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Abstract

International partnership spanning various organizational and geographical boundaries has emerged as the dominant paradigm for organizing modern scientific research; and for undertaking international development policy. Academic collaboration has become ubiquitous, embedded in organizational cultures, and is increasingly organized in a wide variety of structural forms and for different purposes among individual researchers, academic institutions, international development agencies, and governments. Research partnerships can promote knowledge production and sharing; stimulate the pooling of financial and high level human resources across boundaries; and create synergies and complementarities among the diverse participants for mutual benefit. But research partnerships are hardly unproblematic. In practice, partnerships are highly dynamic and complex phenomena embedded with varying configurations of power and resource flow asymmetries and geopolitics; and these contestations can intensify where the cooperation involves entities from the North and those in

31.12.2025

the South. This paper suggests that strategic international research collaboration between research communities located within Africa and those in developed countries, as well as regional partnerships among African universities themselves, represent the most productive framework for reinvigorating and strengthening research capacity within sub-Saharan universities. Partnerships can also help reintegrate Africa more vigorously into the emerging global knowledge economy where the continent currently occupies a relatively undermined position or is excluded altogether. This paper is structured as follows. The first part attempts to define and conceptualize the phenomenon of research partnership and examines some of the forces that drive its rapid growth worldwide. The next part looks at the multiple asymmetries embedded within the politics of North-South research cooperation. The growing political and economic significance of knowledge partnership as the newly dominant policy tool within the broader terrain of international development is explored; followed thereafter by a brief overview of the difficulties of measuring the impacts of research cooperation. It concludes with a discussion of the resurgence of regional and international research and development partnerships in the contemporary African continent. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)