



CASE STUDY

**REVISED** Advancing South-South cooperation in education: Indonesian experience with South Africa [version 3; peer review: 1 approved, 2 approved with reservations]

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**Abstract**

Education collaboration is important to increase the quality of human capital. South-South cooperation is conducted to exchange resources, technology, skills, and knowledge between southern countries. The purpose of this research is to investigate the collaboration between Indonesia and South Africa toward advancing South-South Cooperation in education. The data collection used in this qualitative research is an interview and literature study with 9 purposive informants from the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Embassy of South Africa. The data were obtained within six months. The interview was primarily used to explore the roles and practices of government institutions and universities in fostering education collaboration and human resources development. In this study, the South-South Cooperation helps Indonesia address its educational needs. The result showed that most international education cooperation between both countries is agreed upon at the University-to-University level through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), facing less sustainable challenges and low impact. Therefore, an investment-led model, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and a tool to monitor and evaluate this process are needed to improve South-South Cooperation to achieve its goals.

**Keywords**

South-South Cooperation, Middle-Income Countries, Indonesia, and South Africa Education Cooperation

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**REVISED Amendments from Version 2**

Major differences are:

1. More references to support claims and literature are provided.
2. Consistent use of countries' classification (from previously refer it as developing countries to middle income countries).
3. Explain the SSC context in more details and structured into different points (Actors, Modes, Benefit, Challenges).
4. Emphasize the greater detail about investment-led model and why it is necessary.
5. Explain the triangulation model.
6. Provide better context in the concept of human capital.
7. Provide the justification of interviews based on research questions.
8. Offer clearer connection between findings and discussion, in which leads to the investment-led model as the recommendation.

**Any further responses from the reviewers can be found at the end of the article**

## Introduction

The international development landscape has shifted and allowed new forms of cooperation to flourish. International cooperation has always promoted sharing information and best practices as significant features in education. Compared to the North-South Cooperation, the South-South is perceived as more economical, effective, and favorable. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap in the education cooperation model between Indonesia and South Africa to maintain diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The South-South Cooperation (SSC) establishes a collaborative scheme among the least or Middle-Income Countries, most of which are located in the southern part of the globe. In practice, it incorporates the basic principles of relationships between sovereign states, such as respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, and equal rights. This process promotes the exchange of successful experiences between countries that share the same historical realities with similar challenges. Indonesia has been working closely with southern countries since the Asia-Africa Conference, the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) formation, and the G-77 in 1955, 1961, and 1964. Today, it is committed to enhancing its role and contribution to the development of South-South Cooperation, especially in South Africa.

Education is important in most middle-income countries because it aids in the formation of human capital for long-term investment and nation-building. Countries with a focus on human capital become more attractive to domestic and foreign private investment (Becker *et al.*, 2001). Many universities in middle-income countries carry out forms of collaboration with universities from other country to create international quality education. The collaboration usually related to joint publications, development of joint teaching materials, and joint coordination to obtain international funding. Several challenges are faced by middle-income countries such as the inability of students in terms of funding for student exchange programs in developed countries. In addition, limited educational infrastructure, such as research infrastructure, is also a separate obstacle (Nguyen *et al.*, 2015).

Partnership is one way to develop capacity both in the fields of research and education (Hanada, 2021). However, to improve the implementation, it is necessary to have a clear form of partnership between the actors involved, an evaluation of the partnerships that are being carried out, as well as the development of knowledge and skills (Zhu & Chikwa, 2021). Partnerships based on mutuality can create mutual benefits. This can happen because the partnership was designed jointly by the universities from both parties. This is different from aid-based partnerships where the scheme tends to have been designed in advance, such as who will receive assistance and the form of the scheme.

Through the Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia has carried out systemic reforms by revising various regulations, including the national education law on curriculum, research, expertise, and accreditation. Indonesia's education system endorses the philosophy of "Merdeka Belajar" translated as freedom of learning. This concept focuses on revising the curriculum of higher institutions towards greater quality, competence, and expertise of teachers and students. It is also aimed to advocate for the academic mobility of students and lecturers outside their study programs, including cross-university and continents. Although, "Merdeka Belajar" does not directly occur from Indonesia's South-South Cooperation. Yet, this recent regulation has optimized the human capital in middle-income country such as Indonesia. For example, Indonesian students are encouraged to do International Students Mobility in the top universities, including middle-income countries.

The presence of various forums such as the Indonesia-Africa Infrastructure Dialogue (IAID) and the Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF) help the two countries to meet each other's needs. South Africa is Indonesia's largest trading partner in

Africa therefore, the increase in capital goods procurement from this country indicates productivity, which is mainly related to the need for infrastructure development. Indonesia has significant potential to increase the economic balance of South Africa. Both countries share scientific expertise and scholarly exchanges, which are largely unprompted by the government. Although this collaboration has been mentioned multiple times in forums, no cooperation framework has been specifically designed, implemented, or evaluated for educational-related programs such as scholarship and exchanges. The progress seems sporadic and unmonitored, which led to the inception of this research.

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosting “Diplomatic Training/Education “for African diplomats, the educational activity at the state level is technical vocation and training. Meanwhile, at the non-state level, it is carried out through different forms, including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in universities from both countries, the establishment of the African Indonesian Center of Studies in Indonesian University, scholarship scheme for African students and by sending speakers to international seminars. A study conducted by McLaughlin (1996) provides a framework for global education by stating that it builds cross-cultural understanding and develops the cooperative attitude needed to solve world problems.

From several studies discussing educational cooperation (Becker *et al.*, 2001; Nguyen *et al.*, 2015; Hanada, 2021; Zhu & Chikwa, 2021; McLaughlin, 1996), existing research does not yet specifically explain educational cooperation within the framework of SSC. Therefore, this research will specifically discuss the educational cooperation between Indonesia and South Africa within the framework of south-south cooperation. The existing SSC between Indonesia and South Africa is mostly in the agriculture sector. However, satisfaction would still be lagging, without the sustainability of education cooperation, especially in the important agenda, such as teacher’s, girls and women’s education, technical vocation and training, as well as education on technology and halal products. Therefore, this study aims to answer the research question about the collaboration model between Indonesia and South Africa toward advancing South-South Cooperation in education.

## Literature review

### Education as human capital

According to the literature, education can generate human capital and contribute to economic growth and development by creating human capital. The notion of education as a form of human capital was first used in the study of Schultz (1963), sometime after he discussed whether or not knowledge and skills become a sort of capital (Schultz, 1961). A focused study also conducted by Becker between 1960 and 1964 theorized the linkage between economic development meaning high-income revenue and education. Similarly, earlier studies had emphasized the role of education as an intangible capital which means “improvement in basic science, technology, business administration, education and training” to enhance the productivity of a nation (Mincer, 1958; Fabricant, 1959; Schultz, 1961), even further they have found the direct relationship between education and knowledge of the population and national growth, estimated “that knowledge and education accounted for at least 43% of national income growth” and suggested “education contribute to health and nutritional improvements” (Denison, 1962, 1974; Schultz, 1963). The human capital theorized the type of education and knowledge obtained from both formal education, informal education at home and work, vocational education, and on-the-job training (Cohn & Geske, 1990; Schultz, 1981; Corazzini, 1967; Mincer, 1974).

The idea of human capital has been extensively researched and discussed in a number of disciplines, including psychology, management, and economics. According to Ployhart *et al.* (2013), it refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other qualities (KSAOs) that people possess and may use to support economic production and growth. It is believed that investing in and developing human capital will improve both individual and organizational performance.

One viewpoint on human capital emphasizes the fact that it is multifaceted. assert that there are multiple dimensions to human capital and that it should be assessed as such (Dar & Mishra, 2019). This viewpoint acknowledges that human capital comprises aspects like health, values, and competencies and is not just dependent on education or skills (Jackson, 2013). A more thorough understanding of the various facets of human capital and how they affect individual and organizational results is provided by this multidimensional approach.

Understanding the concept of human capital also requires understanding how it is measured. Various methods have been put out to calculate the worth of human capital. The income method rates human capital investments based on the predicted future earnings they generate, as opposed to the cost approach, which values them based on spending (Abraham & Mallatt, 2022). These methods offer a numerical assessment of the economic value of human capital and are in line with national income accounting standards.

Economists generally agree that human capital plays a key role in determining economic growth. According to studies, nations with higher levels of human capital typically have higher rates of production and economic success

(Bachama *et al.*, 2022). Though complicated, the link between human capital and economic growth can be influenced by other elements such as geographical features, economic freedom, and political and social stability (Duan *et al.*, 2022).

Despite the breakthrough, education as human capital receives backlash by criticism of the quality of education, impact of learning on experience, the role of nutrition and health, and unemployment among high credentials graduates (Wößmann, 2003; Gundlach, 1997; Livingstone, 1997). Countries particularly middle-income countries have included human capital development in their national planning (Devadas, 2015). However, a study by Miyamoto (2003) found that some middle-income countries have not yet achieved access to education, quality of education, and adult literacy.

Human capital theory also exhibits a deficiency in several respects. To begin with, it relies on a closed analytical framework and independent variables, neglecting the influence of external factors and interdependencies that are inherent in the issues it tackles. Secondly, it employs a linear approach to phenomena that exhibit non-homogeneity across both space and time. Thirdly, it attempts to amalgamate two distinct domains, education and work, as though they constitute a singular entity. Lastly, it dismisses numerous alternative explanations for the relationship between education and work, despite the existence of multiple plausible alternatives (Marginson, 2017). Furthermore, human capital theorists argue that education is purported to improve an individual's skills, resulting in increased workplace productivity, ultimately leading to higher wages. However, in practice, a person's education level is often regarded as evidence of their greater capability to produce, even though there may not necessarily be a direct correlation between education and productivity (Tan, 2014).

Miyamoto (2003) also found that human capital can contribute to civil liberties, political stability, health, and reduced crime and corruption which are determinants of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Muhr (2016) explains that not only security and economy, but human capital development is also a shared responsibility of countries, "*commitment to mutual support and joint efforts to achieve sustainable and integral human capital development, and the appropriate care of middle-income countries*". The position of education in middle-income countries is then adapted to various global sustainable development agendas. The MDGs and SDGs emphasize achieving universal, free, and compulsory primary education through Education for All (EFA). Improving and enhancing the quality of education and gender equality to support long-life learning is the collective responsibility of countries.

Human capital requires financial support (investment-led model), and to encourage all lines of development, financial access is needed for both human capital investment and non-human investment (Khan *et al.*, 2020). Human capital investment and financial capital are equally important. Where the increase in education that creates skilled human beings and has high human capital supported by investment in the real sector and good financial literacy can encourage maximum economic growth (Mai, 2022). Meanwhile, from soft-power perspective, international education such as scholarship is considered as policy tool to build diplomatic relations and strengthen relationship with partner countries to achieve mutual benefit (Lomer, 2017). Based on above discussion, investment-led model is one of the alternatives to acquire human capital.

### SSC in education

The concept of SSC is understood as "*the best practice transfer and the exchange of resources, such as but not limited to technology, skills and knowledge among the members of southern countries, as well as promoting the development of social, economic, cultural, political by building coalitions.*"

#### a) Actors of SSC

The emergence of middle-income countries as prospectus donors and providers of technical assistance in the 2000s has reshaped the landscape of international development cooperation. This process allows countries to respect each other's cultures and develop friendships while building ideas and strategies to deal with international issues. International educational cooperation has monetary and non-monetary significant effects on countries. In monetary terms, the higher a person's education level, the lower their unemployment and poverty rates with better income returns, used to build the country through taxes. Meanwhile, in non-monetary terms, education affects a person's health and nutrition practices, childcare, and participation in social activities.

Over the past 10 years the field of development cooperation has undergone some significant changes, some of which have been exacerbated by the effects of the global economic crisis that began in 2008. Perhaps the single most visible change has been the diversification of actors, including—at the level of the state—the growing role of Southern countries, which had been net recipients of aid until the 1980s, as net providers. This diversification of actors, which includes not just states but also civil society organisations and private sector entities, represents for recipient countries an emerging 'age of choice,' whose benefits may outweigh the potential costs of additional fragmentation (Abdenur & de Souza Neto, 2013).

Institutions, and individual actors engaged in contemporary South-South cooperation did exist previously. South-South cooperation is itself a contested term, not only in academia but in the field: various actors and institutions currently struggle with or against each other to codify it and stabilize their own account of what South-South cooperation is or should be (Cesarino, 2013).

### **b) Modes of SSC**

This cooperation model combines funding, knowledge, expertise, and technology to transfer between Southern countries, either bilaterally or multilaterally. A previous study on SSC between Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda shows that South-South Cooperation maintains domestic stability covering various fields, such as Agriculture, Trade, and Education. Siahaan (2017) also found that SSC is an effective form of activity to increase “friends,” known as diplomatic relations. Important to note is evidence which support the output of the best practices transfer and programs is infrequent and it is required to pay more attention to evaluate these practices and programs (du Toit *et al.*, 2017).

Some studies have discussed international aid to education, which also helped the exploration of the SSC model. In general, there are two kinds of funding models in international education: the traditional development-aid model and the southern model. The traditional development aid was given by INGOs, such as but not limited to, Development Assistance Committee (DAC), OPEC and OECD countries. Whereas the southern model is given by Non-DAC, Non-OPEC, or “emerging donors” (du Toit *et al.*, 2017; Zimmerman & Smith, 2011; Manning 2006). The latter one is therefore in line with the SSC model comprising the collaboration between partners in the global south which pay a greater focus on partnerships and cooperation. In terms of cooperative education programs based on SSC, there are two kinds of relationships. The first one is vertical intervention by the foreign government in local society. The second one is a twinning relationship or triangular model, which also means best practice transfer (Walensky & Kuritzkes, 2010; Sa e Silva, 2009). Other than funding, Dr. Diplomat in The Economist (2007) mentioned a study about the education cooperation model between Cuba and Africa which was implemented as capacity building and the provision of infrastructure.

### **c) Benefit of SSC**

SSC has come a long way in gaining international recognition and legitimacy as an important modality in development cooperation challenges: the rapid growth in South–South cooperation requires greater efforts by Southern partners at arriving at a common and acceptable definition of the term ‘South–South development cooperation’ (de Renzio & Seifert, 2014).

Regarding the form of educational cooperation, one form of educational cooperation can be found in the case of cooperation between China and Kenya. In this matter, China provides a form of training to strengthen the capacity of Kenyan human resources. In addition, the cooperation between the two sides appears in the form of providing scholarships from both the Kenyan and Chinese governments to Chinese students studying in Kenya and vice versa. The educational cooperation carried out between the two parties is carried out in a reciprocal South-South mode of cooperation. The interesting thing here is that China also provides this form of training through Chinese companies operating in Kenya, and the trainers are not only from China but also from Kenyans themselves (King, 2010). The scholarship form is also one of the programs used by the United States in conducting educational cooperation with Africa. Scholarships are awarded in both technical and social sciences at US educational institutions (Amanor, 2013).

Cheru (2016) explained the cooperation between Ethiopia and India in the field of education. The form of educational partnership carried out by the Indian government provides 50 scholarships for students from Ethiopia to study at universities in India every year. This exchange is monitored by a shared working group which was founded in 2007. Education is one of India’s grant priority sectors. The grant program is given a priority on capacity building in the field of education. Several education programs can be seen in the construction of schools (in the Maldives) and assistance in transforming the South African education system (Tilak, 2016). From several forms of educational cooperation within the framework of SSC, it can be seen that the provision of scholarships and the provision of training in the context of capacity building are the main programs in educational cooperation.

### **d) Challenges of SSC in Education**

There is a discussion surrounding the effectiveness of various implementation models of the aid, as well as the measurement of impact in the recipient country and population. There is so much theory about the intended outcomes of development, rather than what aid micro-aims to achieve. The focus of the conversation is on how aid is utilized to



enhance the quality of life rather than economic return alone (UNDP, 2010). Some suggest the need to comprehend the motivation of all the actors involved in the aid relationship, from the political desires and to the consequence of the relationship of donor and recipient that were formed historically (Schraeder PJ *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, Rosseel *et al.* (2009) express the social role of higher education in development. University has a prominent role in promoting and conducting capacity building such as training and workshops that are beneficial to communities, both in which they are based and beyond. As the co-creators of knowledge, universities promote society participation and produce types of science that address the needs of society.

Previous models may have not been focused on the process of monitoring and evaluating the programs, and rather on theorizing so much of the intended outcomes of the development (Du Toit *et al.*, 2017). Scholars that discussed SSC have just focused on limited types of education cooperation such as scholarship, training, and workshop, and less attention has been paid to more alternative models, like investment-led mode. Therefore, in our model these two factors have been emphasized to fill the gaps.

## Methods

This research is qualitative research, specifically case study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), it is explained that a case study form is a research design in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a topic. The cases taken are limited by time and activity, and the researcher collects detailed information using various data collection procedures over a continuous-time. Analysis of the data used in this study is divided into three stages, namely data reduction, data display, and verification. As explained by Miles and Huberman (1994), data reduction focuses on the process of selecting, focusing, abstracting, and transforming the data that appears in the transcription. In this case, data reduction is based on the framework of thought and research questions that have been determined. Next, the data display stage will be carried out. The results of the data reduction carried out will be made in the form of tables, or matrices to organize the reduced data. The last is the data verification process and making conclusions on the data that has been obtained.

## Study design

This research uses qualitative methods to unravel the SSC in Education between Indonesia and South Africa. The qualitative method was selected because the topic requires an understanding of how the education cooperation process is carried out and developed in the future. The primary concepts in this study are Education as Human Capital and South-South Cooperation Model in Education.

## Participant selection

The purposive sampling method was used during the interviewing process to acquire information-rich cases related to education activity between Indonesia and South Africa. The total number of informants is nine people, three per institution. The informants' criterion is based on two points. First, having the expertise and the task to coordinate foreign cooperation specifically with southern countries. Second, his/her position is exclusive as the director and/or in charge of the public relations in the relevant institution as follows: the Indonesia Directorate General of Higher Education, the Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the South Africa Embassy in Indonesia. The Indonesia Directorate General of Higher Education is pivotal to capture the policy insights regarding the international education collaboration, the implementation framework, including the challenges and opportunities faced in collaborating with south Africa. The Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs is important to understand the political willingness to support education collaboration and its diplomatic relations. Meanwhile, South Africa Embassy in Indonesia provides viewpoint of the cultural nuance such as cultural, social, or historical factors affect the education collaboration between Indonesia and South Africa.

## Data collection

Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources with the duration of data collection being six months covering the data of SSC between Indonesia and South Africa from 2015 to 2020. The primary data were collected through an interview process with selected informants, and the secondary data were from documentation studies, such as ministerial regulations, technical guidelines, scientific journals, and mass/electronic media, in the forms of research reports, documents, archives, or videos. The data set was established to collect the intended information about SSC in education. Firstly, the information regarding the SSC Indonesia with South Africa which consist of: a) programs; b) agreement; c) implementation, was collected from the Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (code of Informant 2) and The South Africa Embassy in Indonesia (code of Informant 3). Secondly, the data about Indonesian scholarship, exchange programs, and capacity building with South Africa were obtained from the Indonesia Directorate General of Higher Education (code of informant 1).

## Data analysis

This research is deductive, focusing on identifying existing educational cooperation between Indonesia and South Africa and analyzing the gap using the South-South Cooperation Framework. In this study, Taguette open-source was used to help with qualitative data analysis in different stages. In maintaining validity, a triangulation method was formed using various available data sources, which were juxtaposed to select the valid ones. Triangulation is a technique which uses multiple methods and/or data sources in a qualitative approach to construct an holistic understanding of phenomena (Patton, 2002). Meanwhile, this research triangulation method matches the data obtained through the interview and literature study methods.

## Ethical approval

All informants completed the consent form. It was made clear that their identities and response would remain confidential and only used for the data analysis of this study. Participants were voluntary, meaning that they could decide to withdraw from any questions they felt not comfortable with. Permission to record the data was obtained from informants through email correspondence to ensure the accuracy of the analysis. This study protocol was approved by the ethics committee from the research, education, and society outreach department of UPN Jakarta.

## Findings

The results of the interview show that increasing the competence and capacity of human capital is one of the main objectives in the implementation of south-south cooperation. This capacity building can be carried out by sending human resources to internship or training activities. As stated by an informant from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia who explained that:

**“In creating quality human capital under the direction of President Joko Widodo, the position of international cooperation in the field of Indonesian education is very diverse. One of these things can be seen through bilateral cooperation, among others: the existence of cooperation to improve the quality of learning in terms of encouraging and facilitating the exchange of information, and scientific publications on early, basic, secondary, vocational, and technical education through formal, non-formal and informal education” [Informant 1.2, Table 1]**

Both countries' education and skills development are critical because they share similar challenges such as poverty, teacher's education, girls' education, adaptive curriculum, and technological disruption. In 2063 African Union Agenda conveyed the need for a revolution in education and skills, which was emphasized in the Common African Position (CAP) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to CAP, there is a need to promote and support research, technology, and innovation, to build human capital in Africa. This includes establishing education centers, an African accreditation board to monitor the educational standards, and strengthening the relationship of Pan African University.

Meanwhile, the educational philosophy of “Merdeka Belajar,” applied at the tertiary level as Strategic Planning of Indonesia Education Development to accelerate the quality, is categorized into three different streams. The first is the provision of scholarship programs for lectures, followed by organizing research collaboration programs, visiting professors, student exchanges, joint laboratories, and others. The last is the 3) fulfillment and utilization of university infrastructure.

**Table 1. Education Cooperation with South Africa as The Development Agenda (Human Capital).**

No	Informants	Point of Concerns
1	Informant 1.1.	One form of capacity building in Indonesia-South Africa cooperation is through training and diplomatic education between the two countries
2	Informant 1.2.	One of the goals of educational cooperation is to improve the quality of human resources
3	Informant 1.3.	Educational cooperation is needed to create human resources following the demands of technological development. Capacity building of human resources not only in academic but also non-academic fields
4	Informant 2.1.	One form of capacity building for human resources in cooperation with a country in Africa is the form of sending education personnel to do internships in partner countries.
5	Informant 3.2.	Capacity building of human resources is the foundation for educational cooperation
6	Informant 3.3.	Good relations between Indonesia and South Africa, especially in the South-South Cooperation, can provide benefits to both countries



Various forums, such as the Indonesia-Africa Infrastructure Dialogue (IAID) and the Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF), help the two countries meet their needs, especially trading partners. Despite the significance, the education agenda has not been discussed much bilaterally between Indonesia and South Africa. This is because the investment-led model is a suitable cooperation mechanism between the two countries.

Investment-led model emphasized on the binding agreement of human capital establishment. The outcome of the agreement has to reach some sort of “rate of return” in which useful for both parties involved. A business-oriented approach to cooperation is needed, which allows to achieve win-win and avoid interference in internal affairs. On the contrary, the unconditional cooperation of the SSC may entrench the unaccountable political elites as a trade-off of democratic reforms and jeopardize the protection of human rights. Thus, investment-led model equip mutual respect towards freedom and democracy.

### Indonesia's contribution

Indonesia's role as a contributor under the framework of SSC has been initiated since 1950, and it is increasingly significant, especially in education.

*The Indonesian government realizes that higher education plays a role to help the country achieve socio-economic goals and have practical impact on society. Higher education promotes responsible citizens, which hold ethical behavior, educational desires, professionalism in various fields, and cross-border engagement. Therefore, as a part of our commitment in helping the international public to survive the global challenges, sharing our experience and resources by nurturing a highly skilled and educated society has also become our priority. [Informant 2.2, Table 2]*

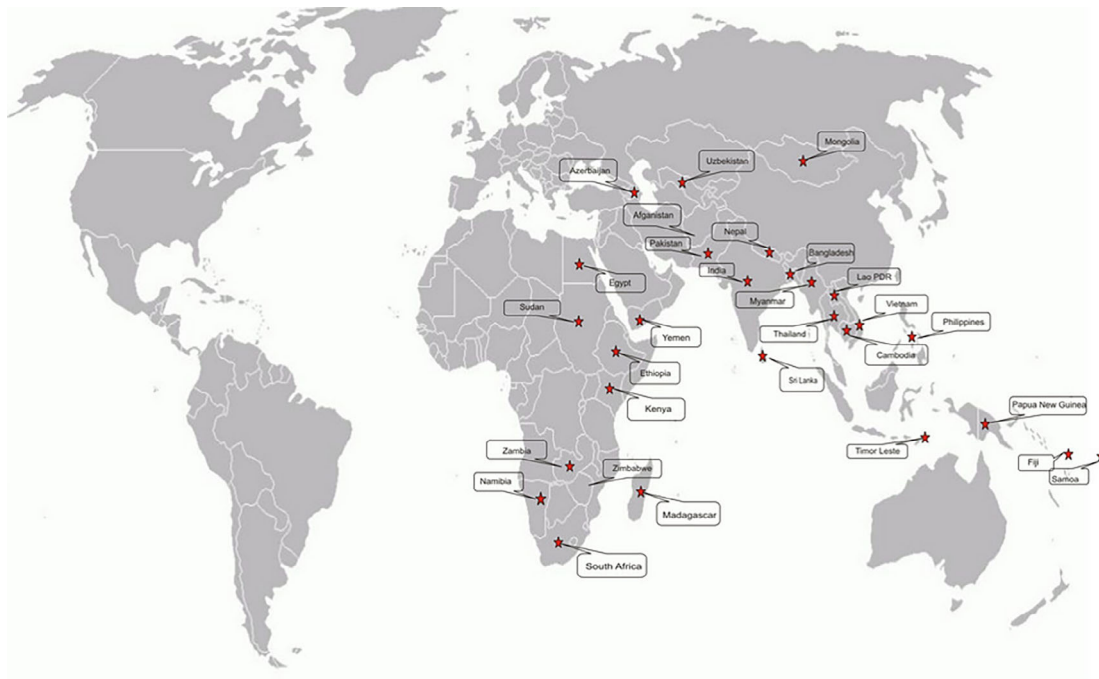
According to Aikins (2008), the socio-political and economic crisis in the African region in the 1970s and 1980s has reduced funding for research and academics, scholarships, decline in student enrollment, and problems in academic-related tasks. Other challenges are related to shortages of a qualified labor force and an institution's capacity. The lack of skills translates into a poor labor market and problematic transition from school to work, affecting the country's productivity (Garcia & Fares, 2008). Varghese (2015) stated that educational cooperation is better directed to support higher education in implementing national policies and institutional enhancement.

Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture increased the Darmasiswa scholarship quota from 250 to 750 students between 2015 and 2020. Darmasiswa Scholarship is a program initiated in 1974 to offer scholarships to international students from countries with diplomatic relations with Indonesia. It is a non-degree scholarship program given to international students at 51 Higher Education Institutions spread across Indonesia for 12 months. Therefore, through this scholarship program, international students can study the Indonesian language and culture at various universities in Indonesia.

*“Participants can select their subjects based on their preference, such as Indonesian language, traditional instruments (gamelan), ethnomusicology, shadow puppetry, traditional dance, crafts, the art of making batik, culinary and photography and et cetera from any of Indonesian university and college” [Informant 2.3, Table 2]*

**Table 2. Education cooperation existing model between Indonesia and South Africa.**

No	Informants	Point of Concerns
1	Informant 1.1.	Increase scholarship quota
2	Informant 1.2.	Scholarships are given, such as scholarships to study Indonesian Language and Indonesian Cultural Arts
3	Informant 1.3.	The scholarship program aims to promote Indonesian culture and language among the younger generation, as well as strengthen cultural ties among students from various cultural backgrounds.
4	Informant 2.2.	There is a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the Republic of South Africa regarding Cultural Cooperation
5	Informant 2.3.	South Africa is the only African country that has a strategic partnership agreement with Indonesia
6	Informant 3.1.	Cooperation between universities in Indonesia and universities in South Africa



**Figure 1. Distribution of Recipient Countries for Indonesian Assistance in the 2018 SSC Framework.** Source: Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia, 2018.

Darmasiswa Scholarship is a quota based on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' country's priority, the state secretariat, and alumni (Figure 1). The total budget allocated is IDR 40,024,025,000 covering tuition fees, living expenses, international round tickets, health insurance, and visa fees. Currently, there are 22 South African alumni of the scholarship program, and 4 are studying in different universities under the Darmasiswa Scholarship Program for the present academic year.

Another program is Kemendikbud Excellence Scholarships, a degree funded by the Indonesian government for international students. These scholarships are accessible to international students outside Indonesia with no limitations. It is offered to various areas of study, such as management, administration, information technology, and food security. Currently, 10 South Africans are benefitting from the Kemendikbud Excellence Scholarship. The last educational aid provided is Kemitraan Negara Berkembang (KNB), known as the *Developing Countries Partnership Scholarship* offered by the Indonesian government to prospective international students from MICs to pursue their master's degrees. The regional exclusiveness of the scholarship was revoked in 2002 since it had developed a global interest.

Darmasiswa, Kemendikbud Excellence, and KNB Scholarship are infamous for Indonesia's educational aid given to international students. This scholarship aims to promote Indonesian culture and language among the younger generation and strengthen cultural ties and enhance skills under the current curriculum of "*Merdeka belajar*," which requires international students to carry out internship programs in Indonesian industries at the end of their study. Among the three, KNB was created specifically to enhance a south-south cooperation mission in which Indonesia contributes to international public goods of education as indicated by the yearly budget allocation. However, from Indonesia's standpoint, the scholarship is also considered charity rather than an investment for development, which is caused by the lack of framework between its SSC in education and South Africa.

Based on information from several informants, it was explained that educational cooperation between Indonesia and South Africa has so far been emphasized more on the provision of scholarships and cooperation in the field of culture. The scholarship quota has also increased from year to year. The cooperation can also be seen in the form of the MoU that has been agreed upon by the two countries. In connection with this MoU, an informant (2.2) Table 2, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia explained that:

**"A Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of South Africa was signed on March 17, 2008, in Pretoria. This agreement is valid for 5 years and will automatically be extended for another 5 years"**

### The lack of SSC in the education framework

According to the Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is no document on the education cooperation between Indonesia and South Africa. However, universities in both countries have accidentally collaborated with South Africa's universities, with non-state actors becoming more influential in international relations. Therefore, a proper discussion is needed to advocate bilateral relations in education at the state level, especially when honoring the SSC between MICs.

Government plays an important role in orchestrating the SSC effort between Indonesia and South Africa, from setting up funding, infrastructure, and human resources, to monitoring and evaluating the results for both sides. Most *Memoranda of Understanding* between Indonesia and overseas universities are ineffective due to the limited resources and the lack of framework. Moreover, President Jokowi mandated the Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture to ensure all forms of an international agreement signed by Indonesian universities are registered and monitored by the state. International cooperation in the field of education needs to be ensured that it can contribute to the development of education. Therefore, it is necessary to map the cooperation that is carried out (informant 2.3) from

**“In accordance with President Jokowi’s directives that were mandated to the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, all forms of international cooperation in the education sector must be carried out as fully as possible, do not let cooperation only be on paper or never been implemented. Therefore, every cooperation with partner countries is reviewed by involving the relevant directorates, mapping what has been implemented and what cannot be implemented, and priority cooperation” [Informant 2.3, Table 2]**

Regional exclusiveness of the Indonesian scholarship shows unexpected results and is therefore revoked. Meanwhile, inter-regional cooperation plays an integral role in advancing SSC in education and skills development. The NAASP (New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership), a strategic inter-regional partnership between Asia and Africa, established the education cooperation that connects NAASP member countries, called the Asia-Africa Development Universities Network (AADUN), consisting of 21 universities with a few from Indonesia and South Africa.

Despite the increasing mobility of South African students to Indonesia, there is still an underlying challenge due to the state's inadequate involvement in granting visas. While South Africans can travel to Indonesia without a visa, Indonesians do not enjoy the same benefits. They need a minimum of 30 days to get a travel visa, which is sometimes difficult to obtain. Deregulation of immigration rules between both countries can promote students, researchers, and lecturers' relationships.

## Discussion

### The needs of Investment-Led model

#### *South-South cooperation in education: way forward*

Previous studies have shown that there is an approach of the “triangular model” in SSC (Abdenur & Da Fonseca, 2013; Walz & Ramachandran, 2011; Sa e Silva, 2009) and the nature of the triangular model allows an effective planning by focusing on participation and long-term involvement for all parties involved. Triangular cooperation model involves southern-driven partnership two or more middle-income countries supported by a developed country or multilateral organization to implement development cooperation programs (TCDC, 1995). However, in this study, beside triangular model, we argue that there is also a need to involve collaboration with civil society.

#### *Collaboration with civil society, NGOs, and private sectors*

SSC is not a well-defined debate due to its inability to determine the role of civil society and its exclusive engagement with bilateral or state-state affairs. Interviews conducted with leaders of universities in Indonesia indicate that not many have detailed knowledge regarding the concept and practices of SSC and civil society. Rather, they mostly depend on information from the internet and social media. Civil society plays a significant role in ensuring that Indonesia's SSC education agenda with South Africa is aligned with the needs and interests of Indonesians. Besides, as the ‘watchdogs’, the people can help identify some obstacles to meeting their various ambitions. Currently, the coordination of the civil society, NGOs, and foundation at the national level is not enough to push the agenda, as there are no concrete plans to scale up the involvement of civil society in SSC-related topics.

The process of increasing state involvement tends to develop an incentive mechanism for actors involved in South-South Cooperation, thereby promoting positive progress and outcomes. Indonesia and South Africa need to cooperate in education and skills development, especially regarding teacher training, girls' education, halal products, and education technology by implementing the SDGs. Simultaneously, identifying requires actions for monitoring and evaluating SSC

to incorporate lesson-learned into the future initiatives in education development. Therefore, with the help of civil society, NGOs, and foundations, the state can reflect on how investment-led policy platforms for SSC can further advance the implementation of the SDGs in education for both countries.

At the inter-regional level, a multilateral organization for civil society networks such as the global network of Asian African Scholars is used to promote good governance and education capable of protecting and maintaining human capacity, dignity, rights, and values. Asian-African relations are becoming increasingly important globally, in the political and economic spheres and social and cultural fields. This is because it opens up new economic development options, political solidarity, intellectual solidity, and the emergence of a transnational civil society.

There is a crucial need to engage with the academic and scientific community and leverage technical knowledge in the private sector and civil society to develop and implement practical solutions. The private sector plays a significant role in sharing information about their capacities and resources, thereby opening up opportunities to include each institution's comparative advantages in the two countries. For example, in the current pandemic, cooperation forums with the private sector play an important role in facilitating medical equipment and medicines.

### ***Collaboration with universities***

In 2014, joint university projects, which focus on poverty reduction and human development were established through a collaboration between the African-Asian Development University Network (AADUN), the Center for Civilizational Dialogue, the University of Malaya, the Asia Africa Option research project (AFRASO), and Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.

Academics and higher education are significant in strengthening educational cooperation between Asia and Africa, especially in Indonesia and South Africa. Universities are becoming the front-row in international cooperation in education through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which contains programs including student exchanges, research, joint scientific publications, double-degree, and training.

Since 2008, Indonesia and South Africa have been strategic partners with halal certification and education based on the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership. Since this partnership, several universities in South Africa have collaborated with those in Indonesia. South Africa has 26 public universities with nearly one million students in various areas, such as agriculture, mining, mineral engineering, and public health.

On 28 Jan 2020, the Chancellor of the Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta (UMY) and the Judicial Council (MCJ) Cape Town, South Africa, signed the MoU agreement to cooperate with the education sector through full scholarships. This program is given to South African students willing to complete undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral degrees. Establishing international cooperation between tertiary institutions can create superior human resources.

### **Investment-Led model**

A study conducted by [Liao \*et al.\* \(2019\)](#) reported a positive correlation between education investment and sustainable economic growth, with a 1% increase leading to a gross domestic product of 0.14% on average. [Bhusnurmath \(2016\)](#) stated that the investment-led model relies on creating new capacity, which provides more employment opportunities with higher demand and production. Therefore, any investment linked to innovation increases supply, demand, and growth. However, the influence of educational investment on economic growth is a long-run process and not immediate.

Rather than equal benefits in economic growth, a win-win in SSC means both parties have access to the output, such as a positive country's image, transfer of knowledge, improvement in education through the investment in each other's learning infrastructure. Others include middle-income countries the information and communications technology (ICT) and improving the quality and service of educators and facilitators. MICs often viewed science as a luxury affordable only by developed countries. Emerging countries, such as South Africa, have also managed to catch up by being Africa's strongest scientific capacity and world-class infrastructures. The SSC promotes more mutual respect while offering substantial experience in dealing with the middle-income countries related-issues. Therefore, we construct a comparison between the existing model and the new model as appears in [Table 3](#).

In order to achieve gradual benefit towards the contributor of SSC in Indonesia, the government needs to take adequate measures by monitoring the international student scholarship closely, adding quotas, or designing a certain priority in requirements when necessary. It rejects the concept of charity and rather emphasizes the principles of equality, respect for national sovereignty, ownership, and mutual goals.

**Table 3. Comparison between Existing Model of SSC in Education and investment-led Model (New Model).**

	Existing Model	Investment-led (New Model)
<b>Nature</b>	Aid	Investment
<b>Actors</b>	1. Government to Government 2. Government to Southern Public 3. University to University	University, Government, Civil Society, NGO.
<b>Document</b>	Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)
<b>Programs</b>	Capacity building: 1. International students through scholarship and internship 2. Diplomat training	Capacity building for educators and trainers Infrastructure building in information and technology Health research
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	None	Time-bound

Meanwhile, the characteristics of SSC do not require the imposition of conditions because they can strengthen the power of the irresponsible political elite at the expense of democratic reform and respect for human rights. A business-oriented approach can end unfair trade-offs; therefore, commitment needs to be ensured when designing the cooperation. There are several factors responsible for successful cooperative activities when achieving objectives. According to *McKenzie et al. (2008)*, some of the key success factors of international cooperation include identifying the genuine needs of all parties, using a two-way process to share strengths to help others, and providing strong links, including central governments like ministries of education. Others include providing a program framework approved by both parties, a realistic time frame, a resourceful secretariat to maintain the implementation, including support from civil society, sharing good practices, and developing plans. The agreement must be tailored to cover both needs, and when implementing the SSC, strong political support from multi-stakeholder is required.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the growing need and efforts to solve today's critical problems require international cooperation and multi-stakeholder support. The cooperation agenda between Indonesia and South Africa focuses on economic balance through trading with education cooperation limited to demand-based vocational training. Furthermore, the current SSC in education between both countries is still unfathomable with the absence of resources focused on developing and implementing a south-south education cooperation model. This incidental agenda is mostly initiated and implemented by non-state actors, such as the university. This research suggests using the investment-led model involving multi-stakeholders to advance SSC in education in both countries. We recognize there were a number of limitations in this study, we sought to follow the recommendation of *Du Toit et al. (2017)* to emphasize the importance of time-bound monitoring and evaluation in SSC cooperation. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that we were also not able to measure the effectiveness of the existing model of cooperation between Indonesia and South Africa. Therefore, this study suggests for future research to conduct a quantitative approach to measure the effectiveness of the model, particularly in the context of university-to-university cooperation.

### Declaration

#### Author contribution statement

Dudy Heryadi: head of research, analyzed

Shanti Darmastuti: conceived, designed interview, analyzed

Ayu Anastasya Rachman: analyzed, interpreted data, wrote the paper

### Data availability

#### Underlying data

Figshare: Advancing South-South Cooperation in Education: Indonesia Experience with South Africa, <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.20113892.v2> (Heryadi et al., 2022).

This project contains the following data:

- Transkrip Pertanyaan dan Jawaban Wawancara - Advancing South South Cooperation in Education Indonesia Experience with South Africa.docx
- Daftar Kerja sama Bidang Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Negara Afrika Sub Sahara.doc
- Kerjasama Selatan-Selatan 2018.docx

Data are available under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License](#) (CC-BY 4.0 International).

The transcripts of all participants will be made available in English upon request.

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# Open Peer Review

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Version 3

Reviewer Report 22 February 2024

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 **Thomas Muhr** 

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As stated in your reply to the review comments, your revised manuscript (Version 3) includes additional literature, and corresponding changes have been made by adding sentences or paragraphs and improving the structure (inserting sub-headings and shifting paragraphs around). However, most of the added literature relates to human capital theory rather than South-South cooperation (SSC) and education. According to my count, there are 12 new items in your references list, of which nine relate to human capital in their titles, one to international education, and three (all from 2013/2014) to SSC cooperation generally. Accordingly, while the section "Education as human capital" has been significantly expanded, "SSC in education" is still lacking more comprehensive and meaningful engagement with the respective (and more contemporary) literature. The remainder of your paper (pp. 7-13) is, except for a few minor modifications, identical to the previous version, with several previously raised issues unaddressed.

In this respect, I need to draw attention to a misrepresentation of my work. On p. 5 you state: "Muhr (2016) explains that not only security and economy, but human capital development is also a shared responsibility of countries, "commitment to mutual support and joint efforts to achieve sustainable and integral human capital development, and the appropriate care of middle-income countries".

This is incorrectly cited. The correct quote cites a meaning of 'solidarity' in SSC:

"solidarity being 'The commitment to mutual support and joint efforts to achieve sustainable and integral human development, and the appropriate care of countries' emergent needs, within the possibilities and in accordance with shared responsibilities'" (Muhr cited in Muhr, 2016: 633( Ref 1)).

Of course, I am not disputing your inference from my work, but if you decide to cite, this has to be accurate.

Generally, as I said in my previous comments, human development, human resources and human capital, which you seem to use interchangeably (e.g., your Table 1: title vs informants' statements), are not (necessarily) the same, and some clarification in this respect would be useful.

Overall, I still think your paper would benefit from a more argumentative/explanatory style to understand better how paragraphs and sections build upon each other. Regarding your approach, for me the main tension has not been resolved: why you analyse (at least partially) your SSC case study through what is widely considered a neocolonial/imperialist West/North-centric framework – ‘human capital’, ‘aid’, International Education and ‘soft power’ (in fact, your well-chosen source, Lomer, 2017, points to the ‘colonial connotations’ of this metaphor ((also see Muhr, 2023 (Ref 2), on this)) – at least in theory, conceptually and/or discursively incompatible with the claims and objectives of SSC. I am not saying that you should not do this; but does your case – empirical findings – justify doing so? The point for me would be to make this explicit, to argue, explain, discuss, what I perceive to be a conflation of two rather opposed models. After all, transposing West/North thought (ideology) to South realities, thus reproducing coloniality, has been subject to much contention, with a growing body of literature over the past 20 years, especially since the higher education decolonisation movement from around 2015/2016.

### References

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**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

**Reviewer Expertise:** Education, Development, Globalisation (Development Theory/Studies; South-South cooperation/South-South cooperation in Education; Decolonisation).

**I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.**

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### Version 2

Reviewer Report 01 September 2023

<https://doi.org/10.5256/f1000research.144425.r178210>

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**Susanne Ress**

University of Bamberg, Kapuzinerstraße, Bamberg, Germany

The article examines Indonesia's approach to South-South cooperation in higher education with focus on potential African partners. It argues that an investment-led model can lead to mutual

benefits in human capacity development. Interviews with ministry officials and secondary data on scholarships provide the base of analysis. It concludes that a strategic approach by the Indonesian government is needed to further enhance SSC in education as a response to global challenges.

The research topic is timely and warranted. I thank the authors for their work and congratulate on an interesting article, which I enjoyed reading very much. However, some additional revisions are needed to further enhance the quality of the argumentation.

Here are my suggestions:

### **General comments**

- The connection between research question, review of literature (or status quo of existing research), methodology, findings and conclusions should be made clearer. How does one support the other?
- More references are needed to substantiate claims throughout the article (e.g., 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on page 5 of the pdf)
- I suggest using “low-, middle-, high-income” countries as classification, use classification consistently
- Check full article for correct use of quotation marks and provide appropriate reference, including page numbers
- Carefully proof-read the article for punctuation, grammar, missing words

### **Introduction**

- Cite relevant literature on south-south cooperation in education (suggestions see below)
- The introduction would benefit from a more nuanced understanding of international development education concepts and approaches
- Provide references to the literature for information on context
- Explain the context of the study in greater detail, for example, explain the Indonesian SSC strategy in relation to “Merdeka Belajar” – how are the two related in the Indonesian education landscape? Has the Indonesian government developed a SSC strategy based on “Merdeka Belajar” or do interview respondents refer to it as justification for their internationalization efforts?
- Please include a clearly stated research question in the introduction
- P. 3, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph “It is aimed to advocate FOR the academic ...” – word missing
- P. 4, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph – correct use of quotation marks, provide page numbers and reference to source (check the article throughout)
- P. 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – “... several studies ...” – please provide references

## Literature review

### *Education as human capital*

- I suggest considering additional conceptual frameworks, for example “soft power” (to explain political function of scholarships, see findings p. 8, Darmasiswa Scholarship) or “education policy transfer”
- Explain the investment-led model in greater detail, how is it different from other models? Perhaps some of the discussion could move here.

### *SSC in education*

- P. 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – text is repeated from previous paragraphs, provide references to the literature
- P. 6, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, last sentence – word is missing “Therefore, IN our model these two ...”
- Please explain your use of “more progressive models” – what do you mean by progressive?
- Please explain “triangular model” in greater detail since you refer to it in the discussion. The explanation given in the discussion is also not sufficient.
- Overall, the literature review would benefit from a more analytical structure rather than an additive summary of articles. One possible structure could be: a) actors of SSC, b) modes of SSC, c) benefits of SSC, d) challenges of SSC in education. This would provide an opportunity to incorporate existing research on SSC in education more broadly (suggestions for additional authors: Abdenur, Chrisholm, Cesarino, Majee, Morais, Ress, Soudien).
- Overall, the literature review would benefit from a more nuanced understanding of human capital theory, including past and present criticisms (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Gillies, 2015).

## Methods

- P. 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – correct “Cresswell & Cresswell”
- Please justify the selection of organizations for interviews based on the research question.

## Findings

- P. 8, last paragraph – use of the word “infamous” – consider revising since it seems contradictory

## Discussion

- It is missing the connection to the findings, for example add quotes
- Explain the investment-led model as part of the literature review
- Explain more clearly how the findings of the study support the investment-led model (or not)
- Focus on how your data (interviews and scholarship data) support the investment-led model (or not)
- Provide a more nuanced understanding of the benefits and especially the challenges of SSC



in (higher education)

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1. Chisholm L: 'Introduction: Rhetorics, Realities, and Responses', in L. Chisholm and G. Steiner-Khamsi (eds), *South-South Cooperation in Education and Development*. *New York: Teachers College*. 2009. 1-13
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10. Bowles S, Gintis H: The problem with human capital theory--a Marxian critique. *The American Economic Review*. 1975; **2** (65): 74-82
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**Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?**

Partly

**Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?**

Partly

**If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?**

Not applicable

**Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?**

Partly

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?**

Partly

**Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?**

No

**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

**Reviewer Expertise:** Internationalization of higher education, south-south and north-south cooperation in higher education, comparative and international education

**I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.**

Reviewer Report 14 July 2023

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**Thomas Muhr** 

Centre of International Studies (CEI), ISCTE-Instituto Universitario de Lisboa, Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

Thank you for inviting me to review this article. Entering a review process at a later stage and picking up from previous reviewers is a challenge for both reviewers and authors. I aim to practice fairness by taking the previous reviewer Indra Yohanes Kiling's (henceforth abbreviated IYK) comments and decision as a benchmark, to which I add my own thoughts. I address you – the authors – directly.

I enjoyed reading this over large parts informative, research-based piece, guided by a strong rationale as stated in the final lines of paragraph 6 on p. 3 (first page of the Introduction, 'Although this collaboration...'). Also, the objective is clearly stated (end of first paragraph of the Introduction; re IYK's query). The empirical focus on Indonesia/South Africa is an extremely useful and welcome case study to contribute to the relatively scarce literature on South-South cooperation (SSC) in education. The main message I get from your paper is a call for the neoliberalization or (in Walter Mignolo's terms) 're-Westernization' of SSC, which to me does not sit easily with the general *raison d'être* of SSC and the current historical development of the South's growing de-linking (e.g., de-dollarizing intra-South trade, growing South-South student mobility/flows). With this in mind, as IYK suggested (to which you have not responded), providing some clarification/discussion of your positioning/positionality in this study would increase trustworthiness. My subsequent detailed comments largely relate to these broad issues.

1. Re IYK's comments on the literature used and conceptual limitations: You have followed IYK's

suggestion to integrate more recent literature (Hanada, 2021; Nguyen et al, 2015; Zhu & Chikwa, 2021). Two of these (Hanada, 2021; Nguyen et al, 2015), however, are in the field of conventional International Education, i.e. collaborations between institutions in the North and South. This practice (also sometimes associated with triangular cooperation), however, is often critiqued for being North/Western-centric, to pull Southern institutions into the circuits of the North-driven neoliberal global higher education governance (a mechanism of 're-Westernisation', domination and control of the South). This is not SSC. So the newly added literature is of only limited relevance to your topic because your Indonesia/South Africa case clearly is South-South, not North-South or triangular cooperation. As recommended by IYK, you need to consult more specific education SSC literature, including reviews of any sort. I consider this necessary for the following two interrelated reasons:

- On one hand, I perceive a conflation of Northern 'aid' (official development assistance, ODA) discourses/concepts with SSC ones. For example, you seem to associate SSC with 'middle income countries', 'donors', 'charity', and 'comparative advantage'. At the same time you also use 'global south', 'partners' and 'win-win', which is more like the language SSC actors commonly use. Certainly, there are hybrid discourses (e.g. to some extent in BRICS). If this is the case in Indonesia/South Africa SSC, this would be a relevant finding and would have to be discussed as such, i.e. explaining why you appear to be using ideas and concepts from these different – rather incompatible – political projects interchangeably.
- On the other hand, you are using human capital theory to frame SSC in education, which is not very common in this field. Did you come across relevant SSC education literature that uses human capital theory? (I am referring here really to SSC literature and not North-South International Education literature). Does the human capital framework relate to or emerge from your empirical (interviews or documentary) research, i.e. do the Indonesian/South African actors themselves refer to this? If so, it would be important to make this explicit. If not, if this framing is purely your choice (considering that you are referring to a 'deductive' approach without further explaining this, p. 6, para 6), however, I wonder why conduct empirical research if this is squeezed into a pre-established rather Western-centric, colonialist theoretical/conceptual framework (of which 'human capital theory' is part). In fact, your Table 1 suggests that while your interviewees themselves refer to 'human resources' (which also appears in SSC discourses I am familiar with), your title of the table appears to equate this with 'human capital', i.e., you seem to use the two interchangeably. But 'human resources' is not the same as human capital (theory). Nor is 'human development', which you also use in these contexts ('human development' as commonly associated with the 1980s UN project of conceiving a liberal-egalitarian, equality-driven challenge to economic reductionism, of which human capital theory forms part).

These conceptual ambiguities need to be clarified in one way or another. Also, regarding concepts, you refer to 'conditions' (p. 11, para. 6), but the appropriate term is 'conditionality'/'conditionalities'.

2. IYK raised some methodological issues you have responded to. I have some minor remarks in this regard: Throughout, including the Abstract, frequent reference is made to 'an interview' and 'the interview'. I could not detect a clear statement of how many interviews were actually conducted and analysed, although you do state that 'nine people' (p. 6, para 4) participated as informants (so I assume 9 interviews were conducted?). It would be useful to clearly state from the start (Abstract/Introduction) the number of interviews conducted, perhaps also how long they were on average and whether an interview guide was used (e.g., with respect to structured, semi-

structured or conversational interviews, or any other type). Also, it would be helpful for the reader to know the exact research questions (which you point to on p. 6, para. 2), and when (year/months) the research was conducted (re 'The data were obtained within six months', as stated in the Abstract and p. 6, para. 5).

3. IYK suggested adding more quotes from your interviews. I am not sure whether all the quotes you have inserted really add a lot. Perhaps re-check your transcripts for particularly meaningful quotes.

4. There is a factual error: OPEC is not part of the 'traditional development aid' architecture (p. 5, para. 5). OPEC was formed in Baghdad in 1960 within the SSC logic. This needs correcting.

5. I sometimes perceive vagueness and questionable evidence, e.g.: 'Dr. Diplomat in the Economist mentioned a study...' (p. 5, para. 5); 'there is so much theory' (p. 5, para. 6); 'more progressive models, like investment-led mode (p. 6, para. 1; Question: what is progressive about investment-led modes?)

6. The section 'Discussion' (pp. 10-11) reads more like a bullet-point-type list of recommendations, whereby it is not always clear how these rather normative statements/claims were generated from the data presented in the previous section.

7. Some minor linguistic, stylistic and structural issues/suggestions:

1. The overall quality of your article is undermined by quite a few little linguistic errors or imprecisions (often related to a – in my opinion – inappropriate use of the definite article). This concerns the entire paper. Just a few examples: in the first paragraph of the Introduction, I believe 'Compared to the North-South Cooperation, the South-South is perceived...' should read 'Compared to North-South Cooperation, South-South cooperation is perceived...'; in paragraph 3 on the same page, 'from other country' should be 'other countries'; or, 'countries have accidentally collaborated' (p. 9 para. 4; I am not sure whether 'accidentally' is the most appropriate verb here).

2. There are a couple of incomplete citations (missing reference/page numbers).

3. There are occasionally statements and paragraphs that to me do not make a lot of sense in the context/section in which they appear. E.g., reference to USA cooperation with Africa (North/South cooperation) in the section 'SSC in education' (p. 5, para. 3; again mixing the two paradigms); para. 1 on p. 8 and para. 2 on p. 11 appear misplaced and could be integrated in previous sections.

4. Please address the inconsistencies regarding capitalizations in South-South cooperation: you interchangeably use 'South-South cooperation', 'South-South Cooperation', 'south-south cooperation', or abbreviated 'SSC' (unless you seek to highlight different meanings attached to each of these, which however would need explaining).

5. The 'Methods' section clearly states the two conceptual frameworks used, i.e. 'Education and Human Capital' and 'South-South cooperation Model'/'South-South Cooperation framework'. I propose to already state these in the Abstract and Introduction. The article would benefit from - requires - clearer discussion of how the two relate to each other (my Point 1 above).

6. An apparent inconsistency/contradiction: p. 3 para. 2 points to 'non-interference' as a key feature of SSC, while on p. 7 para. 5 the paper calls for a 'business-oriented approach' to SSC to 'avoid interference'. In this context, the Western (neoliberal) 'good governance' conditionalities of 'democratic reform' and 'human rights' pop up (p. 7, para. 5; p. 11, para. 6), however, none of this was discussed/introduced previously. (This relates to my initially-stated impression of your paper seeking to promote a 're-Westernisation' of SSC – or a re-definition of the SSC principles? Is this your intention or positioning?)

7. The newly added paragraphs in the Introduction make this a little bit long and bulky.

Perhaps some of this would better be integrated in the next section, Literature Review.

Overall, I find the tone of your paper too assertive and proclamatory, and at times undersubstantiated. There is very little explaining, arguing and discussing. I propose careful and judicious editing, taking the issues raised into account.

**Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?**

Yes

**Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?**

Partly

**If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?**

Not applicable

**Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?**

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?**

Partly

**Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?**

Partly

**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

**Reviewer Expertise:** Education, Development, Globalisation (Development Theory/Studies; South-South cooperation/South-South cooperation in Education; Decolonisation).

**I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.**

Reviewer Report 24 February 2023

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**Indra Yohanes Kiling** 

Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang, Indonesia

Thank you to the authors for their commitment in revising this article. I think this article is now worthy to be indexed. Congratulations to the authors and good luck for their endeavours!

**Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?**

Partly

**Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?**

Partly

**If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?**

Partly

**Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?**

Partly

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?**

Partly

**Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?**

Partly

**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

**Reviewer Expertise:** Community psychology, qualitative studies

**I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.**

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Version 1

Reviewer Report 06 February 2023

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**Indra Yohanes Kiling** 

Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang, Indonesia

This is a well-written article. It has the potential to advance current literature and practice in the field of education. I have some suggestions to the authors to help improve the article.

- The introduction needs more work especially in citing the more recent literature. I would like to suggest the authors to find some relevant systematic or scoping reviews to help in highlighting the current evidence and research gap. I think the authors could also work on making the objectives of the study more explicit.
- The authors should discuss their positioning as a research team in this study. This kind of reflexivity will help to improve trustworthiness of the study.
- Moreover, I would suggest the authors use other efforts to improve trustworthiness of the study besides using triangulation. I would like to recommend the authors to at least use audit trail and diary which is vital to any qualitative study. If they have these documents, they should attach them as appendixes.
- Some more quotes can be used to help explain themes.
- The discussion is strong in the contextual and implications but I think is still lacking in terms of conceptually. Some analysis on the limitations and strengths of the study might benefit the readers as well.

**Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?**

Yes

**Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?**

Partly

**If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?**

Not applicable

**Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?**

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?**

Yes

**Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?**

Yes

**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

**Reviewer Expertise:** Community psychology, qualitative studies

**I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of**

**expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.**

Author Response 14 Feb 2023

**Dudy Heryadi**

Dear Dr. Indra, thank you for your review. We have looked through it and agree to make changes accordingly to improve the article in order to advance current literature and practice in the field of education.

**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

Author Response 14 Feb 2023

**Dudy Heryadi**

Dear reviewer, here are point-by-point respond made according to the given comments.

1. Comment: *"The introduction needs more work especially in citing the more recent literature. I would like to suggest the authors to find some relevant systematic or scoping reviews to help in highlighting the current evidence and research gap. The authors should discuss their positioning as a research team in this study. This kind of reflexivity will help to improve trustworthiness of the study."*

**Respond: The new version have cited and discussed more recent literature by Nguyen et al. (2015), Hanada (2021), and Zhu & Chikwa (2021)**

2. Comment : *"the authors could also work on making the objectives of the study more explicit."*

**Respond: The new version have highlighted research gap and study the objectives based on the research gap founded**

3. Comment: *"to improve trustworthiness, recommend the authors to at least use audit trail and diary, they should attach them as appendixes."*

**Respond: Based on data disclose policy from F1000 is already made available through Figshare and it is stated in the appendix. The reader may refer to the following link <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.20113892.v2> ( Heryadi et al., 2022).**

4. Comment: *"More quotes can be used to help explain themes."*

**Respond: The new version have added more quotes to explain the themes of international education cooperation (role and the rationale of the government)**

5. Comment: *"Lacking in terms of conceptually. Some analysis on the limitations and strengths of the study might benefit the readers as well."*

**Respond: The new version have added and highlighted the limitation and strength in terms of conceptually.**

Thank you so much for your valuable inputs.

**Competing Interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.

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