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EDITORIAL

This issue of *Forum* shines a spotlight on the longstanding ties between European higher education institutions and the 'Global South', a contested term used here to refer to countries facing development challenges in various world regions. In compiling this issue, we were keen to enable readers to deepen their understanding of engagement between Europe and the Global South, highlighting successes and challenges related to collaboration and focusing on opportunities for the future. Similarly, we wanted to understand a little more about the state of internationalisation in the various countries considered to be part of the Global South, and how or whether this was shaping the perspectives or priorities of European institutions in working with Southern partners and stakeholders. As Chair of the EAIE Publications Committee, I am indebted to members of the EAIE Expert Community *Cooperation for Development,* both for their commitment to publicising the call for proposals for this issue and for their contributions as authors.

Indeed, this issue opens with a synthesis of key policy drivers and issues related to the split realities between Global South and Global North authored by members of the Steering group from this Expert Community (including the Chair, Erich Thaler). Roseanna Avento and Eva Kagiri-Kalanzi then provide a historical perspective on European connections with Africa, from the initial 'scramble for Africa' through to the more inclusive agenda-setting of the EU-Africa Strategy.

Following this introduction, a series of articles looks at capacity building in the context of decolonisation, from a description of the iKudu project (a South African–European capacity development project funded by the European Union) to a reflection by Petra Pistor on new opportunities for cooperation as a result of the digital turn. Writing from Myanmar, James Kennedy challenges the assumptions inherent in Global North perspectives on internationalisation and puts forward five principles as a basis for good practice in collaboration.

I'm delighted that Prof Wondwosen Tamrat agreed to be interviewed for this issue. As President of a relatively new university in Ethiopia, Prof Tamrat holds degrees from institutions in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom and Australia, and serves as a member of the International Advisory Board of the International Journal of African Higher Education. Drawing on his experiences in both the Global South and Global North, Prof Tamrat reflects on potential brain drain from Africa and the modern-day legacy of Africa's colonial history as reflected in higher education and research. Rather than framing the relationship between Europe and the Global South in terms of dependence or independence, he advocates an interdependent future in relation to research capacity, student flows and collaboration on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

A further set of articles examines more closely the impact of the current public health pandemic on collaboration between Europe and the Global South. Mark Vlek de Coningh and Huba Boshoff discuss some of the initial impacts of COVID-19 on capacity building projects led by Nuffic (the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education), while Felipe Guimarães, Kyria Finardi and Gabriel Amorim look at positive (if unexpected) effects of the pandemic on collaboration with Brazil. Sandra Rincón and Marcela Wolff add a further perspective from Latin America, with a compelling article about how careers service professionals in Europe can work with their

peers in the Global South to boost youth employability.

Following a series of institutional and national case studies – from India (by Nidhi Piplani Kapur and Amruta Ruikar), from Krygyzstan (by Martha C. Merrill), and from Lebanon (by Hala Dimechkie) – this issue then closes with reflections on the broader architecture of North-South relations. Samia Chasi challenges international education practitioners and scholars to consider their work through the lens of colonisation, recolonisation and decolonisation, while Elizabeth Colucci and Nico Jooste advocate for South–South–North partnerships as a new modality for collaboration. These closing reflections on the overarching structures of Europe's relationships with the 'Global South' leave us with a hopeful, thoughtful glance ahead towards what tomorrow's more equitable and mutually enriching North–South partnerships may hold.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR
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NAVIGATING THE NORTH–SOUTH DIVIDE

Today's exchanges and partnerships between higher education institutions in Europe and those in the regions beyond its periphery are only the latest instalment in a long history of global interaction. Could higher education hold the key to fostering more equitable relations across the North–South divide?

The phrase 'Global South' refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania, and has evolved to denote regions outside the 'Global North', *ie* Europe and North America. These are mostly low-income regions with poor infrastructure that are often also politically or culturally marginalised. At the same time, they are home to the majority of the world's population, and promise to be the motor of world economic growth in future decades.

How can higher education, with the mission of forming future leaders across all disciplines, play a role to bridge the split in realities between perspectives in the Global South and Global North? What are the different North- and South-dominated perspectives and in what way can mutual understanding be fostered through higher education? In this article, we[1] present a synthesis of key policy drivers and issues revolving around higher education initiatives between the Global South and Global North, formulating a call to action and urging readers to explore ways in which their institutions can actively contribute to bridging the gap between the realities of the Global North and South.

PERSPECTIVES ON PARTNERSHIPS

At a political level, European higher education has made clear the relevance and urgency of engaging beyond the Global North. Examples include the Africa–EU Partnership, the EU Neighbourhood Policy, the Bologna Global Policy Forum and bilateral Africa-related strategies. The European University Association (EUA) recognises the need to "keep abreast of global higher education development trends" through conscious connection with the Global South. Inclusion is also visible in a 2014 global declaration from the EAIE and IEASA in South Africa, as well as in other global partnerships such as APAIE (Asia) and AMPEI (Mexico).

Clearly, the Global South is seen as an important study destination, recruitment arena and a place for conducting valuable research. Nevertheless, most university partnerships, according to Maxim Khomyakov,[2] are based on dynamics by which resources are transferred towards the North while standards and models are received by the South. There is a perceived, and perhaps real, imbalance of power, resources and knowledge embodied in such partnerships, which is critically captured in the discourse around decolonisation. This harks back to partnerships with split perspectives, based on "Northern desires rather than Southern needs", which is now driving


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a desire for change toward egalitarian partnerships for education.[3]

Practical concerns in inter-university partnerships are prevalent. Barriers to mobility are frequently related back to lack of personal funds for students and a fear of the unknown, with many countries in the Global South appearing very distant from the perspective of higher education institutions and students based in the Global North, and *vice versa*. Amongst the potential learning of such partnerships, the opportunity for cross-cultural learning in purposeful and meaningful joint activities is huge and important to foster global thinking.

CROSS-CUTTING AGENDAS

Higher education institutions can tackle global issues within a framework of jointly-defined agendas that cut across the North–South divide. For example, NCCR North–South is an academic excellence initiative linking institutions in Switzerland, Asia, Central and Latin America as well as in Africa, which has evolved since its inception in 2001. It began as a partnership in research for sustainable development with the goal of overcoming inequalities and bringing together academic realities in one large global network. Researchers from 40 countries generated knowledge for sustainable development that supports decision– and policymakers, both locally and globally, in the fields of migration, conflict transformation, healthcare systems, sanitation and wastewater management, natural resources, sustainable regional development and governance.

Based on the rich inter-cultural learning and the recognition of the need for mutual understanding, 11 principles and seven questions for mutually beneficial partnerships have evolved from this initial collaboration. The principles cover issues such as joint agenda setting, clarification of responsibilities, promotion of mutual learning, sharing of data and networks, and pooling of profits and rewards, as well as creating a sense of urgency to enquire about the why and the how of a partnership and the creation of relevance. Following from the learning in the NCCR North–South cluster, the Swiss government, together with partner organisations in the Global South, funded programmes based on mutual learning and research. This led to the establishment of different programmes: the Bilateral Cooperation Program with BRICS countries, the SARECO Program for research and innovation with Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Global North–South partnership initiative SUDAC of swissuniversities, the umbrella organisation of the Swiss universities.

BUILDING GLOBAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A more recent example of a Global South initiative demonstrates how the concept of living labs can be executed as a multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary, solution-based process with focus on a community/city problem in an applied learning (R&D) environment. In the 'Cocreatemycity CoLab',[4] three South African cities (Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban) act as the physical living lab. Each city has identified a core theme by means of a consultative process of Dutch and South African stakeholders. Students from universities in both countries collaborate under the guidance of experts from city administration, consultancy and local companies to work on specific challenges. Project weeks on location are followed by virtual cooperation and coaching. The goal of the CoLab is to co-create innovative solutions across the globe for smart and resilient cities by engaging in activities in three broad categories: talent development, applied research and dissemination.

Global developments do not stop at Global North or Global South, just because that happens to be the perspective that we take or have been educated through. The initiatives of higher education projects mentioned here may inspire international education professionals to cross-check the mechanisms of their own partnerships and to further contribute to generating globally accessible knowledge. Fostering cross-cultural learning and mutual understanding for the benefit of solving global problems jointly may help pave the way for future leaders in the effort to bridge the split perspectives of North and South.

— ERICH THALER, MICHELLE GREENE, ALICIA BETTS

1. With contributions from the entire EAIE Expert Community *Cooperation for Development*, in particular Anna Sundbäck-Lindroos, Olga Khachaturyan and Tewodoros Kebede

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THE THIRD SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

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Previous bursts of European interest in Africa were fuelled by imperial appetites for natural resources or Cold War geopolitical manoeuvring. While the current scramble for knowledge and technology is on its face benign, only a concerted, collaborative effort from both continents can keep an exploitative history from repeating itself.

The first scramble for Africa in the 1800s led to European colonialists carving up the continent, seizing lands and spreading their empires. The second was during the Cold War, when African states became the battleground for the United States, the Soviet Union and the former colonial powers of Europe. The third scramble for Africa is now ongoing, driven by a need to strengthen diplomatic, strategic and commercial ties. Africa is indeed rising, boasting the youngest, fastest-growing middle class in the world and holding most of the fastest-growing economies in the world, leading to an increased global interest.

The European Union (EU) has recognised that it must adapt its engagement with Africa and is transitioning towards a mutually beneficial partnership and common actions aligned to policies in both regions. The EU–Africa strategy[1] proposes joint action on five themes: the green transition and energy access; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace, security and governance; and migration and mobility.

Beyond the EU–Africa strategy, some EU member states have drafted their own strategy documents on engaging with Africa. Germany and Ireland have done so for several years, and Estonia and Finland are the most recent member states to draft their own Africa strategies. Such strong and growing European interest in Africa raises the question: are such partnerships truly mutually beneficial – and if not, what steps need to be taken to make them so?

FROM EXTRACTION TO EXCHANGE

Steering the new scramble for Africa is trade, which, while still primarily based on traditional extraction of commodities, is transitioning to exchange of knowledge and technology. This shift puts education and research at the centre of many strategies. In the EU–Africa strategy, education, research and innovation are considered the cornerstone of development. Emphasis is placed in particular on creating greater access to inclusive, equitable, quality education, thereby enabling African youth to fully reap economic opportunities, increasing the employability of graduates, boosting entrepreneurship and aligning skills and learning outcomes to labour market demands and emerging industries. Cooperation on education and research between EU and African states is not new, however, and has long been carried out as official development assistance (ODA).

Germany supports education in Africa at centres of excellence in African universities through the German Academic Exchange Service, which provides scholarships for postgraduate studies and supports vocational skills development in Africa. The Netherlands collaborates with Africa on education and research through Nuffic, the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education, which has an office in South Africa. Nuffic provides scholarships for doctoral studies in either a Dutch university programme or a joint Dutch–South African programme. The Netherlands also contributes to education and research through other ODA initiatives.

Sweden works through the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education, and Finland implements the Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument. The coordination of projects under these various programmes is nearly always run by the European institution and programmes are aligned to the donor's development policy. We have previously noted[2] that national science and innovation policy alignment was often hardly considered, at least in the Finnish approach. Finland and South Africa's education collaboration, for instance, involved 44 capacity building projects related to education and mobility between 2009 and 2020, and 10 EU-funded research projects in 2019, which all fit this profile.[3]

TRANSPARENT PARTNERSHIPS

While there is evidence of benefits being derived from these programmes, there is a growing call to transform how such partnerships are formed, to decolonise research and education, and to address the inequalities and power imbalances between the Global North and the Global South. As knowledge increasingly becomes commoditised, addressing these issues becomes even more challenging. A constant drawback in building equitable partnerships is the complexity of resource allocation. Inevitably, money flows (most notably from North to South) tend to determine decision-making and division of labour.[4] Additionally, when examining education, research and innovation actions in the EU–Africa strategy, little is said about the benefits to Europe beyond trade and migration, while there is much information on how the partnership benefits Africa. Simultaneously, the strategy calls for the creation of incentives for education and research collaboration. But how can incentives for collaboration be created without a clear articulation of the interests of both regions and their institutions?

A NEW PARTNERSHIP PARADIGM

A paradigm shift requires change to be enacted beyond just partnering institutions to donor relations. The UK Collaborative on Development Sciences' 2017 report *Building Partnerships of Equals*[5] highlights the importance of inclusive agenda-setting from funders when working with partners in low- and middle-income countries. An inclusive agenda involves ensuring programmes are designed to meet the partner's needs and being candid regarding the funder's objectives.

There is evidence of further advances towards this transformation. Development researchers have called for a code of ethics for institutions in the Global North working with the Global South. Several institutions, including the European Commission, have signed the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings (www.globalcodeofconduct.org). In the UK, the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London has also taken the lead on decolonisation and transformation through an online training course exploring the tensions of a decolonised and ethical approach to research, whereby evolving funder guidelines can be met without compromising research ethics, cultural sensitivity and relationships with local partners and communities.[6]

Successful implementation of the EU–Africa strategy and national and institutional strategies demands African ownership of these plans. African institutions and governments are, after all, key to advancing their own development.

While European education institutions may endeavour to partner equitably and ethically with Africa, the risks of 'just another scramble for Africa', characterised by colonial and racial injustices of the past, remain valid and grave. African and European education institutions must work together to turn the tide by ensuring that transformation and structural reform are enacted at all levels.

— ROSEANNA AVENTO & EVA KAGIRI-KALANZI

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iKUDU
STRONGER TOGETHER

The iKudu project, managed collaboratively by representatives of 10 consortium partners in Europe and South Africa, represents one direction for more equitable North–South partnerships. Using Collaborative Online International Learning to connect the diverse perspectives of its participating institutions, the project facilitates the parallel processes of Africanisation, internationalisation and decolonisation.

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The iKudu project is a South African–European capacity development initiative funded by the European Union and bringing together 10 universities of diverse size, shape and character from South Africa and Europe, including traditional research universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities.[1] These institutions differ vastly in their background and experience with internationalisation and virtual exchange, but they share common goals for this project:

1. **Developing pedagogies that allow every student to participate in international education.** The traditional mode of internationalisation, which is mainly advanced through travel and physical mobility, is generally limited to those who can afford to travel or who qualify for funding. Our network members are committed to changing this dynamic and developing inclusive internationalisation models to allow all students to benefit from global learning.

2. **Creating a contextualised South African concept of internationalisation of the curriculum.** We believe it is possible to decolonise higher education by working in collaboration with partners from the former colonising continent. We understand curriculum decolonisation as a central aspect of curriculum transformation and of a transformative curriculum. We consider Africanisation, internationalisation and decolonisation as complementary processes.

3. **Forging a sustainable network of diverse universities committed to internationalisation for all.** We believe diversity is the foundation from which equal partnerships can be developed. The critical point is not with whom you collaborate, but rather how you collaborate and the value of the collaboration.

The project is managed through a steering committee and two working groups, with representatives from all consortium partners present in each of these components, which helps to foster inclusivity.

> Diversity is the foundation from which equal partnerships can be developed

Workgroup One focuses on curriculum internationalisation and transformation, as well as the role that Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) can play in this. Workgroup Two focuses on establishing partnerships for these COIL projects, training the lecturers and evaluating the projects. The aim is to set up 55 projects involving more than 50 lecturers and 5000 students, while promoting understanding of internet-based tools to use for COIL exchanges.

Although the pace of the project has been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been possible to conduct most activities online, having already achieved much. This article will highlight two examples of such achievements: one from Workgroup One, focusing on the implementation of self-evaluation through appreciative inquiry, and the other from Workgroup Two, involving a recently-completed COIL project carried out by two universities.

EXAMPLE ONE: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

The original plan was for Workgroup One to conduct site visits to analyse the state of curriculum internationalisation at the South African partner universities and understand the existing policy frameworks there. However, as travel was stopped, a virtual 'appreciative inquiry' approach was adopted instead. This approach enabled not only the South African but also the European partners to appraise their progress in terms of internationalisation of the curriculum and curriculum transformation, and to write a self-evaluative narrative report.

Appreciative inquiry thus allowed each partner university to affirm where it wanted to go with curriculum transformation, to value what had been done and to appreciate the potential that could be fulfilled. Based on these reports, and the learning gained from the sharing of university policy and practice, strategies were put together for the contextualised change that each institution wanted to achieve.

EXAMPLE TWO: COIL

Diversity was central to an exchange between the University of Limpopo, a comprehensive university with a historically disadvantaged background in rural South Africa, and the University of Siena, one of the oldest traditional research universities in Europe.

This pilot COIL collaboration took place in November 2020 and lasted for four weeks, involving nine postgraduate law students from Limpopo and 18 undergraduate political science students from Siena. In addition to weekly shared live lessons, the students had to work together to conduct an analysis of a practical situation in which human rights and religious legal systems could come into conflict, through a comparison between the approaches of the South African and Italian legal systems. The students presented their findings both as a written essay and as an oral presentation to their peers. These presentations were assessed by lecturers using a collaboratively designed rubric.

In addition to the North–South divide and language divide, the South African students were from different ethnic groups, with most originating from rural areas in close proximity to their university campus, whereas the Italian students came largely from highly-developed towns and cities. What was apparent was how students' ideas of difference allowed for an in-depth exploration of the diversity within the group. The students shared information about their own religious and cultural heritage, with some of the South African students dressing in traditional attire and sharing cultural practices. Most students noted that their stereotypical ideas of their peers from the partner countries were not realised, and the gradual discovery of more similarities than differences facilitated the two groups' bond as the course progressed.

> The gradual discovery of more similarities than differences facilitated the two groups' bond as the course progressed

One South African student said: "In my experience, we stigmatise our different behaviours every single day, also in our democratic country, and most people are afraid of diversity just because they do not know other points of view or merely do not want to accept another point of view. Every single person should have the possibility to meet and have a relationship with someone without prejudices."

And an Italian student commented: "Thanks to the iKudu project, I added one more fundamental frame on my personal journey to a deeper awareness of who I am and who I would like to be in the future: the two identities connected by the interest for human rights and the curiosity to know other cultures as much as I can."

Nonetheless, logistical issues faced by the South African students included connectivity and data accessibility. In this pilot, which occurred during a university lockdown, students did not necessarily have access to on-campus connectivity; however, the students overcame this barrier, for example through asynchronous engagement when connectivity was possible, and it provided important insight into the socio-economic realities some students face.

AMPLIFYING STRENGTHS

In summary, what the two examples illustrate, and what the iKudu project has so far identified, is that an inclusive internationalisation model can be successfully developed and implemented – even during a pandemic. The experience so far has taught us that what matters most is the manner in which you collaborate, and that you must use diversity to amplify the strengths of each institution, its lecturers and its students. We hope that the approach taken in the iKudu project can amount to a step towards building a solid, equitable framework of North–South relations.

> iKudu proves that an inclusive internationalisation model can be successfully developed and implemented – even during a pandemic

— REINOUT KLAMER, LIZE-MARI MITCHELL & KATHERINE WIMPENNY

1. In addition to the listed authors, our special thanks to iKudu project partners Cornelius Hagenmeier and Lynette Jacobs at the University of the Free State (South Africa) for their contributions to this article.

DIGITAL AFRICA

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR THE FUTURE

The presence and quality of basic educational infrastructure remains one of the most persistent and deeply-rooted inequalities between universities in Europe and Africa. As digital technology in education continues the transition from luxurious enhancement to basic necessity, investing in digitalising African higher education is a win-win for partners in both the North and the South.

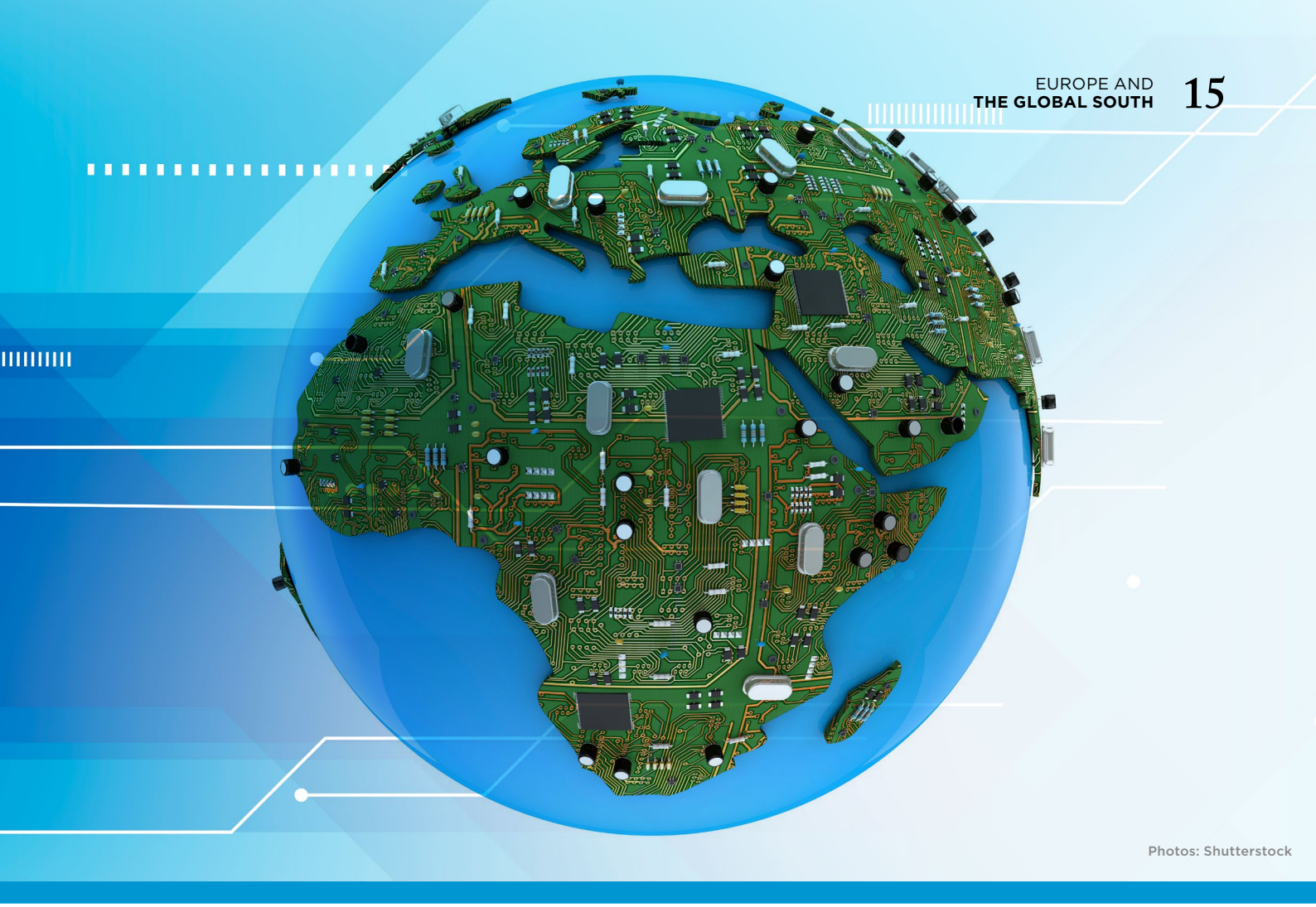
Good education not only ensures the long-term prosperity of individuals but can also promote social participation and responsibility – and ultimately the growth of economies of entire nations. But higher education institutions in developing countries are poorly equipped in material and financial terms, according to the UNESCO *Global education monitoring report 2019*.[1] This also has an impact on the management skills and teaching competencies of university staff. Thankfully, the rapidly advancing digital transformation on the African continent can help to solve some of these challenges.

BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

In Africa, not all universities are able to adequately perform their research, teaching and community outreach tasks. Issues with university management, educational quality and credit transfer make it difficult for African universities to compete globally and to develop their international orientation. Accordingly, the European Union is contributing to the achievement of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal – quality education – through its development cooperation in Africa.

For Germany in particular, the promotion of education in Africa is a key area of development policy. For capacity building projects in higher education, development aid organisations usually draw on experts from the sector, which is not without its challenges. The implementation of such projects in higher education in developing countries usually involves a lot of travel and is often cumbersome and exhausting.

For German institutions, participation in such initiatives is attractive for their international image, and the universities are of course assuming global social responsibility. On the other hand, capacity building projects are not necessarily financially attractive; often, this kind of project – since it is regarded as development aid and a contribution from the 'Northern partner' is expected – is designed as shortfall funding. Moreover, intercultural project management can be quite demanding.



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It takes enthusiastic, internationally-experienced experts to carry out such projects. These are not always easy to find.

Issues with management, educational quality and credit transfer make it difficult for African universities to compete globally

BUILDING DIGITAL CAPACITIES

The African continent has long recognised the potential for digital transformation. It plays a major role, for example, in the African Union's Agenda 2063. Initiatives such as eLearning Africa, a global network of professionals founded in 2005 and working in the field of ICT and education to foster digital learning, and OER Africa, an association founded in 2008 to support the understanding and development of open educational resources as well as open and distance learning, are playing a decisive role in shaping the digital change. The Association of African Universities massively increased its distance professional development workshops on all kinds of topics in the field of higher education in 2020, and there are many other stakeholders in Africa supporting the continent's digital transformation. This will significantly facilitate and advance cooperation between Africa and its Northern partners.

In the area of capacity building in higher education, this concretely means 'going online' more than before. From this, the following benefits can be expected:

- Cost savings in the long run, even taking into account additional costs for hardware and software and the development of digital literacy
- Access to further education for more people and more heterogeneous target groups
- More sustainable access to up-to-date teaching and learning materials via online platforms
- Expanded offers from training providers because of fewer travel days (today in Marrakech, tomorrow in Nairobi)
- Simplified project management across borders due to easier communication
- Better availability of international experts
- Easier networking of professionals in and across countries and continents
- Climate protection

NO CURE-ALL

All this is not to suggest that digitalisation is the solution to every challenge. Depending on the level of development of a target country and the topic, the possibilities vary. Following the first major wave of the coronavirus pandemic, both the Association for the Development of Education in Africa[2] and the eLearning

Africa network[3] published illuminating reports on the impact on education in Africa. Followed by poor access to electricity and technology, the biggest hurdle to digitalising higher education in Africa is poor digital literacy and a lack of capacity building in this area, according to 71% of respondents in a survey conducted by eLearning Africa.

These difficulties affect tertiary education more in less-developed countries and rural areas. Higher education institutions from these areas still have difficulties in benefiting from rapidly available, online training opportunities. The digital divide therefore persists and the education sectors outside major cities and capitals face the biggest challenge if they do not catch up in terms of building infrastructure and digital literacy.

The biggest hurdle to digitalising higher education in Africa is poor digital literacy and a lack of capacity building in this area

POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Nevertheless, the future looks bright. In March 2020, the European Commission published a communication to the European Parliament and the European Council entitled *Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa*.[4] The communication proposes enhanced cooperation focusing on five sectoral partnerships, one of which is digital transformation. It is expected that further funding programmes in the area of digitalisation will be launched soon, covering not only online teaching but also capacity building in the area of higher education management.

In addition to this, it is remarkable that an association of states is able to find such clear and concrete words in a strategy document as can be found in the African Union's digital transformation strategy:

> *By 2030 all our people should be digitally empowered and able to access safely and securely […] all the time wherever they live in the continent at an affordable price […] through a smart device manufactured in the continent […] to benefit from all basic e-services and content, of which at least 30% is developed and hosted in Africa. [We will] offer a massive online e-skills development programme to provide basic knowledge and skills in security and privacy in digital environment to 100 million Africans a year by 2021 and 300 million per year by 2025.*[5]

This commitment, combined with the funding outlook, can only make us feel positive about using the digital potential for North–South capacity building partnerships in the future.

— PETRA PISTOR

1. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2019). *Global education monitoring report 2019: Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls.* https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265866

2. Association for the Development of Education in Africa. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on Africa's education: Reflecting on promising interventions and challenges, towards a new normal. https://www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_covid-19_on_africas_education_final_report.pdf

3. eLearning Africa. (2020). The effect of COVID-19 on education in Africa and its implications for the use of technology: A survey of the experience and opinions of educators and technology specialists. https://www.elearning-africa.com/ressources/pdfs/surveys/The_effect_of_Covid-19_on_Education_in_Africa.pdf

4. European Commission. (2020). Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa. Brussels. https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/communication-eu-africa-strategy-join-2020-4-final_en.pdf

5. African Union. (2020). The digital transformation strategy for Africa 2020–2030. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf

THE FINE LINE BETWEEN INTERNATIONALISATION & RECOLONISATION

Capacity building programmes can transform universities and societies – as long as they ensure that 'internationalisation' isn't code for 'recolonisation'. Examples from Myanmar highlight five guiding principles for changing not only *what* Europe does with Southern partners, but *how* it is done. ▸

Photo: Shutterstock

Internationalisation, as currently defined and practised by universities in the Global North, is predicated on a number of interrelated assumptions about higher education that are common across Europe. The first is that universities are autonomous bodies, with a legal status that enables them to award degrees and enter into agreements with other universities, governments, companies and non-governmental organisations. Second: that faculty are permitted to travel for research and to conferences, that universities can appoint visiting professors and that students have freedom to take part in international mobility. Third: that universities have control of their own funding.[1] And finally: that leading universities are able to appoint the best scholars regardless of their nationality, thus attracting top talent from around the world to their institutions. However, these assumptions don't hold up well in all contexts.

CONSTRAINTS IN THE SOUTH

In contrast, universities in the 'Global South' – a term used here as shorthand for low-income and lower middle-income countries as defined by the World Bank – are dependent on ministries of education for the appointment and dismissal of rectors and faculty, for the signing of memoranda of understanding and other international agreements, and for permission to travel internationally.

For example, a professor from Myanmar, if invited to an international conference with full funding, needs to seek permission from the rector, the education ministry, the finance ministry and finally the ministry of foreign affairs for the issue of a passport. This process may take months and often is only completed after the conference has passed. Students are unable to take up exchange opportunities unless they are totally funded, including airfares as well as tuition, accommodation and living expenses.

These constraints mean that internationalisation as practised in the Global North is almost impossible in the Global South. If the goal of internationalisation is to equip a generation of young people with the cognitive skills and personal perspectives to tackle shared global challenges, then universities in the South simply do not have the autonomy, funding or experience to achieve this.

> Internationalisation as it is practiced in the Global North is almost impossible in the Global South

What, then, can be done through capacity building projects to overcome these barriers? I would like to suggest five principles that serve as a basis of good practice.

1. Address power differences

Acknowledge and provide a counterweight to the power difference through inclusion and consultation. From the beginning of the relationship, the partner in the North usually holds all the cards: the funding, the application process and the track record to impress the donor. Project leadership, management, reporting and evaluation all typically rest with the Northern partner. The partner in the South is sometimes asked to contribute some basic text to the bid, but the full proposal is often not shared before submission. Partners in the South are assigned project management and monitoring roles, but in most cases the resulting reports are ventriloquised by the Northern partner. The lack of agency for the partner in the South, the exclusion from decision-making and their designation as a passive recipient of funding has (short of coercion) all the characteristics of a colonial relationship – and there is often an implicit message from the North that "if you don't do what we say, you won't get the project".

2. Be realistic

Start capacity building from where the partners are now, not from where we are in Europe and not from where you assume they are: engage with them before designing a capacity building project. Internationalisation goals for universities in the South tend to focus on upgrades to faculty (PhDs are rare), further study opportunities for graduates, funding for research and infrastructure, particularly ICT hardware and software, and access to global research databases and laboratory equipment. This may sound instrumentalist compared with some of the idealistic aims of the Northern partners, but it reflects the stark reality of the lack of resources. What else can you do if you want to run a university of international standing for 20,000 students on a budget of less than €5m?

3. Go more than halfway
Appreciate the cultural differences and go more than halfway to adapt your own practices. Academic freedom in the South is tempered by a lack of power and autonomy. There is a hypocrisy in Northern universities grandstanding their objections to perceived human rights violations in the South while turning a blind eye to documented breaches of globally agreed-upon norms in some wealthier middle-income countries that offer lucrative contracts. If you come from a culture where the questioning of a teacher or a professor by a student is considered disrespectful, you are unlikely to comment critically on the design of a project or inaccuracies and misjudgements in a report prepared by your partner from the North. If partners do not understand and discuss this intercultural difference explicitly, projects are likely to fail.

4. Coordinate with others
Your university is not the only show in town: work with other international partners who are already engaged in similar areas. Many donors and lending agencies are active in higher education: multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, United Nations agencies, the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and bilateral funders such as those from the United States, Germany, Japan, Korea, China and Australia. Rarely are projects and activities that are funded by different donors coordinated: for example, separate Erasmus+, German Academic Exchange Service and ASEAN Plus Three projects all offer capacity building for internationalisation in Myanmar, without any communication between them. The ministry is happy to accept any help it can get, and it is left to the bewildered faculty and international office staff at the university to try to balance the conflicting requirements. In one week at the University of Yangon, the rector was expected to be at three internationally sponsored conferences on the same subject of higher education reform running concurrently at his university, all timed to take place in the cool season, when travel for the Northern partners is more pleasant.

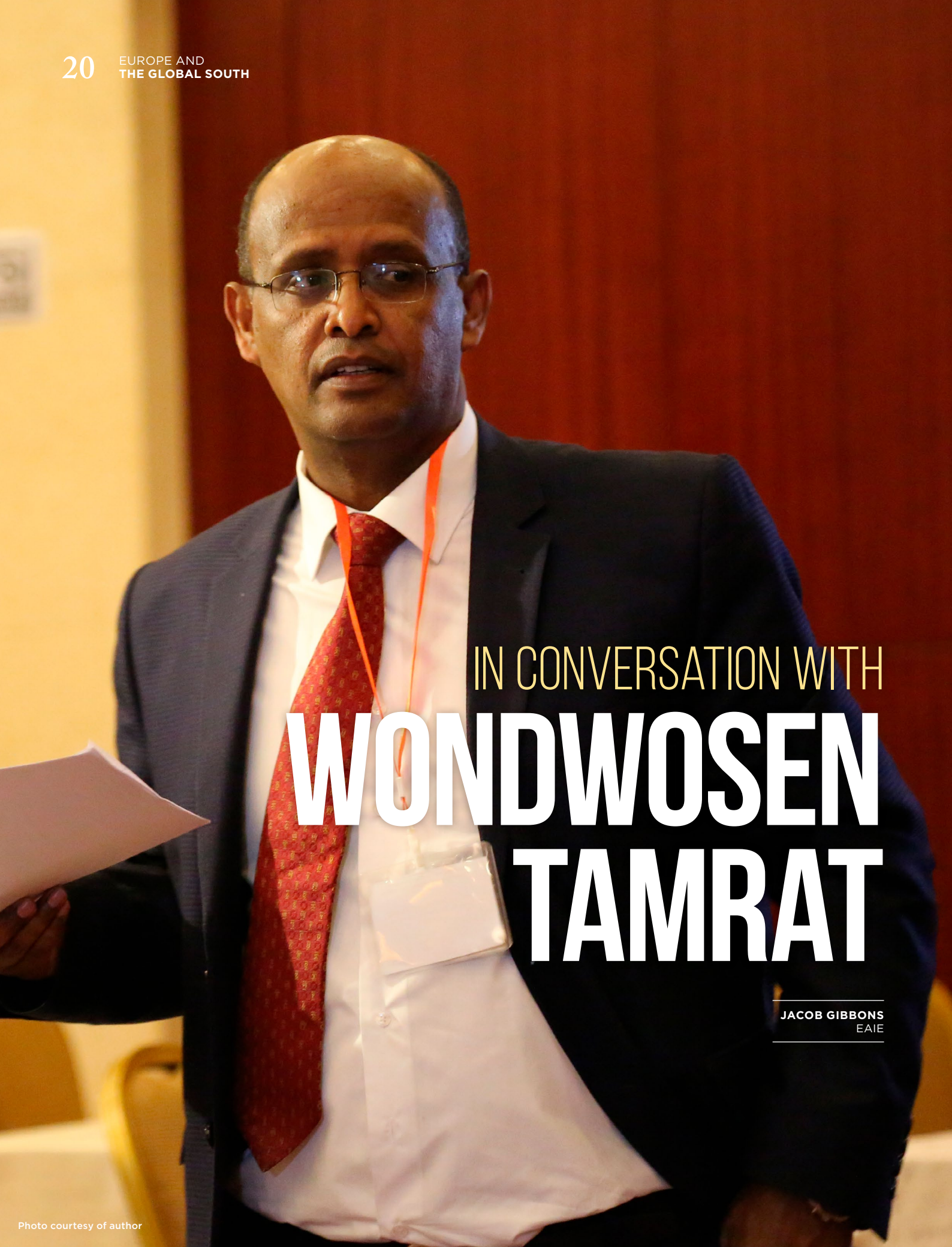
5. Hold high ethical standards
Ensure any capacity building internationalisation projects meet the standards of your university's ethical foreign policy. Universities have well-elaborated processes for ethical approval of research projects and practices. Some have applied similar thinking to development and capacity building activities, but bad practice is still in evidence. Before entering into international partnerships, universities should state explicitly their approach to transparency, equality, authority structures and publicity for the project. This policy should be consistently applied and shared with partners, and its implementation should be rigorously assessed just as project finances are audited.

TIME FOR CHANGE
With the new multi-annual funding for Erasmus+ now approved, European universities should be reassessing not only what they do with partners from the Global South, but more importantly, how they do it. Erasmus+ rightly aims to be greener, more inclusive and more digital. The inclusion of perspectives from the Global South should be added to these objectives to prevent a return to colonial practices and enable capacity building programmes to achieve their true potential for transforming universities and societies.

—JAMES KENNEDY

European universities should be reassessing not only what they do with partners from the Global South, but more importantly, how they do it

1. The European University Association has done an excellent analysis on comparative autonomy of universities. See European University Association. (2017). *University autonomy in Europe III: The scorecard 2017.* https://www.eua.eu/resources/publications/350:university-autonomy%C2%A0in-europe-iii-%C2%A0the-scorecard-2017.html



IN CONVERSATION WITH WONDWOSEN TAMRAT

JACOB GIBBONS
EAIE

Photo courtesy of author

With Master's degrees from institutions in Ethiopia, the United Kingdom and Australia, Prof Wondwosen Tamrat has spent his life learning from experiences on both sides of the equator. In 1998 he founded St. Mary's University in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he is currently President and Associate Professor, in addition to his involvement in various higher education associations and organisations operating in Ethiopia and the wider African continent. In his discussion of the complex relationship between Europe and Africa, he highlights the need to pursue not *independence,* but rather *interdependence* between the neighbouring continents.

From a historical perspective, Europe and Africa have had a complex relationship. How important is Europe for Africa (and *vice versa*) over the coming period?

WT: Europe is of course very near to Africa: there are only 14 kilometres between Spain and Morocco, and only 145 kilometres between Sicily and Tunisia, and we have had a strenuous history due to colonialism. In many ways, the whole of Africa has this sense of paternalism, humiliation and exploitation toward Europe that has come as a result of that history. But you could say that things have improved in many ways since colonial times.

Yet, there is some sense of reservation as to whether the relationship between Europe and Africa has come far enough. Some people note that, despite many countries attaining independence, there are still strong European influences in terms of culture, language, religion, finance, technology and more. The relationship between the two continents is often understood in terms of changing from what was once overt or direct control under colonialism, to a more subtle kind of relationship. There is a growing mutual understanding that more needs to be done in the areas of fair trade, private investment, and things like bottom-up economic development.

I think this is the right time for stronger and more sensible cooperation between the two continents, as Europe also has a lot to offer to further assist Africa. In terms of education and higher education in particular, Europe has been one of the strongest contributors to the development of the African continent, and has much to offer in the future.

We don't have to look for Northern solutions for local problems – we have had our own ways of solving problems for ages and ages

Some institutions in Europe are turning their attention to decolonising the curriculum. Is this also the case in Ethiopia?

WT: The issue of decolonising education has been a very sensitive one, especially after the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement in South Africa. The history of decolonising the curriculum is much more than that, but this movement popularised it. The way I understand the concept of decolonisation is that it's about changing a curriculum tradition and practice which is supportive of colonial legacy and promotes the Global Northern intellectual tradition as superior and universal. Such a model of knowledge dissemination has an impact in terms of how knowledge is generated,

as well as students' psychology and the way they relate to their societies. At some point, people will say, what about our ideas? What about our religions? What about our backgrounds? What about our ways of doing this and that?

The Ethiopian context is interesting in terms of this, as Ethiopia has never been colonised, and it has had its own religious education for more than 1700 years. Despite this, when we moved into modern education, we had to rely on the West for almost everything. Our higher education history starts in 1950, when the University College of Addis Ababa was founded with the assistance of the Jesuit Canadians. Up until 1974, the Americans dominated in terms of educational structures, financing and teaching staff.

Nowadays there are conscious moves to include local and indigenous components into the education system. We don't necessarily have to look for Northern solutions for local problems. We have had our own ways of solving problems for ages and ages. We may have a lot to learn from how knowledge has been generated in the North, but we still also have our own knowledge to contribute to the world.

Ethiopia has been investing in recent years to build research capacity locally. How successful has this been? And has this led to a reduced dependency on imported 'Western' knowledge?

WT: Ethiopia is indeed trying to build its research capacity. The Ethiopian government set the goal of becoming a middle income country by 2025, and one of the major challenges in reaching that goal thus far has been research and research capacity. The amount of money spent on research and development is around 0.27% of our GDP, which is very small, even by African standards. This results in limited budgets, problems with infrastructure and facilities, and shortages of qualified personnel.

That brings us to the question of whether we are independent of the Western knowledge or not: that's a straight 'no'.

Not in the near future, and maybe not even in the longer term. The Ethiopian higher education system is almost fully funded by the government, but we continue to receive donor assistance in terms of capacity building, systems improvement, training, human resources development, leadership, joint research projects, and joint academic programmes. Furthermore, we have a limited number of personnel: around 8% of the Ethiopian teachers are from other countries, especially at the PhD level, so we have to rely on the assistance of the West and also from elsewhere in the Global South. If you look at teachers working at many public universities in Ethiopia, for example, you will find that there are many Indians, Nigerians and Filipinos, as well as Europeans.

Rather than talking about *independence* from 'imported knowledge', I would prefer to talk about *interdependence*. As much as we would like to be independent and self-sufficient, we must also continue learning from each other.

Rather than talking about independence from 'imported knowledge', I would prefer to talk about interdependence

Europe remains an important study destination for many in the Global South, leading to concerns about 'brain drain'. Does the tradition of imbalanced partnerships and student flows between Europe and the Global South continue to hold? How can these imbalances be countered?

WT: Brain drain is a critical challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa: there are more African scientists and engineers in the West than within the African continent. We have challenges like job scarcity, low wages, political instability and poor educational systems, what we usually call the 'push factors' that drive educated Africans out of the continent. In terms of 'pull factors' from the North, things are much better in terms of security, salaries, social mobility, and all the things that naturally attract people, which will continue to be the case whatever we do here in the South.

At one level, the solution starts with designing strategies to retain our academics and better accommodate their needs. There must also be strategies to develop local capacity, producing more academics in-country. Efforts to produce highly-educated citizens locally have increased

in the last two decades, recently reaching 3500 PhDs awarded each year, and the government aspires to produce 5000 PhDs annually in the next few years. We also need to learn to make use of the diaspora, whether it be in the form of teaching courses, transferring knowledge and technology, resource generation or coming here on short-term basis to help build the systems and then assist from afar.

Improvements to research infrastructure and facilities could also encourage many Ethiopian researchers to stay within the continent. The Global North could help in rebuilding universities and working together with African countries to build 'centres of excellence' at the regional, national and even international levels. For instance, when the COVID-19 outbreak began, West Africa had a lot of experience with managing viral outbreaks from their experiences with the Ebola virus, from which the West had much to learn. Contributing to centres of scientific excellence in African countries is very important, and the whole world can benefit from such initiatives.

There are more African scientists and engineers in the West than within the African continent

What opportunities do you see for institutions in Europe and the Global South to collaborate on the UN Global Sustainable Development Agenda and the SDGs?

WT: The spirit of the SDGs relates to what universities should do and what universities have been doing throughout history, and the SDGs themselves emphasise the importance of global cooperation. Goal 17, for example, talks about revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development, and specifically says that we need to enhance North-South and South-South cooperation and international support for improving effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries. These are initiatives that cannot be carried out by the North or the South alone.

The way the SDGs have been structured recognises the importance of global cooperation and active participation of different stakeholders, including universities, which are expected to play a significant part in the success of SDGs. However, the literature indicates that universities are not pushing as much as they should be, in terms of realising these goals. Universities in the North and in the South, in whatever they do – education, as well as community outreach and research – must continue to learn from each other and collaborate to find out how to better handle the future demands of humanity. I think the cooperation between the North and the South is critical here – we can't do it without each other.

CAPACITY BUILDING

LESSONS FROM COVID-19

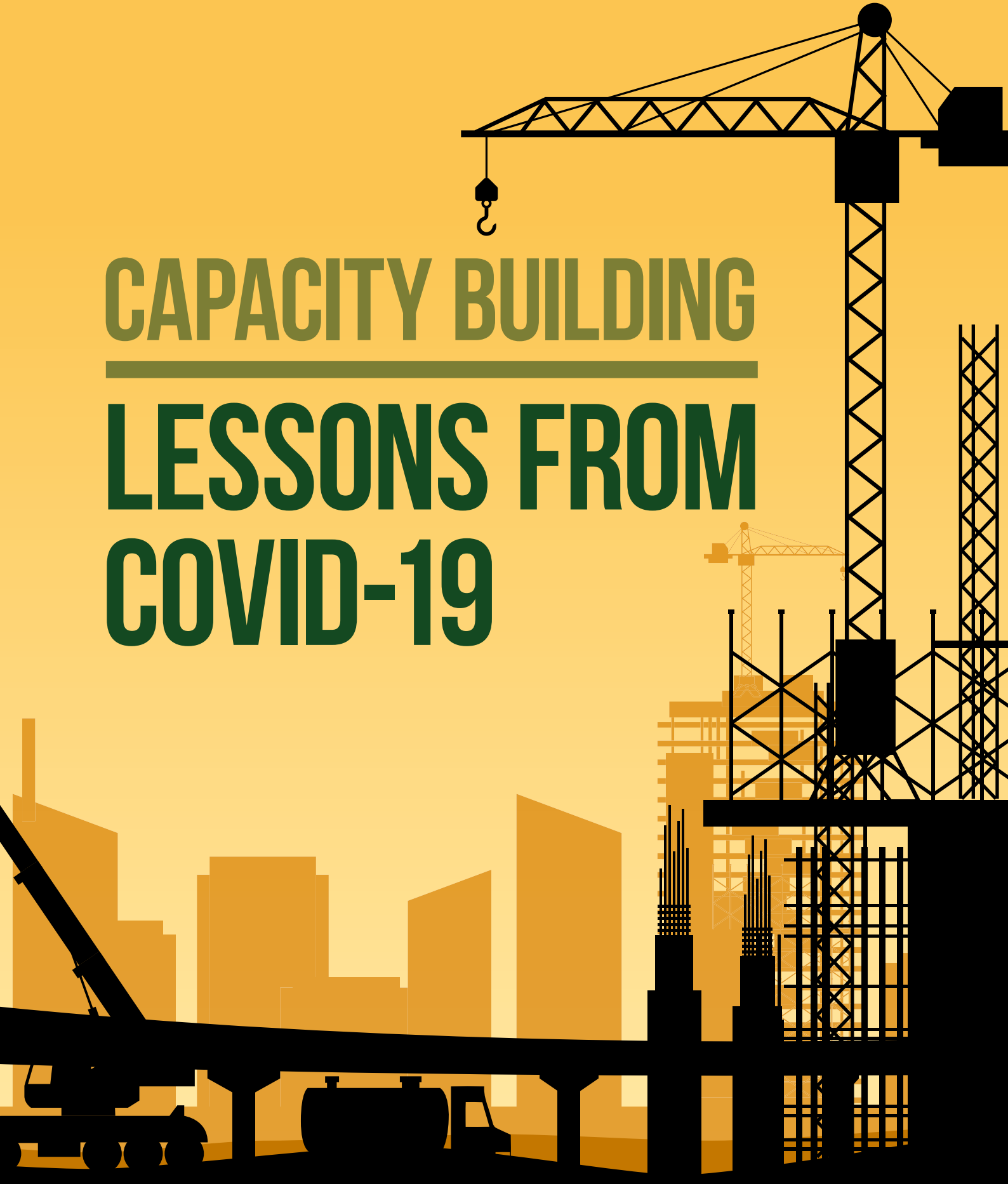
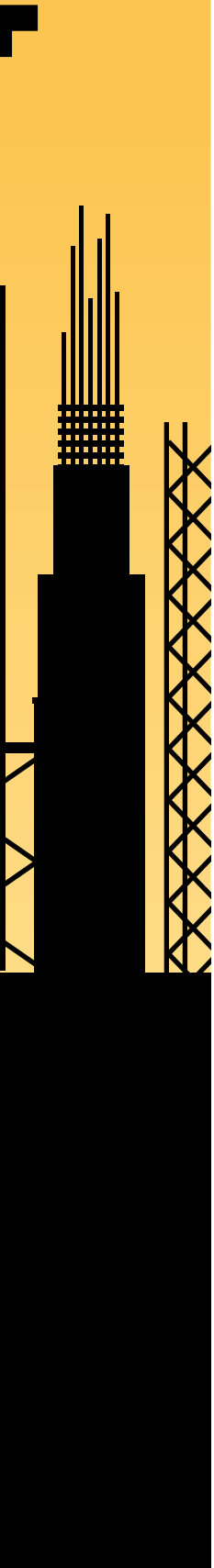


Illustration: Shutterstock



When COVID-19 brought international mobility to a halt, the flagship capacity building programme of the Netherlands' organisation for international education suddenly faced a host of new challenges. Experiences in South Africa yielded new understandings about collaborating with partners on the other side of the world from afar.

Nuffic, the Dutch organisation for international education, has a long history of working towards capacity development in the Global South, and never have we faced such a challenge to our work as that posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. From one day to the next, schools, airports and countries closed for business, leaving projects and programmes dead in the water.

> Never have we faced such a challenge to our work as that posed by the COVID-19 pandemic

Our flagship Orange Knowledge Programme, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, works in 54 countries around the globe and disburses around €60m annually in capacity building projects and scholarships. Needless to say, adjusting this programme, which is strongly reliant on the mobility of individuals, was a Herculean task. However, we and our local implementing partners in the South worked incredibly hard and we were able to turn things around together.

MAPPING THE RESPONSE

In September 2020, we sent out a survey to our partners to map out how they had responded to COVID-19 and to gauge the estimated impact the pandemic would have on projects. What were they doing to adjust their projects to the pandemic, and was it working? In total, the questionnaire was answered for 178 projects. These ranged from smaller, tailor-made training activities to large-scale institutional cooperation projects. We tried to measure the effects of the pandemic in terms of:

- Project impact
- Timing and delays
- How projects had to be adapted
- Whether budgets would be fully spent

In this article, we share some of the insights of that survey and focus on how Dutch institutions, together with local partners, have adapted and redesigned their activities to deliver the best possible projects within the very complicated context of the pandemic.

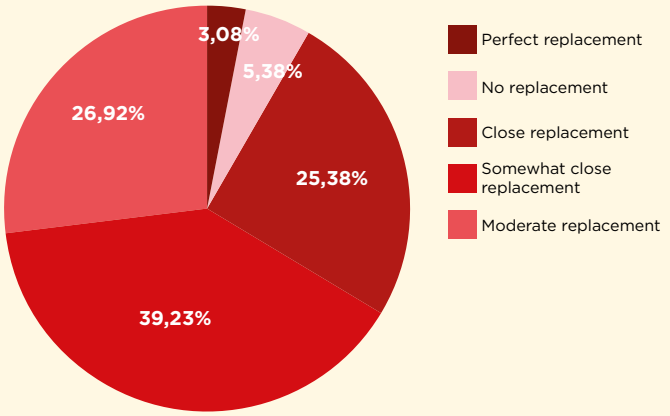
ADAPTATION

When it came to adaptation, we needed information on two things: What did our partners change and what were their experiences with those changes? We paid particular attention to the possibility of 'going online', as we identified that as the most obvious adaptation and a potential catalyst for future activities. However, we also understood that some activities would not lend themselves to simply going online and would have to be redesigned, which is more far-reaching. To this end, we asked our partners:

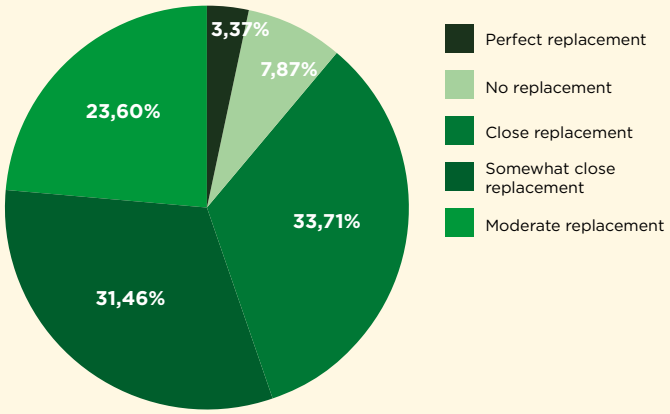
- Were activities moved online?
- Were activities redesigned in another way?

Figure 1

To what extent did online activities adequately replace the original activities? (n=130)



To what extent did redesigned activities adequately replace the original activities? (n=89)



We also wanted to know how they experienced the adaptations. Thus, for both the online and redesigned activities, we asked them to what extent these activities were adequate substitutes for the original plans. The results are outlined in Figure 1.

As can be seen, while the online or redesigned activities were rarely perfect substitutes, they were generally at least moderate replacements. Only a quarter to a third of projects reported that the online or redesigned activities were not or were only somewhat able to replace the original plans.

The wide range of adaptations by our partners underlines their flexibility. Some partners shifted budgets around to buy laptops so that participants could follow activities, some gave a larger role to local staff and others created audiovisual material for staff training. Such training helped staff to teach digitally when curricula, training methods and meetings were redesigned and moved online.

While the online or redesigned activities were rarely perfect substitutes, they were generally at least moderate replacements

IMPACT

The most urgent question was whether our projects would still be able to achieve their goals. While it is hard to measure impact – and we do not yet know how COVID-19 will affect the projects and their results in the future – we nevertheless wanted to get an idea of how strongly the outputs of our projects would be affected. To measure that, we asked respondents to assess the extent to which they thought the outputs of the projects would still be achieved. The results are shown in Figure 2.

Of all projects, over a third said they had not yet been impacted by COVID-19 and did not expect their results to be affected. Of the remaining projects, the majority reported that at least 61% to 80% of project outputs would still be achieved. In other words, there was confidence that even while having to adapt to a new reality, projects would still be able to contribute to knowledge exchange and capacity building.

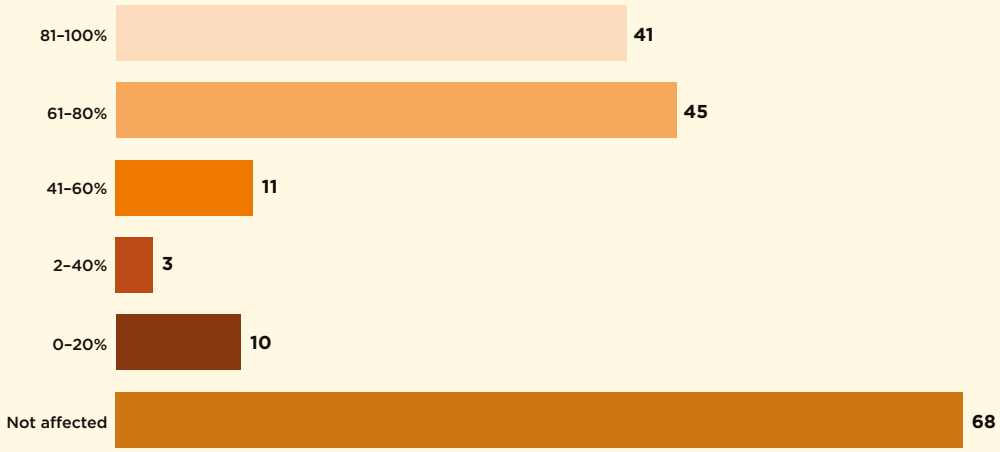
EXPERIENCES FROM SOUTH AFRICA

While we had to work rigorously in the Netherlands to manage the COVID-19 crisis programme, it was even harder for our partners implementing projects in the Global South. The COVID-19 pandemic

The speed at which institutions went online was astounding, and that digital shift likely set a new standard for what education should look like

Figure 2

To what extent will the project outputs be achieved? (n=178)



hit South Africa hard and a nationwide lockdown was in place from late March to May, which brought most sectors to a complete halt. Knowledge institutions were closed and working from home was the only alternative. This shift to working virtually highlighted the fault lines in the South African education sector, including limited access to mobile devices and high data costs, that have a direct impact on our Orange Knowledge projects.

There are three phrases that resonate when reflecting about what we experienced from projects amid the COVID-19 pandemic: resilience, joint ownership and partnership. Never has it been so important for the projects that we engage in between the Global South and the Global North to be firmly built on principles of joint ownership and strong partnerships. The way that project partners responded to the pandemic is an illustration of projects that are grounded in partnership values of trust, commitment and ownership. We saw local partners and coordinators taking on a larger share of the work in terms of communication. We also saw the ways in which project teams connected virtually, even in cases where connectivity was limited, to find alternative ways for project activities to be conducted.

LESSONS LEARNED

The COVID-19 crisis has been a huge learning experience for our organisation and our partners. It is our firm conviction that we will be seeing the impact of COVID-19 in our programming for years to come – and often for the better.

Contexts are always changing, and true impact is made when our projects change along with them

One of the few positives to come out of COVID-19 is that it has been a great catalyst for the digitalisation of education globally. The speed at which institutions went online was astounding, and that digital shift has likely set a new standard for what education should look like, not only in Europe but also globally. This also brings new challenges: we have to be mindful not to expand the digital divide, especially in the Global South, and we must understand that digitalisation is, as shown by the survey, not a perfect substitute for face-to-face initiatives.

Furthermore, local ownership and strong partnerships are more important than ever. If we are moving to a world in which mobility is more limited, having local partners who truly complement your organisation is crucial. The key is to foster mutual trust in these relationships.

Finally, the crisis shows that flexible programming pays off. This is beyond just preparing for the unforeseen: it is about understanding that contexts are always changing and that true impact is made when our projects change along with them.

— MARK VLEK DE CONINGH & HUBA BOSHOFF

FROM PANDEMIC TO PARADIGM SHIFT

Pandemic interruptions to international mobility have thrown a wrench in the works for many institutions' international ambitions, but for some countries in the Global South, it may also present an opportunity. The case of a partnership between universities in Brazil and the UK demonstrates how Southern institutions can capitalise upon digital tools to seize the moment and reorient long-standing relationships between North and South.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the internationalisation of higher education was often equated with academic mobility, largely concentrated in four countries in the Global North: Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA accounted for more than half of all international students. With the disruptions caused by the closure of international borders as a measure to fight COVID-19, higher education institutions all over the world have had to switch to some sort of distance education. In the case of Brazil and other countries in the Global South, private institutions that depend on students' fees (88% of Brazilian institutions) rapidly switched to online classes, while public, state-funded universities took longer, initially focusing on research and outreach activities to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

Brazil faces significant challenges in the move towards virtual education and mobility, especially in the form of its 'digital divide', as not all Brazilian students have access to information and communication technologies. Besides issues of access, there is a language gap, with few Brazilians speaking any language apart from Portuguese, and an imbalance in terms of international partnerships, which are focused mainly on competitive orientations with partners in the Global North.

Despite these challenges, the disruption of the pandemic has in some ways presented an opportunity for countries like Brazil to embrace digital technologies in an effort to reorient their relationships with partners in the Global North.

EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS

The trend towards international higher education in the Global South has also had to weather many storms in recent years. Education reforms have significantly diminished public funding for education, negatively affecting research outside science, technology, engineering and maths disciplines.

Imbalanced partnerships and one-directional student flows are major concerns in cooperation between Europe and the Global South. According to UNESCO,[1]

Photo: Shutterstock

most Brazilian students choose European countries – France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the UK – as their main destination for exchange programmes. This trend can also be seen in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Algeria, Morocco and other countries in the Global South. The number of international students flowing from Europe to the Global South is considerably smaller.

Cooperation between Europe and the Global South could contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – especially SDG 4: quality education – through initiatives that promote global citizenship education (GCE) and more balanced relations in higher education. Under the GCE umbrella, Europe and the Global South could work together on themes such as curriculum reform; education for social justice; multilingual education; sustainable development; intercultural awareness; and issues of accessibility and inclusion in education.
The relationship between Europe and the Global South has evolved during the pandemic as cross-border interactions have migrated to new virtual environments. This has allowed different agents, from different countries and institutions, to be part of international conversations. Internationalisation is moving away from physical mobility, which is available to less than 2% of Brazilian academics, to more global academic interactions in the form of virtual mobility. Opportunities such as virtual exchange and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) have emerged and are contributing to the transformative education agenda proposed by the GCE initiative.

A COIL CASE STUDY

A COIL project between the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES) in Brazil and Coventry University in the UK materialised during the pandemic by way of digital platforms. The collaboration aims to use technology to connect scholars to governments, businesses and communities. More specifically, it integrates the teaching of diverse content in virtual interactions through foreign languages, promoting internationalisation at UFES and Coventry as well as the transfer of knowledge, innovation and science from universities to local communities. This cooperation seeks to establish 'Thirdspaces'[2] of co-creation of knowledge to connect the agents with their surroundings, transcending borders and promoting different views of the world as we once knew it.
In observance of SDG 4, this collaboration reinforces the idea that higher education can leverage more equitable, sustainable and inclusive education and, consequently, a fairer society. Links between higher education institutions and their communities are an example of the outreach services of a university being internationalised and GCE being developed, as local and global academics and their communities combine efforts for the common good. In this way, they can provide global, national and local responses to the turmoil caused by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

PARADIGM SHIFT

As we progress through 2021 with hopes that a vaccine can ameliorate the health, sociological, economic and political commotion caused by the pandemic, we can consider it a positive side effect that higher education institutions in the Global South have gained the opportunity to effectively interact, engage and build more sustainable relations with their counterparts in the Global North, all facilitated by digital technologies. But there are still challenges to be overcome before institutions in the Global South can fully consider themselves to have gained a seat at the table, which is necessary for an ecology of knowledge to be co-created with partners elsewhere.

The fruitful collaboration between UFES and Coventry is illustrative of the paradigm shift that is needed: from competition to cooperation. COIL projects in collaboration with institutions in Europe are a more attainable possibility for Brazilian institutions than physical mobility, and they can help to fully address the GCE agenda with active participation from the Global South.

— FELIPE GUIMARÃES, KYRIA FINARDI & GABRIEL BRITO AMORIM

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2. Soja, E. W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined spaces.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

BOOSTING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

In the face of a pandemic-induced global economic recession which is poised to hit developing countries harder than their Northern neighbours, employability is a crucial concern on both sides of the globe. Examples from Latin America illustrate how Europe can cooperate with Southern partners via alumni networks and digital technologies to strengthen career services innovation in the Global South.

Between 1999 and the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the number of people living in extreme poverty worldwide fell by more than 1 billion – but the pandemic has reversed a large chunk of that progress by putting some 100 million people into extreme poverty.[1]

The International Monetary Fund, after reassessing the prospect for global economic growth for 2020 and 2021, declared the world economy to be in a recession worse than that of 2009. With historic levels of unemployment and deprivation, the Global South is facing greater economic repercussions than Europe, which has been able to deploy some financial support to its vulnerable citizens and businesses. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2.7 million companies are forecasted to shut down due to the health crisis. Job losses are expected to reach an estimated 47 million for all the countries in the region.[2]

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

A concerning figure for higher education is the 267 million young people worldwide between the ages of 15 and 24 who are not in employment, education or training.[3] Research suggests that young people entering the job market during a recession will suffer a negative impact on future earnings and job prospects. In 2019, the International Labour Organization estimated the youth unemployment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean at around 18%, the highest level in the past 30 years, and it is not expected to improve any time soon. Looking back at Europe during the global financial crisis, youth unemployment rates increased dramatically and it took several years for them to come down.

Youth unemployment should worry educators and policymakers because of its negative long-term effects. Research into Europe's youth unemployment during and after the 2009 recession shows that it can lead to increased subsequent unemployment, lower earnings, working more but receiving less welfare support, lower optimism about the future and poorer mental health. Young unemployed adults are also more likely to divorce and they experience higher rates of childlessness.[4] The COVID-19 pandemic poses similar threats and long-term effects for young people worldwide.

CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICA

Many higher education institutions in Latin America offer career counselling to their students and alumni, and they are concerned about the increase in youth unemployment and its consequences for the region's prosperity. We interviewed various career services professionals in the region to learn about the main challenges in youth unemployment. They indicated three:

1. Career development focuses on jobs rather than also developing competencies to prepare students for flexible and uncertain labour markets.
2. Career development should be integrated into the educational experience. Career, international and alumni relations offices often work in silos rather than collaborating to develop competency-based programmes to include in the curriculum and other activities during the student–alumni life cycle.
3. International alumni networks are undervalued and unexplored. In Chile, Natalia Orellana, Managing Director at the Ocides foundation for career development, highlights how urgent it is for the region's governments to address employability within public policy and to focus on career development. She emphasises that direct incentives from public policy can urge institutions to incorporate career development in the educational process and guarantee a thorough assessment of its impact.

EMERGING PRACTICES IN THE SOUTH

International students choose to study full degrees abroad not only to acquire professional knowledge and global competence but also to get work experience. Many European universities have struggled to guide international students wanting to stay to work after graduation or to find jobs back home or elsewhere.

Snapshot report on exchange mobility 2020/2021

Where has COVID-19 left exchange mobility in Europe? Drawing on survey data from late 2020, the following reports dive deep into the nuanced impact of the pandemic.

Part 1: Mobility with EHEA partners
Part 2: Mobility with non-EHEA partners
Part 3: Compulsory mobility & mobility alternatives

www.eaie.org/mobility-report

As prospective international students choose between stay-at-home or study abroad programmes, the probability of finding a job after graduation will surely play a defining role in their decision-making. Thus, universities should invest in career advice, job experience, professional development, lifelong learning and alumni networks for all their students and alumni, regardless of where they end up living.

The pandemic's disruption of higher education has pushed most universities in Europe and Latin America to offer their study programmes online. Some also offer their career services and alumni programmes virtually, which international students and alumni can access regardless of their location. The Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico, for example, provides a virtual Life and Career Center where students and alumni can develop their personal and professional growth. It offers two lines: life and career plans; and employability. The first allows students to reflect about themselves through workshops offered during three periods in their life. Employability gives them access to job fairs, internships, alumni mentors and a job bank where 48% of recent graduates have found jobs.

In Colombia, the app ConHector uses data analysis to match young people's skills to job vacancies, as well as providing training on new skills. ConHector received the TPrize, a Tecnológico de Monterrey and Universidad de los Andes initiative to encourage solutions to educational challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Furthermore, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru have an economic and development strategic platform called the Pacific Alliance, founded in 2012. This provides scholarships to strengthen the region's youth career development through student mobility and professional internships. Universities of member states are required to offer relevant study programmes and career services to guarantee the region's growth.

ALUMNI NETWORKS

Some European alumni networks also offer career services online to their international alumni. The Alumniportal Deutschland provides e-books on different career topics: preparing for your dream job, skills assessment, life balance and networking. The Swedish Institute Alumni Network organises online meetups to welcome recent graduates back to their home country and help them connect with the alumni network there.

To support the Week of the International Student 2020, the NL Alumni Network in the Netherlands hosted a virtual job fair called Here2Work, where 700 international students and alumni participated in webinars and speed networking sessions. It also ran an online conference called Here2Start, hosting 350 international alumni entrepreneurs to connect with the Dutch and Colombian start-up ecosystems.

SHARING EXPERTISE

Career services professionals interviewed in Latin America indicated that collaborating with their European counterparts in sharing practices helped to professionalise career development and alumni relations programmes and to make them more innovative.

In Peru, Dr Mariella Olivos Rossini, Executive Coordinator of the Latin American Council of Management Schools, says that staff who plan, develop and assess employability and alumni relations in universities should widen their understanding of the topic and their role throughout the student–alumni cycle. As Coordinator of the Erasmus+ Linkyou project, a collaboration between Europe and Latin America on employability, Dr Olivos believes that such projects can provide a framework for collaboration between the two regions. The Linkyou project focused on improving the employability of young graduates in Latin America by creating a network that brings together companies, academics and students.

Recognising regional differences, using technology and leveraging existing networks can lead to innovation in career services. Educators and policymakers should create ecosystems to promote career development and increase youth employability. Stronger collaboration and knowledge exchange, specifically on employability, career management and alumni relations between Europe and the Global South, are key to boosting the employability of young people and guarding their future.

Recognising regional differences, using technology and leveraging existing networks can lead to innovation in career services

— SANDRA RINCÓN & MARCELA WOLFF

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3. International Labour Organization. (2020). *World employment and social outlook: Trends 2020.* https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_734455.pdf

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EUROPE & INDIA
A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

From the Indian perspective, decolonising and internationalising education go hand in hand. Under its landmark new education policy, Indian higher education institutions are striving to forge more balanced and mutually beneficial knowledge partnerships with the rest of the world.

July 2020 was a bittersweet month in India. Despite having to cope with a pandemic in the second most populous nation in the world and deal with the dilemma of lives *versus* livelihoods, the government continued unabated on other fronts and made a historic announcement. After 34 years, a new National Education Policy was released – a joyous moment for the academic fraternity and a crucial step towards decolonising education in India.

This giant of the Global South has arrived on the world stage, and for the first time internationalisation has found a place as a key government priority. India, in its quest to become the *Vishwaguru,* or 'universal teacher', recognises the value of the exchange of knowledge and ideas with the global community. Keeping this as the foundation, the National Education Policy focuses on five pillars: access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability.

India's quest to become the *Vishwaguru,* or 'universal teacher', recognises the value of the global exchange of knowledge and ideas

NATIONAL POLICY CHANGES

For starters, India has made the following changes to advance internationalisation:

- Pivoting to multidisciplinary education, with multiple exit options for students.
- Repositioning higher education in the country through its Study in India programme, making India a new education hub.
- Helping foreign universities that feature in the top 100 of global rankings to operate in India.

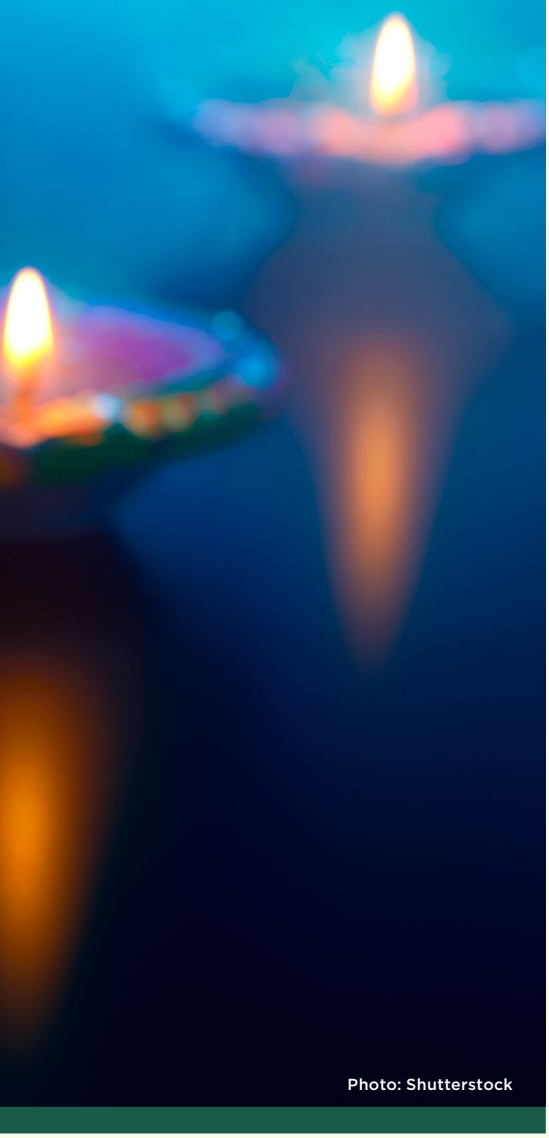


Photo: Shutterstock

- Requiring higher education institutions that host international students to set up an international office.
- Promoting Internationalisation at Home initiatives through capacity building.
- Investing in educational technology and recognising online degrees and programmes.
- Creating an international credit bank to allow students to transfer credits acquired in a foreign country.
- Setting up a National Research Foundation to enhance the quality of research outputs in universities.
- Creating a single regulatory body in higher education: the Higher Education Commission of India.

These policies, designed to be 'light but tight', should enable students to pursue their education abroad without having to worry about restrained academic freedom or their qualifications not being recognised back in India.

CULTIVATING SYMBIOSIS

Symbiosis International University, established 50 years ago, has a vision to build international understanding and a mission to achieve this through quality education. Dr SB Mujumdar, Founder and President of Symbiosis, believes in the power and influence of international students in transforming cities and the economy. Dr Vidya Yeravdekar, Pro Chancellor of the university, also works closely with the government of India in her capacity as chair for internationalisation in various task forces and chair of the FICCI Higher Education Committee.

Symbiosis is a pioneer in internationalisation and has also been mentoring institutions in the country to flourish through capacity building. The Global South has often been plagued by an imbalance in exchanges. This predated COVID-19, has been exacerbated by it and will remain after it. Stepping up Internationalisation at Home has been crucial for institutions in the Global South to continue to offer international experiences and be connected with the world.

Symbiosis has strategically focused on Europe in its internationalisation strategy and has strengthened its connections by:

- Setting up the Symbiosis Centre for European Studies, which was launched by the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.
- Offering E-Academies on internationalisation for educators, university leaders, administrators and students to equip them with multicultural skills and competencies. Expertise for these academies was drawn from the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, Germany and France.
- Integrating cutting-edge innovations such as Collaborative Online International Learning and virtual exchanges across disciplines at the university.
- Offering modules specialising in European studies and law for Master's students.
- Working with the Association of Indian Universities in creating the first Indian network for the internationalisation of education, with mentorship from the EAIE and NAFSA.
- Engaging European students in nation-building projects through internship programmes.
- Working with student bodies and student think tanks such as European Horizons and the Erasmus Student Network to strengthen the role of youth in bridging the divide between the Global North and the Global South.
- Engaging in Erasmus+ and other projects funded through the European Union.
- Working closely with European diplomatic missions, the Delegation of the European Union to India and European companies in India on various initiatives and programmes.

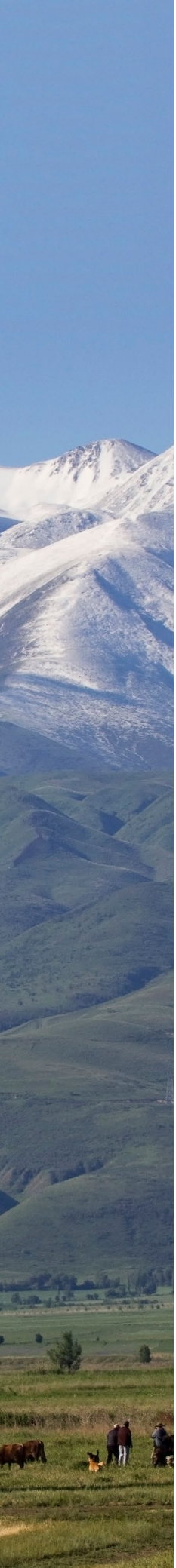
Fostering a spirit of interconnectedness, interdependence, care, agility and resilience has been the cornerstone of the blooming relationship between India and Europe. India is now ready to embrace a new wave of internationalisation and invites institutions and organisations from Europe to collaborate with Indian higher education institutions and invest in the growth of their capacity. This will also allow our European counterparts to gain from India's rich diversity and strength – Indology, Indian languages, yoga, arts and music – in addition to its social and scientific accomplishments. It is exactly this sort of two-way exchange that sits at the heart of internationalisation.

— NIDHI PIPLANI KAPUR & AMRUTA RUIKAR

BOLOGNA IN KYRGYZSTAN

The Bologna Process has ripple effects beyond the boundaries of the European Higher Education Area, exerting certain logistical pressures on the countries just beyond Europe's periphery in particular. Kyrgyzstan offers an enlightening example of how the spirit of Bologna can be adopted as the driving force behind distinctly local policy reforms.

Photo: Shutterstock



Scholars who study educational policy transfer often point out that policies are not transferred from one society to another *per se* but rather are modified, interpreted and used in ways that suit the purposes and contexts of local actors. In addition, the discourse of a policy may cross borders while the original practices and philosophy stay behind. The underlying assumptions and conditions of a policy developed in Society A may not exist and may be impossible to replicate in Society B.

Three characteristics of the Bologna Process – degree levels, student mobility and independent accreditation – play out differently in Kyrgyzstan than they do in the European Higher Education Area. The distinctions may suggest factors for educators to consider in educational policy transfer in other contexts. This is also the case when it comes to transferring Bologna Process policies and concepts to the Kyrgyz Republic in Central Asia, one of the 15 nations formed when the Soviet Union dissolved.

The underlying assumptions and conditions of a policy developed in Society A may not exist and may be impossible to replicate in Society B

THE KYRGYZ CONTEXT

Education prepares students for the future – and since the Soviet future no longer existed after the dissolution of the union, policymakers in former Soviet countries had to consider changes. Educators in the 15 nations, each with different contexts, have chosen different post-Soviet pathways, even though 11 have joined the Bologna Process.[1] Kyrgyzstan is one of the four former Soviet republics unable to join: along with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, it cannot sign the European Cultural Convention, as it has no territory in Europe, which the Berlin Communiqué of 2003 made clear was a prerequisite for membership of the Bologna Process.

Kyrgyzstan is a small, landlocked country, famous for its mountains but with few natural resources. It borders China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and has a population of 6.5 million, with a per capita income of US $3780.[2] However, statistics from 2015 show that 32% of the population lived below the poverty line.[3] Although only 12 higher education institutions existed at the time of independence in 1991,[4] the Ministry of Education and Science has now licensed 32 public and 33 private higher education institutions, including conservatories, institutes and academies as well as universities, although only a limited number are allowed to offer PhDs.[5]

As natural resources are limited and only a small amount of land is suited to agriculture, the economy requires an educated population. Attracting students from outside Kyrgyzstan is a goal of many university rectors, both for financial reasons and as an indicator of institutional quality. Also, given that Kyrgyzstanis often migrate to Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey for work, and attend universities in Russia and Turkey, Bologna reforms have held some appeal. Moreover, the Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies (TEMPUS) has been active in Kyrgyzstan and many faculty members are familiar with its mobility projects, although in interviews some faculty staff mention mobility programmes sponsored by Russia, Turkey and Malaysia in the same breath as TEMPUS projects.

DEGREE CYCLES

The Bologna Process emphasises two degree cycles (as well as a third cycle for doctoral studies), the first aiming at preparation for employment. Other

priorities are student mobility and transparent quality assurance based on a common set of standards, with evaluations by independent agencies. All three characteristics exist in Kyrgyzstan, but the context for each is different from in Europe.

In 2012, higher education institutions in Kyrgyzstan, under government mandate, began the process of shifting from Soviet-era *diploms* and *kandidat nauks* to Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and from a system based on contact hours to one based on credit hours. However, since the *diplom* was a five-year degree and the new Bachelor's in Kyrgyzstan lasts only four years, many employers are dubious of the qualifications of someone with a Bachelor's degree; this causes many students to continue directly to a Master's degree. In fact, some parents complain that they now have to pay for six years of education rather than the former five.

Therefore, the idea of the first-cycle degree as a qualification for employment does not always hold. Moreover, at some institutions in Kyrgyzstan, grades and diplomas can be bought and social networks are strong, so hiring a known person is both acceptable and a good way of being able to verify the quality of the candidate. Most universities do not have career placement centres; networks and institutional connections with employers are the preferred methods of hiring.

MOBILITY AND ACCREDITATION

Student mobility at the undergraduate level is primarily outbound, to Russia, Turkey and a few other destinations. Inbound mobility is mainly from South Asia to medical schools that teach in English. When student mobility within Central Asia was initiated as part of the TEMPUS-funded TUCAHEA project, Turkmenistani universities did not participate and Uzbekistani officials were wary of sending students to Kyrgyzstan, which had, at that time, forced two presidents from office (as of October 2020, the number is three).

Moreover, in Kyrgyzstan, which has a wide diversity of institutions, some with international connections, classes may be taught in Kyrgyz, Russian, English, Turkish and other languages. Russian as a language of instruction has connotations for nations trying to establish independent identities in the post-Soviet space, but for an Uzbek student to take classes taught in Kyrgyz, for example, may be problematic.

Independent accreditation replaced state attestation in 2016. However, the head of the National Accreditation Commission reports to the Minister of Education, and diplomas are awarded by the Ministry, not by individual institutions, so even if an accreditation agency critiques a programme, the Ministry still determines whether or not a student receives a diploma.[6]

Moreover, even though the accreditation standards approved by the National Accreditation Commission are based on the European standards and guidelines, the Ministry of Education publishes state standards for Bachelor's degrees,[7] including the number of hours required in different disciplines, so accreditation is less an evaluation of an institutional programme and more an issue of checking compliance with state standards. Notions of 'quality culture' and 'continuous improvement' are uncommon – and unfunded. At the end of the accreditation process, faculty often say, "Thank goodness we don't have to think about that for another five years."

Although all the terminology of the two-cycle degree process, student mobility and independent accreditation exists in Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyzstani contexts for implementing these reforms in terms of history, goals and finances, mean that the practices and processes of all three are realised differently than they are in Europe, so that Kyrgyzstani actors can achieve Kyrgyzstani purposes.

— MARTHA C. MERRILL

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NEVER WASTE A GOOD CRISIS

Many of the countries that collectively belong to the 'Global South' struggle with an image problem: students and staff are hesitant to spend a semester somewhere they perceive as less than safe and stable. For the American University of Beirut, however, balancing safety concerns against the appeal of learning in a crisis zone has proven key to advancing internationalisation. ▸

Photo courtesy of Sarah Bou Matar, American University of Beirut

Over the past few years, Lebanon – like so many countries in both Europe and the Arab world – has faced its fair share of social challenges and political crises, as well as movements for change as people yearned for a better future. The Lebanese higher education system has reflected these contradictory tendencies: local students have increasingly been looking to leave the country in search of better opportunities abroad, while inbound international students have demonstrated appreciation for the dynamic opportunities Lebanon provides to understand global challenges from a different perspective and lived experience.

Building trust with partners, students and their parents is crucial to counter the perception of Lebanon as an unsafe destination

The Office of International Programs (OIP) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) has been building the foundations of comprehensive internationalisation for the university since its establishment in 2009. The OIP's first internal and strategic plan, which was reviewed externally in great detail, was published in July 2020. One of the office's main objectives has been to establish new and broader partnerships with universities globally, and in particular with our European partners – whose access to European Union funds through the Erasmus+ mobility scheme has further motivated and incentivised AUB students, faculty and staff to enjoy meaningful and sustainable exchanges. The series of crises that have unfolded in Lebanon in recent years are an important context for this international strategy – but in complex, nuanced ways.

THE VIEW FROM BEIRUT

One of the factors that made our drive towards attracting international students possible was our intention to focus on building trust with our partners as well as with students and their parents. This was crucial to counter the perception of Lebanon as an unsafe destination. When some of our traditional regional competitors became less attractive due to war and political instability, we were well positioned to receive more international students who were turning to the AUB because it promised opportunities to study subjects ranging from archaeology to Arabic language, and from Middle East studies and politics to food security and public health, all within the safe confines of a stunning campus and a relatively safe, cosmopolitan city.

We were also responsive to increased interest from universities around the world in sending their students on study abroad programmes to the AUB. Students were coming from Italy to study architecture, from Germany to study Arabic, from France to study politics and from Denmark to study media. Beirut is a vibrant city with a rich history and culture, delicious food and an unbeatable nightlife – who wouldn't want to study there? And because most people in Beirut also speak English or French, students do not need to know Arabic to feel at ease. Furthermore, through its Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, the AUB is able to offer experiential learning for those students looking to engage in community service with refugees, as well as internships, under an institutional umbrella that is welcoming and set up to receive and support international students.

A DELICATE BALANCE

Turbulent regional and national politics and the Syrian crisis (which has brought over a million refugees to Lebanon) are among the very dynamics that attract so many students and that make Lebanon a compelling destination. And yet, not surprisingly, the reasons Lebanon is so attractive to students looking for the 'excitement of crisis' are the very same as those driving Lebanese students to study abroad. For local students, the stress and instability of national and regional politics, combined with a lack of employment opportunities and a weak currency (especially since October 2019), have been fuelling an increasing brain drain. Most AUB students planning to study abroad do so with a view to securing jobs or postgraduate studies in other countries. Overall, there is a delicate

balance in the numbers of incoming and outgoing visiting and exchange students – a balance that relies on the challenges being equalled by the opportunities. In the first weeks of the October 2019 revolution in Lebanon, many of our partners were understandably concerned for their students' safety and wanted them to return home. For the students, however, the situation on the ground was in fact quite safe, and they considered this an ideal way to learn. They expressed a desire to stay on to watch the demonstrations unfold, and most did end up staying. The situation highlighted the very particular role of the OIP as a mediator between what students perceived as being valuable educational experiences and the need for administrators from sending institutions to assess and manage risk.

By providing a clear crisis management plan, regular situation updates, its own risk assessment and clear and honest communication to all the students and partner institutions, an international office can create a space for discussion and negotiation with partners, and this is particularly true in cases where the perception of risk is significantly higher than the actual risk. The contemporaneous protests in Spain and Hong Kong provided much-needed perspective on the situation in Lebanon, which suddenly appeared far less threatening by comparison. Nevertheless, the situation deterred some students from coming to the AUB in spring 2020 – and then came COVID-19.

THE LATEST CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a major recalibration in international education globally and has in a sense levelled the playing field by exposing our shared vulnerabilities. But for our university, which has faced so many challenges over the years, COVID-19 is arguably the least of our concerns. This is because since October 2019, the Lebanese pound has lost over 80% of its value and the inability of families to pay tuition fees (let alone costs associated with studying abroad) is all too real.

> The reasons Lebanon is so attractive to students looking for the 'excitement of crisis' are the same as those driving Lebanese students to study abroad

While this dramatic currency devaluation will make Lebanon even more affordable for international students (when travel restrictions ease, we expect international student numbers to return to what they were before the revolution), for Lebanese students looking to study abroad, these dire economic conditions and the chronic political uncertainty pose a longer-term threat than the pandemic. Many who might have had the means to travel up until last year can no longer do so.

We have sought to recalibrate by working with our European partners to ensure the continuity of Erasmus+ funding and the signing of new international credit mobility agreements, even as so many are in effect suspended for now. We also successfully secured approval for virtual exchanges in cases where the sending and receiving institutions were both going to deliver lessons online. To meet the demands of students unable to attend the AUB in person, we worked with faculty members to create and deliver a suite of virtual courses of particular interest to international students.

This year, our office saw a higher-than-usual number of applications in response to next autumn's call for exchange, but we also noticed that a higher number applied to spots with Erasmus+ funding and that many more than usual applied to our office's very own study abroad fund. There is no question now, in the wake of the revolution and the COVID-19 crisis, that Erasmus+ funding will be ever more instrumental in providing students, faculty and staff with the otherwise unattainable goal of mobility abroad.

— HALA DIMECHKIE

COLONISATION PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE?

The history of higher education in many former colonies finds itself rooted in early efforts to cater to the needs of settlers – and some would argue that these dynamics have not fundamentally changed since colonisation. Drawing on experiences from South Africa, Samia Chasi recommends decolonisation as one way to break the vicious cycle of Southern subordination and chart a path towards more equitable partnerships with the North.

The higher education system in South Africa has, from the very start of its development, been shaped by Europeans.[1] The origins of some of today's oldest and most renowned South African universities lie in colleges that were initially set up in the 19th century to cater for the needs of English and Afrikaner settlers, illustrating the country's shared colonial history with the UK and the Netherlands.[2] Colonial activities such as setting up institutions for Europeans in South Africa and modelling them on European examples might be considered very early forms of internationalisation.

With the history of South African higher education rooted in colonialism, what can be said about the nature of present-day internationalisation? Taking their inherent imbalances into account, can North–South higher education partnerships be interpreted as a form of recolonisation?

NORTHERN DOMINATION

Drawing this parallel is based on the understanding that higher education internationalisation is generally characterised by Northern domination and Southern dependencies. These dependencies are linked to patterns of dominance and power, where "the South continues to be the suppressed underside of the North."[3] In a sense, this can amount to recolonisation, which captures "a process of quite self-conscious and unapologetic resubordination of much of the Global South […] to a western-centred capitalism […] to be carried out in the name of and under the guise of 'globalization'".[4]

Against this backdrop, internationalisation, which is linked in a complex way to globalisation, can be understood as an "instrument of continued Northern domination in the field of higher education, which finds clear


Photo: Shutterstock

manifestation in North–South partnerships", which are often characterised by challenges relating to imbalances of resources, knowledge and power.[5] The nature of these partnerships is described as highly extractive, generally favouring the North in terms of knowledge production and dissemination.[6] Parallels can be drawn between the extraction of raw materials under colonialism and the extraction of raw talent and data in the present day, particularly through international research partnerships. Such considerations raise the question of how traditional patterns of imbalanced partnerships can be countered.

REHUMANISING THE WORLD

I put decolonisation forward as a tool to address inequalities and to change the traditional paradigm of North–South partnerships in higher education. Decolonisation is understood in this context as "both an attitude and a practice aimed at rehumanising the world", which opens up the possibility of a better future.[7]

In South Africa, debates on decolonisation of higher education were powered most notably through the student protests of 2015 and 2016, which formed part of the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement. This movement, which has gained prominence in and outside the country, highlights the complexities of colonial legacies by speaking to a variety of dimensions in South African higher education that urgently require transformation, including statues, symbols and names but also, more broadly, issues of access, financing and relevance, with a particular focus on institutional racism, white privilege and black pain.

Deliberate and deep engagement with these issues by all partners will contribute to shifting the paradigm of North–South partnerships in higher education and other spheres, in Africa and other regions of the Global South. In that sense, decolonisation can help bring about more equitable and balanced engagements. As Menon puts it, the Global South can serve as a point of departure and "an invitation to imagine the world afresh".[8] Reimagining and transforming the nature of partnerships begins with consciousness, with changing attitudes, with 'decolonising the mind', as in the title of a book by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o.[9]

AGENTS OF CHANGE

Generally speaking, Southern institutions should be less complicit and less accepting of inequalities in their relations with Northern partners. What is required, particularly in early stages of partnership development, is increased agency and self-determination.[10] For example, a certain amount of confidence and assertiveness is needed in negotiating partnership aims, objectives and expected outcomes that meet the needs and interests of Southern partners as much as those of their Northern counterparts.

While the imperative for shifting the traditional paradigm of North–South partnerships is often driven by the South, Northern partners also have a role to play in bringing about change. Seeking and conducting partnerships with a commitment to humility, mutuality and flexibility is important in that regard.[11] To illustrate this with a few examples, humility includes being aware of positions of privilege that Northern partners may enjoy and being open to the possibility of learning from others. Mutuality involves actively engaging Southern institutions to ensure partnership activities create benefit and value for all involved. This requires empathy on behalf of the Northern partners and their willingness to see the world through Southern eyes. Finally, Northern institutions should be more flexible in conceptualising and implementing partnerships, leaving room for contingency.

If both Northern and Southern partners are willing to change their 'terms of engagement' in such ways, this will ultimately lead to partnerships that are more balanced, equitable, inclusive and socially just. Embracing this responsibility provides international education practitioners and scholars in both the North and the South with the opportunity to become agents of change and to create a better world for all.

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TOWARDS SOUTH–SOUTH–NORTH PARTNERSHIPS

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Today's global challenges require a new way of connecting across borders to solve shared problems. New networks are emerging to better connect institutions in ways that put the Global South in centre stage.

According to the Oxford Martin Commission's report *Now for the Long Term*[1], attempts to solve today's global challenges are undermined by the absence of a shared global vision. Global connectedness and the free movement of people seem to be taken for granted even as protectionism grows to the detriment of multilateralism. As such, we urgently need to develop new cooperation paradigms.

South–South cooperation – defined as an exchange of expertise between governments, organisations and individuals in the Global South – requires a new focus, especially in terms of its relationship to the North. One solution could be to place greater emphasis on South–South–North (SSN) cooperation, driven by higher education.

This should entail developing platforms for dialogue that speak to a multiplicity of cultures, advance common understanding and promote a more collaborative and equitable world. SSN cooperation must develop an agenda that is driven equally by South and North, acknowledges fundamental differences and celebrates and pursues shared interests such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

GLOBALLY RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE

The OBREAL Global Observatory – an association of diverse, internationally oriented academic and research institutions, as well as university associations and networks from Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia – is reconstructing its modes of cooperation to effectively foster and advocate more targeted, responsive and structured SSN cooperation.

Originally born as a European Union (EU) project to promote bilateral, multi-thematic relations between the EU and Latin America, the Barcelona-based association has evolved its structure and membership to become more globally responsive and inclusive, moving beyond the somewhat antiquated approach of bi-regional cooperation through which Europe has traditionally divided the world into silos.

OBREAL Global's mission is divided into two parts:

1. To promote dialogue and synergies between governments, academia and society, taking into account the specificities and heterogeneity of regions around the world.
2. To create cross-regional and truly global SSN bridges for enhanced development in higher education and research, via collaborative multi-regional projects and knowledge production.

While OBREAL Global has over a decade of experience with EU projects that target development cooperation in higher education (such as the Erasmus Mundus programme, Alfa, TEMPUS and Erasmus+), it has now taken on the challenge of finding appropriate funding schemes that specifically support SSN collaboration. The EU programmes do offer possibilities for global collaboration between diverse regions, and such funding has had a tremendous influence on universities in regions across the globe, but extremely few *multi-regional* projects are selected, as the programmes' complex funding instruments do not facilitate these.

CROSS-REGIONAL EXCHANGE

Such limitations are not just found in EU programmes: Africa and Latin America, for example, share many common priorities, yet higher education cooperation between the two is not politically visible or systematically financed by the South or the North. Past initiatives such as those financed by Brazil, Russia, India and China seem to have faded as political spheres of influence have evolved.

The EU's new fascination is with Africa (as evidenced by the recently agreed EU budget for development cooperation, as well as in the communication on the European Education Area and its global dimension), yet no one speaks of multi-regional alliances and approaches to meet Europe's recovery objectives or development cooperation goals. This

has its ramifications in the way we work academically, in student and research mobility flows and in the general shape of development cooperation processes.

Taking again the example of Latin America and Africa, some universities have worked bilaterally in research; however, at the level of university associations and networks, cooperation tends to be relegated to separate circles. This does not reflect the internationalisation agenda of many Latin American universities, which is increasingly diversifying globally, nor does it reflect the common challenges and historical ties that the two regions share.

The linguistic barrier to cooperation between certain regions is becoming increasingly easy to circumvent, as is extensive and costly travel (a potentially positive effect of the pandemic). With the growing emphasis on contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals through higher education, SSN multi-regional partnerships should be the way forward, embraced by financial instruments, development banks and other international partners and donors.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

OBREAL Global is attempting to move the compass on this topic by developing regional 'chapters' for South America, the Caribbean, Central America, Africa and India. These chapters are driven by members of OBREAL Global, many of which are important regional higher education associations. Each has developed its own work plan based on the dynamics of the region and its needs. An inter-chapter board promotes dialogue between the chapters and defines joint projects and work groups.

The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), which is committed to university integration in southern Africa, co-leads the Africa Chapter of OBREAL Global, identifying core priorities and projects that should change the perspective of South–South cooperation, rendering it multi-regional and not simply intra-regional or African.

SARUA represents the public and private universities of the 16 countries that form the Southern African Development Community (SADC). As such, it is inherently South–South, enabling collaborative networks and partnerships for the development of the region's institutional and human capacity. Its vision is to be a dynamic catalyst for higher education revitalisation and innovation in the SADC. However, it realises that it cannot do this with an inward-looking vision; part of the reason behind its decision to partner with OBREAL Global was to enable its members to form part of a network of regional organisations across the globe.

Through the Africa chapter and the inter-chapter activities, SARUA members will participate in dialogues, projects and benchmarking processes that strengthen their role in contextually relevant development. For example, SARUA is chairing a working group that aims to assess internationalisation trends globally and the extent to which they incorporate and prioritise SSN relations. This working group is also driven by the Grupo Montevideo Association of Universities in South America, the Association of Colombian Universities and the OBREAL Global India chapter chair: Symbiosis International University.

WORKING IN HARMONY

SARUA also has the opportunity to shape global dialogue and collaboration between various regions with which southern African institutions do not traditionally work. As an example, SARUA is a strategic partner for implementing the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Initiative, an EU-funded programme to support the strategic partnership between Africa and the EU and to help to achieve the African Union's integration goals in higher education, particularly in quality assurance. This will help reinforce SARUA's role as a promoter of regional integration and a protagonist of African continental integration. Through OBREAL Global, which leads the team implementing the harmonisation initiative, challenges and successes within Africa's continental integration process may be reflected more globally, allowing examples and lessons to be taken from other regions of the world.

SSN collaboration requires dynamic higher education platforms that seek new approaches to connect networks and associations in different parts of the world. That this is being done by organisations such as OBREAL Global and SARUA without explicit and dedicated funding mechanisms implies both a challenge and an opportunity. While it is important that stakeholders in the South and the North chart their own path together, irrespective of external funding, the international partner and donor community should recognise and fund truly SSN multi-regional solutions to help solve the major challenges the world faces today.

— NICO JOOSTE & ELIZABETH COLUCCI

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