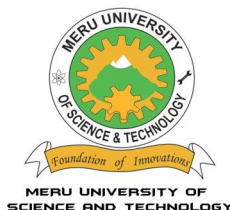




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Building international linkages to enhance research and education in Higher Education Institutions : reflecting on the Meru University of Science and Technology, Kenya and University College Dublin, Ireland collaboration.

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ABSTRACT

KEY WORDS

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This paper presents reflections on a collaborative multidisciplinary initiative between research and academic staff of Meru University of Science and Technology in Kenya and University College Dublin in Ireland. This initiative aimed to build multidisciplinary research and education capacities through staff development, transfer of methodologies and innovative research approaches. We used knowledge mobilization methods, including face-to-face workshops, webinars, and staff exchanges to jointly develop staff skills, knowledge, and learning. In this paper, we discuss our motivations for developing this initiative and the process involved over a period of four years. We highlight the resources and activities that made the collaboration possible and the outcomes of the collaboration. We also reflect on key learnings and offer suggestions that might be useful for institutions seeking to engage in international linkages.

Introduction

Globally, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in national development through the provision of education, skills development, knowledge generation through academic research and engaging governments and wider policy makers with research findings. In the context of Africa, universities have made tremendous

progress in advancing higher education, but continue to face a number of challenges "...both in terms of the social, economic, and political problems facing the continent and in the context of globalization" (Teferra & Altbach, 2004, p. 21). In reference to academic research more specifically, evidence suggests that, with an exception of universities in South Africa, African universities, gen-

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erally, have contributed only a small percentage towards global knowledge production (Boshoff, 2010). Reasons for this have included a limited research culture in universities (Harle, 2013), a lack of research funding closely linked to competition for scarce resources that are directed to local priorities (Chu, Jayaraman, Kyamanywa, & Ntakiyiruta, 2014), poor infrastructure (for example lack of essential equipment), heavy teaching workloads, lack of mentorship (Sawyer, 2004) and limited research career opportunities (Ogundahunsi et al., 2015).

Building research and strengthening research capabilities in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), including Kenya will be crucial to meeting national and global objectives (Chandiwana & Ornbjerg, 2003; Nchinda, 2002) including the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Rabbani et al., 2016). University partnerships, both regional and international, are critical to advancing the achievement of the SDG agenda as they can foster multidisciplinary research collaboration and build the capacity of researchers to identify priority areas of research and design, implement and evaluate locally-relevant and sustainable solutions (Aarts, Greijn, Mohamadbhai, & Jowi, 2020). Research capacity is defined as 'an ability of individuals, organizations, or systems to perform and utilise (..) research effectively, efficiently, and sustainably' (Bates et al., 2006). In addition to formal research training (for example in theory, methods, research design) delivered by universities, individual research capacity develops through practice, that is, through the conduct of research, thereby equipping and honing the skills of researchers (Sawyer, 2004). Cross-country collaborations have the potential to bolster research skills and build capacity through knowledge mobilization strategies such as face-to-face workshops, webinars and staff exchanges.

Meru University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Kenya and University College Dublin (UCD) School of Nursing Midwifery and Health Systems (SNMHS) in Ireland have worked collaboratively since 2017 to strengthen their research

capacity and capabilities in areas which reflect the institutions' strengths and have the potential to contribute to national and international priorities. Since its inception, MUST has continued to play a leading role in the development and expansion of opportunities for higher education and research and acknowledges the crucial role it can play in knowledge generation and application by way of teaching, research activities and research output. However, as a relatively young university, MUST faces several challenges in terms of research capacity characterised by a high number of young researchers, nascent research infrastructure and lack of well-developed research policies and guidelines.

In light of these, MUST recognised the need to strengthen their research capacity and capabilities through international partners that engage with multidisciplinary teams. UCD's research strategy is to build interdisciplinary research and education in areas which reflect the university's strengths and which make significant contributions to identified national and international priorities (University College Dublin, 2015). Given the interdisciplinary nature of the UCD researchers and their expertise in research, through expanded collaboration, and experience in mentoring others in Ireland, the team extended this mentorship to colleagues in MUST. Equally there has been considerable learning for the UCD team enabling capacity building to happen in both universities through sharing skills and experiences.

Much has been written about the importance of international partnerships to build research capacity (Harle, 2013), successes and challenges of such initiatives (Färnman, Diwan, Zwarenstein, Atkins, & consortium, 2016) and frameworks for building capacity (Owusu, Kalipeni, & Kiiru, 2014). Yet, little attention has been paid to the process of building such collaborations (Varshney, 2016) and what lessons they can afford, particularly to young universities in LMICs seeking to build international linkages with institutions abroad. This reflection piece outlines the evolution of a collaboration across the two university teams since

2017, reflecting on key characteristics of our partnership and advancing recommendations to enhance the relevance and success of such efforts. We detail some of the activities undertaken and outputs produced as part of this work and provide insight into key mechanisms promoting effectiveness from the perspectives of those involved.

Context

Kenya has a population of approximately 47.6 million people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019) and the largest and most diverse economy in East Africa, with an average annual growth rate of over 6.2% (Njoroge, 2020). The country has a democratic political system and post-independence, governance was centralized under the national system. However, the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 resulted to devolution and power sharing between the national and county governments (The Ministry of Planning and Devolution, 2007). The country has seen a rapid population growth in recent years, from 28.7 million in 1999 to 47.6 million in 2019 which poses social and economic challenges thus necessitating concerted efforts from all sectors to effectively address these challenges (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Approximately 30% of the population in Kenya live below poverty line. This has negative effects on both their health and well-being.

The country has formulated several policies and guidelines to overcome this. Such policies include the “big four agenda” and Kenya’s Vision 2030 (The Ministry of Planning and Devolution, 2007). The country’s “big four” agendas have been identified as an economic blueprint to foster development and provide solutions to the socio-economic problems facing Kenyans. These include food security and nutrition, universal health care, affordable housing and manufacturing (GOK, 2018). Kenya’s Vision 2030 recognises the critical role played by research in accelerating economic development in the country. The government has therefore committed to providing resources that would enhance scientific research and raise the

quality of teaching in HEIs and other institutions of learning.

To facilitate research and develop research capacities in the national priority areas of science, technology and innovation, the National Research Fund (NRF) mobilizes and manages resources from the Government and other partners and allocates funds for research to universities and research institutions (Mattia Fosci, Lucia Loffreda, Andrew Chamberlain, & Nelisha Naidoo, 2019). NRF also provides funds for postgraduate and multidisciplinary research projects and supports institutional research infrastructure. Researchers can also seek funding from international organizations through the NRF which provides technical support, collaborator matching and financial support. In addition, the Kenya National Innovation Agency (KENIA), a State Corporation, works to develop, co-ordinate, promote and regulate the National Innovation Ecosystem in the country (KENIA, 2021). KENIA supports the identification, recording and protection of innovative ideas and coordinates the establishment and implementation of appropriate policies, standards, processes, infrastructure, and partnerships to nurture innovative ideas.

History of MUST

The establishment of a university in Meru dates back to the early 1960s when the Council of Elders of the Meru people conceived an idea of establishing an institution of higher education in the County (formerly Meru District). This idea was first floated to the government when there was an interest and need to train young people and equip them with technical skills which would enable them to provide the needed manpower for the labour market. In view of this, Meru College of Technology (MECOTECH) was one of the institutions suggested and considered by the Government.

MECOTECH was a technical college offering diplomas and certificate courses in the area of engineering and business administration among others. In 2008, the Government of Kenya upgrad-

ed MECOTECH into a university college which became Meru University College of Science and Technology (MUCST). The university college was established through Legal Notice No. 103 of 18th July 2008 as a constituent college of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) which was later awarded Charter on 1st March 2013 to become Meru University of Science and Technology (MUST), a full-fledged University. In line with its mission, the University has strategically positioned itself to promote the United Nations SDGs through training, research and innovation. To achieve this, Meru University of Science and Technology has established collaborations with institutions at local, regional and international levels. Through these collaboration, students and staff can access exceptional facilities and infrastructure for the support of the various programmes. Further, the university has created various offices to spearhead collaborations and exchanges. These offices include Co-ordinator for linkages and collaborations and Directorate of International Education.

Approaches used to develop linkages

Seed Funding

In 2016, UCD School of Nursing Midwifery and Health Systems (SNMHS) in partnership with MUST School of Nursing (SoN) secured seed funding from ESTHER Ireland Grants to establish a partnership. ESTHER Ireland is “a health development cooperation initiative supported by Irish Aid, which fosters institutional health partnerships to strengthen health systems, particularly human resources for health, to improve health outcomes in low income countries” (Esther Ireland, 2021). It is a branch of the international ESTHER Alliance - an alliance of governments and allied organizations who engage institutions in effective and sustainable North-South partnerships to strengthen the capacity of the health workforce and institutions to provide quality health services for people in low and middle-income countries. The Alliance promotes institutional health partnerships through knowledge generation, sharing best prac-

tice, collaboration, and advocacy. The main aim of the funding secured by UCD was to explore possibilities of collaboration between the two institutions and to support the development of the BSc Nursing programme and the teaching staff in MUST SoN. The grant funded exchange visits between the two institutions including flights, local travel, and subsistence expenses for four members of staff. SNMHS has a well-established and internationally recognized nursing programme and hence two faculty members from UCD visited MUST to assess focal areas that require support and explore areas of collaboration. Additionally, two faculty members from MUST SoN were hosted by SNMHS.

Both institutions collaborated in the planning and implementation of various activities in line with the ESTHER Ireland funding. Initially, a needs assessment was carried out by MUST staff and faculty to establish resource needs and other areas that required support in the context of the BSc nursing programme. The exchange visits offered staff members with insights into how the nursing programmes at both universities were structured and delivered and offered an opportunity to see facilities that support the teaching and learning (for example clinical skills laboratories) including selected hospitals that support this learning. The visits also facilitated wider learning about health system challenges and opportunities in both countries at the policy, epidemiological and service levels including opportunities to experience new cultures through tours to cultural/ historical attractions. Overall, the exchanges provided a great learning platform and lessons learned facilitated improvement of the BSc Nursing programme at MUST.

Based on the support needs identified during the visits, it was agreed that support to MUST SoN would be channelled through the delivery of workshops to staff members, the provision of reading materials (where possible), suggestions to staff about relevant and up-to-date reading sources related to the BSc Nursing programme, and support with other resources (for example

simulation models/ manikins). One key outcome from this collaborative initiative was the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the institutions.

While the initial collaboration focused mostly on the development of the nursing education programme at MUST, conversations among faculty and researchers at both institutions identified strengthening research capacity as a key area for collaboration, beyond the teaching and learning component that was the initial focus and beyond the two Schools. During the visits therefore, staff met with other faculty to exchange ideas and lay the ground for potential interdisciplinary collaboration. The discussions fostered an opportunity to discuss innovative ideas for areas of collaboration and potential funders for future activities. It was agreed that staff at both institutions would seek to develop joint grant applications, collaborative research activities and workshops and ultimately deliver joint publications. The importance of extending the collaboration to relevant partners in the community settings, for example local hospitals and research institutes in both countries was considered critical to ensure that future funding proposals and research activities are informed by realities on the ground.

An audit of research capacity at MUST

Given that MUST is a relatively young University in Kenya, it became clear that it needed baseline metrics and understanding of its current research portfolio and unmet training and support needs. Two researchers (one from MUST and one from UCD) obtained internal funding through MUST to conduct a comprehensive audit of research and research output in MUST. To gather this information a survey was developed iteratively between MUST and UCD based team researchers and it covered the following areas: a) participation of academic staff and postgraduate students in research projects and the types of research they are involved in b) allocation of time by the academic staff to teaching, administration and research c) publication types of researchers from

the research related content. The survey was carried out between June and August 2018 with 78 print questionnaires distributed to academic staff and postgraduate students. In total 70% (n=55) academic staff responded to the survey and only three postgraduate students responded. The results of the survey showed that 93% (n= 53) of the academic staff had participated in research activities in the previous five years preceding the survey. Most of the research carried out was quantitative in nature 64% (n= 34) followed by applied research (60%) (n= 32) then qualitative research 40% (n= 21). Most staff, however, indicated applying a variety of methods in their research. Staff who had been involved in funded research projects as principal investigators, co-investigator or senior researchers within the same period was 56% (n= 31). In terms of the time allocated to research in comparison to other academic activities, 66% (n=36) of academic staff allocated more than 50% of their time to teaching with only 13% (n=7) allocating more than 50% to research. Most, 78 % (n=43) had published in peer reviewed journals within the same period.

We asked survey participants to identify their most recent (previous 2 years) internal and external collaborators. We then used social network analysis (SNA) (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) to analyse and visualise MUST collaborators for that period (see figure 1 for the network map). The network map identified inter-departmental, inter-institutional and international collaborations. Notable, however is that, without a 100% response rate the network cannot be entirely representative of all research links at MUST.

The findings of the audit were presented to MUST academic staff during a half-day workshop held at MUST in October 2018 in which 56 members of staff participated. In order to incorporate the input of additional members of staff and include more voices in the discussion and add further contextual richness to the audit, the presentations were followed by a workshop discussion. The discussions centred around 1) support needed to further increase the number, quality and di-

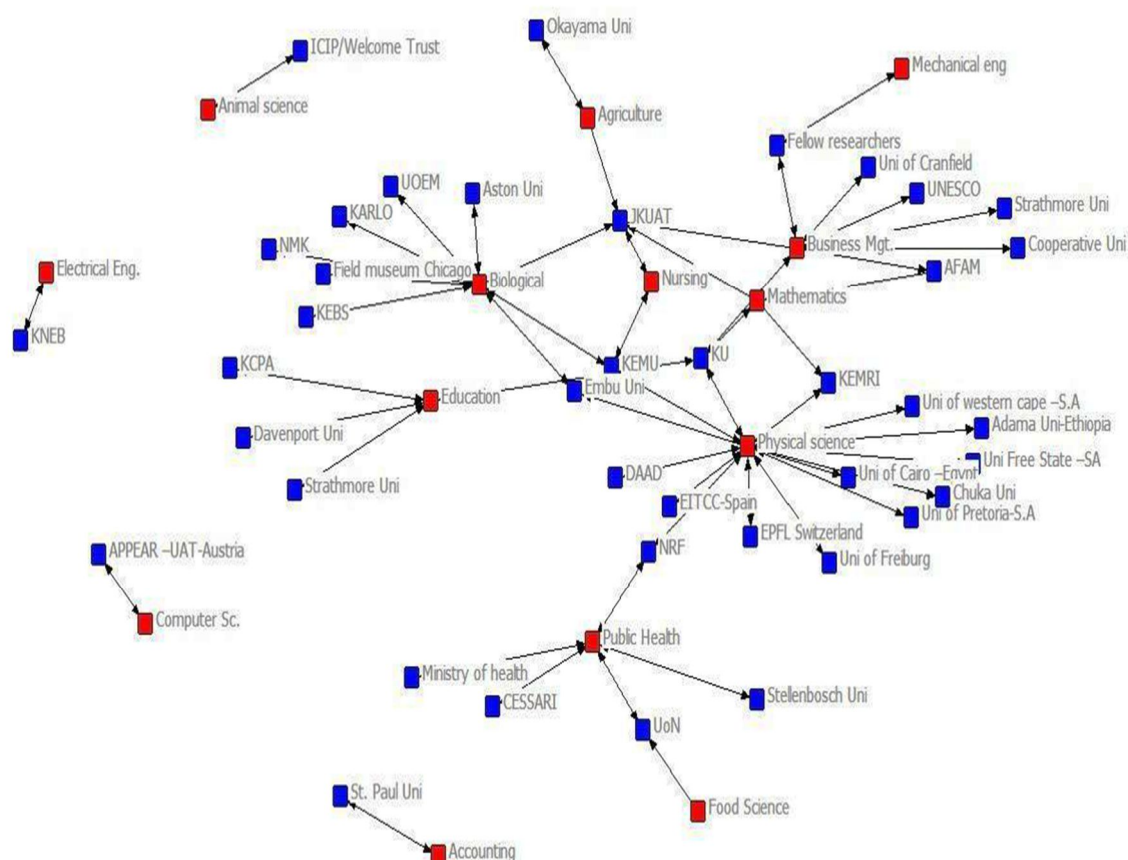


Figure 1: MUST research collaboration network 2016-2018.
Source: MUST Research audit, 2018

versity of publications, 2) mentorship and support for academics and staff at all levels to enhance career development, and 3) ways to enhance MUST's national and international visibility, profile and reputation through collaboration.

Research conversations (RCs)

Research Conversations (RCs) were originally post-doctoral led informal discussions to support research staff and students to share learning and discuss research relevant topics in a supportive and collegial environment. Rather than the RCs being formal learning or teaching events, they are informal discussions aimed at sharing experiences and are held on a bimonthly basis. Each session is led or initiated by one or more designated individuals (can be academic, research staff or student) and are focused on topics that have been identified through discussions at previous sessions. For example, one session focused on networking with participants sharing experiences, including chal-

lenges and benefits, of networking at national and international conferences and fora. Another session centred around grant writing as a skill, where participants shared practical tips and guidance on how to write grants, including writing in concise, plain English for public and patient involvement reviewers. Further sessions were organised to provide an opportunity for participants to receive feedback from colleagues on, for example, presentations, grants under preparation, research methodologies and more.

MUST first became involved in March 2020, following an invitation by UCD partners. These joint RCs were borne out of a need to continue strengthening the UCD-MUST collaboration. RCs were therefore seen as a means of building relationships, identifying common/shared interests and relevant skill sets to support collaboration while enhancing participants' knowledge and skills. It was envisioned that RCs would provide an avenue to listen to different voices, each offering

a unique perspective on various topics under discussion .

The first joint RC was hosted by UCD with 12 members in attendance. Attendees included three academic staff from MUST, one academic staff from UCD, one research fellow, one post-doctoral researcher, one research assistant and six PhD students. Participants introduced themselves, shared their research interests and expectations for the RC. This was followed by a brief explanation on how RCs are conducted, leading up to a discussion on literature reviews. To date, four RCs have been held, each lasting approximately an hour, with MUST and UCD alternately hosting. To encourage participation by colleagues from different departments at MUST, invitations to attend RCs were shared widely through email and social media. The number of participants so far has ranged from 12 to 27, with later meetings attracting larger numbers. Topics discussed included grant writing experiences: successes and failure, academic writing and publishing as well as innovation and commercialization of research. RC organizers held meetings after every session to reflect and plan for the next RC. Participants' feedback was also sought and was largely positive, with requests for additional time for the sessions and suggestions of topics for future discussion. RCs can be optimised by:

- i) A lack of hierarchical structure in organising and running sessions
- ii) Devising topics for sessions collectively
- iii) Ensuring a variety of speakers

Virtual grant writing workshop

A grant writing workshop held in 2020 was another output of the UCD-MUST collaboration. The initial idea was to hold a physical grant writing workshop in June 2020 in Kenya. A proposal for funding the workshop was to be submitted to potential funders for consideration. However, this did not progress due to the COVID-19 situation and hence the team agreed to pursue a virtual workshop. Additionally, feedback from previously held RCs, which indicated need for further training

on grant writing and funding process, informed the need for the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to equip participants with knowledge on successful grant writing and funding procedures. The workshop targeted 50 participants from MUST and UCD. An organising team from MUST and UCD met on a regular basis leading up to the virtual workshop to plan and refine logistics. The virtual workshop set up and delivery was supported by UCD audio visual (AV) staff. Registration links were created and shared with potential attendees using various social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Twitter as well as the university websites. The workshop materials were sent to the host at UCD prior to the workshop who then facilitated sharing of the same during the virtual workshop session. Additionally, the AV team was available throughout the workshop session to ensure its smooth delivery.

Forty-four (44) participants representing various disciplines at both universities attended the virtual grant writing and funding workshop held on 24th June 2020. The main topics discussed were the grant writing process, library support services and research funding and support, each facilitated collaboratively by MUST and UCD colleagues. Features of the workshop included a panel discussion, with leading researchers from MUST and UCD sharing their experiences with grant writing. The panel members outlined how they initially started out writing research proposals and applying for funding and lessons learnt along the way. Other discussion topics included dealing with different challenges and setbacks during the grant writing process as well as the role of collaborators and the importance of building a network. A keynote speaker from the NRF also gave a presentation about funding opportunities and processes in Kenya. Another important feature of the workshop was the use of break-out sessions. During these sessions, participants discussed in small groups key questions related to the grant writing process. Key points were captured via Jamboard (Google, 2021)- a digital whiteboard

Group 1 What makes a strong convincing research proposal?	Group 2 How to best prepare for writing and submitting a proposal	Group 3 What skills are required for writing winning grant proposals?	Group 4 What makes a great research team?	Group 5 How do you identify funding opportunities?
Important topic/issue. Have clear objectives. Scientific gap in the literature to be filled. Must look at vulnerable people in society. Research must have benefits. Achievable within the set timeframe. Proper time management. Right team/network. Proposal that seeks to solve problems that affect society/ people.	Need to know time requirement (have enough). Identify problem. Need right team members. Have background connections with other people. Conversant with area of interest. Identify collaborating institutions. Need right team members.	Knowledge,creativity. Ethics. Familiarise with how to write proposal according to requirements (call). Budget writing skills. Good communication skills (verbal and nonverbal) - align proposal with scope of funding agency. Research skills (developing problem statement, research objectives, methodology). Time management skills (meeting deadlines). Team working skills. Organisational skills (logically organise proposal).	Multidisciplinary teams. Experience(writing grants). Commitment (every member focuses on a common goal). People who can work together (team spirit). Networking (locally and internationally). Leadership (PI needs to be committed and has discipline; qualified; good communication with team). Good structure and systems of hosting organisation (University).	Research funding offices. Google Search. Partner search (funding). Subscriptions to funders. Link with people who are experienced in identifying funding. MUST (research office). National Research Fund (NRF) Kenya. Initiate research programme and seek funding.

Figure 2: Key points emerging from discussions in break-out groups

Source: MUST-UCD virtual grant-writing workshop, 2020

that enables participants to collaborate, engage and share ideas- and this formed the basis of further discussions in the main discussion forum- (Figure 2).

Following the workshop participants' feedback was gathered to assess whether the workshop's objectives had been met, and to identify areas of focus for future workshops. Feedback was received from 31 workshop participants and 61% (n= 19) rated the workshop as excellent and 38% (n= 12) as good. Participants also highlighted the need for further workshops for example on practical grant writing, budget preparation, searching for funders, as well as collaboration/partnerships in grant writing. Certificates of participation were issued to attendees.

Discussion and Reflections

HEIs in Kenya experience a number of challenges in terms of research capacity and capabilities. Through organisations such as the NRF and KENIA tremendous progress is being made to build capacities through funding and training of person-

nel. In addition, HEIs are pursuing collaborations with well-established institutions both locally and internationally and MUST has not been left behind. It is through these efforts that the university established a working relationship with UCD to enhance research and strengthen research capabilities.

MUST as a new university in Kenya has been proactive in developing a vibrant research and innovation culture. The strategic focus on impactful research in response to the Sustainable Development Goals and Kenya's Vision 2030 provide a robust framework for research undertaken by MUST academics. The strategic and targeted partnership with a number of universities is of great benefit. The MUST-UCD collaboration afforded an opportunity to build trust among partners and characterise the baseline for research capacity and capability development at an early stage.

The ESTHER Ireland grant provided staff with an opportunity to broaden their horizons, understand new cultures and build networks that have extended beyond the two Schools. The face-to-

face meetings that occurred between staff from both universities were critical in helping the team build trust and develop a shared mission. Strong interpersonal connections for ongoing collaboration were developed between UCD and MUST which could not have occurred without the ESTHER Ireland grant. However, despite the achievements realized, it was a challenge to fit in all the collaborative work in a five-day visit, whilst also settling into a new environment and culture. A longer visit supported with more funding could have allowed for a longer stay and more collaborative events to occur.

The research and research output audit was a timely and important assessment of research capacity at MUST that provided important insights into what works well, and where research support can be improved. It demonstrated that commitment to research at MUST was high while highlighting opportunities for further growth in the areas of publications, grant capture and international collaborations. A key take-away was the need for supports in grant writing and mentorship of staff. The workshop discussions focused on improvement and development activities and was able to generate ideas from participants to enrich the audit report.

RCs were a novel experience for colleagues at MUST in two ways. First, they offered an opportunity for participants to engage in candid discussions around research, share their experiences and learn from each other, in a way that they had not done previously. Although initially, attendance was limited to colleagues from SON, the RCs were opened up to colleagues from other departments which saw an increase in attendees in subsequent meetings. This however, became a challenge later on due to limited individual participation in the conversations. Additionally, perhaps due to lack of familiarity with the structure of RCs, participants from MUST appeared to be hesitant to actively participate. To address this challenge, participants were encouraged to use the chat box to express their opinions or ask question during subsequent RCs. An attempt was also made to communicate

the topic of discussion in advance in order to enable potential attendees to prepare.

The second distinct feature was the use of Zoom technology for meetings. This was a new experience for the majority of participants from MUST, who were unfamiliar with such a format of conducting meetings. It presented an opportunity for participants to learn how to navigate this technology, which later became the standard for meetings and teaching due to COVID-19 restrictions. A related challenge was poor internet connectivity and lack of internet data bundles, which continues to be an impediment in developing countries. Although the organizers carried out informal evaluations of the RCs, it was not until after the second RC that feedback was sought from participants. It is advisable that when conducting similar meetings with diverse members, feedback is gathered from the outset in order to address potential challenges such as access and use of technology.

RCs have helped both teams to identify topics/issues common across career stages and enhanced the sharing of experiences while building knowledge. More importantly RCs have fostered a collaborative atmosphere and team-based approach to research. This supports the aims of the UCD-MUST partnership of building impactful, multidisciplinary collaborations of mutual interest.

The success of the virtual grant writing and funding workshop indicates that virtual webinars are viable options for international collaborations, where physical meetings may be untenable due to barriers such as distance, cost or travel restrictions,. The workshop was also a low cost venture. The main resources required were participant's time, internet data bundles and printing costs for certificates. Virtual workshops are therefore worth considering in the current era and in the future to facilitate North-South collaborations, especially with the North supporting in technology capacity which is limited in the latter.

However, participants' feedback noted that the nature and format of the workshop precluded the ability to acquire practical skills. Some participants talked of the need for a practical and longer

session on grant writing in future workshops.

A number of academic outputs have already emerged from this initiative: Three collaborative publications, one published in 2020 (Mwendwa, Mutea, Kaimuri, De Brún, & Kroll, 2020) and two in 2021 (Mwendwa, Githui, Marete, & Kroll, 2021; Mwendwa, Karani, et al., 2021). The teams have additional papers under development.

Conclusion

This paper presents reflections on our collaborative multidisciplinary initiative over a four year period that was initially made possible through seed funding from ESTHER Ireland. In this paper, we examined the sequential approach taken in the collaborative approach of the two universities to define, characterise and enhance research capacities and capabilities.

Local and international networks between UCD and MUST have been created and continue to be strengthened through on-going collaborative activities (for example joint publications) and other funding opportunities such as the Erasmus exchange programme. The ESTHER Ireland funding presented both universities with immense collaboration opportunities and valuable lessons have been learned in the areas of staff exchange, grant writing, research, and international collaborations. The audit was crucially important in highlighting the gaps in research capacity at MUST and the findings helped to inform subsequent collaborative activities.

Our experience suggests that a small amount of funding can have a ripple effect providing the necessary stimulus for a more ambitious collaboration. COVID and the move to online meetings and workshops has contributed to a shift in mindset and allowed for more frequent and regular interactions that would previously have been planned as face-to-face, requiring more advanced planning and greater time commitment. The importance of responding to the needs of each institution at each step in the process e.g. the research audit, and of being innovative and flexible in the methods of engagement contributed to the momentum and success of this collaboration and

is something that should be considered by others embarking on similar initiatives.

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