

Opportunities, challenges - and bad weather

- Experiences and reflections of African researchers involved
in Danida funded research capacity building 1989-2019

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Background

- To give voice to African researchers who have been involved in Danida funded research capacity building projects (1989-2019), to unfold their experiences and to share their reflections regarding research capacity building.
- To provide a systematic overview of the participants' current employment and continued relations with the Danish research environment.



Methods

- Workshop

45 participants, held at Danida Fellowship Centre.

- Questionnaire

About 50 questions (closed/open-ended)

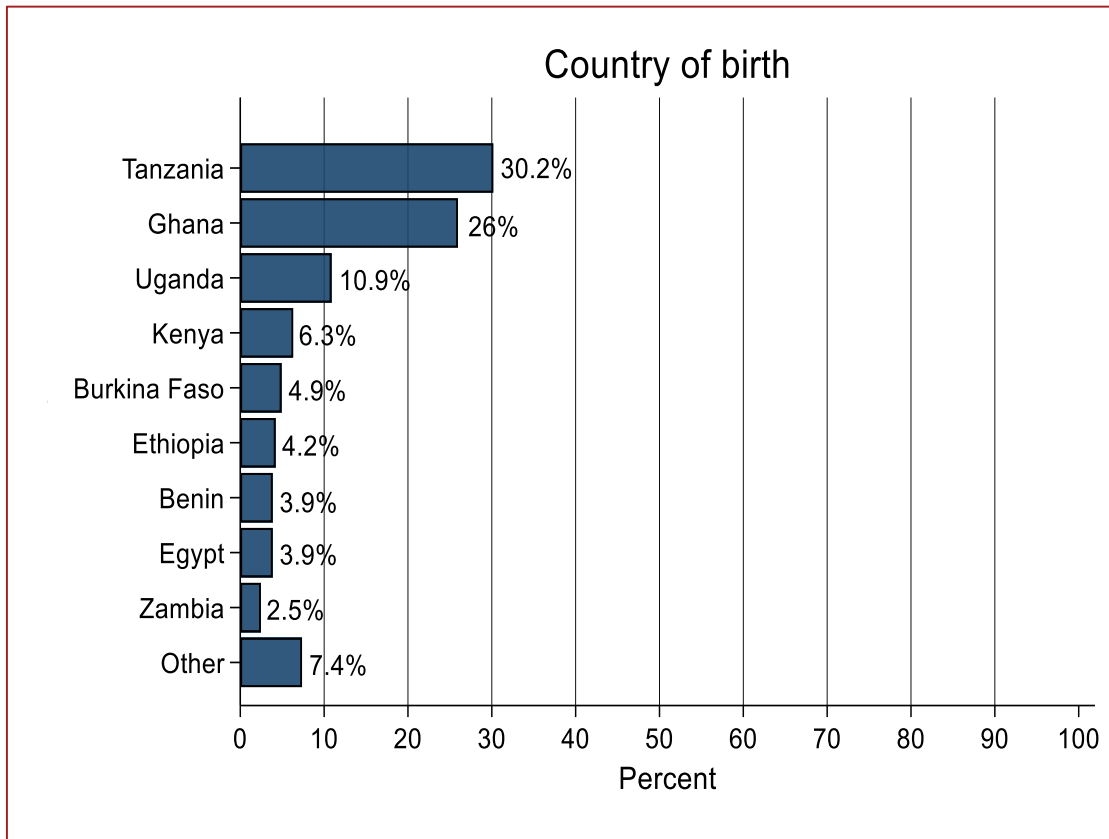
Total population 499, response rate 60%, distributed in Oct-Nov 2018.

- Qualitative interviews

14 interviews, current PhDs, former PhDs, researchers



The participants



Distribution of respondents according to country of birth (n=285).

The participants

<i>Current principal employment</i>	Master's Students	PhD Fellows	Early Entry Danida Researchers	Late Entry Danida Researchers	Total
<i>University</i>	9 42.86 %	72 61.54 %	81 68.07 %	18 78.26 %	180 64.29 %
<i>Public sector</i>	8 38.10 %	24 20.51 %	17 14.29 %	3 13.04 %	52 18.57 %
<i>Private sector</i>	0 0.00 %	3 2.56 %	3 2.52 %	0 0.00 %	6 2.14 %
<i>International donor/aid organizations/NGOs</i>	0 0.00 %	2 1.71 %	7 5.88 %	1 4.35 %	10 3.57 %
<i>Think Tank</i>	1 4.76 %	2 1.71 %	1 0.84 %	0 0.00 %	4 1.43 %
<i>Unemployed</i>	0 0.00 %	7 5.98 %	1 0.84 %	1 4.35 %	9 3.21 %
<i>Own business/consultant</i>	1 4.76 %	2 1.71 %	2 1.68 %	0 0.00 %	5 1.79 %
<i>Retired</i>	0 0.00 %	0 0.00 %	1 0.84 %	0 0.00 %	1 0.36 %
<i>Other</i>	2 9.52 %	5 4.27 %	6 5.04 %	0 0.00 %	13 4.64 %
<i>Total</i>	21 100 %	117 100 %	119 100 %	23 100 %	280 100 %



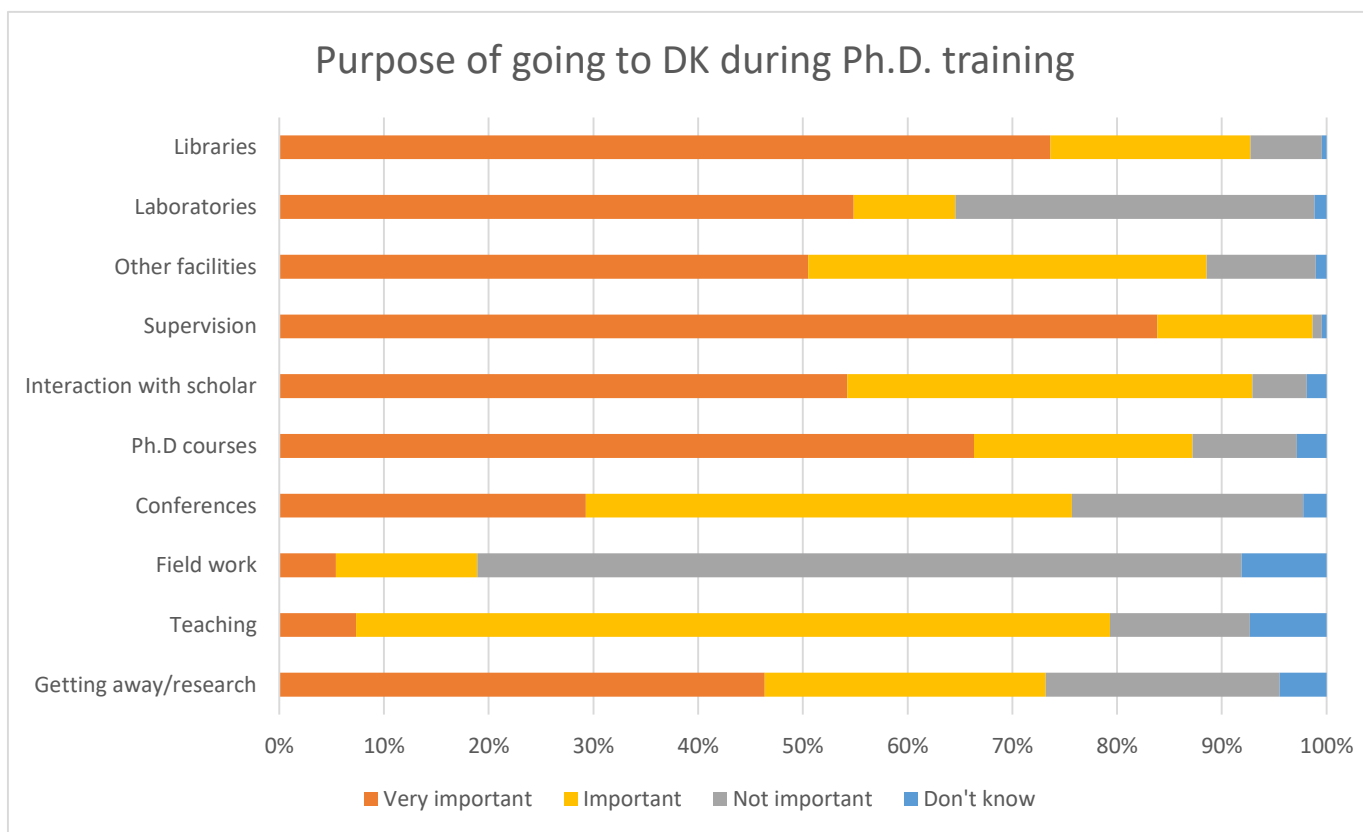
Getting into a Danida funded PhD

'Somebody told me of an opportunity for doing a PhD and I said, why not?'

- Denmark was rarely the first choice but, many were really pleased with their stay in Denmark and what they had learned in the course of doing their PhD.
- For the interviewees, research capacity building was not particularly interesting in itself. It was a means to an end, namely to do research.



Doing a Danida funded PhD



The PhD Fellows' and Early Entry Danida Researchers' responses to the question: What was the purpose of going to Denmark during your PhD training? (n ranges from 148 to 223)



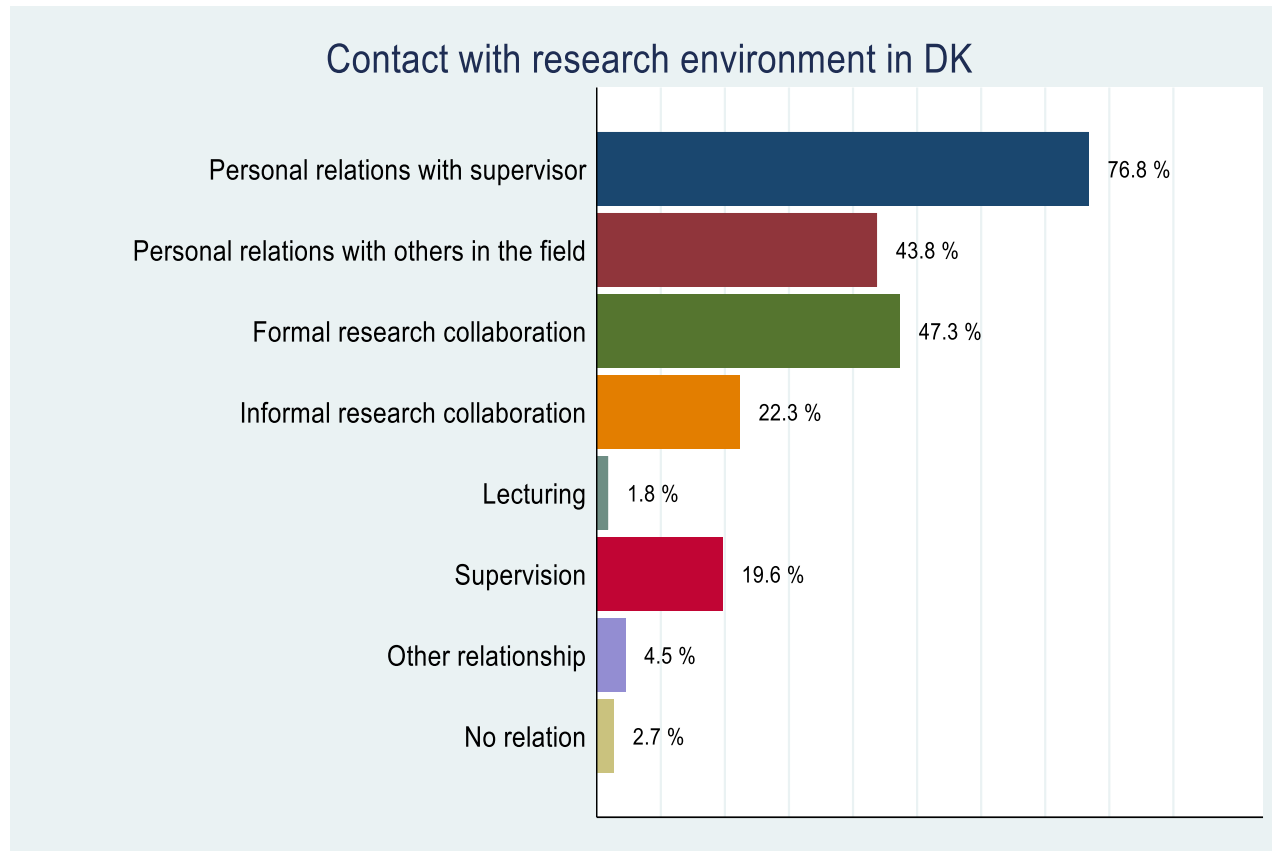
Doing a Danida funded PhD

'Access to world class literature and strong supervision turned me inside out for the better in terms of intellectual development'

- Learning to be a critical thinker and questioning the taken for granted during the stay in Denmark.
- Being in Denmark gives access to advanced instruments and laboratories, to journals and other physical resources.
- Interaction and personal relationships with the Danish researchers: long-term relationships, joint research.
- Mobility create opportunities for experience of relatively flat social hierarchies and working independently as a researcher



Being involved in Danida funded research after a PhD



The percentage of Early Entry Danida Researchers who answered the question, "In what ways do you have contact with the research environment in Denmark, where your Ph.D. work was attached (Several options possible, n=112).



Being involved in Danida funded research after a PhD

't is important to maintain the connections that can help pay for conferences and to participate in projects that can finance fieldwork and to do joint publications'

- The knowledge, skills, and competences can be used back home. The majority returned to universities in various African countries. They use their critical thinking skills and their knowledge about questioning the taken for granted and sharing knowledge.
- The majority publish in peer-reviewed international journals. Getting the skills and the procedures for publishing is an important result of their stay in Denmark and their subsequent collaboration with the Danish research groups.



Being involved in Danida funded research after a PhD

'Funding by Denmark allows you to develop your own project ideas. Other countries bring their own agenda and lets you fits in'

- Participants brought home 'Danish' notions of what it takes to be a good academic as well as what are considered to be good teaching practices.
- Maintaining personal relations with the Danish (or other international) research environments is very important for the ability to have an international research career. Having long-term relations makes it easier to get access to funding and thus to maintain a research career as a university employee in Africa.

