

Title: **STEP Programme: From Collaboration to Innovation and from Innovation to Collaboration**

Presenter: **Marodsilton Muborakshoeva**
Institute of Ismaili Studies

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

...learn about the collaborative efforts at institutional levels that led to the creation of a unique and innovative programme such as STEP

...apply practical examples of collaboration within their own contexts

...understand the relevance of close communication between lecturers and between lecturers and students in order to advance teaching and learning

Session Outline

Based on the analysis of available research, interviews with stakeholders, and reflecting on own practice this presentation explores how STEP is an innovative programme and how it has managed to create a conducive environment for collaborative teaching and learning. STEP is a joint program of the UCL's Institute of Education and the Institute of Ismaili Studies. It is a two year post-graduate programme where students obtain two degrees, MA in Muslim Cultures and Civilisations and MTeach in Education. I will first discuss how the collaboration at senior institutional levels resulted in the creation of this innovative programme. Its most innovative feature is having an integrated approach to knowledge acquisition and production where the MA and MTeach programmes are designed in a complementary way to equip students with the subject knowledge to do with Muslims' faith, cultures and civilisations as well as methodologies and pedagogies of teaching. I then examine how STEP lecturers collaborate closely to ensure this integrated approach of the complementary degree courses was delivered smoothly and as one coherent programme. Afterwards I explore how students actively utilise knowledge gained from MTeach programme in their discussions, debates, and analysis of the MA modules and in turn use their MA content knowledge to inform debates and classroom practice. Finally, I will conclude by reflecting on the challenges and discuss the exemplary nature of STEP programme for other faith communities who may struggle with providing quality religious education to their young generation in this increasingly secularised world.

STEP is a unique case of collaboration between a secular institute of education and an institute of religious studies belonging to a faith community. Research on collaboration and innovation predominantly focuses on research cooperation between public universities and industries (Abramo et al, 2011; Kauppien, 2012; Knobel et al, 2013) and between different

types of institutions (Kezar, 2006) and mergers to share resources for broader educational or research purposes (Brown, 2001; Czarnitzki et al, 2007). However, most of these collaborations and mergers are on hard sciences with the exception of a few that are on teacher training and health education (Russell et al, 2001; Lewis et al 2012; Abbey et al 2015). This has been questioned by researchers who claim that the place of humanities and social sciences in such mergers and institutional collaborations is either absent or very limited (Benneworth, 2010). Nevertheless, some universities initiated collaborative projects with the wider community (Carlton et al 2009; Weerts et al, 2010; Watson, 2013; Watson, 2014) to conduct and support research that aims to connect diverse ways of knowing at institutional and community levels (Facer and Enright, 2016; Facer, 2016).

However, there is almost no serious research on how collaborations between a public secular university and a private institution with its research on religion and educational mission for a faith community work. Moreover, the advance of colonialism and nationalism both created a dichotomy in education and as a result religious education was marginalised in Muslim contexts (Muborakshoeva 2013a; 2013b). Therefore, generally speaking, Muslims have remained deprived not only from the classical teachings of religion, but also from having adequate knowledge about their educational, civilizational, and cultural heritage and for them it is very important to have an integrated approach to knowledge acquisition and production (Sardar, 2015; Muborakshoeva 2016). Therefore it is hoped that this study will shed light on such collaborations and innovations and will open new debates in the field to address some of the existing gaps.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

This presentation should be joint with the panel presentation by Nicole Brown, as these two presentations together offer two views on the same programme, the views from the respective institutes the lecturers represent.

The two ten-minute presentations will be followed by the panel discussion, which shall take into account any twitter discussion as well as slides questions from within the presentations.

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