

NORTH–SOUTH–SOUTH HEALTH SCIENCES EDUCATION NETWORK

Coordinator: The University of Kuopio, Finland

Partners: University of Ibadan, Nigeria; University of Eastern Africa, Kenya; Kendu Adventist Hospital, Kenya; Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania; Weill-Bugando University College of Health Sciences, Tanzania; Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre, Tanzania; University of Ain Shams, Egypt; MISR University for Science and Technology, Egypt; University of Limpopo, South Africa; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana

Study areas: Medical Sciences

What are the main aims of your network?

The main aims of the North–South–South Health Sciences Education Network are curriculum development, capacity building, and facilitation of the South–South cooperation of the African partner universities. The present North–South–South Health Sciences Education Network forms a unique combination of public health, nutritional sciences and pharmacy, i.e. health sciences that share a clear scientific and practical mission of improving population health and wellbeing globally. The curriculum development and capacity building of partner universities' health science programs represent sustainable and cost-effective form of cooperation. By investing on higher education that is based on local needs, we can expect best returns for the developmental investment, and the effects are believed to be long-lasting and self-sustaining.

Public health and other health-related training modules and programmes address virtually every aspect of the UN Millennium goals. At the centrepiece of public health training, for example, are such issues as child and maternal health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, poverty and social inequalities in health.

What kind of activities are there in your network?

The early stage of the network was when the University of Kuopio started cooperation with the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Since 1993 there has been active student and teacher exchange as well as fruitful research collaboration. Tanzanian and Kenyan partners joined the network later by student exchange and finally Egypt and South Africa joined the established North–South Network in 2006. Since the early phases, the network has gone through a notable change: the current network represents a more innovative, better planned and more comprehensive answer to public health related higher educational needs of the involved partners.

The activities within the NSS Health Sciences Education Network include student exchanges (BBs, MSc, PhD), teacher exchanges and intensive courses. All the partner universities participate in these activities. During the academic year 2008–2009 the network will carry out 8 teacher and 8 student exchanges.



What sort of successes and challenges have you encountered during your project?

Since the pilot phase in 2004, 12 incoming and 9 outgoing teachers and 13 incoming and 10 outgoing students have participated in network mobility. The first intensive course 'Public Health Challenges in Africa – International Scientific Workshop 2008' was held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, in May 2008. Altogether 14 students and 9 teachers from 7 different countries participated in the one-week course. Also a network meeting was arranged at the same time.

The programme has succeeded especially in the academic outcome. Students have found the exchanges and academic courses useful regarding their future career. Teachers have benefited from the exchange in terms of new contacts with colleagues and research collaboration. The exchanges have far reaching outcomes when the students and teachers carry knowledge and experiences to their universities back home. This way the objectives of the programme, such as capacity building and curriculum development, are reached.

The amount of workload is demanding. Scheduling the teacher exchanges, organizing lectures, controlling the financial matters and counselling students require much time and resources from the coordinating university.

Your advice to forthcoming networks

A well-functioning network require good contacts and active communication between partners. Mutual rules and practices should be agreed on well in advance to avoid misunderstandings. In addition, the distribution of exchange places and criteria for student/teacher selection need to be discussed openly between partners.

