Higher Education in the World Report 8
Special Issue

New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030

Abridged version
Complete open-content report available at www.guni-call4action.org
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CLO</td>
<td>Chief Learning Officer</td>
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<td>COL</td>
<td>Collaborative Online International Learning</td>
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<td>DESD</td>
<td>Decade of Education for Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>EHEA</td>
<td>European Higher Education Area</td>
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<td>ERA</td>
<td>European Research Area</td>
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<td>ESD</td>
<td>Education for Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>EUA</td>
<td>European University Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAIR</td>
<td>Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable</td>
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<td>GUNi</td>
<td>Global University Network for innovation</td>
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<td>HBCUs</td>
<td>Historically Black Colleges and Universities</td>
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<td>HEIs</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
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<td>IAU</td>
<td>International Association of Universities</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>MCU</td>
<td>Magna Charta Universitatum</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PKM</td>
<td>Personal Knowledge Mastery</td>
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<td>RDF</td>
<td>Researcher Development Framework</td>
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<td>RRI</td>
<td>Responsible Research and Innovation</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SDLC</td>
<td>Software Development Life Cycle</td>
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<td>SDGN</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Solutions Network</td>
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<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
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<td>SwafS</td>
<td>Science with and for Society</td>
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<td>THE</td>
<td>Times Higher Education</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNCED</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Environment and Development</td>
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<td>UNSCD</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>WCED</td>
<td>World Commission on Environment and Development</td>
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<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Education Forum</td>
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<td>WHEC</td>
<td>World Higher Education Conference</td>
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Steven H. Mintz is a professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin, and he previously directed the University of Texas System Institute for Transformational Learning. Author and editor of 15 books and a leading authority on the history of families, children, and the life course, he regularly writes on educational innovation for Inside Higher Ed. He previously taught history at Columbia University, where he directed the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Teaching Center, the University of Houston, Oberlin College, Pepperdine University, and Universitat-Siegen and been a fellow at Stanford’s Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and a visiting scholar at the Center for European Studies. A former president of H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online and the Society for the History of Children and Youth, he has also chaired the Council on Contemporary Families.

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Núria Vives has been responsible for the EduCaixa Leadership for Learning Programme promoted in 2019 by the “la Caixa” Foundation and aimed at education centre management teams across Spain. Between 2015 and 2019, she ran programmes designed to improve students’ key skills within the same foundation. Previously, she worked in the third sector in transformative education projects and as a teacher of adolescents and adults. Vives is undertaking a doctoral degree in Education and Leadership at the UCL Institute of Education and holds an undergraduate degree in Education from UNED, a master’s degree in Teacher Training from EOC-UPF and a bachelor’s degree in Advertising and Public Relations from UAB.

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Christopher J. Ziguras is a Professor and Associate Dean of Global and Language Engagement, where his research and teaching draws on his background in political science and sociology to explore contemporary issues in global political economy and global governance. His research focuses on the globalisation of education, particularly how regulatory agencies and markets, education providers and other actors shape the cross-border provision of higher education. This interest is carried across his higher education leadership, diverse management roles at RMIT, prominent
research on cross-border higher education, teaching in international development and public policy, and his active public engagement. He was President of the International Education Association of Australia 2015-18 and works closely with the Association. He undertakes research, teaching and doctoral supervision through his membership of the RMIT Social and Global Studies Centre, the Australian APEC Study Centre, the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, and the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education.

Special mention must be made to experts and GUNi members that contributed to the definition of the GUNi Vision by participating in the online focus group on the new GUNi Higher Education in the World Report “New Visions for Higher Education Institutions towards 2030”. List of participants:

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- Axel Didriksson, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, GUNi-LAC (Mexico)
- Valerii Monakhov, Head of UNESCO Chair “Education in a multicultural society”, The Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia (Russia)
- Ramon Torrent, President, OBREAL Global (Spain)
- Sara López, Head of International Relations, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Spain)
- Vidya Yerawdekar, Principal Director of Symbiosis Society, Symbiosis International University (India)
- Pastora Martínez, Vicerector of Globalization and Cooperation, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain)
- Olusola Oyewole, Secretary-General · Association of African Universities (Ghana)
- Deb Adair, Executive Director, INQAAHE (The Netherlands)
- Oscar Felipe García, Famimuundo Institute (Mexico)
- Santiago García Granda, President of Crue’s Commission for Agenda 2030, CRUE (Spain)
- Jairo Cifuentes, Rector, Universidad Javeriana de Bucotá (Colombia)
- Roger Chao, Assistant Director/Head of Education, Youth and Sports, ASEAN Secretariat (Indonesia)
- Ana Lúcia Gazzola, former Executive Director, UNESCO-IESALC; former Rector, Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brasil)

Twenty-three years after GUNi was created, the mission and goals of this global network remain as relevant as ever. Our mission, which is already shared by 268 institutions in 85 countries, is to foster the role of higher education in society by supporting the renewal of its visions and policies around the world in terms of public service, relevance, social responsibility and innovation. Likewise, our objectives call on us to:

- Generate and share knowledge on higher education policy and management around the world.
- Promote the knowledge society by strengthening higher education systems and institutions for the sake of progress, culture and well-being.
- Support institutions and governments around the world for the advancement of higher education, scientific research and innovation.
- Promote the development of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Encourage academic and scientific diplomacy to promote multilateralism and international cooperation.

Despite challenges and a lack of structural funding, GUNi continues to be a global benchmark in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management. It gives us great pleasure to connect initiatives and projects with institutions around the world and to serve as benchmarks in the deployment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, we are pioneers in the introduction of new topics in the field of higher education and university management.
UNESCO’s Introduction

The timing of this special issue in the GUNi World Report Series could not be more opportune or relevant. As the international communities of youth, teachers, researchers, employers and policymakers gather together in Barcelona for a global conversation at the 3rd UNESCO World Higher Education Conference, the dawn of a new vision for higher learning ecosystems has arrived. Every aspect of what we all hold true for universities around the world is changing, being rethought or reinvented. From issues of governance and financing of institutions, quality enhancement in provision and programmes, to equitable and inclusive access, harnessing digital technologies for student engagement, and internationalisation and cooperation in teaching, research and learning, modern seats of higher learning are at an existential crossroads. Whilst the directions taken will and must differ between systems and institutions, there is universal acknowledgment that higher education is being turned on its traditional axes.

Actions to address this reality cannot be undertaken lightly, in isolation or in a uniform fashion. Nevertheless, if the barometer of higher education relevance for local and national communities is to be retained, a reaction to changing norms is now paramount. Learner profiles are changing – notions of “traditional” students no longer apply. Everyone, young and old, is now a lifelong learner not necessarily by choice but by virtue of necessity in a constantly changing workplace where learning new skills and reskilling is almost a daily priority. Different types of learners need different types of courses and programmes; different types of courses and programmes need innovative new curricula; new curricula need flexible learning access modalities enabled by effective use of digital technologies. International cooperation in learning, teaching and research requires sustainable models to link students and researchers in the pursuit of discovery and scientific solutions that the planet needs for the future – a future engraved in the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UNESCO 3rd World Conference Roadmap will provide signposts at the different crossroads for higher education communities to share experience, knowledge and innovative collaborative approaches to realising each of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Re-designing higher education institutions, their research and their learning programmes, and preparing skilled graduates must be the cornerstone for designing a sustainable future for us all. This GUNi Special Issue is a vital contribution to the bank of knowledge that will guide universities through a defining moment in their futures.

P. J. Wells
Chief, Higher Education
UNESCO

Catalan Association of Public Universities’ (ACUP) introduction

We are experiencing a period of accelerated transformation; we are walking towards a digital-human future and we are witnessing changes in the world of work, in our perception of the individual, citizenship and society, with movements that challenge our democracies and reveal a social crisis, changes in the methods of creation and dissemination of knowledge, in international relations and, undoubtedly, in our planet’s ecological and systemic imbalance. In the face of these great challenges, education, science and innovation are becoming, more than ever, fundamental building blocks for progressive, sustainable and committed societies on a local and global scale.

In this context, we must rethink the university to make it a lever for social transformation. But we must not do this alone, we must move forward in a network, emphasising local, regional and international inter-university cooperation, in addition to cooperation with public institutions and social agents. The Covid-19 crisis has shown us that cooperation is essential to provide adequate responses to the period of transformation we are currently experiencing on a local and global scale. In this regard, the Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP) wears its cooperation as a badge of honour and regards this as its key mission. Created in 2002, ACUP groups the eight Catalan public universities: Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Girona (UdG), Lleida (UdL), Rovira i Virgili (URV) and Oberta de Catalunya (UOC). Through ACUP, the Catalan public universities forge close collaboration to promote relevance, efficiency and quality, both on an individual scale and within the Catalan higher education system.

Against this backdrop, our Association has a strong commitment on an international scale through the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi), which we promote together with UNESCO. The GUNi network upholds the values and principles of UNESCO. The GUNi network upholds the values and principles of UNESCO, while driving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals for the improvement and transformation of higher education institutions. While driving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals for the improvement and transformation of higher education institutions.

Jaume Puy
President
Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP)
Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi)
About the Report

1. Introduction

Since the creation of the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi) in 1999 after the 1st UNESCO World Higher Education Conference, the network has been working to meet its core mission of generating knowledge, strengthening higher education systems around the world and supporting innovation in higher education institutions (HEIs). Through its series of Higher Education in the World Reports, GUNi fosters global and regional analyses of higher education institutions and systems. In particular, this special issue once again takes up GUNi’s mission, offering an overview of the present state of HEIs and their prospects looking towards 2030 and beyond.

The introduction aims to describe how the special issue has been conceived, setting out its aims, structure and methodology, as well as the importance of the selected topics and the approaches and principles that frame them.

Entitled “New Visions for Higher Education Institutions towards 2030”, the report analyses the state of higher education in the world and seeks to respond to the need for HEIs to transform themselves at a key time of major global changes. Three core questions guide the report’s approach:

- If we were to create an HEI from scratch today, what would it be like?
- What should HEIs look like in the near future?
- In seeking to answer these questions, the special issue builds on GUNi’s accumulated experience, both in terms of the world reports that we have published and the varied subjects and lines of work that we have pursued. The aim is to take an in-depth look at the current context, bringing together the top debates in the area of higher education, while also adhering to GUNi’s values and goals, in order to outline the way forward for HEIs. In other words, the special issue undertakes a detailed analysis of the present state of affairs in order to keep HEIs advancing successfully towards 2030 and beyond.

2. An important time for a special issue in the series of Higher Education in the World Reports

As a distinctive feature, the report focuses primarily on institutions rather than on systems or policies. In this vein, the covered topics are aimed directly at HEIs, seeking to achieve the maximum applicability of the findings and trusting that they will be of interest both to policymakers and to other stakeholders. This is because we need consequential analyses and bold ideas to make the best decisions, ones that will help us to build on the lessons learnt and create the kinds of societies and HEIs that we want for the future.

At the same time, the report is a stepping stone in a wider, more ambitious project entitled “GUNi International Call for Action (2022-2025): Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies”. This project will be one of GUNi’s key strategic lines of action for 2022-2025 and will seek to encourage and help HEIs around the world to deploy the actions and changes that are needed to adapt and become more relevant, inclusive, effective, innovative and socially responsible.

Along these lines, it is also important to highlight that, in the context of the International Call for Action, the present report is conceived as a document that will evolve over the next four years. The aim is to add new materials, reflections and best practices in relation to the covered fields. All of the materials will be published online at the web portal for the special issue and the International Call for Action, including papers, interviews, videos and podcasts, so that the report will be at once a living document for analysis and reflection and a platform for transformational action in HEIs.

2. An important time for a special issue in the series of Higher Education in the World Reports

GUNi’s flagship project is the edition of its Higher Education in the World Report series, which has become a benchmark in the higher education sector after seven issues and a synthesis prepared for the 2nd UNESCO World Higher Education Conference.

This time, the current context and situation of change calls for a special issue, not a report focused on a single topic like previous reports, but one that takes a broader view of higher education and sets out a renewed vision looking towards 2030 and beyond.

There are three main reasons why it is now time for the series to add a special issue:

First, GUNi has very recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Two decades have passed since GUNi sprang into existence after the 1st UNESCO World Higher Education Conference. Although our higher education systems and institutions and our societies have changed a great deal in the interim, our mission and values are now more important than ever: to foster the role of higher education in society and support the renewal of its visions and policies worldwide in terms of public service, relevance, social responsibility and innovation. More than ever, there is a need to reaffirm the social value, role and contribution of higher education institutions (HEIs), and a need for HEIs to build a new vision and strategy for the future.

Second, in the past few decades, our world has experienced major transformations and crises, including climate change and environmental degradation, demographic pressures, forced migrations, rising inequalities, political pressures and the transformation of the labour market. Some of these transformations could have a devastating effect on our societies and our planet, and might even become irreversible if clear action is not taken urgently. In any case, they have crucial implications for HEIs and the role of HEIs in society and it is of utmost importance to address them. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed pressing issues in higher education and society, and revealed rapid, undesirable transformations such as digitalisation.

Likewise, in recent years, there has arisen an unprecedented need and willingness to connect and cooperate. Yet, there have also emerged narrow-minded concepts that revolve around nationalism and “we first” policies. The context requires us to think about and develop new visions for higher education and its institutions, missions and values with regard to the public good and social responsibility.

Certainly, there is a need to rethink the role of higher education institutions and their contributions to society in light of the trends and major transformations that are now occurring. HEIs have their own specific characteristics as an outgrowth of their particular culture and region, but they are still part of a global, interconnected system that follows similar patterns.

3. The main premises of the report

The report’s approach is based on the key concepts and values of GUNi and UNESCO: human rights, public service, international cooperation, sustainable development, innovation and education for all. The main premises of GUNi, when designing and developing its world reports, are as follows:

- Higher education institutions are societal institutions, and higher education is a fundamental part of society, at the service of the public good.
- Excellence and public service are compatible. Our mission is not to seek the maximum competitiveness of HEIs while ignoring other considerations, but for the competitiveness of HEIs to be at the service of society’s interests and needs and to be useful for international collaboration to meet global challenges and advance knowledge, science and human progress.
- Beyond equipping students with the tools needed to enter the job market successfully, higher education is also key to providing people with critical thinking skills, wisdom and an understanding of the world.
- In an age of globalisation, higher education must contribute to global peace and human development through science, culture and communication, strengthening international partnerships and cooperation.

Third, the 3rd UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC), which will take place in Barcelona in May 2022 in partnership with GUNi, presents a unique framework and roadmap for the momentum and transformation of higher education in the years ahead. WHEC 2022 has set new guidelines for policy, capacity building, and regional and international conventions and commitments. In doing so, it has drawn on the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, including policymakers, rectors and presidents of universities, UNESCO Chairs, professors, students, staff, organisations, NGOs, civil society groups, businesses and GUNi representatives. The official launch and presentation of this report within the framework of WHEC 2022 presents an additional raison d’être for a special issue to foster symbiosis and spur the transformation of HEIs.
Accordingly, the present report is descriptive and analytical, and it seeks to have an impact on HEIs. That is, it looks ahead and lays the groundwork for adaptation at the service of decision-making and public policy analysis and knowledge creation. Our reports aim to be useful tools for institutional action and the current special issue: analysis and knowledge creation of all levels of education should be connected in the broadest sense.

The first part of the report is descriptive and analytical and it seeks to have an impact on HEIs. That is, it looks ahead and lays the groundwork for adaptation at the service of decision-making and public policy making. This is once again the focus of the current special issue: analysis and knowledge creation at the service of decision-making and public policy in the broadest sense.

The present report arises out of the need for continuity and coherence across the different stages of education: basic education to higher education and lifelong learning. All too often, these realities are analysed separately, disconnectedly. Yet, in the context of championing lifelong learning, boundaries between stages make no sense at all. As UNESCO-IIEP argues, any thinking about the mission and purposes of higher education cannot miss out its inescapable connections to primary and secondary education, as well as to lifelong learning. Thus, we are also striving to make them interdependent. The transformation of HEIs is a process of interdependence of all levels of education. In-depth analysis of seven topics by contributions from renowned intellectuals.

The first part begins with the impact of Covid-19 on higher education, treating the topic as a transversal issue with consequences and effects on all of the areas that follow. We have chosen this issue as the right place to start because of the pandemic’s significant and unexpected impact in driving transformations like digitalisation and even spurring a paradigm shift in many aspects of society and HEIs. The eight thematic chapters go into specific areas of higher education that are important for its transformation towards 2030 and beyond. The themes or topics have been chosen for their significance and because, taken as a whole, they give a good account of the current state of higher education in its entirety. The eight topic areas are set out in the figure below.

1. "... scenarios help us learn from the future to reframe and repurpose our understanding of the present" OECD (2020). Back to the future of education. Four OECD scenarios for schooling.


The report focuses on HEIs, seeing them as societal institutions but also adopting a wider system view. We are speaking of higher education institutions instead of universities in order to include the wide variety of tertiary education providers while not trying to define only one model of institution. By taking a comprehensive view, the special issue acknowledges and values diversity and different realities across the world of higher education. We believe in the need for diversity. The vision that we are building will have room for many different types of HEIs.

Looking ahead over the current decade, we think that the biggest transformational potentials of the 2030 Agenda do not lie in pursuing single goals or targets but rather in taking a systemic approach that manages their myriad interactions.

Beyond studies and generic analysis, we understand that it is necessary to be very mindful of the reality of higher education across the many countries and regions of the world. Individual countries and regions face unique challenges and have diverse development priorities. The specific design of transformation pathways depends on each context; few solutions work the same everywhere. Instead, we must strive to combine different sets of transformation levers based on the needs and conditions in each setting. At the same time, we need harmonised high-level efforts to steer the interactions between pathways and their aggregate outcomes in order to deliver universal progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

Lastly, the present report arises out of the need for continuity and coherence across the different stages of education: from basic education to higher education and lifelong learning. All too often, these realities are analysed separately, disconnectedly. Yet, in the context of championing lifelong learning, boundaries between stages make no sense at all. As UNESCO-IIEP argues, any thinking about the mission and purposes of higher education cannot miss out its inescapable connections to primary and secondary education, as well as to lifelong learning. Thus, we are also striving to make them interdependent. The transformation of HEIs is a process of interdependence of all levels of education. In-depth analysis of seven topics by contributions from renowned intellectuals.

The aim of the first part is to conduct an analysis of the context of higher education and construct a new vision for HEIs. When looked at in greater detail, this part explores what has happened in the last two decades of the twenty-first century in terms of general societal trends and trends in higher education institutions.

The first part begins with the impact of Covid-19 on higher education, treating the topic as a transversal issue with consequences and effects on all of the areas that follow. We have chosen this issue as the right place to start because of the pandemic’s significant and unexpected impact in driving transformations like digitalisation and even spurring a paradigm shift in many aspects of society and HEIs. The eight thematic chapters go into specific areas of higher education that are important for its transformation towards 2030 and beyond. The themes or topics have been chosen for their significance and because, taken as a whole, they give a good account of the current state of higher education in its entirety. The eight topic areas are set out in the figure below.
4.2 GUNi Vision

The next part is called “The Vision of the Global University Network for Innovation”. Going a step further in this section, the report provides a purposeful document that lays out a new vision for HEIs in terms of how they must be shaped to respond to the current state of affairs. The new vision aims to be an inspiration that enables us, based on observation, to put forward institutional strategies, objectives, and action plans to achieve them.

This vision arises out of the fundamental values and mission of GUNi, drawing on the analysis conducted in the first part of the report and bringing in the contributions of experts and members of the network. To this end, GUNi created a task force of member representatives who worked closely with the GUNi secretariat to draft the vision. The vision was also shared with all members in order to gather their input and contributions.

The vision is structured in two main sections. The first section sets out the starting point and the principles that frame the scope of action, followed by a look at the way to achieve the vision, which envisages the actions to be taken to bring about change. The second section presents the key developments in the main areas of transformation that correspond to the topics addressed in the first part “New Contexts, New Visions”.

4.3 Part 2: Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices

The second part of the report seeks to analyse and describe how we could move towards this new vision by addressing a number of core issues and topics in higher education. As its title suggests, the second part aims to respond to how we go from where we are toward our vision for HEIs by delving into the key topics of the first part and giving voice to leading experts and actors in the field of higher education.

In particular, the second part includes a real-time approach to what is currently being done, focusing on what HEIs around the world are doing in response to the needs, challenges, crises and transformations analysed in the first part. For this purpose, seven key topics have been selected:

Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices

| HEIs’ governance and public service: between autonomy and community engagement |
| Skills and competences: a humanist vision for a changing professional world |
| Research and innovation: towards open, ethical and responsible research and innovation |
| ICTs and digitalisation: a digital-human future towards more inclusive and accessible HEIs |
| International higher education: from competition to collaboration |
| Higher education management: promoting new leadership and innovation |

Experts from all over the world have constructed the content of these chapters based on their own particular areas of expertise. Each topic is covered by a number of papers in which contributors set out the challenges, actions and findings and provide inspiring examples of HEIs that are working on initiatives, new developments, changes and innovations to adapt to the new context.

4.4 Part 3: Regional Approaches

Finally, the third part seeks to provide a regional approach on the understanding that, even though the contexts and forces may be global, each region has certain patterns that need to be tackled from a regional perspective. Acknowledging that there are global similarities but also different purposes, organisational cultures, goals and strategies, the following questions guide the six regional chapters of the third part:

- What do the regions feel higher education institutions should be like in the future?
- What are the similarities? What are the differences?

As in the second part, several experts from each region have made contributions based on their own particular field of research, country or regional expertise. The result is six chapters that reflect the following regions:

Regional Approaches

Middle East and North Africa
North America
Asia and the Pacific
Europe
Africa
Latin America and the Caribbean

5. Methodology

Below is a detailed description of the methodology followed in each of the three parts and their respective chapters.

Part 1: New Contexts, New Visions

The first part, which is more analytical and wide-ranging in nature, followed an eight-step methodology:

I. General literature review
II. Identification of common issues and concerns
III. Preparation of an initial content outline
IV. Targeted literature review
V. Review of content outline
VI. Drafting of chapters
VII. Review and finalising of chapters

In the general literature review (step I), sources of information were reviewed, including reports on education and higher education, the mainstream print media at national and international levels, publications specialising in education and higher education, scientific papers, online conferences and seminars, books and book chapters, documentaries and interviews, and web portals on education and global trends.

The general literature review was broad and did not discriminate in terms of topics. The result was the identification of common issues and concerns (step II), that is, those matters that appeared repeatedly across the literature. Based on these ideas, we prepared an initial content outline (step III).

With the content outline to hand, the targeted literature review (step IV) delved more deeply into the literature on each identified topic, with focused searches on the aspects regarded as more significant. Based on the targeted readings that followed, the content outline was updated (step v) and the chapters drafted (step vi).

It is important to note that the selection of topics for the initial content online (step iii) sought to be representative rather than comprehensive. Our aim was not to cover every topic that is currently a focus of debate in higher education. The text of the drafted chapters (step vi) is based on the bibliography and is in some sense closer to a review. Rather than merely listing a succession of ideas, however, each chapter aims to group similar or parallel ideas together.

Lastly, the chapters were reviewed and finalised (step vii). This step involved the participation of outside experts, who brought their own views to the analysis.

GUNi Vision

Drawing out the key points from each of the topics addressed in the first part, the editorial team held working sessions to look globally at the context of higher education and mark out lines of action that not only reflect GUNi’s values and mission and the SDGs in Agenda 2030 but are also, in our view, crucial to the future of HEIs.

Then, a first draft was prepared and shared with all GUNi members in a process of participation and consultation that sought to gather their impressions and input to formulate a more comprehensive vision.

At the same time, a special consultation was undertaken with a selection of GUNi members and outside experts. In this case, the process took the form of an online session structured as a focus group. Participants, who read and studied the vision document prior to the session, gave their individual views in the session and offered thoughts and suggestions to enrich the vision.

Parts 2 and 3:

The preparation of the second part “Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices” and the third part “Regional Approaches” drew on the contributions of experts in the respective topics and regions covered.

Specifically, GUNi sought out potential authors who are specialists in the different topics or from the different regions. Given the particular field of expertise of each contributor, the editorial team proposed that he or she write a paper for inclusion in the special issue along the lines set out in the Concept Note. The contributions

New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030
were reviewed by the editorial team jointly with the authors in order to ensure quality and coherence across all contributions.

As a consequence, the resulting chapters have been shaped by many experts from a variety of regions or areas of expertise, whose perspectives are unique and uniquely their own, based on their own particular blend of ontological, professional and geographic principles. Neither the contributors’ choice of approach nor their use of terminology implies any particular preference or inclination of GUNi in one direction or another. This special issue as a whole seeks to encompass a wide range of views. For that reason, all of the topics and terminology put forward by the authors have been considered equally valid and pertinent.

6. An ongoing process

As noted earlier, the goal is for the special issue to be useful throughout the period 2022-2025 and in the context of the International Call for Action. To this end, GUNi has developed a new format. Not only will the report appear in print format and as a downloadable file, but GUNi will also launch a live webpage that will display all of the content related to the special issue and also be open to new creations.

As in earlier publications in the series of Higher Education in the World Reports, the print edition of the special issue has been created as an abridged version that contains the thematic chapters in the first part “New Contexts, New Visions” and overviews of the papers in the second part “Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices” and the third part “Regional Approaches”. The complete report including the full papers in the last two parts is available in a totally open format at the GUNi website and the new website for the report itself.

What makes the report unique is that it will be a living document. Throughout the period 2022-2025, new contributions will be added in the form of papers, videos, interviews and podcasts, giving voice and bearing witness to new ideas, contributions and actions relating to higher education institutions and systems as they move in the direction of Agenda 2030 along the lines marked out by the GUNi vision. The overarching aim is for the International Call for Action and the special issue website to become a key open space for contributions to the transformation of HEIs around the world.
Entitled “New Contexts, New Visions”, the first part of the Higher Education in the World Report 8–Special Issue addresses core considerations in eight key areas on the transformation of higher education institutions towards 2030 and beyond.

The topics have been chosen for their significance and because, when taken as a whole, they give a good account of the current state of higher education in its entirety. The eight topic areas are:

- The impact of Covid-19 on higher education
- The future of work: training in competences and skills throughout life
- Citizens: promoting humanist values and profiles in a changing world
- Knowledge: putting research and innovation at the service of social challenges
- The digital–human future: constructing more inclusive and accessible universities
- Sustainability: reinventing universities for a sustainable future
- Internationalisation: reinforcing partnerships to attain common goals
- Governance and professionals: building resilient, innovative and socially committed institutions

The first part begins with the impact of Covid-19 on higher education, treating the topic as a transversal issue with consequences and effects on all of the areas that follow. We have chosen this issue as the right place to start because of the pandemic’s significant and unexpected impact in driving transformations like digitalisation and even spurring a paradigm shift in many aspects of society and HEIs.

Next come the main topics of the report, which are developed separately but are viewed broadly and share many points of connection. This view of interdependence reveals a holistic approach to transformation much as Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are conceived as a single horizon of sustainable development.

The next section of the report is entitled “The Vision of the Global University Network for Innovation”. Going a step further in this section, the report provides a purposeful document that lays out a new vision for HEIs in terms of how they must be shaped to respond to the current state of affairs. The new vision aims to be an inspiration that enables us, based on observation, to put forward institutional strategies, objectives, and action plans to achieve them.
1. An increased infrastructure, technology and knowledge gap

Covid-19 has revealed the enormous digital and infrastructure divide that exists between countries and regions, and between higher education institutions, in addition to that which affects the family environment. Worse still, during the pandemic the existing divide has deepened inequalities in various sectors, including education. The inability to go to school or university, the lack of connectivity and of a suitable space within the family, some universities’ institutional incapacity to face the pandemic, and technological and structural shortfalls at national level have highlighted and increased inequalities and imbalances. It has also been observed that these inequalities are not only related to access to knowledge, but also to the capacity to handle and use this knowledge. This phenomenon is known as the cognitive divide.

The digital divide has become evident in different ways in different countries. In countries with a medium level of development and even those known as developed countries, it was found that a large proportion of students lacked the right conditions for correct implementation of online teaching (IESALC 2020, p. 20). Furthermore, countries with a lower internet penetration rate and a more inadequate infrastructure resorted to media such as radio or television to ensure that education reached as many students as possible, as explained in a study on the application of technological measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, drawn up by the ministries of education in several countries (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank 2020, pp. 22–24).

In terms of higher education institutions, a study by the International University Association showed that 85% of European centres moved to online format, while institutions on the African continent mainly cancelled their classes and only 29% could make this change (Mariconi et al., 2020, p. 24). Farnell et al. (2021) explained that European universities could respond with greater efficacy to the implementation of distance education. For example, the University of Strasbourg identified 160 students whose lack of technological equipment meant that they could not access courses or examinations. The university prepared an emergency fund of €61,000 to meet the material needs of these students.

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The digital divide has become evident in different ways in different countries. In countries with a medium level of development and even those known as developed countries, it was found that a large proportion of students lacked the right conditions for correct implementation of online teaching (IESALC 2020, p. 20). Furthermore, countries with a lower internet penetration rate and a more inadequate infrastructure resorted to media such as radio or television to ensure that education reached as many students as possible, as explained in a study on the application of technological measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, drawn up by the ministries of education in several countries (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank 2020, pp. 22–24).

In terms of higher education institutions, a study by the International University Association showed that 85% of European centres moved to online format, while institutions on the African continent mainly cancelled their classes and only 29% could make this change (Mariconi et al., 2020, p. 24). Farnell et al. (2021) explained that European universities could respond with greater efficacy to the implementation of distance education. For example, the University of Strasbourg identified 160 students whose lack of technological equipment meant that they could not access courses or examinations. The university prepared an emergency fund of €61,000 to meet the material needs of these students.

In contrast, other higher education institutions were left behind. Bloomberg (2021) described situations such as that of South Africa, where a lack of incentives from the government and the universities led to protests and pressure to close the universities until these met financial demands resulting from the pandemic. In some higher education institutions, the implementation of technological resources caused controversy and was rejected as it was considered “impractical and elitist”.

In countries such as Zimbabwe, the charges for electricity and internet access are excessively high for the student body (University World News, 2020). At the level of the family, students from vulnerable environments experienced considerable worsening in their conditions. The European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (2021a, p. 42) explained that the shift to online education increased existing inequalities among students. Specifically, it highlighted the lack of access to technology, the lack of support in homes, and the lack of a suitable environment and space. Reimers et al. (2021, p. 19) noted an increase in forced dependency on parental financial support, whose responsibility replaces that which would ideally correspond to the institution. Unfortunately, in some cases the institution is a much more reliable option than the family.

All of this shows that access to new technologies and connectivity should be considered a fundamental right. Consequently, governments, international organisations, NGOs, development partners and companies, among others, should work together to eliminate existing inequalities. Farnell et al. (2021), for example, advocate for such policies, which could be made possible with the introduction of a nation-wide recovery plan to invest in online infrastructure. Investments should also be made to educate the population in the use of these technologies (United Nations 2020, p. 24; International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2020, p. 7) and thus to avoid or close the cognitive divide (see the section on digitalisation).

The digital divide is only one symptom of the systemic inequality seen in the world of higher education for years. This inequality can be found in many forms in the sectors of the education system, as the provision of quality tertiary education does not depend exclusively on the higher education institutions. It is also strongly influenced by institutional capacity and state infrastructure, and by well-being and security at family and individual level. The combination of these three spheres
shows how the digital divide, which has been revealed by the pandemic, is very deeply rooted in social inequality. Consequently, the transition to digital learning is not only about technology but empowering its users and recognising the primacy of the human dimension. Governments, public and private partners must step up action to narrow the digital divide, extend connectivity and electrification, develop quality digital learning contents and support teachers to master remote and hybrid teaching (Reimers et al. 2021, p. 2).

2. The economic and social crisis accompanying the health crisis

All economic crises inevitably impact education. It is difficult to make a general assessment of this impact in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, as it has affected each country in a different way and each response strategy has been different. However, in general terms, it is clear that Covid-19 has altered access to higher education, that is, enrolment; the process of training students; and access to the job market, that is, employability after higher education. The extent and duration of economic crises and their impact on education depend on the public policies that are implemented at supranational, national and local levels, in line with the economic capacity of each country and higher education institution.

In terms of access to education, the abrupt halt in face-to-face activities due to the pandemic led to a drop in university enrolment. This situation was mainly due to the possible closure of universities and the economic crisis faced by the pandemic, which increased unemployment and poverty in some households. This increased the pressure on families and on young people with scarce resources, who see in university education a way to get out of a vulnerable situation. It is what the long-term impact will be on students, particularly those from low-income families, women, minority ethnic groups, people with functional diversity and students from rural areas, among other vulnerable groups. As indicated in the IESALC (2020) report, the crisis would have deepened existing disparities in education and reduced opportunities in these sectors. The International Commission on the Futures of Education (2020, p. 19) also warned that the economic crisis would lead to greater job losses and an increase in vulnerability in these sectors to an extent not seen in decades. The structural and systematic discrimination against students in the most vulnerable sectors could even lead to a generational catastrophe (United Nations 2020b, p. 10) and create a ‘Covid generation’ that experiences an unprecedented decline in social mobility and faces a difficult situation with respect to their future (Farnell et al., 2021).

The pandemic has increased the hazards and risks suffered by women. The closure of education institutions caused a situation of greater risk for women, who were susceptible to greater abuse, domestic violence and an increase in forced and early marriages (United Nations 2020, p. 10). In addition, the pandemic meant that families had more time at home, which led to an increase in the time dedicated to caring for the family and the home; a role that is usually attributed to women. It is therefore women who neglect their work and study time, which inevitably increases the gender gap (United Nations, 2020, pp. 10-11).

In addition, as Taner stated (2021), the pandemic has affected universities’ budgets and has led several institutions to state that they are in a financial crisis. IESALC (2020, p. 28) notes that the most vulnerable universities are the small and medium-sized private institutions that have less economic and technological capacity to guarantee online teaching. Although public universities are less likely to disappear, as they generally receive state support, they may suffer from large cuts in public spending and a drop in student contributions (IESALC, 2020, p. 28). To understand the situation and to be able to take the most suitable measures, the losses generated in higher education institutions due to decreased income from local and international student enrolments need to be assessed (Farnell et al., 2021).

Regarding employability, another impact associated with the pandemic has been an increase in fears and concerns among students regarding their professional future (Aristovnik et al. 2020, p. 22). The International Labour Organization noted that the pandemic has wreaked havoc in the job market. It has exacerbated job losses with increased unemployment and a worrying rise in work inactivity, causing a reduction in working hours in those who are still employed and creating a global loss in labour income. Above 25% of those employed in temporary jobs during the first quarter of 2021 were previously permanent employees. Although informal work dropped sharply in mid-2020, a relatively rapid recovery has been seen that suggests that employees who lost their jobs have entered the informal economy (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022). Therefore, the pandemic has accentuated job insecurity and economic uncertainty.

Farnell et al. (2021) noted that a possible mid-to-long-term effect of the shift to online education could be an increase in unemployment among university graduates. This would be due to employers’ lower trust in the quality of online studies and their demands. However, some distinctions should be made. The e-Valuate project has defined a series of important criteria to recognise quality online education through “the quality, authenticity, level, learning outcomes, workload, testing and participant identification of an e-learning certificata” (NUFFIC 2019, p. 5). These elements contribute to credibility and transparency, which would help online qualifications to be recognised by employers (Andersens et al., 2021). In addition, higher education institutions will need to create new laws and regulatory terms for quality assurance and recognition of qualifications in the context of distance learning, to protect academics and teaching methods that were unprepared to be provided online.

3. Teaching and studying in a post-pandemic society

The sudden shift towards online teaching and learning brought about several changes and long-term changes for teachers and students, and to the relationship between them. In the post-pandemic context, teachers’ and students’ skills and competences must be updated or rethought in face-to-face and online formats. The virtual classroom comes with some new challenges, which affect the quality of student life in many ways. For example, vulnerable students may have limited access to educational resources, and privacy may be violated by big data technologies. As higher education becomes increasingly virtual, it remains to be seen how the overall quality of educational competences of students and teachers will be affected in the long term. As for the face-to-face format, after the experience of the pandemic, it is even clearer that the classroom plays an important role in providing a healthy, enriching environment for students.

During the pandemic, teachers had to remodel their teaching methods in a format that was unexpectedly forced into their professional lives. As competent and eloquent as a teacher may be, the quality of their lectures could be involuntarily hindered by their lack of experience in using the virtual format as the main tool for their teaching. This idea was reinforced by IESALC (2020, p. 36), which stated that the knowledge and expertise required to understand the technological complexity of the virtual format has exacerbated the need to improve teachers’ competences in the difficult task of efficiently adapting their lectures to online teaching. Similarly, Farnell et al. (2021) pointed out how the pandemic revealed a need for thorough pedagogical and technological training of academic and administrative staff on data protection in online tools, so that online teaching can be properly prepared and implemented.

As for students, the lack of face-to-face social interaction in college campus diminishes and undermines what is generally considered a unique experience at this stage in life. Digital technologies can provide new teaching methods that counter the loss of physical presence, albeit not entirely. Farnell et al. (2021) argued that without an approach focused on safeguarding presence, vulnerable sectors’ participation in the student community could be reduced.
This would raise significant concerns about educational equity. The International Commission on the Futures of Education (2020 pp. 9-10) agreed with this assessment: This [virtual education] is a major problem for children living in poverty worldwide, who often rely on the physical setting of their schools to provide educational materials, guidance, and, sometimes, the only meal of the day. In their homes, especially during times of confinement or quarantine, children can face multiple forms of abuse and violence. Crowded conditions, a general lack of resources, particularly digital devices and connectivity, mean that typically the cost — in terms of education and general well-being — of the current health crisis will be highest for populations that are already vulnerable.

Those who do not suffer from the digital divide are typically digital natives and thus are familiar with digital tools for education. However, the complete digitalisation of education eroded what Agamben (2020) considered the essence of studentato (“studenthood”): the physical space of the classroom could be reserved for practical and interactive learning. This could serve to strengthen student life even if it has a certain level of “pre-pandemic normality”.

Taking into account the relevance of the physical environment for the sake of fruitful teaching and learning, higher education institutions must achieve a fair balance between online and face-to-face modes so that they can bring about a healthy, successful hybridisation of their education services. Both teachers and students could think about what they valued and missed most in such interactions. This would serve to help teachers the experience they need to adapt to the new educational context (Gomez Recio & Colella, 2021, p. 23). Perhaps the lockdown and the forced reliance on virtual teaching tools have exposed flaws in the methods and techniques used in higher education to date.

The classroom could be considered an opportunity for students to exchange ideas, debate issues and interact in seminars and group peer-to-peer discussions. This could contribute to the elimination of instruction methods that revolve around the constant reception of information. The theoretical part of education could be taught in online format. In contrast, the physical space of the classroom could be reserved for practical and interactive learning. Perhaps this is the “silver lining” that higher education institutions can extract from the sudden, unexpected shift towards a virtual classroom model. As they could not carry out face-to-face activities in the classroom, teachers and students could think about what they valued and missed most in such interactions. This would serve to help teachers the experience they need to adapt to the new educational context (Gomez Recio & Colella, 2021, p. 23). The impact of COVID-19 on higher education: a review of emerging evidence. Analytical report. Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission.


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1. The labour market today: changes taking place and changes needed

The world of work is being shaped by new global challenges, scientific and technological advances, globalisation, the economy and social changes. The labour market is changing, as are the knowledge and skills needed to enter it. This means that lifelong learning, reskilling, the acquisition of new skills and even readiness to change professional sector have all come to the fore (Woetzel et al., 2021).

The changes that the labour market is undergoing are numerous and diverse. Facer (2021) underlines the following: new technologies have restructured and will continue to restructure employment; women’s participation in the formal economy has increased globally; polarisation between highly paid work and growing mass low-wage work has increased; globalisation has increased the complexity of supply chains; and, finally, there has been growth in informal economies and under- and precarious employment. Likewise, the interaction between these trends is giving rise to related phenomena. Based on the ideas of Graham and Shaw (2017), Facer (2021) explains, for example, that the intersection between precarity and digital technologies is pushing towards the emergence of a gig economy that both "creates new labour markets and transforms (some) old ones" and offers "the capacity to exploit and alienate workers in new and innovative ways". At the same time, according to research by the McKinsey Global Institute (Manyika et al., 2017), 60% of current occupations have 30% of activities that could be automated. Thus, this partial automation has led us to reflect on essentially human contributions and consider how they can be enhanced through education.

In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the existing problems. According to The Economist (2021b), the health crisis “has destroyed millions of jobs, causing a drop in employment that was 14 times bigger than the one after the financial crisis of a decade ago. In many countries unemployment has risen to levels last seen in the 1930s, with the pain concentrated among the low-skilled”. However, The Economist itself offers a contrasting view of this pessimistic outlook. With a focus on the 37 members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a club of mostly rich countries, it argues that popular perceptions about the world of work are largely misleading. It points out that the legacy of the pandemic “may be a better world of work, as it speeds changes that were already under way and highlights those places where further improvement is needed”. Specifically, it emphasises the fact that teleworking will offer greater flexibility and, at the same time, make workers more productive. It also predicts that governments will play a bigger role in sustaining employment and reducing inequalities, since the pandemic has highlighted the importance of a healthy labour market.

Against this backdrop of rapid and sometimes entirely unexpected changes, it is difficult to predict what the future of work will look like. This was pointed out by UNESCO (2015) long before the pandemic compounded the instability: “Indeed, the quickening pace of technological and scientific development is making it increasingly difficult to forecast the emergence of new professions and associated skill needs.”

We do know, however, what changes are needed to build a healthy work environment. In this regard, one of the most obvious needs involves putting workers at the centre, because this change will naturally give rise to many others. The movement Democratizing Work: Democratize, Decommodify, Remediate (1) indicates, first and foremost, that firms must be democratised and highlights the fact that workers “hold the keys to their employers’ success. They are the core constituency of the firm, but are, nonetheless, mostly excluded from participating in the government of their workplaces – a right monopolized by capital investors”. Secondly, it points out that work must be decommodified, “[which] means preserving certain sectors from the laws of the so-called ‘free market’ [and also] ensuring that all people have access to work and the dignity it brings”. Thirdly, it mentions “environmental remediation” by referring to the need for a “successful transition from environmental destruction to environmental recovery and regeneration”. According to this movement, this will be possible only in democratically governed firms, in which all voices are heard when it comes to strategic decision-making. If this does not happen, “labor and the planet always lose”.

The role of women has been and will continue to be a prominent feature of debates about the changes needed in the labour market. With respect to the specific case of

1. See https://democratizingwork.org/
higher education, although women’s access to higher education studies is increasing, a phenomenon known as “female advantage” (see chapter Sustainability), a number of voices have pointed to the lower presence of women in professional positions at universities. According to UNESCO-IESALC (the International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean) (2021), “women still encounter obstacles when seeking to occupy key academic positions in universi- ties, to be involved with relevant research, and to take leadership roles”. Moreover, “the so-called STEM areas of study (that is, science, technology, engineering and mathematics), [...] show a heavy underrepresentation of female students in most countries. This underrepre- sentation of female students is then closely linked to the underrepresentation of female research in these fields” (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021). The reason for this is that “cultural structure and stereotypes have helped identify careers as female or male, therefore increasing the gap” (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021b).

The labour market is not only critical to ensuring that everyone can cover their basic needs; it is also crucial for the development of the individuals within society. Accommodating it properly should represent one of the main goals of higher education institutions (HEIs). In this context, the new skills demanded by today’s labour market are presented below (Section 2). These skills are linked to a paradigm shift in the way we understand learning (Section 3), as well as to an expansion of learning moments and environments: Lifewide and lifelong learning (Section 4). Finally, Section 5 of this chapter asks what role education institutions should play in this new scenario.

2. The broad spectrum of new skills

Focusing on the diagnosis of the World Economic Forum’s 2021 report Upskilling for Shared Prosperity, Myklebust and Smidt (2021) state that “there is a fast-growing void and stark mismatch between people’s current skills and the skills needed for jobs that will be created in the next decade”. According to these authors, these skills include specific knowledge for new professional profiles, such as digital skills, and transversal skills, such as critical thinking. The Euro- pean University Association (EUA) (2021) also highlights the need to acquire, in this case, three skill types: “the interplay between professional, technical and trans- versal skills is crucial. Employers have a demonstrated interest in transversal skills, even in jobs with a strong technical profile.” In fact, the European Higher Educa- tion Area (EHEA) (2012) had stated this 10 years earlier in the Bucharest Communiqué: “Today’s graduates need to combine transversal, multidisciplinary and innovation skills and competences with up-to-date subject-specific knowledge so as to be able to contribute to the wider needs of society.” We aim to enhance the employability and professional development of graduates throughout their careers.”

Transversal skills are general, while technical skills are specific and take a very concrete approach. They promote knowledge and learning through different paths, but the paths are complementary and both are essential in today’s world. The following sections explore transversal skills (Section 2.1) and technical skills (Section 2.2).

2.1 Transversal skills

In a constantly and rapidly changing society, UNESCO (2015) stresses the importance of cultivating adaptability and resilience in the professional arena, which “implies ensuring that individuals are more resilient and can develop and apply career adaptive competen- cies most effectively. These competencies often include more emphasis on what have been variably termed ‘transferable skills’, ‘twenty-first century skills’, and ‘non-cognitive skills’.” In his book El trabajo ya no es lo que era (2020), Albert Carliguerbal anticipates that “the illiterate people of the 21st century will not be so much those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and releam” (quoted in Argemi, 2020).

Based on data from the report SDG 4. The role of com- panies in achieving quality education (2020), Riestra Puga (2020) also highlights the importance of willingness to engage in lifelong learning, adaptation, creativity and innovation, and in relational aspects such as manage- ment of emotions, communication, leadership and empathy. With respect to relational aspects, the impor- tance of prioritising collaboration over competition is a recurring theme (Reiner Mason, 2021).

According to the World Economic Forum (2020), the top 10 skills for 2025 include: (1) analytical thinking and innovation; (2) active learning and learning strate- gies; (3) complex problem-solving; (4) critical thinking and analysis; (5) creativity, originality and initiative; (6) leadership and social influence; (7) technology use, monitoring and control; (8) technology design and pro- grammation; (9) resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility; and (10) reasoning, problem-solving and ideation. Most of these refer, broadly speaking, to problem-solving and the others refer to aspects relating to self-mana-gement, working with people and technology and use and development. The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) (3) provides a benchmark for identifying transversal skills; in this case, they are aimed at the research communi- ty, although they can clearly be broadly applied and adapted to other domains. The Vitae RDF is structured into four domains. Domain A covers knowledge and intellectual abilities; Domain B corresponds to personal qualities; Domain C is related to knowledge of the pro- fessional standards and requirements to do research; and Domain D concerns the knowledge and skills to work with others to ensure the wider impact of research. These are just a few examples of transversal skills cited in the literature. As demonstrated, they include a wide and varied range of skills that can be summarised as follows: adaptability and creativity, which are closely related to each other; the ability to solve problems, and the ability to self-manage and relate to others.

The humanities play a major role in the development of transversal skills. While these aspects are addressed in the chapter Citizens, focused on humanities, and in the Part 1: The digital future of this Report, it is important to note that many of the transversal skills that are, and will continue to be, in greatest demand in the job market are closely related to the humanities, and that one of the reasons for this lies in the phenomenon of automation; machines and robots will perform tasks previously carried out by humans, and humans will be forced to strengthen every aspect that differentiates them from these machines and robots. Guní (2019) explains this phenomenon as follows: “As is recognised in the report Work for a Brigh- ter Future, published in 2019 by the International Labour Organization, [...] some of the skills that will be most in demand are related to the humanities, communication, relations and critical thinking. If we think that many activities will be automated, and very much so, in the immediate future, it is obvious that the resulting jobs will have to incorporate other skills and abilities, and these include those linked to and driven by study of the humanities.”

2.2 Technical skills

Both policymakers and international organisations and experts point to mismatches between the training and skills needs of the labour market and the supply of workers with these qualities (Taylor and Burquel, 2021). Given this reality, the SDGs themselves, specifically Target 4.4, stress the need to “substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employ- ment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.”

According to the World Economic Forum (2020), there has been “a clear acceleration in the adoption of new technologies [...] Cloud computing, big data and e-commerce remain high priorities [...]. However there has also been a significant rise in interest in encryption, reflecting the new vulnerabilities of our digital age, and a significant increase in the number of firms expecting to adopt non-humanoid robots and artificial intelligen- ce, with both technologies slowly becoming a mainstay of work across industries”. These new technologies are set to drive the future growth of the industry and give rise to new jobs and the need for new skills, explains the report by the World Economic Forum (2020).

The report also presents a list of “cross-cutting skills”, i.e. skills that are in demand across multiple emerging professions. They are as follows: Product marketing Management, digital marketing; Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC); business management; advertising; human computer interaction; development tools; data storage technologies; computer networking; web development; management consulting; entrepreneurship; artifi- cial intelligence; data science; retail sales; technical support; social media; graphic design, and information management. As is clear, most of these skills derive from
the digital transformation and the implementation of new technologies currently taking place in the world of work; skills related to business management and marketing also feature prominently.

In this context, the concepts of skillling, reskilling, upskilling and micro-credentials have emerged. These relate to training that is closely linked to market demands, is short-delivered and is primarily delivered in virtual format. They also involve a modular approach to knowledge, since they focus on very specific learning intended for a specific task. As defined by TechnoLine.ca (2021), “Micro-credentials are a key component of many government strategies for upskilling and reskilling. They are designed to help close the skills gap and get people back to work. They also reflect a trend toward on-demand, short-form learning that is focused on skills, competencies and specific capabilities – a shift away from long-form learning, such as degrees and diplomas”.

Although micro-credentials are partly defined by their links to both industry and the academic world, these links need to be concrete and efficient. According to TechnoLine.ca (2021), in the case of industry, it is important to “link micro-credentials to the in-demand (or soon to be in-demand) skills and competencies employers are actually seeking” and, to ensure that this link is real and effective, the industry needs to be involved in the design of micro-credentials. Moreover, it is crucial to create mechanisms to assure employers that micro-credentials actually train employees in the skills for which they have been designed.

“The key is that employers agree that a specific micro-cred- ential and its assessment provide a sufficient basis for employability.” With respect to links to the academic world, it is important to identify micro-credentials that can be scaled up to undergraduate or postgraduate degrees and that give rise to credits for these degrees.

Internships and work placements also represent effective tools to prepare individuals for entering the workplace, since they provide them with professional experience. As mentioned by EUA (2021), it is also essential that internships and work placements provide a good fit for both the employer and the academic programme: “[They] should be carefully designed within the curriculum, to meet both employers' demands and academic require- ments.” However, in the context of curricular activities, it is important to go beyond internships and work placements to offer “a mixture of curricular interventions, e.g. com- binations of internship modules, practical courses and different teaching methods (project-based learning, com- munity-based learning, research-based learning, etc., possibly including real-life based, authentic assessment)” (EUA, 2021). In this regard, the dual training initiatives implemented in many countries represent a useful methodology that favours the hybridisation of academic knowledge and practical knowledge of the workplace.

In a global world, it is impossible to overlook the impor- tance of international experience, even if this is not strictly speaking a technical skill. As indicated by Weimer (2018), “robust research has emerged supporting the assertion that a student’s employability is impacted by their inter- national higher education engagement [...] It is up to the institution to create rich opportunities and provide tools for students to reflect on and transform their international experience into desirable employability traits.”

Finally, it is important to update skills, but also to ensure that this is accessible for everyone. Woetzel et al. (2021) present the notion of the “three Es” – “everyone, everywhere and everywhere” – in relation to the case of China. Accor- ding to Woetzel et al. (2021), China will play a key role in determining tomorrow’s global labour market, because “one-third of the global occupational transitions needed for the future of work may be in China”. In this context, the three Es refer to three aspects that are necessary for the transformation of this country and are, in fact, appli- cable globally. “Everyone” refers to the need for the entire population to acquire the skills they need. “Everything” stresses the importance of addressing cognitive issues, such as critical thinking and decision-making; social and emotional issues, such as interpersonal skills and leader- ship; and technical skills, such as advanced data analysis. Finally, “everywhere” refers to the need to make education and training ubiquitous and available to everyone through- out their lives.

2.3 Personal responsibility for learning

In addition to acquiring new skills, it is essential to empower students and make them responsible for their learning and, by extension, their career paths: “Adres- sing employability skills does not only mean enabling graduates to find a job or create one. [...] It is about empowering students as self-reflective, lifelong learners, and ultimately developing their personal responsibility for their learning” (EUA, 2021). Taylor and Burquel (2021) also reflect this idea when they refer to the need to place stu- dents at the centre of the educational process:

Student-centred education implies that students are given the responsibility for their own learning process, setting their own goals and finding their own pathway to become independent thinkers, develop the confidence to learn by discovery (rather than simply to memorise academic information), acquire lifelong learning skills to deal with 21st century problems and compete in the local and global job market (Taylor and Burquel, 2021).

Meanwhile, Facer (2021) emphasises the importance of nurturing students’ ability to respect themselves and construct dignified work environments for everyone. According to the author, it is necessary to nurture “the capacity for students to respect themselves, identify what constitutes valuable work for themselves and their com- munity and develop the personal and social capacities to organise collectively in order to create conditions in which they are able to conduct such work with dignity”.

Within this framework, the importance of group and colla- borative work comes to the fore, because “creating viable working opportunities can no longer be seen as the job of the individual in isolation, or the subject simply of indi- vidual ‘careers’, but is also dependent on the collective capacity to negotiate for better working conditions, wages, working conditions and employment rights”.

Both Facer (2021) and Taylor and Burquel (2021) also point to the social impact of learning by underscoring the skills, social capacities and valuable work individuals can bring to the community. By linking their educational and professional journey to civil society, students’ empower- ment and personal responsibility transcend the private sphere. In this regard, new educational and social action methodologies have emerged, such as service-learning, an educational approach that combines community res- ponsibility and learning to give meaning to the training process.

Empowerment in learning is important not only for stu- dents, but also for leaders; students and leaders are, in fact, just different points on a continuum. To this end, Mikkelsen and Jarche (2015) explain that “we need leaders who promote learning and who master fast, relevant, and autonomous learning themselves. There is no other way to address the wicked problems facing us. If work is learn- ing and learning is the work, then leadership should be all about enabling learning”.

In this context, Harold Jarche, co-author of this article and a consultant on distributed work and networked learning, developed the so-called Personal Knowledge Mastery (PKM)®, a lifelong learning strategy and a method for indi- viduals to take control of their professional development through a continuous process of seeking, seeing, mak- ing and sharing. As Mikkelsen and Jarche (2010) explain, “seeking” is about finding things out and keeping up to date with smart filters to sort out the valuable information; “sense-making” is how we personalise information and use it; and “sharing” refers to exchanging resources, ideas and experiences with our networks, as well as collabora- ting with our colleagues. With this method, “everyone in an organization can become part of a learning organism, listening at different frequencies, scanning the horizon, recognizing patterns and making better decisions on an informed basis”. In addition, a new position has emerged and is becoming increasingly present in organisations: the Chief Learning Officer (CLO), who is responsible for facilitating learning and is capable of leading and facili- tating processes of change, digital transformation, learning and innovation in an uncertain environment (RIHR/DigITAL, 2020).

3. A paradigm shift in the way we understand learning

The far-reaching changes affecting the professional world, and society in general, have extended to the education system. This is becoming evident at a time when neurosciences is undergoing significant advances that are having a major impact on education. In short, neuroscience offers an insight into the way the brain functions “to better understand the interactions between biological processes and human learning” (UNESCO, 2015). As David Bueno explained in an inter- view with Ferragut (2019), we used to see the long-term results according to the strategy used, whereas now we can see what is happening in the brain, which allows...
us to understand more about how learning should be sequenced and how knowledge should be transmitted. It should also be noted that proposals emerging from the field of neuroscience and related disciplines are linked in particular to so-called transversal skills (Section 2.1) and individuals’ responsibilities for their learning process (Section 2.3).

In this context, one of the key aspects is the importance of putting students at the centre of the learning process. Students must tackle learning challenges on their own, which allows them to mobilise existing knowledge and generate new ideas, for example, teachers must give them time before intervening, together with other practices that stress the importance of self-learning and empowering children to take control of their learning (Porlán, 2021; Cornella, 2021). However, putting students at the centre of learning and promoting their autonomy is not about self-teaching, on the contrary, the people who accompany students in the learning process are crucial (Monereo, 2021). Autonomy is about being able to solve problems with the voices that support you.

Another important aspect, closely related to putting students at the centre, is the need to focus on the questions rather than the answers. Knowledge cannot be “given”; rather, students must be supported as they build it (Porlán, 2021). Monereo (2021) points out that those who are able to ask good questions develop better, while Tokuhama (2021), suggests that students should be assessed based on the quality of their questions. In any case, it must be emphasised the importance of placing students in the learning context, since knowledge provides the answer to problems, projects, cases, challenges, dilemmas, etc (Porlán, 2021). It is therefore necessary to place students in the context that gives meaning to the question, the problem and the knowledge.

Another matter of ongoing debate relates to the depth of learning. According to the author, in-depth knowledge is necessary because it is “durable, transferable, functional and productive”. Along similar lines, there has also been a change in the way we understand and organise knowledge, and this has clear implications for learning and higher education. Specifically, there has been a paradigm shift in the organisation of knowledge based on differentiated disciplines, with a tendency for self-referential research and academia’s isolation from the professional world, the job market and students, towards interdisciplinary linked to the emergence of the knowledge economy (Tabukawa, 2017). Given the complexity of contemporary challenges that require comprehensive reasoning and a multidimensional perspective, interdisciplinary eschews watertight compartments and links knowledge from different disciplines, thereby providing students, professionals and academics with tools for better knowledge integration and promoting scientific, technical, personal and professional development (Llano Arama et al., 2016). Thus, in the field of learning, interdisciplinary is embodied in “the teaching of the interrelationships between all of the universe, such that students do not learn in a piecemeal way when being taught things that occur in an integrated manner in real life” (Llano Arama et al., 2016).

Memory, which already plays a key role in traditional education, also takes centre stage in this new paradigm. According to the philosopher Gregorio Luri, memory is not only a memory, but rather a permanent memory of language, of the person and of the culture. Memory is therefore necessary to put students in the context that gives meaning to the question, the problem and the knowledge.

We are moving away from the model in which learning is organized around stable, usually hierarchical institutions (schools, colleges, universities) that, for better and worse, have served as the main gateways to education and social mobility. Replacing that model is a new system in which learning is best conceived as interdependent and necessary. Some learning have not been changed, but others are not so scarce but widely available, opportunities for learning are abundant, and learners increasingly have the ability to autonomously dip into and out of continuous learning flows (Gorbis, 2013).

Many concepts have proliferated based on the idea of lifelong learning: learning ecologies and ecosystems, which refer to learning involving the whole ecosystem, community schools and learning, which encompass the same idea but focus on the community, education and expanded learning, which refer to broader learning, and informal, unconscious, invisible and silent learning, which involves all learning that occurs outside the formal system and conscious action. Likewise, after-school and summer learning activities are being given ever-greater prominence, as they are regarded as crucial to educational success.

As explained by EUA (2021), “in addition to the classroom, […] skills acquisition and training also takes place through informal learning, outside the classroom, or in a mixture of co-curricular and extra-curricular situations. This poses the question of recognition for learning that takes place outside the curriculum and is not credited as part of it.” In addition, one of the future scenarios presented by OECD (2021) involves “extended school housing multiple activities (like many college campuses today) other than those purely academic”. Gorbis (2013) takes an open, holistic viewpoint and suggests that “instead of worrying about how to distribute scarce educational resources, the challenge we need to start grappling with in the era of social structured learning is how to attract people to dip into the rapidly growing flow of learning resources and how to do this equitably, in order to create more opportunities for a better life for more people”. Some initiatives in this spirit are the National League of Cities’ Education and Expanded Learning and the Bofill Foundation’s Aliança Educació 360*. Finally, the Magna Carta Universitatum (MCU) (2020) establishes a large network of higher education institutions and links them to the host community:

*Higher education institutions are part of global, collegial entities that do not acquire, maintain and develop them, but rather are immersed in and connected with global developments and in the process of each other. They also have their own networks and roles in local communities and ecosystems (MCU, 2020).

The idea of lifelong learning goes hand in hand with another recurring concept that is widely sought after in higher education: lifelong learning. These days, having a university degree is not a guarantee of a job, much less a stable job for life. Learning does not end with a degree, and it is this idea that underpins the concept of lifelong learning. As pointed out by EUA (2021), “While a university degree is needed and appreciated by employers, that degree education may no longer
be sufficient to ensure employability throughout one’s lifetime”. UNESCO (2015), meanwhile, stresses that “lifelong learning is critically important to coping with new employment patterns and achieving the levels and types of competencies required by individuals and societies”. Fito (2020) also refers to this concept: “In this new scenario, the limited life span of education no longer makes sense; the current challenge for universities is to promote people’s empowerment and their ability to adapt to permanent change.” In this context, lifelong learning must become a right. As Roca (2021) puts it, “It is no longer enough to say that lifelong learning must be a functional necessity; rather, it must be an inalienable right of everyone: the right to lifelong learning”.

Moreover, several authors stress the importance of establishing ties throughout the learning process, from childhood to adulthood. In this regard, the MCU (2020) portrays higher education institutions as part of a continuum: “Education is a human right, a public good, and should be available to all. Universities recognise that learning is a lifelong activity with tertiary education as one part of a continuum. Within that one part, universities serve diverse learners at all stages of their lives.”

5. The role of HEIs: reducing tension and becoming part of the ecosystem

It is essential to establish “a series of transformations that will turn the training-based vocation of higher education into a clear employability-based approach”, says Fito (2020). It should be noted, however, that this vital link between higher education institutions and the professional world creates two types of tension: firstly, with the academic character that has defined universities over the centuries and, secondly, with the professional world creates two types of tension: firstly, with the academic character that has defined universities over the centuries and, secondly, with the professional world creates two types of tension: firstly, with the academic character that has defined universities over the centuries and, secondly, with the professional world. In this regard, the MCU (2020) points out that “employability today has become more complex, unstable and uncertain, which makes it necessary to identify fresh perspectives, including the systemic perspective: "the dichotomy between developing professionals and citizens with a long-term view and meeting the needs of the market can tether the work of universities to the flow of the market and shift it away from its primary mission of training tomorrow’s citizens. In this regard, however, EUA (2021) points out that “employability alone does not necessarily mean being employed by a company or industry in a defined field of work: it is broader as a concept, and also covers social activities, such as engaging with local communities”.

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This tension disappears naturally if universities are incorporated into the ecosystem, into the community, where everyone works towards the same goals: progress, growth, sustainability and equality. Based on the ideas of Albert Cañigueral, Argemí (2020) explains it thus: “The future [...] must be built on everyone’s contributions from their own spheres of power. If not, it will be built without us and, even worse, against us. In the future, if we do our best, the focus will be on communities and not on individuals, on collaboration and not on competition; a place where synergies will be combined and resources harnessed.” This idea ties in with the so-called quadruple helix model, which seeks to coordinate academia, industry and government and which later evolved into the so-called triple helix model, which also included civil society and the media, and the quintuple helix, which incorporated the so-called new environment (see the chapter Knowledge on research and innovation). All these actors must work together within the framework of the ecosystem. Fito (2020) also proposes a very clear approach in this regard; an approach in which the university is part of a network where exchanges between university and community and, within the latter, the workplace, are constant and fluid. “The focus on new employability requires a more permeable university that maintains constant dialogue with the other inhabitants of the ecosystem and opens classrooms to professionals with a teaching profile or moves learning out of the classroom.”

Consensus on the role of the university in fostering social progress through employment was laid bare in the Bologna declaration more than 20 years ago. Employability today has become more complex, unstable and uncertain, which makes it necessary to identify fresh perspectives, including the systemic perspective: “Universities must reposition their own role within an ecosystem of knowledge production and dissemination whose dynamics are increasingly complex, where this knowledge is shared through multi-stakeholder hierarchic: structures, in the form of a network” (Fito, 2020). The author also stresses that “this transition to an ecosystem-based vision in which universities no longer have a monopoly on generating and transmitting knowledge, but instead play a privileged role in which they connect and catalyse the various expressions of that knowledge, can and should be used to generate employability.”

Dual training, which is well established in countries such as Germany and France, is one of the formulas that seek to move in this direction. The principles of dual training are clear, says Vilalta (2021):

- Recognition of employability as a lifelong and fundamental activity. Such a recognition is necessary in order to ensure that higher education is able to meet the needs of the market and to shift it away from its primary mission of training tomorrow’s citizens.
- Involvement of employers and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of training programs.
- Integration of universities and polytechnics into the broader ecosystem of knowledge production and dissemination.
- Collaboration between universities, polytechnics, and other stakeholders in the ecosystem.
- Identification of competencies and skills required for specific fields of work.

These approaches call for internal coordination between higher education institutions, in addition to coordination with the rest of the ecosystem: “To make employability a horizontal matter across the institution, a fine-tuned coordination and continuum is needed between and within study programmes, academic faculties and departments, and different support units (the university’s career development office, units in charge of work placements, quality assurance units, etc.)” (EUA, 2021).
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Part 1: New Contexts, New Visions

New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030
1.3 Citizens. Promoting humanist values and profiles in a changing world
1. Redefining the human experience: the pathway to change

The race to have more, earn more, achieve success and be the best has shifted the focus from the individual as part of a group towards competition between members of the group. We accumulate things instead of sharing them and we compete against each other instead of cooperating, all based on the belief that our resources are unlimited.

The world we inhabit is facing vast imbalances and profound changes: the climate emergency is calling the production system into question; political crises are emerging everywhere, sometimes giving rise to authoritarian governments and diverse wars; the Covid-19 health crisis has taken precedence over everything and everything else has been put on hold; thus casting doubt on many of the models used to govern countries and the relationships between them; advances in science and technology are making it imperative to carry out joint reflections on the impact of the new paradigms that are emerging, we are advancing an ever-increasing rate, but the signs of a sick society are everywhere. These changes, which are caused partly by individualist zeal and excessive accumulation, require that the human experience be redefined and a new relationship between humankind and the environment be created. As GUIN explains (2019):

These [societal] changes are presenting trans-cendental challenges in terms of thinking and rethinking the meaning and value of human experience, and even of what it means to be human, as individuals and in relation to other people and with nature, now and in the future, and so we need to reflect critically and rationally, including from human emotionality (GUIN, 2019).

Against this backdrop, people are sounding the alarm about the risks of abandoning cooperation in favour of competition, since it has destroyed the ethical structure that humanity has been building for millennia. The human experience must involve establishing a sustainable relationship in harmony with the environment. The environment is the planet we inhabit. When we imagine a possible future, we cannot separate humans from the rest of the planet; rather, we must understand humanity as part of a larger system, the biosphere (Section 2.1). The environment is also the series of contexts in which our lives are immersed: the workplace, community, etc. These contexts are fluid and complex and, in this fast-moving reality, force us to learn to live with uncertainty (Section 2.2). Through observing this process of analysis and experience, the humanities can help us learn about and understand this environment and, therefore, provide us with the tools we need to develop within it.

2. Learning to integrate into the environment

Redefining the human experience must involve establishing a sustainable relationship in harmony with the environment. The environment is the planet we inhabit. When we imagine a possible future, we cannot separate humans from the rest of the planet; rather, we must understand humanity as part of a larger system, the biosphere (Section 2.1). The environment is also the series of contexts in which our lives are immersed: the workplace, community, etc. These contexts are fluid and complex and, in this fast-moving reality, force us to learn to live with uncertainty (Section 2.2). Through observing this process of analysis and experience, the humanities can help us learn about and understand this environment and, therefore, provide us with the tools we need to develop within it.

2.1 Humanity as part of the biosphere

The report Learning: The Treasure Within, also known as the Delors Report (Delors et al., 1996), proposes that learning be based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to be, learning to live together and learning to do. According to UNESCO (2015), these pillars require modification due to growing concerns about sustainability: “Learning to live together, for example, must go beyond the social and cultural dimensions of human interaction to include a concern for the relationship of human society with the natural environment.”

At the same time, new schools of humanist thought have emerged, some of which have been classified as the environmental humanities, which focus on the relationship between humankind and nature for the sake of sustainable development. The environmental humanities are characterised by a “connectivity ontology based on the need to integrate human development into ecosystems. Or, put another way, to adopt eco logical, economic and social sustainability as a paradigm for development” (GUIN, 2019). As Serenella Iovino, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, explained at the European Humanities Conference held in Lisbon in May 2021:

The environmental humanities are animated by the ambition of intervening in the understanding as well as in the ethical reframing of inhabiting the world. [...] The environmental humanities are animated by the idea that our species as well as our planet are not ‘lonely’ but are already always in a deep inter-change. This implies that every form of politics must take into account this mutual belonging, this multiplicity, as well as the gaps of injustice among different species, or among members of the same species: ours.

The concepts of the environmental humanities are also addressed by UNESCO (2020), which makes specific proposals for education in the post-COVID era. The health crisis is “the latest in a series of developments which show us that our humanism cannot be as narrow as it once was. We cannot separate humanity from the rest of the planet and this must be born in mind as we work to shape desirable alternative futures”.

2.2 A complex and uncertain world

If there is one adjective that keeps cropping up when defining the phenomena and contexts in which we are immersed, it is ‘complex’; there is talk of the complex reality, complex social challenges, complex professions, and so on. “Uncertain” is another word that is repeatedly used to define today’s world. The world is uncertain, but we try to comprehend it, to grasp it. “Long before the pandemic hit, we lived our lives worried about safety and obsessed with avoiding all risks, which made us slaves to prevention. We clung to the certainties and dogmas that thwart any peaceful quest for the truth” (Jolohin, 2021). Modern living requires that we embrace a multifaceted, changing reality and that higher education institutions must provide the tools needed to inhibit it and, even more importantly, to grow through it.

Complexity, for example, requires a transversal approach in which the boundaries between disciplines are blurred and the humanities play a key role. At the Third International Congress of Neuroeducation, Marina Garcés (2021) spoke about uncertainty and stressed that educational institutions must guide their students’ knowledge; she also called upon teachers and students to learn to get lost together and to be unafraid to do so. One of the most widely discussed subjects is how to deal with complexity and uncertainty in the workplace (see the chapter The future of work), and higher education must ensure that the employees of the future have the skills that are needed, such as knowledge of the context (society, 1. This excerpt has been adapted from an unpublished text by Marina Subirats, a sociologist, public official and Catalan politician.
3. Learning to build a community

We are not simply beings who have been dropped on a planet that we can dispose of indiscriminately; we are part of an ecosystem and we need to learn how to live in balance. Likewise, we are not individuals who are independent from each other and have merely found ourselves in a particular place and time, we are social beings who live in a community where we create synergies that are crucial for evolution.

With this in mind, we must shy away from realities such as that described by Lozano (2021). “We live side by side, but we do not live together or communally, with connections that vary from person to person in the same institution (or in the same workplace).” On the contrary, we must live together. We must serve, help, welcome and accommodate each other. Likewise, against this backdrop of global and diverse coexistence, we need to be open to different ways of understanding the world and life, and we need to learn to accept differences and disagreements, since this is an essential part of living in a democracy.

3.1 A commitment to service and hospitality in a global world

We live in society and interact with each other in a network. This network, however, is not always synonymous with cooperation for the common good. In a world ruled by a global market that views individuals as tools for profit and is governed by the race to individual success, the network is often woven in line with criteria that have little regard for the bonds of coexistence. As indicated by Nussbaum (2018):

If our institutions of higher education do not build a richer network of human connections it is likely that our dealings with one another will be mediated by the defective norms of market exchange. A rich network of human connections, however, will not arise magically out of our good intentions: we need to think about how our educational institutions contribute to that goal (Nussbaum, 2018).

Service and hospitality are essential for the construction of this network, and must be entrenched in all higher education bodies, processes and programmes and, above all, in the classroom. Marina García (2021) defends the need to make education into the art of hospitality and to accommodate other’s’ existence in the learning process, along with everything that defines and characterises this. We must learn to accommodate and serve others, and we must put the perception of universities and the people who form them at the forefront, as a service to society.

Furthermore, it is important not only to understand coexistence in terms of the immediate environment, but also to recognise this sense of coexistence on a global level, while eschewing centralist and neocolonialist perspectives. This is one of the ideas explored by Nussbaum (2018), who focuses on the need not only to recognise a global, diverse and plural citizenship, but also to take responsibility for it.

Citizens who cultivate their humanity need, further, an ability to see themselves as not simply citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern. [...] We neglect needs and capacities that link us to fellow citizens who live at a distance, or who look different from ourselves. This means that we are unaware of many prospects of communication and fellowship with them, and also of responsibilities we may have to them (Nussbaum, 2018).

The humanities are important allies to bring about these bonds; to create networks for enrichment and commitment to others; to build a diverse, global community that rejects centralist perspectives; and, ultimately, to focus on the development of the citizens of the future.

3.2 Coexistence, difference and diversity

Living together involves surrounding ourselves with different ways of thinking and acting. If we broaden our field of vision and look at the world as a whole, these differences expand and multiply. Democratic societies must be able to accommodate this diversity, accept these differences and incorporate conflicting ideas peacefully. However, in a highly polarised world fuelled by the phenomenon of fake news, this is becoming increasingly rare. As UNESCO (2020) warns, “The spread of misinformation and fake news [...] is now proving fatal for social life and human understanding, but is also literally destroying lives”. The rise in fake news is particularly evident in social media, where bubbles inhabited by people who share the same ideas are created; these ideas then collide with other’s spaces and give rise to ever greater polarisation.

Lies, which are presented in high-impact, emotionally charged publications, catch us out because they allow us to cling to a single, clear and unwavering stance and give us a (false) sense of security. Accepting other views and nuances and being open to change and evolution is more uncomfortable and makes us feel insecure. Jolönch (2021) states that lies for the sake of false reassurance must be eradicated. “This is the challenge scientifically, ethically and politically: to tirelessly seek out the truth. Moreover, in a world of uncertainty, it is necessary to demand the truth in times of propaganda.” A parallel idea is presented in The Economist, in an article that takes inspiration from Erasmus to defend the moderate path against extremist positions: “The 16th-century humanist should give hope to those who resist competing bigotries. Erasmus shows that moderate are not right and the awful consequences of extremism and intolerance” (The Economist, 2020).

All of this also involves adopting a critical view of one’s own ideas and one’s cultural and family beliefs. Kant taught us that a critical attitude can only be held by one who has awoken from a “dogmatic slumber” and matured, and who has the capacity for judgement and complete autonomy. Critical thinking could be encapsulated in these characteristics, which were highlighted by a more recent philosopher and educationalist, John Dewey. First, critical thinking is based predominantly on criteria much more than data, hence the word “critical”; in other words, it is more important to interpret than to understand, to understand than to assimilate, to know than simply inform. Second, critical thinking is based on the principle that everything human is processual, has a “history” and can therefore be understood and interpreted if viewed in the context of its evolution. Third, in addition to being processual, everything human is essentially contextual, in other words, it can be understood only if elements of the context in which it exists and interacts are included in the analysis. Finally, critical thinking is self-correcting, that is, the thinker assesses whether it is working at all it should be or is willing to amend it at the slightest suspicion that it is coming up short.

A critical attitude must be accompanied by a broad, inclusive view of the different ways of seeing the world. Plenty of voices have addressed this issue from a range of perspectives. GUNI (2019) emphasises the importance of incorporating “the different views of what we mean by ‘human’ and the environment in which life is developed”. It also makes a point about equality and diversity, which should never be at odds with one another. There is also a need for the humanities to analyse the very concept of ‘equality’, to prevent it from becoming contradictory to our commitment to diversity and reciprocity between cultures and ways of life.

According to UNESCO (2015), meanwhile, “The right to quality education is the right to meaningful and relevant learning”. If there are different ways of understanding life, there must be different ways of establishing what must be learned. “This implies hearing the silent voices of those who have not yet been heard.”

The Manifesto Knowledge, Action and Hope, which was presented in 2021 by the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, warned about the “loss of our global treasury of intangible cultural heritage of Indigenous languages, stories, songs and ways of knowing” and expressed the need for the “decolonization of higher education, acknowledging through an explicit recognition of multiple epistemologies and multiple forms of representing knowledge”. Finally, UNESCO-IESALC (2021) proposes ways to achieve relevant learning in each context.

The acknowledgement of multiple forms of knowledge and greater use of non-English languages can support this ambition. Contextually relevant knowledges will also help in settings where there are disconnects between what students learn from books and articles and the real challenges they face in their communities and societies. [...] Greater con-
textual relevance would also stem from research being able to move away from the current pattern whereby scientific communities and networks are dominated by a small number of HEIs that have historically had the power to define scientific norms and influence the types of research that are conducted (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021).

To recognise multiple epistemologies and expressions of knowledge and, even before that, to allow these epistemologies to be formulated and disseminated, it is essential to acknowledge linguistic diversity and the richness of languages as the content of, and contingent upon, knowledge and cultural heritage. In the framework of the Information for All programme, UNESCO (2021) states:

Languages are unique tools that enable people to comprehend and describe the world, communicate and transmit knowledge, they are repositories of historical and social experience of nations, and act as socialization factors and means of human self-identification. However, almost half of the world's languages are facing the risk of extinction, while still more languages are facing the risk of losing their role in many fields UNESCO (2021). Within the field of education, languages and linguistic diversity lie at the heart of the debate on the quality of learning, personal development and knowledge creation. "Research shows that mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education has a positive impact on learning and learning outcomes" (UNESCO, 2014). Therefore, enabling meaningful and relevant learning implies protecting every language and giving it recognition as a vehicular language in education. At the same time, endangered or minority group languages are being preserved and promoted through multilingual education, thereby safeguarding cultural richness and the world's linguistic and cultural diversity.

4. Learning to explore the individual

One idea that surfaces repeatedly in discussions about the future of education is the importance of cultivating the traits that make us human: "Being uniquely capable of love and imagination" (Nussbaum, 2018), "the development of the whole person not just academic skills" (UNESCO, 2020). This idea gathers even more momentum in discussions on the rise of artificial intelligence, in the words of Cornella, "in a world with intelligent machines, our best option is to be human." This appeal to cultivate what makes us human places individuals (Section 4.1) and their emotions (Section 4.2) at the centre of the educational process.

4.1 Focus on the individual

Today's higher education institutions face a wide range of challenges, including disengaged students (Rouhainen, 2019). Many students skimmel over content and activities in the classroom. The main goal of their presence in the classroom is to pass a subject or earn a degree. They approach their training from a professional point of view – which is no bad thing – but they are disconnected from anything deeper, what might called their purpose in life or their vocation.

Our vocation is the intersection between our calling, understood as our true passion, and service to society: "Education should encourage us to explore our purpose in life, and should not assume that we have arrived at university with a clear vision and that we simply need to be taught how to achieve it" (Lozano, 2020). Several authors have highlighted the need to explore this calling and fulfill it. According to UNESCO (2020), "It is important to develop a strong base of knowledge about the world and about oneself - tools to consult and tools that allow each of us to find purpose and be better able to participate in social and political life." In an article that focuses on historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Reinert Mason (2021) explains that the culture of service that is prevalent in many HBCUs "helps students look outside of themselves to find their passion and their purpose".

It is important to stress that our understanding of purpose and vocation is broad and can include interests that vary greatly in terms of nature and intensity. However, sometimes it might be more appropriate to refer to vocations, in the plural. Far from being restricted to people with a very clear, one-way mission in life, these concepts must be within everyone's reach, because everyone has passions that push them in one direction or another.

Students who are disconnected from the training process are the product of a profound disconnect between education and these vocations. It is essential to rebuild these links so that any changes to be made for society start with the individuals who form part of it. Seen from another point of view, it is vital to consider the group and the environment in this search for individuality and genuineness to escape the all-too-common tendency to play individual rights off against collective rights.

4.2 The role of emotions

It is now commonly accepted that we can only learn if our emotions allow it. However, western culture has traditionally underestimated emotions as a source of knowledge and considered them inferior, far less important than ideas and abstract reasoning (Subrata, 2021). Some authors point to the need to avoid resoring to overly cognitivist and rational models and to approach feelings in a more genuine way: "Ever since we started talking about emotional intelligence and then later about emotional education, [...] emotional education has been applied on the basis of reason, whereas neuroscience has contributed significantly and tells us that emotions are felt. We don't think, we feel" (Timoneda, 2021).

Art, painting, literature, music, theatre, film, photography, sculpture, etc., play a central role when focusing on emotions. Riestra Puga (2020) explains that artistic and creative processes represent a transversal educational dimension that allow each of us to find purpose and be better able to participate in social and political life. In an article that focuses on historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Reinert Mason (2021) explains that the culture of service that is prevalent in many HBCUs "helps students to take ownership of themselves to find their passion and their purpose". It is important to stress that our understanding of purpose and vocation is broad and can include interests that vary greatly in terms of nature and intensity. However, sometimes it might be more appropriate to refer to vocations, in the plural. Far from being restricted to people with a very clear, one-way mission in life, these concepts must be within everyone's reach, because everyone has passions that push them in one direction or another.

If students learn from emotion, they can acquire the tools they need to structure not only their knowledge, but also their life balance, and they enjoy themselves in the process: "Education based on emotions seeks wisdom linked to enjoying life to the fullest, in conjunction with the enjoyment that is achieved with the acquisition of learning" (De Alonso Paz, 2021). Indeed, the pursuit of this well-being is one of the priorities, along with human interaction, set out by UNESCO (2020) for the future of education.

5. The humanities today

Humanities, “made up of a heterogeneous set of knowledge” and disciplines (GUNI, 2019), provides us with tools to observe, analyse and interpret the context around us; it encourages us to explore ourselves through art, creation and emotions; and it enables us to communicate, collaborate and create networks for coexistence. Because the humanities are not always directly linked to productivity and the goals of a market that governs us, however, the field has been overlooked by higher education and education in general. Martha Nussbaum calls this phenomenon whereby the humanities and arts are disappearing “from both the curriculum and the hearts and minds of parents and children,” a silent crisis of education and warns that “this passion for profit in the global market means that we run the risk of losing precious values for the future of democracy” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 16). However, she points out that both economic interests and the promotion of citizenship require the same skills, which are rooted in the humanities, so it is necessary to connect knowledge and forms of education “to promote a climate of responsible and attentive management and a culture of creative innovation” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 26).

In reference to the report Change and Cohesion Towards 2030: Humanistic Initiatives from the Danish Association of Masters and PhDs, Myklebust (2021) stresses the importance of including humanities scholars in discussions on seven thematic areas: future climate solutions; cultural and unity challenges; knowledge on facts and fiction and technology in higher education; democratic values and digitalisation; family welfare and gender equality; better health communication and greater equality; and active intervention against religious polarisation. In addition, echoing the words of David Buddz Pedersen, Myklebust (2021) says, “Now is the time to convince policy-makers that the humanities are making important contributions to society, democracy and policy-making across complex challenges such as health, climate, security, education, digitalisation and democracy” and adds that “most public decision-makers are indoctrinated with a blind belief that the economy and the market are the most suitable tools for making prognoses for rational behaviour. But the truth is that democracy is a much stronger mechanism for creating sustainable and responsible changes.”
In this context, it is necessary to study how the humanities can meet current needs, rather than clinging to them as if they were the saviour of all today's evils or hanging onto a nostalgic vision of what they used to be. It is necessary to interweave them with modern needs and, from there, reflect on the role they should play in higher education.

We go beyond these two opposing extremes, for we are working from the idea that humanities are neither a residual heritage that needs to be protected, nor a drug or a remedy to counter the devastating effects of other areas of society. Quite the contrary, the humanities are part of making sense of human existence and our shared experien-

cies-old humanism, which was patriarchal, Eurocentric and to Christian values. In fact, as GUNI (2019) explains, “Right now, the strongest philosophical, aesthetic, technological and other schools of thought have made a stand either for or against humanism. Hence the debates on trans-humanism, post-huma-

nism, anti-humanism”. In the same Higher Education and the World Report, Prieto and Prats (2019) state that there is a link between knowledge and the patriarchy, as the foundations of humanist notions emerged within the patriarchal framework. Therefore, the mainstream sciences, humanities and knowledge were defined from a male perspective. However, “feminism and gender studies have now for decades been producing and contributing essential work for repairing the damage caused by humanistic patriarchy” (GUNI, 2019). This transformation process transcends debates concerning how many hours should be devoted to these subjects and the specific contexts in which they should be taught. It also transcends methodological discussions. The shift towards depatriarchalised knowledge, free from established patterns of power and hierarchy, requires a thorough reassessment and a shift in attitude towards the epis-

temological paradigm of science, humanities and, by extension, education (Prieto & Prats, 2019).

If one issue is clear in discussions revolving around the role that the humanities must play today, it is the need to incorporate these disciplines into the framework of transdisciplinary projects and programmes. In fact, European policies have further strengthened the commitment to interdisciplinarity and the social scien-
ces, humanities and knowledge areas and start thinking in terms of knowledge areas and start thinking in terms of disciplines or juxtaposing and overlapping knowledge and methodologies. Rather, it is important to stop thin-
kings in terms of knowledge areas and start thinking in terms of problems; in other words, “looking at issues rather than looking from disciplines”, as expressed by Xavier Prats, former Director-General of Education and Health at the European Commission, in an interview for Fixing the Future in December 2020. Only with this holistic, dynamic perspective, which in no way requires that the specific characteristics of each knowledge area be neglected, will we be able to respond to the challenges of the future.

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1.4 Knowledge. Putting research and innovation at the service of social challenges
1. Sustainability in research and innovation: from need to opportunity

Knowledge is emerging as the most crucial factor for progress, well-being and, at the same time, the competitiveness of our societies to the point that they are becoming so-called knowledge societies (Bindé, 2005). The meteoric pace of vaccine development in the context of the Covid-19 health crisis is a very recent example that demonstrates that knowledge, in the form of research and innovation, is a key component of progress. Moreover, the health crisis has shown that the means of solving these great challenges must involve responsibility, in a global sense, towards the planet and the people who inhabit it, and collaboration. In this regard, YERUN (2020) highlights the importance of extending the Covid-19 experience of collaborative research to other areas.

Research strengths are currently scattered among countries and institutions. Centralising all efforts and research capacity is not an easy task, but it becomes crucial for increasing and speeding up research collaborations. That is the case with COVID-19 research that has witnessed the creation of specific platforms in which all available research outputs are put together. That should be extended to other research disciplines and areas (YERUN, 2020).

Higher education institutions are being called upon to play an essential role in this process, in the framework of stable and coordinated work with society, governments and industry. As pointed out by EUA (2021), “universities will play a leading role in innovation ecosystems. They will bring together stakeholders around a common vision, bridging different cultures spanning from academia, business and start-ups, to civil society and the social and cultural scene”.

The theory of the triple helix formulated by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995) refers to the need for coordination between academia, industry and governments to achieve innovation. In this interaction, universities and knowledge creators, together with local, regional and national governments, are involved in the development of individual policies (Galvao et al., 2019). The triple helix model has evolved over the last 10 years and given rise to the so-called quadruple and quintuple helices, which present a broader, more inclusive vision. The former was expanded to include civil society and the media and, more recently, the latter incorporated the environment. As indicated by Galvao et al. (2019), the quintuple helix focuses on the essential evolution of society and the economy towards sustainable models from a social and environmental point of view, in other words, it is an “ecologically sensitive” model.

When we envisage a possible future, research and innovation must go hand in hand with sustainability and cooperation. But we must go further, since sustainability must be regarded not only as a need but, more importantly, as an opportunity for growth. “The natural environments of societies and economies must also be seen as driving the production of knowledge and innovation, thus defining opportunities for the knowledge economy” (Galvao et al. 2019, citing various authors).

In the framework of progress and innovation ecosystems, universities must play a leading role to ensure an orderly transition towards these transformations. Achieving all this involves flipping certain aspects of the traditional approach to knowledge and incorporating research and innovation. It is necessary, in the first instance, to build bold, stable bridges between science and society (Section 2). It is also necessary to put in place the means to transform knowledge into innovation (Section 3). Addressing future challenges requires entrepreneurial, transdisciplinary universities (Section 4). Moreover, sharing and cooperating in research and innovation, and opening up to the world, is a key (Section 5), as is attaching importance to all matters that go beyond traditional research through renewed assessment criteria in the academic field (Section 6).

2. Building bridges between science and society

The gap between scientific development and society has been a latent challenge for decades. Many voices are calling for society to become more involved in research and innovation; for social actors and civil society to become involved in the decisions that define the fields and direction of research and innovation for sustainable growth. Universities must play a fundamental role here, as highlighted by EUA (2021): “Europe’s universities will make human-centred innovation their trademark, aiming to achieve sustainability through cooperative models.”

Within this framework, Ferrer-Balas (2011), in reference to a proposal by Gibbons et al. (1994), made a distinction between Mode 1 science and Mode 2 science. For Mode 1 science is academic, investigator-initiated, discipline-based and underpinned by knowledge production. Meanwhile, Mode 2 science, which emerged in the mid-20th century, is context-driven and problem-focused. These problems are characterised by uncertainty and complexity, and require collaborative and transdisciplinary work. In this regard, Messerli et al. (2019) highlight that competition and meritocracy must be put aside to work in a cooperative way, and point out “the urgently needed shift from individual – and individualistic – research modes to cooperative transformation-oriented approaches”.

Lafuente (2020) also discusses this topic in reference to the fact that Covid-19 has highlighted the need for a new social pact for science: “What society demanded of scientists […] was no longer reliable knowledge in exchange for resources to ensure their independent judgement. What society required for the new millennium was a declaration of their willingness to take charge of the world’s problems.” The work of scientists must serve to promote peace and the public good and redress asymmetries: As highlighted by the author, “The innocence party was over for scientists.”

This desire has taken shape in several initiatives in recent years. In 2014, the Rome Declaration on Responsible Research and Innovation defined RRI as “the ongoing process of aligning research and innovation to the values, needs and expectations of society.” It also stated that “RRI requires that all stakeholders including civil society are responsive to each other and take shared responsibility for the processes and outcomes of research and innovation” (GUN, 2017). RRI has become a key concept in the international sphere, along with open science, citizen science, sustainable science, science with and for society (SwafS), participatory research and co-creation.

Closer integration between science and society and, more specifically, between the different stakeholders calls for reciprocal relationships in which the other’s point of view is taken into account, shared values are, therefore, vital. In citing several authors, Werker (2020) explains that, in RRI, jointly acceptable solutions in research and innovation must be based on shared values:

- Developing shared values about the process and outcomes of research and innovation requires integration of the values of all relevant stakeholders […] While the values of stakeholders can substantially differ, shared values, in the hands of stakeholders eventually agree on them (Werker, 2020).

Another initiative that aims to raise awareness of the contribution of research and innovation to the challenges facing society today are so-called Missions, a new component of the Horizon Europe programme. As explained by Mazzucato (2018), “Mission-oriented policies can be defined as systemic policies that draw on frontier knowledge to attain specific goals”. According to the same author in a later publication, “Rather than focusing on purely technological problems, we can focus innovation efforts to solve societal challenges that involve technological change, institutional and behavioural change and regulatory change” (Mazzucato, 2019).

The manifesto Knowledge, Action and Hope, presented by the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research (Social and Social Responsibility in Higher Education), makes numerous references to the creation of bridges between science and society. It advocates, for example, for “deepening our understanding of knowledge democracy as a fundamental framework for transformative change”, as well as “increased opportunities for all students to be able to learn about democratic approaches to research in theory and in practice”. Moreover, it supports the creation of structures and policies to incorporate community-based research as an integral part of academic careers.

It is also worth highlighting a series of movements that are helping change society’s role in the field of innovation. Science Shops, for example, are defined by the International Science Shop Network (Living Knowledge, n.d.) as “small entities that carry out scientific research in a wide range of disciplines – usually free of charge – on behalf of citizens and local civil society”. This network also explains that “the fact that Science Shops respond to civil society’s needs for expertise and knowledge is a key element that distinguishes them from other knowledge transfer mechanisms”. A second initiative is Fab Labs, which, “from community based labs to advanced research centers, […] share the goal of promoting shared values and deepening our understanding of knowledge democracy as a fundamental framework for transformative change” (Mazzucato, 2019).
3. Turning knowledge into innovation

Research is an activity that naturally drives innovation, since it involves new, more efficient solutions to social or business-related problems and demands. Within this framework, it is widely accepted that striking a balance between knowledge generation and innovation capability is crucial, although transferring research results and knowledge to innovation and the development of responses to societal challenges is often complex. In contexts with a shortage of research, it is virtually impossible to find examples of knowledge transfer and innovation. However, in contexts such as Europe, where a large volume of research is available, the reality is that a balance has still not been struck between knowledge generation and innovation capacity.

In the Green Paper on Innovation, the European Commission encapsulates the concept of the European paradox, which reflects Europe’s failure to transfer its leadership in research to innovation. Almost 30 years later, the European paradox has not been resolved and variations have emerged, including the European AI paradox, which refers to the fact that, although Europe continues to play a leading role in artificial intelligence on an academic level, none of the major AI companies is European, explains Almirall (2021).

Transfer and innovation lie at the core of current European policies in an effort to reverse this trend. In this regard, one of the primary goals of the European Research Area is to foster the continued creation of research and its transfer to innovation. To that end, industry and science policies must be aligned, so that the demand for knowledge drives research and research gives rise to innovation development.

4. The new university: entrepreneurial and transdisciplinary

“The role of the university has continued to evolve along with the underlying economic forces shaping economic growth and performance.” According to Audretsch (2014), the university is one of society’s most resilient institutions due to its “ability to both adhere to its traditional strengths as well as adapt to the needs and concerns of society”. Within this framework, the author presents the concept of the “entrepreneurial university”, which emerged from the link between universities and companies, between research and innovation. A parallel concept would be, for example, “academic entrepreneurship”, which seeks to define the new entrepreneurial dimension of universities (Galvao et al., 2019).

According to Audretsch (2014), with the emergence of the “entrepreneurial economy”, where entrepreneurship is the driving force behind economic growth, “just undertaking scholarly research in basic disciplines did not suffice in generating sufficient knowledge to contribute to economic growth and performance”. The result, in the first instance, was the “entrepreneurial university”, which aimed to “create new interdisciplinary fields and research areas devoted to providing solutions to specific societal problems and challenges”. In particular, the entrepreneurial university aims to create innovative companies and promote knowledge transfer from universities to companies in the form of patents and start-ups.

The entrepreneurial economy was followed by the entrepreneurial university: “While the entrepreneurial university has a mandate to facilitate the commercialization of university research and generate startups and new ventures, the role of the university in the entrepreneurial economy is considerably broader and more fundamental – to provide thinking, leadership and activity to enhance entrepreneurship capital.” What distinguishes the university in the entrepreneurial society from the entrepreneurial university is the scope of its mission, which is more global and inclusive.

Integrating universities into the entrepreneurial society requires, firstly, the involvement of the entire institution and, secondly, transversality. In this regard, Audretsch (2014) explains that “something of a dichotomy emerges for the entrepreneurial university with certain parts of the university contributing to the commercialization mission while other parts alienated or at least not participating in this mission”. By contrast, with respect to the university’s contribution to the entrepreneurial society, “many if not most aspects of the university contribute to the generation of entrepreneurship capital, if not explicitly then through an orientation enhancing and celebrating freedom of inquiry and creativity but also with an awareness these values have beyond the walls of the university.”

Closely related to the idea of the entrepreneurial university is the concept of the transdisciplinary university. These two concepts have different perspectives and different mechanisms, but both seek transversality, cooperation and a global, inclusive vision of the world’s problems with a view to finding solutions. Moreover, both strive for a profound transformation that must be progressively implemented in higher education and HEIs.

As Max-Neef (2005) explains, the structure of the vast majority of university faculties, departments and centres revolves around isolated disciplines. This encourages a single-discipline approach to training, especially at undergraduate level. Likewise, the concept he calls the “transdisciplinary university” does not exist; instead, the best-case scenario is that interdisciplinarity is expressed in isolated and/or marginal experiences and efforts, rather than in an comprehensive change in the university structure.

Max-Neef (2005) defines transdisciplinarity as a pyramid: at the base are empirical disciplines (“what exists”) such as physics and sociology, immediately above is another group of disciplines that constitute the pragmatic level (“what we are capable of doing”), including engineering and agriculture; the third is the normative level (“what we want to do”), which includes disciplines such as politics and environmental design; finally, the top of the pyramid corresponds to a value level (“what we want to be”) and is occupied by subjects such as philosophy and theology. In a simplified, practical application-based vision of transdisciplinarity that the author calls “weak transdisciplinarity”, this is the result of coordination between all hierarchical levels.

The complexity involved in our relationship with the world requires complex and inclusive thought that only transdisciplinarity, understood here as “strong transdisci-
5. Opening up science and innovation

If we want a future society that is human, liveable and, ultimately, sustainable, we must think beyond global information and knowledge societies to become societies of shared knowledge (Bindé, 2005). Shared knowledge needs to play a key role in the development of research and innovation capacities in a world that must be egalitarian and respectful of the environment.

On this basis, open science was conceived and has evolved in recent years alongside open innovation, which helps exploit the results of the former with a view to creating socioeconomic value. Open science and innovation are broadly shared. They include open access to research publications they finance. In addition, Horizon 2020 (European Commission, 2020) describes the inequalities between member states in terms of research and innovation, which give rise to gaps in excellence, knowledge transfer and innovation that must be bridged.

The basic principles of open science and innovation are broadly shared. They include open access to knowledge, access to shared research and innovation infrastructure, cooperation within the framework of knowledge ecosystems, and promotion of diversity to grow together and to grow better.

Open access to scientific knowledge (scientific publications, open research data, open source software and source code, and open hardware) and dissemination of scientific knowledge are two of the pillars of open science (UNESCO, 2021). Within this framework, the European Union and several national funding agencies have made open access a prerequisite for the scientific publications they finance. In addition, Horizon Europe also refers to its open science policy as mandatory open access to publications and the application of open science principles throughout the programme (Directorate-General for Communication, n.d.).

In universities without walls: A vision for 2030, EUA highlights the need for HEIs to support non-commercial publishing systems by proposing the following scenario:

- Universities will support a diverse non-commercial publishing system and will, themselves, be directly involved in such a system, by promoting and supporting non-commercial and smaller publishing initiatives. Data and other outputs resulting from research will be made FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) (EUA, 2001).

- It is also worth highlighting that open science has been incorporated into research practices, thereby encouraging a shift in the approach to research activity, from a desire for rapid and exclusive publication towards a tendency to share results and data in stages prior to the final publication (European Commission, 2016).

- YERUN (2020) highlights the impetus given to shared knowledge in the context of the pandemic and stresses the need to extend this practice beyond Covid-19-related research. The opportunities created by open science have been demonstrated and momentum towards this approach is already a reality. Institutions and policymakers need to provide resources and invest in training scholars in the adoption of practices with a view to fully and effectively implementing it.

- In terms of infrastructure, one of the current goals of the European Research Area is precisely to improve access to excellent facilities and infrastructure for researchers across the EU. In this regard, the European Commission (2020) describes the inequalities between member states in terms of research and innovation, which give rise to gaps in excellence, knowledge transfer and innovation that must be bridged.

- Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth at the European Commission, recently advocated for the importance of cooperation within the framework of the ERA.

We live in times when scientific activities require faster and effective collaborations. We need to strengthen the European Research Area. An area embracing all of Europe, because knowledge has no territorial boundaries, because scientific knowledge grows with collaborations, because knowledge is trusted if there is open scrutiny of its quality (European Commission, 2020).

In this regard, the open innovation of open science is to allow all stakeholders in the innovation process to participate so that knowledge can enjoy effective freedom of movement and translate into products and services for new markets, thereby encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship (European Commission, 2016). It should be noted that the concept of open innovation is constantly evolving and is moving from linear, bilateral transactions and collaborations towards dynamic, networked, multi-collaborative innovation ecosystems. This means that a specific innovation can no longer be seen as the result of predefined and isolated innovation activities, but rather as the outcome of a complex co-creation process involving knowledge flows across the entire economic and social environment (European Commission, 2016).

All actors, whether public or private, whether in academia or business, whether public authorities or civil society, are called upon to participate in this process, with a constant focus on the needs of society and the world we inhabit. In this network, it is vital to create a citizen/user-centred approach, as “an invention becomes an innovation only if users become a part of the value creation process” (European Commission, 2016). Another key issue in this path towards the development of shared knowledge systems is the focus on diversity, especially in terms of pluralism in geographical sites and modes of knowledge production as fundamental building blocks for inclusive societies (UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibiliti, 2021). UNESCO (2021) calls for the need to initiate dialogues to promote the inclusion of knowledge from traditionally excluded sectors such as indigenous knowledge.

The future must involve opening up science and innovation so that it takes place in an environment of cooperation and shared progress. And, in this framework, universities and higher education institutions can exercise power and play a unique role (Ayns, 2021).

6. Assessment: beyond the metrics

While assessment has been based increasingly on quantifiable parameters, such as the number of publications, impact factor and global rankings (Hicks et al., 2015), indicators should never replace expert judgement and qualitative assessment. Rather, indicators should be used to support the assessment process, which must address aspects such as scientific integrity, creativity and the contribution to science and society. Given the increased power of data over the direction of science, it is necessary to stress that decisions must combine the robustness of statistics and metrics with qualitative attention to the objects and nature of the research being assessed (Hicks et al., 2015).

In this regard, Kho (2021) calls into question excellence as we understand it today in the academic field, since “excellence is over-reliant on global measurement, rankings and league tables which drive excellence towards zero-sum contests”. Thus, it refers to the need for a broad, multidimensional approach to quality in higher education that encompasses issues such as “equity, purpose, inclusion, critical independence and creativity that are necessary for the production of scientific, cultural and public value”.

Along with this desire to expand the viewing angle in research assessment, it is also necessary to include diversity in the mission, in addition to geographical and social diversity. As indicated by the European Commission (2016), “the speed and scale of digitalisation are [...] enabling new innovation processes and new ways of doing business, introducing new cross-sector value chains and infrastructures”.

The basic principles of open science and innovation are broadly shared. They include open access to knowledge, access to shared research and innovation infrastructure, cooperation within the framework of knowledge ecosystems, and promotion of diversity to grow together and to grow better.
the Netherlands (VSNU, KNAW, NFU, NWO & ZonMw, 2019) highlights the one-sided focus on research performance, which frequently leads to the undervaluation of other key areas such as education, impact and leadership. This is partly due to the implicit and overt one-sided emphasis on traditional, quantifiable output indicators. In this context, it proposes that a new balance be struck when it comes to recognising and rewarding academics with a view to improving the quality of each of these key areas: education, research, impact, leadership and (for university medical centres) patient care. The assessment system must be adapted and improved in each of these areas and in the connections between them.

Along similar lines, Atam (2021) says that teachers’ incentives must be improved through accreditation systems for teaching innovation and knowledge transfer, and these accreditations should have a clear impact on recruitment and promotion. According to the author, three avenues for recruiting teachers could coexist: the first based on research excellence, the second based on excellence in teaching innovation and the third based on excellence in knowledge transfer. In all cases, a good research profile would be required, but in each avenue, the excellence would be focused on one of the three dimensions.

Hicks et al. (2015) highlight the fact that abuse of research metrics has become too widespread to ignore. In all cases, on the basis of excellence in knowledge transfer, the first based on research excellence, the second based on excellence in teaching innovation and the third based on excellence in knowledge transfer. This is partly due to the implicit and overt one-sided emphasis on traditional, quantifiable output indicators. In this context, it proposes that a new balance be struck when it comes to recognising and rewarding academics with a view to improving the quality of each of these key areas: education, research, impact, leadership and (for university medical centres) patient care. The assessment system must be adapted and improved in each of these areas and in the connections between them.

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1.5 The digital-human future.
Constructing more inclusive and accessible universities

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Towards a new paradigm

We are facing a paradigm shift in which digital technologies are gaining increasing importance in higher education, reshaping teaching methodologies and even the way we understand university training. As Govindarajan, Srivastava and Enache (2021) stated, the prevalent scenario in university education for centuries, “required students to come together at a predetermined time and location to be taught at an instructor-led pace.” Online educational alternatives, such as massive open online courses that take advantage of innovations in communication technologies, have changed this model. Consequently, digitalisation has called into question the space and time of training.

The European University Association (EUA) (2021) has described “universities without walls”, in which “the virtual campus will make the university ubiquitous. It will be developed to improve access for all to participate in research and learning, enhance cooperation, and explore new, innovative ways of pursuing university missions.” According to Govindarajan, Srivastava and Enache (2021), digital technologies “have matured to a point where they can cause disruptive changes to the age-old college education model.”

The Covid-19 health crisis has accelerated this trend. The unexpected shift to online classes, which was not always smoothly adapted and prepared, was a leap of faith and a step forward. Millions of simultaneous experiments took place worldwide: “tectonic shifts in society and business occur when unexpected events force widespread, coordinated experimentation around a new idea,” explained Govindarajan, Srivastava and Enache (2021). Many difficulties emerged, especially in the early stages of the pandemic, but the lessons learnt and experiences gained have clearly revealed the potential of technology in the classroom. According to the same authors, “college education that’s known to some as their ‘virtual classroom’ has matured.”

2. Digital technologies as a medium

“Online education” and its variants, including “online instructor”, “online teaching”, “distance education” and “distance learning”, are concepts that cover a wide range of phenomena. Their definition depends on their use in each context. They could refer to a traditional distance education using new technologies or to e-learning with a strong technology-based approach; they could involve synchronous and asynchronous solutions, or they could be understood as a simple replica of classroom lectures, usually based on video lectures, as a PDF delivery model or as an accessible repository of documents (Sangrà, 2021). Cohn (2021) refers to this variability and the resulting confusion. “the term ‘hybrid’ especially continues to confuse in light of the myriad options that colleges and universities are offering students for the time and location of their classes.”

In this sea of technological possibilities, what should be determined is where we are going and how technologies can help us to get there. Often, the focus of debate is the technology, as if digitalisation were an aim in itself. However, the main issue to discuss is what education model we construct with the available technology to reach students, and what we want to obtain (Freeland, 2021).

Three aspects are at the centre of many of the debates on this issue. The first is how digital technologies can help to reduce the costs of education and reach the maximum number of people. The second is how digital technologies can help to make higher education more flexible to adapt to the different needs of students. The third is how digital technologies can help to construct good learning models for the world of today.

Regarding the first aspect, Govindarajan, Srivastava and Enache (2021) propose three strategies that are clearly differentiated in economic terms. Higher education institutions must choose from them according to their objectives: “an online hybrid model, in which students learn in campus and interact with students and teachers in person.” This model embraces a very specific way of understanding education and has a series of advantages, but it is expensive: “it works well for top-tier schools that enjoy brand recognition and have access to rich donors, world-class faculty, prestigious employers, and influential alumni.” The second strategy is “a hybrid model based on the idea that universities and students have limited resources”. In this proposal, the key is to divide resources optimally between “face-to-face interactions, which impose the highest cost on students and universities, and asynchronous virtual learning, which imposes lower costs.” Ideally, universities should conduct only those activities on campus that “...are hard to do virtually and permit.” The third strategy is “a fully online model that offers quality education to strictly virtual audiences.”

This wide range of options means that a larger, more diverse section of the population can be accommodated. However, we should be cautious and attentive, as the potential of digital ecosystems for learning could become a kind of Trojan horse, bringing new segregations and worsening existing divides. The rise of digital technologies that has occurred in recent years in different sectors, and the strong push that they received during the pandemic now provide us with an excellent opportunity to study in depth questions like these, in the framework of an innovative pedagogical model, to achieve a more universal, inclusive higher education.

Flexibility in higher education is crucial in a world such as that of today, where studies and work are combined, where lifelong learning emerges (see the next chapter, “The future of work”), and in which the profiles and circumstances of students are highly varied. This required flexibility is another area in which technology could play a notable role. Eringfeld (2020) indicated that “by combining virtual with face-to-face education, universities will be able to accommodate the diverse needs of students in safe and flexible ways.” Similarly, Cohn (2021) noted the importance of the current time in this respect: “we have an opportunity to rethink not merely how to leverage online and hybrid learning to deliver content, but, more important, how to use the faculty’s growing expertise with technology to make teaching and learning more accessible for everyone.”

Cohn (2021) used an example to explain how students could be offered different ways to approach contents: “short prerecorded lecture videos allow students to watch at regular speed or slowed down; they can listen or turn on captions to read along, or they can read the transcript of the video and not engage with the audio or visual elements at all.” These options benefit, for example, students with functional diversity or those who work full-time and can only take classes asynchronously. In addition, the author explained that some students learn better when they can go at their own pace. The aim is to take “the diversity of learners into consideration up front as we design our courses.”

Flexibility is very closely linked to another of the characteristics that is sought in the new higher education models: personalisation. In fact, as Martí stated (2021), “the gradual reduction in face-to-face activities due to the blended paradigm has also permitted, and even increased personalisation.” In turn, Taylor and Burquel (2021) noted that digital technologies and new educational models must enable us to “adapt to independent learning and develop personalised learning, allowing the students more flexibility in their learning paths.” However, personalisation in its strictest sense requires the support of artificial intelligence tools and these are still not sufficiently developed to be implemented comprehensively (see Section 4).
3. Complementarity between online and face-to-face modes in new learning scenarios

In recent years, and particularly since the outbreak of the pandemic, online learning models have been increasingly present in the higher education area. Online education has some clear advantages, but the value of face-to-face activities is notable. It is increasingly clear that face-to-face and online activities will coexist. This coexistence can be focused on meeting the needs of each training process and the learning objectives. Nevertheless, given that face-to-face activities have added value and costs, a physical-digital segregation could emerge in higher education, in which face-to-face students would benefit from the experience of social interaction on campuses, while digital students would be deprived of this advantage.

According to Govindarajan, Srivastava and Enache (2021), “lectures that require little human interaction must be digitized. Students can watch multimedia presentations using immersive interactive technologies at their own pace. […] For such courses, technology platforms can deliver content to large audiences at low cost, without sacrificing one of the important benefits of the face-to-face classroom – the social experience – because there’s hardly any in these basic-level courses.” In contrast, according to Taylor and Burquel (2021), face-to-face mode is more suitable for active problem-based learning.

UNESCO (2020) has highlighted the importance of schools as a space for socialisation and learning about collective life and face-to-face activities are vital and irreplaceable. However, it also noted the importance of bringing together everything that we have learnt to be able to progress in the future: “though the school space remains fundamental, it needs to be transformed and augmented by a much broader space for learning.” In turn, Innerarity (2021) explained the importance of students’ presence in learning processes, and differentiated this from the mere transmission of information where the space is not as important.

The idea of the irrelevance of places was associated with the information society, but the knowledge society has a more intense relation with space and presence. The conditions of teaching are not the same as those of learning. Information is ubiquitous. However, most educational experiences require, in contrast, a specific place. Information, which is universally accessible, must be distinguished from experiences that require personal interaction” (Innerarity, 2021).

In addition, some authors argue that the channel is not the most important factor. What is really vital is the opportunity to interact, whether face-to-face or online, synchronously or asynchronously. Cohn (2021) gathered data from an Educause study and stated that “[s]tudent’s most-positive experiences depended more on the number of opportunities for student-instructor interaction than on the type of learning environment itself. How instructors and students organized and spent class time, and the amount of feedback and direct interaction, mattered more than the use of technology.”

Everything seems to indicate that the nature and structure of many universities will be hybrid and designed with a holistic approach to be able to accommodate the various learning needs of society, as described by the EUA (2021).

The physical campus will continue to be crucial as a place for social interaction and dialogue: a place that will host encounters that challenge and inspire, but will also offer quiet spaces for focused learning and research. The virtual campus will make the university ubiquitous. It will be developed to improve access for all to participate in research and learning, enhance cooperation, and explore new, innovative ways of pursuing university missions (EUA, 2021).

4. Artificial intelligence and digital humanism on the discussion table

Artificial intelligence is gaining ground in the higher education area. According to Rouhiainen (2019), the support of systems based on artificial intelligence could be of great help to reduce repetitive and routine tasks. This would give teachers more time to attend to students, train and research. Furthermore, “AI-based learning systems would be able to give professors useful information about their students’ learning styles, abilities, and progress, and provide suggestions for how to customize their teaching methods to students’ individual needs.” However, artificial intelligence’s entry into higher education is still very subtle. Consequently, for artificial intelligence to be implemented on a large scale a lot of research is still needed into this type of tools (Rouhiainen, 2019).

The implementation of artificial intelligence in higher education institutions is not without controversy. For certain artificial intelligence systems to function well, data are required, big data extracted from students’ activities, and this must be managed in a way that is appropriate and ethical. Prats (2020) highlighted the risk of technology in terms of determinism. “A computer knows you so well, you can personalize education so much that you have the risk that people will take away the liberty of improving.” Finally, some have clearly warned us that technological development could go too far. “Brutal technological development with far-out control could be like a steamroller that crushes our lives and even our own nature. We should think about this, as some humanists do” (Fanjul, 2017).

The benefits and opportunities of artificial intelligence are clear, as are the risks. In the face of this situation, it seems that the best solution is to find a good meeting point between taking advantage of artificial intelligence, and more generally digitalisation, and strengthening everything that makes us human. “There will never be a time when humans aren’t necessary for the tasks related to education. For example, teachers will always play a crucial role in our society, as we must never underestimate the value of human interaction and critical thinking in the field of education” (Rouhiainen, 2019). Taylor and Burquel (2021) stated that “the Fourth Industrial Revolution is bringing fast technology-driven change, integrating technology and people, the physical and the digital, into new approaches, services and products to ‘augment intelligence.’”

Fanjul (2017), using the words of philosopher Marina Garcés, defended the search for this meeting point by establishing “a new partnership between sciences and humanities, a partnership to reconsider what we expect from technological development, what we want to become.” In fact, as indicated by the same author, technological development is strongly associated with certain branches of the humanities, particularly the most philosophical. Similarly, using the words of science and technology philosopher David Casacuber- ta, he stated that “many technological developments first emerged in the mind of philosophers to then be developed by engineers” (see the chapter Citizens).

In fact, many have suggested that a meeting point should be found between digitalisation and that which makes us human. Many have expressed this idea in another way, from the perspective of the need to put people, human life, at the centre of technological development, always in relation to the planet on which we live. This was explained by Trias de Bes (2020): “digital humanism is a trend that shows that digitalisation is not at the service of technology, but of humans. I sincerely believe that if we are going to accelerate the digitalisation of citizens’ behaviour and habits, the companies and suppliers of technology that do this best will be those that design a digital future with the individual as the starting point.” Plana (2020) explains the difference between understanding digitalisation as a noun – the core, “the necessary subject of all actions”, the final objective – or as an adjective – “the descriptive complement that adds value”, the means. Plana concluded that “a classic subject should be put at the centre: humanism, and everything should pivot around people.”
5. Digital citizenship education: a right and a priority

According to the Council of Europe’s definition (2021), “Digital Citizenship Education is the empowerment of citizens through education or the acquisition of competences for learning and active participation in digital society.” Considering this definition, education must gain a new dimension that prepares children and subsequently young people and society in general to participate actively and fairly in the digital society, exercise their rights and responsibilities online, and promote and protect democracy and human rights. Taylor and Burquel (2021) also noted the importance of gaining digital competences, in this case, for growth and professional development; “graduates need to have the skills to live and operate in a technology-led world and also to understand how to leverage the potential of technology for new business development.”

Digital citizenship education must be a priority of education worldwide. This was stated by the Council of Europe (2021) and explained by UNESCO (2015): “educators need to prepare new generations of ‘digital natives’ to deal with the ethical and social dimensions of not only existing digital technologies but also those yet to be invented.” It is essential that this training is a process that develops throughout life, is cross-cutting, continuous and efficient (Council of Europe, 2021). Finally, it is vital that train students to get the most out of the digital world’s benefits and to be prepared for the potential hazards that it involves.

Although it is generally accepted that the use of digital technologies is a way to make higher education more inclusive and universal (Section 2), technology can also lead to exclusion: “technology is increasing inequality in HE (for those who don’t have access) not only between countries, but also within countries.” This leads to new forms of illiteracy: technological and digital illiteracy (GUNI, 2019).

One of the causes of inequality is that internet connections, electricity networks and access to computers and smart phones are still lacking in many countries and regions (Altbach and de Wit, 2020). Furthermore, for digital technologies to really reach everyone, “open educational resources must be prioritized; public education cannot be dependent on digital platforms provided by private companies” (UNESCO, 2020). More specifically, UNESCO demands “global collaboration among governments, philanthropy, and non-profit organizations to develop and distribute open educational resources and open platforms, recognizing that much of what is currently provided by private companies should become a public undertaking where advancing the interests and capabilities of learners is the sole purpose.” These issues are discussed in the chapter Knowledge, focused on research and innovation.

However, it should be noted that access to technology and information seems easier to resolve than training in skills: “with the development of relatively inexpensive technology, the digital gap” is more likely to be a gap in skills required to make advanced use of the technology than access to technology per se” (Council of Europe, 2021) (see the chapter Impact of Covid-19 in Higher Education). Similarly, Tello (2007) distinguishes between the digital divide and the cognitive divide. The cognitive divide is much more worrying and the real challenge, as it “accumulates the effects of the various divides observed in the main areas of knowledge, access to information, education, scientific research, cultural and linguistic diversity.” It is the main challenge to construct knowledge societies. Although access to information is essential, the most important step is to transfer information into knowledge.

Even if resources are invested to expand the infrastructure for accessing the internet, a wired society in which conditions of connectivity exist is not the same as society that has the ability to access, assess and apply the information. The aspiration to attain a knowledge society must involve people having real access to information in addition to being able to access the internet. They must know what to do with this information and be able to convert it into knowledge, and the knowledge into tangible benefits” (Tello, 2007).

The Ferrer i Guardia Foundation (2020) also expressed this idea “[social inclusion] is achieved through people’s capacity to get closer to technology and benefit from it in a way that goes beyond the digital sphere and has an impact on opportunities to improve living conditions.” Clearly, the opportunity to access knowledge does not eliminate the differences in knowledge between individuals and regions. In other words, the cognitive divide will not disappear by solving the problem of the digital divide (Tello, 2007). A broader approach to the problem is required, and education plays an essential role in this.

References


Part 1: New Contexts, New Visions
1.6 Sustainability. Reinventing universities for a sustainable future
1. Sustainability: the unavoidable responsibility of education

Climate emergency, extraction and production systems that disregard the planet’s biophysical limits, global health emergencies and growing social inequalities within and between countries: these concerns are repeated tirelessly and call for a profound, systemic paradigm shift, if we genuinely want to think of a future for humanity on Earth. Indeed, the sense of urgency to bring about such a transformation has only grown stronger during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has made clear and, in most cases, sped up existing disparities and imbalances.

In The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021, the United Nations (UN) lays out an array of facts and figures that can leave nobody indifferent. In 2020, the global rate of extreme poverty rose for the first time in over twenty years. At the same time, the climate emergency worsened: the concentration of greenhouse gases keeps going up; the average temperature has now climbed to roughly 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels; and the impacts of climate change are increasingly plain to see. Moreover, as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres puts it in his foreword to the 2021 report, “[t]here is a risk of a generational catastrophe regarding schooling, where an additional 101 million children have fallen below the minimum reading proficiency level, potentially wiping out two decades of education gains.”

The education that Guterres now sees at risk includes a brief chronological overview of multilateral agreements relating to the environment and, subsequently, to sustainable development right up until the approval of the 2030 Agenda. It also sets out an analysis of the shortcomings of the 2030 Agenda as a global roadmap. Section 2.2 then applies these premises to higher education, one of the key agents in the transformation toward a future in balance with the environment and with equality for all of the planet’s inhabitants.

The 2030 Agenda has been put together to furnish a common framework and implementation tools to agents involved in sustainable development. Section 2.2 also includes a brief chronological overview of multilateral agreements relating to the environment and, subsequently, to sustainable development right up until the approval of the 2030 Agenda. It also sets out an analysis of the shortcomings of the 2030 Agenda as a global roadmap. Section 2.2 then applies these premises to higher education, one of the key agents in the transformation toward a future in balance with the environment and with equality for all of the planet’s inhabitants.

2. The role of higher education in the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda lays out a common framework for the transition toward a future that must be sustainable if it is to exist at all. Under the umbrella of the 2030 Agenda, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) then sets out the more specific framework for education, with each stage in the educational process marked by its own distinctive features and particular mission. For instance, higher education, as the final stage for many young people, opens up doors onto their professional future and their future as citizens. As a result, higher education has enormous transformative power.

Within this context, Section 2 of the present paper outlines the road that has led to the 2030 Agenda and reflects on higher education’s potential to make change happen. What does the change need to be? What is required to bring it about? Section 3 then goes on to offer answers to these questions before Section 4 concludes by applying environmental, social and economic perspectives to higher education institutions (HEIs).

2.1 The road toward the 2030 Agenda (and how far remains to go)

The approval of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 was the culmination of a long journey that started in 1972 at the UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm(1). For the first time, the climate emergency had reached the political arena and was now the focus of the world’s attention. A few months beforehand, the Club of Rome had published a report entitled The Limits to Growth, the outcome of a study conducted by 17 researchers into the exponential economic and population growth taking place on a planet with limited resources.

Over ten years later, in 1983, the UN General Assembly set up the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which became known as the Brundtland Commission after the name of the commission’s chair, former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. After four years of work, the commission’s report Our Common Future, in which it defined sustainable development as “deve lopment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The Brundtland Report, as it was called, took up the spirit of the Stockholm conference, putting the environment back on the political agenda and pinpointing the need to tackle the environment and development jointly.

The efforts of the Brundtland Commission laid the groundwork for the first UN Conference on Environ ment and Development (UNCED), or Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Rio conference put on the table the interdependence of the social, economic and environmental spheres, and raised the need for a new way to look at how we produce, live and work in order to bring these spheres into balance and make them sustainable. At the time, this was a truly revolutionary idea. The Rio conference also saw the drafting of the first Agenda for Environment and Development, or Agenda 21, which laid out recommendations ranging from new educational methodologies to proposals for the preservation of natural resources, by way of alternative economic models.

In 2000, the third millennium kicked off with the Millennium Summit at UN headquarters in New York City. The summit culminated in the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)(2), which set 2015 as the deadline for their achievement. The MDGs represented an unprecedented push in the fight against poverty and the pursuit of other development goals, such as the prevention of life-threatening diseases and primary education for all. Indeed, the MDGs have been described as a human development agenda because that was their primary focus. In 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), which is also known as Rio+20, was convened as a twenty-year follow-up to the original Earth Summit in Rio. The Rio+20 participants came to an agreement to launch a process to produce a list of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would carry on the MDGs originally set for 2015. After a process of multilateral negotiations, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution on 25 September 2015. It was entitled Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and it established 17 goals and 169 targets. Importantly, the approval of the 2030 Agenda, as it has become known for short, happened only a few months before the signing of another historic accord: the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in the context of COP 21.

The 2030 Agenda, the process of its construction and its final outcome, have been the subject of much analysis and debate. Martínez Martinez & Martínez Osés (2016) describe it as “an aggregation of visions and interests [and means of implementation] that was the result of power asymmetries”. For his part, Gómez Gil (2018) focuses on the idealistic, visionary nature of some of the goals, the feasibility issues of the approved indicators, the complex architecture, and the technical limitations and inconsistencies. On the other hand, the philosopher and activist Jorge Riechmann made some remarks in Territories of Knowledge that go to the effect that the SDGs “would have been useful thirty years ago, but now incremental changes and gradual pathways are of no use. We have let decades of denialism and inaction pass by, so that now the prospects are bleak and sombre.”

Several authors criticise the 2030 Agenda for its lack of clear, direct accountability. For instance, Gómez Gil (2018) characterises the SDGs as “empty rhetoric and deliberate ambiguity, which call for sweeping worldwide changes through concerted international action that does not appear to be part of any current political priorities”. In the same vein, Martínez Martinez & Martínez Osés (2016) emphasise “the agreements’ lack of any binding and prescriptive character [. . .] which makes it possible to take up certain demands of transnational groups without giving rise to direct responsibilities for any given actor”. For instance, the 2030 Agenda calls for a global partnership, but it distinguishes neither

1. See https://www.stockholmsustainabilityindex.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html
2. See https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
3. See https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
who is responsible nor what real possibilities may exist to bring about change. As the two authors note, “the final approved text does not constitute an ‘intergovernmental consensus’ in the strict sense, but is simply a wide assortment of issues, insights and proposals that coexist in a declaration whose character is more descriptive than prescriptive in the way of solutions”.

The new global roadmap for sustainability that is defined by the 2030 Agenda does go beyond the UN development agenda in effect until 2015. According to Martínez Martínez & Martínez Osés (2016), “the goals are expanded, new steps are taken in the direction of a universal, multidimensional logic of development, and relevant elements are introduced for the governance of development”. As to the aim of universality, Gómez Gil (2018) points out that “the MDGs applied only to impoverished countries, taking a limited view of development, far from a multidimensional understanding of development. [By contrast, the SDGs] are a mirror through which all nations see their own policies and performance reflected back at them.”

Despite these advances, however, Gómez Gil (2018) stresses that there has not been a smooth transition from the MDGs to the SDGs and old problems of compliance have not gone away. Specifically, the SDGs are the heirs of commitments and agreements embedded in the MDGs “but without having gone through a thorough, comprehensive evaluation of the political and technical fulfilment of the earlier agreements” with the result that there is a lack of “exact scientific evidence to support the principles and policies appropriately”. Closely connected to this issue with the SDGs, Gómez Gil adds that “many of the goals and substantive targets derived from the MDGs to the SDGs and old problems of compliance have not gone away. Specifically, the SDGs are...”

Lastly, Martínez Martínez & Martínez Osés (2016) stress the unfinished nature of the 2030 Agenda: “the idea of the agenda is a closed, consensual, accepted agreement carries major risks, given that the process of defining the goals and targets has not been completed, nor will the achieved result have to be applied in the same way in every signatory country. [...]. Each country must now define how to adapt the 2030 Agenda to its national reality, that is, how to interpret the SDGs politically.” Concurring with this view is Gómez Gil (2018) who says, looking at the next steps, that “to make significant advances, the SDGs require clear decisions and precise political commitments to transform empty rhetoric and hollow words of no value into effective, transformational measures to improve our afflicted planet and the living conditions of its inhabitants”.

2.2 The unique potential of higher education to forge change

We live at a defining moment for the future of humanity, in a new era when human activity affects the very dynamics of the planet on which we live. Sutiors (2021) notes that education has never before played such a critical in the future of humanity and the species as we live in an era, Anthropocene, “marked by humanity’s unprecedented control over the natural environment”. Indeed, education must shoulder part of the responsibility for the new paradigm, which challenges even the most fundamental definition and goals of the educational process.

However, this is not news. For some time, efforts have proceeded apace. In the context of the MDGs, for instance, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014) 4 set a goal to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development in all aspects of education in order to engage education with the knowledge, competences and attitudes needed to become a change agent.

Subsequently, on 21 May 2015, the World Education Forum met in Incheon (WEF 2015) and adopted the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030, which set out a new vision of education for the next 15 years under the framework of the 2030 Agenda: “our vision is to transform lives through education, recognising the important role of education as a main driver of development and in achieving the other proposed SDGs” (UNESCO, 2015b).

More specifically, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, particularly of SDG 4.7: 5

However, it is also a key element in the achievement of all the other goals. In this context, the ESD for 2030 roadmap (UNESCO, 2020), the framework for the current decade of Education for Sustainable Development, envisions the urgent sustainability challenges and points out “the implementation of the new Education for Sustainable Development: Towards Achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030) framework, which was adopted with the aim of increasing the contribution of education to building a more just and sustainable world”. Indeed, the roadmap outlines activities in five priority action areas: advancing policy, transforming learning environments, building capacities of educators, empowering youth and accelerating local level actions. Moreover, the roadmap has underscored ESD’s key role in the successful achievement of the 17 SDGs and the major individual and societal transformation required to address the urgent challenges of sustainability.

The ESD for 2030 framework was presented to the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development 2021 in Berlin, where the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2021) was adopted. “In this Declaration we acknowledge the power of education to turn things around”, said Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, in her address at the conference. 6 The adoption of the Berlin Declaration will give additional impetus to the application of the ESD for 2030 roadmap.

Higher education has a great responsibility under the new paradigm. Not only does it open doors into the world of work, but for many citizens it also prepares them for the role that the broadest sense of, these citizens will necessarily come face to face with a changing reality in which the change is, in reality, imperative and in their hands. As former UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor Zaragoza said to GUNi (2019): “universities must be at the forefront of the radical and urgent changes that are needed to put the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change into practice”.

Within the educational process, therefore, we observe that higher education holds a key position in time, if we understand it as a part of stage that will extend throughout life; and it also holds a key position in space, by virtue of being situated between the local community and the international context. GUNI (2017), in its aptly entitled report Towards a Socially Responsible University: Balancing the Global with the Local, addresses these very issues: “HEIs can be identified as key players from both perspectives and, thus, have the singular responsibility of helping to provide appropriate and adequate responses to both legitimate needs and interests” in the global arena and in the development and competitive- ness of their societies.

Higher education also has great potential in the change process because of its link to knowledge. Its unique role in the production and transmission of knowledge gives it a tremendous capacity for growth. This unique quality, together with its key position between local and global and the fact that is the doorway to employment for many, turns higher education into the guiding and driving force for all other change agents as well. Taking up this perspective and commitment, higher education is now engaged in a host of actions in relation to the SDGs. In March 2021, the rectors of 56 universities from 30 countries signed the Joint Statement of Global University Leaders on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the presence of UN members, to declare their aim of working together to achieve the SDGs. This marks the first time that leading universities from six continents have undertaken a joint commitment to the SDGs and they did so, specifically, in five key areas: implementing the concept of sustainable development across their activities and operations; improving the sustainable development competence of students, faculty and staff; supporting a wider spectrum of scientific research, including blue-sky discovery and interdisciplinary research, in response to global challenges; working with civil society to promote innovative solutions and leveraging technology; and upholding open science to facilitate constructive cross-border collaboration to solve specific problems (O’Malley, 2021).

As the International Association of Universities (IAU) (2020) put it, the impact of the SDGs on HEIs is twofold, since higher education is both a target (4.3) and a promising actor (20.9) of the 2030 Agenda. HEIs must transform how HEIs function in teaching and research, while on the other hand, HEIs must contribute actively to sustainable development through the links that they forge with their local community and the international arena.

5. By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

6. Wrap-up video with some conference highlights - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dp8RYUG.2Dr

Part 1: New Contexts, New Visions

New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030

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On the one hand, the SDGs are transforming the way higher education institutions function. This includes for example teaching about them, specifically doing research or in general orienting the institution along the 2030 Agenda. [...] On the other hand, HEIs are actively contributing to the achievement of the global goals, again through teaching, research, community engagement and campus initiatives. What is more, the sector critically engages with the goals set in the 2030 Agenda, questions them, revises them and in many cases translates them to the local level. Many academics and scientists are in dialogue with national governments, UN agencies and other policymakers, thus actively engaging themselves in the science-policy interface (IAU, 2020).

One noteworthy initiative was the publication in 2017 of a guide entitled Getting started with the SDGs in universities. A guide for universities, higher education institutions, and the academic sector, which was put together by a group of universities in Australia and the Pacific that were members of the Sustainable Develop- ment Solutions Network (SDSN). As the guides authors note, “...a broad remit around the creation and dissemination of knowledge and their unique position within society, have a critical role to play in the achievement of the SDGs. Arguably none of the SDGs will be achieved without this sector” (SDSN Australia/Pacific, 2017). On the assumption that every higher education institution will approach the SDGs differently, the guide offers tools that can be adapted to different contexts. In 2021, the SDSN in Spain published an updated version of the guide entitled Accelerating Education for the SDGs in Universities. A guide for universities, colleges, and tertiary and higher education institutions, “[which] aims to expand, update and refine the information provided in the previous guide based on new resources, tools, thinking, and learnings from universities working to implement ESDGs, to consider what ESDGs mean for universities” (SDSN, 2020).

In the same vein, GUNi has adopted a strategic line of action revolving around the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; Sustainable Development Goals: Actors and Implementation, a Report from the International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals and Higher Education in 2020, and it has launched the Group of Experts on SDGs and Higher Education. GUNi has also produced publications and reports, most notably Approaches to SDG 17 Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Sustainable Development Goals: Actors and Implementation, a Report from the International Conference, and Implementing the 2030 Agenda at Higher Education Institutions: Challenges and Responses.

Moreover, it is well known that universities keep close track of their activities by means of evaluation and monitoring, and the area of sustainability is no different. Since 2010, the University of Indonesia has published an annual GreenMetric ranking, which assesses univer- sities around the world in terms of the extent of their engagement with sustainability. The ranking’s criteria fall into six categories, specifically relating to campus design and infrastructure, energy consumption and carbon footprint, waste management, water usage, transport, and the incorporation of sustainability in teaching and research. More recently, the second edition of the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings appeared in 2020. The Impact Rankings, which seek to assess universities in terms of their degree of com- mitment to the SDGs, takes a more global approach to sustainability, evaluating universities on three dimensions: the social, the environmental and the economic. According to Miñano, Benayas & Mataix (2021), these rankings do reflect genuine progress, but they are not above criticism.

Higher education has witnessed a host of proposals for the implementation of sustainable development. Still, many voices stress that there remains much to do before HEIs offer a favourable score on sustainability. The IAU (2020), for example, notes that “the question about how universities around the world are transla- ting those ideas into action remains”, adding that since the 2030 Agenda was written for governments, “it is hence not the task of higher education to implement the SDGs, but rather to engage with them”. For his part, Wals (2020) eloquently points out the “education has been hijacked by (short-term) corporate interests and a ‘neo-liberal’ agenda that is not concerned with deve- loping an ethic of care, solidarity, sharing, mindfulness, lack of a and sensitivity towards the other, the far away and the unknown”. Clearly, it is necessary to keep pressing forward and lay the groundwork for change in HEIs so that it is both robust and binding.

3. Foundations of change

As Tilbury (2011) says, “sustainability is more a journey than a checklist”. The implementation of sustainabi- lity in higher education necessarily entails profound changes that take time and a determined transforma- tion that reaches every part of HEIs. In this respect, several authors make proposals that revolve around (i) the idea of connection or synergy, that is, connecting with the environment and with people near and far, connecting areas of knowledge with one another, and connecting higher education institutions both inwardly and outwardly, while a host of writers mention (ii) the need to change how we approach sustainability, that is, by using critical thinking, engaging not only with fear but also with hope, and employing self-restraint while, at the same time, taking action.

(i) Synergies, broadly understood, are essential to create the necessary conditions for a higher education in support of sustainability. Wals (2020), for instance, speaks of the need for a “relational pedagogy” that would create opportunities for connection, more specifi- cally, to “connect to the local environment and the way it relates to the wider world, connect to other species and non-living matter in a deeper and more caring way, and connect to other humans, also those not in sight, those thinking differently, having different socio-econo- mic, cultural, etc. backgrounds”. Ferrer-Balas (2011) similarly underscores the importance of fostering contact between different cultural milieus, especially those that are compatible with the principles of sustainability, such as Buddhist culture.

In addition, synergies need to be generated between branches of knowledge, and between sustainability itself and other disciplines. This is not yet always the case. For instance, GUNi (2019b) highlights a “lack of coordination and interdisciplinary work” and, there- fore, “the need to break down silos and work across disciplines and faculties”. Similarly, Granicelli et al. (2020) note that “even now that we have crossed pla- netary boundaries and life on the planet is rapidly going extinct, the university still treats sustainability as a sepa- rate discipline or as an ‘add-on’ to the standard package meant to sustain our competitiveness by advancing green technologies”.

There is also a great need not only for interaction among the different members, departments and areas of higher education, but also for interaction between the foregoing groups and outside agents. As GUNi (2019b) has it, “most of the higher education com- munity involved in such topics agree that the main objective for HEIs in the implementation of sustainable development should be its holistic integration in their systems”. More specifically, “in many cases, [...] there is a leadership that is convinced of the need to embed sustainable development but finds it very diffi- cult to reach academics, service staff and students and make cultural change possible, or we find strong bottom- up approaches coming from enthusiasts that lack clear support from leadership”. Also, the interaction between HEIs and society is imperative and it is even more crucial to foster a systematic vision that inclu- des every agent involved in the change process. In this respect, Ferrer-Balas (2011) speaks of “thoughtful tran- sition”. Clearly, the university must change; however, Ferrer-Balas goes on to say that “it would be quite naive to see it as a two-step change: first, the universi- ties change, and then they support society to change. Rather, it must be viewed as a co-evolution of systems”.

(ii) As noted above, another frequently mentioned issue is the need to change how we approach sustainability. Recognising the famous woman who cannot change the system as a way of solving our problems with the same thinking we used to create them, if they are to be fixed, “young people need to be given the space to ask bold and disruptive questions about why things are the way they are, to learn how things can be changed but also how they can be changed from the bottom up. Ignorance is not the answer” (Wals, 2020). In other words, we must stren- gthen critical thinking and make spaces for reflection. Importantly, in such spaces, it is also indispensable to find an appropriate way to manage fear and hope in the face of an uncertain future. Granicelli et al. (2020) put it like this:

“...our inspiration came from Martin Luther King Jr that he proclaimed “I have a nightmare,” he would never have mobilised the critical mass to uproot entrenched racism. Young people today cannot imagine a world without, say, fossil fuels, even if they know CO2 emissions are killing us. They fear the loss of familiar lifestyles for lack of a "dream" about a better future. So dealing with these fears and hopes is a crucial ingredient of education for a sustainable future (Granicelli et al., 2020). In addition, we need to change our deeply entrenched mindset and behaviour toward the world: "scaling-down and pulling-back rather than designing our way out of..."
problems.” (Grancitelli et al., 2020). In the case of the climate crisis, it has become clear that human beings cannot solve the problems basically through technology, laws and legislation. According to the authors, what is necessary is “self-restraint in human behaviour”. Perhaps the most commonly repeated point is that we must get beyond knowledge and commitment, that is, we must take action. It is necessary to live sustainability as an experience, not merely in academic terms (Castells, 2021). But what has to be done so that today’s young people become citizens committed to sustainability? According to Grancitelli et al. (2020), “if you look at our university education, the answer seems to be that you have to learn ‘facts and figures’ about issues like climate change or pollution, and once you know what is wrong, you will do the right thing. Of course, that’s not how it works.” Young people are well informed about the climate crisis and, indeed, many of them take to the streets to demand action (see Section 4.1). However, the authors add that “asking the government to save the planet is one thing. Changing your outlook on life is another. And that is not what you learn in the groves of academe.”

Failure to take action can have serious consequences. As Wals (2020) warns, “when there is a disconnect between what a school does and what it tries to teach in these areas, there is a hidden curriculum of unsustainability at work that can do more harm than good”. When education focuses only on knowledge and commitment, but also from the social and economic perspectives. The following sections lay out the implications of all three perspectives for higher education. Specifically, Section 4.1 links higher education to climate change, while Section 4.2 adopts a social perspective to treat higher education as a common good and Section 4.3 looks at education for economic well-being.

4.1 Adaptation and transformation: higher education and climate change

UNESCO (2015) has stated that “education plays a paramount role in raising awareness and promoting behavioural change for both climate change mitigation and adaptation”. This is indeed what is set out in SDG 13.3[7]. The role of higher education in sustainable development is key, not only with regard to the transmission of knowledge on the subject and the raising of awareness and commitment, but also in the case of action. In other words, higher education must work with other change agents to mitigate the effects of climate change and create the means by which we can adapt to new environmental conditions.

According to Facer (2020), higher education institutions have the chance to become core actors in the transition toward sustainable models. As she puts it, “climate change is not a scientific and technical matter alone, but is driven by a set of underpinning issues relating to economics, social inequalities, how we produce knowledge and ideas of what it means to be human”. Thus, higher education can make major contributions not only through research into the scientific and technical aspects of climate change, but also by dealing with all of the underlying issues transversally within the institution. Facer (2020) clusters these underlying issues into four specific areas for action: 1) redesigning the day-to-day practices and colleges to reduce emissions, nurture biodiversity and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate; 2) reinvigorating the civic role of institutions to build ecologically and socially resilient communities; 3) reshaping the knowledge structures we have today to address the interdiscipli- nary complexity of climate change; and 4) refocusing the educational mission of the institution to support students to develop the emotional, intellectual and practical capacities to live well in their environment and with the planet in the era of climate change.

Against this backdrop, various initiatives now enable universities to propose and pursue innovative projects to address the challenge of climate change. As she puts it, “we now need to understand that it draws more young people into the movement.”

4.2 Higher education as a common good

The knowledge society has led to a growing acceptance that university training is necessary to obtain high-quality, value-added jobs, and this realisation is indeed reflected in a sustained increase in higher education. Indeed, it has prompted a rise in higher education and secondary-schooling. However, the universal agreement on higher education. In this vein, SDG 4 sets out for the first time that “the scope of education is conceived of not merely as universal, but also as transversal, as something that is pursued throughout people’s lives.” For this reason, the SDGs now include the achievement of inclusive, equitable access to a higher education that must be of quality” (Martínez-Samper & Vilalta, 2021). Along the same lines, a recent report entitled Reimagining our futures together (UNESCO, 2021b) seeks to build a new social contract to reinforce this idea and expand the right to education so as to include access to information and the right to opportunities to make contributions to the knowledge commons, the accumulated and ever-changing resources of our collective knowledge.

SDG 4 also focuses on the presence of women and other groups that have traditionally been more excluded from education. The aim is to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”. Like-wi-
se, the Incheon Declaration also addresses the issue of gender. “We recognise the importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all. We are therefore committed to supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments, mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula, and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools” (UNESCO-IESALC, 2015b).

Since the late nineteen-seventies, gender issues have gone through changes in higher education. While there used to be a notable underrepresentation of women, now the level of schooling for women has risen and they have a greater likelihood of completing their studies than men do (UNESCO-IESALC, 2023). This phenomenon has come to be called the “female advantage”. The 2021 UNESCO-IESALC report asks whether the “female advantage” has really put an end to gender inequalities, since the issue of women’s role in higher education does not appear to have been entirely resolved.

Regardless of these somewhat encouraging statistics on women participation in higher education, concerns about the issue of gender equality in the tertiary education system have been growing over the last decade. A valid assumption is that women, after they graduate, are also able to proceed and study for higher degrees that would enable them to occupy most academic positions in universities, be involved in relevant research, take on leadership roles, and even earn competitive and comparable wages. Yet, [...] this has not been the case (UNESCO, 2021).

According to the report, there is a clear increase in women’s access to higher education, but they continue to face obstacles when they seek, for example, to take part in important research, move forward in their academic and scientific careers, or take up leadership roles (see chapter The future of work).

Another recurring debate linked to education as a global common good concerns the issue of human rights. The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on Human Rights put forward the idea of human rights as a global common good. In this vein, the new social contract for education calls for the inclusion of “a society-wide commitment to include everyone in public discussions about education. This emphasis on participation is what strengthens education as a common good” (UNESCO, 2021b).

There appears to be a clear need to treat both education and knowledge as common goods. Nonetheless, there is an all-too-familiar gap between regulations and discourse on one hand and implementation on the other hand, and gender issues are one of the key elements of discrimination. The dominance of stakeholder groups remains too great (UNESCO, 2015). Beyond calls to enact these rights, therefore, it comes down to everyone working together.

4.3 Education for economic progress and well-being

Jorge Riechmann (2020) notes that “climate change is the symptom, but the disease is capitalism”. The economic model that guides the world today, many argue, is what needs most urgently to be overhauled. In such a context, what role does higher education have to play? Riechmann (Territons.cat, 2020) makes the critique that “faculties of economics everywhere are [privileging] the business school model over economic models committed to the survival of living species, including human beings”.

Denying the gravity of the situation and trusting that it will get fixed without challenging capitalism, in Riechmann’s view, is not working. Moreover, he adds, green capitalism and the green new deal are oxymorons (Territons.cat, 2020) as we live in a planet of limited resources, economically controlled by the self-determining dynamic of capital accumulation, also inherent in its “green” versions. Therefore, Riechmann (2020) defends the need of “an emergency contraction”.

Despite our awareness that the goal is very tough to achieve, Riechmann proposes that we keep doing things in the meantime: “Think about how to organise collectively, not individually, in your daily lives and things closer to home in order to feed yourselves, move about, live in the most sustainable way possible. At the same time, also think about how to fight politically in response to major challenges like mobility, the energy model, a global agroecological programme...”. In this process, higher education will have an essential role to play. There is a need to support students and the broader society in the transition toward new models and approaches so that, drawing again on Riechmann, “when the signs of major disaster become apparent to the vast majority of the population, we will have enough room to make the best possible responses” (Riechmann, 2020).

Facer (2021), for her part, puts forward a number of proposals for education aimed at economic well-being, revolving around the idea of employability (see chapter The future of work):

For many around the world, having a job in the formal economy has long been seen as a fantasy; their financial income comes primarily from informal work, the grey economy and precarious employment. For many others, the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the 2008 financial crisis made starkly visible the fact that jobs in themselves are not enough to provide economic security. Under these conditions the other ways in which people can provide security for themselves - the care and material resources of the household, the resources of the commons and the underpinning infrastructures of the State – become clearly apparent, alongside their fragilities (Facer, 2021).

Against this backdrop, Facer notes that “education needs and attain not only to students’ capacities to participate in meaningful work in the formal economy, but also to their capacities to create ecologically resilient and caring households, [...] to sustain and defend viable states and to contribute to the maintenance of common goods”. Thus, it is necessary to focus on the whole person and his or her context.

More specifically, Facer (2021) picks up on proposals from the economist Kate Raworth to explain that “economic well-being depends upon [...] provisioning practices” (1). Paid work in the marketplace in exchange for money, but also access to goods and services provided by (2) households, by (3) the commons and by (4) the state. With respect to the second aspect, which entails “creating conditions in which households can provide or access care and develop food supplies that are resilient to market failures”, Facer (2021) stresses that under no circumstances can it involve “removing women and girls from their rights to participate in and contribute to the wider community”.

To sum up, in keeping with education for economic well-being put forward by Facer (2021) and proposals from Riechmann to change the economic model, it is necessary to furnish students with opportunities to rethink how the economy currently operates in order to come up with a model that will actually be sustainable.

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1.7 Internationalization. Reinforcing partnerships to attain common goals

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, higher education institutions (HEIs) face important societal demands. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the pressure exerted on them, and the last two years have resulted in an authentic tour de force for students, academics and staff. Among other issues, the impracticality of face-to-face education and limitations in international mobility posed tough challenges that required new ways of thinking and acting to be successfully overcome. Some of these challenges have had a particular effect on the internationalisation strategies pursued by HEIs, which in recent years have acquired more relevance in university structures.

This chapter attempts to provide a brief analysis of current trends in HEIs' internationalisation, identifying common issues and proposing some potential lines of action. It aims to identify the potential role of internationalisation policies in the post-pandemic scenario facing universities, and in particular the power of HEI networks, alliances and other collaborative settings to tackle urgent global issues.

If there were still some doubts about the reality and scope of globalisation, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown how interconnected the world really is. Recent events inescapably created an opportunity to confirm not only the existence of very tangible global problems, but also the fact that global problems can only be solved through global solutions. The climate emergency, the consequences of the pandemic, and the socio-economic transformations which, among other consequences, have resulted in an unacceptable increase in massive inequalities, requires a coordinated, decisive and global intervention.

Higher education institutions cannot overlook the crucial challenges that the world currently faces, as these changes jeopardise not only the perspectives and wellbeing of future generations but those of current generations too. To better serve their communities, HEIs need to address global issues. But in addressing global problems it is crucial not to overlook the particularities and conditioning features of their own community. It is important to remember this double linkage of HEIs: they are fully embedded in their local communities and at the same time integrated in a broader global scenario; both local and global trends affect and amplify not only their performance and results but also their main mission (GUNI, 2017).

There are multiple areas of action in which HEIs can make a unique contribution to the solution of global problems. Authors like Slaughter (2017) specifically include universities in the group of players that are “…making a real impact in discovering, formulating and implementing solutions to global problems”. Along with governments, “…large foundations, universities and civic organisations of all kinds are on the ground trying to tackle what used to be known as “development issues” or international problems such as climate change and global health” (Slaughter, 2017, p. 20).

These lines of action require HEIs to be orientated towards collaboration and association with other agents, and HEIs' internationalisation policies and practices can play a crucial role in making this possible. Probably the most salient issue is the urgent necessity to rethink and reframe the current world-competition paradigm and to analyse the feasibility of collaborative models at national and international level. This would represent a complete change in the way HEIs' internationalisation policies are usually understood.

Let us consider, for example, the current influence of global technology corporations, which in some cases threaten basic rights like active citizenship, the right to privacy and the concomitant undermining of democracy (See Veliz, 2020; Lanier, 2013). Most higher education institutions are nodes of multi-level networks that create and disseminate high-quality knowledge. They are organised into alliances and other collaborative models, with the participation of relevant social players. Under certain conditions, HEI networks could play a crucial role in countering the weight that global technology corporations currently have in the creation of cutting-edge technologies. (For notions of nodes and networks, see Benkler, 2006 and 2011; for the role that transnational and global networks can play in the current global scenario, which includes a specific role for HEIs, see Slaughter, 2004 and 2017).
1.1 The evolution of HEIs’ internationalisation strategies to navigate an interconnected world

When addressing HEIs’ internationalisation strategies, it is important to keep in mind that, besides the relevance of a university’s autonomy, these strategies are fully imbued in a wider geopolitical scenario and a particular cultural community that universities cannot ignore.

As is well known, since their origins universities have conceived of themselves as part of an interconnected, albeit geographically and culturally limited, world. As Guri-Rosemblit (2015) stated, Western medieval universities had been built on the foundations of a common language (Latin) and a vocation of explaining universal models. The main aim of their academic mobility, understood as scholars and students attending different universities, as well as the international recognition of university credentials, can be traced back to the 14th century.

This original universal-oriented ethos was diluted by the rise of contemporary nations and their national acade- mies. As mentioned by de Wit et al (2015), in the 17th and 18th centuries became an instrument to support national interests. At the same time, Latin was replaced by national languages as the teaching language, and universities turned into national-centred institutions. This process intensified throughout the 19th century and the early part of the 20th, when preparing national elites for governmental and liberal professions became a central goal for universities. In this context, HEIs aligned their goals and mission with national aspirations, and the concept of serving the country was added to their core values. A second concept arose at that time: the ideal of competition. Originally linked back to the 14th century, this idea that universities needed to cultivate an international cultural community that universities cannot ignore.

1.1.1 The importance of mobility

Mobility, understood as scholars and students attending different universities, as well as the international recognition of university credentials, can be traced back to the 14th century.

1.1.2 The internationalisation of HEIs

This process intensified throughout the 19th century and the early part of the 20th, when preparing national elites for governmental and liberal professions became a central goal for universities. In this context, HEIs aligned their goals and mission with national aspirations, and the concept of serving the country was added to their core values. A second concept arose at that time: the ideal of competition. Originally linked back to the 14th century, this idea that universities needed to cultivate an international cultural community that universities cannot ignore.

1.1.3 The influence of the Cold War

The Cold War (1947-1991) had an impact on the HEIs’ internationalisation strategies, as well as on the international political landscape. The US government had a strategic interest in promoting higher education as a tool for promoting democracy and countering the spread of communism. The US government’s sponsorship of this effort was organized through the Fulbright Program, which was established in 1946 to provide opportunities for international educational exchange. The program was designed to promote mutual understanding between the US and other countries, and to support the growth of democratic institutions and practices internationally. The Fulbright Program provided scholarships and grants to students, scholars, teachers, and other professionals, enabling them to study, work, and conduct research in the US or in other countries.

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highly competitive research grants, in which those usually considered and best-positioned universities get more resources, in turn results in a "Matthew Effect", in which the richer institutions tend to accumulate wealth faster, leaving developing countries behind. Unfortunately, a ranking position in the international competitiveness model, with a few exceptions, still follows a centre-periphery and competition model. Among other factors, as we mentioned in section 1.1, university rankings and other competitive settings have contributed to the establishment of HEI hierarchies that usually penalise institutions in developing countries. Unfortunately, a ranking position results in a "Matthew Effect", in which the richer universities can play in the resolution of global challenges, and the poorer and weaker-positioned get less.4

This conception of centre-periphery and national competition can even be detected in internationalisation practices not exclusively based on the international physical mobility of students and staff but on what has been called comprehensive internationalisation, inter-institutionalism, as scholars search for alternative and non-academic staff. The list of enablers includes: (1) improvements to do more for and by themselves, (2) it enhances their capacity to do more in loose commonality with others, without being constrained by having to organise their relationship through a price system or in traditional hierarchical models of social and economic organisation, and (3) it improves the capacity of individuals to do more in formal organisations that operate outside the market sphere (p. 8).

Among the obstacles: some of the actions that could contribute to change are beyond HEIs' capacities, others could be held back by faculty due to being perceived as a threat to institutional core values, like autonomy, and, as usual, there is a widespread lack of resources that undermines change and demoralises academic and non-academic staff. The list of enablers includes the view, shared by HEIs located in different regions and countries, that collaboration, diversity and community engagement are key assets to the present and future of HEIs, that the successful experience of exchanges and other policies and practices for internationalisation, showing the benefits of opening up institutional boundaries; and the support of already existing networks of players other than HEIs, such as governments, corporations and civil society organisations.

We have identified six indicators that could help in mapping the strategic position of a university when assessing a collaborative scenario. We believe that one of the factors that might contribute to facilitating integration in collaborative endeavours is to understand the traits that partly shape HEIs' institutional identities. Please note that these indicators are conceived as a self-assessment tool that could help universities to visualize their position in relation to potential integration in coordinated actions with other players. None of the indicators are good or bad per se, they just represent the situation and could help to identify obstacles and enablers, as well as determining areas in which the university has room for manoeuvre and areas in which the decision is beyond its scope. It could also be helpful to identify partners, based on similar or complementary characteristics.

Even when the indicators are not dichotomous or continuous, it is easier to understand them if they are presented in pairs. The pairs are competitiveness/collaboration, divergence/integration and singularity/homogeneity.

The first pair, competitiveness/collaboration, attempts to capture the institutional disposition and also the entire framework of an HEI towards zero-sum (competitive) and collaborative (win-win) approaches. Variables like participation and position achieved in international rankings, competition for external grants and other resources, as well as the preference for meritocratic and individual results-oriented procedures in the award of scholarships and rewards to students and academic staff are examples of how relevant and integrated into the institutional culture competitiveness is. However, participation in open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion of open-science projects, sharing of facilities and resources with other institutions, promotion
of collective problem-solving procedures, participation in collaborative projects with the community, NGOs and other non-academic players, and participation in networks or alliances work as a proxy for the prominence of collaborative approaches. The second pair, divergence/integration, focuses on how idiosyncratic or homogenised academic procedures and regulations are. To build the divergence indicator, it might be useful to pay attention to variables like the difficulty or ease of recognising credits attained in other institutions (national or international), the length of offered degrees, and grading systems. Integration could be measured by considering policies regarding the exchange of students, faculty and staff, bilateral or multilateral agreements with other HEIs, as well as joint or double degrees.

The third pair, singularity/homogeneity, concentrates on the characteristics of the academic offering, paying attention to its unique or common traits. Looking at the singularity indicator, we could consider variables like the presence of a teaching offering in native languages, the uniqueness of an academic offering or teaching and learning methods. The proposed indicators are not dichotomic or continuous. Every university necessarily has all six components, at different levels and in different configurations, and they may be expressed in different institutional areas. Any accurate and action-oriented analysis of their strategic situation and the potential room for change must take many variables and particularities into account. It is imperative to avoid the one-size-fits-all approach that characterises some styles of policy recommendations, because these changes are not peripheral; on the contrary, they will probably affect universities’ central components and structures.

**Final remarks**

HEIs are asked to open their institutional boundaries and establish effective channels of collaboration with other organisations. This requirement poses new challenges in terms of university performance, finances and governance. As Carvalho (2021) mentioned, these are not new requirements, but in the last decade have been crystallised and consolidated as part of universities’ core functions. She warned against dichotomic interpretations of the policies and practices established by HEIs in that context, as they are usually too pessimistic or too optimistic, and proposed bringing back into the discussion the relevance of institutional, social and political particularities. This recommendation is particularly appropriate for analysing internationalisation policies and practices.

HEIs’ internationalisation is an ongoing innovative endeavour that is expressed in different ways. It has the potential to make a crucial contribution to institutional transformation and to create a more inclusive and sustainable world, reinforcing the ideal of global citizenship. Internationalisation can also redesign the boundaries of academic communities, making them more open and inclusive, and reinforcing their commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and the common good. However, its actions must be aligned and supported by the whole institution. HEIs’ internationalisation policies and practices may act as catalysts of internal change but cannot act separately from the rest of the institution to which they belong. They can function as a laboratory for innovative practices, but if they really want to promote change, their actions should not contradict the core values of the institutional culture. The guiding principles of this chapter are extremely respectful of the unique cultural and social character of HEIs. As Page (2007) stated, in a knowledge society diversity is a value per se. Respecting and promoting HEIs’ institutional identity and particularities is a necessary prerequisite of any collaborative intervention. In that sense, the challenge for higher education institutions committed to significant change is to find a balance between competitiveness and collaboration, between divergence and integration, and between singularity and homogeneity, in order to better serve their institutional values and mission. Even when there is no single or simple solution, it could be helpful to think of strategies that combine institutional flexibility, openness and a commitment to transparency, and the courage to innovate.

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Paving the way for a new dimension in European higher education, research, innovation and society: Paving the way for a new dimension in European higher education.

1.8 Governance and professionals. Building resilient, innovative and socially committed institutions

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1. Introduction

As the contributions in this report show, Higher Education Institutions all around the globe are at a critical turning point. Among other factors, extraordinary internal and external demands, structural financial troubles, large demographic changes, global challenges and emergencies bring global and HEI governance into the centre of the picture.

In the field of public and private management, recent and not so recent literature has tried to answer the question of how to adapt classic principles and guidelines of governance and management to exceptional situations, times of crises and emergencies (i.e., Comfort 2007, Crandall et al. 2013). In this sense, HEIs face certain specific challenges and possess some features that make them special. Aas Shattuck (2014) states, "(...) in the modern world, university governance structures are in a constant transition and adaptation process to respond to external pressures in a way we have not seen before". Institutional autonomy, financial independence, sufficient and stable funding, decision-making capacity, self-government, and internal leadership are some of the elements that form the basis of university governance. These elements, which had been redefined in the last two decades, are deeply affected by the complex relationship that universities maintain with their corresponding governmental bodies, whether at the regional, national or supranational level. A variable interplay between internal governance and power elements, external constraints, and a general narrative of promoting competitiveness and incorporating market elements, have forced HEIs to undertake profound changes in their governance systems.

This chapter explores how different models of HEI governance can contribute to fulfilling their commitment toward serving their communities as well as the global public interest. An unavoidable question that demands our full attention is the role that higher education institutions’ governance need to play to honour their commitment towards a fairer and more sustainable society. Public universities are a role and a privileged engine for innovation and social change, and the construction and dissemination of knowledge. For universities to fulfill this role, it is essential to find governance models that allow the best articulation of the institution’s interests with the needs of its community and the global society in which they are immersed. The human factor is undoubtedly the most decisive factor for any higher education institution. Having qualified teaching, research and management staff committed to university activity is key to building resilient, innovative and socially committed institutions. The final section of this chapter addresses the challenges for HEI professionals and the reshaping of profiles in a changing world.

All in all, it should be made clear that it is not a matter of finding a single governance model and replicating it, nor a single professional profile, quite on the contrary. Particularly in complex issues like this, it is essential to think of flexible models and profiles that can incorporate cultural, national, organizational, and the institution’s own academic cultures and specificities.

2. What is the governance of higher education institutions?

The notion of “governance of higher education institutions” should be regarded as a phenomenon by everyone involved in this sector. However, it is not so simple. As it happens, there is not a unique, broadly accepted definition of university governance. But, besides differences and nuances, all definitions of the concept focus on some common elements:

- **Decision-making:** Who makes decisions about the internal government of the university and how they are made?
- **Election:** How are authorities elected (even if there is some ambiguity about who counts as “an authority”)?
- **Autonomy:** What is the institution’s degree of autonomy with respect to the corresponding national, regional or supranational governments?
- **Stakeholders:** What is the role of other relevant stakeholders, such as students, unions, donors, and others, in the university’s decision-making processes?
- **HEI interaction:** How does the university interact with other universities and research centres, especially those with which they have partnerships, alliances, or networks?
- **Funding:** What relations does the university maintain with other sectors of society, such as NGOs, civil society leaders and movements, neighbours, etc.?
- **Openness:** What relations does the university maintain with other sectors of society, such as NGOs, civil society leaders and movements, neighbours, etc.?
- **Authority:** What is the institution’s degree of autonomy with respect to the corresponding national, regional or supranational governments?

In the same vein, the Oxford White Paper on University Governance (2006) states that university governance implies not only institutional decision-making processes but also the procedures, actions, and practices implemented to achieve those decisions. Shattuck (2014) emphasizes institutional autonomy, self-government, and the distribution of authority within universities as the main components of university governance and remarks on the relevance of funding arrangements. In fact, he considers that the nature of funding is “the most influential driver for change in institutional governance structures (...) because they provoke the need for new decision-making processes and demand greater attention to institutional strategies” (p. 12)

These and other definitions of the concept of governance also reveal the existence of two forces that shape the space of potential decisions: on the one hand, the heritage and particularities of each university’s own institutional culture; on the other, the conditioning factors imposed by national or supranational governments. It should be noted that these conditioning factors not only imply compliance with mandatory regulations and norms but can also set courses of action, propose curricular content, and set objectives to be pursued by HEIs. The tension between these two forces creates a dynamic tension that is often read as the limits of university self-government and autonomy, but in reality, implies a much more complex agenda (see, Fröllick et al. 2013, and Kraatz and Block 2008).

The relevance of HEI governance analysis implies the recognition of the centrality of universities’ actions and performance in a knowledge society, as well as the important role that other actors play in this endeavour. It also highlights the relationship between HEIs and governments, civil society, businesses, and citizens. Analysis of the different models of university governance, though, provides insight into how universities shape their position in the global knowledge society, in which they are key players (see Guní, 2017). A recurring question in the literature is to what extent the influence of globalizing processes and immersion in the knowledge society contribute to a confluence in university governance models. Although it is possible to detect common features, such as the inclusion of some types of market and competition mechanisms, there are still important spaces for the expression of particularities. As Capano and Jarvis (2020: p. 12-13) have recently pointed out, while this is not to dismiss the emergence of important cross-national governance trends or growth in global systemic forces impacting national higher education systems, it does suggest that cultures of governance continue to display national specificities and that there are limits, or at least differences, in the degree to which international forces or ‘globalizing models’ impact national contexts.

In sum, different definitions of university governance have been given, but they all usually refer to a series of elements, the specific combination of which may define other models of governance that might differentiate and particularize universities across the world.

3. A brief review of models of HEI governance

In his seminal work of 1971, J. Baldridge summarizes and reconstructs three university governance models: bureaucratic, collegial and political. The bureaucratic model is based on the Weberian idea of bureaucracy. Baldridge (1971) identifies five elements that highlight the Weberian bureaucratic components of a university:

1) Being “a complex organization chartered by the state” implies that “the university is thus a corporate person with public responsibilities” (p. 3).
2) Its formal and strictly ranked hierarchy.
3) The existence of internal formal channels of communication that must be respected.
4) The “bureaucratic authority relations, with some officials exercising authority over others (...)” (p. 3).
5) The existence of formal policies and regulations “that hold the university together and govern much of its work” (p. 3).

The collegial model, also called the republic of scholars, can be understood in three different ways, according to Baldridge (1971). The first refers to an aspirational understanding of how a university should be managed. Following this interpretation, participation of all academic community members should be granted and promoted, and the decision-making process should privilege the point of view of scholars, free from the interference of bureaucrats and other officials. The second one refers to the level of professionalization of the academic community. “The scientist in industry, the military advisor, (…) the physician in the hospital, and the professor in the university are all examples of professionals whose influence is supposed to depend on their knowledge rather than on their formal positions.” (Baldridge, 1971, p. 5). In this thread, the emphasis is placed on the unique professional skills and abilities that make scholars the most suitable actors to define university policies and actions. Finally, the third meaning of the community of scholars refers to the fact that the university should be a refuge and a bastion against the dehumanization of society. “[M]any critics of this impersonal, bureaucratized educational system, including students, are calling for a return to the ‘academic community’, with all the accompanying images of personal friendship, human education, and ‘relevant confrontation with life’” (p. 6).

Regarding the political model, Baldridge presents it as an intermediate and most realistic approximation to real-life university governance: “[w]hen we look at the complex and dynamic processes that explode on the modern campus today, we see neither the rigid, formal aspects of bureaucracy nor the calm, consensus-directed elements of an academic collegium.” (p. 8) He claims that the discussion about HEIs governance should recognize that universities are politicized institutions.

“there is a complex social structure, which generates conflicts, there are many forms of power and pressure that affect the decision-makers; there is a legislative stage in which these pressures are translated into policy, and there is a policy execution phase, which eventually generates feedback with the potential for new conflicts” (p. 12).

It is interesting to note that, even though this article was written 50 years ago, the issues it addresses are still relevant, as evidenced by discussions about the role of bureaucrats v. academics, the limits of university autonomy, the professionalization of staff, the dehumanization of university teaching and learning, or the complex power relations among universities and governments. However, those models have been criticized and re-elaborated by other scholars (for a review of theoretical critiques, see Clark 1983, Paradise et al. 2008, Frolich et al. 2012), and several alternative models of analysis have been elaborated. Among them, it is worth mentioning the contribution made by Bieleke and Kogan (2007), who noticed and summarized the passage of HEIs from the idea of a republic of scholars towards a stakeholder organization, because it captures the moment in which market and competition mechanisms arise and consolidate as an integral part of university governance.

According to Bieleke and Kogan (2007), the approach of HEIs as a stakeholder’s organization considers institutional autonomy “a basis for strategic decision making by leaders who are assumed to see it as their primary task to satisfy the interests of major stakeholders, from where the voice of academics within the institutions is but one among several stakeholders” (p. 477). In that model, the academic community is one of the stakeholders, but not the only one. Therefore, their voice and position is still valuable but modulated and accommodated to other demands of other stakeholders.

They identify these central components of that change in the main governance structure.

1) Governmental actors (national and supranational levels) have “[a] far stronger role for central authorities in determining university objectives and modes of working” (p. 479).

2) New managerial structures are created within the university, and, in some cases, they replace decision-making structures traditionally integrated by scholars.

3) The replacement of collective representative boards such as university senates “by councils and boards of trustees who incorporate representation from the world of business, public services and politics” (p. 479).

4) “[a] movement of power so that institutional leaders — rectors, presidents or vice-chancellors who used to act as primi inter pares are now nearer the position of chief executives running a corporate institution.” (p. 479)

Even when models are always an abstraction, it is easy to recognize several of the abovementioned traits in current discussions about the future of universities. In fact, in some cases, an institutional panoptism can be observed when looking in detail at any university: elements for all those models, from the bureaucratic to the managerial, can be found. Managerialism, though, still strongly influences how university government is conceived, probably because the paradigm of competence and excellence stands desirable for more than one group of interest or stakeholder, especially in heavy research-oriented universities. As Bieleke and Kogan (2007) state, a powerful force lending support to the growth of managerialism has been the assertion of quite penetrative quality assurance procedures that replace the hitherto ‘trustful’ relationships between academics and their institutions as the belief in ‘transparency’ has replaced trust in expert and professional knowledge. Both research and teaching and learning are assessed by a variety of measures, including various forms of external review, benchmarking, and performance indicators, that “define authority… that position is still valuable but modulated and accommodated to the demands of other stakeholders.”

For those models are pre-knowledge societies, and it is time to adopt a new model that could answer the challenges of a network knowledge society. It is not that the elements highlighted by these accounts of HEI governance are no longer useful or relevant. But societies are changing fast and profoundly, and universities must do the same to respond to the challenges and pressures of our new world. When everything changes so fast, key actors must become flexible and adaptable in unprecedented ways if they want to survive. This is why some ideas that are missing in the more traditional accounts of HEI governance, such as their capacity to collaborate, their ability to be more open - following the paradigm of open government and open institutions that have become dominant today-, and their capacity to get new stakeholders and citizens involved in co-decision-making processes result nowadays critical. The following section develops these three elements briefly.

As stated in the UNESCO World Report Towards Knowledge Society (Bindi, 2005), HEIs are “destined to play a fundamental role in knowledge societies, based on radical changes in the traditional patterns of knowledge production, diffusion and application.” (p. 87) This concept of knowledge society and the universities’ role in it is also very challenging to universities. It fully recognizes HEIs as key actors in producing and disseminating knowledge, but they are no longer the sole actors that can or should create and disseminate knowledge. In fact, the main concept of knowledge society states that knowledge production and dissemination is distributed among different actors, from the public and the private, from the non-profit and the for-profit, from the formal and informal sectors. It also implies that HEIs are requested to open their institutional boundaries and establish effective collaboration channels with other organizations.

That requirement poses new challenges in terms of university governance. But, as Carvalho (2021) says, it is important to avoid dichotomic interpretations of the policies and practices established by HEIs in that context, usually too pessimistic or too optimistic, bringing back to the discussion the relevance of institutional, social, and political particularities in that respect.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to identify which model or combination of models of university governance favours the best fulfilment of the mission of universities in the midst of the knowledge society, in an interconnected world that requires collective efforts to solve crucial global problems.

Without wishing to promote a standardized approach, four elements should be carefully considered regarding successful governance models: respecting the vernacular institutional culture, guaranteeing the participation of the entire academic community in decision making, promoting the appropriate combination of elements of competition and collaboration with other universities, and promoting the participation of the local community in university affairs.
Regardless of the particularities of each case, there is a common factor that cannot be ignored: the leadership exercised by university authorities and their staff, both academic and non-academic. Any proposal to transform the governance system must empower the autono-
mous leadership of each institute, or it will be doomed to failure. As Capano and Jarvis (2020) state “[u]niversi-
ties bring together groups of individuals performing very different jobs (e.g., the job of a biologist versus that of a historian, or the job of a computer technician versus that of a help desk employee), numerous inter-
twined decision-making processes, and a great variety of institutional outputs (…)” p. 77) Understanding and respecting that complexity requires a leadership style that it is not easy to find, because governing a university is an extremely turbulent process that requires unique skills. Especially now, when trying to build HEIs that can integrate and collaborate with institutional peers, natio-
nally and internationally, is one of the inevitable tasks that must be undertaken.

Finally, and in the same direction as the previous para-
graph, how can universities involve new stakeholders and citizens in their actions? How to make the institu-
tions more permeable without jeopardizing the values of university autonomy and academic freedom? How to reconcile the seemingly exclusive objectives of pursuing academic excellence and the inclusion of marginalized sectors of society from access to the university? The answers to these questions are by no means simple, nor can they be answered by a single person. The very reflection on the governance systems of universities tests the self-critical capacity of the aca-
demic community and should invite us to explore paths that, although they may seem uncomfortable, will allow us to overcome the bottleneck in which many HEIs seem to find themselves trapped in nowadays.

5. Professionals in higher education institutions: changing profiles in a world in transformation

The human factor is undoubtedly the most important for any higher education institution. Having qualified teaching, research and administrative staff who are committed to university activities is vital to construct institutions that are resilient, innovative and socially engaged. This was also the case in the past: attracting and retaining talent has been an essential strategy for the proper function of education and scientific research, and for effective and efficient management.

However, the profile of higher education institutions’ professionals is changing and will continue to change significantly in the coming years. According to the teaching function, new profiles of academics should be hired who are experts in a set of new disciplines, in line with the technological and socioeconomic revolution that we are experiencing. The role of teaching staff is also being transformed to a great extent. In the past, teachers were figures who possessed knowledge and information. Now, their role is mainly as mentors and tutors who support students in their training and deve-
lopment, as qualified professionals and citizens. The extensive and intensive use of digital possibilities and information and communication technologies will revo-
lutionise classrooms and ways and times of teaching. Consequently, the function and pedagogical strategies of teachers should be reconsidered. The research task will also need new professional profiles. It will require people who are more experienced in research and collaboration and teamwork with experts in other dis-
ciplines and with other institutions. They will be more open to co-creation with social institutions and citizens, more attentive and committed to the impacts of their research on society; the answers to these questions are by no means simple, nor can they be answered by a single person. The very reflection on the governance systems of universities tests the self-critical capacity of the aca-
demic community and should invite us to explore paths that, although they may seem uncomfortable, will allow us to overcome the bottleneck in which many HEIs seem to find themselves trapped in nowadays.

This process of reformulating professional profiles in higher education institutions will also occur in the management area. First, professionals will need to have a higher level of qualifications, given that an increasing number of repetitive, automatable tasks will be carried out by machines, robots and software. Management professionals will be required to have greater added value and the highest level of specialisation and efficacy. One notable aspect in this area is the increasing blurring between teaching and research staff on the one hand and management staff on the other. This division, which was very clear until a few years ago, will gradu-
ally be blurred to give way to more hybrid profiles. For example, teaching management staff could play a key role in students’ learning or a research manager could be an important link in research projects. This is already occurring in all research projects that require the use of advanced scientific and technological research infras-
tructure, specific software, laboratory and materials management, field work or experimental studies, etc. At the same time, teaching and research staff are partic-
ipating extensively in management, organisation and planning tasks to support their teaching and research function. Therefore, higher education institutions must break increasingly imaginary barriers and make a clear commitment to qualified, multi-talented hybrid profiles of people who are open to collaboration and to flexibil-
it and permanent innovation.

In a discussion of professionals, we should mention talented young people who are in training and develop-
ment. Unfortunately, in recent years, many countries and many higher education institutions have experi-
cenced crisis conditions, with budget cuts and a lack of expectations beyond the immediate future. This has had a significant impact on the lack of expectations for the future, the employment of young academics and managers and the development of a decent, attractive professional career. Unfortunately, this impact is much more notable in developing regions and countries, where the lack of prospects and the uncertain situation of young professionals makes it impossible to construct resilient institutions with added value. Therefore, it is vital to further strengthen all policies that enable the professional development and stabil-
isation of young talent in higher education institutions.

A strong commitment to women’s talent must be one of the key factors in the reconsideration of higher edu-
cation institutions. Specific policies and grants should be promoted to enable a professional career that is as 
decent as that of men, to break the glass ceiling and enable women to access positions of responsibility (in academe, management, leadership, singular projects) under equal conditions. In addition, policies and grants should foster women’s presence in academic areas that are still very male-dominated.

In this context of change and transformation, higher education institutes should also be focused on social needs and problems. They should be able to carry out their academic activity with a social focus and break the classic ivory tower of traditional universities. Uni-
versities should work with and for society to be able to develop the knowledge society together, to cons-
truct what is known as the democracy of knowledge and to become more cultured, resilient, critical and collaborative societies.

Management and leadership in a broad sense should also be discussed. Here, we refer to intrainsitutional leadership for the strategic management of institutions and the leadership of schools, faculties, departments and institutions of all kinds within higher education institutes. We refer to the leadership of teams, which are increasingly hybrid and multidisciplinary. We refer to integrative leadership that promotes everyone’s collaboration and participation to reach shared goals. However, we also refer to leadership outside of ins-
itutions, with other social, political and economic agents or citizens, through specific missions or pro-
jects. Higher education institutes of the present and the future require solid leadership that is effective and inclusive. At the same time, this leadership must extend to society so that higher education institutes become real beacons in the task of working towards the progress, wellbeing and competitiveness of socie-
ties. For these reasons, the training of managers and shared, solid leadership should be given sustained attention as a priority.
References


GUNi Vision
The vision of the Global University Network for innovation (GUNi)

The development of a vision helps us to define the final point we want to reach; what we want to become and attain within the timeframe. The vision aims to inspire horizons of transformation and should enable us, by observation, to outline institutional strategies and objectives, as well as the action plans to achieve them.

The GUNi World Report, entitled New Visions for Higher Education Institutions towards 2030, aims to define recommendations for universities worldwide within this context. The main focus is on institutions, without losing sight of their embeddedness in higher education systems. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are called on to rethink their social function and strategies in the coming years in the context of major technological, economic, social and cultural transformation. Therefore, the GUNi World Report focuses on universities and their capacity for transformation and innovation in this change of era and within the timeframe of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda.

This vision is drawn from GUNi’s fundamental values and mission and our desire to promote the transformation of higher education towards greater public service, relevance, social responsibility and innovation. Likewise, at GUNi we promote the exchange of resources and experiences and seek to encourage group reflections and the joint production of knowledge for change. The vision being presented is also therefore drawn from the contributions and views of GUNi’s members.

Moving beyond words, this vision creates a space for active transformation which, together with the report as a whole, will constitute the stepping stone for a wider institutional and cultural transformation. Therefore, institutions working for the common good and in the rigour that should define them, and all the conviction of institutions working for the common good and the progress, peace and well-being of humanity. We advocate the promotion of institutional plurality as a source of richness and a necessary response to diverse social contexts and needs. What makes university institutions equal is the desire to achieve quality in service to society.

We know that knowledge, talent and scientific research have become key factors in progress and well-being. Although universities have lost the monopoly on knowledge (which is increasingly widespread), there are now key institutions in the knowledge society. Making a commitment through public policies to construct innovative universities is vital if we want to build societies that are resilient, sustainable and progressive. Universities could become beacons for society and leading institutions. They could serve as a space for testing and innovation. They could become centres for discussion and co-creation, taking advantage of their neutrality and prestige. They could be catalysts to ask the right questions and establish ways of working with other social players to find potential solutions.

In this context, it is essential to reflect on the added value provided by HEIs, focussing on the guidance and support provided during the training process, the sense of community and network, the transmission of frameworks and learning pathways at different times of life, interdisciplinarity and encouragement of the capacity for discernment, all of which contribute to individual and social transformation.

Starting point

Our starting point is to consider higher education and knowledge as public goods which must be preserved and promoted by governments and public institutions to enhance progress, well-being and competitiveness. This means opening up higher education, knowledge and research to society (both public and private institutions), and establishing policies for equal opportunities, equity and access to higher education.

Given the trend in recent decades for a certain degree of standardisation of higher education institutions (for example, through indicators, standards and rankings that prioritise research and the impact of scientific publications over teaching and learning), the main focus is on institutions, without losing sight of their embeddedness in higher education systems.

The complexity of social problems today, at local and global level, requires expert and scientific knowledge to introduce the most suitable public policies. Dialogue between politicians, public management and academia should be continuous and promote social advances and progress. A good example of this can be found in the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the extraordinary effort made by universities and research centres and their respective governments worldwide to create and share knowledge in record time.

As mentioned above, the world is facing enormous political and social challenges; these include poverty, inequality, mass migration, xenophobia, populism, the climate emergency, technological and scientific revolution, and the required environmental, social and economic sustainability. We believe that universities, in this context, must position themselves socially with all the rigour that should define them, and all the conviction of institutions working for the common good and the progress, peace and well-being of humanity. We therefore call for universities that are committed and open, not closed in on themselves and self-satisfied.

This social responsibility must be translated into a clear institutional commitment:

- to students, putting them at the centre of the university mission and promoting their training as critical, free citizens and qualified professionals;
- to knowledge and science, constructed with and for society;
- at local and regional level, including the social and cultural fabric, the regional economic framework, public institutions and the community;
- at global level, by creating close links with institutions and networks worldwide to work together towards academic diplomacy and advances in education, science and culture as a source of collective and individual progress.

The social responsibility of universities has an excellent framework in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda establishes the main challenges and commitments for humanity and enables the design of a tool to reflect universities’ institutional policies.

The Covid-19 crisis, with all of its severe consequences for humans and health, has also caused an immense social crisis. In education, it has led to an increase in inequality and once again revealed the power of the work done in schools, institutions and university faculties to fight against inequality and promote social mobility and socialisation. In addition, as we know, the pandemic has acted as a great accelerator in the rethinking of education in the digital area and has shown the advantages (and limitations) of the intensive use of communication and digital technologies for education throughout life.

How to achieve the vision

Reconsidering university institutions in this change of era is no simple task. We must break down the inertia and long-term institutional strategies that promote and amplify all the expertise and creativity of university professionals. This means constant investment in institutions’ human capital and the professional development of teams with a strategic vision. Universities must work to expand managing teams of academic and administrative teams, organise themselves more autonomously through missions and projects, and focus on being organisations that learn, adapt and unlearn.

Considering the potential of institutions and focusing on their agency, we must not lose sight of the fact that they are part of higher education systems which, in terms of structure, policy, politics, finance, quality standards, governance and laws, depend on accommodating institutions and the system at the same time in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The strategic capacity of universities must be based on broad institutional autonomy and, at the same time, full and exacting reporting to public authorities and society. In many countries, government actions can be observed that limit or question the autonomous capacity of universities. Some governments burden universities with procedures and controls that have
Main areas of transformation

Beyond what has been stated already, our vision is based on seven main areas of transformation. All of them are considered critical in the rethink of university institutions and focusing them on the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. The areas are:

- **Sustainability**
- **The digital-human future**
- **The future of work**
- **Citizens**
- **Knowledge**
- **Internationalisation**
- **Governance and professionals**

1. **Sustainability: reinventing universities for a sustainable future**

Sustainability can no longer be a general concept or a simple coat of varnish to be applied to a university. Instead, sustainability must form a central part of the mission of higher education institutions, through radicalism and the generation of strategic programmes and initiatives. Universities must become driving forces behind the spread of sustainability while at the same time taking on a great responsibility for it.

We must make a commitment to including sustainability in a way that cuts across all aspects of higher education and avoids an isolated conception of sustainability as a subject or practice to be incorporated. Universities’ contribution ranges from training and teaching to scientific research and knowledge transfer, promoting a new vision of their relationship with the world and the environment to transform HEIs’ operation, management, training and research. Universities’ responsibility also extends to agreements and commitments with other social, economic and cultural agents to jointly create transitions to sustainability.

We adopt a broad definition of sustainability that encompasses environmental, social and economic factors. In the educational field, social sustainability is closely related to universalisation of the right to education, the extension of training throughout life for everyone, gender equality, and direct support for minority and marginalised groups. In education, economic sustainability defines knowledge and education as common goods which must be preserved and promoted, with equal opportunities and policies for equity and redistribution.

Education and universities should be seen as real drivers for change and the sustainable transformation of our societies at local and global level. Globally, they can lead international collaborative programmes and projects that could address any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. At local/regional level, they can promote sustainability by educating through example or collaborating on sustainable development initiatives in the territory, society and the economy.

2. **The digital-human future: constructing more inclusive, accessible universities**

Digitalisation entails a great social, economic and cultural transformation that directly affects the foundations of higher education and university institutions. Digitalisation and widespread information (and disinformation) make possible it to reconsider the education function from top to bottom: the role of teachers, educational spaces and timetables, teaching methods and curricular organisation. Digitalisation has also led to the emergence of for-profit private suppliers in the educational field, who, in many cases, treat training as a highly profitable form of business with high demand in many countries. As we well know, the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly accelerated digitalisation at all stages of education, with little planning and very uneven results.

We consider digitalisation to be a powerful instrument for universal, inclusive and efficient education, constructing digital ecosystems for learning. In this area, we advocate blended university training models which at all times seek the potential of digital technologies at the service of learning and the richness and benefits of face-to-face on-campus training and added-value interactions.

Once again, we do not believe in just one model of university institution, but rather the introduction of a great diversity based on a range of educational models and the use of digitalisation, including high-quality universities that are completely online. Digitalisation breaks down the classroom walls and it is inevitable that all HEIs will eventually end up working with digital technologies to design and teach courses online.

Digital technology can also maintain and increase social inequalities and exclusions, as the experience of the pandemic has revealed, especially in the field of education. Advances in technology are associated with the many dimensions of the digital divide, including physical and economical access to technology, resources and connections on equal terms and of the same good quality, cognitive abilities to assimilate, understand and use the whole potential of technologies, social access in terms of freedom, lack and lack of bias in information, free circulation of knowledge and protection with regard to risks and security concerns.

Given the multiple dimensions of the digital divide, we are committed to the extensive digital training of citizens and the construction of good learning models that promote flexibility and adapt to different types of students and needs. At the same time, we call for investments and public policies focused on reducing divides. We must continue to work to reduce gaps through public funding of universities, regulations to guarantee quality education on physical campuses and in online courses, and a wide range of grants and financial aid for students. Special mention must be made of the vital investment in continuous training of academic staff on the use and implementation of digital technologies and adaptation to new trends that could be brought about by technological advances in teaching and research.

Digitalisation should also enable us to make education more personalised, by providing opportunities for...
different educational models and learning strategies to promote learning self-management. Similarly, now is the ideal time to take advantage of the potential of digitalisation to bring about educational revolution and knowledge transformation through digital tools.

3. The future of work: training in competencies and skills throughout life

The job market is in the midst of a transformation, with radical changes that are affecting the classical conceptions of the industrial era. As higher education institutions are responsible for training qualified professionals, they must lead and respond to these challenges appropriately.

Universities should put teaching and training at the heart of their mission. They must be allocated sufficient resources to nurture future professionals and citizens and meet the training needs and demands of the current workforce in the field of lifelong learning. This can only be guaranteed if students at the centre of universities’ raison d’être. Students should be supported in their development and empowered in this context of a complex, dynamic job market. To achieve this, there are five key, complementary aspects that must be specifically worked on. They are as follows:

• Training in competences and deep knowledge, but also in human and social capability, resilience, critical spirit, analytical capacity, creativity, innovation, social commitment, global citizenship, etc.

• Full acceptance of the paradigm of training throughout life. This means introducing a real university for all ages and all stages in higher and permanent education: skilling, reskilling, upskilling, micro-credentials and professional retraining.

• Interdisciplinary training with a focus on current and future economic, social, cultural and technological problems and challenges.

• The widespread introduction of practical and applied training with all its related opportunities, in close collaboration with other players and including dual training, work placements, service learning, etc.

• The availability of international training for all students through international mobility programmes, co-creation programmes, stays and exchanges, and the promotion of new models of internationalisation at home for all students.

This should be achieved while at all times promoting equity, equal opportunities and the participation of vulnerable groups and minorities in higher education. In addition, extensive student support programmes are required, including grants, salary grants and social aid. These challenges and key aspects must be worked on in collaboration with economic and social agents, governments, citizens and the business sector in order to obtain broad consensus and solid, lasting value propositions.

4. Citizens: promoting humanist values and profiles in a changing world

Universities have the mission to train free, critical citizens who are socially and globally committed. In recent decades, this function has been overlooked in favour of technical training for professional qualifications and entry into the job market. We advocate comprehensive training that goes beyond this division between training for citizenship and training for professional qualifications. Higher education institutions in today’s complex, dynamic world must regain the values of free, critical, committed citizenship. They should defend these values with determination and apply them in all their fields of activity: training, scientific research, knowledge transfer, innovation, social commitment and internal management.

This institutional commitment should strengthen democracy and the values of human rights, dignity, equality, coexistence, divergence and disagreement, as well as respect for minorities. In accordance with their universalist aim, universities must help to construct a universal ethic which is shared by all humankind. Their social responsibility includes the construction of peace and freedom, training in peaceful conflict resolution and boosting of community-based research, listening to social players not only for productivity improvement, but also to provide training in world citizenship and peace management. They must do this by moving away from centralism and neocolonialism, respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic traditions from all places and treating them as global cultural heritage that must be preserved.

Training in values and humanist profiles should be extended throughout institutions and included in courses on science and technology. In a highly technical world with challenges such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the use and management of big data, the environment, and commercial and economic globalisation, humanist values must permeate all syllabuses for the comprehensive training of students. New paradigms are needed, such as digital humanities and environmental humanism. Likewise, these values must accompany scientific research activity at all times, in order to bring about a better, more habitable world and establish ethical and human frameworks for scientific, social, cultural and technological development.

The fight for free, critical citizenship is also a fight against disinformation and in favour of knowledge democracy. In this situation, collective decision-making is based on evidence and scientific rigour. At the same time, a participatory democracy that works for the common good is promoted at all times.

5. Knowledge: putting research and innovation at the service of social challenges

Knowledge is becoming a critical factor for the progress, well-being and competitiveness of societies. In what is known as the knowledge society, science, technology and talent are key factors for building progressive societies. In fact, some of the disputes between countries at international level are aimed at achieving a competitive advantage in technological and scientific capacity in various fields and all kinds of applications.

Of course, universities play a key role in society and knowledge democracy. However, they have lost their monopoly on knowledge and therefore need to forge partnerships and collaborations with other agents: public institutions, companies and organised civil society. We must construct open universities which at all times facilitate these collaborations with other agents and focus on the advance of culture, science and knowledge, as well as its social and economic application.

We are committed to responsible research and innovation, research that is carried out with and for society. We are committed to social participation in scientific developments and scientific dissemination and communication as tools to bring these developments closer to all citizens. We advocate the promotion of scientific knowledge and innovation that applies not only to natural and technical sciences but also includes social sciences and humanities. In this context, we promote open science as a universal common good that must be jointly constructed and shared.

We want to develop entrepreneurial universities at the service of society that strengthen entrepreneurial capital through their leadership, knowledge and research and training activities. Universities should foster cross-disciplinarity and have a cross-cutting vision of social problems beyond the classical academic disciplines. They must promote complex thought and have a global, inclusive vision.

We aspire to a broad, multidimensional conceptualisation of university quality that considers questions such as equality, inclusion, autonomy, critical capacity and creativity, all of which are essential to the public, scientific and cultural value of higher education institutions. In this regard, we propose a shift from individualist research models to cooperative transformation-oriented approaches. In addition, new metrics should be developed for assessing the academic and scientific activity of teaching staff that value the social impact of scientific research, its dissemination and eventual application.

6. Internationalisation: reinforcing partnerships to attain common goals

In recent years, internationalisation has become one of the main focuses of university strategy to gain an international position and compete in the league of top universities. The knowledge and shared information society has led higher education institutions to become consolidated as nodes of multilevel networks that create and disseminate high-quality knowledge organised into alliances and other collaborative models. At
the same time, globalisation and advances in internatio-
nal transport have made student and academic mobility a key factor in the international standing of institutions and the circulation of knowledge.

However, with the Covid-19 crisis, internationalisation activities suddenly had their modus operandi curtailed to a certain extent, with almost non-existent academic mobility in the last two years. This has increased the importance of strengthening new models of interna-
tionalisation. These models were already in existence, in some cases for over thirty years. Examples include internationalisation at home and internationalisation of the curriculum. These models are spreading to new con-
texts and have gained more relevance in this decade.

New forms of internationalisation, along with the possi-
bilities offered by technology, have increased the capacity of universities in their mission to train critical citizens with global competencies and knowledge, and the ability to make decisions that have a local, natio-
nal and global impact. These new forms mean that the multicultur- nal dimension has been incorporated into the construction of the global knowledge, vision and mana-
gement of higher education institutions. In addition, they reinforce universities’ mission to be inclusive and fairer, and to guarantee access with equal opportunities.

Digitalisation has provided new approaches to interna-
tional collaboration and cooperation, through methods such as virtual exchange, collaborative online inter-
national learning (COIL) programmes, co-creation, co-teaching, blended mobility and virtual classrooms. Combined learning enables the diversification of internationalisation and encourages universities to coo-
perate internationally by sharing tools and experiences. In a framework of collaboration, university partnerships, international associations and programmes to promote university cooperation and coordination for the future of co-crea-
tion, cooperation and promotion of a space to share good practices and foster transnational work. In the international arena, this approach serves to promote the mutual recognition of qualifications and training, strengthen the participation of students, teaching staff and the entire university community, and promote knowledge transfer.

Internationalisation should not reinforce a global market of producers and consumers of knowledge and training, but boost international cooperation for advan-
cement through horizontal logic and reciprocity. In this sense, it is generally claimed that there is a need for greater interregional and South-South cooperation that goes straight to the needs, specificities and potential of each territory. Despite the difficulties of creating a global vision, this is needed if we are to then move into details at other levels. The global international and framework must be revisited in the different contexts of the global north and global south, taking a regional issues-based approach while also considering the inner diversities of the regions.

At the same time, we cannot talk about the future of internationalisation without taking into account present and future demographic growth, which will shift the focus and volume of students and institutions to new leading regions.

In short, future internationalisation must find a balance between the more competitive approach and the coo-
perative dimension that is associated with community responsibility. In this respect, the trends for internatio-
nalisation of higher education institutions must evolve and be transformed in parallel with the main social challenges.

Higher education institutions are singular organisations with centuries of history. They are dedicated to knowle-
dge creation and transmission and are key agents in the progress, well-being and competitiveness of societies and countries. Universities have often been at the heart of the future of co-creation, cooperation and promotion of a space to share good practices and foster transnational work. In the international arena, this approach serves to promote the mutual recognition of qualifications and training, strengthen the participation of students, teaching staff and the entire university community, and promote knowledge transfer.

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perative dimension that is associated with community responsibility. In this respect, the trends for internatio-
nalisation of higher education institutions must evolve and be transformed in parallel with the main social challenges.

7. Governance and professionals: building resilient, innovative and socially committed institutions

The vision defined here helps us to set horizons of trans-
formation for higher education institutions. As noted, the vision aims to inspire the construction of institutio-
nal strategies, objectives and action plans to achieve the envisioned horizons.

In this sense, GUNi will continue to generate reflection and knowledge, one of its core missions, by enriching the content of the new Higher Education in the World Report. This report is a living document, not only deve-
loped in printed and downloadable format, but also launched on a live webpage where new contributions will be added in the form of papers, videos, interviews and podcasts. The overall aim is to contribute over the period 2022-2025 by giving voice and bearing witness to new ideas, contributions and actions relating to higher education institutions and systems as they move in the direction of the 2030 Agenda, along the lines marked out by the GUNi vision.

Moving beyond words, the vision creates a space for ac-
tive transformation which, together with the report as a whole, will constitute the stepping stone for a wider and more ambitious project entitled “GUNi Interna-
tional Call for Action (2022-2025): Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies”. This project will be one of GUNi’s key strategic lines of action for 2022-2025 and will seek to encourage HEIs around the world to deploy the actions and changes that are needed to adapt and become more relevant, inclusi-
ve, effective, innovative and socially responsible. The overarching aim is for the International Call for Action and its special issue website to become a key open-
space for contributions to the transformation of HEIs around the world.

A vision for an ongoing process
The second part of the report, which is called “Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices”, seeks to analyse and describe how we could move towards this new vision by tackling core issues and topics in higher education. As its title suggests, the second part aims to respond to how we go from where we are now toward our vision for HEIs by delving into the key topics of the first part and giving voice to leading experts and actors in the field of higher education.

In particular, the second part includes a real-time approach to what is currently being done, focusing on what HEIs around the world are doing in response to the needs, challenges, crises and transformations analysed in the first part. For this purpose, seven key topics have been selected:

- HEIs’ governance and public service: between autonomy and community engagement
- Skills and competences: A humanist vision for a changing professional world
- Research and innovation: towards open, ethical and responsible research and innovation
- Sustainability: reinventing the role and place of HEIs for a sustainable future
- ICTs and digitalisation: a digital–human future towards more inclusive and accessible HEIs
- International higher education: from competition to collaboration
- Higher education management: promoting new leaderships and innovation

Each of the topics is covered by a number of articles in which contributors set out the challenges, actions and findings and provide inspiring examples of HEIs that are working on initiatives, new developments, changes and innovations to adapt to the new context.

Experts from all over the world have constructed the content of these chapters based on their own particular areas of expertise. As a result, their perspectives are unique and uniquely their own, based on their own particular blend of ontological, professional and geographic principles. That said, neither their selection of approaches nor their choice of terminology implies any particular preference or inclination of GUNi in one direction or another.

In this abridged print version of the report, the following pages introduce the experts’ contributions through their respective abstracts. The complete version of their contributions can be found at the report’s website: www.guni-call4action.org.

What makes the report unique is that it will be a living document. Throughout the period 2022-2025, new contributions will be added in the form of papers, videos, interviews and podcasts, giving voice and bearing witness to new ideas, contributions and actions relating to higher education institutions and systems as they move in the direction of Agenda 2030 along the lines marked out by the GUNi vision.

In this respect, it is important to note that the report aims to be a stepping stone in a wider, more ambitious project entitled “GUNi International Call for Action (2022-2025): Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies.” This project will be one of GUNi’s key strategic lines of action for 2022-2025 and will seek to encourage and help HEIs around the world to deploy the actions and changes that are needed to adapt and become more relevant, inclusive, effective, innovative and socially responsible. The overarching aim is for the International Call for Action and the special issue website to become a key open space for contributions to the transformation of HEIs around the world.
2.1 HEIs’ governance and public service. Between autonomy and community engagement

Introduction

It is hard to find a university that would not subscribe to contributing to public service. Most would agree that universities do not exist for themselves, and that it is precisely their raison d’être to cater for the needs of the world. As basic institutions of the social order in any given society, they are made to serve. Why should we then be re-thinking the nature of Higher Education Institutions and their relation to public service? Not because this function is optional, that much is for sure. The main reason such re-thinking is needed is changing circumstances. That is why universities ought to regularly monitor their performance as well as their profile. It is a standard task for any professional institution anyway, and universities are no exception.

Such monitoring should include checking university strategies and activities, as well as the dynamics of needs and issues on the societal side. Over time, both universities and societies are constantly subject to change. Plans and past results are no panacea or guarantee for the future. Taking stock and keeping up to date is and should be standard policy.

In recent years, many societies have shown more than the usual degree of change. At the same time, it is my observation that universities in general are less responsive and sticking to existing provisions and priorities to a higher degree than is desirable. This is possibly because they have been successful for such a relatively long period of time. It may very well be that they have been numbed by their successes in recent decades.

Main trends

At this point I cannot, from where I sit, and therefore shall not, take stock and monitor Higher Education in relation to the public interest in its entirety, under all circumstances, in every possible location. Rather, what I shall be doing is identifying a number of general trends as I observe them, weighing up their impact on the public role of universities and considering the agenda, or rather, the challenges that would emerge from all of this. These trends are as follows:

After a period that saw a considerable increase in international collaboration (as a positive response to supra-national challenges) we are now living in times of nationalist revivals (nations bracing for fiercer competition rather than embracing collective approaches). These political developments have a direct bearing on universities, as well as on individual faculty and students. In some locations the consequences are highly...
visible, immediate and serious, while elsewhere they are less conspicuous, slower and yet treacherously tricky.

Societies are increasingly showing signs of fragmentation rather than cohesion. A growing number of groups and movements, sharing common identity and interests, are very keen on public visibility and political recognition. On the rebound institutions with a public mission, designed to serve the public good as a whole, are being challenged and brought into discredit, as supposedly self-serving and elitist themselves.

At the same time, the need to jointly find interrelated approaches to key global challenges remains extremely urgent. However, it seems that the attitude of many nations is protectionist rather than internationalist, driven by selfish interests rather than steering towards collaborative approaches.

These trends and developments are of immediate importance to universities. Universities must respond, re-profile and reposition themselves under these circumstances. In the final section of this paper I shall be proposing what I see as some urgent agenda items for universities.

Exposition of the main trends: shifting balance between local and international commitments

Five years ago, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán gave a ceremonial speech, in celebration of the 650th anniversary of the first Hungarian university in Pécs, to underscore the national importance of the event. Evidently university foundations are to be remembered and honoured as significant chapters of nation building. However, on this occasion the Prime Minister made a remarkable statement when he called upon all students in Hungary to be courageous and prepared to row against the current, by opting for their own nation and family values rather than Europe and its values. It was thus assumed that there is and ought to be a tension, a discrepancy, between their local community commitments (to town, region and nation) and the wider international community of countries and colleagues.

This example clearly demonstrates how being responsive to our immediate environment can be deemed at odds with active international engagement. It is a national politician driving home the point about national norms and priorities, in contrast with the traditional majority view in Higher Education and Scientific Research that these tasks cannot be accomplished in isolation due to the sheer scale of the challenges we face, as well as the need for mobilisation on a global scale of all we can and all we know. These challenges (good healthcare, reliable food and nutrition, sustainable sources of energy and water, coping with climate change, fair opportunities for schooling and employment, etc.) have pivotal international dimensions which cannot be handled skilfully and successfully without international partnering and a coherent international agenda.

Universities for the most part are and always have been location driven institutions, part and parcel of nation building, regional development or urban expansion. Founders and supporters are clear evidence of these origins and orientations: they were and are kings and bishops, national governments and city councils. Their interests lay in the creation of qualified professionals, and since the 19th century, the production of up-to-date scientific knowledge.2

When reading older university histories, one is struck by the founders’ and supporters’ keen expectation of getting things the way they wanted, the way their institution would serve their interests best. New universities were often founded precisely because the existing ones were no longer relevant to the new rulers.

This explains why academic independence is a relatively recent phenomenon and - also in more recent times - never absolute. It depends upon a kind of social contract between founders and professors. In more formally guaranteed by charters or laws, the very fact of dependency makes academic autonomy and freedom liable to social change and political pressures.

However, the obvious national or regional nature of universities does not exclude a strong international dimension. Even in the early years of university history, one can observe the cross-border mobility of students and professors. In the course of time, native text-books, novel instruments and methods were borrowed from abroad or brought in by foreign teachers.

Of course, such international relationships were strongly steered by jurisdiction, persuasion and language of instruction. Reliable protection, the same religious affiliation and a familiar tongue were also decisive factors.

It is interesting to note how many of these factors continued to play a role after the Second World War, when a new tide of internationalisation began. La Françophonie, Iberoamérica, Jamā‘at ad-Duwal al-‘Arabiyya, the Commonwealth, the Roman Catholic Church – these are just some of the frameworks promoting international cooperation and mobility while building forth on traditional cultural and political associations. The last quarter of the 20th century saw a clear acceleration of internationalisation. A handful of new frameworks emerged (like the European Higher Education Area with its Bolonga Process, the European Union with a growing variety of programmes for students and researchers, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, etc.). At the same time, key players on the global scene introduced their own schemes and built their own networks of preference.

One should not forget that most of these developments were driven by the best interests of individual nations, as the founders and participants of these new frameworks. The underlying idea being that unity of purpose and programmatic cooperation would enhance each and everyone’s individual position. It is precisely on this point where we have recently seen substantial change happening. The Hungarian Prime Minister is by no means the only one who wants to redefine the existing balance between national and international engagement. Like many other government leaders in countries such as Turkey, India, Russia, China and Brazil, he sees the best interests of individual nations as no longer being served by internationalism.

Exposition of the main trends: monopolies here, fragmentation there

This trend of nationalist revivals is closely linked to changes in the political climate in individual societies. Remember that with only a few exceptions the rise of this new type and style of nationalist leadership has been driven by the best interests of individual nations, as the founders and supporters of these new frameworks. Even when formally guaranteed by charters or laws, the very fact of dependency makes academic autonomy and freedom liable to social change and political pressures.

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On the one hand, we see traditionally open, multiparty democracies like the Netherlands, France and Germany experiencing the ascent of nationalistic, anti-immigrant and anti-internationalist parties which, over time, although thus far unable to attain majority positions, have been quite successful in influencing political agenda-setting as well as public opinion. The general cultural climate is no doubt affected, without however impac- ting basic institutional structures of society.

On the other hand, there are some multiparty democracies (like India, Brazil and the USA) where political personalities and movements have come to power by adopting and propagating a plain-spoken exclusivity agenda that is entirely in line with the economic interests and cultural preferences of their supporters. Solidarity and inclusivity play no role, neither does the protection of minorities or dissenting voices. The demo- cratic principles of justice and equal treatment for all are endangered by a strong drive to monopolise the powers of the state and to try and fashion public institutions to satisfy their partisan supporters.

This list is of course incomplete. The People’s Republic of China is run by a single party that not only controls government at all levels, but all relevant institutions of the country as well, including regional and local elections. Multiparty democracy in countries such as Iran, Cuba, Venezuela and Myanmar, to mention just a few.

In parallel to these sorts of monopolising nationalist and protectionist tendencies, quite a few societies have experienced a clear increase in internal division: groups or strata in society with a shared identity and socio-cultural profile. They may be highlighting gender identities, religious affiliations and shared immigration backgrounds, or be characterised by regional, non-urban settings, socio-economic position or age group. Not all of these find expression in political representation. Yet low-threshold social media platforms are available to almost everyone. Media visibility is no longer the reserve of traditional establishments in politics, government, entertainment or business.
The simultaneity of these tendencies complicates societal landscapes considerably. One of these complications being that the whole concept of public service or contributing to the public good has no simple point of reference. When stating that an institution or service brings substantial benefits to society or the public good, the evident follow-up question will be: Which public? Which society? Does one understand public interest as defined by the ruling political powers of the time or as specified by one of many competing interest groups?

Consequences of these trends for Higher Education: monitoring social and political change and its consequences

It is time to turn to the consequences of these trends for Higher Education. At the start of this piece I stated that it is hard to find a university that would not subscribe to contributing to public service as a core mission. As basic institutions of the social order in any given society, they are made to serve. Which immediately leads to questions of what, what for and how? For public service to be effective and relevant, universities must be able to answer such questions, and stay or get in keeping with the times and circumstances.

With considerable social and political change occurring in many places, it therefore goes without saying that universities should engage in serious monitoring of such changes and their impact on universities. Burying one’s head in the sand and hoping the issues go away won’t do.

There are at least two compelling reasons for this. In the first place, as has already been said, universities cannot serve societies properly if they do not understand what is going on and where and how to contribute best. It is equally important to do serious monitoring because universities are themselves part and parcel of society. Monitoring includes, and should include, self-reflection. At the end of the day, universities that know what they are and what they stand and work for, based on the engagement and commitment of their entire community, stand a much better chance in actual fact and practice of being and remaining the independent and responsible academic communities they want to be.

Consequences of these trends for Higher Education: universities as lighthouses of openness and tolerance

Two years ago, the Council of Europe published a volume of articles on Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and the Future of Democracy (Bergan et al., 2020). It offers a clear and instructive reflection of the interdependence between university and society in terms of core values, in particular freedom and autonomy. Ironically, academic freedom and institutional autonomy at universities fare better in situations where they are least called upon. In open societies with high levels of acceptance of diverse public opinion and positions, for debate and sound argument, both in the domain of scholarship itself and in the societal context that universities are part of.

This lighthouse function is precisely one of the key instances of public service that universities ought to provide. However, it is by no means easy to get this right (because of the risks of outside pressure and government infringements). It has become clear that it is quite a challenge to actually experience and maintain the freedom, openness and tolerance that should be characteristic of university life. Success cannot be taken for granted, at home or abroad or in international collaborations.

Nevertheless, universities ought to be lighthouses and examples of openness and tolerance, leading the way for society. If universities fail to practice the ideals of freedom and diversity inside their walls, they not only limit the creative potential of their community of scholars and students, but also fail to function as a good model for the outside world. This is about the realisation of a truth: academic freedom (the right to publish different opinions and positions, for debate and sound argument) is a key component of the social contract between the state and the academic community.

It is time to turn to the consequences of these trends for Higher Education: the right choice of partnerships and programmes

A third guideline for universities in view of the vitality of their public function (alongside the monitoring task and the lighthouse function) relates to their choice of partnerships and the setting of priorities in teaching and research.

We have seen that in the international arena as well as within many nations there is a clear tendency to act in one’s own interests, often of rather narrow dimensions. This leads to a preference for rivalry and competition over collaborative modes. Similarly, easy gains and short-term advances often suppress long-term development and essential but slow improvement. Whether the domain is energy transition, social inequalities or public health provisions, very similar attitudes and policies can be observed.

It is a keen responsibility for universities (meaning all members of the academic community, not just the institution and its leadership) to select partnerships and set priorities that lead to truly sustainable alliances and work towards long-term sustainable impact and results. This responsibility cannot possibly be borne by universities alone. Funding agencies and mechanisms play a key role, both in the public and the private domain.

However, it cannot be fulfilled by individual universities alone, in the sense that universities need each other and should be working in and for sustainable partnerships, both within national boundaries and internationally.

3. For the 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum see http://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charter-universitatum. There one may also find the 2020 version of the declaration, which not only repeats and underlines the core principles of the 1988 original, but adds a number of key commitments and responsibilities of universities, most of them in terms of public service.
Conclusion

By way of conclusion: universities do not indeed exist for themselves; they are made to serve. Public service is not an afterthought or by-product, but a core element of a university’s mission. This may go without saying, but in challenging times, and under pressure, universities are learning the hard way that it is not as obvious and simple as that. It takes courage and a strong collective will for a university community to uphold its responsibilities to the public good.

A re-think of our usual ways and the engrained modus operandi certainly is called for. This should include a serious analysis of self as well as society. Monitoring profiles and programmes as well societal needs and issues will be a crucial foundation stone for long-term engagement. Institution-wide deliberations on core values, profiles and missions should shape this engagement of the entire community.

Along with this first piece of advice to universities, I would like to suggest that they pay serious attention to creating, maintaining and protecting the ideals of openness, tolerance, freedom and diversity within the institution. This is not only of great value to the academic community itself, but can also and should be a positive example, a kind of lighthouse to society at large, precisely because these ideals are often under pressure as a consequence of strong monopolising tendencies in society.

Thirdly, the public responsibility of universities implies that they must prioritise programmes in education and research, and select national and international partnerships that truly and sustainably contribute to the common good. A collective strategy to get this right is called for.

Of course, these three appeals and exhortations are all addressed to universities themselves. There is a long tradition of universities addressing the outside world, in particular opinion leaders and politicians, and urging them to allow and enable universities to do what they are good at, backed by a general promise that all of this will bring great benefits to society. However, such appeals will be far more persuasive if the universities themselves actually provide the best they can, in response to the present and future challenges that societies face, nationally as well as on a planetary scale. Contributing some reflections on this is the aim of this paper.

References


Community engagement in higher education: a vision for European policy and practice by 2030

Thomas Farnell and Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt

Abstract

Over the past four decades, increased attention has been paid globally to the engagement of higher education with society as the ‘third mission’ of higher education. However, in Europe, the focus of most third mission policies has been on the universities’ contribution to the knowledge economy. Recently, however, there has been an shift in European policy towards universities’ role in addressing a broader scope of societal needs. This paper will argue that the concept of community engagement in higher education should become a central concept in the debate about the societal role of higher education in Europe in the coming decade. Community engagement is a process whereby universities engage with community stakeholders to undertake mutually beneficial joint activities. Referring to the recent emergence of European-wide initiatives to support community engagement in higher education (both in policy and practice), the paper will argue that there are tangible opportunities for community engagement to become a much higher priority in European higher education, both through ‘top-down’ policy initiatives and ‘bottom-up’ stakeholder movements. Finally, the paper presents a potential policy tool that could support universities in institutionalising their cooperation with the broader community.

1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, increased attention has been paid globally (both in research and policy) to the ‘third mission of higher education’: how universities should interact with and contribute to society, in addition to their core mission of teaching and research. Although the contribution of higher education institutions to social development in their local and regional settings has always been an integral aspect of this third mission, the focus of most third mission policies and practice over the past 30 years has been overwhelmingly on the economic significance of universities (Bennisworth, 2018). From technology transfer, the commercialisation of research, university-business cooperation and to the labour market relevance of graduate skills. The role of universities in supporting other societal needs, such as strengthening democratic values and civic engagement, addressing the needs of vulnerable social groups, contributing to cultural development and addressing large-scale social challenges, has not been nearly as prominent in the past few decades. This reflects a global trend towards framing (higher) education policies as key actors in contributing to the knowledge economy (Slaufgher & Leslie, 1997; Rizvi & Lindgard, 2009).

Whereas many countries globally (especially in North America, Latin America and Australia) have managed to re-balance the debate about the societal role of universities by establishing national policies, structures and networks to support the public and civic mission of universities, this topic was largely absent from policy frameworks in the European Union (Farnell, 2020). Over the last decade, however, there has been a gradual shift in the policy framing of higher education’s third mission in Europe, with an increasing number of initiatives supporting universities’ roles in addressing a range of societal challenges. In this paper, we will present how such developments have occurred and will argue that the concept of community engagement in higher education should become a central concept to frame the debate about the societal role of higher education in Europe in the next decade and will propose the frameworks that could support this new direction.

2. A shift from economic to community engagement of universities in Europe?

Before 2015, European Union policies referring to the societal role of universities were predominantly framed in economic terms. The EU’s Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) placed universities as key actors in achieving the Strategy’s overall goal of ‘making the EU the world’s most competitive economy by 2010’ (European Commission, 2003). Even after the financial crisis of 2008, the EU’s next policy framework for higher education, The Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education (European Commission, 2011), also adopted a primarily economic angle to frame the debate about the societal role of universities: ‘quality and relevance’ in higher education focused on the needs of the labour market, while the main concept used to promote the connection between universities and society was the ‘Knowledge Triangle’, which focused on connecting education, research and business.

When the Renewed Agenda for Higher Education (European Commission, 2017) was adopted in 2017, it became the first EU policy document to make explicit reference to broader societal engagement by universities, and to consider innovation and entrepreneurship, on the one hand, and broader societal engagement, on the other. The Renewed Agenda notes that ‘higher education institutions are not ivory towers but civic-minded learning communities connected to their communities’ (p. 8). It goes on to describe the kind of engagement that could achieve this connection:

‘Some institutions are developing their profile as “civic universities” by integrating local, regional and societal issues into curricula, involving the local community in teaching and research projects, providing adult learning and communicating and building links with local communities. (...) HEIs should be engaged in the development of their cities and regions, whether through contributing to development strategies, cooperation with businesses, the public and voluntary sectors or supporting public dialogue about societal issues...’ (p. 7)

To support this newly emerging policy direction, two EU-funded projects entitled Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education (TEFCE) and Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement (SHEFCE) took on the task of attempting to define a common European approach to community engagement in higher education and identifying assessment tools and policy recommendations that could push this agenda forwards, by both assisting universities wishing to become more community-engaged and supporting policymakers in understanding how community engagement can be supported through policy.

3. The TEFCE and SHEFCE projects: creating a European framework for community engagement in higher education

TEFCE and SHEFCE are two consecutive projects through the European Commission Erasmus+ programme gathering a total of 28 partners from 10 EU Member States (led by the Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia) to develop innovative and feasible policy tools at the university and European level for supporting, monitoring and assessing the community engagement of universities.

The first task carried out in this process was to develop a clear definition of community engagement. The definition adopted in the TEFCE and SHEFCE projects is that community engagement is the process whereby universities address societal needs in partnership with their external communities, whereby:

• Community is defined broadly as ‘communities of place, identity or interest’, and thus includes among others, public authorities, businesses, schools, civil society and citizens.
• Engagement refers to the range of ways in which university staff, students and management interact with external communities in mutually beneficial ways, either as part of teaching and research or as part of other projects and joint initiatives.
• Societal needs addressed through community engagement are also defined broadly and refer to all political, economic, cultural, social, technological and environmental factors that influence the quality of life within society (Farnell et al. 2020a).
The initial TEFCE project (2018-2021) developed an institutional self-reflection framework for community engagement in higher education – the TEFCE Toolbox (Farnell et al. 2020a). The TEFCE Toolbox was developed based on an extensive analysis of existing assessment tools for community engagement in higher education (including the AUCEA Benchmarking University Community Engagement Pilot Project (Australia) and the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement), the TEFCE Toolbox adopted an innovative approach in the following aspects:

- Adopting a qualitative approach instead of developing quantitative indicators of community engagement.
- Allowing for multifaceted and context-specific applications, instead of providing a ‘one size fits all’ assessment that serves the purpose of comparing and ranking institutions’ performance.
- Encouraging a participative process rather than developing a bureaucratic self-assessment process.

In practice, the TEFCE Toolbox serves as a reference tool for universities, communities and policymakers to better understand the dimensions of community engagement in higher education and serves as a practical tool for universities to determine how well they perform according to each dimension, as well as where they can improve. The TEFCE Toolbox allows universities to firstly identify the range of community engagement activities they carry out at their universities according to seven dimensions of engagement, presented below in Figure 1. The TEFCE Toolbox then allows universities to analyse and reflect on the extent to which the community engagement initiatives are mutually beneficial, to what extent they address a diversity of communities and societal needs, and to what extent they are widespread and sustainable at the university. The results of this process are then synthesised as a colour-coded institutional community-engagement heatmap (Figure 2) and are then the subject of participative discussions at the university.

The TEFCE Toolbox was the result of a co-creation process involving over 170 participants from eight countries and generated much interest worldwide (Farnell et al. 2020b). Meetings and consultations regarding the TEFCE Toolbox were held with key organisations and stakeholders at the global higher education level, including the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, the International Association of Universities, the Talloires Network, the Council of Europe (Working Group on the Local Democratic Mission of Higher Education), the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (UK), Campus Engage (Ireland), the Canadian Pilot Cohort for the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement and UNESCO Bangkok.

In Europe, the support for the TEFCE Toolbox resulted in an initiative to develop a new project to support the community engagement agenda in Europe, in the form of the follow-up project SHEFCE – Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement (2020-2023). In addition to recruiting more universities to apply the TEFCE Toolbox, the SHEFCE project will develop four intellectual outputs:

- One university (with full management backing) included the TEFCE Toolbox among its new strategic priorities, developed an institutional level award for community-engaged teaching and set up an institutional database of community-engaged practices.
- Another university (with less prominent involvement and interest of university management) mobilised an internal network of intrinsically-motivated staff working on community engagement, developing a new module for community-based learning based on their experience in the project.

**Box 1: The TEFCE Toolbox in practice: experiences and impacts on universities in Europe**

The TEFCE Toolbox was initially piloted by four universities from Croatia, Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands in 2019 and is being applied by four universities in 2021 (from Austria, Belgium and Spain). Further interest in the TEFCE Toolbox has since been expressed by universities in Europe, North America, Latin America and East Asia.

The application of the TEFCE Toolbox at each university has usually involved a six-month activity involving a university working group of 5-10 university representatives to lead a data-collection and analysis process, generally resulting in mapping between 30 to 50 case studies of community engagement at each university, and in organising participative workshops with 10-15 participants to reflect on the findings. After a peer-reflection exercise involving exchanges with international experts and partners from other universities, each participating university prepares an institutional report. Discipline only accessible to academics. This was my second point of frustration. Based on the experiences of the first seven universities to have applied the TEFCE Toolbox, the framework’s value has been confirmed. An evaluation of the TEFCE Toolbox (Farnell et al., 2020b) showed that the method used by the TEFCE Toolbox supports the intrinsic motivation of community-engaged staff, students and external partners and that it facilitates a learning journey rather than tools that focus on compliance or competition. Users particularly valued that the Toolbox raises the visibility of the value of community engagement.

Regarding the impact of the TEFCE Toolbox, experiences have differed between participating universities. Some universities applied the Toolbox in a bottom-up approach (without the active involvement or support of university management), whereas other universities were able to ensure the full endorsement and operational support of the central university management. Both cases, however, have shown the potential for impact:

- University action plans for community engagement: Providing a structure, evidence-basis and peer support for European universities to improve their community engagement policies and practices.
- National policy recommendations for selected European countries to improve support for community engagement: Analysing the policy drivers and obstacles to community engagement.
- European Platform for Community Engagement in Higher Education: Developing a central European web...
platform to provide users with information, good practices and guidance on how to carry out community engagement in higher education.

4. European University Community Engagement Heatmap: Creating a prototype tool to allow universities to learn from other European universities about their community engagement practices and structures.

The SHEFCE project is of particular significance since it includes 5 key international stakeholders in its advisory team: the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Students’ Union (ESU), the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). As we will further discuss in the next section, the TEFCE project has already begun to make a policy impact, and both the TEFCE and SHEFCE initiatives could play a key role in supporting the community engagement agenda in Europe in the next decade.

4. TEFCE’S impact on European higher education policy framework

In a significant development, the TEFCE project influenced the inclusion of the priority of community engagement in higher education in the EHEA strategic documents. In the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communique, 49 ministers of higher education committed to building an inclusive, innovative and interconnected European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2030. Under the goal of creating an innovative EHEA, ministers committed to support higher education institutions “to engage with our societies to address the multiple threats to global peace, democratic values, freedom of information, health and wellbeing”. In the Communique, the ministers stated that higher education institutions “must engage with their communities to address the needs of universities’ proximate and other local actors, including local public authorities, schools, health ins-

5. New policy developments and opportunities in Europe

New initiatives of the European Commission also suggest that community engagement could emerge as a policy priority in the next decade. In the Communication from the European Commission on Achieving the European Education Area (EEA) by 2025, one of the six dimensions necessary to further develop the EEA refers to strengthening European higher education institutions that are perceived as “playing a pivotal role in driving the Covid-19 recovery and sustainable development in Europe”. To reach this goal, Higher education institutions will especially focus on the connectivity between higher education institutions and their surrounding society, which should be reflected in all four universities’ missions: education, research, innovation and service to society (European Commission, 2020a).

The connectivity to society will be further amplified through the “full rollout of the European Universities Initiative”, which the European Commission launched successfully during 2019-2020. In the period 2021-2027, the Commission will further optimise the vision of European Universities “to address big societal challenges, become true engines of development for cities and regions and promote civic engagement”, under the Erasmus programme, in synergy with Horizon Europe and other EU instruments (European Commission, 2020a, 2020b). University community engagement will be particularly fostered by the European Universities alliances whose mission is to promote connectivity and co-creation opportunities with their external communities and citizens – as the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance already demonstrates. Finally, the European Commission published a special study by the NESET network on trends, practices and policies related to community engagement in higher education (Farrell, 2020), suggesting that this topic will feature in their new strategic documents.

A strong push towards affirming universities’ societal engagement in all their missions and activities also comes from the European University Association (EUA), the umbrella organisation of the European universities. The EUA envisions for 2030 that “reaching out to society at large and opening up for co-creation will be a continuous ambition for universities in this decade”. One of the three key areas in which European universities “see major potential for increasing societal engagement and contributing to sustainable development” is strengthening their civic engagement. This vision until 2030 could be fulfilled through a “dialogue with society, actively involving citizens and non-academic partners such as business, non-governmental organisations, public authorities and others” (EUA, 2021).

Finally, another important actor, the Council of Europe (COE), has actively contributed to further societal engagement of universities by establishing an “ad-hoc working group on the local democratic mission of higher education” in 2020. In 2021, the COE’s Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice approved the proposal for “The local democratic mission of higher education: a proposal for a Council of Europe platform” that will allow the COE to establish a platform for longer-term cooperation to further the local democratic mission of higher education among all 50 state parties to the European Cultural Convention until 2025.

The COE’s platform is expected to support the role of higher education in furthering democracy, human rights and the rule of law through working not just with the local community, “Local” is understood as referring to the needs of universities’ proximate geographic community. The platform is expected to focus on advocacy, policy development, and exchange of good practice to strengthen cooperation between higher education institutions and other local actors, including local public authorities, schools, health institutions, civil society, community centres and cultural organisations in areas pertinent to the local democratic mission of higher education (COE, 2021).

6. From vision to practice: recommended policy approaches

From the above policy initiatives, it is evident that the period to 2030 has the potential to become the decade of community engagement in higher education in Europe. Making this vision a reality will depend on building a European movement for community engagement that combines a top-down and bottom-up approach to policy advocacy and policy-making (Farrell et al., 2020c). From a top-down perspective, many tools are available to policymakers for steering education institutions – including funding agreements, quality assurance, benchmarking and self-assessment. While many policy tools focus on compliance to standards or fostering competition, Farrell et al. (2020c) argue that the policy tools best suited to support community engagement in higher education should focus on building capacities of higher education institutions for engagement and facilitating a learning journey, rather than on compliance or competition. Namely, community engagement in higher education is context-specific and multi-dimensional and previous attempts to narrow community engagement to quantitative indicators have not been successful. An optimal European policy framework for community engagement should therefore focus on transnational learning, capacity-building tools and funding incentives.

In parallel, bottom-up approaches are crucial in advocating and supporting community engagement. The bottom-up approach refers to measures adopted at the level of higher education institutions as well as other organisations and networks in higher education, particularly those that have already committed to community engagement in higher education. The best approach in the European context would be to build a network of community-engaged universities and create alliances with similar institutional networks at the global level (e.g., the Global University Initiative for Innovation, the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities, and UNESCO Chair for Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education).
When capacity-building policy tools and incentive tools are used, the top-down and bottom-up approaches are likely to intertwine, providing momentum to strengthen community engagement in the higher education sector in Europe.

Conclusions

After decades of being a marginal topic in European higher education, the question of how universities can better respond to societal needs, how to be more open to society and how to better engage with their external communities is reaching the policy agenda. By proposing a new framework to support universities’ community engagement, in the form of an institutional self-reflection framework for community engagement (the TEFCE Toolbox), the TEFCE project (and its follow-up SHEFCE project) could play a key role in structuring future discussions in Europe about how universities can better engage with their communities to address societal needs, and could also provide a basis for transnational learning and capacity-building, as well as the basis for establishing a European network of community-engaged universities. More broadly, the TEFCE Toolbox contributes to the global discussion of how to assess, support and strengthen community engagement in higher education and could support the growing international movement of universities, networks and organisations committed to the civic and public missions of higher education.

References


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Abstract

According to the latest data in the global Academic Freedom Index, while 94% of the global population live in countries that have legally pledged to respect academic freedom (de jure protection), only about 20% live in countries where academic freedom is well respected in practice (de facto protection). The gap exists despite many state and institutional pronouncements on the importance of academic freedom. The last two years alone have seen reports, statements, decisions, declarations, resolutions, and communiqués on academic freedom at the EU, the Council of Europe, the Inter-American Commission and the United Nations. All of these are important and welcome. But they point to the need for authoritative, international guidelines on implementing academic freedom: guidelines that cover the core elements of academic freedom, including legal protection; institutional autonomy; equitable access; professional and personal expression; sanctions, restrictions or loss of privileges; student expression; and shared responsibilities to protect academic freedom. Such implementation guidelines would provide a roadmap for increasing respect and protection, and a checklist for assessing adherence to existing state-level obligations. International guidelines on implementing academic freedom could be developed by an international expert working group, but greater impact would result from responsible state actors endorsing the guidelines concept and leading efforts to secure recognition and promulgation at the state level through regional or global institutions.

According to the latest data contained in the global Academic Freedom Index (Kinzelsbach, K. et al., 2022), while 94% of the global population live in countries that have legally pledged to respect academic freedom (de jure protection), only about 20% live in countries where academic freedom is well respected in practice (de facto protection) (Chart 1). Why the gap, and what can we do about it?

The core of the right to academic freedom is clear, but not well understood

Academic freedom - the freedom of teaching faculty and researchers to set instructional and research agendas based on evidence, truth and reason, and to communicate findings to colleagues, students and the public - is a guarantor of quality and a driver of innovation that empowers the academic community to serve the public good. As such, academic freedom matters not just to academics, but to everyone.


is clear: members of the academic community are free “to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing.” It also includes “the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other person, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognised human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction” (Kaye, 2020) (citing the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [CESCR], 1999).

Recognising its importance, states, higher education systems, institutions, associations, faculty and student unions have long committed to respecting and promoting academic freedom, through such instruments as the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997), the UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Science and Scientific Researchers (UNESCO RSSR 1974, 2017), the Declaration on Rights and Duties Inherent in Academic Freedom (International Association of University Professors and Lecturers [IAUPL], 1982), the Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education, (World University Service [WUS], 1988), the Magna Charta Universitatum (Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of European Universities [CRE), 1988, 2020), the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics (Ardbi Institute Staff Assembly [ARIASA] et al., 1990), the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa [CODESRIA], 1990), the Amman Declaration on Academic Freedom and the Independence of Institutions of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Conference of Academic Freedom in Arab Universities, 2004), and the Juba Declaration on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy (CODESRIA, 2007).

Two threats to academic freedom: obstruction and neglect

All of these are important and welcome. But despite numerous pronouncements, academic freedom remains under attack in many places. Scholars at Risk’s most recent annual monitoring report, Free to Think 2021 (Image 1), analysed 332 attacks on higher education in 65 countries, while noting that these are only a small sample of the total number of attacks (Scholars at Risk, 2021).

This is in part intentional. Some players – states and non-state alike –, despite public pronouncements in support of academic freedom, fear the consequences of allowing free inquiry and open debate. Their power depends on controlling information and ideas, and they do not hesitate to use it. Scholars and other members of higher education communities are routinely subjected to harassment, intimidation, surveillance, imprisonment, even violence and death, merely for serving the public in their professional capacities. In short, for asking questions and sharing their views. Scholars at Risk, our
network member institutions and partners around the world are committed to assisting those most at risk. Yet in many places, academic freedom is not so much obstructed as it is neglected. Lofty statements in support of academic freedom often fail to go beyond mere words. Many universities have mission or value statements that mention academic freedom. Many might also have policies or procedures for addressing academic freedom issues in the context of tenure, employment contracts or student enrolment. But few if any have approaches to building a culture of respect for academic freedom. Few teach the meaning and responsible practice of academic freedom to their students and academic staff, let alone to university leadership or the public at large.

Similarly, many multi-state bodies have issued pronouncements on the importance of academic freedom. In 2020–2021 alone we saw new reports, statements, decisions, declarations, resolutions and communications on academic freedom from the EU, the Council of Europe, the Inter-American Commission and the UN. In July 2020, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, issued a report summarising the existing legal protections for academic freedom in international human rights law (Kaye, 2020). In October 2020, the Research Ministers of the European Union adopted the Bonn Declaration, committing to strengthening academic freedom and institutional autonomy and encouraging research organisations “to promote and anchor the principles of academic freedom in their international relationships” (Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area [ERA], 2020). In November 2020, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation on threats to academic freedom and autonomy of higher education institutions in Europe, creating strong support for monitoring and assistance instruments with concrete next steps (Parliamentary Assembly on the Council of Europe [PACE], 2020). In December 2020, the European Commission’s European Democracy Action Plan explicitly committed to ensuring “academic freedom in higher education institutions is also at the core of all higher education policies developed at EU level” (European Commission, 2020). And in September 2021, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights adopted a new statement of Inter-American Principles on Academic Freedom (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [IACHR], 2021).

All of these initiatives are welcome, and some even began to hint at forward-looking action, principally based around monitoring respect for academic freedom, such as the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (European Higher Education Area [EHEA], 2020) and its reporting findings, and the quadrennial reporting mechanism under the updated UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Science and Scientific Researchers (UNESCO RISSR 1974, 2017), with its first reports due in 2021. These are important steps forward that go beyond the question of definitions towards actions which might ensure that academic freedom is fully operationalised in global, regional and national practices. We must ensure that academic freedom can be meaningfully practised everywhere, but especially in the countries that have already legally pledged to respect academic freedom. We must meet the need and hunger for training, guidance and highly practical suggestions on this issue right now.

At institutional level, faculty and administrators can implement training programmes, workshops and course offerings on academic freedom for students and academic staff. Examples include Dangerous Questions, a free online course (MOOC) on academic freedom (University of Oslo [UiO] & Scholars at Risk [SAR], 2018) (Image 2), and workshops using case studies from SAR’s Promoting Higher Education Values guide (Image 3).

At international level, implementation guidelines are the obvious next step. There are many good models for such international guidelines, including EU guidelines on how states can implement their freedom of expression commitments (Council of the European Union, 2014) and UN operational guidelines in the field of business and human rights (United Nations Human Rights Council [HRC], 2011), which have been taken up in national action plans around the world. States and institutions need the same practical guidance on how to operationalise respect for academic freedom. Toward that end, the following basic principles are offered as the core content of such guidelines. Adopted by higher education institutions, associations and states, such guidelines would not only offer a roadmap for those looking to increase protection for academic freedom, but also a checklist for assessing adherence to existing promises to respect and promote it.

Academic freedom is protected under international and regional human rights legal standards. The roots for such protection are clearly grounded in existing protections for freedom of thought, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to education and the right to the benefits of scientific progress (also known as the right to science), among other established rights. Inter- and national human rights commissions and courts, and national human rights institutions, should guarantee recognition of academic freedom and its importance in their recommendations, reports, policies and decisions. Academic freedom must also be protected under domestic law in national constitutions, basic laws and controlling legislation. Domestic protections must, at a minimum, conform to international standards and recognise a broad right of academic inquiry and expression. Limitations or restrictions, if any, are only appropriate to protect public safety or the rights of others, and must satisfy established conditions of necessity and proportionality. Moreover, domestic legal protections must go beyond words on paper (de jure protection) and include implementing regulations and procedures to ensure the effective exercise of the right and adequate remedies for violations (de facto protection).

Proper implementation of academic freedom requires that laws, policies or practices which sanction academics engaged in critical discourse or inquiry alone, without additional violent, coercive or fraudulent conduct, should be presumed suspect, and must be subject to rigorous evaluation of their intent and application. Examples of laws often inappropriately used to hinder academic freedom include civil and criminal defamation, lèse-majesté, insulting the state (or the nation or its leadership, culture or heritage), sedition and anti-terror laws which sanction academic inquiry and expression, including public expression. Such laws violate the principle that ideas are not crimes, and that critical inquiry is not disloyalty, but a scholar’s duty. Similarly, laws which restrict scholars’ and students’ freedom of movement within a country or territory, on entry or exit, on return after exit, or on expulsion from a country or territory, and...
which punish, deter or impede academic speech, content or conduct, or otherwise sanction a member of the higher education community for their exercise of protected rights, should be presumed suspect and likewise similarly evaluated with regard to their intent and application.

Proper legal implementation of academic freedom requires the availability of adequate legal and procedural remedies. Sanctioned higher education personnel should have an opportunity to challenge laws, policies or practices that punish, deter or impede academic freedom, and for any punishment or sanctions to be lifted. Following a prima facie show by the sanctioned party of the impermissible intent or impact, the burden of defending the law, policy or practice should shift to the state or other sanctioning party, which must either demonstrate that it does not punish, deter or impede academic freedom, or justify any such restrictions as consistent with domestic and international standards of necessity and proportionality.

**Principle 2: Institutional autonomy is essential for academic freedom**

Legal protections for academic freedom at internationa and domestic levels must also include affirmative, de jure and de facto protection for the autonomy of higher education research and teaching institutions. As recognised by the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, “States are under a positive obligation to create a general enabling environment for seeking, receiving and imparting information and ideas. Institutional protection and autonomy are a part of that enabling environment” (Kaye, 2020) (citing the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression [UNSRPOE] et. al., 2018). Autonomy is recognised by UNESCO as “the institutional form of academic freedom and a necessary precondition to guarantee the proper fulfillment of the functions entrusted to higher education teaching personnel and institutions” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.A.18). Autonomy is defined as “that degree of self-government necessary for effective decision-making by institutions of higher education regarding their academic work, standards, management and related activities” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.A.17).

Proper implementation requires that laws, policies and practices concerning the appointment, tenure and removal of higher education leaders, oversight boards and governing councils respect the principle of self-governance, which is an “essential component of meaningful autonomy” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.A.21).

Systems of public accountability for funds or other privileges extended to higher institutions – whether public or private, not-for-profit or for-profit – can be fully consistent with institutional autonomy and self-governance provided that these systems are not overly intrusive and do not interfere with institutio nal decision-making. Systems of accountability which allow players outside the higher education sector to control, sanction or privilege the content of teaching, research or discourse clearly fail to meet minimum acceptable standards of autonomy. Rather than intrude into content, acceptable systems of accountability should focus on evaluating reports and communications provided by higher education leaders, with an emphasis on assessing institutional adherence to principles of quality, transparency, management of public funds, equitable access, anti-discrimination, inclusivity and social responsibility, the latter including “effective support of academic freedom and fundamental rights” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.8.2(c) & (a)-(q)).

Laws, policies or practices which sanction higher education institutions or leadership based on the content of academic discourse or inquiry alone, without additional violent, coercive or fraudulent conduct, should be presumed suspect, and must subject to rigorous evaluation of their intent and application. Similarly, state authorities, including executive and legislative officials, and members of oversight boards and governing councils, should never sanction or threaten to sanction higher education institutions or leadership, including by removing leadership from office or withdrawing or threatening to withhold or reduce budgetary allocations or other resources or privileges based on the content of academic discourse or inquiry alone. Systems of public accountability with due regard for institutional autonomy should provide for the recall or removal of any authority with actual or apparent responsibility for higher education budgetary allocations, resources or privileges who sanctions or threatens to sanction them based on the content of research, teaching or discourse alone.

**Principle 3: Academic freedom is incomplete without equitable access to higher education**

As noted above, full implementation of academic freedom requires that entry to and successful participation in higher education and the higher education profession, whether as a leadership, staff, researchers or students, should be “based solely on appropriate academic [or professional] qualifications, competence and experience, and be equal for all members of society without any discrimination” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.A.25) (See also the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education [CADE], 1960, and the protocol thereto (recognising the affirmative duty to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all in education at all levels), the UNESCO Recommendation against Discrimination in Education [RADE], 1960; the UNGA Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [CERD], 1965; the UNGA Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW], 1979; UNESCO RISSR, 1974, 2017).

Equitable access is both essential to full enjoyment of academic freedom and a contributor to quality teaching, research and discourse. It encourages the widest range of intellectual talent to enter higher education and provides a safeguard against the corroding effects of bias and limited perspectives. Laws, policies or practices which expressly or by practice inhibit full participation in the higher education sector on grounds of race, gender, language or religion, or economic, cultural or social distinctions or physical disabilities, fail to meet minimum acceptable standards of access, without which full implementation of academic freedom is impossible.

Equitable access also requires active facilitation of entry to, and successful participation in, higher education for members of traditionally underrepresented groups, including women; indigenous peoples; ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious minorities; economically or otherwise disadvantaged groups; and those with disabilities, whose participation may offer unique experience and talent that can be of great value to the higher education sector and society generally. Measures which aim to accelerate de facto equity for such groups should not be considered discriminatory, “provided that these measures are discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved and systems are in place to ensure the continuance of equality of opportunity and treatment” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.A.41 (with regard to teaching personnel)).

**Principle 4: Academic freedom requires protection for professional and personal expression**

Full implementation of academic freedom implicates a number of other protected rights, especially freedoms of thought (UNGA International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], 1966, Art. 18), opinion and expression (UNGA ICCPR, 1966, Art. 19), “which shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media.” Academic freedom protections must include not only professional expression within the higher education community (intramural expression), such as in classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, and academic publications, but also professional expression aimed at individuals outside the higher education community (extramural expression), including media, policymakers and the public.

Academic freedom protections must also recognize and defend the essential link between professional expression (academic freedom) and personal expression (free expression). Higher education professionals, “like all other groups and individuals, should enjoy those internationally recognised civil, political, social and cultural rights applicable to all citizens” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.A.26). These include “freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly and association as well as the right to liberty and security of the person and liberty of movement” (UNESCO RSHETP, 1997, V.A.26). Higher education professionals should never suffer threats, sanctions or retaliation for exercising these rights. Censorship, loss of position or privileges, travel restrictions (including entry, exit, intra-territorial travel, employment) and expulsion from study, among others, infringe on the academic freedom of the subject individual when imposed for the purpose...
of deterring or sanctioning the exercise of free expression or other civil, political, social or cultural rights. Moreover, when such threats or sanctions are imposed publicly, such as the firing of a professor or expulsion of a student leader, they can infringe upon the academic freedom of entire communities. They can trigger self-censorship, where higher education professionals refrain from examining specific research questions, teaching specific topics or sharing specific theories, evidence or ideas because of threats or fear of professional, legal or physical retaliation. Self-censorship is not about fear of being wrong. Rather, academic freedom is an essential driver of quality pre- cisely because it protects scholars’ and students’ right to be wrong, to explore theories and evidence which may not pan out. Self-censorship is “about fear of losing one’s job or position, about harassment and threats of violence — whether in-person or remote (such as by phone or online) — including racist, sexist, and homo- phobic threats; ‘doxing,’ or the malicious publication of personal details online; and conscious efforts to destroy reputations and livelihoods. Fear of actual violence, including beatings, rape and killings. Fear of actions by the state, including wrongful arrest, prosecution and imprisonment. Fear of non-state players, including intimidation of children and parents and judicial hostage taking — the prosecution or imprisonment of a loved one to punish the expression of another” (Quinn, 2021).

Threats or sanctions on professional and personal expression can also trigger brain drain — when higher education professionals and students are forced to seek opportunities in territories with greater respect for academic and other freedoms, depriving their com- munity of the origin of their skills and talents — and brain drain — “the lost personal, professional and creative productivity [for the people who remain in place] that would have been, but for the rational fear of retaliation, fear that does not exist in places where academic freedom is well protected” (Quinn, 2021).

International guidelines for the full implementation of academic freedom should encourage laws, policies and practices which recognize the academic freedom and free expression rights of higher education students. They should emphasize that although state and university authorities have a responsibility to maintain public order and safety, they must do so in ways that respect these rights and guard against harm to students or others. This includes a matter of policy avoiding the use of force whenever possible, and ensuring that any force used is limited and proportionate to the situation. Disproportionate use of force, especially in the context of student expression, undermines academic freedom. Such guidelines should likewise recognize that stu- dents have a responsibility to exercise their rights peacefully and responsibly.

Who bears responsibility for implementing academic freedom?

International guidelines embracing the above five prin- ciples would go a long way towards full implementation of academic freedom. Ultimately, the responsibility for deploying such guidelines must fall to states, whose sovereign authority gives them the capacity to orga- nize national legal and higher education systems that respect academic freedom. Minimum state responsi- bilities in this area include: (1) refraining from direct or complicit involvement in attacks on academic freedom and higher education; (2) protecting higher educa- tion communities against present and future attacks; (3) assisting the victims of attacks; and (4) working to deter future attacks, including by investigating and holding perpetrators accountable (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack [GCPEA], 2014). States should preferably encourage the development of such implementation guidelines and work towards the disse- mination and adoption thereof through their bilateral and multilateral relations.

However, states are unlikely to initiate the development of well-crafted guidelines on implementing academic freedom. Badly-behaving states have little incentive to establish policies and practices to protect a right they regularly violate, whereas generally well-behaving states might refrain from delving deeply into the imple- mentation of academic freedom out of appropriate deference to the autonomy of higher education.

Responsibility for initiating and developing internatio- nal guidelines for the full implementation of academic freedom will therefore likely fall to the higher education sector itself; to the institutions, associations, profes- sionals and students who may possess greater insight into the many challenges of implementing academic freedom, and may already be more immediately self-interest in the implementation of academic freedom.

This is not to suggest that states do not have an interest in the full implementation of academic freedom. On the contrary, academic freedom is essential to teaching and research quality, and therefore essential to state interests with regard to national competitiveness in knowledge-production, innovation, and scientific, tech- nological, economic and cultural advancement. But these interests are less immediate than the interests of those exercising academic freedom in the first instance. Indeed, grounding the process of articulating academic freedom guidelines within the academic sector — with institutions, associations, professionals and students — is an important safeguard against improper limitations on the scope of academic freedom imposed by players outside the sector. The role of the sector in articula- ting the scope of academic freedom is not unlimited, however, but rather bound by core values of institutio- nal autonomy, professional and social responsibility, accountability for public funds, and equitable access/ anti-discrimination. States and other players outside the higher education sector acting in good faith may properly question any proposed international guide- lines on the implementation of academic freedom to ensure adherence to these values.

Finally, the general public has a responsibility for imple- menting academic freedom. At a minimum, the public has a responsibility to resist state or other attempts to recruit the public into attacks or pressures on academic freedom and higher education communities. The public would preferably develop a sense of responsibility to protect the institutions, leaders, professionals and students in their own communities whose personal pursuit of knowledge and skills in higher education promises to serve the broader public good. And in exchange for such protection, the members of the higher education sector must live up to this promise and ensure that they use the academic freedom and autonomy afforded by public and state not only for their own advancement, but for society as a whole.

Final remarks

As has been noted, academic freedom is not only a driver of innovation that “enhances the capacity of scholars and students to generate ideas” (Kaye, 2020). It also “safeguards societies’ capacity for self-reflection, which is intimately linked to both social and economic advancement and to self-preservation” (Kaye, 2020). The time has come to do more than simply recognize the importance of academic freedom through words. The time has come for action. The time has come for international guidelines on the full implementation of academic freedom.
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2.2 Skills and competencies. A humanist vision for a changing professional world
The shifting demand for human and specific skills: A humanist vision for a changing world

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the implications of technological change and demographic trends for higher education supply and demand. It argues that: technology is fast changing the nature of occupations and the division of labour between humans and machines, which is changing the demand for skills; technology is changing the nature of work, with further implications for the demand for education; demographic trends, combined with fast technological change, are creating a new market of HEIs for adults with different characteristics from those for young people; technology brings new affordances in the form of new pedagogies and new tools for education.

This chapter also examines how higher education institutions (HEIs) are responding to these technological and demographic trends. Online learning is becoming more ubiquitous. We also review how HEIs are beginning to use technology to document students' learning outcomes, facilitate peer-to-peer assessments, automate the recognition of prior learning, and training teachers. And when the pandemic is behind us, it is hard to believe that things will go back to how they were. The technology deployed will be here to stay and the increased exposure to online learning may have permanently shifted preferences for this form of learning as far as a certain part of the population is concerned, further transforming HEIs.

This paper discusses the implications of these two disruptive trends, technology and demography, on higher education supply and demand. Understanding these changes is important for HEIs to remain relevant and continue to help people to acquire the right skills in a rapidly shifting education and labour market.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have remained pretty much unchanged since their early days. Several factors have helped: first, the demand for higher education has increased steadily in the last few centuries, as the number of young people and the proportion of them with a higher education increased over time. Second, the student body and its needs remained relatively constant over time. They were young people who mostly pursued an immersive, full-time experience prior to the start of their careers.

But this is changing. In developed countries, population aging has reduced the number of young people. Technology is advancing at a fast pace, and with it, the tasks and jobs that people are expected to perform in the labour market. The demand for some skills is thus shifting quickly, often faster than the capacity of HEIs to create new programmes. Studying only at the beginning of one's career entails a growing risk of obsolescence. Rapid skill turnover, combined with the potential of longer working lives, has increased the need for continued upskilling and reskilling of the population. This in turn changes the nature and needs of learners; the proportion of experienced and working people is increasing; and instead of an immersive, full-time experience, adults often seek shorter, highly labour market-relevant, alternative certifications. All of which is beginning to transform higher education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought further changes. In 2020, the social distancing measures imposed to control its spread created, almost overnight, a disruption to HEIs. Courses had to be moved online, often without the equipment or teacher training to do so adequately, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic. Universities had to invest considerable resources in deploying technological tools and accessibility and training teachers. And when the pandemic is behind us, it is hard to believe that things will go back to how they were. The technology deployed will be here to stay and the increased exposure to online learning may have permanently shifted preferences for this form of learning as far as a certain part of the population is concerned, further transforming HEIs.

This paper discusses the implications of these two disruptive trends, technology and demography, on higher education supply and demand. Understanding these changes is important for several reasons: first, as mentioned, HEIs are poised to undergo substantive changes in the context of an intense digital transformation, the spread of artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced robotics, and a reduction in the youth cohort. HEIs that do not adapt to these changes may lose their relevance in the future. Second, there are clear indications that education is a source of resilience against technological change. That is, better educated people are more prepared to withstand the changes and more likely to benefit from technology, while less educated people are more likely to see their situation made worse. Ensuring that HEIs can help people to acquire the right skills is now even more important than before, but the ways in which this can be achieved may well be different from in the past.

Based on a compilation of existing evidence, this article argues that technology is fast changing the nature of occupations and jobs. Technology is rapidly creating new occupations, particularly those related to the production and maintenance of technology. But traditional occupations are also changing, as companies deploy new technological tools.

Moreover, because the division of labour between machines and humans is changing, we argue that the demand for skills is changing as well. One direct consequence is the present demand for advanced digital skills. But other skills are also seeing increasing demand. Soft skills fall into this category, as there is mounting evidence that these skills are becoming more valuable in the labour market. Perhaps paradoxically, the more we bring technology into our lives, the higher the demand for “human” skills, such as empathy, communication, problem solving or adaptation to change, in which humans have, at least for now, an advantage over machines. Machines are best suited to performing repetitive tasks and, as they become cheaper and more ubiquitous, are substituting workers in routine-based tasks. Since most of these jobs are performed by workers with medium-level skills, the demand for workers with these skills is declining as well.

We also discuss how technology is changing the way we work and how this in turn further changes the demand for skills. The expansion of remote work and the spread of technological platforms that can, almost frictionlessly, match workers to tasks is changing work as we know it. While the majority of people still engage in one full-time job, with fixed hours and in an office, an increasing number of workers are working remotely for several different employers on demand. The technology and demography are creating important shifts in the demand for skills and education.

2. Two drivers of change

Technology and demography are creating important shifts in the demand for skills and education.

2.1 Technological advancement

Since the industrial revolution, the emergence of new technologies has sparked fears that machines will displace humans at work. In recent years, the expansion of advanced robotics and artificial intelligence has rekindled this debate. An enormously influential study written by two Oxford University professors (Frey & Osborne, 2016) predicted that in the United States, 47% of jobs could soon be automated with existing technologies. Quite interestingly, they made use of an artificial intelligence algorithm to predict which occu-
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2.1 The end of jobs?

Since then, these conclusions have been qualified in various ways. First, the study assumed that all tasks are equally automatable within an occupation, while in fact more repetitive tasks are more likely to be automated than less repetitive ones. Considering this distinction, new studies found that very few occupations are fully automatable and only 9% of jobs in the USA and 8% in the East of Europe were at risk of being automated away in the coming years (Armtz et al., 2016). Second, the fact that automation technologies are available does not necessarily mean that they will be deployed. Factors such as the cost of labour, the regulatory environment and the prevailing social norms influence whether companies introduce such technologies.

Given these caveats in the predictive studies, it is important to measure whether companies are actually replacing humans with technology. Some studies measure the impact of industrial robots on employment, while results vary across studies, most conclude that introducing robots in a company reduces jobs: each additional robot per 1000 workers reduces employment by 0.16-0.2 percentage points (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020, for European countries). Other studies found that very few occupations are fully automatable and only 9% of jobs in the USA and 8% in the East of Europe were at risk of being automated away in the coming years (Armtz et al., 2016). Second, the fact that automation technologies are available does not necessarily mean that they will be deployed. Factors such as the cost of labour, the regulatory environment and the prevailing social norms influence whether companies introduce such technologies.

2.1.1 The end of jobs?

The key to the future of jobs lies in finding new, as yet unthinknable uses for AI or robotics, the aim of which goes beyond the objective of saving labour for companies (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019). HEIs, as research institutions, can play a big role in achieving this. Of course, it raises the issue of how to prepare people for jobs that we cannot yet predict, a subject to which I will come back later in the chapter.

2.1.2 Technology does not affect all jobs in the same way

Even if the overall effects of technology on jobs are hard to predict, there is mounting evidence that some workers have been more affected than others. A growing number of studies, measuring how the labour market adapted to the introduction of computers, found that people who performed repetitive, routine-based tasks were at a much higher risk of being replaced by these technologies than those doing less repetitive tasks. As a result, the demand for humans has declined in routine-based occupations and increased in occupations that are intensive in non-routine tasks (Autor, et al., 2003; Goos & Manning, 2007; Acemoglu & Autor, 2011; Darvas & Wolff, 2016). And because many routine tasks are concentrated in occupations that require medium-level skills, such as industry operators or administrative workers, the demand for jobs that require such skills has declined. In contrast, non-routine tasks are found in occupations that either require relatively high education and high manual dexterity (such as construction workers or hairdressers) or a high investment in education (such as engineers or managers). As a consequence, the demand for jobs at both ends of the wage and education distribution has increased. This effect, coupled with the hollowing-out of the middle of the jobs distribution, has been called the polarisation of the labour market and has been observed, to a varying degree, in most developed economies. It is a phenomenon that has had the unfortunate consequence of destroying many middle-class jobs. At the same time, because technology is increasingly used to automate many higher-skilled occupations, it is also fuelling the demand for higher education.

As AI and advanced robotics make further inroads into society, these trends are expected to continue in the future. To date, even the smartest machines have failed to be the source of so many jobs today! The key to the future of jobs lies in finding new, as yet unthinknable uses for AI or robotics, the aim of which goes beyond the objective of saving labour for companies (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019). HEIs, as research institutions, can play a big role in achieving this. Of course, it raises the issue of how to prepare people for jobs that we cannot yet predict, a subject to which I will come back later in the chapter.

2.1.3 Fast technological change is increasing the demand for new skills and rendering other skills obsolete

Along with changes in the demand for occupations, technological change is creating demand for new skills. According to a recent study, in 2019, 30% of companies in the United States admitted that they were using AI and robots. One study of 150 companies found that 60% of those companies asked for skills in 2007 that were obsolete by 2019. Skill turnover is highest in IT-related occupations (47%). Business-related and design and media occupations also have high rates of skill turnover, while occupations related to education and healthcare have the most stable skill demand.

Another important finding of this study was that workers in occupations with a high skill turnover experience faster earnings growth because they can add new skills and find jobs across a wider range of occupations. As AI and advanced robotics make further inroads into society, these trends are expected to continue in the future. To date, even the smartest machines have failed to be the source of so many jobs today! The key to the future of jobs lies in finding new, as yet unthinknable uses for AI or robotics, the aim of which goes beyond the objective of saving labour for companies (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019). HEIs, as research institutions, can play a big role in achieving this. Of course, it raises the issue of how to prepare people for jobs that we cannot yet predict, a subject to which I will come back later in the chapter.

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Students had a higher risk of automation. Their results, coupled with the much-hyped progress in self-driving cars and smart robotics, ignited a global discussion on the future of work and the threat of technology-induced mass unemployment.

The big question is whether this time will be different. In 2019, the reason why, despite the constant introduction of new technologies, there is no mass unemployment, is the reason why, despite the constant introduction of new technologies, there is no mass unemployment. A study for Europe found that the introduction of industrial robots increases the participation in employment of professionals, technicians and service workers, while reducing the employment of office workers, agricultural workers, artisans and operators (Chacchio et al., 2018). In the specific case of Germany, the introduction of robots created greater demand for managers, legal specialists and technicians, while systematically reducing the demand for machine operators.
that soft skills have significant wage returns and help to close the gender gap (Balcar, 2014). An important caveat is that Deming’s research referred only to the United States. I am not aware of any similar studies suggesting the growing importance of social skills in other countries, in terms of ascertaining whether this pattern is widespread across countries.

Another manifestation of the value of hybridisation, that is, the combining of different types of skills, comes from studying the freelance platform industry. Freelance platforms are online marketplaces (OLM) where self-employed persons (freelancers) sell their services. Over the period 2017-2020, the global market for OLM increased by 50% (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018). On these platforms, each person posts their profile, skills and experience, as well as the services offered and the price they charge per hour or project. Data from the platform’s transactions therefore provide valuable information on the prices commanded by different skills. A recent study by Stephany (2021) used OLM data to that end and grouped skills into 8 clusters: Audio Design, Data Engineering, Graphic Design, 3D Design, Legal Services, Software and Technology, Support and Translation and Writing. He found that learning skills across skill domains increases the hourly earnings that freelancers get on the platform. He also found that the value of these additional skills varies considerably depending on the skills a freelancer already has, showing the value of developing personalised skill pathways.

2.1.5 Upskilling and reskilling needs are rising

Fast technological change has created large skills bottlenecks for companies and workers. A recent study for the UK, for example, found that 69% of employers indicated that they are facing skills gap (Microsoft & Goldsmiths, 2020). What is different about this so-called fourth industrial revolution is the speed of change. In the past, countries adapted to previous revolutions by preparing the new generations for future skills. However, in this revolution companies and active workers will have to adjust in the current generation. Just by way of comparison, it took almost a century to spread electricity across the world, a process that is still unfolding, but it has taken less than 15 years to spread smartphones to more than 50% of households in the world (Bosch et al., 2018). Middle-aged and mature workers, not native to digital technologies but increasingly forced to coexist with them, are likely to be the most impacted. Another group of at-risk workers are those who lack the social and advanced cognitive skills that are increasingly required in the labour market. Promoting the acquisition of basic transversal and market-relevant skills for children and youth will therefore not be enough to prepare a labour force in need of constant reskilling. For some decades, there has been an ongoing discussion about the need to promote lifelong learning, especially for a more numerous and flexible group of people who have engaged in education as adults. Education systems and public budgets are not yet prepared to meet a potentially large increase in demand. The expansion of existing higher education systems, mostly geared to young people, will not do; adults learn in a different way and have different requirements and time constraints from young people. Promoting more avenues for adults to acquire more sophisticated skills (upskilling) or to retool (reskilling) has become an increasingly important priority for governments, education and training systems.

2.1.6 Fast technological change is increasing the gap between what is taught in HEIs and what is required in the labour market

A recent study by the Center for the Governance of Change (2021) at the IE Business School in Spain examined the match between the skills required in the labour market – through vacant posts – and the skills taught in colleges via an analysis of course descriptions in Denmark, the UK and Spain. They found that many HEIs are lagging behind with their curriculum, which is not in line with the rapidly changing needs of the labour market; private universities and newer institutions are more likely to teach skills that match labour market requirements. They also found skill gaps that are bigger in the category of transversal skills (such as communication skills or the ability to learn independently) than for technical skills. The expansion of existing higher education systems, an ongoing discussion about the need to promote lifelong learning, especially for a more numerous and flexible group of people who have engaged in education as adults. Education systems and public budgets are not yet prepared to meet a potentially large increase in demand. The expansion of existing higher education systems, mostly geared to young people, will not do; adults learn in a different way and have different requirements and time constraints from young people. Promoting more avenues for adults to acquire more sophisticated skills (upskilling) or to retool (reskilling) has become an increasingly important priority for governments, education and training systems.
a self-employed basis, the need for self-managing and entrepreneurial skills, such as marketing, client communication or financial planning, will increase (Legit, n.d.). It will also be necessary to adapt the welfare state so that freelancers can attain access to social protection schemes and publicly sponsored reskilling opportunities that are today only available to salaried worker in many instances.

In short, technology is changing the demand for jobs, the skills required in the labour market and where and how we work. In the process, the demand for workers in occupations intensive in routine-based tasks is declining while the demand for occupations intensive in non-routine activities increases. Technology is boosting the demand for “human” skills, as least in the United States. A large demand for workers who combine both STEM and social skills. Technology is increasing the need and demand for skills and reskilling. Technology is also shifting the scope of application of skills: fostering some local labour markets – as more people can work from anywhere – and, at the same time, a more global market – as it is now possible to export and import talent without migrating. All these trends create important opportunities and challenges for the higher education sector.

2.2 Population aging
At a slower pace than technology, but still steadily, demographic changes are transforming societies and altering the demand for skills. According to United Nations data, the number of people older than 64 will more than double in the next 30 years, from about 700 million to 1.5 billion people, up from 9 to 16 percent of the population (United Nations, 2019). For HEIs, the most direct consequence of population aging is the reduction in the size of the youth cohort. While globally, this cohort will still be growing in the next 30 years, albeit at a lower rate than in the past, in developed nations this cohort is projected to decline in absolute terms, from 140 million in 2020 to 132 in 2050 (United Nations, World Population Prospects, 2019).

Another direct and relevant consequence of population aging is the extension of working lives. It is unlikely that the extra years of life will all be spent in retirement, since people reach retirement age in much better health than in the past. In addition, pension systems are unlikely to cope with the increased costs of paying pensions to a higher share of the population for longer (Blosch et al., 2017). The more feasible scenario is one in which people will be working for longer, although not necessarily full-time. Retirement ages have already increased from 60-65 to 67 and beyond in many countries.

Another consequence of population aging is the increasing burden of disease. In only the last decade, for example, life expectancy has increased by more than 6 years, that is, more than 20 percent of post-secondary students who were enrolled, but the number of years a person can expect to live in good health has increased by only 5.4 years. Thus, the number of years in which each person might live with some form of disability has increased.

These changes are fuelling growth in the demand for medical and care occupations. The department of labour in the United States estimates that in the next six occupations in this group will be among the ten fastest growing occupations in the United States (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2019). Similarly, Schady et al. (2019) forecast a very large increase in the demand for doctors and nurses in Latin America (from 1.3 million doctors and 3.2 million nurses in 2018 to 3.1 million doctors and 8.3 million nurses in 2040). Another factor that will contribute to the rising demand for medical and care professionals is the fact that these occupations are unlikely to be automated in the coming years. To date, algorithms and robots have not become adept at empathy, a core skill requirement in these occupations, and have a hard time with non-structured, complex tasks, as most tasks in the medical and care occupations are. A more likely scenario is one in which AI applications complement the areas of diagnosis, scheduling, accounting and administration, helping doctors, nurses and caregivers to improve quality and reduce the costs of services (The Medical Futurist, 2021).

3. Technology and demography are already shaping the supply of education and will continue to do so in the future.

Technology and population aging are already shaping the supply of education and these trends will continue to occur in the coming years.

3.1 The most obvious technology-driven change is the increasing presence of online learning, accelerated by the Pandemic.

The number of HEIs that are offering online courses had already increased substantially, even before the pandemic. In the United States, data from the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) suggests that in 2018, 35 percent of post-secondary students were enrolled in online courses at degree-granting institutions. Private-for-profit colleges had the highest share: 67% at institutions with some online courses and 22.5% enrolled at exclusively online institutions, while the corresponding figures in public colleges were 8.9 and 0.3 percent, respectively (Lederman, 2019). Likewise this data showed that graduate students were more likely to be enrolled in online courses than undergraduates.

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to intensify this shift. As a result of social distancing measures, most HEIs had to switch, virtually overnight, to some form of online learning. Going forward, many observers see very high continued growth potential in the online market (Wadhwani & Gankar, 2021). The disruption caused by the pandemic is a big opportunity to innovate in the deployment of e-learning solutions. Online learning is seen by many HEIs as a way to scale up training and reduce costs per student, in view of the continued increases in higher education costs. In the context of higher education and from a learning outcomes perspective, online learning has proven to be no worse than face-to-face learning, with some modalities, like blended learning – that is, the combination of face-to-face and e-learning – exhibiting superior learning outcomes (Means et al., 2013, Pei and Wu, 2019).

3.2 Technology brings new pedagogical methods and tools
Online learning brings new affordances to learning, as well as some limitations. Producing effective learning experiences requires taking the distinct nature of online learning into account. Research indicates that online students engage in more quantitative reasoning and may retain more materials than those in a classroom (De Larreta-Azelain and Martin, 2016). In contrast, in-classroom students report more teacher-student interactions and more peer-to-peer discussions. There are a number of possibilities afforded by technology that can enhance the learning experience. Examples include sharing high-quality open educational resources, such as videos, podcasts, online lectures and other materials available online to support teaching, and using social media to engage in peer-to-peer discussions.

Technology and education analytics also make it possible to track students’ interactions with learning materials, assignments and assessments. Technology can help to document students’ learning outcomes as they meet milestones. Similarly, social media platforms can help facilitate peer-to-peer assessments. Furthermore, institutions are beginning to leverage AI to develop highly personalised learning experiences and to identify and track students at risk of dropping out.

Additionally, technology has provided tools that are increasingly deployed in the learning space. Learning management systems facilitate course administration, and have a hard time with non-structured, complex tasks, as most tasks in the medical and care occupations are. A more likely scenario is one in which AI applications complement the areas of diagnosis, scheduling, accounting and administration, helping doctors, nurses and caregivers to improve quality and reduce the costs of services (The Medical Futurist, 2021).

3.3 The emergence of life-long learning and alternative credentials.
Longer working lives, combined with fast technological change, have increased the need for upskilling and reskilling and opened up the potential for multiple careers along a person’s lifespan. In the future, the number of adult learners is poised to increase as a proportion of all higher education learners. Moreover, this group is likely to have very different requirements from the younger cohort. According to NCES data, in the United States, enrollment of college students aged 25-34 has already increased by 35 percent in the last decade, while overall enrolment rates fell during the same time period. In general, because they work first and study
second, they are less likely to favour a full-time, face-to-
face, immersive learning experience, preferring instead to engage in less intensive and shorter certifications imparted in an online or blended format, thereby increasing the demand for shorter and highly labour market-relevant certifications.

Many institutions already provide alternative certifications to recognise these skills, such as micro-credentials, badges or industry-recognised certifications. Some certifications provide credits to be used towards a degree. Some alternative credentials can be stacked to attain an official diploma or certificate. Some universities are already offering students the possibility of attaining a micro-credential for any individual course in their entire portfolio that has been successfully completed. This segment of the education market is attracting new players, such as learning platforms created as offshoots of academia, like EDx, Coursera or UDEMY, and technology players like Google or LinkedIn Learning, and many of them take the form of MOOCs (massive open online courses).

Going forward, the issue of whether MOOCs’ alternative certifications and the new set of providers that are attracting will disrupt the traditional segment of undergraduate and master’s degrees remains open to discussion. At the onset of the MOOC revolution, around 2011-2012, it was widely stated that MOOCs would radically alter higher education by reducing costs, allowing global access to the best teachers and expanding learning opportunities to the underserved, either in high-income or low-income countries, or in developing countries. These promises have not yet materialised. In the United States, enrolment on massive open online courses, after increasing initially, has declined in recent years. A study in the US analysing a popular learning platform found that most MOOC providers, may need to innovate in pedagogy (and andragogy) to become a credible disruptor of higher education, devising new tools to increase completion rates. They will also need to provide further student support, through mentors and tutors, to motivate students and reduce dropout rates. Another area that offers opportunities for improvement is the facilitation of more student-teacher and peer-to-peer interactions. This will bring MOOCs closer to hybrid forms of learning, likely increasing learning outcomes but reducing the potential for economies of scale and the anticipated cost reductions.

3.4 New tools for tracking skill requirements and providing career guidance for students

Big data and AI have made it possible to create technology-based tools to track the demand for skills and provide individualised career guidance for students. New sources of data, such as data from online vacancy boards, social media and online job boards, provide highly granular, real-time information on the demand for different occupations and skills. These data, complemented by traditional sources of labour market information and AI algorithms, are powering new tools to help people and HEIs to navigate a changing labour market. Data from online job boards offer very rich information on which occupations are rising or falling in demand, and which skills, experience and education levels are required in vacancies. Social media companies, such as LinkedIn, also gather anonymised labour market data on the demand for different occupations and the skills, experience and education of people working in those jobs, self-reported by users. Likewise, data from online labour platforms, such as Upwork, track the profiles of users that sell services across different occupations, along with their skills, the rates they expect to get and the jobs they have done in the past, providing a basis for understanding the demand and value of different skills in the labour market (Stephany, 2021). Some companies are beginning to build technological platforms, bringing this information together to facilitate learners and HEIs’ decisions on courses and portfolios.

3.5 Automating recognition of prior learning

Another field in which technology holds promise is the automation of recognition of prior learning (RPL). In a world of constant change, more and more individuals want to further their higher education during their careers. Yet developing successful learning trajectories starts with acknowledging and recognising existing skills, regardless of where and how they were attained (Kitto et al., 2020). The objective is to save learners from undertaking training in subjects they already know. To now, this recognition has proven very difficult due to the differences in the way each HEI describes and defines the curriculum. In some countries or regions, qualifications frameworks (QF) provide skill equivalences across different degrees at national or international level (like the European Qualifications Framework). However, a rapidly changing labour market means that there is a need to constantly update QF. As a result, RPL continues to be a challenging venture. Studies have begun to show that rather than manually finding skill equivalences between subjects and courses taught in two HEIs, Natural Language Processing software can generate automated equivalences across courses and subjects in terms of their competences, facilitating the automation of RPL (Kitto et al., 2020). Nonetheless, in order for this to be possible, HEIs and workers will need to provide a detailed description of the competences provided in each course and subject and/or those developed at work. Developing international agreements to mandate the filling of some comparable fields for each programme and course could greatly help to support this automation.

4. What next?

Technology and demography are causing unprecedented change in the labour market and altering higher education supply and demand. But technology and demography are not a matter of fate; governments, HEIs, companies and learners can develop a human-centric approach to put technology and demography at the service of people.

First, it is becoming increasingly clear that education and skill acquisition are a source of resilience. All the above-mentioned change is deeply in the direction of increasing the value of higher education. Not only are highly skilled people more likely to keep their jobs in the face of automation, but they are also more likely to benefit from, and contribute to, the productivity gains afforded by technology. Expanding access to higher education for people of all ages must therefore continue to be a priority.

Second, HEIs need to closely track the alignment of the skills they are teaching with labour market needs. Paradoxically, the consequence of living with more technology is that human skills, that is, those skills that distinguish us from machines, are increasingly important. Many HEIs, particularly the oldest and public ones, are almost entirely focused on teaching hard skills, but need to make the teaching of soft skills a higher priority in their curricula. Moreover, it is essential that learners acquire the ability to learn how to learn as easily as possible, as many people will need to constantly upskill and reskill throughout their lives.

Third, technology and demographic trends are compassing to make the traditional segment to which most HEIs cater today - the fresh out of high school, or fresh out of college population - increasingly less relevant, unless the percentage of those enrolled in HE in the 18-25 cohort notably increases, or advanced economies’ HEIs attract more students from developing countries. Yet at the same time, a new segment is becoming increasingly important: the market for lifelong learners, which has very different characteristics and needs from the youth market. HEIs will need to innovate to produce education relevant to this population. Given their characteristics and time constraints, this group is more likely to request individual courses, rather than degrees, and to be taught remotely rather than in immersive face-to-face experiences, or with a combination of face-to-face and online learning. The extensive supply of MOOCs developed by many HEIs constitutes a first step, but more innovation is required to increase completion rates and reach underserved populations. Promising avenues are adding more human interaction, through

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mentors, tutors and peer-to-peer interaction. HEIs will also need to continue developing flexible portfolios of courses and certifications that are market-relevant and suited to the needs of the adult population.

Fourth, technology is not only changing the demand for skills, but is also providing the means to create valuable tools to support learners. HEIs, with the cooperation of governments, need to strengthen their links with employers and invest in data-enabled technological tools to track the changing needs of the labour market. Such tools will help align portfolios with the labour market and provide valuable suggestions to students seeking advice on what occupation to develop or which courses to take.

Fifth, HEIs and companies and governments need to promote agreements and technology to facilitate the recognition of prior learning. It is essential for learners to get recognition for the knowledge and skills they have acquired, irrespective of where they got them, so they can focus on what they do not know.

Finally, HEIs and governments will need to develop the right pipeline of professionals in the medical and care occupations.

Some structural dynamics, including a declining youth market and rapid skill obsolescence, have weakened the case for business as usual. They force HEIs to look for new market segments and to continue expanding the use of new tools and pedagogies to reach them. While some HEIs, probably the most successful ones under the status-quo, may choose to continue with their traditional models, many others will see these changes as an opportunity to reinvent themselves in order to continue leading talent and innovation development in the years to come.

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From Homo Economicus to Persona Implicitus: The concept of students in the Anthropocene age

Keri L. Facer

Abstract

Universities are designed around and governed by particular ideas about students. As this idea changes, so does the university. Indeed, the key long term historical shifts in universities’ structures and purposes have been accompanied and driven by equivalent shifts in the idea of what it means to be human and what sort of world we are preparing our students for. Western European enlightenment, humanism and neoliberal economic traditions have produced two dominant ideas about students that are in conflict today: a) The ethical-critical humanist and b) The self-maximising economic actor. Neither of these is adequate for an era characterised by climate change, disruptive technologies, polarising and precarious economies. What it means to be human and our understanding of how humans might create economic security for themselves is changing profoundly. To that end, this paper proposes a shift away from the dominance of homo economicus as a coordinating idea for universities. Instead, it suggests considering students as persona implicitus: A student who is already and will always be better than offline learning in undergraduate medical education? A systematic review and meta-analysis. Medical Education Online, 24 (1). DOI: 10.1080/10872981.2019.1666538


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In this piece, I would like to argue that - if universities are to play a role in the civilisational change required to create sustainable societies - the notion of the student that we have inherited from both European enlightenment and neoliberal economic traditions needs to change. We need to fundamentally rethink our assumptions about who our students are and their relationship with the world.

The ideas we have about our students and their futures are important. They function as ‘imaginaries’ (Jasanoff & Kim, 2009) that organise the work of universities, coordinating (albeit imperfectly) the people, materials and practices of the institution towards particular forms of education-oriented towards particular concepts of the student. While always contested, different notions of the student are dominant in different university traditions and historical periods: from the future civil servant of ancient Chinese and Egyptian universities, via the clergy of medieval Europe, to the disciplined citizen of the Humboldtian university and its descendants. The concepts of the student that coordinate assumptions in the contemporary university are visible on websites and in mission statements – these students are ‘world-class professionals’ (Manchester Metropolitan) ‘leaders who make a difference globally’ (Harvard) or students who will ‘graduate ready for work’ (Sydney University), amongst others.

In universities, the post WW2 era has been characterised by a conflict between two dominant notions of the student: first, the European humanist idea of the enlightened individual for whom the purpose of education is the development of the ethical self and the capacity to lead and live wisely in the world; and second, the student as a self-maximising economic actor, concerned with education as an investment in their personal human capital for sale in the commercial marketplace. There is no doubt that the latter is and has...
been ‘winning’ for many years, fuelled in particular by the increasing debt burden of students. However, the point I would like to make in this piece is not that our attention should be dedicated to replacing such instrumental neoliberal educational values with enlightened European humanist values. Indeed, I want to suggest that neither of these ideas of the student are adequate for current times. Therefore, a new concept of the student is necessary to coordinate the work of universities in an era of climate change, radical wealth inequalities, changing forms of employment and disruptive technologies.

**Beyond ‘homo economicus’**

Let us start with what is unarguably the dominant notion of the student at the heart of many universities today: the student investing in their human capital to prepare for a future world of work, ready to become the rational and self-maximising homo economicus of economic forecasts. This is premised upon a vision of higher education as a way of guaranteeing financial security for both students and society. The promise is clear: degrees = jobs = economic security for individuals and states. However, this is no longer the secure promise that it might have seemed in the past. There is a declining ‘return on investment’ for students as competition for graduate roles increase (Brown et al., 2012).

In a radically changing job market, we see graduates petition for graduate roles increase (Brown et al., 2012). However, this is no longer the secure promise that it might have seemed in the past. There is a declining ‘return on investment’ for students as competition for graduate roles increase (Brown et al., 2012). In these conditions for all other forms of provisioning; their roles in households, in communities and as active citizens in states. However, these four provisioning practices are also undergoing significant and disruptive change. First, the world of ‘jobs’ is changing. Trends towards increased precariousness and casualisation, the continuing global move of women into the formal workplace, polarisation of the economy between high and low paid work, and restructuring in the light of global supply chains, bring significant challenges even to professional roles (Buchanan et al., 2020). Even without the pandemic, technological developments and climate change promised to bring significant disruptions to formal and informal employment (Woodcock & Graham, 2019).

For many women and children in areas of ecological stress, household provisioning also includes gathering water in precarious situations or making a safe shelter to live in. The household labour provision is a foundational form of provisioning for economic wellbeing and is essential to the body’s capacity to take on paid work.

- **Household provisioning** – This work is present in all households, providing care for people, looking after children and the elderly. It includes growing and preparing food. However, these four provisioning practices are also undergoing significant and disruptive change. First, the world of ‘jobs’ is changing. Trends towards increased precariousness and casualisation, the continuing global move of women into the formal workplace, polarisation of the economy between high and low paid work, and restructuring in the light of global supply chains, bring significant challenges even to professional roles (Buchanan et al., 2020). Even without the pandemic, technological developments and climate change promised to bring significant disruptions to formal and informal employment (Woodcock & Graham, 2019).

Over the next decade, we may see a failure of economic recovery to bring a return of jobs and new experiments in Universal Basic Income, suggesting a re-orientation of employment towards casualised, voluntary and precarious employment, or even demanding education for access to essential social provision (Johdiir, 2017). In these conditions, informal labour plays a greater role in household incomes, while the gig economy offers workers the capacity to exploit and alienate workers in new and innovative ways (Graham & Shaw, 2017: 6). Working, in other words – and as it is already in many parts of the world most long-term jobs dominated by formal employment. At the same time, the urgent need to move away from carbon-based industries to comply with Paris Climate Agreement targets will mean significant demands for mid-career retraining in high carbon intensive industries (Bezdek & Wendling, 2014). Finally, while the adoption of artificial intelligence is unlikely to be as universally transformative as the proponents of ‘flex’ would have us believe, it will bring a swift restructuring of employment in countries and industries with the resources to adapt rapidly. This restructuring is likely to further exacerbate inequalities in the short term and demand new working relationships between human and non-human-like intelligence in the long term. The world of work, in other words, is profoundly changing.

At the same time, these are ongoing dynamic changes in the other forms of provisioning that support economic security. The impact of ageing populations combined with declining younger populations, the challenges of childcare and intergenerational equity that these will bring, may require radically creative ways of provisioning care within households – as well as novel forms of care mobilised across country divides (as youth migrate to access employment elsewhere).

Many families and homes globally will be vulnerable to climate change, which will displace and also affect the ability of those dependent upon local and household food production to provision themselves, increasing food vulnerability and migration. Likewise, water shortages are already making communities in water-impoverished areas increasingly vulnerable. When households are unable to access water, the consequences are extreme.

These developments are not inevitable – climate action remains possible, appropriate water stewardship is achievable with regenerative and permaculture-based agriculture and the growth of micro-farming and urban farming demonstrates that local communities can grow enough food to provision themselves increasing food vulnerability and migration. Likewise, water shortages are already making communities in water-impoverished areas increasingly vulnerable. When households are unable to access water, the consequences are extreme.

In relation to both state and commons provisioning, the future presents a panorama of sustained struggle for which students will have to be prepared to defend commons and state provisioning practices. In the digital arena, the enclosure of both personal data and collective products of human endeavour will be a site of urgent political tension. Access to land and welfare and healthcare or long-term research and development, legal rights and freedoms – which create conditions to enable the effective functioning of the other three forms of provisioning.

Economic wellbeing, in other words, is not something that can be achieved - either by individuals or states - by considering the student simply as a future ‘employee’. Instead, work in the formal marketplace is deeply embedded in and dependent upon the provisioning activities of these three domains. The household, the commons, and the State. As economists such as Raworth and Maria Mazzucato demonstrate, students’ future economic wellbeing requires attention to these broader domains (Mazzucato, 2018). This sort of economic analysis is not simply theoretical; these ideas are being practised applied in a number of different cities and regions, from Brussels to Sao Paulo, Amsterdam to Colombia, as a basis for creating economic wellbeing at a city and regional levels. Even if universities are primarily concerned with the idea of the student as an economic actor, this idea requires significant expansion beyond the individualised investment in human capital for formal employment to encompass their roles in households, in communities and as active citizens in states.
Towards a new idea of the student: aliens in the classroom?

About 30 years ago, Bill Green and Chris Bigum wrote a paper suggesting that we were teaching ‘aliens in the classroom’, children who, because they had grown up with digital technologies, were thinking and learning in different ways (Green & Bigum, 1993). Today, as basic concepts of what constitutes economic security are changing, as our core ideas of what it means to be human are shifting as we grapple not only with technological change but radical environmental disruption, we might ask the same question. If we are not teaching homo economicus or the enlightenment individual anymore, who are these students in our lecture halls? I am inclined to suggest we are teaching ‘persona implicitus’: a student who is already and will always be dependent upon and implicated within social, ecological and technological systems and relations.

What might it mean to see our students in this way - to recognise them as embedded in the changing material realities of land and climate, as shaped by and dependent upon interactions between themselves and their communities, as interdependent with the tools that they are using? Many different practices are emerging in universities that point to what this might look like – from the work of Indigenous educators or the Common Worlds Collective or the Ecospheres network, pointing towards the pedagogies that might be needed to support students to understand themselves as part of a living world, or to the dialogue and design work of initiatives such as the Chalmers University Challenge Labs, supporting students to develop their capacities to work in collaboration with others and to reflect upon the tools and resources that they are using to do so.

However, the challenge is not primarily pedagogic; it is collaborative. We need to question our fundamental assumptions about the students that we are teaching, the overarching stories we tell them about why they are in universities and the promises we are making when we offer a higher education. It is time to come clean about the fact that Higher Education cannot, on its own, guarantee the sort of ‘ontological security’ (Stein et al., 2017) it might have promised to individuals in the past – either through the fiction of the autonomous economic actor or the enthralled human. Instead, our promise to persona implicitus must be a different one: a commitment to support our students to understand and become aware of their interdependencies with each other, with the planet and with their technologies and to develop the capacity to create those relationships that nurture and sustain the resources that we share in common, and which underpin security and flourishing for all. We aren’t teaching autonomous humans anymore; we are teaching people who are always and already embedded in an ongoing and changing world populated by other human and non-human people, the encounter with which is precisely what constitutes the educational moment.

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Demand for new professional knowledge, skills and competencies in the labour market: higher education, covid-19 and artificial intelligence

Francisco López Segrera

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the need for learning focused on the formation of specific skills and competencies. To achieve this, the curricula of universities, higher education institutions and vocational training centres must teach relevant knowledge that enables proper entry into the labour market. This leads to a need for the adoption of visions and strategies to transform higher education. The pandemic has increased inequality between regions, countries and social classes. It has brought about changes of great relevance in education and higher education and in its potential scenarios and future prospects. It has increased the need for certain skills and competencies that the labour market requires in this situation. We analyse how good practices are being developed in the Latin American region in public and private universities. The aim of these practices is to equip students with certain competencies and skills so that they can carry out their functions properly after graduation and enter the labour market without difficulties.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the need for learning focused on the formation of specific skills and competencies. To achieve this, the curricula of universities, higher education institutions and vocational training centres must teach relevant knowledge that enables proper entry into the labour market.

Good practices are being developed in public and private universities in the Latin American region. The aim of these practices is to equip students with certain competencies and skills so that they can carry out their functions properly after graduation and enter the labour market without difficulties. At the end of our analysis, we include four good practices of this type.
2. Effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

We are at a global turning point: ecological collapse, the threat of nuclear war, technological disruption, a decline in US supremacy, a crisis in the supremacy of the West, and cracks in the traditional alliances between the USA and the European Union. The Covid-19 pandemic adds to all this. After it, the world will not be the same. Since the end of 2020, various vaccines have been administered. However, the expectations of achieving global herd immunity will take time if they are achieved at all.

The good news is that the state is emerging stronger against neoliberal capitalism’s defence of the market. The pandemic has raised the visibility of and increased inequality, poverty and extreme poverty. “The implications for higher education will be considerable and mostly negative, amplifying gaps and inequalities between learners, institutions, and countries. There will be significant variations globally, with the likelihood that universities in the poorest part of the world will be affected more severely” (Altbach and de Wit, 2020).

The development of automation and AI have been seen to have a detrimental impact on employment, which increased globally with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) showed the negative impact of Covid-19 on the labour markets in 2020. Globally, the employment rate of women dropped 5%, while that of men decreased by 3.9% (ILO, 2021).

The global unemployment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in Latin America the unemployment rate increased by 2.6 percentage points and the employment and participation rates by 10.0 and 9.5 percentage points respectively (ECLAC, 2020).

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in Latin America and the Caribbean, in 2020, the unemployment rate increased by 2.6 percentage points and the employment and participation rates by 10.0 and 9.5 percentage points respectively (ECLAC, 2020).

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Covid-19 triggered a global economic crisis with sharp drops in GDP in all nations. However, a fast recovery was observed in 2021 except in some countries and regions, as is the case of Latin America.

3. Covid-19, higher education and employment

3.1 Global and region figures on the number of students affected

The global gross enrolment rate (GER) rose from 13 million students in 1960 to 227 million in 2020. In other words, it increased from 19% of students enrolled in higher education worldwide in the age range from 18 to 23 years in 1960, to 38% in 2020. Regional and national differences in enrolment rate highlight the global inequality: 9% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 77% in North America and Western Europe, 52% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 26% in Central Asia, 45% in Western and Southern Asia, 39% in Eastern Asia and the Pacific, 46% in the Arab States, and 74% in Central and Eastern Europe (International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, IESALC, 2020).

Covid-19 has affected around 1.6 billion students in 2020 countries. This is equivalent to 94% of the global student population. Around 24 million students at all educational levels (180 countries) are at risk of not returning to education after the pandemic (IESALC, 2021).

In 32 of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, face-to-face classes were suspended in 2020. This affected 165 million students of all educational levels (IESALC, 2020a).

3.2 Higher education scenarios after Covid-19

Higher education has had to face the challenges of Covid-19, which will be overcome when herd immunity is reached in many countries. In some countries, this could happen in the last quarter of 2021. In others, the process will take longer. Universities are outlining strategies to, at one extreme, return to face-to-face mode as soon as possible, or, at the other extreme, to continue with higher education online during 2021 and perhaps throughout academic year 2022–2023.

3.2.1 Basic scenarios

• Continue with higher education online.
• Return to face-to-face higher education.
• Reorganize the old model with the experiences gained through higher education online and move to a blended mode.

3.2.2 Complex scenarios

1. Return to normality
   All teaching, research and extension activities return to face-to-face mode in all countries of the world.

2. Face-to-face in countries with herd immunity, online in countries that do not have it
   Only countries that have reached herd immunity return to normality. Other countries continue with higher education online.

3. Return to face-to-face higher education in 2021 in “world-class universities” and in other universities in developed countries
   In “world-class universities” – which are mainly Anglo-Saxon – and universities in many developed countries, face-to-face teaching will restart in the last quarter of 2021.

4. Return to internationalisation
   In the next academic year, the internationalisation of higher education will recover a high proportion of the participation figures of 5 million students that it had reached in 2019.

5. Bachelor’s degrees face-to-face, postgraduate programmes online
   In postgraduate courses at public and private universities worldwide, higher education will remain online throughout 2021, although bachelor’s degree courses will return to face-to-face mode.

6. Blended higher education
   Higher education could be provided in blended mode in certain bachelor’s degree and postgraduate courses in some universities and countries. Students would go to the campus for intensive face-to-face experiences and then return home to complete the term online.

7. Synchronous model: face-to-face and online
   Courses would be taught face-to-face and online by the lecturer at the same time.

4. Professional knowledge, competencies, skills, labour market, artificial intelligence and employment

4.1 Definition of competencies and skills

Although they are synonyms, there are various definitions and concepts associated with the words “skills” and “competencies”. According to the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) dictionary, habilidad (skill) means the ability and aptitude to do something. These abilities could be innate or learned. In English, the word “skill” is used for learned abilities that are required to carry out a job successfully. They can be classified as soft skills (intra- and interpersonal) and hard skills (technical), each one of which has various transmission and training mechanisms for its development.

In the same dictionary, the word “competency” is defined as the expertise, aptitude or capacity to do something or to get involved in a certain matter. Hence, competencies are the knowledge and behaviour that will lead us to success in an undertaking.

Despite these differences, in many cases the words are used almost interchangeably. Other texts refer to “skill & competencies”. In other words, the terms are joined to cover the entire phenomenon. Note that skill tends to refer to specific knowledge, while competency is more closely associated with behaviour (Vargas-Lama et al., 2021a).

4.2 Higher education, skills and competencies

Universities should offer the professional competencies of bachelor’s degree disciplines, such as mathematics, physics, health sciences, engineering, architecture, business management, finances, economics, international relations, negotiation techniques, computer studies, software, big data, sociology and design. They should also offer soft skills such as: leadership, communication, languages, creativity, persuasion, resilience and time management. Soft skills do not tend to become obsolete over time, unlike technological competencies.
When certain skills and competencies are taught in curricula and study programmes, the following should be considered: formal education must be adapted to the needs of the labour market; we must focus not only on what we learn but on how we learn it, theoretical learning alone is different from learning within the future company or learning that involves some kind of pre-professional practice; importance should be given to hard competencies and to soft or social skills.

In addition, it is essential to differentiate between education and training. Education refers to values, principles and attitudes. Training involves aptitudes that should be updated periodically (Mayo, 2019).

Students born at the end of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century have new characteristics: they are digital natives and tend to associate vocation with employability. (Rodríguez, 2021).

University education today requires new competencies and abilities in a digital environment that is advancing exponentially and in which AI dictates its rules. The OECD with programmes such as PISA, UNESCO, the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI), among other institutions, have been leading the study of knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes and skills that are particularly relevant in higher education (OECD, 2016, World Economic Forum, 2015, Vilalta, 2019; World Bank, 2019; Vilalta, 2018; Delors, J. et al., 1996, UNESCO, 2018). The OECD report “Skills for a digital world” (2016) describes three groups of skills that are required: technical and professional skills, ICT generic skills, and soft skills such as leadership, communication and teamwork.

The document lists the changes in skills policies that are a priority to promote growth: (1) ensure that basic ICT skills are gained in initial education, (2) better anticipate needs and competencies in education and guide students to better learning outcomes, (3) ensure that the qualifications required for the digital economy are used by both business owners and employees, and both groups must be ready and motivated to retrain and gain new knowledge and qualifications periodically.

Upskilling, which entails training to optimize the achievement and evolution of the competencies required in a job profile, and reskilling, which involves gaining hard technical competencies to move from one job to another, have been strengthened by the pandemic. During this period, continuous training has been seen as vital to face the digital transformation, changes in the job market and unexpected crises such as the pandemic. According to the World Economic Forum, upskilling has the potential to create 5.3 million new jobs globally (Villena, 2021).

Skills can be classified in various ways, from the 15 skills established for 2025 by the World Economic Forum (2020) (Table 1) to Deloitte’s (2018) approach to the categorisation of skills (Vargas-Lamás et al., 2021b).

Table 1: Fifteen skills for 2025

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Skills for 2025</th>
<th>Definición</th>
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<td>Active learning and learning strategies</td>
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<td>Complex problem-solving</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation</td>
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<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
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<td>Troubleshooting and user experience</td>
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<td>Service orientation</td>
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<td>Persuasion and negotiation</td>
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Source: The Future of Jobs 2020 (WEF, 2020)

Table 1: Skills and competences

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Source: compiled by authors, based on Deloitte (2018)

Full awareness of the fact that professional knowledge should be complemented by specific competencies and skills did not develop until the twenty-first century, and specifically until the acceleration caused by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. However, in the 1970s, McClelland demonstrated that traditional intelligence tests with excellent results did not guarantee success in the work environment. Certain competencies and skills were needed that do not tend to be measured by intelligence tests (McClelland, 1973).

Research on students’ learning outcomes indicates that university graduates do not have important skills that are required by employees. These include communication, decision-making, problem-solving, leadership, emotional intelligence, social ethics, and the capacity to work with people of different origins. Many recently graduated professionals work in multicultural, multinational environments and therefore must have the right professional competencies and specific skills, such as a command of languages.

The table below clearly shows the nuances between skills and competencies. Professional competencies refer to our knowledge of specific disciplines such as medicine and engineering, but we also need special skills and additional competencies, as shown in the table.

Table 2: Skills and competencies

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Source: The Future of Jobs 2020 (WEF, 2020)
Skill is defined as the knowledge and experience required to carry out a specific task. In contrast, competency is the capacity to apply knowledge, “know-how” and skills to a situation that could be habitual or changing.

Competencies are much broader than skills. Skills are specific to a task, while competencies incorporate a set of specific skills and professional knowledge. Academic skills are comprised of basic skills such as academic writing, presentation and reference skills, and more complex skills such as critical thought and reflective practice.

A skill is the capacity to do something, while competencies are behaviours that specify how the individual carries out the skills that they have. For example, 20 people could be skilled in computer programming, but perhaps only two will work in accordance with the company culture, which prioritises teamwork.

Competencies in higher education cover cognitive (know how to learn), executive (know how to do), and axiological (know how to be) aspects.

Job competencies are a set of specific knowledge of the disciplines, skills and attitudes that are required to enter the job market easily. They could be general, for example marketing, communication and computer science, or specific, such as electoral marketing, communicator specialised in telecommunications and computer scientist specialised in cybersecurity.

As mentioned previously, they could also be hard skills, which are the techniques of a discipline (for example, the use of spreadsheets for accounting) and soft skills, which are more general and personal (leadership, verbal communication). These skills and many others determine a graduate’s employment opportunities.

Competency-based or skill-based education is a new direction imposed by technological disruption, the dramatic rate at which the labour market is changing in the knowledge society and even more in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Consequently, universities must have closer ties with the world of work.

The technological changes imposed by automation and AI require the transformation of universities to provide students with professional knowledge and general competencies that enable them to join the job market easily.

A general review of the literature on necessary skills and competencies revealed that studies do not tend to specify which are the most important to get a job, regardless of our professional knowledge and competencies. It was also observed that in assessment and qualification processes inbero-American universities, curricula do not always have to include an accurate description of the competencies that graduates should have gained by the end of their courses, in addition to the professional knowledge obtained in the degree or postgraduate programme. Double degrees, and even professional training, are an attempt to resolve this shortcoming.

The development of general competencies in higher education curricula addresses many unresolved issues on the need to include these competencies in a precise way. In 2019, the EU had a shortfall of one million workers in new jobs associated with AI and automation.

In job interviews, recruiters tend to look for general skills such as: communication, empathy, forward planning, decision-making capacity, leadership, critical thinking, flexibility, digital competency, capacity to work remotely, result orientation, capacity to work in a team, productivity, reliability, commitment, responsibility, commercial skills, multidisciplinary skills, professional development and technical skills.

To ensure that students internalise these skills in the teaching-learning process, the following actions are required. 1. Create scenarios in which the use of certain skills is put into practice, so that students can see how important it is to gain a command of them and know how to apply them. Visualise learning and the use of technology as an inseparable, integrated pairing. Teach in an interdisciplinary way. Develop teamwork as a style and as a process that offers better results. 2. Ensure that students feel comfortable in various national settings and multicultural environments. 3. Ensure that, in simulated exercises, students play different roles in the area of private companies (manager, human resources manager, graphic designer) and public institutions (foreign minister, ambassador, consul, dean of a faculty) as this prepares them for working in collaboration. 4. Ensure that, in the learning process, students learn to integrate the education and training sector with the production sector and with social goals and sustainable development goals. 5. Learn to digitally process large amounts of information and convert them into relevant knowledge.

From 30 to 50% of companies carry out “competency interviews” as part of the process of recruiting new employees. One question at the start of an interview tends to be: “Describe two situations in which you have had to work as part of a team.” In general, the candidate is asked: 1. What are the main strengths of this company over its competitors in the industry. 2. What personally attracts you to the firm (close relation with the candidate’s university studies, the place where it is located). 3. Other relevant factors that seem interesting (style of working, corporate social responsibility that the company participates in).

Professional competencies and skills should not be limited to ensuring employability and productivity. Students should be trained not only in aspects required by companies and the market, but also and above all in what society needs, to enhance fairness and sustainable development.

5. Case studies: Good practices

In various universities worldwide, good practices are developed in the teaching-learning process to train students in the skills and competencies that enable them to join the job market easily. Below we describe good practices in two Latin American public universities and in one private one, the Pontific Xaverian University Calli, and in a network associated with UNESCO.

5.1 Good practice in trainer training, University of Chile (Ramis and Peña, 2019)

Trainer training is a subject of increasing interest for those who design public policies in education and for higher education institutions that are responsible for teacher training. This interest is relatively recent in Europe and in Latin America. On the old continent, it arises from the indirect effect of school system reforms in the European area on initial and continuous training of teachers. In Latin America, along with a similar situation to the above, this interest may be influenced by the fact that universities in the region have tended to take over teacher training from the former schools since the 1970s.

Until recent years, the study of the professional profile of trainers in continuous training had not managed to attract all the research attention that it deserves. This is because studies carried out during the last two years to be a secondary rather than a main objective. A second reason is the difficulty in defining this professional in terms of tasks, competencies and specific skills, as in the context of continuous education and the labour market this professional profile is subject to constant changes.

5.2 Good practice of the University of Santiago, Chile (Segura)

Skills and competencies should be developed from an innovative perspective in higher education institutions, as is happening in the education system in general. The development of competencies and skills should not be considered in isolation, but as an integrated whole designed to be developed to solve a problem or carry out a task. In this context, the Vice-Presidency for Postgraduate Studies at the University of Santiago, Chile (USACH), has worked hard to promote a student newsletter that strengthens competencies such as leadership, communication, critical thinking, teamwork and time management.

This newsletter started out with the fundamental premise of extensive participation of students and graduates from the university’s faculties, school, institutes and specialisations. With the guidance of a professional, the students determined the processes, work committees, deadlines and expected products. These were decided on by various work committees.

This experience has been developed since May 2021. A first stage was determined called "establishment of the proposal". Although the proposal had some aspects that were already defined, the students then modified them to create broad spaces for the definition of activities, under the premise of constructing the proposal as a group.

A second stage was established with the definition of the proposal’s objectives as: “To disseminate contents of value on activities carried out by the postgraduate community of the University of Santiago, Chile.” This stage evolved through the work of self-defined committees. The committees are dissemination, content generation, editing, and design and production.

2. For information on this good practice, contact consultas.postgrado@usach.cl
The conditions of the health, economic and social crisis meant that this proposal is only disseminated through a website and social networks. Consequently, a website was set up first, and all members of the team could access training on how to use it during this period.

Content generation has been marked by the students’ initiative on topics of interest to them, with profound social connotations.

Topics have been influenced by the social outburst in in Chile in October 2020 and the pandemic situation. This has led to questioning of the system of beliefs and dominant paradigms. In addition, a call was held that received articles from around 40 students, academics and graduates.

Work on editing has been carried out by reviewing the articles, and the design process was planned for the month of October.

In November 2021, the first newsletter was published. Its characteristics are broad participation, strengthening the skills and competencies required to train students of this century in knowledge areas, and respecting the time required for a truly collaborative project.

5.3 Good practice of the Institute for Intercultural Studies, Pontificial Xavierian University Cali(3)

The Institute for Intercultural Studies of the Pontifical Xavierian University Cali, Colombia, offers a master’s degree in Interculturality, Development and Territorial Peace. It is designed to train social leaders who will help to positively transform intercultural territories that have been profoundly hit by violence in Colombia. The aim is to foster students’ skills and competencies, to facilitate their entry into a specific job market. This experience brings together students who are part of the communities and associated with community-based organisations. Cabildos Indígenas or Consejos Comunales, associated with community-based organisations: Cabildos Indígenas or Consejos Comunales, are the main educational gap in the region. This is achieved through: (a) the generation of rigorous comparative research, (b) the identification, experimentation and adaptation of effective educational innovation; and (c) dissemination and collaborative work in a network with education ministries, research centres and civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean. The model of work generates:

- Comparative, rigorous knowledge and evidence that identifies and addresses the main educational gaps in the region.
- Effective, adapted, high-impact innovations that can be scaled up in partnership and coordination with educational agents in the region.

5.4 The SUMMA laboratory of education research(6)

SUMMA is the first Laboratory for Research and Innovation in Education for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was created in 2016 by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) with the support of the education ministries of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. In 2018, the ministries of Guatemala, Honduras and Panama also joined.

The mission of SUMMA, the Laboratory of Educational Innovations, is to guarantee the right to education and reduce educational inequalities, with a teaching and learning process that offers specific competencies and skills. This is achieved through: (a) the generation of rigorous comparative research, (b) the identification, experimentation and adaptation of effective educational innovation; and (c) dissemination and collaborative work in a network with education ministries, research centres and civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean. The model of work generates:

- Networks of collaboration and dissemination of knowledge and innovations.

6. Conclusions

The dramatic pace of the Fourth Industrial Revolution was further accelerated by Covid-19. Considering foreseeable changes and those that are already underway, this has made it necessary to adopt visions and strategies to transform higher education in a context of increasing inequality, where environmental sustainability is threatened, and with a labour market that requires up-to-date professional knowledge and a wide range of skills and competencies to ensure employability (López Segreira, 2019).

If universities want to achieve their missions in this new situation, they must meet the exacting demands of society and its citizens, and not just those of companies and the state.

We cannot yet forecast in depth how higher education will evolve in the various regions and countries of the world. However, we can state that universities will continue to play a relevant role in the construction of the best future possible. We should be at the forefront of technological and disciplinary knowledge and, above all, of ethical values.

References


2.3 Research and Innovation. Towards open, ethical and responsible research and innovation
Of “Lighthouses”, “Living Labs” and the “Wisdom of the Crowd” - Social responsibility beyond research and teaching (an NGO perspective)

Norbert Steinhaus

Abstract

There is a broad consensus that research and innovation (R&I) must be steered towards socially desirable ends, ensuring that science and technology are the driving forces behind social progress. This puts the current R&I system under increasing pressure to become more inclusive and responsive to current and future societal challenges. Although the critical issues of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) have been gaining academic awareness and political support as tools to move European R&I governance forward, there is broad recognition that the engagement of civil society organisations and citizens has been suboptimal in defining R&I priorities. Here it needs to rethink the role of higher education institutions and their contributions to society in a context of rapid transformations and world crises. Citizens all around Europe are already showing increasing interest in participatory activities: their engagement in social movements and voluntary associations as well as science-related activities such as Citizen Science are clear signs of their willingness to be active players in the field. This paper introduces and reflects on the different concepts of co-production of knowledge, knowledge exchange and knowledge mobilisation, such as Community Based Research, Citizen Science or Science Shops.

Introduction

It is the well-known story of the ivory tower. Scientists have locked themselves in, high above the rest of the population. Nearly unreachable and isolated. But even when they leave their ivory tower, they remain misunderstood and disconnected from the rest of the population. Civil society does not see their problems taken seriously. A lack of transparency, poor communication and a lack of skills or opportunities for cross-cutting cooperation ultimately lead to the population’s denial of scientific facts. But isn’t the spherical-supernatural incomprehensibility of science a cliché? Scientific research is, of course, not necessarily compatible with the everyday consciousness of most people anywhere. But neither is the job of a logistics manager at a large department store chain or the investment planning of a savings bank. So, where does the special feature of science come from? From its fundamental function for the community (Ossing, 2018).

Democratising Knowledge

If we want to promote not only excellent but also socially desirable science and technology, it is vital to align the objectives of research and innovation with the needs and values of the societies that support them. This means to involve the whole of society in decisions about the development of science and technology. James Bovard (2016) once said “Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner”. This is a nice picture when thinking of the stakeholder groups to work with in engagement activities: Research, Industry and Civil Society/ Communities.

Keywords

Research & Innovation, RRI, community engagement, stakeholder consultation, Science Shop, CBIR, European Commission, Horizon 2020, community of practice, barriers, constraints, research needs, collaboration, structural change, public engagement, higher education.

Responsible Research and Innovation

Decisions in research and innovation in a European context must consider the principles on which the European Union is founded, i.e., respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities. This was embedded in the Lund Declaration (Swedish Presidency to the EU, 2009) and has served as a clear inspiration for Horizon 2020.

Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) was and still is an attempt to achieve conceptual and practical ways to transform the R&I system in this direction. RRI requires that all stakeholders, including civil society, are responsive to each other and take shared responsibility for the processes and outcomes of research and innovation. This means working together in science education, the definition of research agendas, the conduct of research, access to research results and the application of new knowledge in society, fully respecting the ethical and gender dimension (Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, 2014).

Although the concept of RRI and its key issues have been gaining academic awareness and political support as efficient tools to move forward in addressing the challenges for European R&I governance, as can be seen from various sources. RRI practices are not yet consolidated across Europe’s R&I sector (La Caixa Foundation, 2017, MoRRI consortium, 2018).

Open Science

In 2014, the European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation took the wind out of the sails of the RRI concept and introduced Open Science as a new approach to the scientific process - based on cooperative work and new ways of disseminating knowledge through digital technologies and new collaborative tools. The idea was to reverse a systemic change to the way science and research have been carried out for the last fifty years, shifting from the standard practices of publishing research results in scientific publications towards sharing and using all available knowledge at an earlier stage in the research process (European Commission [EC], 2016). However, Citizen Science as a concept and
A Vision of the Future
The year is 2030. Open Science has become a reality and is offering a whole range of new, unlimited opportunities for research and discovery worldwide. Scientists, citizens, publishers, research institutions, public and private research funders, students and education professionals, as well as companies from around the globe, are sharing an open, virtual environment… (EC, 2016).

Service-Learning
As an educational approach to balance formal instruction and direction with the opportunity to serve in the community, Service-Learning provides a pragmatic, progressive learning experience. Service-learning offers pupils and students immediate opportunities to apply classroom learning to support or enhance the work of local agencies that often exist to effect positive change in the community (Knapp et al., 2010).

Science Shops
The most common definition of Science Shops describes them as entities that provide “independent, participatory research support in response to concerns experienced by civil society” (Leydesdorff & Ward, 2005; Living Knowledge, n.d.). This support often takes the form of collaborative research and/or innovation projects to respond to civil society (mostly Civil Society Organisations, CSOs) needs (Mulder et al., 2006).

Community-based participatory research (CBPR)
Community-based participatory research can be defined as a partnership approach to research that equitably involves community members, organisational representatives, and academic researchers in all research process aspects. It enables all partners to contribute their expertise, with shared responsibility and ownership; it enhances the understanding of a given phenomenon and integrates the knowledge gained with action to improve the health and well-being of community members, such as through interventions and policy change (Israel, et al., 1998, as cited in Detroit URC, 2021).

Norbert Steinhaus
Co-creating competence: Citizen knowledge matters!
The TelRIFICA project applies so-called crowd-mapping: stakeholders participate in the identification of regional needs and priorities by putting a mark on a digital map. By doing so, they support the visualization of robust social information on climate change in local environments. It links Science Shops and Citizen Science. (See Figure 1 and www.terrifica.eu)

Science Shops
Figure 1. TelRIFICA crowd-mapping in Minsk

Project-based learning (PBL)
The PBL format is a student-centred pedagogy in which students learn about a subject through the experience of solving an open-ended problem. Students learn both thinking strategies and domain knowledge. The goals of PBL are to help students develop flexible knowledge, effective problem-solving skills, self-directed learning, effective collaboration skills and intrinsic motivation (EduTopia, 2021).

Public Engagement with Research
Public engagement describes the many ways in which the activities and benefits of higher education and research are shared with and informed by the public. There are already many ongoing inspiring public engagement activities involving universities, research institutes, NGOs and Civil Society Organisations. Much of this work is still under the radar and vulnerable to shifts in funding.

To capture the wisdom of the crowd is at the core of public engagement, the collective knowledge of a group of individuals rather than that of a single expert. In this context, online communities have become an important source of knowledge and new ideas. However, the potential of crowdsourcing as a tool for data analysis to address the increasing problems faced by organisations and institutions in trying to deal with “Big Data” is still not fully explored (Garcia Martinez & Walton, 2014).

All in all, it is about creating value from knowledge, and we have a variety of strategies for participatory ways of knowledge creation, which have emerged in the last 50 years based on specific research contexts and experiences.

From education to engagement - A variety of strategies
Practical project experience and theoretical work have increased opportunities for citizen (or public) engagement, especially in the last two decades. This is done through active involvement in scientific practice (Research and Agenda Setting), discussions about scientific findings and their impact on policy and society (Policy & Social Dialogue) and a better understanding of the scientific process (Education).

In the following paragraphs, different approaches will be described which have stepped into the spotlight of public and policymakers’ interest in recent debates on Science and Society relations.
empowers people by considering them agents who can investigate their own situations. Community input makes the project credible, while the approach as such provides a forum that can bridge cultural differences among participants and helps dismantle the lack of trust in research shown by some communities.

Citizen Science

Citizen Science can be understood as scientific research conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur or non-professional scientists. The core issue of citizen science is the participation of non-regular scientists in knowledge generation. The methodology is also known as crowd science, Civic Science, community science, volunteer monitoring, participatory monitoring or participatory action research (Engage2020 Consortium, 2014).

As there is no universally accepted definition of Citizen Science, special attention has to be given if the term is used to describe either a method (allowing traditional scientific research practices to reach larger scales) or a movement (that democratises the scientific research process by for example restoring public trust in science, re-orienting science toward societal challenges, and installing democratic governance of science), or a social capacity (as a knowledge-producing capacity of society and a path to evidence-based decision-making).

A suitable approach is to categorise Citizen Science according to its openness, along the prototypical steps of a scientific process from formulating research questions to the actual conduct of research and the subsequent analysis based on the research. Who is actually designing the study? Who is collecting the samples? Who is analysing them? And who interprets the data? These questions represent the steps of a classical scientific process.

Depending on the responsibilities for these steps, the models are classified with an increasing degree of participation by the community in the research process. The ‘community consulting model’ encompasses various collaborative settings, from public data-collection, through to a collaborative analysis. The ‘community-based participatory research model’ describes projects where all tasks are conducted by the community, equivalent to participatory action research approaches (Schrögl & Kolleck, 2019).

The strength of the method lies in the rapid collection of large amounts of data, observations and/or ideas for problem-solving. Besides this “functional” benefit for research, citizen science can help strengthen ties between science and society and raise awareness about scientific work in the wider public. The direct involvement of citizens in research, which can help make people learn about what research implies in terms of methods, skills and reasoning, is another strength of the method.

It can be criticised that the method does not usually imply the influence of laypeople on project design and is not per se tailored towards engaging people in problem definitions and setting research objectives. However, it might be possible to include these as well in the case of research done on socially defined problems.

The White Paper on Citizen Science, therefore, demands an educational plan on key aspects of Citizen Science that encompasses all phases of the life-long learning process, from early childhood to continuing adult education, which should also provide educational strategies for Citizen Science actors and address, among others, scientific procedures, technical issues, community management, sociological aspects of learning methodologies, as well as specific training on Citizen Science methodologies (Serrano Sanz et al., 2015).

The politically important question to answer is how does citizen science actually strengthen ties between science and society? To do so, it would have to reach out to less educated and more sceptical circles. To all appearances, it has hardly succeeded in doing this so far. Although there is only scattered information on the sociodemographic characteristics of the researching citizenry, everything indicates that up to now, older people with a higher level of education have formed the majority. Meanwhile, citizen science projects for school classes are striving to connect with the younger generation. A far more difficult task for science and education policy will be to reach other target groups outside the established middle-class educational milieu (Krischke, 2021).

Living Labs

Living Labs are defined as user-centred, open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings. Living Labs are both practice-driven organisations that facilitate and foster open, collaborative innovation, as well as real-life environments or arenas where both open innovation and user innovation processes can be studied and subject to experiments and where new solutions are developed. Living Labs operate as intermediaries between citizens, research organisations, companies, cities and regions for joint value co-creation, rapid prototyping or validation to scale up innovation and businesses. They involve user communities, not only as observed subjects but also as a source of knowledge, creating value by contributing to the co-creation and exploration of emerging ideas, breakthrough scenarios, innovative concepts. They have common elements but multiple different implementations (European Network of Living Labs [ENoLL], 2021).

Living Labs are developed as user-centric, open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings. Living Labs are both practice-driven organisations that facilitate between citizens, research organisations, companies, cities and regions for joint value co-creation, rapid prototyping or validation to scale up innovation and businesses. They involve user communities, not only as observed subjects but also as a source of knowledge, creating value by contributing to the co-creation and exploration of emerging ideas, breakthrough scenarios, innovative concepts. They have common elements but multiple different implementations (European Network of Living Labs [ENoLL], 2021).

So what? What do we need in the future?

In all our activities, starting either from the academic context or from a non-academic environment, we must learn from models that already worked with an interactive, joint-learning and co-creative approach. We must look out for “lighthouses” as seeds for replication. By establishing networks of “lighthouses” or “living labs” for different Sustainable Development Goals, national research strategies or local needs, we can develop positive environments and encompass multidisciplinary research to bring together citizens and heterogeneous stakeholders to co-create solutions, share knowledge and develop skills.

Figure 2: The Wisdom of the Crowd: Diversity and Independence of Opinion
Resources


The Emergence of the Global University

David B. Audretsch, Erik E. Lehmann & Jonah M. Otto

Abstract

This paper explains the constituents of the Global University, what differentiates it from its predecessor, the reasons for its emergence and why it is likely that global universities will acquire competitive advantages in the future. The global university represents a sharp departure from the conventional Humboldt university model in that the source of value is not dictated by traditional academic disciplines or “knowledge for its own sake”, but rather, as has been the case for the entrepreneurial university run by a broad range of external stakeholders. However, these stakeholders have an increasingly global perspective, in which students, faculty, research and societal impact are not geographically bounded by city, regional or national borders.

Commodified education, research and societal impact will rarely be able to compete in the globalised market for higher education services/products. Instead, the competitive advantage for the Global University emerges in services and products that resist commodification, in that they are firstly based on authentic relationships. This paper provides relevant examples of best practices for globalising teaching, research and social impact. The paper concludes that the successful Global Universities of tomorrow will prioritise authentic relationships to provide unique and compelling value to global stakeholders.

Introduction: Defining the Global University and its Mission

In the past decade, there has been a trend to label universities acting beyond their national borders as ‘global universities’. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, large swathes of the world have become truly global for the first time – global, in the sense that these interactions and markets have become globally connected and interrelated. Since their emergence in the 11th century, universities have been part of the internationalisation and globalisation of the world. While internationalisation has become a major strategic focus of universities in recent decades, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, global universities have become a pervasive phenomenon in recent years, see the attention from media, academia and policymakers around the globe (Figure 1). Although the term ‘international university’ has been popular since the 1960s, the term ‘global university’ has entered media nomenclature mainly in the new millennium.

Figure 1: Mentions of Key University Descriptors in Mass Media

There has been extensive debate in higher education literature attempting to delineate the scope of the term ‘global university’, in contrast to other previously mentioned identifiers such as ‘international’ and ‘multinational’. Some scholars have tied the definition to notions of citizenship, arguing that universities that belong within a particular nation, as technically determined by their charter, cannot claim to be global universities since they do not officially represent the entire world (Ayoubi, 2019). This reasoning then argues that a vast majority of universities are either multinatio nal, international or national universities, depending on their locational classification in their charters as well as their student, staff and curricular composition (Ayoubi, 2019). Others take a much broader view, claiming that a global university is an institution that operates within a globalised marketplace for students, researchers and knowledge through many of the modern strategies and operations of university internationalisation (Wildavsky, 2012). Following in this vein, McGillivray et al provided a nuanced definition at the Global University Symposium in 2010:

“A global university pays attention to the trends in economics, science, technology and the movement of goods and people and capital across transnational borders. The institutions that take steps to capture those opportunities are, in my view, global institutions (McGillivray et al., 2010).”

This paper incorporates and builds upon these findings, aiming to explore the inner workings and motivations of the global university as a model for university mission achievement (de Wit, 2015). The aforementioned positions of Wildavsky (2012) and McGillivray et al. (2010), the theoretical works of de Wit (2000; 2002), Knight (2004) and Altbach and Knight (2007) establishing the origins and motivations of international higher education to improve university performance and the interpretation of entrepreneurial university studies summarised in Otto et al. (2021), all contribute to this work’s understanding of the emergence of the modern global university. The present study moves beyond the rise of the global university to also determine what the global university manifests and how it displays it, thus accounting for the aforementioned curricular, student, staff and citizenship stances of Ayoubi (2019) and Beelen and Jones (2015), as well as Hudzik’s theoretical work connecting internationalisation to all university functions (2011, 2015) and also the best practices for sustainable university international partnerships established by Sandström and Weiner (2016) and Hosselt and Thampapillai (2018).

This study contributes to existing literature by positing that the rise of the global university as a functional model is higher education’s response to broader globalisation trends. This work also fills a research gap by asserting that the global university creates and distributes value to its stakeholders through relationship-based partnerships that facilitate enhanced achievement of the university missions of teaching, research and service to society. Here it is argued that within the competitive global landscape of higher education, universities must assume the identity of ‘global universities’ to rise above the zero-sum notion of competition. They must cultivate meaningful, relational partnerships internationally to improve service delivery to their stakeholders, thereby becoming more attractive and competitive through cooperation in the worldwide contest for the best students, researchers, funding and other resources. These relational partnerships provide the foundation that universities need to pursue the vast array of teaching, research and service performance opportunities that are enhanced through international collaboration (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Otto et al., 2021). Within this framework, the successful implementation of a global university ethos is vital for a university to be internationally relevant amongst peers – a prerequisite in the modern higher education ecosystem. Therefore, global universities connect with other global universities to create value for their stakeholders, something they cannot create alone.

With an understanding of the global university explained, this work continues by detailing its evolution, how it creates and distributes value and how this is measured and assessed—Concluding with a summary of key findings.

The Evolution of the Global University: from Human Capital and the Humboldtian model to Internationalisation and Division of Labour, to the Emergence of the Global University

For simplicity, three stages in the evolution of universities can be identified. Firstly, the human capital and labour mobility stage, where the focus of universities was on offering a focal point for students and academics. The second stage is characterised by the division of labour among universities in an international context, exchanging students and scholars. In the third stage, universities truly cooperate in the global context. See Figure 2 for a graphic depiction of this progression.
However, in defining their relevant stakeholders, universities have diversified in the last century, particularly Anglo-Saxon countries in the early 20th century and the shift from public to private finance via tuition fees. Following a ‘business model approach’ to maximise revenues, these universities increased their efforts to attract students from abroad to increase revenues from fees (see Table 1) to help with government funding shortfalls. This has drastically shaped the geographical expansion of universities worldwide. A third player has entered the landscape in the last few decades: Asian universities, Chinese in particular, have also started to expand beyond their national borders.

Geographical expansion, the evolution from national to international and global universities, has become a strategic decision of universities and governments, leading to competition for high quality and affluent students beyond the local delimitation. Together with tuition fees, donations and investments made by industry, universities have also become a major source of finance, expecting returns on their investments. Consequently, universities have invested in cross-border internalisation in several ways, such as close cooperation with partnering universities, contractual programs or direct investments with their own subsidies to satisfy the needs of industry and the students. As globalisation has exploded, the ‘war for talent’ has become the slogan, resulting in an increased demand for talent from industry and private organisations. As universities as well as fee-paying students and providers of talent. Thus, explanation of the global university can be seen in the current and future demands of their main stakeholders or those who perceive them as such.

As every country feels it is a part of the global society and economy, policymakers, university leaders and governmental officials prefer their institutions to be branded as global universities. This branding has thus become part of the university business model strategy, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries where it can serve as a market signal. This is exemplified by Global University Systems B.V. (GUS), a private limited company registered in the Netherlands, founded in its present form and name in 2013 by Russian-born British entrepreneur Aaron Etingen, who serves as chairman, CEO and majority stockholder. As a corporate group, GUS owns and operates several private for-profit colleges and universities that attract fee-paying international students in the UK, Canada, Israel and Europe, as well as other brands and companies in the education sector. The consequences of these market mechanisms impact global talent development, the resources of colleges and universities, and labour markets in the United States and the countries sending students (Bound et al., 2021).

Despite these commercial aims, there has been a paradigm shift in Anglo-Saxon and European universities towards value-driven concepts - particularly of public and societal value. An interest in social value is growing, towards value-driven concepts - particularly of public and societal value. An interest in social value is growing, towards value-driven concepts - particularly of public and societal value. An interest in social value is growing, towards value-driven concepts - particularly of public and societal value. An interest in social value is growing, towards value-driven concepts - particularly of public and societal value. An interest in social value is growing, towards value-driven concepts - particularly of public and societal value. An interest in social value is growing, towards value-driven concepts - particularly of public and societal value. An interest in social value is growing, particularly after WW2, shifting towards the demands of industry and customers within the university business model approach – the students (Otto et al., 2021). Of particular note are the emergence of business schools in Anglo-Saxon Countries in the early 20th century and the divide of labor in research and education. Global cooperation and ecosystems have converted to solutions for society.

Thus, the emergence of the global university goes far beyond the GUS as a profit-maximising organisation with worldwide subsidiaries. As seen in this paper, the global university constitutes a logical evolution of universities as the primary source of a global knowledge production function, generating knowledge spillovers to solve global problems. Even when recent developments such as Brexit, populist nationalism and the Covid-19 pandemic have pushed the education towards de-globalisation (Otto, 2021), the globalised university tends to dominate the higher education landscape more than ever. With the global contagion and resulting social and economic problems, crisis-management has also had to become global. Modern, worldwide challenges require global cooperation instead of fragmented national responses. Therein lies the call for the global university.

How Global Universities Leverage Relational Partnerships to Create & Distribute Value

As the key driver of a global university’s international value creation, partnerships with outside institutions, such as other universities, governments, NGOs, etc., serve as the platform for designing and implementing the programmatic portion of internationalisation (Hoseth & Thampapillai, 2018; Otto, 2021; Otto et al., 2021; Sandström & Weiner, 2016). These partnerships foster positive performance outcomes, including language learning, student and staff mobility, international experiential learning, multinational research consortia, curricular development, etc., thus allowing each partner to uniquely expand and improve upon its missions of teaching, research and service to society by
implementing the programs that these bilateral and multilateral partnerships enable (Hoseuth & Thampapillai, 2018; Hudzik, 2012). In this way, global universities improve their performance and create better value.

Since partnerships themselves are not a new or novel phenomenon, global universities must execute them in the most effective way possible to maximise benefits and gain competitive advantages for all participants. Despite the myriad opportunities for performance enhancement and expansion listed above, previous studies have generally concluded that developing a high quantity of partnerships is not the best strategy for realising these goals (Hoseuth & Thampapillai, 2018; Sandström & Weimer, 2016). Global universities must be more strategic in partnership selection, focusing on quality, by seeking out other global university partners that can achieve multiple internationalisation value-creation objectives simultaneously (Sandström & Weimer, 2016). This has been accomplished through relational partnership building, where the global universities involved seek more profound and nuanced partnerships built upon mutual interests and values, where institutions engage with one another through multiple and diverse programs, resulting in an entire activity portfolio within the partnership. These nuanced and multidimensional collaborations generate knowledge spillovers through their inherent interdisciplinarity, further enhancing stakeholder value (Lehmann et al., 2020). Naturally, relational partnerships are then more sustainable as well, since they are deemed to be employing these concepts in such a way as to differentiate themselves from competitors, particularly their local peers (U.S. News and World Report, 2021). While there is certainly debate regarding the nature, composition, use and methodology behind global university ranking and evaluation systems (Marginson, 2007; Rauhvargers, 2011; van Vught & Ziegele, 2011), the U.S. News and World Report utilise the above rationale to assess the top 1,500 global universities with select metrics which measure academic and research performance as well as regional, national and international reputation (U.S. News and World Report, 2021). The geographic distribution of the top 1,500 global universities shows the individual countries that currently excel in this arena (see Table 2), and a look at the rankings, dating back to the origin of this system nearly a decade ago, shows how the concept has gained prominence internationally over time (U.S. News and World Report, 2021). While the U.S. News and World Report’s findings are generally highly regarded, other points of view suggest that measurement and assessment of global universities may develop and become more nuanced over time to more adequately represent the effectiveness of leveraging relational partnerships to create value and mutual benefits, regardless of institutional reputation, national/cultural context or prestige writ large (Marginson, 2007; Rauhvargers, 2011; van Vught & Ziegele, 2011).

In the latter case, the relationship between Indiana University and the University of Augsburg is further proof of this point. Directly after the outbreak of the pandemic, both universities were able to rely on their shared trust and history to swiftly alter plans and move international programs online, utilising new platforms and tools to continue creating value for stakeholders by keeping international education opportunities alive. Through the relational partnership, these global universities were able to pivot into a digital learning and engagement space to continue delivering student exchange programming, student group projects, consultancy services for external organisations, guest lectures, etc. This allowed the partners to continue to create value for their existing stakeholders in teaching, research and service and expand their reach and attract interest from new audiences and participants.

**How Global Universities are Measured and Assessed**

Understanding that the goal and orientation of global universities is geared towards utilising relational partnerships and networks to improve mission achievement in teaching, research and service to society, it follows that at the top level, they are assessed by their overall performance in these categories. While universities of all sizes and reputations are also able to assert themselves as global universities, elite research institutions are deemed to be employing these concepts in such a way as to differentiate themselves from competitors, particularly their local peers (U.S. News and World Report, 2021). How Global Universities are Measured and Assessed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of universities in the top 1,500</th>
<th>Percentage of universities in the top 1,500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. https://international.oneill.indiana.edu/
2. https://www.uni-augsburg.de/de/fakultaet/areas/pro/fw/lehmann/kummer-school/
3. https://assets.uni-augsburg.de/media/filer_public/5c/0f/f5cff01850-7236-4039-b671-7553554c4ace/file/inside_view_special_issue.pdf
5. https://www.uni-augsburg.de/de/fakultaet/areas/pro/fw/lehmann/kummer-school/
The Future of the Global University

The recent Covid-19 pandemic emphasizes that the world has been facing many natural epidemics or outbreaks with global health concerns in the last two decades, e.g., SARS virus in 2003, Bird Flu virus in 2008 and Ebola in 2010, all requiring global solutions. While every nation maintains and applies its unique policies and mechanisms to stay healthy, cope with inequality, handle migration, etc., global solutions are necessary. These must be based on knowledge created in global knowledge production functions within global ecosystems that have global universities at their core. While much of the recent debate is about joint knowledge production and spillovers to solve natural pandemics, global universities are also looking back to their ‘Humboldtian’ roots in the sense that they generate knowledge and public value beyond the commercialising of knowledge spillovers in the short term. To do so, they expand their reach, influence and effectiveness by building relational partnerships with one another that allows them to achieve more for their stakeholders together than what they can on their own. While recent nationalist and protectionist movements may hinder the mobility of students and scientists today, they will not impede the continued emergence of the global university in the future.

References


Knowledge Democracy and Higher Education

Budd L. Hall and Rajesh Tandon

The call for decolonisation of knowledge and higher education grows. In South Africa, this call has been for ending what has been experienced as a form of intellectual apartheid in South African Universities where the dominant theoretical foundations of the academic disciplines are of European origin mostly written by white European or North American authors. In Canada, one of the authors of the discussion focuses on how higher education institutions are subtly transformed by Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and teaching. In India, the calls for a decolonising project can be heard from voices of civil society and social movement structures as well as directly from the urban poor, women victims of violence, Tribal peoples and others labelled as subaltern.

Our contribution to this important world report consists of our own engagement with the concepts and principles of knowledge democracy, the origins of the domination of Eurocentric knowledge systems, and stories about what higher education institutions in various parts of the world are doing to address the challenges of knowledge democracy. An extended discussion of these ideas can be found in our recent book on Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy (Hall & Tandon, 2021).

Knowledge Democracy

Knowledge democracy refers to an interrelationship of phenomena. First, it acknowledges the importance of multiple epistemologies or ways of knowing, such as organic, spiritual and land-based systems, frameworks arising from our social movements, and the knowledge of the marginalised or excluded everywhere, or what is sometimes referred to as subaltern knowledge.

Secondly, it affirms that knowledge is both created and represented in multiple forms, including text, image, numbers, story, music, drama, poetry, ceremony, mediation and more. Third, and fundamentally, our thinking about knowledge democracy, is understanding that knowledge is a powerful tool for acting in social movements and elsewhere to deepen democracy and to fight for a fairer and healthier world. And finally, knowledge democracy is about a balance between providing open access for sharing knowledge so that everyone who needs knowledge will have access to it and the control of knowledge by community and Indigenous knowledge keepers. Knowledge democracy is about intentionally linking values of equity, justice, fairness and action to the process of understanding, creating and using knowledge. But before exploring the implications of knowledge democracy for higher education, let us share the dark story of how the knowledge systems of 15th and 16th Century Europe, emanating from the Renaissance, became dominant throughout the world.

The four epistemicides of the long 16th Century

We are grateful to the work of Grosfoguel and Dussel, in addition to de Sousa Santos, who have helped us to understand how the ideas of white men from just a few countries such as Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA came to dominate the world of knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2013, Dussel, 1993). How and when were the colonial structures of knowledge created? How have we arrived at this point in time when any of us could be parachuted into any university in the world, settled into a social science lecture and be at home with the authors and ideas being discussed?

To understand this, we have to look at what Grosfoguel has called the “Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century” (Grosfoguel, 2013). It seems that the story of dispossessing people from the ownership of their ideas in the community began with the creation of mediaeval universities that brought ecclesiastical power to the new universities was just the start of our knowledge story. Grosfoguel mentions four distinct stories of epistemicide together, which have almost always been treated as separate historical processes. In doing so, we learn in a powerful manner how intellectual colonisation emerged. The four epistemicides are the conquest of the Andalous, the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Europe, the conquest of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas started by the Spanish, continued by the French and the English and still underway today in the contemporary Western Hemisphere. The creation of the slave trade, resulting in millions killed in Africa and in Asia and being totally de-humanised by enslavement in the Americas, was a third genocidal knowledge conquest. Finally, the killing of millions of Indo-European women, mostly by burning them at the stake as witches because of their knowledge practices non-European knowledge systems and knowledge transfer from Europe being from the periphery of an earlier dominant Islamic centre of intellectual power to taking centre stage. But in a historical irony, Spain and Portugal, the leading military and intellectual powers of the 15th Century, have been shut out of the post 16th Century Northern European monopoly of knowledge.

What is important to understand is that these four conquests are both military and epistemological/ideological. At the height of the Andalus Empire in Europe, the city of Cordoba had a 100,000-book library. This was at a time when the largest Christian intellectual centres in Europe would have had libraries of 5-10,000 books. The Spanish burned the library in Cordoba and elsewhere, also destroying most of the codices in the Mayan, Inca and Aztec empires. Women’s knowledge, which was largely oral, was simply silenced, as was the knowledge of Africa. African slaves were portrayed as non-human, incapable of Western-style thought. Hegel, for example, commenting on Africans, says, “Among negroes it is the case that consciousness has not attained even the intuition of any sort of objectivity…the negro is the man a beast (Lectures 218)” (as quoted in Dussel, 1993). The continued linguicide of Indigenous languages in North America and throughout the world today is evidence that the patterns established through conquest in the 16th Century are still deeply entrenched in our minds and most certainly in our higher education institutions.

There are so many examples of how the western monopoly of knowledge has distorted our higher education institutions that we only need to take a look at each and every university in Canada, starting with my own University of Victoria. But simply for illustrative purposes, let me share some thoughts from several African scholars about how they see the situation. Lekabekang, Phalane, Dalindebo (South Africa), Odara-Hoppers (South Africa-Uganda), Wangoolang (Uganda) and Ezeyanya (Rwanda) have written/worked extensively on the importance of the reconceptualisation of ideas from our historical traditions. “Institutions of higher education in South Africa were (and still are) copyscats whose primary function was (and still is) to serve and promote Western colonial values” (Lekabekang, 2006). Similarly, Ezeyanya adds, “In Africa, the research agenda, curriculum and ‘even’ conceptual frameworks should be continuously re-examined …with the aim of eschewing all manifestations of neo-colonial underpinnings and emphasising indigenous ideas” (Ezeyanya, 2011).

Ecologies of knowledge and cognitive justice

Boaventura de Sousa Santos observes that we have created an intellectual abyss in the realm of knowledge, which hinders human progress. He speaks of abyssal thinking, which he notes as follows: “Abysmal science the monopoly of the universal distinction between true and false to the detriment of […] alternati- ve bodies of knowledge” (de Sousa Santos, 2007). The global dividing line he is referring to is the one that separates the visible constituents of knowledge and power from the invisible. Popular, lay, plebeian, Indigenous, the knowledge of the aboriginal peoples and more cannot be fitted into any of the ways of knowing on ‘this side of the line’. They exist on the other side of the ‘abyss’, the other side of the line. And because of this invisibility, they are beyond truth or falsehood. The ‘other side of the line’ is the realm of beliefs, opinions, intuitive or subjective understandings, which at best may become “objects or raw material for scientific inquiry” (de Sousa Santos, 2007). The author establishes a strong link between values and aspiration in saying, “Global social injustice is therefore intimately linked to global cognitive injustice. The struggle for global social justice will, therefore, also be a struggle for cognitive justice.” (de Sousa Santos, 2007)

Shiv Visvanathan contributes to this discourse expanding the concept of “cognitive justice”.

1. We acknowledge earlier publication of some of these ideas in Hall and Tandon (2007) Decolonisation of Knowledge, Epistemicide, Knowledge Democracy in Higher Education.
“The idea of cognitive justice sensitises us not only to forms of knowledge but also to the diverse communities of problem-solving. Therefore, what one offers is a democratic imagination with a non-market, non-competitive view of the world, where conversation, reciprocity and translation create knowledge not as an expert, almost zero-sum view of the world but as a collaboration of memories, legacies, heritages, a manifold heuristic of problem-solving, where citizens take both power and knowledge into their own hands.”

“These forms of knowledge, especially the ideas of complexity, represent new forms of power-sharing and problem-solving that go beyond the limits of voice and resistance. They are empowering because they transcend the standard hegemonic cartographies of power and innovation. By incorporating the dynamics of knowledge into democracy, we reframe the axiomatics of knowledge based on hospitality, community, non-violence, humility and a multiple idea of time, where the citizen as trustee and inventor visualises and creates a new self-referential idea of democracy around actual communities of practice.” (Visvanathan, 2009)

The Indigenous Ways of Knowing at The University of Victoria (Canada)

The University of Victoria has seen steady growth in efforts to either indigenise or decolonise the university. They built a First People’s House in the centre of the university campus. Indigenous Community leaders and Indigenous Faculty and staff at the University jointly manage this house. They have created a position as Director of Indigenous Academics and Community Engagement and an Assistant Vice-President for Indigenous Affairs. But perhaps the most powerful contributions have been the creation of Indigenous academic programmes in Law, Social Work, Education, Nursing, Governance, Humanities, Counselling, Linguistics and the Social Sciences. The most recent programmes created are BA and MA degrees in Indigenous Language Revitalisation. Along with the development of Indigenous academic programming, there has been a deepening of relations between the University of Victoria and the surrounding Indigenous communities where the university is located on Vancouver Island. Before accepting his university inauguration as the new President of the University of Victoria in 2021, President Kevin Hall asked for formal permission from the surrounding First Nations communities to live and work on their land. A ceremony organised by the territorial First Nations communities was held, and the protocol of giving the President permission was granted. This was an unprecedented act in Canadian university history.

Knowledge Democracy in Practice

The UNGS is a small public university created in 1992 to meet local and regional education needs not covered by traditional academic offerings. Its main campus is in Malvinas Argentina, a locality in the Province of Buenos Aires marked by high levels of poverty and other related conditions. Since its inception, the UNGS has facilitated the convergence of research, teaching and community services to contribute to the socio-economic development of the local communities. Relationship with the local context is a key component of the UNGS identity and has determined its origin, strategic project, institutional design and ongoing development. (2)

To encourage research partnerships and engagements, the UNGS has established the Community Services Centre to manage, promote and disseminate local and regional development projects that connect students, faculty members and a variety of stakeholders (governments, private firms and CSOs) in an institutionalised manner. (3) This unit integrates the service-learning and outreach initiatives presented by UNGS professors that impact on key academic functions. Thus, the three principles that structure the institutional identity of the UNGS (i.e., research, teaching and community services) are embedded in the development of training courses and diplomas for non-academic stakeholders, external consulting services, basic and applied research and local development projects that contribute to the strengthening of science and technology. These community services are offered to achieve two critical goals: (i) to provide solutions to problems identified by civil society actors, (ii) to improve the entire process of knowledge production and the existing training and teaching practices within the UNGS.

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE GENERAL SARMIENTO (UNGS, Argentina)

Te Whare Wananga O Awanuiarangi (Aotearoa/
New Zealand)

Te Whare Wananga O Awanuiarangi is a Maori University headed by Sir Hirangaroa Smith, a distinguished Maori scholar. The mission statement of this visionary institution is as follows:

“We are committed to explore and define the depths of knowledge in Aotearoa, to enable us to re-enrich ourselves, to know who we are, to know where we came from and to claim our place in the future. We take this journey of discovery, of reclamation of sovereignty, establishing the equality of Maori intellectual tradition alongside the knowledge base of others. Thus, we can stand proudly together with all people of the world. This is in part the dream and vision of Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiarangi.” (4)

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Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra (India)

Associated with the Radhasoami sect of Hinduism, Dayalbagh Educational Institute (DEI) is located in Agra, India, within the heart of a colony of 3000 followers of the Radhasoami faith. The colony provides a space for living together irrespective of caste, creed, colour and the following of a devotional life integrating meditative practices, collective labour in the farm and dairy, use of solar electricity and cooking, a collective kitchen, rainwater harvesting, free medical services in both allopathic and Indian systems of medicine. The DEI is a value-based and holistic education institution that combines work-related vocational and crafts teaching with leading-edge scientific programmes. It is an institution where the holistic value-based teachings of Radhosaami Hinduism live in respectful harmony with western scientific knowledge. In Dayalbagh, we see an attempt to establish a new order where women and men live and work in harmony serving humanity. (5)

The Committee of Entities in the Struggle Against Hunger and for a Full Life (COEP) (Brazil)

COEP is a national social mobilisation network established in Rio de Janeiro in 1993 to mobilise institutional and public action to support the popular movement against hunger and poverty. The network’s membership now includes more than 1000 member organisations such as public enterprises, non-governmental organisations, private-sector firms, and government departments. COEP was created by a small group of activists led by sociologist Herbert de Souza, known as ‘Betinho’. Together with Luis Pinguelli Rosa of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and André Spitz of Furnas, the electricity utility, Betinho invited the presidents of the major public entities to discuss their integration into the ‘Struggle against Hunger and Misery’. Soon, over 30 enterprises representing sectors such as banking, energy, telecommunications, health, agriculture and education declared their membership.

3. See: https://www.ungs.edu.ar/mtra_centro_servicios
4. See: http://www.wananga.or.nz/about/whawi
5. See: https://www.deli.ac.in/deli/
The Knowledge for Change Global Consortium

The Knowledge for Change Global Consortium (K4C) is an international consortium of community-based research hubs based on principles of knowledge democracy. There are currently 22 K4C hubs in Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Ireland, Italy, Canada, South Africa, Colombia, Cuba, Uganda, Tanzania and the UK (UNESCO Chair CBR-SR, 2020). Each hub is a partnership between an academic institution and a community organisation. The hubs provide training opportunities for young people in academic and community settings. The K4C Global Consortium is an initiative of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. The K4C Consortium aims to develop research capacities for the co-creation of knowledge through collective action by community groups and academics working together in training hubs around the world on issues related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as Indigenous wellbeing, water governance, poverty and inequality, climate action, gender equality and violence against women. K4C accomplishes this through a decentralised training structure (Lepore, 2020).

Replacing English with Arabic -Qatar University (Qatar)

Emna Belkhiriya, Mazhar Al- Zooby and Arslan Ayari share their story of replacing English with Arabic as the language of instruction at Qatar University (2021). This is, in many ways, a remarkable story, as Arabic has become more and more dominant as a language of knowledge sharing worldwide. But English is also the means by which linguistic, the killing or diminishing of other languages and epistemicide, the disappearing of other language systems occurs. They note that the rapid economic development in the Gulf regions of the Arabic-speaking world has created a situation where native Arabic-speaking populations are becoming a minority in their own countries. Sensitive to the challenges of linguistic subordination, the State of Qatar decreed in 2012 a change in the language of instruction at the nation’s flagship University, Qatar University. The goals of the decree were to preserve Qatari culture and strengthen Arabic as a language of knowledge production and transfer. The impact of the language change in Qatar for the strengthening of Qatari culture and identity has implications for higher education institutions in all parts of the non-English speaking world.

Continued Relevance of Tagore’s Approach to Higher Education (India)

In the late 19th and early 20th Century, the Indian Nobel Prize-Winning Poet, Rabindranath Tagore lent his remarkable creative mind to the idea of a higher education institution based on Bengali cultural values, a land-based pedagogical philosophy and an organic relationship with the communities in the area where he lived. In doing so, he insisted on respect for the knowledge keepers in those communities. Visva-Bharati, the institution of higher education that he founded, is still very much in operation. Tagore’s work predates our contemporary discourse of knowledge democracy and is, in fact, a foundation around which our current thinking evolves. Sarita Anand (2021) shares the story of the Visva-Bharati as it is structured today. Arguably the most distinctive characteristics of contemporary Visva-Bharati practices are the numerous festivals, ceremonies, marketplaces, and regularised interactions between the communities in the region and the lives of students and academic staff. Most of these festivals and events were originally created by Tagore and continue today. The principles of humanism, sustainability, self-reliance, respect for the knowledge and skills of community members provide us with how Tagore’s ideas remain a powerful inspiration for us all.

Conclusions

Higher Education is facing the most profound challenges to its purposes, structures and ways of work since its first emergence as mainly an expression of post-renaissance European thinking. The climate crisis, the failure of neoliberal capitalism to provide equitable distribution of wealth, the resurgence of land-based knowledge and calls for decolonisation of knowledge will not disappear. The past two years of the pandemic has once again raised the debate of continued relevance of science, research and knowledge. Struggling to share open access data from field studies, scientists began to realise the ‘politics of evidence’ as multiple treatments for the virus were being promoted by different interest groups. The public scrutiny of science, scientists and their enterprises during this pandemic has demonstrated the societal anchoring of knowledge production and dissemination. The continued politics of vaccine production, certification and distribution across the world of 7 billion humans has reinforced calls for ‘dismantling’ the pursuit of the knowledge economy. Millions worldwide have been returning to indigenous wisdom, experiential knowledge and grandmothers’ recipes during the pandemic and now facing the impact of climate change. HEIs are expected to play important roles in the search for sustainable solutions and universal wellbeing. Knowledge democracy represents one set of ideas and principles which will be part of the great turning ahead.

Social Infrastructures: Engaging with Communities for Change (South Africa)

Benita Moolman and Janice McMillan, in a recent publication (2021), shared a case study of their experience teaching an undergraduate course on Engineering and Built Environment at the University of Cape Town. They contextualised the course within a backdrop of education as a form of colonial violence in South African history. Knowledge co-creation, community-engaged learning and social justice are noted as key components of the pedagogical design of the course. The course consists of two basic parts. The first part is on critical interrogation of concepts and practices of transformative adult education and community engagement. The second part is based on challenges facing cities and communities in the region. Students are understood to be learners, emerging professionals and active citizens. In their conclusion, the authors note, “A more critical, decolonial lens, shaping processes of knowledge co-creation and framed by social justice principles is needed to inform teaching and learning practice in higher education” (Moolman & McMillan, 2021)

Education Outside the Classroom: University Javeriana (Colombia)

James Cuenc Morales and Claudia Lucia Mora Motta (2021) tell us of their experience at the Universidad Javeriana Cali with the FORJA, a community-based learning strategy whereby students work in communities to strengthen their roles as allies in co-responsibility for community change. Working in the three territories of Buga, Pance and Commune 18. Students work with community members and community organisations to identify projects that address fundamental inequality and exclusion issues. They admit that many academics still believe in the superiority of university-based knowledge but that the FORJA course environment is provides a space for recognising the knowledge that those living and working in the community hold. The FORJA strategy is proving to be a space of transformative energy and knowledge democratisation for students, academics and community members.

Build L. Hall and Rajesh Tandon
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Open Science: Observations for Universities as Agents of Paradigm Change

Eva Méndez and Núria Bautista-Puig

Abstract

Universities are fundamental riches for research and knowledge generation. Ensuring that the results of research are freely accessible, and promoting a more collaborative and participatory science, is essential to improving the effectiveness of RH systems, and to opening up Universities’ knowledge to the society that sustains them. Open Science implies a new paradigm, promoted by the European Commission and embraced in November 2021 by all UNESCO countries, the aim of which is to move from ‘publish as quickly as possible’ to ‘share as soon as possible’. This document characterises Open Science and includes fundamental reflections for its implementation by Universities, taking into account the key role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the effective shift to a new research paradigm, providing examples, initiatives and pointing out the main problems that researchers face in putting Open Science into practice. However, also reflected here is the commitment of many universities and university alliances to Open Science, particularly in Europe, through the creation of the new European Research Area (ERA), in which OS is a structural element.

1. Introduction. Collaboration, equity and sustainability for a global Open Science (OS)

Research and Innovation (R&I) play a fundamental role in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and their results are a vital asset for creating a better society. Research is becoming increasingly complex, digital, interdisciplinary, data-driven, dependent on large-scale computing capabilities and highly competitive. Digital technologies, in particular the World Wide Web, enable distributed collaborative research behaviour (Dawson et al., 2008) and the possibility to communicate knowledge immediately, transparently, collaboratively, openly and globally. The Web, and the openness of research and innovation processes and collaboration, provide an opportunity to envisage a promising transformation of the way we do science. Despite this, the way we conduct, publish, fund and evaluate research has not changed since the 20th century (Méndez, 2021).

In universities, we have been talking about open science for many years now, but always as a serious concept. OS policies and mandates, until quite recently, focused solely on Open Access (OA) to scientific publications, and often conflicted with national policies and with universities’ other underlying interests such as rankings, which dominate policies and behaviours, pushing researchers towards the traditional “publish or perish” and subjecting them to the tyranny of 20th-century metrics and the business of scientific publishers.

HEIs are key institutions in the 2030 Agenda[1]. One of the biggest challenges facing universities in the 21st century is how to effectively manage their efforts to solve societal problems, such as those tackled through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in an increasingly complex, competitive and changing global environment (Păunescu et al., 2022). OS is also an essential enabler of the 2030 Agenda[2], and can be seen as a concrete way to reduce inequalities (SDG 10) and leave no one behind. It must also be adapted to universities in less developed countries where they do not have the funding needed for research. Investments should create a virtuous circle in which changes in research outcomes generate more funding in the long term (Orne, 2020). “Failure to address structural inequalities directly means that those who are already privileged will see their advantages increase, especially because they have greater influence over the way Open Science is implemented” (Ross-Hellauer, 2022).


2. See: Towards Global Open Science: Core Enabler of the UN 2030 Agenda: https://research.un.org/conferences/OpenScienceUN
2. The concept of Open Science, and challenges for universities

2.1 Open Science: a new global paradigm for research and innovation

OS is a new way of conceiving research through collaborative work, openness and transparency in all stages of research, and bringing science closer to society more effectively. It requires a radical transformation in the way research is conducted, and requires the current model to undergo a paradigm shift (Anglada & Abadal, 2018). OS emerged in the fields of economic history and the sociology of science, which focus on the economic dimension of knowledge and intellectual capitalism in the late 17th century. In the sociology of science, the principle of openness is seen as inherent to academic activity and can be traced back to the original precepts underpinning the conduct of researchers (Merton, 1974). The race to be the first to claim credit in science has traditionally provided a strong incentive for scientists to make their knowledge public. The sharing of scientific knowledge created with public money, however, poses a social and political problem.

Most theories and definitions characterise OS as a “movement”, however, as well as the activism side, OS has a political discourse, and which transcend the basic discussion of open access to publications, and bringing science closer to society more effectively. It is a global effort that requires the whole of society to play an active role. UNESCO not only defines OS as a global public good, but also includes the need for international cooperation between different actors in all countries and in key areas.

Figure 1. Main OS challenges related to research results and to the stakeholders involved.

Source: adapted from (Méndez, 2021)

3. See: Charters and Principles in Scholarly Communication. http://tinyurl.com/scholcomm-charters. To date (March 2022), the living document includes over 120 declarations, manifestos, etc.

2.2. The challenges of Open Science and how universities can address them

OS cannot be delayed any longer, and HEIs are playing a key role in its implementation. In the latest HEW7 report, Ayris & Labastida (2019) highlight the eight fundamental challenges or pillars identified by the EC and emphasise the need for universities to undergo a change of culture in order to face these challenges, as described in the League of European Research Universities (LERU) report. If we remove the specificity of the European EOSC, and summarise it as the need for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR) data, which is the European EOSC, and summarise it as the need for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR) research data. OS is a global effort that requires the whole world to play an active role. UNESCO not only defines OS as a global public good, but also includes the need for international cooperation between different actors in all countries and in key areas.
In addition to these more or less universally accepted challenges, we must include another: equity, which also derives from UNESCO (2021) and is crucial to ensure that OS is not the norm solely in the most prosperous or developed countries and institutions, but that all HEIs have the resources they need to transition to OS. Universities must embrace a culture that promotes diversity and equal opportunities, articulating shared values that create a shared research and innovation system, and establishing the necessary legal and social framework to implement it.

As we have highlighted on numerous occasions (Méndez, 2021; Méndez et al., 2020), OS does not only need policies, statements and recommendations; it also needs Practical Commitments for Implementation (PCIs) from all stakeholders involved. PCIs are measures that put into practice the principles and values of OS; they are realistic and include a concrete action plan. In Spain, the Digital Agenda 2025 (Government of Spain, 2020) defines the country’s priorities in the current context, and the challenges and developments foreseen for the coming years, and includes the actions that the EUA will take to support them. It highlights three priorities: universal and permanent OA to all research results; FAIR research data; and institutional rights three priorities: universal and permanent OA to all research results, and includes the value of OS; they are realistic and include a concrete action plan. In Spain, the Digital Agenda 2025 (Government of Spain, 2020) defines the country’s priorities in the current context, and the challenges and developments foreseen for the coming years, and includes the actions that the EUA will take to support them. It highlights three priorities: universal and permanent OA to all research results; FAIR research data; and institutional rights.

OS creates a framework where there is a need to shift from seeing science as a product to seeing science as a process, and to foster competition between researchers for collaboration that goes beyond universities and boosts innovation.

Although many projects include participatory methodologies for this key OS challenge, citizens’ contributions need to be more meaningful at numerous stages of the entire research process. For that purpose, universities need to provide infrastructures and programmes to develop such practices. The way universities choose to establish this type of practice varies, from make-spaces (hackerspaces or FamaLabs) (Niaros et al., 2017), to science shops (Leydesdorff & Ward, 2005) and living labs (Schurman et al., 2011) (also recently called Open Labs). Living labs are spaces for testing, validation, development and co-creation at all stages of a design and commercialisation process (Leminen et al., 2017) and have been implemented by both companies (Merz et al., 2007) and universities (Nesterova & Quak, 2016).

Committed and innovative universities must put citizens at the heart of OS, in line with the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). There has been significant progress in recent years, but there is still work to do before this is a widespread approach in universities.

3.3. Research quality: scientific integrity and reproducibility

Another aspect that universities need to pay attention to is quality of research, which can be compromised by initiatives and behaviour falsely presented as OS. OS sometimes breeds opportunistic behaviour, such as editorial practices that have resulted in fraudulent journals, and others that – while not considered outright fraud – have encouraged predatory behaviour. A new ethical code of good practice is needed to guarantee the reproducibility of science and a new integrity in the universities of today for guarantee a proper transition to the OS paradigm.

The new ethics required by OS and data-driven science presents a fundamental challenge and still lacks a shared or global vision that goes beyond pre-established codes of ethics (e.g., ALLEA, 2017). Reproducibility is a continuum based on three main research processes: reproduction (re-creation of a study by a third party, using the original setting, data and analysis methodology), replication (more general re-creation of results, using the same analytical method but on different datasets) and re-use (more flexible re-use of results beyond the original research context (transdisciplinary) (Lusol, 2020).

HEIs must establish ethical and technical protocols for data sharing that guarantee broad reproducibility/replicability and reuse, including the publication of negative results, which are currently discriminated against in scientific output. From a technical point of view, making data FAIR is no small matter. It requires investment and monitoring by universities, which are not always prepared to go any further than funders’ requirements to create a data management plan (DMP). Publishing all the data that underpins a piece of research can save resources and avoid repeating failed experiments. We cannot estimate how much it costs HEIs to make their data compliant with FAIR principles, but we do know how costly it is if they are not (PwC EU Services., 2018).


From a supra-institutional point of view, university networks in Europe (EUA, YERUN, LERU, CESAE, etc.) and internationally (GUNI, IAU, ACA, etc.) have played – and continue to play – a very important role. European university alliances have also joined them through EC-funded projects in the EU. This initiative presents an opportunity to work together, to reflect and to deepen university collaboration in a multinational environment. University alliances can serve as role models or test-beds for new approaches (Clayes-Kulik, 2021), particularly to bring about the real, cross-institutional implementation of OS through solid PCIs. To maximise synergies in research and innovation policies, the
EC complemented the funding of the Erasmus+ European Universities Initiative through a specific call for proposals for the Horizon 2020 Science with and for Society (SwafS) programme. All partnerships therefore have in project in which “mainstreaming Open Science practices” was one of the transformation modules highlighted in the call. OS is an essential part of all the projects funded in this call, and thus also in the partnerships and institutions involved in them: for example, YUFERING (YUFE alliance, Fig.3) and RIS4CIVIS (CIVIS alliance), which have a specific OS work package (WP), and ENHANCERIA (ENHANCE alliance), where OS is a cross-cutting theme throughout the project.

4. Final observations: Knowledge+Open = Universities 2030

Sometimes it can feel like the ideals, values and recommendations of OS remain the same, and the only thing that changes is the target year for bringing about the change. The EC initially set 2020 as its target year for making all publications open; we are now in 2022 and still a long way from meeting that target. The target year for universities is now 2030, as well as for OS and the SDGs. Universities are trying to establish OS policies, but these are increasingly being referred to as “open-washing”, which is when action plans are undermined by the pressure of the anarchistic and absurd publication system, or by the purely binary method of monitoring compliance with requirements (e.g. research data is listed as either open or not open, while the level of compliance with FAIR principles is not assessed).

Looking towards 2030, the EUA(5) is presenting Universities 2030 as institutions that are open, transformative and transnational; sustainable, diverse and engaged; strong, autonomous and accountable. The EC-commissioned report Towards a 2030 Vision on the Future of Universities in Europe identified several transformation modules. One of these was “knowledge-driven universities in the context of digital changes: the transition to open science (through FAIR and open data) and Open Access”. The report also highlighted the need for greater citizen trust in the knowledge produced by universities through collaboration (citizen science) (CS4S, 2020). With the same 2030 target, the final report of the Open Science Policy Platform (OSPP) (Méndez et al., 2020) proposed the five attributes that a shared knowledge-based research system should fulfil by 2030: an academic career structure that rewards diverse outcomes, practices and behaviours; a research system that is trustworthy and transparent; a research system that enables innovation; a research culture that facilitates diversity and equal opportunities; and a research system that is built on evidence-based policies.

Although universities have made an effort to incorporate knowledge and OS into their systems since the beginning of the 21st century, they are still a long way from becoming Open Knowledge Institutions. This concept – which was also highlighted in the GUNI Higher Education in the World Report (Benneworth et al., 2019) – defines universities in 2030 as Open Knowledge Institutions, collaborating at various levels (country, region), with different partners (multi-stakeholders) and from a transdisciplinary perspective.

Aside from all the definitions and references given in this article, OS means giving science back to the researchers who carry it out, and to the society that funds it. Science is like a parachute: if it is not open, it cannot help us. Universities have a fundamental role to play in creating an ecosystem of innovation and research that allows knowledge to become open and of value for society.

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2.4 Sustainability. Reinventing the role and place of HEIs for a sustainable future

Abstract

If higher education is to make a significant contribution to the transition towards a more sustainable world, it will need to break the resilient practices of ‘business-as-usual’ that normalise growth orientation, individualism, inequality, anthropocentrism, exclusion, exploitation and even catastrophes. Doing so requires more than cultivating often-mentioned sustainability competencies and qualities such as handling complexity and ambiguity, anticipating and imagining alternative futures, taking mindful action, having empathy and agency, and so on. It also requires the capacity to disrupt and to learn from resistance to disruption. This contribution introduces and discusses transgressive learning, disruptive capacity building and pedagogies of resistance, such as learning-based counter-hegemonic responses that can unearth and uproot mechanisms of exploitation, oppression, extractivism, colonialisation and marginalisation. Transgression, disruption and resistance will inevitably lead to tensions, conflicts, controversy and discomfort, but this is where critical consciousness and spaces for fundamental change can arise. More hopeful, energising and regenerative cultures can develop when this disruptive work can be combined with participation in social movements and transition niches that provide concrete utopias and viable alternatives.

Overcoming systemic dysfunction

It is increasingly recognised and accepted that the current sustainability crisis is deeply ingrained in ‘Western’, ‘colonial’ and ‘modernist’ mental models and the dysfunctional values and relationships (between people and between people and the planet) that they produce on a global scale, even in the most remote places. These mental models, mind-sets and ways of thinking can be characterised by their tendency towards commodification (turning public goods, nature, etc. into tradeable units that have economic value and can be consumed), reductionism (creating boundaries, distinctions, sectors and disciplines), efficiency and accountability (and associated forms of management and control) and competition (celebrating meritocracy, continuous innovation, excellence, survival of the fittest and the implicit acceptance of inequality) and growth thinking (the idea of continuous personal and economic growth).

At least from a sustainability perspective, these maladaptive and dysfunctional qualities and ways of thinking have also become subsumed by our education systems. In many schools and universities these patterns are willingly and unwillingly reproduced and amplified. In a sense, they have become part of what might be referred to as the hidden curriculum of unsustainability. Viewed as such, all education is sustainability education as no matter what is taught, enacted and experienced in our schools and universities, it will always have an impact on sustainability in either a positive or, as is mostly the case today, negative way. This realisation is pushing an increasing number of schools and universities, sometimes pressured by youth movements, to rethink the education they provide.

Sustainability as learning

Sustainability is not the final destination of an agreed product to be achieved or created by humanity, but rather a continuous search for a dynamic equilibrium that will allow all people and fellow species to live well on planet Earth without overstepping ecological boundaries. Sustainability-oriented learning can be described as an organic and relational process of continuous framing, reframing, tuning and fine-tuning, disruption and accommodation, and action and reflection, which is guided by a moral compass inspired by an ethic of care (Wals, 2019). Such learning implies or even demands a certain freedom to explore alternative paths.
of development and new ways of thinking, valuing and doing. The notion of transgressive learning and disruptive capacity building is somewhat new in discourses around sustainability-oriented education (Lott-Sistlka et al., 2015; Wals and Peters, 2017; Chaves and Wals, 2018). It stems from the realisation that in order to move towards a more sustainable world, it is crucial to critiquethe and transform highly resilient systems, structures and routines that are inherently unhealthy and unsustainable. The quest for a more sustainable world begins with two questions: what is it that we need to sustain, in ourselves and in the world, and what is it that we need to disrupt, in ourselves and in the world? The latter question has been much ignored in education, including education for sustainable development.

Optimising what is or transitioning to what might be

Much attention is given to responsiveness, resilience and adaptation in education. After all, prevailing but problematic logic states that the world is changing rapidly and people need to keep up with the changes or they will be left behind. At first sight such logic seems sensible but upon closer inspection it becomes clear that it is, at least in part, fuelled by a neo-liberal agenda and associated economic globalisation. In education this is sometimes masked by concepts such as 21st Century Skills or, more recently, even the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As an example of the latter, SDG 8 calls for ‘Decent work for all and a regenerative or circular economy’ (emphasis mine) and not ‘Decent work for all and a concern for sustainability’. The quest for a more sustainable world begs the questions: what is it that we need to sustain, in ourselves and in the world? The latter question – by asking moral questions and posing ethical dilemmas, and to learn from the ‘push back’ and resistance from the normalised unsustainable systems that all the above creates.

Resistance pedagogy

Transgressive learning (Lott-Sistlka et al., 2015; Wals and Peters, 2017; Chaves and Wals, 2018), disruptive capacity building and resilience pedagogy can be characterised by learning processes and contexts/environments for learning that invite a counter-hegemonic response which unearths and uproots mechanisms of exploitation, oppression, extractivism, colonisa- tion and marginalisation. Resistance pedagogy allows people (e.g. teachers and students) to address injustices and forms of marginalisation and exploitation that they themselves identify, by finding forms and spaces that can oppose the authorities and normalised established systems that are responsible for their existence (Bracher, 2006). In Latin American social movements, resistance pedagogy is often linked to Freire’s notion of critical education as a means of helping people “perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves” (Freire 1970, p. 64). Critical sustainability education seeks to help students become aware of the social and ecological inequalities that exist in their everyday lives and that are omnipresent in the world, both locally and globally.

Chandra Mohanty adds that resistance lies in self-conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations and the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces. She points out that resistance which is random and isolated is clearly not as effective as that which is mobilised through systemic politicised practices of teaching and learning (Mohanty, 1989).

Education as a practice of freedom

bell hooks(1) approaches resistance pedagogy differently, in a way more pedagogically, by advocating “an engaged pedagogy that can counteract the overwhelming boredom, discontent and apathy that so often characterise the way professors and students feel about the teaching and learning experience” (hooks, 1994, p10). In Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (hooks, 1994), she argues that education needs to go beyond, or rather stay away from a focus on achieving prescribed levels of some kind of literacy, the development of professional skills and essentially helping students conform to the status quo. Instead she argues that education needs to nurture a reflective and critical stance towards social realities. hooks’ engaged pedagogy can be considered a “transgressive” pedagogy in that deep engagement, and indeed excitement, can be viewed as potentially disruptive of the atmosphere of misguided seriousness which characterises so much learning in schools and universities (hooks, 1994).

Such excitement, she argues, comes from creating a space for emergence, surprise and an environment of attentiveness to who is there and who is not there and what is happening or what needs to be happening. While hooks recognises the severe confinements of the conventional conceptions of teaching and learning in schools and universities, she also believes that the classroom is potentially the most radical space of possibility, change and transformation. hooks urges educators and students alike to open their minds and hearts so that they can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that they can think and rethink, so that they can create new visions. “I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions – a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education a practice of freedom” (ibid., p22).

Becoming uncomfortable

Going against and beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable as a practice of freedom also requires being willing and able to leave the comforts or routines of our everyday lives, as staying within them minimises possibilities for productive resistance (Kuntz, 2020). For sustainability education the question is then: how can we create spaces that enable learners to leave their comfort zones, to enter the not yet known and the previously deemed impossible? Kuntz advocates for philosophical inquiry as a means to open up such spaces. A first step of such inquiry is the mapping of what he calls the habitualised conventions of our everyday lives in order to “manifest entry points for differently resistive practices, built on alternative logics, extending a diversity of effects-differentiating…” (ibid., p. 26). He refers to Foucault’s ethics of discomfort, which points out the transformative power of feelings of unease, especially among those in somewhat privileged positions. “To operate in terms of flows, disjunctures and dynamic relations... as a resistive practice requires a different ethical articulation; one unbond from the conventional conceptions of stasis, synthesis and repetition” (ibid., p. 28). Part of the discomfort, he crucially points out, is that any claims made as a result of such work are necessarily tentative as they fail the conventional test of certainty. Yet, he continues, it is the open-ended nature of potential – what might happen – that generates resistive practice, one that refuses pre-determined aspects that are extrapolated from current hegemonic conventions.

Implications for sustainability education

These insights would seem to be crucial for educators with a concern for sustainability. Kuntz ultimately identifies three elements of resistive inquiry: (1) the challenge of mapping “the convention of today”, (2) enacting resistance without being subsumed by the resisted, (3) an ethical obligation to refuse the seductions of prescribing for others even as we perhaps desire a course forward towards a differently encountered today (ibid, p. 29). Mapping the convention of today includes the essential first step of being aware of one’s own predispositions and the comfort they can provide, while also being mindful of their limitations, if not now then maybe in

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(1) bell hooks is a pseudonym for Gloria Jean Watkins who, as a writer, chose the pseudonym bell hooks in tribute to her mother and great-grandmother. She decided not to capitalise her new name in order to place the focus on her work rather than her name and on her ideas rather than her personality.
times to come, and calls for maintaining a critical dis-
tance and navigating a fine line between holding on
and being willing to let go. Again, in the words of Kuntz,
it calls “for not allowing presumptions to remain lodged
in totalising certainty yet not thinking them fragile
easily to be overturned by contingent facts; maintai-
niing a distant view that also addresses the nearby, or
the local” (ibid, p. 30).

Foucault (2000), referring to Merleau-Ponty, points
out that it is crucial “to never consent to being com-
pletely comfortable with one’s own suppositions.
Never to let them fall peacefully asleep, but also never
to believe that a new fact will suffice to overturn them;
never to imagine that one can change them like arbi-
trary axioms, remembering that in order to give them
the necessary mobility one must have a distant view,
but also look at what is nearby and all around oneself.
” (Foucault, 2000, p. 448). In earlier work he had already
pointed out that today the point is not so much to dis-
cover what we are, but rather to refuse what we are.
“We have to imagine and to build up what we could be
to get rid of this kind of political “double bind,” which
is the simultaneous individualisation and totalisation
of modern power structures. (p. 785).

More recently, Braudotti added that we need to “de-toxify
our bad habits, in our way of consuming, of thinking,
and of relating with others, instead entering a state of
critical displacement that refuses the biased habits
of thought that, through their repetition, maintain the
exploitative and violent relations of “today.”” (Braudotti,
2019a). The zig zagging between local-global, past-pre-
sent future and what is and what might be, “affords a
critical relation to one’s situatedness, a type of resisti-
ve dislocation through philosophical engagement with
our contemporary moment. Through inquiry we might
provoke the detoxifying distance necessary to map the
circumstances of our moment that, in turn, animate the
injustices of which we are a part” (Braudotti, 2019a, 161).

Doing so won’t be possible without disruption and will
inevitably lead to tensions, conflicts, controversy and
discomfort, but it is therein where critical consciousness
and spaces for fundamental change can arise (Wals, 2021).
When this disruptive work can be combined with
participation in social movements and transition niches
that provide concrete utopias and viable alternatives,
more hopeful, energising and regenerative cultures
(Wahl, 2016) can unfold.

Resistance pedagogy and transgressive learning in practice
Earlier I wrote that in order to engage students and
staff meaningfully in the great sustainability challen-
ges of our time, our schools and universities need to be:
relevant in terms of connecting with the life-world,
the community and the issues that matter, responsive
in terms of being capable of dealing with continuous
change, emergence and surprise, responsible in terms of
being aware of the values that individuals, schools,
structures, etc. amplify, ignore or silence, re-imagina-
tive in terms of engaging learners in imagining and
creating viable and energising alternative futures, rela-
tional in terms of establishing deeper connections with
people, non-humans, matter/materials and places, and,
finally, reflexive in that a healthy community is a learn-
ing community which also implies that sustainability
is a continuous search rather than a destination (Wals,
2019). This chapter adds another ‘r’: for resistance.

There is a whole range of hopeful and generative prac-
tices emerging around the world, from student-led
transformations in higher education, to citizen-led
transformations of urban green spaces, to sustainabili-
ty-minded activist scientists engaging in transformation
of energy, water and food systems, to school commu-
nities trying to green their schools and curricula in
meaningful ways, to circular economists beginning
to challenge some of the fundamentals that underlie
capitalism. Many of these practices are transgressive in
that they go against forces and normalised routines
and systems that push a future pre-determined and
pre-scribed by others that, from a sustainability point
of view, is highly problematic. By inviting diversity and
dissidence, and utilising multiple ways of knowing and
being in the world, sustainability-oriented ecologies of
learning can play an important role in co-creating the
knowledge and wisdom needed to live more lightly,
meaningfully, equitably and healthily on the Earth,
while being mindful of the intrinsic values of all that is
around us.

One example of resistance pedagogy in action might be
T-Labs (www.transgressivelearning.org). While
T-labs exist in many forms and articulations, they
have a number of key elements in common in that they
typically:

• depart from existential concerns and questions regar-
ding the socio-ecological wellbeing of people and the
planet, that are rooted in specific people and places but
always nested in a bigger world;

• involve and invite multiple perspectives and vantage
points that can help all affected by these concerns and
questions develop a deeper, more integrative and sys-
temic understanding of what is at stake;

• recognise, utilise and combine multiple ways of know-
ing (scientific, experiential, local and indigenous)
and multiple methods of co-creating interventions that
might lead to a resolution or improvement of the situa-
tion (including cartographic mapping, trans-sectional
walks (Box 1) and backcasting);

Box 1: Trans-sectional walks as a way into
critical sustainability education
The transformative and transgressive potential of
place-based, localised and ‘rooted’ education is often
neglected. Trans-sectional walks provide an
excellent entry point for becoming more atten-
tive and conscious of how sustainability or a lack
thereof is manifested in the places where we live.
Small groups of students, ideally with different
backgrounds, walk towards a pre-identified des-
tination that can be reached within 20 minutes or
so. Each group has its own destination to make
sure that there is also some variation in the walks.
On their way to the destination they are to identify
something that to them represents ‘unsustaina-
bility’. Each group briefly elaborates on
the systems of structures that affect these practices;
the systems of structures that willingly or unwillingly
work against socio-ecological justice;

• pay attention to the development of knowledge and
understanding but also to the socio-emotional well-be-
ing and agency of those involved;

• are explicitly normative in that they work towards a
more just society that allows people to live more equi-
ably without compromising planetary boundaries;

• do not shy away from problematising the conven-
tional and the “normal” by resisting and disrupting
systems and structures that willingly or unwillingly
work against socio-ecological justice;

• seek to move beyond analysis and critique by looking
to change and transform socio-ecological practices and
the systems of structures that affect these practices;

• consider the quest for socio-ecological justice to be
an iterative and emergent process that requires continuous
experimentation, monitoring and evaluation to allow for
frequent recalibration of what socio-ecological justice
entails and what needs to be done to achieve it.

Although not necessarily rooted in resistance pedago-
gy, examples of such forms of transgressive learning,
thus far usually outside or on the edges of universi-
tes, can often be found in loose intentional networks like
the Youth Climate Strike movement, Extinction Rebellion
or Fridays for Future, but also in intentional communities
seeking to go off-the-grid by creating more localised
sustainable energy cooperatives, food systems and

Back in the classroom, the teacher will have
collected all the images provided by all the
groups representing the ‘unsustainable’ and the
‘sustainable’. Each group briefly elaborates on
their choices and all the others can ask questions.
Discussions reveal the ambiguous and wicked
nature of sustainability, the boundaries that can or
should (not) be disputed and provide a way into the
ethical, habitual and systemic elements of
(uns)ustainability, especially when questions are
asked about how these ‘local’ issues are nested in
larger global issues. Trans-sectional walks are
often a starting point for identifying issues that
can be explored in more depth during the
remainder of the course. What to look for during
such walks can vary. One might also ask stu-
dents, for instance, to look for signs of empathy
or a lack thereof.
Learning from Process Ecology to transform Higher Education in the Anthropocene

Anne Snick and Raad Sharar

Abstract

Current crises such as mass species loss, 400 ppm greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and the massive disruption of life by human overpopulation are unprecedented in history, making it impossible to learn from the past about how to sustain life in the future. Moreover, these disruptions are brought forth by human behaviour, especially the Western model of development that colonialism has imposed worldwide. Universities have played a crucial role in this development. Academic institutions were shaped in the 17th century, embracing a mechanistic (Newtonian) and separatist (Cartesian) ontology and embedding it in their architecture, thereby ignoring the dynamic interconnection between human and other-than-human and human subsystems. Consequently, Higher Education (HE) focuses on transmitting discipline-based knowledge and rational approaches while marginalising more holistic and whole-person ways of learning.

Today’s crises are anomalies revealing that this paradigm is misaligned with reality and undermines the prospects of future generations. The concepts of knowledge (research) and learning (education) have to be radically recalibrated for HE to become a sustainable practice. This article proposes that HE can shift its sustainability. For future citizens to learn how to navigate complexity and design responsible alternative futures, HEIs must transform into open learning ecosystems, fostering the co-creation of diverse kinds of knowledge aligned with the processes of life.

The text first explains the ontological context of the Anthropocene and elucidates why the mechanistic and separatist epistemology that prevailed during the Holocene no longer suffices to make sense of today’s complex reality, inform responsible decisions and educate future generations.

The article then presents a model of process ecology clarifying what makes systems sustainable; this is proven to depend on a system’s capacity to maintain a balance between resilience and ascendency. This framework helps to understand why HE is so slow to adapt to societal evolutions, and to analyse how to increase its sustainability. For future citizens to learn how to navigate complexity and design responsible alternative futures, HEIs must transform into open learning ecosystems, fostering the co-creation of diverse kinds of knowledge aligned with the processes of life.

The text thirdly proposes a practical strategy for fostering the emergence of this kind of learning. By complementing existing curricula with learner-driven...
1. Why change education? Diagnosis of our time

Due to economic globalisation, human actions today have an impact on Earth’s geophysical processes. Human expansion of the Earth from the exceptional stability of the Holocene (the era starting some 12,000 years ago, allowing humans to settle and build civilisations) towards the unstable conditions of what scientists call the Anthropocene. The unlimited pursuit of economic growth, massive use of fossil fuels and unrestrained extraction of natural resources result in a depletion and pollution of natural ecosystems and an unstable climate with more extreme weather patterns. Phenomena like mass species loss, 400 ppm greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere and decimation of wild nature by expanding human populations are currently testing at KU Leuven, and with a vignette written by one of the learners involved.

Next, the article offers some critical reflections on this approach, discussing its potential (lack of) impact and its capacity for scaling and spreading to different parts of the world. This too is illustrated by means of a vignette presenting a learner-driven initiative in the Global South.

In conclusion, some recommendations are formulated about what learners, universities and societal decision-makers can do to make this scale rapidly.

2. A framework for HE transformation

The future cannot be an extrapolation of the past but requires a deep transformation of how we define our relationship with nature, aligning ourselves again with the dynamics that govern life. The approach proposed here builds on insights into sustainable ecosystems revealed by process ecology, a scientific model used to study the organisation of complex flows of energy and nutrients within (natural and technical) ecosystems (Goerner et al., 2009; Lietaer et al., 2012). Systems end up being sustainable when they achieve a balance between two opposing characteristics: ascendency and resilience (see figure 1).

Ascendency is the capacity to channel activity along the most efficient pathway by streamlining processes and eliminating superfluous pathways. Monocultures, for example, are extremely efficient ways to grow plants. However, pursuing maximum ascendency means decreasing the number of alternative pathways that can take over the system’s vital activities if the usual processes fail; monocultures therefore score low on sustainability. A single disease or storm can destroy entire crops and once the system passes critical ‘points of no return’, it may collapse (the red dot on figure 1).

HE’s mainstream paradigm is unfit to make sense of today’s complex reality and to prepare youth for a future that cannot be a continuation of the past. Many young people are aware of this, they distrust education and take to the streets to call for change. Some of their peers do not want to hear about sustainability-related issues, because it depresses them (Thomas, 2014). Many academics embrace the eco-modernist belief that technology can save the planet, ignoring the fact that technology becomes political as soon as it is used and therefore requires a preliminary ethical and societal reflection (Owen et al., 2021; Symons & Karlsson, 2018).

The pedagogical transition therefore requires a shift both in the contents of education (from a mechanistic and anthropocentric to a complexity-based and ecosystem worldview) and in the pedagogical relation (enabling young people to learn how to co-evolve with the rest of nature). Universities, however, are not designed for such learning. The question is therefore what models and strategies can allow the HE system to transform and adapt.
Governing should happen close to the system, so that in before the system is too far removed from its goal ting its processes in response to context changes. It regulates the system by adjust ing or restoring the balance between (resi- stence) and ‘sustain’ established patterns, which in misunderstood as the system’s capacity to return to its former state (and ‘sustain’ established patterns, which in fact increases their ascendency and may weaken their sustainability). In dynamic systems, resilience means the capacity to establish innovative and efficient pathways towards a new balance, pursuing long-term co-evolution. “Governance” in this context refers to mechanisms maintaining (or restoring) the balance between (resi- stent) and free creative (resilient) mechanisms to their optimal levels. It regulates the system by adjust ing its processes in response to context changes. For example, a thermostat adjusts flows (by closing or opening valves) in response to fluctuating ambient temperatures. The correcting feedback has to kick in before the system is too far removed from its goal (e.g. the desired temperature), thus keeping it within a ‘window of viability’ (e.g. a pleasant temperature range). Governing should happen close to the system, so that feedback can kick in rapidly. Bottom-up (niche) alter natives that ‘think outside the box’ reveal the resilience of a system; however, to increase the sustainability of the system they also need top-down support (ascen- dant measures) allowing them to become embedded in a new regime (Chapman, 2015; Geels & Schot, 2007).

This framework helps to understand the current func tioning of and possible alternatives for HE. A decisive factor is the goal the system pursues (Meadows, 2008). If a society pursues economic growth, it no longer treats its economic-financial subsystem as a means of achieving societal goals (e.g. community wellbeing and ecosystem health), but treats it as a goal in itself, redu ing the system to the planet to ‘reach something’ (offering resilient pathways) that have potential for rapid scaling (ascendency). The following SWOT-analysis of the current HE context can shed light on available pathways. The weakness of the HE system is its adherence to an anthropocentric and separatist worldview, its extractivist economic model, and its strong institutionalisation in concepts, identities, buildings, funding mechanisms, evaluation systems and legislation. Moreover, HE is the gatekeeper for the education of future generations; it holds a quasi-monopoly on issuing validated diplo- mas and certificates. Universities in the Global North increasingly function with the same business model as economic corporations, which means that financial parameters become dominant and influence the goal academia pursues (Ezeanya-Esibuzo, 2019).

In spite of scientific reports that time is running out before ecosystem degradation reaches critical tipping points, HE remains locked in to business as usual, still preparing young people for a model that is proven to be unsustainable. The last few decades have seen many calls to reform HE, however, a shift in its mainstream models and practices has still not been achieved. A wealth of inspiring niche innovations is emerging inside and outside of academia, but these remain side-bran ches or optional courses and are far from becoming the ‘new normal’ (Tescori, 2019). Since teachers’ careers depend on their adherence to the paradigm, they are discouraged from exploring resilient alternatives. Governance is more geared towards reinforcing the existing (specialist) paradigm than towards reinforcing emerging (niche) alternative pathways. Universities in all continents are striving to catch up with the standards of Western academia, thus reproducing a monoculture of economics, epistemology. Consequently, alternative epistemologies such as indigenous knowledge, re- nevative economics or ecofeminism – crucial sources of resilience – are further marginalised, producing the aca- demic equivalent of a monoculture (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Taleb, 2014). What is framed as ‘development and progress’ thus paradoxically entails the loss of knowledge and a decrease in alternative pathways in the face of potentially catastrophic anomalies.

3. A bifocal strategy for transforming HE

In the light of this diagnosis, the most promising strate gy for transforming HE is to focus on niche innovations (offering resilient pathways) that have potential for rapid scaling (ascendency). The following SWOT-analysis of the current HE context can shed light on available pathways. The weakness of the HE system is its adherence to an anthropocentric and separatist worldview, its extractivist economic model, and its strong institutionalisation in concepts, identities, buildings and regulations. Combined with the undercurrent of economic globalisation, this model continuously spreads and increases its ascendency, in spite of scientific consensus that this entails the risk of catastrophe and collapse. Most efforts at making HE more sustainable focus on transforming the curriculum (Moreso & Casadesus, 2017). However, the lack of success in doing so over recent decades is a clear indicator that curricula do not offer sites of resilience. An undeniable strength is the fact that young genera tions no longer accept the dominant education system and are demanding a shift. Youth movements (such as Students Organising for Sustainability International, Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion) are well organised and highly engaged; they call attention to scientific insights into the anomalies of the current paradigm and their voices are increasingly heard by people in political and economic decision-making.

They are organised in decentralised ways, using online platforms to access information and knowledge and mobilise their peers, allowing them to scale rapidly. The threat present in the current system is the shrin king window of opportunity for avoiding catastrophic tipping points. The recent IPCC report is seen as a ‘code red for humanity’, since it indicates that humanity has only a few years left to radically shift the system (Mas son-Delmotte et al., 2021). The longer society waits to adapt, the higher the probability it will have to deal not just with complex problems, but with chaotic ones, including floods, pandemics, mass migration, forest fires, etc. In the face of chaotic crisis, the most impor tant aim is to restore order (often requiring authoritarian measures, such as lockdowns), which is an inadequate context for outside-the-box thinking and adapting to complexity (Snowden & Goh, 2020). Opportunities are twofold. Firstly, there is a growing consensus among policymakers that a new model of development is needed. Agenda 2030, with its 17 Sustain able Development Goals (SDGs), was approved by more than 178 countries. A caveat, however, is that given the separatist knowledge model, the SDGs are currently often approached as a list of disconnected goals, ignoring the effects the pursuit of one goal may have on other ones. However, if approached as an inter connected agenda, the SDGs may become a driver for a more systemic and holistic approach to research and education (Snick, 2020).

Secondly, a movement of social innovation is emer ging, initiated by societal players breaking away from the extractive, individualistic and colonial ideology that dominates academia. For example, policymakers encourage cities or regions to practise Responsibility Research and Innovation or embrace doughnut econ omics, entrepreneurs explore regenerative business models, civil society movements pursue community wellbeing and design local currencies to serve their goals, indigenous peoples challenge the dominant paradigm to reclaim a pluralis tic epistemologies, etc. (Fritsch et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2020; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). These innovations offer living laboratories to explore alternatives, sites of societal resilience which can serve as ‘classrooms’ for learning about sustainable pathways.

In the light of this SWOT-analysis, the most promising strategy for transforming HE appears to be shifting the focus from teacher-driven curriculum reform towards learner-driven transdisciplinary programmes. This New Voices for Higher Education towards 2030 - Part 2: Transitions, Key Topics, Key Voices 226 226 227

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approach does not criticise or alter discipline-based teaching, but provides an additional focus. It takes place in complementary learning spaces where learners from various disciplines and backgrounds are encouraged to look at current issues from divergent perspectives, deal with the emotions the societal crisis evokes, learn the eclectic ideology and learn to embrace a radically new, ecocentric vision of what it means to be human in relation to the rest of nature. This model of learning uses the knowledge from various disciplines and from emerging social innovators to explore and experience a new vision for society and to co-create insights into what pathways could help communities to move in that direction.

Over the last couple of years, teams of learners (students and coaches) at KU Leuven (Belgium) have experimented with this approach, and the outlines of its new pedagogy have gradually become visible. The basic assumption is no longer that nature functions as a mechanistic system which humans can dismantle, improve or control; rather, the complexity and non-linearity of natural processes is accepted as the planetary context humans must learn to navigate with humility (Gruner et al., 2020; Smeers et al., 2020).

• Complexity means that no single discipline or scientific model can reveal the ‘truth’ about the world; in order to make sense of reality, learners are encouraged to look at it from as many angles as possible, integrating academic with traditional, experiential or artistic approaches, and including the perspective of more-than-human beings (Crist, 2019).

• Non-linearity means the future cannot be extrapolated from (data about) the past (Hosenfelder, 2018; Jasa-noff, 2018; Rovnıy, 2012), but depends on humans proceeding in a more responsible way, treating nature with restraint, respect and reciprocity, and adapting their demands to what the ecosystem really has to offer (Blending, 2020). Co-evolution is influenced as much by the natural world as by the way humans use to find meaning in the world as by the technological and economic processes they deploy to achieve that worldview (Snick, 2020). These narratives and technologies in turn affect the biophysical processes (increased entropy and depletion), which specialists respond to by doing ‘more of the same’ (deploying even more pervasive technologies in a linear view of progress). Non-linearity, however, requires considering the role of narratives (e.g. ‘progress’ or ‘wellbeing’) as well as technologies in restoring the balance between humans and the rest of nature.

• Experiential learning – for example via immersive activities, field trips or service learning – lets learners envision and get inspired by alternative practices; this cannot be achieved by transmitting facts and figures, but requires ‘leaving the ivory tower’ and learning with the head, heart, hands and hope. In times of Covid these ‘live’ field trips may have to be replaced by watching documentaries about regenerative practices (Dion & Laurent, 2015; Tickell & Harrell Tickell, 2020).

• Learners work together and in dialogue with innovative societal players who share the goal of a sustainable world; on this mutual learning culminates when they co-design a concrete proposal for an alternative approach to a topic of their choice. They thus follow an iterative, engaged and democratic practice that means that an ‘expert’ first has to reveal the truth about (the future of) the world, but then disseminate this knowledge for society to ‘implement’. Rather, they understand at a deep level that what the future will look like depends on the values they embrace, the choices they make, the innovative pathways they co-create, and the (financial and other) technologies they use. They also understand that what counts is not so much the specific ‘product’ they design, but mainly the co-creative and transdisciplinary learning process they embark on. Once the process is ‘understood’, it can be used again and again to learn and redesign practices in various domains.

• A distinctive feature of this approach is that the notion of ‘learners’ is not identical to ‘students’, but also includes facilitators and other (regenerative) societal players. The ‘learner-driven’ concept highlights that this kind of programme is not ‘expertise-driven’, but enables mutual learning about how to adapt to life. This is not primarily a matter of revealing and transmitting knowledge, but mainly one of taking responsibility and mustering the moral courage and creativity to think outside the box, take part in co-designing a radically regenerative future, and accepting that (academia in the Global North) has a lot to learn from the indigenous people it so long treated as ‘primitive’ or ‘underdeveloped’ (Goel et al., 2021; Snick, 2020).

Based on that methodological framework, and depending on the specific capacities of local HEIs, a variety of concrete programmes is possible, ranging from a week-long summer school to extra-curricular programmes lasting one or more years. However, in order for this approach to scale rapidly, it is crucial for learners to be empowered and encouraged to coach their peers in this kind of learning process. At KU Leuven, one of the HEIs where this approach is being prototyped and tested, the programme started (in 2019-20) with one team consisting of three students and a coach. In the second year (2020-21), learners from the first-year project coached two new teams of eight learners, working on different challenges while using the same complexity-based, transdisciplinary and co-creative framework. In the third year (2021-22), nine of the learners from the second iteration engaged in coaching three new teams, this shows the potential of this approach to spread rapidly if the right conditions are created.

The following vignette describes the experiences of a learner (Raad) who participated in the second iteration of the programme at KU Leuven, coached by participants from the first iteration of the programme.

Raad: Vignette 1

I have been studying anthropology for about six years, first on a bachelor’s degree at BRAC University in Bangladesh and then on a master’s degree from KU Leuven, Belgium. Anthropology is in essence a study of people, cultures and societies; a study of the anthropogenic fabrics of the world. Yet a surprisingly large part of my educational experience has been based inside classrooms reading early works of social thinkers and then sitting for rigid exams based explicitly on these readings. This was my first point of frustration. How could such a people-centric discipline be taught in a way that was so detached from real people and their experiences? Societies and people are ever evolving. How is it that the works of armchair anthropologists and social thinkers from centuries ago still demand so much attention in the current curriculum? Even the prescribed articles and books were written in a languange that was not easy to read, making anthropology as a discipline only accessible to academics. This was my second point of frustration. A discipline learning about people and making breakthroughs in research that has the potential to contribute tremendously to social change should be more easily accessible to a wider public.

We learnt about the Anthropocene and read authors like Bruno Latour (Latour, 2000), who has championed collaboration between the natural and social sciences. However, the practical aspect of his teachings is sadly missing from coursework and is only available to students who opt to pursue research on this subject in particular.

I was confronted with a completely different level of frustration when I started my master’s degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology at KU Leuven (Belgium). While the above-mentioned problems remained, here I was further troubled by the colonial aspect of the discipline. Even though the students came from diverse cultural backgrounds, it still remained an environment where dialogue between student and teacher was limited. It felt like a lost opportunity, since decolonisation could be achieved by welcoming the active contribution of students from formerly colonised backgrounds, co-creating with us and allowing our own experiences and knowledge to be taken into account in the learning process.

These frustrations led me to join a learner-driven programme that aimed to explore how Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics should adapt to the complexity of the Anthropocene (called ‘STEAM+’). The first overwhelmingly interesting aspect of this programme was the fact that our team was multidisciplinary. Secondly, the challenge was multifaceted and relevant to scenarios for the current world. As an anthropologist looking for a different, more inclusive approach to education, this programme instantly ‘ticked all the boxes’.

The programme opened my mind to the innovative ways education can really work. It showed me various pedagogical methods in which class-rooms become redundant and people can learn in a more holistic and dynamic way, from their environments and each other, and co-create solutions.
to problems in a more inclusive and susta-
ible manner. As part of our challenge, my team
created a board game addressing one aspect of
the climate change reality plaguing the world
today: the suffering of the oceans. We learnt as
a team, drawing from the diverse backgrounds,
expertise and knowledge of each team
member. We settled on creating a learning game,
hoping this could be used as a tool to learn about
ocean problems and ways in which those prob-
lems can be solved. We designed the game in a
way that would hopefully get the players engaged
in creating solutions and not just hear about the
issue as an abstract faraway event with no direct
relevance to their lives. Jorge helped players really
feel the need to care about the current plight of oceans as they played, instead of having
an “expert” dictate that need solely through facts
and logic. It was at this point that I finally saw the
collaboration of natural and social sciences come
to fruition; something I had previously only seen
as a possibility in classrooms. It was also at this
point that I saw a completely different and unor-
thodox way education could really work; a way
that was learner driven and broke away from the
mainstream pathway of education systems. What
the game helped me to understand was that learn-
ing is simple and uncomplicated, and can be
taken from literally anywhere. My experience with
the programme took me back to the essence of what
education should look like: inclusivity and co-
creation, foregoing the fact that there is any
hierarchy to knowledge.

4. Reflections on
governance

The learners’ reactions on how this programme affects their lives are very positive (Grenacci et al., 2020; Smeers et al., 2020). Moreover, since it does not aim to reform the curriculum, but constitutes a comple-
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Nijera Kori is, in many ways, a unique organisation within the NGO universe in Bangladesh. The organisation focuses on the empowerment of landless rural women and men by helping them form independent landless groups and supporting them through awareness raising and capacity building initiatives which enable them to autonomously establish their rights as citizens. It was important for the organisation to emphasise the fact that the landless groups would be able to claim and establish their rights as citizens rather than as customers, consumers, beneficiaries or users. Members are empowered to take up challenges within their own spheres for a better and more meaningful life for themselves and their immediate community, and to establish their rights over the institutions that decide on the allocation of resources and services for the poor.

In the capacity building and training sessions, the landless groups were given information on agriculture, law and gender equality. Through these sessions, the group members continued to mature, develop and understand their rights and overcome gender bias, organically and systematically changing the oppressive structures of their society. A central mission of Nijera Kori was to ensure the voices and lifestyles of the landless groups were taken into account. The organisation never decides on what is beneficial for the groups. Rather, after giving the landless group general knowledge of gender norms and other social realities, the organisation encourages the landless groups to come to their own decision on how to move forward.

During my stay with the organisation, among the many projects that I have been a part of, one that stood out was the initiative the organisation took to provide football (soccer) training to young girls from a particularly patriarchal and fundamentalist area. Simply training them to play matches and encouraging them to play the game regularly among the landless groups where they discuss issues pertaining to their social obstacles and together design cultural events through which they are able to raise awareness among even more members of society. During the training and workshops, the participants compose new dramas covering issues such as women’s rights, rights of agricultural workers, against fundamentalism, rights to Khasland water bodies, and people’s/folk songs. This process at Nijera Kori, where they let the participants take the lead, is a true example of a learner-driven programme in the field of development sector.

As pointed out above, development policies continue to reiterate Western pedagogy and most NGOs in today’s world feed into this reality. Learner-driven programmes such as those taken up by Nijera Kori, where the beneficiaries experience independence in their own decision-making and learning processes, is a crucial step towards decolonising these existing Western narratives and giving importance to indigenous and local knowledge structures instead of assuming them to be backwards.

The above example in itself shows how effective it can be to just let participants find their own ways to ameliorate their own situation. They take into account their own lived realities (unlike outsiders working in an NGO) and co-create solutions with the organisation that result in a more sustainable outcome.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

To achieve a transition towards complexity-based (transdisciplinary) and learner-driven (co-creative) HE, we no longer accept the dependent position whereby the transition has to be imposed or facilitated top-down, as this proves to be too slow a strategy. Instead, one can build on the power and motivation of youth to question the current pedagogical institutions and empower them to shift from anger to activism, while at the same time encouraging meta-resilient players (teachers, HE leadership and societal decision-makers) to join, support and reinforce this learning pathway. It is not a cost innovation (as no high-tech labs are necessary), but values the expertise, creativity, visionary courage and empathy of all learners (inside and outside of academia) (Snick, 2021).

Learners are already making this approach a reality, as the transdisciplinary programmes and other co-creative platforms described above reveal. Currently, the world runs on extractive forms of living, a lifestyle leading to possible environmental collapse. Learner-driven approaches are a more inclusive form of education and can help humanity to glimpse a way out of this predicament. To that effect, universities and other educational institutions can actively support these programmes and adopt the learner-driven approach in their educational programmes, as a (bio)call complement to existing curricula. Through their platforms, networks like GUNI can help bring this approach to a wider public, thereby making it accessible to all individuals across the globe.

Further information

To learn more about the vision and approach of Nijera Kori:
http://nijerakori.org/

Learners and coaches involved in the learner-driven programme started at KU Leuven (Belgium) share their experiences on LinkedIn:
https://www.linkedin.com/company/young-persons-guide-to-the-future

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Anne Snick and Raad Sharar
The contribution of South African higher education institutions to tackling exclusion and sustainability challenges

The Case of University of Johannesburg’s Izindaba Zokudla project in Soweto

Alexis Habiyaremye and Joseph Eliabson Maniragena

Abstract

One of the most significant consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the worsening of already high inequality in South Africa in the form of disproportionate loss of employment among low-wage workers. Higher education institutions have the potential to contribute to inclusive transformation as producers of scientific knowledge that can be deployed to help disadvantaged communities solve local development challenges. This article uses a case study of a university-community engagement project to explore how South African higher education institutions deployed knowledge exchange projects to build inclusive and sustainable smallholder farming communities. Key informant interviews indicate that government support is necessary to scale up basic community capacity to optimise knowledge exchange between the university and disadvantaged communities. In most developing countries, resource-poor rural communities are oftentimes those that most need to apply specialised, university-produced knowledge to address their local challenges. Their inclusion in the innovation process aimed at addressing their specific problems is therefore particularly important because it leads to better development outcomes (Arza & van Zwanenberg, 2014; Petersen et al., 2016). The mechanisms through which universities exchange newly created knowledge with industry in collaborative and commercial transactions (e.g. Etzkowitz, 2002; Chakrabarti and Rice, 2003; Niosi, 2006; Perkman & Walsh, 2009; Ankrah & Omar, 2015, etc.) or engage with external stakeholders with adequate financial, intellectual and managerial resources to absorb academic knowledge have received considerable academic coverage in literature on university-industry collaboration and community engagement (see Perkman & Walsh, 2007; 2008; Perkman et al., 2013, or Kruss & Visser, 2017 for an overview). Collaboration in research and innovation between universities, the private sector and the public sector, in the so-called triple helix, has therefore become a new distinctive approach towards leveraging innovation efforts (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995; Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 1998; Lawton Smith & Leydesdorff, 2014). The U.S. innovation landscape, for example, has seen a veritable mushrooming of university-government-industry collaborations in the form of cooperative research centres (CRCs) that seek to provide organisational solutions to the challenge of cooperation in science and technological innovation (Wessner, 2013). As a result of the increasing benefits of such collaborations, support for CRCs has become the main channel of government agencies’ funding strategies to promote transformative or paradigm shifting research (Visser & Gray, 2010). Collaborative development and transfer of technology between local universities and local industry underpins much of the success of innovation clusters such as Silicon Valley, Route 128 and the Research Triangle of North Carolina, as pointed out by Etzkowitz (2002), Chakrabarti and Rice (2003) and Kruss & Visser (2013), among others.

In contrast, much less attention has been paid to elucidating the structures of knowledge exchange between universities as knowledge producers and rural communities where financial, intellectual and managerial resources are scarce, as pointed out by Theodorakopoulos et al. (2012). In developing economies, interactions between universities and other players occur in a context that differs more or less significantly from that of developed countries. The type of collaboration modelled as public-private partnership research centres (CRCs) or Centres of Excellence (CoEs), while successful in university-industry technology transfer, is ill prepared to yield the desired knowledge exchange and technology diffusion to resource poor communities in the face of knowledge asymmetry between knowledge producers and the intended technology recipients. This problem is particularly significant for cases in which the technical solutions to be applied are complex and the intended end users of the technological knowledge are members of under-resourced rural communities (Petersen et al., 2016; Jacobs et al., 2019). Collaboration within such structures is tedious when the mostly tacit, localised knowledge basis of the intended technology recipients has limited overlap and complementarity with the specialised, mostly codified technological knowledge required to develop and apply the optimal technological solution to the challenge to be addressed (Jacobs et al., 2019).

With the increasing recognition that problem-solving skills and ability do not automatically follow from curriculum in specialised knowledge, there is an emerging need not only to broaden the opportunity to acquire specialised knowledge, but also to stimu-
imposed by Covid 19 and the recent social unrest in South Africa.

Most universities engage mainly in passive modes of technology transfer to communities, which usually takes place through presentations or seminars. This renders the transfer of skills associated with that technology very impracticable. Such a mode of knowledge diffusion is therefore unlikely to be effective in rural communities where the proportion of illiterate, technically unskilled people is large. However, the active mode, which is commonly deemed by many observers to be effective in rural areas, provides a technical demonstration of the scientific knowledge by putting in place a working system where technical application of this knowledge is deployed. End users are trained in the utilisation, management and maintenance of the corresponding technological equipment (Le Grange & Buys, 2002). Knowledge transferred under this mode is also aligned and customised to the users’ current environment in a way that enables them to take ownership of it.

This study contributes to these debates by probing what happens at the interface of knowledge exchange to shed light on what can be done to bolster the contribution of university-produced knowledge in addressing community challenges. The paper is structured as follows: the section below presents the theoretical rationale of applying cooperative learning to overcome the hurdles of knowledge asymmetry between knowledge producers at universities and in marginalised rural communities in South Africa. The second section presents an empirical illustration of the application of cooperative learning in university-community engagement at the iZindaba Zokulisa Farmers’ School and Innovation Lab, an initiative of the University of Johannesburg and the community of black smallholder farmers in Soweto. The final section concludes with remarks on the sustainability and inclusivity of the co-learning outcomes of the project.

The cooperative learning approach

Cooperative learning (also called co-learning) is a capacity building approach that encourages a move from the concept of learning as an individualistic and competitive endeavour to a collective responsibility for knowledge sharing and development in order to achieve a certain task or solve a given problem (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, Johnson et al., 1998). By learning together, team members are likely to learn more in a shorter amount of time while developing social skills and teamwork (Clark, 1999).

The application of cooperative learning has its roots in the social interdependence theory (Deutsch, 1949; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Positive interdependence (cooperation) results in promotive interaction as individuals encourage and facilitate each other’s efforts to learn. Positive interdependence results in promotive interaction, whereas negative interdependence results in oppositional or “contrariant” interaction.

Co-learning makes use of the instructional organisation of learning into small groups or teams to ensure that group members work together to maximise their own and each other’s learning (Johnson et al., 1998, 2014). It helps develop the skills necessary to work on projects too difficult and complex for any one individual to complete alone in a reasonable amount of time. By using cooperative learning techniques, learners eliminate competition and work better together so that they can learn the vast quantity of information required of their training programmes and professions (Clark, 1999).

Whereas situated learning in communities of practice has been suggested to overcome the complexity of knowledge transfer to rural communities in the presence of knowledge brokers (Theodorakopoulou et al., 2012), the resource constraints of marginalised communities mean that the corresponding transaction costs can be prohibitive. Because of its greater capacity to facilitate skills accumulation, it has been suggested that cooperative learning be used to overcome the hurdles posed by the complexity of the external knowledge to be acquired (Deutsch, 1949; Clark, 1999; Aroca & Sutz, 2000; Teed et al., 2015).

Creating a learning community

A community is a limited number of people who share common goals and a common culture (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). For a community to exist and sustain itself, members must share common goals and values that define appropriate behaviour by community members and increase their shared quality of life. Within a community, everyone should know everyone else and realise that relationships are long-term (as opposed to temporary brief encounters). Creating a learning community requires emphasising the overall positive interdependence among members.

Knowledge generation and management at universities and absorptive capacity in partner communities play an important role in determining the rate at which creative solutions can diffuse across value chains (Lámá, 2008)(3). However, whereas the application of specialised scientific and technological knowledge has often resulted in technological innovations to address societal challenges, more or less sizable mismatches have regularly arisen between university-generated knowledge and the needs of the communities that it was supposed to meet (Wolfison, 2010).

The existence of such mismatches has created the need for an adaptation mechanism between technological knowledge producers and recipients, in which knowledge sharing facilitates a co-learning process that can help overcome the constraints of the knowledge asymmetry inherent in the linear transfer of technological know-how, especially when asymmetry involves tacit knowledge. Co-learning acts as an ignition phase in the process of knowledge co-production between researchers and other and key stakeholders, which is crucial for the successful development of new ideas and innovative solutions (Poht et al., 2010). Organisational learning and knowledge co-creation based on a continuous and dynamic interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge can thus be a potent tool to overcome the constraints of linear innovation and technology transfer models (Lámá, 2008).

For externally produced knowledge to diffuse to community members, Nahapet and Ghoshal (1998) proposed a knowledge exchange mechanism con...
sitting of networks of strong, crosscutting personal relationships developed over time that provide the basis for trust, cooperation and collective action. Figure 1 gives an illustration of knowledge exchange involving knowledge asymmetry between specialised knowledge producers and members of under-resourced communities. Successful exchange is facilitated by bringing holders of different types of skills and knowledge together to establish such personal relationships and share their views. This process of creating a shared understanding of problem-solving knowledge corresponds to what Benneworth and Olmos-Penuela (2018) call the “coupling of knowledge circuits through cognateness” between knowledge creators and knowledge transformers. Cognateness is understood as a shared knowledge base and a common understanding of problems enabling players to incorporate usable knowledge from external sources (Cummings & Kiesler, 2005; Benneworth & Olmos-Penuela, 2018).

As stressed by Lipman (2013), the spatial design of such a space for collaboration and knowledge exchange is of significant importance because of the necessity to establish interpersonal relationships that foster mutual learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development suggests that learners can develop their skills and strategies faster by working with others who are more expert in a given task. It has found a contemporary application in the concept of “reciprocal teaching”, used to improve students’ ability to learn from others who are more expert in a given task. Indeed, spatial design influences how people engage with one another and affects their ability to fully participate in activities. When designed thoughtfully, collaborative learning spaces help create optimal experiences for learning by allowing members to cooperate or work independently according to the specific requirements of the learning task (Lipman, 2013). Figure 2 gives an illustration of such a space, where face-to-face interactions are prioritised in order to facilitate trust building and cooperation. The section below pays specific attention to the co-learning and co-creation processes that take place in a community engagement project run by scientists of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Johannesburg and members of a local community.

The project started in 2013 as a service-learning technology development initiative and has since grown into a system of innovation that encompasses events, stakeholder integration and other activities that have created an ecosystem wherein emerging and small-holder farmers can be empowered. This project was born when researchers from the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at the University of Johannesburg held a 3-day workshop to develop a “Strategic Plan” for urban agriculture in Johannesburg (Malan, 2020). This forum aimed at implementing a participatory technology development service-learning project eventually became ‘iZindaba Zokudla, which juxtaposed technology development, service learning and urban agriculture with popular and university participation, entrepreneurship, food systems change and multi-stakeholder engagement.

Empirical illustration of university-community co-learning: iZindaba Zokudla project

The co-learning findings presented in this study are based on interviews, documents and observational data collected from the iZindaba Zokudla (Conversations about Food) project in September 2021. The project is based in Soweto, Johannesburg, where the University of Johannesburg (UJ) has a satellite campus.

Project background

iZindaba Zokudla aims to create opportunities for urban agriculture in a sustainable food system. This project was initially launched as an action research project with a goal in South Africa, Africa and rest of the world. The project’s success is partly attributable to the use of multi-stakeholder methods being pioneered by project partners in the “Global Innoversity”. The methods used aimed not only to incorporate multiple stakeholders into the design process, but also to develop technologies, products, systems and practices that have social, environmental and economic benefits.

Co-learning approach

The aim of the iZindaba Zokudla project is to build a framework or institutional foundation for meaningful action research that involves community members, university researchers and industry players, with the aim of triggering a systemic and sustainable change in local food systems. It aims to create opportunities for urban agriculture in a sustainable food system in Johannesburg. The project encourages the consumption of food produced in or nearby local communities. One of the values of the project is to promote a diversity of stakeholder methods and sustainable and regenerative agriculture in South Africa. The project also provides a platform enabling emerging farmers to set up enterprises that can produce food for local markets as a key component of a locally based sustainable food system.

iZindaba Zokudla’s learning outcomes reflect its mission of creating a multi-stakeholder platform to transform local food systems into an economically productive, environmentally sustainable and socially beneficial network linking multiple stakeholders. This project has enabled many emerging enterprises to develop new activities and launch new products. Its multi-stakeholder nature has also allowed it to influence the country’s agricultural policy through submissions to parliament and petitions with regards to urban farmers’ problems and challenges. This has led to key innovations, including the creation of the Lab itself, the Khula! app and aparat.co. It has also resulted in the creation of seed libraries for the “rainbow maize” cultivar and the establishment of its value chain, which emerged from the initial visits made by the Slow Food Ark of Tastee’s representative to the lab in 2016. The launch of the rainbow maize seed libraries was enhanced by workshops organised in collaboration with the African Centre for Biodiversity and Bioversity International in 2016. Since then, a number of other seed libraries have been established by the farmers themselves.

In pursuing its goal to change urban agriculture, iZindaba Zokudla also established the Farm Lab, which provides local youth with skills training in organisational development and supports them with marketing, business development and information on agro-processing techniques. Before the outbreak of Covid-19 and the ensuing lockdown restrictions, the Farm Lab brought people together for various activities and regularly hosted 100 to 300 participants on days when such activities were organised. Activity participants included farmers and food processors, students volunteering at the lab (as part of the University’s Community Engagement), outside entrepreneurs coming to buy from farmers and stakeholders, as well as those who were there out of curiosity. Farmers brought produce to sell

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at the lab and discussed ways of supporting each other to confront their multiple challenges. They also made use of networking opportunities at lunch time, and some of them even formed (business) partnerships.

In partnership with various stakeholders, the iZinda-ba Zokudla Farmers’ Lab has also been organising the Soweto Eat-In since 2016, an event in the form of a food festival that showcases the best in heritage and indigenous foods. They also organised the ‘School Garden Dialogues’ with Educators in Soweto, the iZinda-ba iLanga energy workshops with the Process, Energy and Environment Technology Station on UJ’s Doornfontein Campus, as well as other unique events that aimed to facilitate the entry of emerging food entrepreneurs in a sustainable food system in South Africa. The focus on sustainable entrepreneurship is a key feature of this initiative, as it presupposes that real change can only be accomplished by entrepreneurs and enterpri- ses that in many respects exemplify sustainability. This also explains the dearth of direct evidence for the effi- cacy of iZinda-ba Zokudla, as the project itself cannot make much real change, given that its activities are all aimed at stakeholders accomplishing the task of social change. This however, ties up enterprise development with the theme of this project: accomplishing a transi- tion to a sustainable food system.

From our discussions with the beneficiaries of this ini- tiative, it emerged that the main outcome has been the involvement of previously marginalised communi- ty members in the iZinda-ba Zokudla monthly Farmers’ Lab, which translated complicated technical and scien- tific terms into simple, easily understandable concepts; this resulted in the creation of new activities and the establishment of new enterprises. Peer learning is another important outcome, whereby some farmers who had prior knowledge or specific experience in agri- culture used the opportunity offered by the lab to teach fellow farmers.

Knowledge co-creation

The setup of the Farmers’ Lab offers opportunities for full interactive learning and knowledge co-creation between UJ researchers and local community members. One way of achieving this is ensuring that scientific and other jargon is fully explained in concepts that are easy to grasp. In knowledge exchange discussions, expert and non-experts are juxtaposed on a public stage. Inter- viewed participants recalled that when the Farmers’ Lab discussed biogas, a local farmer who had a biogas unit on her farm and a university expert were recruited to explain biogas adoption to local community members. The local farmer offered a complementary lecture to the university expert. The same process is used in other instances where an expert is paired with a local farmer or community member who has experience in the topic being discussed. Local farmers are now able to teach their peers, provide advice and sometimes even challenge the university expert with their local indigenous knowledge. This knowledge co-creation has even extended to how to sell their produce, as well as graphic design workshops where local designers work hand-in-hand with university design experts to develop optimised irrigation system designs.

The main concern was the lack of government support that would have enabled the scaling up of local com- munity capacity to take advantage of more substantive investment opportunities.

Another limitation on co-learning is the language barrier that seems to be hindering participation by the elderly. When UJ lecturers come to teach them and cannot speak the local languages, it creates frustrations. Partici- pants and local community members suggested that more programmes be prepared in isiZulu and other local lan- guages to broaden participation. They also proposed the idea of supplementing the Farmers’ Lab initiative with other measures, including government support for local capacity building and financial assistance to help shore up investments in smallholder farming.

Concluding observations

Whereas the legacy of apartheid made it difficult to apply knowledge produced in higher education institutions to address the local challenges of disadvantaged commu- nities, the post-apartheid era has seen the emergence of multiple university community engagement projects, wherein scientific knowledge produced by universities is shared with members of disadvantaged local communi- ties to improve their living conditions in a sustainable manner. Sharing scientific knowledge with members of disadvantaged communities requires overcoming multiple hurdles of knowledge transmission within a context of knowledge asymmetry between epistemic communities. The cooperative learning approach offers the opportunity to overcome these hurdles more easily, by building trust among learning partners and encour- aging learning collaboration to increase the speed at which local capacity can be developed among the knowledge end users. As illustrated by the case of the iZinda-ba Zokudla project involving the University of Johannesburg and smallholder farmers from disadvan- taged communities in Soweto, a university-community co-learning approach offers multiple opportunities to co-create readily applicable practical knowledge to help community members confront their local challen- ges and develop sustainable solutions that increase their inclusion in the local and national economy. The success of such an approach rests on developing a long-term vision underpinned by mutual trust, whereby existing knowledge held by disadvantaged community members is merged with university-produced scientific knowledge to design the most appropriate solutions. Participation of the end-users in the conception and implementation of practical solutions to their challen- ges increases the sense of local embeddedness and represents a key aspect of both the inclusivity and sus- tainability of co-learning outcomes.

Community engagement with extensive interactions is necessary to coordinate knowledge sharing and stren- gthen local absorptive capacity in order to optimise the benefits of co-learning. Accordingly, a reorientation of the incentive systems within knowledge-producing institutions is required to accommodate and attach value to the time and energy spent on enhancing the problem-solving capacity of the local communities in which universities are embedded.

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Multi-layered digital inequalities in HEIs: the paradox of the post-digital society

Laura Czerniewicz

Abstract

This paper explains the ways that digital inequalities are becoming more complex in higher education (HE). It shows that while the foundations of access to devices and connectivity is improving to an extent, the fundamental social inequalities of electricity and affordability are severe. The paper shows how the rapid digitalisation of HE catalysed by the Covid-19 pandemic introduced risks pertaining to student and staff data sovereignty. There is an elaboration on the role of technology in knowledge representation and visibility; the Matthew Effect in educational technology, the biases of algorithms; and the underside of the “any time anywhere” promise.

In answer to the question “How can HEIs, ICTs and digitalisation address these inequities and contribute to inclusive and accessible HEIs?”, the first answer is that sometimes it can’t, and that technology might be inappropriate or even unethical. The argument is made for a serious commitment to a research agenda regarding the ways that HE has been changed by dominant technological systems and discourses. There are also opportunities to leverage the gains of designing for equity in practice and in policy. And finally, there is room to use the affordances of the technology itself to build completely transformed systems for equitable ends.

ICTS and digitalisation in Higher Education: Problem? What problem?

The question of whether and how technology can assist higher education in becoming more inclusive and accessible is not a new one, with decades of efforts, promises, failures and research building a substantial knowledge base. As society at large has made digital integration essential for participation, new forms of exclusion are coming to bear into, in and on higher education, abetted by unequal power relations and compromises to be negotiated within the Higher Education (HE) ecosystem. The intensive digitalisation catalysed by the pandemic and concomitant “online pivot” means that HE is in danger of fast becoming a site of surveillance capitalism, with the concomitant dangers for equity, little transparency and unequal terms of engagement.

It is not possible to review ICT and inequality in higher education in isolation: addressing inequality must be considered within broader social realities. Society is sometimes described as being post-digital because it is impossible not to be impacted by the digital, even, ironically, as digital inequalities grow.

However, digital structures and practices are unevenly distributed and experienced within social structures, which are in turn refracted into universities. In a virtual cycle, universities reproduce these structures and practices, while knowledge production and dissemination in universities also shape and reframe social practices.

The intersection of the digital with dominant economic models has created what Zuboff calls rogue capitalism, i.e. surveillance capitalism - an economic model which uses human experience as data for the purposes of profit making and behaviour modification (Zuboff, 2019). From an HE perspective, “our mind and psychic life have become the main raw material which digital capitalism aims at capturing and commodifying” (Mbembe, 2019). The value of data in HE was illustrated pre-COVID19 by the financial value of companies which own and provide student data.

The pandemic saw the rapid entry and scaling-up of private companies into the HE sector with massive educational technology investment in a sector confirmed as a market opportunity. Of course, there had previously been private companies in the HE ecosystem, and rightly so. However, because of the urgency of responding to lockdowns and campus closures in 2020, speedy negotiations in tandem with underfunded universities meant that there was insufficient time for needy universities to hammer out equitable terms of engagement. It also meant that there was a likelihood that short term decisions and agreements, hastily made...
New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030 - Part 2: Transitions: Key Topics, Key Voices

Laura Czerniewicz

connectivity and cheap data. These are essential but addressed through access, more complex layers of infrastructure (8) and reduced inequalities (10). Exclusion also operates at several levels: individually (students and educators), institutionally, and across the sector nationally, regionally and internationally. It also requires disentangling how divides play out and how peripheries manifest, as well as the terms under which forms of capital intersect.

Addressing inclusion in HE means simultaneous engagement with several of the Sustainable Development Goals ( Goal 4: quality education, 8: decent work, 9: industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10: reduced inequalities). Exclusion that the multiple forms of existing inequalities in university communities were exposed. Now that they have been seen, they cannot be unseen (Czerniewicz et al., 2020). The questions for those concerned with ICTs and inequality for addressing inclusion in HE must always be: who profits, who loses, which interests are served, and what are the terms of engagement? For those who use big tech companies’ products as teaching and learning platforms, there are more serious ramifications as this metadata can be aggregated with that of other products in the company’s basket.

Understanding these new technically convoluted education technology systems creates new forms of inequities. While the interface is designed for ease of use, decoding the data provided, what has been called its “shadow text” is hidden from view and accessible only to epistemic elites, who alone have the expertise and technological machine learning resources needed to decode it (Perrotta et al., 2021). This makes disputing company assurances and negotiating with them arduous: another form of inequality is introduced into higher education as only those with sophisticated expertise can engage with the data systems.

For students, privacy and cookie settings are the first point of encounter with data. These are generally obscure and unclear (Amiel et al., 2021), with a minute minority likely to respond to these settings at all. In less obvious ways students are caught up in surveillance practices, whereby their experiences are turned into data. Their “consent” means little when they have no effective choice and the ostensible “agreements” are obfuscated. “Free” tools extract a data price, and it is only those with the financial ability to pay for tools and services who really have the option of refusing to use such tools.

Old and new digital divides

The digital divide is alive and well; indeed the paradox is that even as the basics of the divide are addressed through access, more complex layers of exclusion are added; digital inequalities thus morph into new complicated forms. Nevertheless, fair and equitable technological infrastructure is the foundation of inclusion in HE: electricity, devices, ubiquitous connectivity and cheap data. These are essential but insufficient.

The ability of residential universities to ameliorate differences in access to technological infrastructure on campus fell away during the pandemic, when students and academics were sent home to learn and teach. The most basic access requirement is electricity. Yet 790 million people have no access to electricity and 2.6 billion people in developing countries do not have access to clean electricity (World Bank, 2021). Many students, especially in rural areas, had no electricity to study from home.

Basic connectivity is becoming globally ubiquitous: ninety-three per cent of the world population has access to a mobile broadband network. Yet this percentage is only 77% in Africa. Globally, about 72% of households in urban areas had access to the Internet in 2019, almost twice as much as in rural areas (only 38 per cent). The urban-rural gap was small in developed countries, but in developing countries urban access to the Internet was 2.3 times as high as rural access (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2020b).

The cost of data is a serious barrier. There is a 30,000% difference between the cheapest price for data and the most expensive, with the most expensive data being the most expensive data being the most expensive in three African countries (Malawi, Benin and Chad), while India, Israel and Kyrgyzstan have the least expensive (Ang, 2020). A significant affordability gap remains between developed and developing countries, especially for baskets that include at least 1.5 GB of data. ICT services in the majority of the least developed countries (LDCs) remain prohibitively expensive. In many developing countries a data-only package with the minimum 1.5 GB of data still costs the consumer more than 2% of monthly income. And in several countries the median price can be more than three times the 2% affordability target. The gap between developed and developing countries in terms of value for money is growing (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2020a). Of course, in addition to cost, the adequacy, appropriateness and fixability of devices are relevant considerations.

These factors are outside of the education sector but have a direct impact on it. As long as technology infrastructure is not considered and implemented as a public good, those with resources will be advantaged. It is for this reason that in a networked and global world, national elites were able to access what was needed to study online in every country during the pandemic.

Divides at sectoral level have widened as universities grapple with digitalisation.

Underfunded universities were thrust into the digital age at speed in 2020, unable to escape the digital and related realities of their students’ lives as institutions scrambled to improve access and connectivity. Their varying abilities to do so exposed the stratification of national systems; some universities had deep pockets, large endowments and wealthy students. Others had none, or lost their additional forms of income, and some universities have closed (Higher Ed DIVE Team, 2022).

There has been growth in the number of public-private relationships being formed, partly in response to some of these challenges. These relationships are being forged and negotiated by over-stretched public universities, many of which are coping with slashed government funding, hungry students and exhausted overloaded educators. Wealthier universities are in a better position; they have brand power, can afford to develop in-house capacity, are able to develop and implement privacy frameworks, can and do employ privacy officers, and have the capacity to negotiate terms with vendors such as Online Programme Managers (OPMs). These are the ways in which, adjusting to the requirements of a digital university in a post digital world, uneven university systems are being further stratified.
Responding to this dense and convoluted terrain requires multifaceted interconnected digital literacies, critical literacies, information literacies and data literacies (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2020). Those with access to extensive cultural capital are more likely to be positioned to take meaningful control and ownership of their own data. There are thus inequalities within the student population, as well as between students and the tools they use.

Nationally, it is not the purview of one department to put in place practical and legal structures to ensure fair and equitable data sovereignty and to make strides towards resolving digital divides. The tasks are fragmented across several departments or ministries of telecommunications, education, labour, infrastructural planning and so on. It is a national imperative to ensure that such coordination takes place to ensure citizen rights for all, especially those most marginalised by limited access to economic and other capital.

Knowledge and learning

There are numerous forms of exclusion in higher education. They relate to equity and justice, critical literacies, information literacies and data literacies (Poydner & Sefton-Green, 2020). Those with access to extensive cultural capital are more likely to be positioned to take meaningful control and ownership of their own data. There are thus inequalities within the student population, as well as between students and the tools they use.

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Using them generically for the sake of efficiency is to the disadvantage of some, leaving academics and designers to answer the impossible question of what number of “some” is too many. This period has also shown a light of the numerous ways programmes and curricula have been can be designed with and inclusion at the forefront. Such equity-focused design has been explored worldwide, in even the richest countries. Student learning has been enabled in many places with low connectivity or no connectivity contexts and online classrooms with varying levels of access. There are also examples where students have been involved in decision-making and co-creation of resources. Improved learning design and the increased take-up of universal design learning (UDL) through the multiple modes necessitated by the pandemic has offered improvement for increased diversity in the sector, partly because of massification in the system. These are activities and approaches to build on and grow.

- Developing equitable ethical data policies and frame-works

Inequities and unequal power relations can and are being tackled at policy and regulatory level. These are largely under the banner of FAF - Fair, Accountable and Transparent. Such efforts occur within curricula, institutionally, nationally and internationally. Some of these efforts occur outside the HE sector but impact on HE in immediate ways. Examples are the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) at regional level, and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) at national level. These kinds of policies are aimed at individual data sovereignty and control, with implications for both the running of universities and the way that research can be undertaken and reported.

Within universities, valuable regulatory frameworks regarding student data and learning analytics protect students. Such frameworks highlight the principles of privacy, data ownership and control, transparency and consent; anonymity; non-maleficence and beneficence; data management and security; access; responsibility; minimising adverse impacts and enabling interventions (Corrin et al., 2019). In addition, there is a need for other ethical considerations such as lack of justice, inequality and power embedded in the learning analytics system (Cerratto-Pargman & McGrath, 2021).

Perhaps the most demanding area is the formation and development of digital, data and critical literacies, as research has shown that such literacies are much more effective when integrated into curricula. Stand-alone literacy development is essentially a Band-Aid solution. Given how complicated and emergent the terrain is, this is a big ask of overburdened educators who may themselves not have those very capabilities.

There are equity implications in practice as well as in policy. Technical, administrative, procurement and legal services within institutions make decisions about tools, platforms and services which impact on equality. Procurement processes need to ensure that due con-sideration is given to technologies which may cause or impact on barriers to learning. In hybrid environ-ments, such teaching and learning models are likely to account for students being both on and off campus in diverse environments. In addition, it is the responsibility of those in these positions to negotiate terms and conditions with educational technology companies and vendors, keeping an eye on the agreements regarding student data in particular.

Transforming the system

For parity of participation - Fraser’s definition of social justice (Fraser, 2005) - to be possible, the HE sector would need to be foundationally transformed in terms of the allocation of resources, values, funding models, governance structures and systems. Perhaps ironically given how technologies have been used to date, digital technolo-gies intrinsically have affordances which would need to be foundationally transformed in terms of equity and social justice. At this post-pandemic time, the shape and future of universities are under scrutiny. This is a time when pluri-versal knowledge structures, open edu-cation, knowledge commons and learning commons can be dreamt into being. This is tough but possible through the building of alliances and collegial colla-boration. As sites of knowledge production, radical innovation and deep expertise, universities are the ideal location for radical transformation.

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Higher education and digitalisation in the pandemic: Latin American lessons for the challenges of the future

Ana Laura Rivoir

Abstract

The situation of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020 and 2021 has created significant challenges for education in general and higher education in particular. Institutions have made a considerable effort to maintain teaching by resorting to online tools. In Latin America, they faced problems of infrastructure and connectivity and a lack of digital capabilities and skills, due to conditions in higher education institutions (HEI) and countries. The paper presents an overview of the initial conditions of the digitalisation of higher education in Latin America and the existing inequalities. The following aspects are analysed using the available data: the changes experienced, and the processes associated with emergency distance education, lessons learnt from the introduction of new modes of teaching, and risks associated with fulfilling the right to education and advancing in its democratisation. Finally, some recommendations are given for progressing in the transformation of higher education using a blended mode, and some of the actions that are needed in this area.

Latin America: Higher education and digital development at a time of pandemic

With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Latin America took up the health measures implemented by their governments just as their counterparts did around the world, including the suspension of in-person classes. For HEIs, however, this decision posed two major challenges: finding ways to stay connected to their students and findings ways to maintain their offering of training and

Graph 1: Estimation of the total number of students and instructors affected by the suspension of in-person classes in March 2020 in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: UNESCO-IESALC, (2020)
education. Both challenges called for the use of digital technologies.

This paper analyses the various initiatives and processes implemented by HEIs in 2020 and 2021 under the umbrella of emergency remote education (ERE).

Maintaining educational links amid the pandemic in a context of inequality

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the shutdown of higher education ultimately struck every HEI affecting 98% of the region’s roughly 24 million students and 1.4 million university instructors (Pedró, 2021). As Graph 1 shows, the number of teaching staff and students who were affected by the suspension of classes rose steeply from mid-March 2020 to the end of the month.

With the suspension of all in-person classes, the vast majority of HEIs took the decision to pursue remote education. At the time, their action doubtless signified a major policy decision to uphold the right to education. By December 2021, only Uruguay had fully reopened its classroom doors. The remaining countries in the region carried on with some form of hybrid or blending learning that involved various combinations of remote and in-person learning (IESALC, 2021a).

In 2020, Latin America witnessed a sharp increase of 60% overall in the use of online education, but the rise was not homogeneous given the gaps in access, use and connection speed that existed across the continent (CEPAL, 2020).

The adopted measures have affected students unequally. As in the rest of the world, the growth of higher education in Latin America has boomed in recent years. According to IESALC (2020), the past twenty years have accounted for the rapid growth, most notably economic development, the increased aspirations of the middle class, the rise in the number of private HEIs, and the adoption of measures to cope with the emergency. Colombia developed a regulatory framework to guide HEIs on how to handle the emergency with technologies, and designed a sponsorship programme known as the “Plan Paprdino” to promote collaborative efforts among public and private HEIs to develop academic activities supported by ICTs (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021).

With the switch to virtual education, inequality also affected connectivity and access to ICTs, especially the internet. According to CEPAL (2020), 66.7% of people in Latin America and the Caribbean had internet connection in 2019 and the main disparities in access related to socioeconomic status. In 12 countries in the region, 81% of people in the top quintile had access, whereas only 38% in the bottom quintile did. The same kinds of inequality affected students, where 80% of households in the top quintile had laptop computers compared to only 10% of households in the bottom quintile. In addition, 67% of households in urban areas had internet connection, whereas only 23% of rural households did. In Bolivia, El Salvador, Paraguay and Peru, 90% of rural households did not have internet.

Moreover, connectivity alone is not enough. This is because low connection speeds affect educational use, limiting the effectiveness of digital solutions for online education. The problem proved particularly serious during lockdown, when different members of a household needed to use the internet at the same time. In June 2020, 44% of the countries in the region did not reach the download speed required for carrying out several online activities at the same time (CEPAL, 2020). With the suspension of in-person classes, the impossibility of internet use in households became a determining factor in the continuity of education.

According to the UNESCO-IESALC report (2021), taking into account that over 50% of the higher education on offer in the region is private and that a significant number of public HEIs also charge tuition, the region’s governments and institutions facilitated mechanisms of financial support or access to credit in response to the worsening economic situation. Some countries and HEIs also gave financial assistance to households to obtain internet access and equipment.

Other forms of assistance were targeted at HEIs. In Chile, for example, the government took resources assigned to competitive funds in 2020 and redirected them to online training projects. In Brazil, the government’s assistance to HEIs involved the purchase of materials, equipment and connectivity for federal universities. Colombia and Peru opened spaces for pedagogical and technical skills development to cope with the emergency. Colombia developed a regulatory framework to guide HEIs on how to handle the emergency with technologies, and designed a sponsorship programme known as the “Plan Paprdino” to promote collaborative efforts among public and private HEIs to develop academic activities supported by ICTs (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021).

In addition, Peru invested in the acquisition of internet packages for students and teaching staff. In Colombia, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology started implementing two of the four initiatives in the “Last Mile” programme, installing internet access by landline for initially more than 250,000, covering an equal number of families in socioeconomic strata 1 and 2 (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021).

According to IESALC (2021b), HEIs sought to give continuity to their academic and administrative activities after the disruption of the pandemic by making significant investments in equipment and material that they delivered to university students to carry on with their studies, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Help with material and equipment delivered by HEIs to students to carry on with virtual academic activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Connectivity</th>
<th>Equipment (computers and/or tablets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Centro Universitario das Facultades Associadas de Ensino - FAE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Uncamp - Universidade Estadual de Campinas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Universidad de Chile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Universidad de Talca</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Universidad Nacional de Colombia</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Universidad de Antioquia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>UNAM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Universidad Mayor de San Marcos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>Universidad de la República</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios</td>
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The majority of the universities in question delivered assistance in the form of “technology grants”. Beneficiaries were chosen on the basis of socioeconomic status. In 2020, the University of the Republic in Uruguay created a “laptop grant”, which consisted of free loans of computers as part of an agreement reached with the Ceibal project (UNESCO-IESALC, 2021).

In short, higher education on the continent had to face the twofold challenge of shifting in-person learning to virtual learning in conditions that were far from optimal either for connectivity or for access to ICTs. In response, steps were taken to mitigate inequality in order to sustain educational activity and keep the greatest possible number of students connected and learning. From this period and these experiences, we still have opportunities. The uses and appropriations of the population, particularly higher education, and a great deal of education does not bring in new means, particularly in terms of resources, whose impetus and recommendations have been pushed by UNESCO© for decades, made it possible to draw on materials rich in information and content that could be worked on and constructed collectively (Aibar et al., 2015; Rivoir et al., 2017). Many HEIs on the continent took note of the availability of accessible digital resources and study content. Given the circumstances, they were also able to count on the collaboration and efforts of teaching staff and, therefore, encountered better conditions for rapid headway through this particular stage of access to content, if they did not actually leap past it.

The events, actions and processes experienced during the pandemic could furnish answers to how we can or wish to change the use of technologies in the future. To cope with closure, HEIs applied practices of “emergency remote education” (ERE). Hodges et al. (2020) have given this label to initiatives seeking to ensure educational continuity in contexts of crisis or catastrophe. Because of the pandemic, it became abruptly necessary to adapt planning and programming to emergency circumstances and work situations, making significant use of ICTs and other existing resources and capacities. The rapid shift from in-person learning to virtual learning relied on institutional support and guidelines, instructors’ capacity for innovation, and peer communities. Overall, HEIs issued very broad guidelines and instructions. According to Maggio (2021), the key step in the first part of 2020 was to make the content of courses available to students in digital format.

Under these circumstances, the existence of open educational resources, whose impetus and recommendations have been pushed by UNESCO© for decades, made it possible to draw on materials rich in information and content that could be worked on and constructed collectively (Aibar et al., 2015; Rivoir et al., 2017). Many HEIs on the continent took note of the availability of accessible digital resources and study content. Given the circumstances, they were also able to count on the collaboration and efforts of teaching staff and, therefore, encountered better conditions for rapid headway through this particular stage of access to content, if they did not actually leap past it. Of teaching staff and, therefore, encountered better conditions for rapid headway through this particular stage of access to content, if they did not actually leap past it.

In a second stage, synchronous classes were introduced through different systems of video conferencing, which did not necessarily entail a change of pedagogical approach (Maggio, 2021). According to the findings of the UNESCO-IESALC (2021) report, most HEIs recommended to their teaching staff that they use virtual classrooms, but an equally large number recommended the use of video-recorded lessons. Close to 40% pointed to a combination of the two strategies, but also encouraged other means, such as the use of email and WhatsApp. Significantly, it should be noted that one-fourth of universities did not give recommendations to their teaching staff. Indeed, this is doubtless one of the typical characteristics of emergency remote education (ERE).

At the same time, it is also important to note that most HEIs surveyed by IESALC (2021b) used platforms that existed prior to the emergency (80%), while only 8% set up platforms specially in response to the situation and 11% stated that they were in the midst of implementing platforms (see Graph 2).

According to the survey, the most commonly used platform was Moodle, although others included Google Classroom, Blackboard, and many other commercial platforms or platforms designed and developed by the universities themselves. However, the real use of platforms was far from universal, since only one-fourth of HEIs indicated usage. Also, only 68% of university instructors connected regularly, although the percentage rose to 80% in the case of students (see Graph 3).

1. See: https://es.unesco.org/themes/tic-educacion/wes
Emerging futures based on the experience of emergency virtualisation amid the pandemic

In conclusion, the vast majority of HEIs responded to the suspension of in-person classes by maintaining their activity through emergency remote education (ERE). It was an important policy and political decision to uphold the right to education. It was also a process sustained by instructors’ commitment, students’ adaptability and resilience, and the efforts of HEI staff who were more wrapped up in logistics and administration. However, it became clear that there was a low degree of ICTs incorporated into daily use and instructors needed to develop their digital competencies more. Heightened development is required not only in times of crisis but also to enable HEIs to meet the opportunities and benefits of technological development in the twenty-first century in order to enhance higher education. It is very likely that “forced digital immersion” has, in turn, enabled intensive development of instructors’ digital competences, which could be capitalised on to make a qualitative leap in ways of teaching.

that there were students who lost contact or directly abandoned their studies because they could not afford tuition or could not carry on with their courses in digital format. The impacts on educational continuity should be analysed more fully by level (i.e. undergraduate and postgraduate levels), because there is evidence that the effects differed. For example, we need to determine the extent of the impact caused by students’ living conditions relative to their care responsibilities, travelling expenses and other aspects that may have had a positive or negative effect on students’ educational links and progress in their studies.

Starting from this reality, Maggio (2021) sets out a number of aspects that have become consolidated in practice: a) the prioritisation of basic content, b) the absence of changes in course syllabuses to account for teaching practices implemented when classes went virtual, c) virtual campuses with limited functionality that did not encourage innovation; d) the centrality of the instructor in models of video conferencing; e) the use of a wide range of resources and methods with fruitful lessons and experimentation; f) the experiences of student collaboration through networks and other mechanisms, in many cases without institutional oversight or evaluations (Maggio, 2021).

The experience of students was not homogeneous. Some rated virtual work positively and called for its continuation after the emergency. Others felt that they had been harmed because they lacked access or sufficient digital competences. The same thing happened with teachers’ staff (Alzaga & Bang, 2021). New and old experiences welcomed the shift toward virtuality; they also reported unearnewise over issues of connectivity, the unsuitability of work methods, and the lack of preparation among instructors (Alzaga & Ilang, 2021).

The desired transformations require technology use and pedagogical innovation. To that end, the development of digital competences is important, but so are cultural changes and the evolution of the institutional contexts. Both of these take time and calls for sustained action to consolidate efforts (Silva et al., 2019). During the pandemic, many instructors appear to have found new ways of teaching, while students discovered new ways of studying and learning. Thus, it appears likely that teachers have come to the realisation that content is not everything, but rather that they can prioritise particular aspects for further consideration through reflection, exchange and discussion. Another lesson may have come in the form of instructors adopting different formats as useful course elements (e.g. audio-visuals, schema, presentations and class summaries), distancing themselves from traditional lectures and seeking to deliver content more effectively. Technology-mediated exchange served not only as a replacement for some in-person spaces but also as a potential complement in the future. Another feature relates to the review of evaluation methods and the potential for continuous assessment.

In all likelihood, teaching staff who had prior experience and training in the pedagogical use of digital technologies have been better able to cope and engage in innovative performance. In this respect, HEIs that trained their instructors in digital competences will have made the transition to virtualisation more successfully and will now have a greater chance to carry on with the processes that they have instigated.

It is also important to bear in mind that any changes in the labour relations with teaching staff and the evaluations of students very much enjoyed institutional support and validation during the period of emergency. Many of these efforts, however, cannot count on the same backing in “normal” times, particularly if we take into account the return to in-person classes. It now becomes necessary to evaluate and consider these aspects in the context of the transformations to pursue.

With the gradual return to in-person classes, the issues that concern us are how to sustain the transition to hybrid or blended learning and where it will take us. These questions open up scenarios that involve risks and opportunities for the transformation of higher education. Based on an understanding that what is important now is to update, transform and adapt ways of teaching and learning in the twenty-first century while treating pedagogical and didactic innovation as the driving force, one of the worst scenarios would be nostalgia and trying to get back to the starting point or old normal. Yet, at the other extreme lies the transition to total virtualisation, an unprecedented phenomenon, predating the pandemic and involving strong trends toward the commodification of higher education. This approach would involve the formulation of HEIs as content suppliers for students to pass courses and obtain degrees, bringing churn out content, given certain resources. The role of instructors would thus vanish, taking with it any chance of a thoughtful, critical education that produces knowledge. Such changes would not be desirable, since the core
aim is still the transformation of HEIs into institutions that are relevant, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and socially responsible. Above all, if the goal is to ensure an inclusive, just, ethical approach focusing on the human being, changes will be needed at different levels based on the recent experience in virtualisation.

Final considerations

Latin American HEIs started off with inequality of access to higher education and to connectivity and ITCs. Indeed, both factors became starkly clear with the suspension of in-person classes. Virtualisation emerged as a way to expand opportunities for educational continuity, but the inequality for some sectors in accordance with the installed capacities of each HEI and each country. The absence of sufficient, sustained policies of digital inclusion served to exclude various sectors or severely disrupt their ability to carry on their studies.

While it is still too early to assess the scope of any changes, some evidence points to the implementation of certain transformations that experts, innovative teachers and specialist areas in HEIs have sought for decades. It is likely, therefore, that hybrid or blended modes of teaching that combine in-person classes and remote learning will remain in place or at least the training of teaching staff will still be an obstacle to the exercise of the right to higher education.

To support the right to higher education, HEIs and countries in Latin America need to consider a series of measures and challenges in the medium to long run:

1. needs to be extended to a greater proportion of the population. The investment in infrastructure and connectivity at the level of countries is crucial, as is the need to make devices more accessible to anyone who does not have access through the market.

2. must aim at improving the use of digital technologies for learning purposes, seeking changes in teaching and administration that can require long processes, headway may be possible through gradual changes, including at the level of courses.

3. the digital competences of teaching staff, which could not be developed through thoughtful reflection in the face of emergency remote education (ERE), now need to be developed to enable the application of pedagogical innovations. Instructor training and incentives for change need to be a sign of the future.

4. that deeper transformations will involve changes to curricula, regulations and administration that can require long processes, headway may be possible through gradual changes, including at the level of courses.

5. Steps must be taken to ensure that any initiated innovations will continue. To this end, institutional support is important, not only at the level of curriculum design but also in terms of the functional and institutional recognition of the teaching staff who implement and demand that are relevant, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and socially responsible.

References


Technology ecosystems to rethink universities in the digital age

Mercè Gisbert Cervera

Abstract

The last two decades have been characterised by the widespread integration of technology into education, and universities and higher education have been no exception. During this time, the use and application of technology in teaching and management (more than in research) have been approached more from an instrumental perspective. Tools and applications have taken centre stage. Although most universities around the world have digitalisation plans, virtual campuses and numerous technological tools and resources, evidence of the reality and the pandemic have highlighted the fact that we are still a long way from achieving the digital transformation needed to tackle the challenges we face. It is necessary to go a step further by considering higher education institutions as a digital ecosystem from an organisational and strategic point of view. The perspective needed to ensure that this ecosystem is balanced involves adopting a shared vision of all areas (management, teaching and research) and all groups (teaching staff, students and administration and services staff), with a clear commitment to integration, equity and sustainability, both institutionally and socially.

1. Introduction

The nature and pace of the transformations affecting today’s society require that we speed up processes and prepare ourselves for the prospect of constant change. Universities in general and higher education institutions (HEIs) in particular are no exception. Over the past two decades, we have associated the pace and necessity of change with the digital society and a level of technological development and digitalisation that has come to touch on every area of our lives. Digitalisation, however, is not the only aspect that we must take into account in HEIs. We also need to look at how digitalisation may be “killing off” our future, migrations (both voluntary and forced) that call for integrated and transcultural views of the educational process; and no less importantly a labour market in constant flux that has become an unavoidable part of the world today. Nor must we forget that HEIs train future professionals for a professional world that is being redefined every year, while we in the universities take as long as two to three years just to carry out the design, approval and verification of a new official educational proposal.

In addition to the foregoing list of crises, we must also include everything that the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to light. On one hand, technology has the power by which to design alternative learning scenarios to meet the training needs of a far-reaching educational community through distance learning. Clearly, the evidence indicates that physical space can be overcome. Also, as we saw when we overhauled university degrees to adapt to the EHEA (the European Higher Education Area), the pace is set by the student (not by the content or instructor). Front and centre among the needs of HEIs is the need to review the entire digitalisation strategy. While HEIs may have become digitalised, they have made almost nothing automatic yet. Indeed, the whole university community (researchers, teaching staff, students, and administrati ve and service staff) has not yet sufficiently developed its digital competence. As a result, some digital tools and strategies have suffered from the fact that this particular community is literate but not competent. Lastly, the lack of a digital strategy (for teaching, research and management) has stood in the way of addressing the needs of the organisation “in real time”.

Given the initial position set out above, the digital transformation of HEIs is a matter of training (aimed not just at digitalisation, but also at innovation and change) and institutional strategy, but it is also a matter of personal and professional strategy and capability of adopting digital technology as a context, framework, scenario, strategy and tool. In no way is any of this intended to downplay the talent of the institution’s human dimension. Rather, the challenge that it poses is to humanise technology and turn it into the greatest ally of people. Technology on its own (much less artificial intelligence) will not bring major change unless it comes with a good institutional strategic plan, a sound plan to give people the skills required to use it well, and a sustainability plan to renew all equipment as often as needed to guarantee its smooth operation and give access to everyone on an equal footing. In short, we in the HEIs must seek to ensure access to technology on the same terms for all (equality) and in accordance with the needs of each (equity).

2. A changing digital context

The digitalisation of daily life and the adaptation of our environment to the digital format have heralded a clear societal transformation from which HEIs are not exempt. Accordingly, in terms of access to technology, we must not only consider the economic capacity of the public, which obviously matters, but also the level of competence needed to make good use of technology. With respect to the responsibility of education policies and HEIs to the goals of equality, cohesion and equity, it is necessary to promote measures that counteract the effects of the risks involved. During the pandemic, the threats of technology have surely become more apparent. At the same time, we must consider all of the opportunities that such an extreme situation has produced.

In terms of responsible public policies, international bodies first turned their focus to the importance of equality, cohesion and equity over two decades ago, highlighting the need to take steps to prevent the effects of what was then called the digital divide (OECD, 2001). In the first few years of the twenty-first century, digital inclusion was viewed as an essential step toward social inclusion in a technological world where people interact. In 2021, the European Commission (EC) presented a vision of digital goals for Europe in 2030. Then, in 2022, the EC issued a declaration on digital rights and principles for a human-centred digital transformation, including freedom of choice, security and protection, solidarity and inclusion, participation and sustainability (European Commission [EC], 2022). Over the past decade, some countries like Uruguay have become clear touchstones by moving forward with a digitalisation plan like Uruguay’s Ceibal Plan to furnish citizens with devices and training and set up observatories to monitor the results (Morales, 2019).

Bearing in mind the characteristics of the digital society, however, it is not enough to think only in terms of inclusion and exclusion. We must consider every principle that is required to ensure educational equity and that can be brought to bear in HEIs. The International Commission on the Futures of Education, which was set up by UNESCO in 2019 to pursue Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, put forward nine key ideas in 2020 that it regarded as fundamental for the future of education (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2020). The nine ideas focus on strengthening education as a common good, promoting access to technology and even advancing international solidarity. HEIs are also social institutions. As a fundamental part of society, they must aim to serve the public good and ensure that excellence and public service are compatible. This is a service that is oriented to the interests and needs of the context, but also useful for the promotion of international collaboration, which is what will be needed if we are to tackle major global challenges and push ahead in knowledge creation, science and human progress. For this to be possible, however, we must furnish students with access to techniques and strategies not only for their employability, but also to turn them into critical thinkers who are wise and able to grasp the world in which they find themselves. A digitalised world will require them to develop specific competences to face the challenges of technology.

In terms of their guiding aims, HEIs must seek to lessen the extent of inequity in the world. By way of example, two figures suggest how groups and geographic areas do not all enjoy the same opportunities: only 1% of refugees have access to higher education, whereas 36% of all other young people in the world do. If we could ensure that migrants have access to university on an equal footing, it would increase their social integration, freedom of action and quality of life (UNESCO, 2018).

Similarly, one of the latest publications produced in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL, 2021), which sets out data collected in the wake of the initial waves of Covid-19, indicates that the gaps

1. Cepal study based on data collected in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).
between different population groups as a result of poverty are trending upward in rural areas (among children and adolescents), in indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, and in groups with lower educational and economic levels.

Enrolment in higher education has grown in recent decades, rising from 17.1% in 1998 to 27% in 2008 to 38% in 2018 (UNESCO, 2018). Of these contexts, the one that can enable us to meet the needs of today’s digital society: HEIs, therefore, must also take on the role of developing the digital citizenship competence. The Council of Europe (Frau-Meigs, O’Neill, Soriani & Tomé, 2017) has summarised the 10 domains of this competence as shown below in Figure 1.

Digital citizens are trained in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, very often learning invisibly everything that will help them to develop as social beings (Cobo & Moravec, 2011). Of the three contexts, the formal one is the one that we can control. It is also the one that will enable us to ensure that future citizens receive the training they require to meet the needs of today’s digital society: HEIs, therefore, must also take on the role of developing the digital citizenship competence. The Council of Europe (Frau-Meigs, O’Neill, Soriani & Tomé, 2017) has summarised the 10 domains of this competence as shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The 10 domains of digital citizenship:

1. Access and inclusion
2. Language and digital literacy
3. Values and attitudes
4. Rights and empathy
5. Inter- and interdisciplinarity
6. Active participation
7. Financial competence
8. Privacy and security
9. Critical thinking
10. Communication

Source: Frau-Meigs, O’Neill, Soriani & Tomé, 2017

The failure to dedicate the time and resources needed to develop the 10 domains only serves to push the number of digital outcasts ever higher as technological development speeds up. From an educational perspective that includes higher education, this is a reality that we will be able to reverse and improve only if we are able to create genuine technological ecosystems for learning that are aimed at the development of the digital citizenship competence across the board and on equal terms for all (Gisbert & Lázaro, 2020).

In such an ecosystem, HEIs can play an important role by making available all necessary technological resources and infrastructure (libraries, learning and research resource centres, labs, digital classrooms, etc.) not only to their own academic communities, but also to the wider society. Particularly with respect to students, HEIs can play a key role by providing compensatory tools to students who need them. That is, when HEIs furnish all of the sometimes state-of-the-art technological resources mentioned above, the provision of compensatory tools can help to bridge shortfalls in the personal environments of students and therefore ensure that they receive the best possible training to meet the challenges of society and the labour market. Also, another good way to encourage the development of digital citizenship is for HEIs to promote open labs that take a social perspective and are free for any members of the public who wish to attend. Labs of this sort provide a space and pursue a strategy by which different participants seek to take together to renew the methods of innovation and creation through the use of processes that are collaborative and open, not only analogue but also digital (Lépine & Martin-Juchat, 2020).

2. HEIs addressing inequalities that stem from the knowledge gap and the lack of access to the internet and technological devices

Equity should be one of the core elements of all education policies to ensure a level playing field for each and every individual who seeks a quality education. While it is true that various international forums, government statements, and the education legislation of each country incorporates the principle of equity and inclusion, the reality is that there are still many groups who cannot gain access to education in general or to higher education in particular on an equal footing. Ethnicity, culture, gender and language are still variables that work against equality of educational opportunities. The problem proves even more serious in the case of ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants and people who have some type of special educational need.

We take the digital gap to be the distance between those who merely have access to technology and those who have the capacity or opportunity to use this technology. Following the conception of Tello (2007), I regard the digital gap as the divide between those who are connected to the digital world and those who cannot enjoy the benefits of such a connection. Lázaro, Estebanell & Tedesco (2015) define four factors that can promote digital inclusion and, therefore, social cohesion: 1) the strategic management of public policies, 2) a broad guarantee of access to technology, 3) the continuous training of educators on technology issues, and 4) evidence-based evaluation and monitoring of implemented policies.

We need to reflect on today’s society and the new models of knowledge creation that it entails, consider the level of digital inclusion (rather than looking at the digital gap) that is needed to achieve the transformative education HEIs must ensure, and look thoughtfully at how citizens and professionals must be developed in a digital context. It is well past time to focus our discourses and strategies more on inclusion than on gaps. HEIs also need to be aware that they often fail to take account of the socio-economic profiles of their students, especially in the case of countries in the so-called First World. Our HEIs must make the transition from an academic perspective to a social one.

Moreover, we need to engage with stakeholder groups, such as HEIs, NGOs, governments, international organisations, migrant associations and human rights organisations, in order to work together on this trans-disciplinary subject, and we need to put our heads together to improve on our shortcomings. International cooperation will become important not only, for instance, to share computer tools, platforms and experiences in digital learning, but also to collaborate in the training of educators. The creation of learning scenarios in digital contexts offers the potential added value of internationalisation and the possibility of access to training anywhere, anytime – that is, at any point in our lives when education or training happens to be most suitable for us.

Digital inclusion is connected to a variety of processes: a community’s availability of telecoms infrastructure...
and networks, accessibility to services offered by technology, and the competences and knowledge needed to make good use of technology. At the same time, the literature on technologies tends to present them as a major factor in equalising opportunities and connects them to public policies that need to be enacted to transform reality. In this respect, the discourse needs to shift its focus toward forms of knowledge access, exchange and co-creation by individuals and communities (Gisbert & Lázaro, 2020; Lago Martínez et al., 2016; Morales, 2019).

The various applications that have been implemented and made available to society at low cost, or indeed at no cost, have turned millions of users into captive “customers” of strategies, interests and even world-views. So much so that the large corporations that are involved should be required – on the grounds of corporate social responsibility – to ensure that a share of their profits is ploughed directly back into society so that it becomes a better place day by day for citizens to live (Picard & Pickard, 2017). If this were the case, the non-formal context in question would become an important ally of HEIs, facilitating access to information and knowledge affordable to society at low cost, or indeed free of charge, and made available to society at low cost, or indeed free of charge, and making it possible to develop a worldwide educational system with low-cost devices and a worldwide reach is to put technology, training and knowledge at the fingertips of less advantaged sectors of the population with the help of low-cost devices and a worldwide reach is the initiative of Salman Khan and his Khan Academy. Originally, Khan created Khan Academy only to offer private classes from Boston to students in New Orleans. Soon, however, the experience spurred him to design and develop a worldwide educational system with low-cost devices, a good didactic component and pleasing voices. It is no longer necessary to have expensive hardware, highly prepared staff, specific venues, installed servers or a distribution network, if you can use the internet as your distribution network, YouTube to store videos freely, a conventional computer with a camera, and a graphics tablet that is able to run free or low-cost recording software, all by following a “do it yourself” philosophy (Sheikh et al., 2021).

Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng at Stanford University set out to build a highly successful course with the same technologies and came up with Coursera (Mass et al., 2014). Anant Agrawal also pursued a similar approach, first with MITx and then with edX in conjunction with MIT and Harvard University (Pujar & Banosof, 2014). The technology was mature. From that point onwards, it was only necessary to apply it intensively. In the first half of the last decade, MOOCs became fashionable even if they did not persist as a strategy. The reality of the pandemic, however, has shown us that having MOOCs implemented would have helped to make the lockdowns more bearable. We would have had material and resources accessible on any device, anywhere and anytime. Both the experience of the Khan Academy and the experience of MOOCs delivered can enable large-scale access to training and therefore contribute to inclusion and equity in technological contexts with only minimal necessary infrastructure.

4. Institutionalising the digitalisation of HEIs

In recent years, the talk at HEIs has turned to blended and flexible learning as well as hybrid learning models. This particular narrative gained oxygen during the pandemic, but the reality is that online resources at in-person higher education have served only to supplement the prevailing mode of instruction, which is still synchronous and on place. Even so, the pandemic has demonstrated the need to design training activities for delivery through technologies designed for digital environments and drawing on supplementary human support (in person or online).

As a result, it is now clear that HEIs are not so much about what they teach as they are about how to teach, in a manner interconnected to the world, giving meaning and skills to students so as to enable them to engage in their own transformation while also providing them with the tools needed to develop as citizens (Boix, 2016). This is one of the major contributions that we in HEIs can make to ensure inclusion and equal opportunity, and we can make it happen by putting a set of overarching competences into our training programs. Prior to the pandemic, the global education movement was already gaining ground (Camilleri, 2018). Indeed, one of its aims is for HEIs to be cognizant of the need to foster the principles of respect, inclusion and especially equity.

Viewed overall, these approaches, which have been designed in technological environments, call upon our imaginations to transform the context of HEIs gradually over time according to a plan. However, we will not be able to do so with a top-down strategy, because the approaches also entail a process of cultural change that will take place at most in the medium term. That said, real change will be possible only if there is good institutional leadership, professional growth for educators, optimal infrastructure and a well-planned evaluation process that can provide evidence of students’ development in terms of learning results, from the cognitive and emotional perspectives (see Figure 2).

The perspective depicted in Figure 2 can take different forms in practice. All involve teaching and learning stra- tegies that are flexible, inclusive and enable users to develop in terms of their perspectives and needs. Maker spaces (Hynes & Hynes, 2018), open labs (mentioned earlier) and living labs (van den Heuvel et al., 2021) are all examples of spaces conceived with a functionality that is oriented toward the co-creation of knowledge and the application of new learning methods. They are also spaces where analogue and digital tools co-exist. In general, the strategy adopted to promote learning in such spaces becomes as important as, or even more important than, whether the available technological devices are state-of-the-art. Even so, there is still a tendency to focus the discussion more on the technology than on the teaching strategy.

As an example, we have the Monterrey Institute of Technology with its open lab project, specifically the Mostla project, which is a lab to reinvent education using state-of-the-art technology tools. Nonetheless, the truly significant aspect of the experience is the contribution of the Mostla project to the professional development of current and future educators.

Technology-based open and living lab concepts enable us to ensure access to all learners on an equal footing as long as the conditions for connectivity and access are optimal. We must not forget, however, that we can also imagine spaces that are not strictly digital. Indeed, we will encounter the blended or hybrid approach in many of the cases.

The pandemic has once again revived the debate over the quality of higher education and its genuine contributions and limitations. On top of an educational model designed for 100% in-person learning in which technology has typically played no more than a token role, we have suddenly been compelled by reality to implement an entirely remote learning approach. The learning process in general and the evaluation process in particular have had to be redesigned from scratch. Moreover, the resulting evaluation process has drawn sharp criticism. It has been clear yet again that not only do HEIs need to promote access to knowledge, but they must also equip students with critical thinking skills and make them capable of interacting with other students in the co-creation of knowledge (Farnell et al., 2021).

Ultimately, HEIs must focus on students, their needs and their links to every part of the institution. That is, personalised pathways must be developed for each student. Also, we need to imbue our institutional strategies with the views, perceptions and experiences of students. They need to be considered in the design of traditional process maps and attention must be given to the communication channels and relational mechanisms that they use. Only in this way will we be able to produce a 360-degree view of student needs as well as the needs of every other agent who takes part in the educatio-
5. HEIs must lead the change toward sustainability

We must take on new challenges in terms of learning standards, pedagogies and forms of evaluation and certification, which will require contextualisation, analysis and improvement (if necessary). While the trend already existed, the migratory crisis has grown significantly more intense since the outbreak of the pandemic (UNESCO, 2018). Indeed, it is intertwined with climate change and will only be more so in the decades to come. The pandemic will eventually disappear, but climate change will continue to pose an imminent threat for all societies. However, we must not view sustainability solely from the perspective of climate change. It is also necessary to see sustainability in terms of ensuring access to higher education for immigrants and refugees and making it a duty of HEIs to ensure educational equity.

To guarantee sustainability, we need to address the issue by means of a strategy for transformation. In this vein, HEIs need to take the following steps (based in part on CRUE, 2017):

- **Define a vision** that looks at how digitalisation brings value to the institution.
- ** Undertake processes of culture change and organisational change**: this is the core challenge.
- **Redefine processes**: this is the first step toward change. Finish the "industrialisation of processes" and move on to automation and then innovation and change.
- **Define the point of contact for students**, which is moving increasingly closer to everything digital.
- **Be reachable** anywhere, anytime and from any device. The university does not yet have an answer to this issue.
- **Include the views of students in process maps.**
- **Design technology services** (advanced data analysis) to monitor reality in real time.

- **Rethink the university model.** Shift from an analogue to a digital university. Generic online attention and personalised on-site attention. New educational techniques and strategies (e.g. MOOCs not as an end, but as a means).

Bearing in mind that we live in an increasingly liquid context, any strategy that we define will need to be flexible enough to ensure that HEIs can rise to the challenges of meeting the needs of learners and responding to the local and global context through the transfer of research results and newly created knowledge.

References


2.6 International Higher Education. From competition to collaboration
International Collaboration from an African Perspective: Strengthening Partnerships for our Common Goals

Oluwaseun Tella

Abstract

Immediately after Africa’s independence in the 1950s and 1960s, many universities were established alongside the few founded during the colonial era. Against the colonial backdrop and with a resolve to safeguard its newfound independence, the continent opted to Africa- nise its universities rather than implementing strategies of internationalisation and collaboration. However, the globalisation of universities exemplified by the world ranking of higher education institutions and the atten- dent quest for global relevance, among other factors, dictated that Africa would have to abandon this agenda in favour of internationalisation. The recent call for decolo- nisation of African universities ignited by the 2015 student-led protests across South Africa (#FeesMustFall) begs the question of the relevance of African universities to the continent’s developmental goals as its higher education sector wallows in a myriad of challenges such as Eurocentric epistemology, weak digital technology, low research output, poor infrastructure and outdated teaching methods in the era of the fourth industrial revo- lution and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

Despite the fact that many African states gained inde- pendence in the 1950s and 1960s, it was only in 2005 that Africa adopted a regional strategy for education, science and development – Africa’s Science and Tech- nology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA) (Woods et al., n.d.). The CPA has two key objectives, namely, to enhance Africa’s capacity to apply science, technolo- gy and innovation to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development, and to enhance the conti- nent’s contribution to global scientific knowledge and technological innovation (Woods et al., n.d.). These objectives should be viewed against the backdrop of the quest to strengthen African policies on science, technology and innovation and foster collaboration among African countries by sharing experiences and policy learning in pursuit of the internationalisation of their universities. Although the number of African uni- versities skyrocketed from 100 to around 2,000, and enrolment increased from about 250,000 to around 14 million between 1970 and 2018 (Howie, 2019), these institutions continue to confront numerous challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, infinitesimal research output and anachronistic teaching, prompting the for- mulation and implementation of alternative strategies.

African Frameworks and Strategies on Higher Education

The African Union’s (AU) 2016 Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) states that “harmonised education and training systems are essential for the realisation of Intra-Africa mobi- lity and academic integration through regional cooperation”, while its 2019 Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA-2024) seeks to “accelerate Africa’s transition to an innovation-led, knowledge-based economy”. African Union, 2016, p. 7; 2014, p. 11). These strategies reflect the AU’s realisation that collaborative efforts in the area of education are fundamental to the continent’s path to development and that a knowledge-based economy is the panacea for Africa’s developmental woes. Agenda 2063, a nor- mative and strategic framework, seeks to enhance African growth and development in a bid to enable the continent to become a global force. It recognises the potential salience of higher education in achieving these objectives, raising the need to invest in capacity building, especially in critical disciplines such as natural science and technology, as well as the social sciences and humanities, in order to change the mind-set of African people (Addyane, 2018).

In a bid to implement the CESAs, the Pan-African Uni- versity (PAU) was officially launched in 2011 (although it was conceived in 2008) to enhance research promo- ting African development. The PAU seeks to improve the region’s education standards and promote science and technological advancement, with the ultimate objec- tive of fast-tracking regional integration against the backdrop of quality higher education in specific fields (Jowi, 2012). Collective acknowledgement of the role of African higher education in promoting social and economic development (Woods et al., n.d.) has implications for collaboration among African academics and students. The African Union Commission (AUC) focuses on five research areas in selected higher education institutions that have been referred to as Pan-African University Institutes across the continent’s five key sub-regions. These include Life and Earth Sciences at the Univer- sity of Ibadan, Nigeria (West Africa); Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation at the Jomo Kenyatta Uni- versity, Kenya (East Africa); Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Yaounde II, Cameroon (Central Africa); Water and Energy at the University of Algeria (North Africa); and Space Science for Telecommunication, South Africa (Southern Africa). The PAU thus facilitates policy-informed multidiscipli- nary research programmes that are potentially critical to decision-making on the continent through its focus on collaborative, competitive and development-orien- ted research to fast-track Africa’s economic and social development.

One of the key targets of Agenda 2063’s first 10-Year Implementation Plan is the establishment of an African virtual and e-university. It is envisaged that by 2063, 70 percent of secondary school graduates will be enrolled in higher education institutions, 70 percent of whom will graduate in science, technology and innovation programmes, thereby enhancing the human capital that has a significant effect on Africa’s development (African Union, 2015). Agenda 2063 further envisages a harmonised education system championed by the PAU, with centres of excellence across Africa and human capital that would remain on the continent rather than becoming part of the diaspora. Other key initiatives include the 2014 revised Arusha Convention, which seeks to promote mutual recognition of academic qua- lifications; the PAU’s Mwalimu Nyereer University Union Scholarship Scheme established in 2007, which encourages African students to study in top universi- ties on the continent; and the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM), which seeks to promote a culture of quality in African institutions (African Union, 2015). However, implementation of these initiatives has been slow at best.

The Call for Decolonisation and Harmonisation of African Higher Education

African higher education is not exempt from the Afro- pessimism that characterises discourse about the continent. While higher education was a public good in the immediate post-colonial period, the eco- nomic crises in the 1970s and 1980s and their attendant structural adjustment programmes resulted in a signi- ficant cut in African governments’ budgets for higher education, leading to the decline of premier universi- ties such as the University of Ibadan, in Nigeria, and Makerere University, in Uganda (African Union, 2015), as well as their decolonial projects. The recent call for decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum was ignited by the 2015 #FeesMustFall student-led movement in South Africa. The campaign underscored the need to transform the objectives, content and methods of curricula in order to produce graduates that understand the needs and imbibe and affirm the continent’s culture and values (Daniel et al., 2019). In a nutshell, Africanisation in this sense does not connotate delinking from the West but promoting African consciousness towards the “fusion of epis- temologies” (combining African and other forms of knowledge) to tackle the continent’s challenges (Higgs, 2020). This is crucial as, following decades of decolo- nisation, 21st century African universities still wallow in the hegemony of Western thought and the relegate of indigenous knowledge to the backburner, as reflected in Eurocentric and Americentric content and methods, which often do not reflect African realities, especially the continent’s developmental needs. African higher education is thus failing to enhance the quality of life of African people (Daniel et al., 2019).

“The harmonisation of higher education in Africa is a multidimensional process that promotes the inte- gration of the higher education space in the region. This objective is to achieve collaboration across borders, sub-regionally and regionally, in curriculum
African Higher Education and External Collaboration

The 5th African Union-European Union summit held in 2017 highlighted the need for investment in education, science, technology and innovation (STI) and skills development (Zygierewicz, 2019). In terms of higher education, the following key priorities were set:

- **a)** promote the mobility of students, scholars, researchers and staff;
- **b)** harmonise higher education in Africa;
- **c)** enhance quality assurance and accreditation in African universities; and
- **d)** develop centres of excellence in Africa, in particular through the PAU (Zygierewicz, 2019).

In 2019, the European Commission, in partnership with the AU Commission, held a conference called Investing in People, by Investing in Higher Education and Skills in Africa (Zygierewicz, 2019). The Erasmus+ programme provides a framework for the EU and AU partnership. In 2018, 16,000 African academics and students benefited from the previous Erasmus+ (2014-2020), with the number rising to 35,000 in 2020. Under the current programmes (2021-2027), 105,000 African academics and students are expected to benefit by 2027 (Zygierewicz, 2019).

It is against this backdrop that several European countries have realised the potential of African universities and developed various programmes with the latter to achieve key objectives. For example, in light of Germany’s key foreign policy objective of addressing climate change, the government’s WASCAL research programme has established ten graduate schools in West Africa to educate African students and policymakers in the areas of climate change and land management (Andoh & Salmi, 2019). The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Africa focused on five key areas in the period 2015-2020:

- **a)** improve the qualifications of university lecturers through scholarships in Germany and at well-performing universities in sub-Saharan Africa;
- **b)** building capacity for graduate education and research at African universities; and
- **c)** strengthening universities to become effective players in promoting societal development, especially through degree programmes that are relevant to current and future labour markets, applied research and consultancy, knowledge transfer to industry, promoting entrepreneurial commitment among graduates, social and legal expertise and developing a culture of dialogue in civil society;
- **d)** facilitating German universities’ access to the African continent and disseminating knowledge about Germany in Africa, building on existing interest in cooperation and opening up additional opportunities through appropriate funding programmes; and
- **e)** strengthening synergies and cooperation by reinforcing the ties between German and African players, especially with Africa’s regional university associations (AUAMIES, IUCEA and SARUA) (DAAD, 2014).

Similarly, Sweden has partnered with a number of African institutions, especially Southern African universities. For example, drawing on Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) funding, Sweden has collaborated with universities in Rwanda, Tanzania and Malawi to enhance digital disciplines including Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics and Ecology (Stockholm University, 2019). This has been accompanied by high profile delegation visits to Africa. For example in 2010, a delegation from Stockholm University, including its former Vice-Chancellor Kåre Bremer and the Pro Vice-Chancellor, visited the University of Cape Town in South Africa to discuss the universities’ student exchange programmes; and in 2016, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UkA) and the Swedish Foundation for International Co-operation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) arranged for 13 presidents of Swedish universities to visit the Universities of Johannesburg, Pretoria, the Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch, and the University of Botswana to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones (Stockholm University, 2019). Moreover, African universities have sent delegates to their counterparts in Sweden for various purposes. In 2017 and 2018, student union executives from the University of Nigeria visited the Stockholm University Student Union and in 2019 representatives of a Tanzanian research funder, the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), visited the Swedish External Relations and Communications Office to share their respective experiences in research communication and social media.
Challenges Confronting African Higher Education

There is no gainsaying that African universities are characterised by a myriad of challenges from institutional to intellectual, pedagogical, political (Celaca, 2002) and financial, to cite but a few. These are further complicated by the obstacles that confront many prospective students, including the increasingly high cost of tertiary education on a continent that is home to the largest number of poor people, with 38 percent of the population living on less than $1.90 a day in 2018 (prior to the emergence of COVID-19) (van Manen et al., 2021). It is thus not surprising that the 9.4 percent higher education enrolment rate in sub-Saharan Africa in the same year was significantly below the 38.4 percent world average. This has resulted in two key trends: first, many prospective African students now look beyond the continent (to countries such as the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Canada and France) for their education (with around 375,000 studying abroad in 2017); second, the proliferation of private African universities in a bid to meet increasing demand for higher education (Manen et al., 2021). Indeed, the number of private universities on the continent grew from 35 in 1969 to 972 in 2015, with significantly higher tuition costs than public universities, resulting in a shift from access to higher education as a public good, to access by a privileged few (Daniel et al., 2019). Increased demand for higher education and the attendant rise in the number of universities on the continent has exerted further pressure on the student-staff ratio as there are insufficient staff to teach the burgeoning number of students. Academics have a heavy teaching load and consequently less time for research. It is no surprise that African universities do not fare well in global research output; the continent accounts for 2.1 percent of global academic publications, significantly below Asia’s 33.1 percent and Europe’s 32.9 percent (Daniel et al., 2019).

In the era of the fourth industrial revolution and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, African higher education’s weakness in terms of digital infrastructure has been laid bare as a large percentage of African students struggle to work remotely due to lack of access to a reliable internet connection, a stable electricity supply and personal computers, as well as expensive data; while academics have struggled to adjust to the digital realities of teaching and conducting research remotely. The continent needs to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 to develop its digital education, as it offers many potential benefits such as lower direct (tuition fees) and indirect (such as transportation and accommodation) costs of education, flexibility for students (learning at home or places of their choice and relatively at their own pace) and improved opportunities to combine study and work (van Manen et al., 2021). The University of South Africa (Unisa) and National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) are germane in this regard. The former is one of the largest open distance learning institutions in Africa with about 400,000 students and the oldest distance learning university in the world. The NOUN is also one of the leading open distance learning universities on the continent with around 500,000 students and 78 study centres across Nigeria. A recent report by eLearning Africa indicates that 83 percent of Africans support the transformation of the continent’s curricula for distance learning in the future (eLearning Africa, 2020).

Recommendations

To achieve innovation, African universities need to take investment in quality teaching and rigorous research more seriously.

Increased collaboration among African universities is important if African solutions are to be found to African challenges, as such partnerships can potentially have wider impacts on continent-wide policymaking and implementation.

There is often a gap between African universities’ internationalisation agenda and the focus and targets, such as science, technology and innovation, of key regional bodies like the AU, SADC and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is therefore imperative to align African universities’ vision with the targets of these key regional organisations.

The quest for internationalisation should not be the exclusive preserve of international offices, but part of the day-to-day activities of African universities and must be reflected in their key responsibilities, including teaching, research, community engagement and academic citizenship.

The efforts of the African diaspora based at universities abroad are critical to the bid to internationalise African universities, as they are well placed to Africanise the curricula they are responsible for, by, for example, prescribing African texts and offering Afrocentric syllabi.

References


The future of international higher education and international academic collaboration: Strengthening partnerships for our common goals

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Abstract

To address growing global challenges, including economic and geopolitical tensions, racism, nationalism, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic, international academic collaboration is more necessary than ever. In this report, we predict future international academic collaboration or cooperation dynamics in the global context.

We describe nine key themes to be taken into account to understand future short- and long-term challenges in international higher education and international academic collaboration: (i) Fundamental global macro-level trends affect international higher education; (ii) International academic collaboration plays a key (though contextualised) role in higher education; (iii) COVID-19 will have a persistent impact on international collaboration; (iv) Physical academic mobility will resume with revised assumptions/rationales; (v) Greater emphasis will be given to locally-based international cooperation; (vi) Virtual collaboration will grow in frequency and importance; (vii) Reduced public funding for international academic collaboration in some contexts will likely exacerbate existing inequalities; (viii) Shifting geopolitical allegiance will affect who is collaborating with whom; (ix) Institutions may increasingly view international academic collaboration in relation to society. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of these trends for the future of international higher education.

Over the past decades, two main, and — to a certain extent — contradictory, trends have dominated the development of international higher education: its miasification and its role in the global knowledge economy. The increasing demand from a rising middle class for access to higher education, particularly in contexts where the supply of higher education is insufficient to meet such demand, has led to a dramatic increase in the number of students seeking higher education across borders, with the number of internationally-mobile students surpassing 5 million in 2017 (IOM GMDAC, 2020). At the same time, recognition of the importance of top-quality research and education for the knowledge economy has resulted in a selective emphasis by governments around the world on excellence initiatives, which benefit a limited number of top universities at the cost of general support to tertiary education, a process which has exacerbated the divide between a small elite group of countries, universities, scholars, and students, and the rest of global higher education.

These tensions influence many aspects of current international higher education, including international academic collaboration. Recent stresses — namely the COVID-19 pandemic, but also global challenges such as climate change, increasing geopolitical tensions, economic recession and rampant racism, nationalism and populism in many parts of the world — are likely to affect these trends and further solidify inequalities within and between systems. At the same time, international academic collaboration is more necessary than ever, if we are to have any hope of addressing the substantial global challenges we face.

Predicting the role of international academic collaboration or cooperation in relation to the future of international higher education requires a clear understanding of the current macro-level changes or global trends that lay the foundation for trends in national and international higher education, as well as the meso-level changes at the systemic level. In this contribution, we describe nine key themes that must be taken into account in order to understand the short and long-term future challenges in international higher education and international academic collaboration.
1. Global macro-level trends lay the foundation for understanding trends in international higher education.

Globalisation has brought about social, economic and political changes that influence all systems in the world, including higher education systems. Increased economic competition between countries has created a global knowledge economy which privileges those with the advanced skills and competencies fostered by higher education, while political globalisation has resulted in a complex system of global governance which affects the development of higher education policy around the world. These dynamics have in turn affected other social systems which impact higher education. For example, economic globalisation has led to an expansion of the middle class, resulting in a larger number of families with both the means to support children through higher education and the aspirations to do so (Marginson, 2016). Global campaigns in support of universal primary education have also increased the number of secondary school graduates, leading to rising numbers of aspiring higher education applicants.

One clear impact of globalisation on higher education has therefore been the massification of systems around the world. The number of students enrolling in higher education has been increasing for the last seven decades. Although there are no exact figures, there are presently more than 200 million students around the world studying at more than 20,000 higher education institutions (UNESCO, 2021; UIS, 2019), and the massification of higher education is continuing, especially in emerging economies. As a result of this rapid expansion, many new private providers have emerged on the market. The nature of the academic profession has also changed, as systems have required additional staff to support growing student populations. In some parts of the world, this has meant hiring faculty members without doctoral degrees; in others, it has led to the proliferation of part-time faculty (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbely, 2010).

Political globalisation has also supported the global spread of neoliberalism as a key philosophy influencing the structure and evaluation of our social systems, including higher education. Institutions have fundamentally changed their modes of governance to adopt more corporate structures, and new players in higher education systems, such as regional accreditation bodies and quality assurance agencies, have proliferated. Neo-liberalism’s embrace of competition as the best driver of quality has also had a profound influence on global higher education, particularly via the creation of global university ranking systems. Since rankings mostly value research output, universities tend to pay more attention to research than teaching or service to society. As a result, higher education institutions compete for qualified international and local faculty, international students with strong educational backgrounds (especially in STEM), and funding. Furthermore, rankings influence how nations and institutions govern their universities and structure their higher education systems. There is now an enormous emphasis on the creation of world-class universities and metrics that gauge quality in terms of the indicators most valued in the rankings (Hazelkorn, 2015).

Despite the economic and political pressures on countries to expand higher education systems — and to compete with one another via the higher education industry — public spending on higher education has decreased in many parts of the world. This is partly due to general circumstances of austerity but has also been caused by neoliberal understandings of what makes a strong higher education sector. The impacts of austerity have been pronounced, particularly in terms of student funding arrangements and pressures on universities to diversify their revenue sources through, for example, the creation of for-profit spin-offs and other income generating activities (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbely, 2010). This trend has also been exacerbat ed by COVID-19, which has led to increased costs and reduced revenue in universities around the world.

Finally, globalisation has enabled a technological revolution around the world, with enormous impacts on higher education. Technology has fundamentally changed classroom dynamics — even disrupting the very notion of a “classroom” in many contexts — and opened up new opportunities for virtual collaboration. At the same time, technological developments have resulted in increased access to international travel, as transportation has become more affordable throughout the world.

2. As a result of many of these trends, international collaboration plays a key role in all higher education systems, although the specifics of how international collaboration manifests depends significantly on the context.

International collaboration has arguably been the cornerstone of the internationalisation of higher education policies, which have been developed in response to globalisation in most countries in the world. International academic collaboration can include activities which relate to all three traditional functions of universities, i.e. research, teaching and service. Specific forms include international student mobility (both short and long-term), the growth of international programmes and institutions (dual and joint degrees, international branch campuses), international scholar mobility, leading to joint regional and international research projects, as well as increasingly international disciplinary conferences and workshops; the increase of funding allocated to scholar mobility to enable joint research; and the possibility of shared access to cutting-edge instruments and physical facilities.

An understanding of the drivers of international research collaboration, on the part of institutions and individuals, helps to better predict the future of this trend for all forms of international academic collaboration. Although these vary significantly by context, drivers for international research collaboration include:

• The potential for more prestige and increased citation impact through international research collaboration, given the significant influence of global university rankings on institutional decision-making, and the subsequent benefits to individual researchers, departments and institutions in the competitive knowledge economy;
• The potential to develop shared understanding, trust and commitment between and within international academic communities (Amaratunga et al., 2018; Geoghean, 1998; Maringe & de Wit, 2016).

The relative ease of mobility in the present day, alongside digitalisation in society and within higher education, has also greatly facilitated the possibility of many forms of international academic collaboration (The Royal Society, 2011).

3. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the global higher education landscape in ways that will have a persistent impact on international collaboration.

In order to continue operations during the uncertain circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, universities had to rapidly move all of their teaching, research and service activities online, including those related to international collaboration. Such a rapid “pivot” required financial resources, adequate technological infrastructure (including high-speed internet) and substantial knowledge and understanding of education technology (by faculty, staff and students), as well as a flexible administrative structure at both institutional and national level. The pandemic therefore exacerbated existing inequalities in the global higher education landscape, as wealthier systems (and institutions within systems) were better prepared for the shock and able to continue operations without noticeable disruption (Chan, Bista & Allen, 2022).

It appears likely that these inequalities will persist, as countries will also emerge from the grip of the pandemic at different rates, with better resourced countries being able to provide for their citizens with high-quality vaccines sooner than the rest of the world. Institutions in wealthier countries are also more likely to be better...
4. Physical academic mobility will resume, but with revised assumptions and rationales.

The pandemic has had a tremendous influence on international higher education in general, but especially on student, faculty and staff mobility, due to border closures, travel restrictions, visa regulations and remote teaching. In these unprecedented circumstances, different modes of mobility, such as virtual exchange, have been used as a temporary alternative to physical mobility. (One example is the decision of the European Commission to partially allow virtual exchange in replacement of physical exchange under the Erasmus+ mobility programme.)

However, it is unlikely that physical academic mobility will be entirely replaced by virtual forms of mobility in the long term. Recent analysis of the extensive data on virtual forms of mobility, afforded by the rise in such efforts during the pandemic, has confirmed that virtual mobility cannot provide the same kind of learning experience as full immersion in another country (Buiskool & Hudepohl, 2020). As a result, even during the pandemic, a small number of academic mobility programmes continued operating despite the restrictions, demonstrating the resilience and significance of physical mobility for academic cooperation, and there are now signs that institutions (and individual students) are rapidly resuming mobility efforts, as vaccination programmes roll out around the world.

According to the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) Fall 2021 International Student Enrollment Snapshots report, 70 percent of US institutions surveyed reported an increase in their international student enrolments for Fall 2021, an increase which cannot be attributed to online learning, given that 99 percent of institutions surveyed were offering in-person or hybrid classes, with only one percent of institutions offering online classes only (Martel, 2023). Most US universities also plan to fund outreach activities for international students to the same or a higher level than before in the upcoming academic year and have made significant changes to their operations in order to accommodate international students who cannot get to the US and/or do not have access to vaccination in their home countries. For example, 72 percent of universities surveyed by the IIE offered the vaccine to students, faculty and staff on campus, as opposed to requiring students to be vaccinated prior to arrival (Martel, 2021). Many HEIs also simplified their application process by allowing online testing, waiving standardised testing requirements, extending deadlines for application submission and allowing admission deferrals. All these measures demonstrate a commitment to physical mobility which is likely to continue. At the same time, it is notable that US higher education institutions are open to offering hybrid and online modes of teaching to those students who are not able to get to the country due to COVID-19 related difficulties.

In terms of COVID-related impact, the situation is not too different for the other main English-speaking receiving countries (i.e. the United Kingdom and Australia), which have also seen a rather drastic decrease in inbound international students over the past few years. However, both contexts are also grappling with other factors affecting physical mobility – namely, a decrease in the number of European students studying in the UK as a result of Brexit and a decrease in the number of Chinese students studying in Australia due to geopolitical tensions. Increasing competition from non-English-speaking countries is also starting to affect the dynamics of international academic mobility (Altbach & de Wit, 2021; de Wit, Minaeva & Wang, 2022, forthcoming).
The COVID-19 pandemic has only emphasised the importance of skills fostered through international academic collaboration (e.g., problem-solving skills and intercultural competencies). Given limitations on physical mobility for the majority of students in the world (both those that have long existed and those that have arisen in the pandemic context), we anticipate that we will see a far greater emphasis on locally-based international cooperation, i.e., focused on internationalisation at home and internationalisation of the curriculum.

Internationalisation of the curriculum has long been seen as an outstanding mechanism for fostering the skills and attitudes necessary to address global challenges. Indeed, it may be more effective than physical mobility for ensuring internationalised learning (Leask & Green, 2020). The results of mobility programmes are usually assessed utilising quantitative data (e.g., the number of students who participate in mobility, the duration of exchange programmes, the diversity of countries where universities send their students, the diversity of international students), rather than the outcomes in terms of student learning. Such assessment does not demonstrate whether mobile students gain intercultural competencies and/or increase their intercultural awareness. In contrast, when internationalisation is advanced via the curriculum, internationalised learning outcomes are drafted and assessed towards the end of the experience. This qualitative approach paints a far richer picture of students’ learning. More broadly, internationalisation at home increases the impact of internationalised efforts, by expanding the small minority who are able to access physical mobility (Jones, 2020).

Although arguments in favour of internationalisation at home have long circulated in academic circles, the perceived benefits of physical academic mobility for cross-cultural learning have tended to ensure that physical mobility remains the core internationalisation strategy for many systems and institutions around the world. However, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may have shocked the system sufficiently to finally strengthen efforts to increase internationalisation at home activities (Leask, 2020) – activities which will only become more salient as the climate crisis evolves.

5. We will see greater emphasis on locally-based international cooperation, i.e., focused on internationalisation at home and internationalisation of the curriculum

Reimagining the Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC): Best Practices and Promising Possibilities (Leask et al., forthcoming), published in Spanish by the University of Guadalajara in Mexico, is a useful resource for those interested in innovative approaches to IoC currently being implemented by institutions around the world. The book brings together case studies and analyses of IoC from South and North America, Europe and the Asia Pacific region. Some promising examples highlighted in the book include:

- The International Business School Maastricht, which has a mission to guide young professionals to become resilient business leaders with a global mind, who can act as change makers for a sustainable world. In 2018, the School established an Intercultural Business Learning pathway as part of its International Business degree, in which IoC is synthesised with education for sustainable development, providing a holistic approach to intercultural and sustainability learning in the curriculum and new roles for lecturers as coaches and experts to deliver the new mission.

- A large-scale, cross-institutional professional development initiative, implemented at the University of Hong Kong, which aims to help academics broaden their perspectives and practices in the domain of IoC. Early findings suggest that this sort of activity has transformative potential for institutions hoping to move towards a more integrated, learning-focused understanding of IoC.

- An international student mobility programme in the Tourism B.C. at the University of Guadalajara, which is specifically incorporated into the curriculum of the degree as a whole (meaning that students unable to participate in the mobility scheme are also able to benefit from the experiences of their mobile counterparts, via structured activities).

6. Virtual forms of collaboration will become increasingly frequent and important.

As has already been the case over the last year, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital forms of collaboration will become increasingly frequent and important. Limitations on physical mobility – as well as possible changes in mobility preferences, related to concerns about environmental sustainability – will lead to further development and proliferation of the use of digital technologies in higher education. As previously discussed, this may manifest in “virtual mobility” or “virtual exchanges” of students, faculty and staff, collaborative online international learning (COIL), online webinars and conferences, and the proliferation of open library resources and other open access publications, among others. As in the case of physical academic mobility, we do not anticipate that digitalisation will replace all of the physical functions of higher education. Rather, we assume that digital elements will now be incorporated throughout all higher education functions, leading to an increase in blended and hybrid forms of collaboration.

In the United States, the Stevens Initiative has provided funding and other resources to advance virtual exchange. In a recent report (Bhandari et al., 2021), it was documented that over 3000 of these exchanges took place in 2020 and more than 80 grants were awarded. The American Council on Education (2021) has also added a transformation lab on virtual exchange and COIL (collaborative online international learning) to offer resources to universities interested in advancing these approaches.

Already underway even before the pandemic, the ERASMUS+ Virtual Exchange provides opportunities for virtual mobility for young people aged 18 to 30 years old. This programme will be continued by the European Youth Portal.

The Inter-American Organisation of Higher Education created the Virtual Mobility Space in Higher Education (eMOVIES) to allow students from OUI-OHE member institutions to enrol on courses from institutions in other countries, while receiving academic credit in their home institution. A similar scheme known as the Global University Network Mobilitas allows students from institutions that are members of the Organisation of Catholic Universities in Latin America and the Caribbean to participate in academic mobility and virtual exchange. This virtual mode has quickly surpassed in-person exchanges within this network.

Digitalisation of international collaboration can have two possible outcomes. Utilising digital forms of collaboration, which do not require physical mobility and the related financial resources and time allocation, can increase access to international research and education, thus making them less elitist. However, the reverse may also be true. Given that countries, institutions and researchers do not have equal access to digital resources, relevant training, support personnel or ancillary equipment and software, increased digitalisation may also further exacerbate the current digital divide in global tertiary education. Digitalisation also requires changes in legislation, quality assurance and credit recognition procedures and institutional policies, all of which are more likely to happen rapidly in some contexts than others. All of this may in turn result in less collaboration between technologically advantaged and disadvantaged contexts.

Digitalisation of international collaboration is also likely to result in further dominance of the English language and, relatedly, English-speaking countries. English is already the dominant language for scholarship and research. As the countries with the most developed information technology infrastructure are also English-speaking, the vast majority of conferences, webinars,
virtual exchange opportunities and ODOP opportunities are offered by these countries, typically in the English language. It has proven difficult for other countries, in particular those with limited public funding for tertiary education, to offer similar opportunities and/or to attract similar sized audiences for programmes offered in other languages (Unangst, Altbach & de Wit, 022, forthcoming).

7. Reduced public funding for international research collaboration – particularly in and with lower-income contexts – is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities within international higher education.

With a multiplicity of interrelated global events in the contemporary context, including the pandemic, the related global economic crisis in higher education and, more widely, the rise of populist forms of nationalism, we have seen a decline in public funding for research collaboration in some contexts, as well as a general decline in funding for collaboration in and with lower-income countries (Highman, 2019).

As a result, we are likely to see further inequalities in terms of global research output – with the majority of published academic work continuing to be authored and disseminated by scholars based in higher-income contexts and research priorities (due to a global imbalance in the ability of researchers to access funding).

Declining public funding in certain parts of the world may also result in private players, such as think tanks, research institutes and private research foundations, playing a more significant role in global research spaces. Such a shift presents an opportunity for new and different kinds of research partnerships and collaborations between universities and the private sector. However, it could also result in the proliferation of new boundaries on research agendas – i.e. if only academics working on agenda-relevant research were able to access these funds and partnerships – as well as potential limitations on public dissemination of research results. The effects of moving away from public funding of academic research are most dire for non-STEM disciplines, as departments and research budgets for these fields seem to suffer the most and may have the least access to private sources of funding. Furthermore, university-industry and other forms of public-private partnerships in international research collaboration may effectively be a step backwards in the efforts to ensure that international research collaboration is diverse, representative and equitable. Access to such forms of collaboration will undoubtedly be restricted to the most elite of higher education institutions.

8. We will see shifting geopolitical allegiances, which will in turn affect who collaborates with whom

As a result of geopolitical pressures, we are likely to see shifting geopolitical allegiances, affecting who collaborates with whom. As an institution within society, a university participates in and is subject to shifts in political relationships at local, regional and global levels. In a globalised world, geopolitical shifts in power over the past decades – related to political dynamics, economic crises and demographic movement – have significant worldwide knock-on effects, including on higher education and international academic collaboration.

One prominent example is the repeated censure of international academic collaboration with China, apparently due to national security concerns as voiced by various national governments. The undeniable rise of China as a global power and a leading player in international higher education (as can be seen from its position in global university rankings, its extensive research and development budget and its volume of research publications) plays a part in contemporary geopolitical volatility (MargnIon, 2018).

Alongside political concerns about collaboration with China, a related rise of populist forms of nationalism in several countries and regions of the world, including the US, the UK, Australia, Hungary and others, has led to anti-internationalist calls for more nationally focused ends for higher education across teaching, research and service functions.

As a result, we have seen growing political interferen- ce in international academic collaboration, affecting university-university partnerships, university-indus- try collaboration, research collaboration and funding, and teaching and learning (for instance, with regard to Confucius Institutes and language/cultural learning) (Altbach & de Wit, 2021).

Specifically, we have seen increased securitisation of universities, knowledge and individuals, with greater levels of federal oversight into research collabora- tion, ongoing and frequently unwarranted legal cases against scholars with links to non-allied countries (e.g. US scholars with collaborative relationships with China) and political fear-mongering regarding intellectual property theft and foreign influence related to foreign research funding.

These trends will likely shape patterns of collabora- tion in the years ahead, such that collaboration will be restricted to institutions, administrators, academics and students from particular countries. North America and certain countries in Europe may collaborate more often among themselves, while China may redirect academic collaboration through its Belt and Road Initia- tive towards South East Asia, Africa, Latin America and other countries in Europe, although with rising concer- ns about their economic and social impact, as recent
examples in countries like Hungary, Macedonia and Zambia have illustrated. Additionally, reduced funding may further delay the potential to increase access to knowledge at a global level and restrict the development of partnerships between scholars and institutions in the “Global South” and “Global North”.

9. Institutions may increasingly view international collaboration in terms of its potential impacts on society.

One potentially positive impact of recent trends is that universities may increasingly view international collaboration in terms of its potential impacts on society. The concept of Internationalisation of Higher Education for Society (IHES) has been debated in academic circles in recent years, with advocates such as Brandenburg, de Wit, Jones, Leask and Drobner arguing that IHES extends the benefits of internationalisation to the local, regional and global community, thereby participating in the provision of local, regional and global public goods to the global common good (Brandenburg et al., 2019). In effect, this involves extending internationalisation activities beyond the traditional pillars of research and teaching to the third function of higher education – that of service to society. It is possible that strategically aligning the service function or “third mission” of universities with the internationalisation agenda could help to counteract implicit tendencies to compete rather than collaborate – often observed in higher education more broadly, as well as within internationalisation, through academic capitalism and academic ethnocentrism (Jones et al., 2021) – and to address recent critiques levelled at universities for being elitist and disconnected from society.

If universities around the world start to see potential value in such an orientation for their internationalisation efforts, we are likely to see:

- Further centralisation of international collaboration efforts, including those focused on societal impacts, as part of institutions’ strategic plans;
- Support for programmes and formal and informal institutional, university-community, and university-industry partnerships that carry out IHES through reciprocity and engagement with local and international academic communities and the broader public;
- Research collaboration with a broader set of stakeholders, including participation in networks and associations, in order to ensure that research is responsive to and accessible by both local and international public and academic communities;
- Further incorporation of local and global perspectives and emphasis on global social justice in teaching across the disciplines;
- And a recognition of how cross-alignment of IHES with the teaching, research and service functions of universities can support efforts to positively impact society, through a range of different forms of international collaboration (Brandenburg et al., 2020).

The recent IHES Mapping Report (ACA, 2021) includes a number of examples of IHES-focused initiatives, including the International Town and Gown Network, coordinated by Stellenbosch University in South Africa (which is an international network of universities committed to social impact and community engagement), the Citizen Science Talent Programme at the University of Southern Denmark (which pairs international students with local citizen scientists in order to increase student research skills and gain international exposure for local research topics) and the Interfaculty Council for Global Development at KU Leuven (which provides funding for research projects that are co-created by Belgian researchers and civil society organisations and counterparts in the Global South). It is also possible to access current examples via the IHES Online Repository.

Although such activities remain in the minority in internationalisation projects around the world (ACA, 2021), a growing number of institutions are adopting IHES-focused initiatives, and it appears likely that this trend will continue in the years to come.

10. International Academic Collaboration for the future, in conclusion

The trends outlined here point to the resilience of traditional forms of academic cooperation, as well as the possibilities of long-term transformation. Rather than continuing with a mindless inertia, the pandemic has forced a deep interrogation of taken-for-granted practices and recognition of the substantial possibilities afforded by technology and remote cooperation to augment international collaboration in more sustainable ways that are potentially more effective and inclusive.

At the same time, the events of the last year have highlighted the limits of purely virtual collaboration and made clear the likelihood of new modes of engagement being just as likely to exacerbate inequalities as they are to address them. There is no doubt that we will see new, different and potentially more diverse forms of international collaboration in the years to come. What remains to be seen is what these new forms of collaboration will bring to the sector and, more broadly, the world.

References

Promoting Research in Africa through Higher Education Networks and Alliances

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Abstract

Universities in sub-Saharan Africa were established by colonial powers when the countries were about to achieve independence, mainly to train the workforce necessary to take over state administration after the departure of the colonisers. The initial emphasis, therefore, was on undergraduate teaching. Decades later, the need for running postgraduate programmes and undertake relevant research was felt. However, universities had little capacity for this. African universities soon realised that their best strategy to achieve their objectives would be to collaborate among themselves, sharing knowledge, experiences and resources. This initiated the creation of networks and alliances among African universities, funded by external donors in almost all cases. Many very diverse networks have been established, although a great deal of the earlier ones ceased to exist once donor funding stopped. This paper looks at a sample of the higher education networks and alliances currently operating in Africa, highlighting their academic areas of cooperation, mode of operation, governance structure, funders and achievements. The paper then identifies some common features of the initiatives and proposes some issues for future consideration.

1. Introduction

Universities in sub-Saharan Africa were established by the colonising powers at a time when countries were about to achieve independence, mostly in the 1960s. An important objective of the institutions was to train the workforce required to take over the administration of the countries once the colonisers had departed, and also to provide skilled personnel in the countries’ key development areas. The initial emphasis was therefore on teaching, mainly at undergraduate level. It was a couple of decades later that African universities felt the need to run postgraduate programmes and undertake relevant research, vital for their countries’ future development.
However, there is limited institutional collaboration or sharing of resources in these initiatives and they will not be considered here.

2. Former initiatives

A large number of networks and alliances of higher education institutions, very diverse in nature, were established in Africa as early as the end of the 1980s, although the majority of them were created from the beginning of the 21st century when revitalisation of African higher education started. Most of the early ones, and even a few of the more recent ones, no longer exist as they were not sustainable once external donor funding had stopped. Two such initiatives are briefly described below.

University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnership in Africa (USHPEIA)

USHPEIA was a collaborative staff development programme launched in 1995 as a consortium of eight universities in East and Southern Africa, led by the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa. The main objective of USHPEIA was to enable academic staff in science, engineering and humanities in the partner universities to obtain a PhD, either from their own university or from UCT, by sharing their resources, especially those at the well-endowed UCT. The programme, which was funded by several US foundations, enabled PhD candidates to undertake research fieldwork at UCT and also facilitated staff exchanges for lecturing, research supervision, external supervision, etc. among all the partners. External donor funding stopped around 2007 and this formally ended the programme. The partner universities continued their collaboration for some years using their own resources, but this was not sustainable in the long term (USHPEIA, n.d.).

Regional Initiative in Science and Education (RISE)

RISE was established in 2008 by the Science Initiative Group at the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, US with a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The project was aimed at producing graduate students, at Master’s and PhD level, who would serve in academia in Africa and also produce quality research. In order to encourage collaboration and sharing of resources among African universities, five competitively-selected RISE Networks of universities were created in areas of science and engineering of relevance to Africa’s development. Twenty-two of the 24 universities in the Networks were in East and Southern Africa. A student at a university in a Network had access to complementary teaching and research facilities available at the other universities within that Network. The Carnegie funding came to an end in 2017 and by then RISE had produced over 120 Master’s and PhDs. Attempts at seeking other funding sources and getting RISE to be rooted in Africa and Africa-owned did not materialise (RISE, 2019).

3. Current networks, alliances and consortia

This section looks at a sample of networks and alliances currently active in Africa, especially those where several institutions from different African countries collaborate to undertake postgraduate training and research in areas important for Africa’s development.

African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

The AERC was created in 1988 as a public, non-profit organisation for the advancement of economic policy research and graduate training to strengthen local capacity for conducting rigorous and independent inquiry with regard to management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa (AERC, 2021). Its main training programmes are the collaborative Master’s and PhD programmes in Economics which it runs through a consortium of over 25 universities in more than 20 African countries, both English-speaking and French-speaking, by sharing institutional expertise and resources. These programmes are aimed at training mid-level managers, public policy analysts and academics. The AERC also supports research on issues critical to Africa’s economic development through grants to researchers in African universities. In 2020, it embarked on several collaborative research projects on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on African economies.

AERC is funded by a plethora of nearly twenty funders, which include international partner countries, multi-lateral and international organisations, private foundations and African central banks. It has a unique governance structure comprising a Board of Directors (consisting mainly of the funders), a Programme Committee (mostly academics from Africa and other countries), and a Secretariat headed by an Executive Director in Nairobi, Kenya.

It is quite remarkable that the AERC, which is perhaps the oldest higher education collaborative initiative in Africa, has continued for over 30 years. This is no doubt due to the pertinence of its programmes and research areas for Africa, but also its governance structure which ensures ownership by both academics and the funders.

Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

RUFORUM, which started as a network of a small number of African universities in 2004, is now a consortium of 129 universities in 38 countries on the continent, and is registered as an international non-governmental organisation. Although its activities have expanded enormously over the years, RUFORUM’s strategic thrusts remain training Master’s and PhD graduates and promoting research in agriculture in response to national stakeholders’ needs and Africa’s development goals, through the collaboration of its members to achieve economies of scope and scale. A characteristic of RUFORUM’s postgraduate training is ensuring that the students undertake field-oriented research through attachments.

Initially, RUFORUM was mainly funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, but now there are a large number of international and continental funders, many of whom fund specific activities and projects, often at designated universities. As at 2020, it had mobilised USD 215 million on behalf of its member universities. It has trained over 2,000 Master’s and PhD graduates.

RUFORUM has quite a complex governance structure which includes an Annual General Meeting, its supreme governing body, a Board of Directors, a Committee of Deans of Agriculture, an International Advisory Panel, and a Secretariat hosted by Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda (RUFORUM, 2020).

Agriculture remains a key area for Africa’s development, and RUFORUM’s role in promoting postgraduate training and research in agriculture through university collaboration, and in particular linking universities to rural communities, is commendable. All indications are that the organisation will continue to expand and strengthen its activities, which are well-supported by national governments and international development partners and donor agencies.

Southern Africa Network for Biosciences (SANBio)

SANBio was established in 2005 under the New Partnership for Africa’s Development – NEPAD (now the African Union Development Agency – AUDA) - as one of the four regional networks of its African Biosciences Initiative. It covers the 13 countries of the SADC region and provides a shared research, development and innovation platform to collaboratively address some of Southern Africa’s key biosciences challenges in health, nutrition, agriculture and the environment.

The Network operates through several thematic Nodes in different countries. Each Node deals with a specific area and collaborates with interested universities and research centres in the other SADC countries. For example, the University of Mauritius is the Bioinformatics Node, the University of Namibia the Mushroom Node and the LiLongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi the Fish Node. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of South Africa is home to the Secretariat, which is headed by a manager. The Network’s operations are overseen by a Steering Committee which comprises representatives of all the SADC member states, while the SADC Secretariat identifies and coordinates key collaborative activities and assists in resource mobilisation (SANBio, 2021).

SANBio is funded mainly by the Finnish government, which provides grants for the research projects and some mobility and training. South Africa also contributes to the Network’s administration and activities. Several research projects have been completed and the results published, and several are ongoing.

SANBio differs from the other initiatives in several ways. First, it is restricted to countries in the SADC region. Second, it is research-focussed and does not provide for doctoral training. Third, the member states have a direct oversight of the Network’s activities. However, the key characteristic of universities in different African countries collaborating to share their resources for research remains the same.
The approach adopted by ARUA is to get its partner universities to establish inter-disciplinary Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in 13 very diverse, broad thematic areas that define Africa’s crucial development challenges. These areas include Post-Conflict Societies, Migration & Mobility, Notions of Identity in Africa, Urbanisation & Habitable Cities and Good Governance. Each CoE establishes its own internal management structure and brings together leading researchers in the relevant field from ARUA’s partner universities and also from other universities, either within or outside Africa. The operations and management of each CoE are funded partly by the host university and partly from a grant mobilised by ARUA. For its research and training, a CoE will seek external research grants worldwide with strong support from ARUA.

Also, in December 2020, ARUA launched three Vaccine Development Research Hubs for Western, Eastern and Southern Africa, with a grant of USD 1 million from the Open Society Foundations, to undertake vaccine development research. Each hub is hosted by an ARUA partner university with researchers from 4-5 other partner universities collaborating.

At central level, ARUA is governed by a Board of Directors comprising the Vice-Chancellors of the 17 member universities, and a Secretariat, headed by a Secretary-General, located in Accra, Ghana, which receives support from Witwatersrand University, South Africa. ARUA is funded by a host of international partners (ARUA, 2020).

The websites of the 13 CoEs, accessed from ARUA’s website, give an indication of their research activities. Some appear to have made more progress than others, but clearly ARUA has been a major development in Africa’s research ecosystem and will no doubt significantly boost the research output of African universities.

**4. Analysis of networks and alliances**

This section is an analysis of the various initiatives with a view to identifying some common features among them and proposing a few issues for future consideration.

**Regional delineation**

Africa comprises five regions as designated by the African Union – East, Central, North, Southern and West. It is interesting that almost all the networks and alliances involve universities across the different regions and are not restricted by regional delineation. This is commendable as academic collaboration should not be constrained by boundaries.

However, North Africa appears to be an exception, as most of the collaborative initiatives do not include universities from that region. This is most probably because the initiatives are all externally-funded by donor and development agencies which usually restrict their assistance to sub-Saharan Africa, where the main research centres and universities are located. While this is understandable from the point of view of providing aid, there is little justification for excluding North African universities from participating in collaborative postgraduate training and research activities with sub-Saharan African universities. Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia in particular are known to have excellent research-strong universities and could also provide funding for the networks and alliances.

It is therefore highly desirable for the various initiatives to include North African universities as partners. RUFORUM already has a few universities from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia as members.

**Linguistic consideration**

It is equally satisfying to note that the initiatives are not defined by linguistic consideration as they include universities that are English-speaking, French-speaking or Portuguese-speaking. It is true that, generally, English is the predominant language used for communication, but that appears to be the situation in most parts of the world. In Europe, for example, most regional activities are conducted in English.

With regard to North Africa, although most of the countries are Arabic-speaking, language should not really pose a challenge. Egyptian academics are usually fluent in English, and French is widely spoken in Morocco and Tunisia. In any case, rapidly evolving technologies should make it possible to communicate simultaneously in multiple languages.

**Governance**

Governance of a network or alliance plays an important role in the success of the initiative and its sustainability. The governance structure varies considerably from one initiative to another, in some cases, it is simple, in others, multi-layered and complex. What seems to emerge is that the governance structure should involve the participating partners and also the funders. In the case of USHERA, the programme was centred at and heavily led by UCT, with the other partner universities being regarded as beneficiaries. In RISE, although the academic activities were undertaken by Networks in Africa, the programme was essentially run from the US. However, while involving stakeholders’ participation in governance, the structure must not become too complex or bureaucratic so as to stifle the initiative’s operations.

One important factor that each initiative should take into account is changes in leadership at the level of the participating institutions, especially the one which initiated the network. Such changes can have a negative impact on the continuity of operations.

**Quality of doctoral training**

The majority of initiatives that promote research in Africa have a component of doctoral training. The latter is important not only for increasing the output of research but also for upgrading the qualifications of faculty. The number of PhD programmes in African universities has increased significantly over recent decades.

However, in most African universities there is a shortage of PhD-qualified faculty in the appropriate field to serve as supervisors, and those available often do not have adequate doctoral supervisory capacity; there is also the absence of a research environment, and research facilities that are not always available, all of which has a negative impact on the quality of the PhD (Mohamedbhai, 2020a). This is where networks and alliances can play an important role. As Quality Assurance agencies in most African countries do not yet have the capacity to externally audit doctoral programmes, and international accreditation is very expensive, it is incumbent on the universities in a network or alliance to collaborate to ensure the quality of their doctoral programmes. The approach used by CARTA in providing support for capacity-building of PhD supervisors is excellent and should be replicated in the other networks.
Impact of COVID-19

Much has been written about the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning in African universities, but little about its consequences on research. Yet the pandemic will affect research. In the short-term, researchers, including doctoral students, especially in the science and technology areas, have had to suspend their field or laboratory work and this has seriously impacted on the duration of their work. Some doctoral students have had to modify or re-start their experiments. As most research and doctoral studies are externally funded by donor agencies, a significant extension of the work may not always be possible, and this will affect the output and quality of the research.

In the long-term, public universities should expect a reduction in their government grants, and this has already happened in several countries. In such cases, it is usually the research component of the institution’s budget that is slashed first. Allocation of funds to national research councils may also undergo a reduction, as has happened in South Africa. Also, as most research in Africa is funded by the North, it is quite possible that such funds will be curtailed because of the economic situation resulting from the pandemic. Yet another consequence is that much of the available research funds may be re-directed to the funding of COVID-19-related research projects, at the expense of much-needed research in other development areas (Mohamedbhai, 2020b).

It is important for research networks and alliances in Africa to be aware of such threats and to be prepared to take appropriate action to mitigate their negative consequences.

Sustainability

All collaborative initiatives rely on external donor funding, and over-reliance on external funding has been recognised as a major challenge in Africa. This explains why several initiatives come to an end when the funding stops. If a project achieves its set targets, it should be considered to have been successful, even if it ends when the funding stops. There are unspecified accrued benefits in all projects. In UShEPIA, for example, the academic bonds created among the participating universities have endured to this day, and they continue to facilitate informal and fruitful collaboration between them.

African academic diaspora

None of the initiatives makes specific mention of the contribution of African academic diaspora. Yet the African Union considers the African Diaspora as its 6th region, in recognition of its contribution to Africa’s development. African diaspora in academia could provide valuable assistance in many of the initiatives. However, past attempts made at luring African diaspora to permanently return to Africa have not been successful. African academic diaspora, especially first-generation, are highly motivated to assist African universities but, for academic and personal reasons, only through short-term engagements.

In recognition of this situation, in 2013 the Carnegie Corporation of New York launched the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFIP, 2021), through which it funds fellowships to African diaspora in the US and Canada to enable them to travel to African universities for short periods and provide support in teaching and research, although the programme covers a limited number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Well over 500 such fellowships have been awarded to date under the programme.

Conclusion

Collaboration between universities for the purpose of sharing resources for postgraduate training and research is now a common feature in the African higher education landscape. The guiding principle behind the various initiatives is best captured by the well-known African proverb: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” There are many initiatives and they vary significantly in terms of the nature of the collaboration, the academic areas, the governance structure, the geographical coverage, etc., and the list of networks and alliances mentioned here is far from exhaustive. There is little doubt that the various initiatives will significantly increase the number of doctorsates in Africa and provide a boost to much-needed research.

However, research funding continues to be a conditioning factor, with African countries, on average, spending barely 0.5% of their GDP on research and development and thus having to rely heavily of external donor funding. Unfortunately, the funding situation is likely to worsen with the COVID-19 pandemic. All stakeholders, within and outside Africa, must realise that a major halt in Africa’s research activities will have a serious impact on the continent’s development.

International collaboration

Many African universities that form part of the networks have long and fruitful partnerships, originating from their colonial past, with universities in Europe, and subsequently in North America, China, Brazil, etc. The African networks should use these partnerships to support their research activities and benefit from the expertise in other parts of the world; they can even help to attract additional funding. Collaboration among African universities need not be at the expense of international collaboration. However, the networks should continue to be rooted in Africa and be Africa-led. International partnerships between US Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and African universities can be particularly helpful to the networks. This is one of the objectives that prompted the Association of African Universities (AAU), in collaboration with the African Union, to organise its first AAU-African Diaspora Homecoming in 2021.

References


International collaboration for equity, accountability, innovation and resilience: Universities as hubs for partnerships to address global challenges

Roberta Malee Bassett and Jeremie Amoroso

Abstract

The University, one of society's oldest institutions, is a pillar of local communities, a driver of regional development, and a partner at the forefront of designing solutions to existing global problems. The current 2020-30 decade, which began with the most significant global disruptor in nearly a century—the COVID-19 pandemic—will be filled with new challenges as the world aims to build back better—including understanding and expanding upon those crisis interventions which ought to be sustained and strengthened to support stronger, more equitable higher education systems. As they have done for centuries, universities will play an active role in contributing to human progress, but this is not an outcome from a single institution. Rather, it is the combined effort of partnerships fostered between post-secondary institutions of all types and missions and from across borders and the societies they serve. International collaboration in teaching and research allows institutions to strive toward achieving their missions more productively, and to reap benefits for broader societal impact. In this article, different modalities of international collaboration, and to reap benefits for broader societal impact. In this article, different modalities of international collaboration.

Academic staff and students benefit immensely from a strong commitment to embedding internationalisation into teaching and research, as well as in academic career development. Internationalisation, a tool that embeds global interconnectivity, integration and awareness into the holistic tertiary education experience of students and staff, is an important factor in building the capacity of countries, industries, institutions and individuals to harvest the benefits of cross-country cooperation on an equal footing. From mobility programmes across borders to promote collaboration and cooperation to curricular inclusion of international issues and examples to normalise an international perspective in all academic activities, impactful internationalisation is a key contributor to 21st century skill development.

Indeed, internationalisation and regional cooperation efforts are now recognised and measured as key characteristics of high-quality higher education institutions and systems by policymakers and in global ranking methodologies. International interconnectivity, education and experience are fundamental for countries, institutions and individuals to harvest the benefits of cross-country cooperation on an equal footing. Today, even with the known benefits of international cooperation and collaboration, impactful internationalisation largely remains a privilege of the global elite. Regional cooperation has emerged as a powerful tool for tertiary education impact at scale through investment in the strategic pooling of talent and resources (as noted below in the section on the Africa Centres of Excellence initiative).

Collaboration for Resilience

Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has afflicted higher education systems by leading to mass disruption of teaching and research and, especially, opportunities for in-person cross-border engagement. Nonetheless, universities have remained central to the fight to mitigate the impact of the novel coronavirus. They have served as testing centres, manufacturers of protective equipment and research hubs, as well as training facilities for the highly skilled personnel needed to provide guidance and treatment protocols in the fight against the disease.

In attempting to return to “normal”, the most impactful outcome of international collaboration would not have been possible without higher education institutions, as shown by Oxford University’s key role in developing a vaccine using data published on the coronavirus genome by a Chinese virologist at Fudan University. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is the mainstay of COVAX, the global vaccine initiative, which cites equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for low- to middle-income countries as its goal. Decades of research and collaboration at several universities were the foundation for pharmaceutical companies’ efforts to design other vaccine candidates in hours (Pfizer/BioNTech) and days (Moderna). Now approved for use around the world, these two vaccines, which are also part of COVAX, use mRNA — “genetic script that carries DNA instructions to each cell’s protein-making machinery” (Kolata, 2021). Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Texas at Austin were instrumental in the development of the mRNA field and in isolating the novel coronavirus’ spike protein, respectively. This work was also complemented by 25 years of research into lipid nanoparticles (conducted at the University of British Columbia in Canada) (De George, 2021, Airhart, 2020, Cross, 2021).

Efforts to solve complex social, environmental and economic challenges in energy, the environment, health and security have increasingly required collaboration between universities and industry, as few organisations have the independent capacity to deliver results on their own (Gian et al., 2018). International collaboration should not be seen merely as the product of partnerships forged during extenuating circumstances, such as a once-in-a-century pandemic. In the long term, societies will benefit significantly from fostering stronger partnerships between their local higher learning institutions and international entities, whether public or private.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly exposed the fact that technology will be the primary resilience instrument for the tertiary education sector, and that tertiary education institutions (TEIs) will need to operate more strategically as teaching, learning and research and embrace digitalisation and remote delivery. In this context, tertiary education systems must invest in the development of their local digital infrastructure towards building more agile and flexible systems. This could take place through the strategic allocation of institutional funding to expand and update technological infrastructure for digital pedagogy, investment in learning science and training of faculty members. Institutions, staff and students equipped with sound infrastructure, resources and skills, who were already engaged in a culture of using technology for teaching and research, have had a much easier transition to remote learning.

Building a digital ecosystem with the help of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) is an important investment for countries seeking rapid improvements in their digital higher education delivery. Harnessing the power of technology means that TEs not only profit from digitalisation but also advance technical skills and the application of digitalisation across its functions and related research and development.

In this context, tertiary education systems can leverage the collaborative power of NRENs — which are specialised internet service providers dedicated to supporting the needs of research and education communities in their own country — to mitigate the
In access to high-quality teaching and research expertise, materials and facilities. Systems collaborations, in theory, would also promote equity by creating partnerships that maximise negotiating power and scalability, where contracting for the costs of licensing, for instance, or with private internet access or technology hardware providers, could benefit from the far greater value of the collaborative environment (versus any single system).

Even at state/national level, international collaborations could promote development in a way that creates opportunities to close equity gaps via shared knowledge and resources. In fact, this happens to some extent through bilateral aid efforts, such as NORAD’s massive programmes supporting higher education scholars and scholars in Africa.

NORAD aims to achieve the following impacts in low and middle-income countries by 2030: an expanded and better qualified workforce; increased knowledge; evidence-based policies and decision-making; and enhanced gender equality.

For the period 2021-2026, NORAD’s flagship programme, NORHED (Norwegian Programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research for Development), which supports collaborative partnerships between HEIs in Norway and the global south, will finance several higher education and research projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America with a budget of NOK1.1 billion (US$128 million) (NORAD, 2020).

Under NORHED II, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Malawi had the highest number of projects approved, although several other Sub-Saharan African countries are also recipients. A key operational aspect of the projects focuses on collaboration between Norwegian HEIs, as the applicant, and multiple partners in each of the recipient countries. The previous programme, NORHED I, was implemented from 2013-2019 with a budget of NOK735 million (US$85.5 million).

NORHED II, as the applicant, and multiple partners in each of the recipient countries. The previous programme, NORHED I, was implemented from 2013-2019 with a budget of NOK735 million (US$85.5 million).

Collaboration for Accountability

Cross-border collaboration among institutions and researchers has resulted in findings which promote public accountability on major global issues, such as climate change. The decarbonisation agenda has gained traction in recent years, and climate change is likely to remain a key policy issue for countries well past 2030. Entrepreneurs are turning their attention to climate solutions; the largest companies in the world have set goals to achieve carbon neutrality; and sustainability-focused investments in ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) have grown significantly. In the last decade, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, ratified roughly one year apart, have both formalised commitments to climate action.

In September 2015, just days before UN member countries ratified the SDGs, one of the world’s largest automakers Volkswagen Group admitted to corporate subterfuge involving violations of emissions standards that affected roughly 11 million vehicles. To date, fines and settlements linked to the emissions scandal exceed US$34 billion, while estimates of combined health costs in the United States and Europe are at least US$39 billion (Oldenkamp et al., 2016). The exposure of Volkswagen’s emissions inconsistencies and the resultant global scandal began with the collaboration of two independent non-profit organisations.

U.S. officials learned about the automaker’s deception as a result of the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) commissioning a research centre at West Virginia University to perform a study on emissions levels from light passenger diesel vehicles. The ICCT presented the results of the US$70,000 study by the Centre for Alternative Fuels, Engines and Emissions (CAFEF) to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the California Air Resources Board. The centre’s findings focused on real-world road emissions testing as opposed to laboratory-based testing which used a portable emissions measurement system. Researchers discovered that emissions for some vehicles were up to 35 times above approved regulatory standards. The automaker admitted to installing software that was activated when an emissions test was being performed. CAFEF has since built the largest database of vehicle emissions and efficiency data in the United States, which multiple government departments and the EPA now use for air-quality control.

Collaboration for Innovation

The most advantageous outcome of international collaboration is perhaps in the area of innovation, especially among academics and between academia and industry. Recent advances in computing power, neural networks and deep learning have transformed the artificial intelligence (AI) market which, in turn, is disrupting industries across countries and economies. Even with known and notable advances, scholars and practitioners insist that AI is still in its infancy with AI being reported as one of the most significant trends for the next decade, alongside ESG, blockchain and cryptocurrencies, among others despite or, more likely because of, the progress made over the last decade.

Universities have long been the conduits through which society explores new frontiers, contributing to economic, social and cultural development by educating, training and upskilling the cadre of professionals who build on the progress achieved by their predecessors. This progress has not come without social costs, however, as higher education is often criticised for contributing to human capital flight from lower capacity countries to higher capacity settings (the concept long known as brain drain).

AI researcher ‘brain drain’ may be a worrisome and growing trend in the US and elsewhere. From 2004-2018, there were 221 departures of AI faculty in favour of industry roles (Coursera did not participate) which suggests that AI researchers are likely to face significant challenges in retaining the capability to train the next generation of academic researchers in AI. Moreover, industry players, rather than collaborating with universities, have been establishing their own research labs, effectively competing with universities’ second mission (research) while also weakening the institutions’ ability to perform their first mission, at least in the context of AI.

There is a strong need for universities and industry to collaborate, rather than compete, in advancing new fields such as AI, as their relationship is critically symbiotic —universities provide the talent and skill development of young researchers, while industry offers commercial and economic advantages, such as expensive computing power, access to the variety and depth of data needed to train highly specialised, technically agile individuals vital to the knowledge-based
Early in the 21st century, as China’s wealth and influence rose, government officials launched the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Post-secondary education emerged as the centrepiece of the Forum, which provided more than 50,000 government scholarships to African students between 2010 and 2015, training for African professionals, and post-graduate and doctoral places for African students at prestigious Chinese universities. According to China’s Ministry of Education, the number of African students admitted to Chinese universities increased eighteenfold between 2005 and 2015 (FOCAC, n.d.).

Towards the end of the Forum’s first decade, Sino-African relations on education expanded beyond scholarships and study visits for African students and scholars, and evolved into international collaboration between universities. In 2009, the Forum announced the twinning of Chinese and African universities with a focus on higher education development. Subsequently, China’s Ministry of Education launched the 20+20 Cooperation Plan for Chinese and African Institutions of Higher Education to implement a model for collaboration between higher education institutions, featuring 20 Chinese universities and 20 African institutions, building on the Forum’s agenda. The 20+20 Plan includes multiple international collaboration strategies (Li, 2017).

First, partnerships between Chinese and African universities feature a voluntary, market-based approach to collaboration on multiple initiatives, driven by prior relations. In instances where universities from China and Africa did not share a history of collaboration, the Ministry of Education in the respective African country and their counterparts in China had to recommend and approve the partnership. Second, the 20+20 Plan also allows for individual initiatives between institutions, exchange programmes and professional development. Third, the Plan fosters partnerships to establish Confucius Institutes which are akin to the UK’s British Council offices, France’s Alliance Française centres, and Germany’s culture-focused Goethe-Institut; although with one key distinction (Freda-Kwarten, 2020). Unlike these well-recognized organisations which established stand-alone operations in several cities worldwide, Confucius Institutes have been established within several African universities.

China’s strategy of a multi-layered approach to international collaboration with African universities is noteworthy, given the country’s history of bilateral partnerships in higher education. Over fifty years, China’s industrialisation facilitated its transition from a recipient of partnerships with Soviet universities, to a convener and provider of partnerships with African universities. In the 1950s, the country’s foray into international collaboration with Soviet universities as the recipient had failed by the decade’s end. As Li (2017) notes, “[a]lthough the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship clearly indicated that the partnerships were based on equity, mutual respect and benefit, as well as friendship, the overall university partnerships were dominated by the Soviet side, and the Chinese side was not genuinely respected by the Soviet Union.” Sino-African collaborations also first began roughly around the same time as Sino-Soviet university partnerships, but on a limited scale, focusing on student and teacher exchange programmes (Li, 2001). It is also worth noting that the geopolitical landscape in the 1950s was significantly different from today’s climate.

The most recent iteration of Sino-African university partnerships is now two decades old and the question of equity emerges once again. Some scholars question the altruism of the Chinese government in financing all the costs of Sino-African university partnerships, as well as officials’ assertions that the approach is founded on the equity principle. As we move through the 2021-2030 milestone decade for international development, those countries across the African continent that continue to strengthen university partnerships with China (and other global systems) are likely to model development that may also ultimately allow many of them to progress from recipient to provider systems.

The World Bank’s Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE) Projects aim to build the capacity of African HEIs in areas that are important for the region’s development challenges and economic growth. By addressing critical gaps in human capital and innovation in science and technology, ACEs become regionally acclaimed research and academic institutions in their respective fields. The project embraces the importance of industry-sector partnerships in providing labour market-relevant training, and that of regional and international academic partnerships in raising quality through the joint delivery of programmes and sharing of resources. Developing such regionally specialised centres of excellence — by coordinating national investments regionally — facilitates economies of scale through the sharing of expensive high-end technology, laboratories, equipment and trained faculty.

Since the launch of the first phase of the project in 2014 in West and Central Africa (Africa Centres of Excellence for West and Central Africa, ACEI), ACEs have provided opportunities for African students to enrol in quality, market-relevant postgraduate education programmes in priority growth sectors such as health, agriculture, extractive industries, renewable energy, water, railways, information and communications technology, and education. Following the success of the ACEI model, the second phase was launched in Eastern and Southern Africa with an approach aimed more at regional integration. The Africa Centres of Excellence for Eastern and Southern Africa (ACEES) Project provides competitive scholarships for students to undertake a two-year Masters degree programme at an ACE outside of their home country. In support of technical assistance to develop partnerships with the private sector, under ACEI and ACEES, there are 46 university-based ACEs in 15 participating African countries that are involved in cutting-edge research.

The third phase of the ACE initiative ACE Impact is now operating in West and Central Africa. The goals of ACE Impact are similar to its predecessors, however, there is a stronger focus on development impact, which will be achieved through deeper engagement and partnership with private and public sector stakeholders. In addition, ACE Impact places increased emphasis on strengthening institutional impact by supporting the adoption of global sound practices for university governance and operational policies.

Recently, academic staff and researchers at institutions in the world’s two largest countries (based on research output) have been vocal about their growing reticence to seek out future collaborations (Silver, 2020). Speaking on this issue, Kei Koizumi former senior adviser on science policy at the American Association for the Advancement of Science noted that “Nobody wants to
get hassled for doing research” (cited in Silver, 2020). Some are reconsidering their participation in academic exchanges and conferences, even in the face of some powerful examples of collaborations borne out of global conference introductions. When Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna first met at an academic conference in March 2011, they could not have anticipated that that meeting would lead to the development of a method for genome editing. Less than a decade later, their collaboration would earn them the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Face-to-face and side-by-side interactions such as theirs, according to Nature, are the origin for as much as 90 percent of international collaborations, but tactics at national level that limit the academic and entrepreneurial freedoms of researchers may make transnational collaboration efforts less palatable or worthwhile for researchers and the private sector alike. While the current decade’s prospects for international collaboration are unlimited, emerging risks particularly those linked to geopolitics could forestall the groundwork needed to investigate new frontiers.

References

2.7 Higher Education Management. Promoting new leaderships and innovation
Supporting innovation and change in higher education through leadership and management development

Arnaldo Barone, Leo Goedegebuure and William Locke

Abstract

Few university leaders and managers have experienced the challenges currently faced in their higher education (HE) work. Leading and managing in this environment is likely to require a different mindset and skillset and, in many ways, a different leadership style. Therefore, leadership and management development in HE is more important than ever. This paper focuses on how to support innovation and change in higher education institutions (HEIs) through leadership and management development. It is grounded in research and evidence regarding successful strategies in bringing about transformation, especially in challenging times. It starts with a focus on Australia and also draws on expertise from the UK, the US and elsewhere. It asks: What is the relationship between leadership, management and performance in HE? Does training in these actually lead to improvement? We find that program effectiveness is related to various design and delivery elements and also the effectiveness of post-training implementation. Furthermore, there is a need to differentiate between leader development which focuses on the level of individual leaders, and leadership development which looks at the development of collective leadership beliefs and practices, in addition to personal development.

Introduction

This paper focuses on how to support innovation and change in higher education institutions (HEIs) through leadership and management development. It is grounded in research and evidence regarding successful strategies that have proven successful in bringing about transformation, especially in challenging times (Goedegebuure, 2021). The paper starts with a focus on Australia, but then broadens to draw on expertise from the UK, the US and elsewhere.

In the global recovery from COVID-19, HEIs face several major challenges, many of which have been accelerated by the pandemic and will be part of the journey towards building a ‘new normal’. These include finding a new balance in the digitisation of teaching, research and university management and addressing issues around cyber security, the protection of data and the sharing of information. As part of this, we have seen the increasing use of big data analytics to inform decision-making, often without sufficient critical input. In addition, there is a need to address climate change and achieve sustainable development through education, research and the sustainable management of institutional infrastructure. If this were not enough, HEIs are faced with the challenge of reviving the public, social and common good purposes of higher education (HE) and revitalising their engagement with place and location. Few leaders and managers in universities - even the most knowledgeable and capable – have experienced such challenges during their working careers in HE. Even after the global financial crisis of 2008, they will not have experienced the level of contraction and retrenchment they are currently facing. Leading and managing in this operating environment is likely to require a different mindset, a different skill set and, in many ways, a different leadership style. Leadership and management development in HE is thus more important now than ever. Yet participation in such developmental activity is declining, and that includes involvement in formal learning and non-formal learning – or learning that does not necessarily lead to a formal qualification.

Motivation

To understand how we might address this in the HE sector, we need to know a bit more about the motivation for selecting leadership training programmes. This is no small matter, with 356 billion US dollars spent globally on leadership training. Often these programmes are chosen by word of mouth, which is at least based on personal experience. Is this a good or bad thing? It only reflects one person’s experience of, probably, a single programme. How leaders work, what suits one person or one employer, may not suit another.

Things change quickly and, while HE is generally highly regarded, it is sometimes considered – particularly by politicians – to be poorly managed. Its leaders are often criticised for being paid too much, constantly asking for more money from governments and not managing risk effectively. There are therefore calls to improve the leadership and management skills of the HE workforce and borrow from the corporate sector while, in parallel, there is an influx of professionals into HE from this sector.

However, what is the relationship between leadership, management and performance in HE? Does training in these areas actually lead to improvement? "In spite of a growing number of published reports, it remains to be learned about the effectiveness of leadership development programmes." (Packard and Jones, 2015: 155)

An Organisational View

There seems to be a link between those organisations that regard learning and development (L&D) as critical to business success and those that perform well.

"...organisations that view L&D as critical to business success are continuing to deliver top performance compared with their peers...Yet at the same time, survey responses...suggest that many L&D organisations are falling short in their ability to exert a measurable impact on business performance..." (HBSP, 2018: 2).
the federal government’s ‘Job-ready Graduates’ policy, which aims to create price signals (including disincentives) for students and universities with regard to which disciplines the government wants to prioritise. Oddly, the policy’s use of price signals includes a number of internal contradictions: in many cases, the disincentive provided by a price rise for a course is contradicted by an increase in funding to universities that encourages greater provision of the course in question, effectively blunting the effectiveness of this allocation mechanism.

Despite these contradictions, the policy has resulted in an overall reduction in income for HEIs from domestic students (Warburton, 2021). The same government also barred universities from accessing the ‘Job Keeper’ – or Furlough – scheme, which has been such a lifeline for other industries. Over a longer timescale, less federal government funding has been available for research, such that more than 50 per cent of university research spending now comes from discretionary sources of income rather than directly from government funding (Larkins, 2020).

As a consequence of these challenges, we have seen major contractions and retrenchments, including significant reductions in capital expenditure and staff redundancies. Casual (or contingent) staff have been dismissed, many senior academics have taken early retirement and new recruitment has been frozen. Some have criticised this as a ‘sledgehammer’ approach, pointing out the lack of precision used in response to the fall in tuition income from international students. Other observers have provided a more nuanced analysis of what a more sophisticated approach to these new circumstances might look like (Baré et al, 2020, Tja et al, 2020). Either way, these circumstances have implications for HEIs’ capacity to grow and the kind of leadership we need now and into the future. This is exacerbated by the sector’s business model, which has relied heavily on international student fee income, in part, a consequence of the policies of the federal government, as well as universities’ own strategies.

There are of course both short and long-term impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. One positive, if there are any, is in the way limited mobility has accelerated the sector’s acceptance of online learning. While this can be a good thing, it also poses challenges for future education strategies. A number of UK universities may have decided that they will continue with online lectures even after students have returned to campus (Coughlan, 2021). Australian universities may decide to follow the same path, but can HEIs really expect students to pay the same fees they did for a campus experience? An increase in online offerings also increases the possibilities for competition, with the potential for new entrants to enter the Australian market (and indeed, vice versa for other nations) using online formats. The increasing online reality will likely need different sorts of leadership and management skills. So what will be the optimal combination of in-class and online education, and what does this mean for how universities organise themselves?

Multiple purposes and characters
A university is a community of scholars, teachers and learners. Universities undertake a multitude of activities, with the education of students and the production and dissemination of new knowledge at their core. However, these common purposes conceal the diversity of institutions, with some oriented more towards teaching and others towards research, incorporating a wide range of undertakings which sometimes compete with each other. Their location also determines their character, including whether they serve regional, remote and rural communities, for example, or are part of a metropolitan, cosmopolitan network with global connectivity. The variety of disciplines within them, and how these interact, can also influence their organisational cultures. We should add to this non-university tertiary education institutions and private – for profit and not-for-profit – providers. This multiplicity of purposes and characteristics has implications for choices around the purpose and form of leadership and management development.

Diversity
This diversity also extends to the students and staff who learn and work in such institutions. How are the diverse needs of these different groups to be accommodated, and how is leadership and management development to be designed accordingly? What is the ultimate impact on these diverse students and staff and how can we evaluate its effectiveness, since this will depend on how we define and measure what it is that we do?

Leadership and management in HE
Setting these difficulties aside, the HE sector is not short of leadership and management development programmes. However, when finances are constrained, finding the right kind of leadership development becomes even more crucial. There are of course generic programmes available, but there is a large number of programmes that have been designed specifically for the sector and taking the sector’s particular characteristics into account. Research by van der Wende (2019) found almost 300 programmes around the world at master’s and PhD level. Our own LH Martin Institute programmes, including the Master’s in Tertiary Education Management and the Emerging Leaders and Managers Programme (eLAMP), are examples of this (Goedegebuure, 2021). There have also been a large number of programmes aimed at developing countries. Michael Beer and colleagues (2016) noted that a common approach among many leadership programmes is their implicit view of organisations in reductionist terms, as an aggregation of individuals. This view filters through into the design and delivery of leadership training. So often, these programmes rest on providing programme participants with the skills and capabilities they are thought to need to be better leaders. The hope is that by raising an individual employee’s skill level, this will, at aggregate level, yield a change in organisational outcomes. One problem with this approach is its failure to recognise that organisations are ecosystems of interacting parts. In other words, their focus is on agency, but there is little consideration of structure, which can place limits on the benefits that might accrue to an organisation through an increase in the skill level of individual managers and leaders.

Following bouts of training, individual employees return to their organisation, full of enthusiasm and eager to use the knowledge gained in these programmes, only to find they are unable to apply their new knowledge and skills because they face barriers. These can include entrenched cultures that are antithetical to change, or senior management which promotes a culture that does not welcome, let alone encourage, the application of new knowledge, approaches and techniques.

This helps to explain the findings of John Burboyne and colleagues, who investigated what people thought...
Evidence of impact in HE

The lack of evidence of the impact of leadership and management development extends to the HE sector. To paraphrase Sue Dopson and colleagues (Dopson et al., 2016), for a sector known as part of the “knowledge industry”, it has a relatively poor record of investigating, understanding and learning from its own impact. Such training and development as exists is often based on individualist terms, taking little account of organisational and system-level realities. This lack of evidence is problematic, and research suggests that our leadership development programmes are similarly informal and focused more on the quality of training sessions and less on the impact the training had on the organisation.

Building effective programmes

So how do we build effective programmes? One recent proposal from Christina Lacerenza and colleagues (2017) began by noting that leadership programmes should be systematically designed to enhance leader knowledge, skills, abilities and other components. They then adapted a model based on the work of Donald Kirkpatrick (1959), who evaluated effectiveness according to four criteria, which he termed:

- Reactions: how do people respond to the training, are they excited by it? Did they find it valuable?
- Learning: did the training lead to a permanent change in knowledge or skill?
- Transfer: how well and willing will the trainee be to use the knowledge they gained through the programme?
- Results: did the training help the organisation achieve its objectives, such as increased turnover or reduced costs?

As shown in Figure 1, the model posits some practical suggestions for how robust training can be built, which are listed in points 1 to 8. Their main point was that we should identify the outcomes we want before we go on to develop or deliver leadership training, because design impacts outcome. In doing so, we should ask: who are the stakeholders and what outcome(s) are they trying to obtain? Are there multiple outcomes, and if so, are some outcomes more important than others?

Developing and assessing effective leadership training

Returning to our earlier point, how do we build assessment and evaluation into the design of a training programme? We consider two proposals: the first is a framework posited by Dennis Tourish (2012), who proposed a virtuous circle made up of five discrete steps:

1. Develop a Vision, with short, medium and long-term goals which focus on issues central to the HEIs strategy.
2. Identify appropriate leadership behaviours to produce a competencies framework or key behaviours statement.

Institutional Case Study Box - Australian Catholic University and the Emerging Leaders and Managers Programme (eLAMP)
The Australian Catholic University (ACU) is a multi-campus university that operates seven campuses across three Australian states and the Australian Capital Territory, as well as housing a campus in Rome. It was formed following the 1991 amalgamation of four institutes of higher education and offers education and training across a range of courses, from health sciences, to theology, law, business, education and the arts.

The University is a good example of how fertile soil can make an impact on the quality of leadership and management. Its commitment is visible across a suite of documents, and not least of which is its Enterprise Agreement. One of the mechanisms to develop leadership and management skills in its staff to enable the University to meet its strategic goals and priorities. One of the programmes to gain official recognition in the Enterprise Agreement is the national
Emerging Leaders and Managers Programme, or eLAMP. A central design feature of eLAMP is a central design feature of eLAMP is to provide flexibility to beat the COVID-19 hit.

3. Select potential leaders who show high leadership potential to undertake the training, based on their behaviours.

4. Identify problems that might obstruct the HEI in achieving its goals, give people the job of solving them and provide appropriate support.

5. Assess the behaviour change and the impact on the HEI’s performance to see whether the problems have been resolved, the major goals have been achieved and there is a sufficient return on investment.

Another proposal is from Dopson and colleagues (2016), who recommended the development of a research programme to create a better evidence base (including large-scale surveys, cohort studies and leadership case studies) and a national research programme. The programme would focus on five areas, including:

- Identifying promising leadership interventions that have a robust evidence base.
- Providing clarity on the conceptual and theoretical basis applied to leadership and leadership development in HE.

Issues and questions

Ultimately, the question is, not just ‘Is leadership and management development effective, but can it be effective, and if so, how can we ensure that it is effective?’

- Can training improve leadership and management in HE?
- If so, how do we ensure we design effective training programmes, especially in a multipurpose environment such as an HEI?
- Are current training programmes too focused on a ‘reductionist’ approach? Is a systems approach warranted? If so, how do we design these sorts of programmes?
- How do we improve measures of their impact and benefit?
- How do we determine the best way to identify training needs? Word of mouth? Other?
- What determines ‘fertile soil’ and how do we achieve it?

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Abstract
This paper proposes reforms to higher education, based on the notion of balancing its social and economic values, its role as a public/societal institution with a more robust view of its social contracts, and its goal of promoting social capital/civil society in developing countries.

The paper summarises the positive and negative impacts of neoliberalism in emerging higher education systems, particularly on accountability and productivity, funding, research and innovation, and working conditions for staff. It argues that future higher education reforms should consider its broader role as educational and humanistic institutions, with more egalitarian, collectively owned and participatory democratic approaches. In this framework, higher education reforms in developing countries should consider the democratic implications of knowledge development and dissemination, i.e., a broad-based innovation strategy; an integrated academic role and interdisciplinary orientation to education, research, and service; the promotion of ethics and morality and the enhancement of social enterprise and the public service of the institutions and their professors. The paper will showcase specific practical strategies or projects deemed relevant to realise the potential of the recommended reforms.

Introduction
Throughout history, higher education, one of the longest-lasting institutions in the world, has played a crucial role in serving its communities and fulfilling the public good. It has contributed to the purpose of society, from generating and transmitting knowledge to grooming future leaders and citizens to building nations. Since its inception, the role of higher education has always been to educate its students to become future leaders and citizens. Since its inception, the role of higher education has always been to educate its students to become future leaders and citizens. Since its inception, the role of higher education has always been to educate its students to become future leaders and citizens.

In emerging higher education systems, reforms moving towards a knowledge-driven economy have been of great importance for nations in economic, political and social terms (OECD, 2008). In the context of a developing country like Malaysia, for example, various national policies and blueprints were developed to align the role of higher education with the overall national development policies. Nevertheless, government policies and the higher education sector were still unable to fully address the socio-economic gaps and promote social mobility and well-being (Asian Development Bank, 2012). The impact of higher education in terms of teaching, research and service in the last three decades are found to be inconsistent with the government’s overall vision (Vision 2020) and economic development plans (see 12th Malaysia Plan by Government of Malaysia, 2021 and Science Outlook Report by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, 2021).

The Perfect Storm: Tangible Benefit of the Market place
Features of the contemporary higher education landscape, including neo-liberalism, and theories of human capital, are considered pivotal enablers for a new societal paradigm of a genuine knowledge-based-society. The economy should become a means rather than an ultimate goal for human development and social progress in this integrated form.

The Changing Faces of Higher Education in Malaysia
In emerging higher education systems, reforms moving towards a knowledge-driven economy have been of great importance for nations in economic, political and social terms (OECD, 2008). In the context of a developing country like Malaysia, for example, various national policies and blueprints were developed to align the role of higher education with the overall national development policies. Nevertheless, government policies and the higher education sector were still unable to fully address the socio-economic gaps and promote social mobility and well-being (Asian Development Bank, 2012). The impact of higher education in terms of teaching, research and service in the last three decades are found to be inconsistent with the government’s overall vision (Vision 2020) and economic development plans (see 12th Malaysia Plan by Government of Malaysia, 2021 and Science Outlook Report by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, 2021).

The government’s highly neo-liberal policies and stakeholders’ expectations, particularly industries, were not always coherent and clear about the purpose and direction for HEIs. Fundamental values of the national higher education - equity, social parity, citizenship, community development, and sustainability - were not given adequate attention. Arguably, there has been a steady drift away from core ideals and behaviours that ought to define higher education’s social contract with society. Thus, despite over half a century of interventions and waves of reforms in Malaysia, higher education institutions, systems, and practices have had scant attention to the distinct values and goals, or missions and visions that connect higher education to the major challenges of local needs and contexts.

To tackle the ever-growing social, cultural and environmental issues due to the overemphasised economic policymaking and the anticipated spiral effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, developing nations need a radical shift to strike a balance by acknowledging that higher education, apart from being an economic instrument, is a vehicle for social transformation and civilisation. A shift towards a more balanced model, where knowledge is not only subordinated to economic reasoning but is based on the integrated notion of social, economic and sustainable development values, can inform a new societal paradigm of a genuine knowledge-based-society. The economy should become a means rather than an ultimate goal for human development and social progress in this integrated form.

Positive and negative impacts of neoliberalism on emerging higher education systems
Enhancements of higher education institutional values such as accountability and relevancy. Over the past three decades, HEIs have been compelled to engage and interact with external stakeholders resulting in a more concerted partnership between government and industry. For example, through the liberalisation and privatisation of higher education, the number of private HEIs in Southeast Asia has increased, mostly in the form of for-profit initiatives, providing access and equity, empowering more people to attend higher education, while also providing programmes and services integral to economic needs. Great strides have also been made to address and redress the problems of access to education and the low completion rates of students (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Higher education has been successfully used as a tool to reduce social differences in background, culture, and privilege (Azman, 2019b), hence further emphasising its obligation to the public and its role as social mobility, equaliser and justice.

State Financing-Performance based Funding
Another significant manifestation is performance-based funding, which seeks to incentivise outcomes such as job placement or research effort and quality by making institutions compete for additional revenue. This has prompted HEIs to assess how well they function, thereby improving their academic and student services. Performance-based funding also helps to limit the range of activities that HEIs pursue by rewarding some activities more than others, thus reducing the diversity of institutional missions. However, performance-based funding has led HEIs to concentrate on tasks proven helpful in securing funding while reducing the emphasis on public and community engagement. HEIs started to be commoditised as products and services competing for market share and economic return on investment (ROI) as management focuses more on financially efficient educational services and delivery of the curriculum.

As public funding declines, public HEIs increasingly operate like for-profit institutions, as businesses that provide education to make money, consequently changing the value of knowledge from public good to private good at a cost. Knowledge or ‘the truth’ is thus made less available, especially when it does not benefit the institution’s financial interests. Specifically, the neo-liberal models of management affect decision-making
and the institutional language of accountability has replaced that of social responsibility (Santigo et al., 2015; Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar, 2013). This shift in management to focus on markets and accountability has also affected the ability of institutions to address inequities experienced by faculty members (Azman, 2020; Jones, 2012), as values of collegiality, inquiry and debate are replaced by performance and output accountability (Olssen and Peters, 2005).

**Educating vs Training**

In many nations' higher education policy statements, the neoliberal paradigm subscribes to promoting HEIs not only as a system driven by the needs of industry and the labour market but also as fulfilling the traditional purposes of higher education in terms of educating actively engaged and holistic graduates. For instance, under the Malaysian Education Blueprint—Higher Education (2015-2025), a holistic graduate paradigm is proposed to ensure the development of holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced graduates who would have relevant disciplinary knowledge and skills, ethics and morality, along with the appropriate mindsets, behaviours, and critical thinking skills. They need to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, society, nation, and global community. Clearly, such beliefs regarding higher education include individual prosperity and employability as a function of education, and economic or social good but with minimal profitability. If Malaysian HEIs accomplished such ideal goals as those described within the policies of developing holistic graduates, successfully instilling traits and abilities in their graduates, this would be synonymous with economic vitality and human morality development.

The issue remains whether Malaysian HEIs have shifted from placing greater emphasis on helping students fulfill a broad range of human capacities to emphasizing and fostering employability potential to comply with government established graduate employability rates. This emphasis on employability rates allows the government and the public to justify funding for public higher education as an investment rather than an expenditure, with expected financial returns. However, critics argue that HEIs have not been producing a qualified workforce for the market and that, even with an occupational focus, a vast gap lies between teaching and practice. HEIs have altered their curricular content to favour disciplines with high potential returns on financial investment and also curriculum delivery via cost-efficient distance learning, or greater reliance on part-time/curricular faculties. As a result, liberal arts and social sciences and humanities majors have declined while business, technical and health fields have grown. A significant trade-off occurs between broad formal education and narrow credentialing. Students appear to be motivated by more explicit utilitarianism and vocational desires in their course and major field choices. Parents and students are adamant about focusing on short-term ROI and getting an education that will get them a job, preferably well paid. The personal and economic benefits of higher education are seen as more fundamental than its social benefits (Marginson, 2007). The belief that a higher education degree is essential for socio-economic success in life remains firm, but the public value of that credential seems to be diminished.

**A Tide of Academic Capitalism**

Commercialisation forces (competition among educational institutions; orientation of profit; production and sale of educational and research services) are not necessarily negative for the higher education sector. The knowledge-based economy has created a need for a tremendous expansion of the national research capacity. Research became a much larger part of the HEIs’ mission in the latter part of the 20th century, and it was also linked in the public mind to national and local economic viability. HEIs’ research functions have taken on expanded roles in society, and governments and businesses continuously urge HEIs to contribute to knowledge generation through research not only for technology advancement but also for solving social problems.

Nevertheless, the need for HEIs to seek corporate sponsorship and to privatise the gains from their research can often mean, to a certain extent, abandoning objectivity. Moreover, the financial benefits of corporate-sponsored research present a lucrative alternative to other, less profitable ventures, resulting in the downsizing of areas such as the humanities that represent civic and social good but with minimal profitability. These same pressures to commercialise research and knowledge transfer are felt throughout Malaysian HEIs. Significant portions of funding have been targeted towards research in areas where commercialisation is more likely (e.g., technology). Yet, despite the emphasis on the commodification of research, few Malaysian HEIs are earning a significant portion of their budget from patented inventions or innovations (Academy of Sciences Malaysia, 2021).

One of the evident legacies of the new management is increased pressure to quantify the impact of higher education. While HEIs are pushed to solve economically and socially oriented tasks set upon them, the assessment and rewards of their achievements remain skewed towards economic or tangible results such as graduation rates and research publications which can be easily measured by numbers and within the short term, rather than the less tangible gains made in knowledge and understanding, and preparation for work and citizenship. Such practices predicate funding measurable outcomes at the expense of those that are more difficult to quantify in financial terms. In fact, academic integrity or a lack of it is confounded by a pervasive new management orientation based on tangible outcomes and the view of knowledge as a commodity. The emergence of global university brands and influential international rankings have also resulted in negative perceptions of academic integrity. Which, in turn, significantly impact institutional reputations (Azman, 2019a; Azman and Kutty, 2016).

Thus, although transformation discourse combines both the economic outcomes of education and the social or liberal arts purposes of education, the implementation and assessment tend to measure only economic results. Non-financial benefits—such as improved health, functioning democracy, or social equality increase the value of education in ways that ROI assessments specifically, in general, are not able to measure. These linkages between purpose and outcomes raise questions and implications for HEIs, creating a new ideal they must negotiate with in the future.

Emerging higher education systems worldwide tend to adhere to models of neoliberalism depicted above, with varying impacts on education and society. The obvious potential benefits of neoliberalism are very clear in terms of economic development and dissemination. It simultaneously wreaks damage on educational or social conditions. The ideology results in a tension between the free market values and those of civil society. The notion that HEIs should be defended as centres of critical scholarship and social responsibility appears irrelevant. Arguably, what may be lacking is not the ability of higher education to reclaim its public purpose and centrality but its reluctance to do so in an environment where dissent is unpopular, and conformity is the order of the day.

**Reform in Developing/ Emerging Countries**

The vision of the future of higher education includes action by institutions and graduates to alter the public discourse regarding the role of higher education, focusing on how it could better serve as an inclusive and diverse public good. There is a need to blend the focus on equity and justice with a corresponding emphasis on individual economic empowerment and placing the purposes of higher education squarely within public and private spheres. These two purposes, frequently framed as mutually exclusive, can and should exist in tandem. HEIs need to strike a balance between market success and public mission.

Arguably, this notion of public and private goods as an implicit balance is advocated in many national policies. In this “balanced” framework, higher education is seen as conferring both individual and social benefits, improving both social and economic conditions. This framework allows for a separate-but-complementary set of effects of higher education, spanning the traditional and neoliberal purposes. Most developing nations underline this balanced framework and the need for the nation to remain economically competitive through education while also pushing for the development of educatio- nal or academic capital that results from education (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Education is key to a country’s economic and social prosperity, therefore, developing countries aiming towards becoming developed and prosperous nations require educated citizens who not only are well-educated, but also driven by the desire to contribute to the harmony and civic spirit. This means that the future of higher education requires it to adopt both the traditional ideologies and neoliberal of higher education purposes and ensure that they operate in tandem instead of in competition.

Against this backdrop, higher education reforms in developing countries should consider the democratic implications of knowledge production and dissemination, i.e., a broad-based innovation strategy; an integrated academic role and interdisciplinary orienta- tion to education, research, and service; the promotion of ethics and morality, including the quest for truth, as core values in education, research and leadership, and the enhancement of social enterprise and the public service of the institutions and their professors. The rest of the paper will showcase two specific practical strategies or projects deemed relevant in realising the
potential of the recommended reforms. The examples are, however, limited to the Malaysian context.

The role of HEIs as public/societal institutions with a more robust view of the social contract

Contribution to the public good is of immense significance today. The definition of public good has changed over the years as the needs of society have changed. It involves not only general education and cultural enrichment but also professional training and certification, lifelong education, the inculation of democratic values, the provision of social mobility, the development of advanced research and technology, the provision of advanced public health, and support for sustainable development. There is a clear give-and-take relationship between higher education and society, and the role of HEIs is to develop citizens and future leaders, and to drive the economic engine. The mutual need demonstrates that higher education is perceived as a common good to be supported by society, in effect, creating a contract between higher education and society.

Overall, the contribution to both national wealth and wellbeing of HEIs is increasingly significant for many developing nations. Broadly speaking, the challenge for HEIs, especially public HEIs, is to focus on societal economic benefits, such as increased productivity and greater civic engagement. It must be borne in mind that higher education’s dual purpose to provide public good and individual gain should not disappear in the future. In fact, the challenges of this blended discourse are far-reaching. Public good and occupational competency are both grounded in skills and knowledge that comprise traditional general or liberal education: analytical and problem-solving skills, the ability to think and learn, and broad multidisciplinary exposure that enable and technology, the provision of advanced public health, and support for sustainable development. There is a clear give-and-take relationship between higher education and society, and the role of HEIs is to develop citizens and future leaders, and to drive the economic engine. The mutual need demonstrates that higher education is perceived as a common good to be supported by society, in effect, creating a contract between higher education and society.

A broad-based innovation strategy and the enhancement of social enterprise

HEIs need to take a more active role in transformative change by working with their communities and creating real social impact through innovations. Thus, there is a need to find ways to foster innovation that generates social and public value (OECD, 2017). The social dimension of innovation is growing, due to unprecedented global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a need for a new narrative drawing on a broad-based innovation strategy encompassing both technological and non-technological innovation at all levels of society, and with a stronger focus on the citizen and on responsible and sustainable business – a quintuple helix and place-based approach to science, research and innovation.

In the future, Social Innovations (SI) need to occupy a more central role in the academic curriculum, research and policy of higher education. This is because social innovation is a tool for a regional innovation system in which the importance of knowledge is not determined exclusively by competitiveness and productivity but by taking into account the creation of social well-being, the impact on the quality of life and co-creation of knowledge as part of public-private partnerships (Moraw ska-Jancelewicz, 2021). The recently discussed concept of Society 5.0 and Industry 5.0 (Carayannis et al., 2020) highlights the need to rethink existing working methods and approaches towards innovation and focus them on developing human-oriented solutions and SI. The quadruple/quintuple helix model expands the triple by adding the fourth/fifth dimension: civil society and the environment (Carayannis and Grigoroudis, 2016). This concept allows the integration of a bottom-up and top-down approach (complementing the previous top-down policies and practices) which is more suitable in the ASEAN context or developing nations.
The role of the Malaysian higher education system in the SI process is evident in a small number of successful projects. One of these is the Langkawi Geopark project conducted by researchers from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) with government agencies, industries and rural communities. This project is an example of how one university’s research and service, based on solutions to economic, social and environmental issues, can contribute to knowledge-based rural development via SI. The SI activities carried out by the multi-disciplinary group were explicitly focused on the research niche area of sustainable development under the cluster of heritage conservation. This cluster comprises four research groups: geological and biological heritage, governance for conservation, public education and community empowerment, with approximately 15 members.

The group integrated social innovation activities in their research work through the UNESCO Geopark projects in Malaysia. The Langkawi Geopark Project aims to provide scientific knowledge for a geopark development plan and to implement innovation agendas of economic and social value. The project was developed in collaboration with various stakeholders such as the local development authority (LADA), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the local industries such as Hotels and Tour Guide Associations, the communities such as the local fishermen’s association and cooperative, as well as local schools. The researchers’ involvement was not only in transferring findings from geological, biological and cultural heritage as well as education and economic studies, but also in expanding their services by providing expert advice and involvement in activities related to new sustainable tourism products, a new co-management approach, community empowerment and public education on conservation, and environmental sustainability programmes.

Only initial research projects under the groups of heritage conservation and Geopark were sponsored by UKM, and the number of tourists and local community revenue tripled in the five years after the geopark creation.1 The research group continues to contribute as intermediaries to developing national and global geoparks in Malaysia. They also work with NGOs social organisations promoting environmental sustainability and social justice and equality, especially among the most at-risk natural heritage and groups of individuals/communities.

Conclusion

Towards 2030, the advancement of sustainability through societal collaboration and various functions such as education, research and outreach must constitute a significant strategy for HEIs. These would affect the principal mission, focus areas, emphasised disciplines, view of education for Sustainable Development, core external partners, projects and outputs with external stakeholders, geographical focus, and primary functions involved. Indeed, the work of the HEIs is inseparable from the creation of an educated workforce and the provision of adequate professional services. There should be a balance between the external demand for performance and progress and internal priorities, as well as between the view of undergraduates as consumers and their view as students. In terms of management, there should be a balance between accountability, autonomy and integrity. The required balanced approach between knowledge as power and knowledge as enlightenment, and between government and business prescription and the public mood, does not require the HEIs to reinvent institutions, but rather, it is a case for refoosing and reforming by playing a more constructive role in the future of humanity. This will require internal courage and external support from both academic managers and leaders as well as higher education policymakers.

References


1. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jszl1eyxJIo.


Enhancing data openness within and beyond academia through quality data management

Mercè Crosas

Abstract

Never in history have data been so ubiquitously available to help us infer knowledge, and yet so readily amenable to misinterpretation or confusion. High quality, well-described, traceable data are thus an essential foundation. With universities, research centres, industry and government entities generating copious amounts of data, data management must be a core activity and part of their education and training. This article discusses what it means to apply good-quality data management and describes the benefits. The emphasis is on sharing data with others in such a way that the data can be reused and interpreted correctly and thereby help us validate scientific findings and further build on them. The discussion starts with a review of the data lifecycle, the increased use of advanced workflows that help us optimise and replicate the data lifecycle, the implementation of fair (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) principles to facilitate data management and data sharing by machines, and finally an exploration of data sharing and open data beyond academia.

The data lifecycle embedded in the research cycle

Since the beginnings of modern science, a large part of research consists of an iterative cycle running from model to data and from data to model, i.e., a cycle that includes collecting or generating data to validate a model of the universe, the world, or society, and then learning from the data to improve the model. Good-quality, well-managed data makes the cycle more efficient and the model more reliable. Today’s data-centric research, often with large, diverse, or complex data, and the collaborative undertakings that most studies demand, make it even more important to manage data properly as they are used throughout this data-model cycle, especially when the cycle becomes less clearly defined. Furthermore, the need to validate scientific findings to support responsible and accountable science requires transparency of the methods, the steps, the data and the software used in the research. Data should be managed by planning from the initial stage through sharing during or at the end of a research cycle to efficiently and adequately achieve this transparency. Thus, along with the research cycle, there is a data lifecycle that often includes the following phases: Definition of a data management plan, data collection, data cleaning or processing, data analysis, data sharing and preservation, and when possible, data reuse, together with additional data, to start the cycle again (see, for example, https://rdmkit.elixir-europe.org/).

Creating a data management plan is a good practice when beginning research, even if it is not explicitly required. It does not need to be a long formal process. It can be as simple as thinking about what type of data will be required, what formats, data structure and data model, metadata standards and controlled vocabularies (taxonomies and ontologies) you might use to define the variables, where the data will be stored (often in a collaborative way to conduct the analysis), whether there are concerns about data privacy or sensitivity, and finally how the datasets that support your findings or conclusions will be publicly shared. A formal Data Management Plan (DMP) should ideally be revised every six months.

In the next phase, when the data are generated or collected, you should already consider whether the variables (the columns in a tabular dataset) can be defined in a standardised way, with taxonomies or ontologies commonly used in the subject’s domain, or whether there is a suitable standard data model that can be applied to more complex data. Good quality data also means creating a representative and non-biased dataset, with the variables needed for the objective and completeness of data values, although this is out of the scope of this article.

The phases of data cleaning, processing, and analysis vary highly, dependent upon the type of data and research being conducted. Therefore, it is difficult
to generalise or define a best practice. But from the perspective of data management, there are important aspects to consider: document the steps sufficiently so that it is possible to replicate your work; when code is used, try to use a version-control repository (e.g., a Git-based repository) and an open-source license to enable collaboration and reuse by others; and when suitable, use workflows or computational notebooks that can provide a repeatable execution of the analysis (more on this in the next section).

In the final phase, the dataset used to produce the result of the analysis should be shared openly and securely, i.e., published in a repository responsible for the dataset's accessibility and long-term preservation. The repositories available might vary depending on the research domain or your organization. For example, an increasing number of universities have their own institutional data repositories (with platforms such as Dataverse - dataverse.org - or Figshare). In some cases, the dataset is published in a repository along with the article published in a scientific journal (e.g., using DataDryad, Zenodo, or the Harvard Dataverse repository). And in other cases, repositories specialising in a particular type of data or scientific domain are the preferred option for publishing the dataset (e.g., DataDryab for developmental psychology, QDR for qualitative social science data, or one of the many biomedical repositories that support specific, well-defined data types, among repositories that are available. More at: https://www.nature.com/data/policies/repositories/).

There are many questions regarding options for sharing sensitive or restricted data. In some cases, sharing the metadata that describes the dataset in detail, with the necessary restrictions to access the original sensitive dataset, can be a step forward towards transparency of the privacy of a published dataset by using differential privacy or synthetic data, reducing the risk of reidentification.

The benefits of defining and creating a workflow are multiple. First, it requires explicit enumeration and description of the steps to conduct the complete data transformations, processing, and analysis and enables an in-depth description of each step at the same place as the code. Second, it creates a traceable document with provenance from the original dataset to the one used for the results. It allows the steps to be repeated quickly with any data changes or correcting errors made in any step. Thus, it optimises and makes future research more efficient and correct. And finally, to be mindful of verification and transparency, the workflow should be open, to enable others to reuse it to produce the results or build on them. The workflow itself can be published in a repository along with the dataset.

In the last decade, there has been a proliferation of workflows and automated pipelines in many research fields to facilitate repeatable research cycles (e.g., WorkflowsHub). In addition to large, automated workflows that have been used already for quite some time in specialised fields such as particle physics or climate science, the use of computational notebooks has become more widespread in the last decade (e.g., python Jupyter Notebooks). These notebooks keep track of the code and data used in a research analysis workflow, from cleaning, reorganising, or processing them for analysis and exploration, to running statistical models or machine-learning algorithms.

Advanced workflows for optimisation and replication

In the implementation of FAIR Principles towards machine-actionable data

Managing and sharing data should ensure that machi- nes or algorithms can reuse them easily (often referred to as machine-actionable) and are AI-ready. This is the original purpose behind the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data principles. A good implementation of FAIR principles can facilitate the automatic application of advanced workflows to a dataset, the automatic comparison and harmonisation of datasets from diverse authors and disciplines, and the automatic use of generalisable tools and services for exploring, analysing, and visualising data. A workflow, for example, can include the steps for preparing the data to be shared with others, and once the data have been used for research work and conclusions have been made, the workflow can include the API to automatically publish a snapshot of the dataset used for that research work to a data repository. Thus, workflows can facilitate connecting all the steps of the data lifecycle, making it easier to follow a data management and sharing plan, and improving the quality and verification of the research outputs.

Workflows are often designed and used by a collaborative team. Therefore, they benefit from being built and shared in a collaborative environment. At the same time, they are being developed (i.e., shared in a version control repository since they are created and used by a team) the workflow code should also be published openly to maximise transparency of the entire research process and be published similarly to the dataset, following best practices for open-source and code sharing.

Researchers and data professionals should learn about workflows during education and subsequent training.

Research communities and stakeholders should invest in building advanced workflows for their communities, not only to make the research more efficient and accelerate discovery but, more importantly, to improve quality, documentation, and traceability with increased replicability and fewer mistakes. A clean, efficient way to document what has been done in research work is tracking the provenance, from the original data to all the subsequent transformations, and capturing it in a workflow.

Workflows are often designed and used by a collaborative team. Therefore, they benefit from being built and shared in a collaborative environment. At the same time, they are being developed (i.e., shared in a version control repository since they are created and used by a team) the workflow code should also be published openly to maximise transparency of the entire research process and be published similarly to the dataset, following best practices for open-source and code sharing.

Researchers and data professionals should learn about workflows during education and subsequent training. Research communities and stakeholders should invest in building advanced workflows for their communities, not only to make the research more efficient and accelerate discovery but, more importantly, to improve quality, documentation, and traceability with increased replicability and fewer mistakes. A clean, efficient way to document what has been done in research work is tracking the provenance, from the original data to all the subsequent transformations, and capturing it in a workflow.
It is not reasonable to expect that researchers, data scientists, or others working on, and processing data would be able to provide everything needed to make a dataset FAIR (that is, conduct the FAIRification of data, as it is commonly called among FAIR aficionados). Fortunately, an increasing number of platforms and data repositories, such as those referenced in the previous section, provide functionalities aligned with FAIR principles. That is, these repositories automatically assign a DOI, a Handle, or another global persistent identifier to the dataset when it is deposited in the repository, provide support for one or more descriptive metadata standards such as Dublin Core, schema.org, or DOI that help index and find the dataset, and enable the use of controlled vocabularies. In many cases, they also provide support for sharing and usage license in the metadata, an API (Application Programming Interface) to access the metadata and data files directly, and authentication and authorisation protocols to access the data with the appropriate permissions when the data need to be protected. When researchers or data authors use these FAIR-aligned repositories, much of the work is done for them. However, the use of controlled vocabularies, whether in the form of taxonomies or ontologies, would need to be considered and added when collecting or processing the data, so the data are defined appropriately in the dataset from the beginning of its creation. In summary, researchers and data professionals do not need to become experts in FAIR data, but they should learn more about building well-defined datasets, considering the use of standards for describing the variables, using controlled vocabularies that are commonly used in their research domain or community, and when possible, even use standards that go beyond their field. For example, variables such as time and location can be prominent in many types of datasets created in diverse research fields. In the case of location, including standardised geolocation data can help reuse the dataset automatically by data exploration or visualisation tools and can help combine datasets from multiple sources. Of course, the location might be low-hanging fruit for FAIRification, but the same mindset applies to other variables that are not as commonly standardised in health, social sciences, biomedicine, in natural sciences. These types of best practices that help towards making the data more FAIR should be part of the teaching and training for researchers and data professionals.

Data Sharing and Open Data beyond academia

Open Science and Open Data are encouraged by initiatives and policies of the European Commission, U.S. national funding agencies other funders and governments, many scientific journals, and by some universities, research organisations, and scientific communities. The notion of Open Science is based on the principles that science is a collaborative enterprise and should, therefore, be transparent and verifiable, that others should be able to build on prior findings, and that primary and secondary research data and code should be considered a public asset and shared for the common good. Open Science is part of FAIR Data Publishing, together with Open Access, but it also goes beyond Open Science, since it is relevant for government data and other data generated and used outside scientific and academic communities. Data Sharing and Data Publishing are closely related to Open Data, although they can refer more broadly to data that might not be entirely open due to privacy concerns or other restrictions. All these movements are intertwined and share similar goals - to maximise transparency, accountabilty, and reuse - but they have often been pushed forward by communities that do not necessarily communicate. There would be a great benefit in connecting these communities and sharing best practices and insights by opening academic, government, and industry data, and making them usable for research, policy-making, and a transparent and accountable data economy, being mindful of privacy.

Open Science Open Data movements have grown thanks to many actors. Partly thanks to those that have tirelessly driven it, convinced that they were a just and efficient way to conduct science. Partly thanks to initiatives such as the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) that have encouraged the growth of tools and services that support open science and fostered the discussion on Open Science, even though its development has been slow. Partly thanks to incentives and policies provided by many scientific journals, which strongly recommend or even require sharing the data that supports scientific results upon publication of an article. Partly thanks to funders increasingly demanding a data management and sharing plan where data will be publicly available once the funded study ends. And partly thanks to the increased number of readily available data repositories, workflow tools, and other technologies that facilitate data management and sharing. Open data and data sharing is not yet a universal practice across all research fields and beyond academia, but it has increased considerably in the last two decades. Previously, it was almost non-existent except for limited areas of biology and physics.

Where do we go from here? Open Science, and particularly sharing research data, will continue to grow if we continue providing incentives, policies, and technology to support it. It is time for universities and research organisations to do more by incentivising open science and data sharing behaviour and providing credit and recognition to those who help move it forward. But data sharing and Open Data can go even further. It is time for bringing academia, government, and industry communities together to help share data more openly, provide tools and safeguards that allow appropriate access and use of sensitive or restricted data, making them easily reusable not only for research but also to improve policies and legislation, build responsible tools, and put them in the hands of citizens. This could be achieved by building a collaborative Open Data Commons that federates data from all these multiple sources - research data from academia, government data, industry data, data sourced by citizens - facilitates the creation of new, merged data products and views, and shares them as open as possible, as restricted as needed.

Conclusions

Quality data management is the foundation for good data sharing and broader data opening. Data management starts with planning what data are needed and how they will be stored (considering privacy and security when required), how the dataset will be structured and its variables will be described, and eventually how the dataset will be shared. The increasing availability and use of workflow tools, including advanced algorithms and automation of research and data lifecycle, can make data management more robust, high-quality, and efficient. Furthermore, as it is guided by the FAIR principles, being aware of metadata standards and controlled vocabularies commonly used by the research field, can help define the variables more accurately and uniquely, making them consistent with other datasets and enabling data comparison and merging across sources. Once the research is complete, a well-defined dataset, together with the workflow that contains the provenance of its transformations during the research process, should be shared in a FAIR-aligned repository that enables machine-actionable data.

Besides applying good quality data management to research data from academia, much of the same considerations can be applied to industry and government data. The three communities - academia, government, and industry - can join forces to share data in this high-quality and consistent way, which facilitates combining data from various sectors and sources, and build a powerful resource for richer research and policy and decision-making, with social transparency and accountability.

Mercè Crosas
The third and final part of the Higher Education in the World Report 8–Special Issue looks at the debates and realities of HEIs from a regional perspective, exploring the contexts and perspectives of each of the six regions.

The third part seeks to provide a regional approach on the understanding that, even though the contexts and forces may be global, each region has certain patterns that need to be tackled from a regional perspective. Acknowledging that there are global similarities but also different purposes, organisational cultures, goals and strategies, the following questions guide the six regional chapters:

- What do the regions feel higher education institutions should be like in the future?
- What are the similarities? What are the differences?

To this end, several experts from each region have made contributions from their own particular field of research, country or regional expertise. The result is six chapters that reflect the following regions: Middle East and North Africa, North America, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The perspectives of the contributing authors are unique and uniquely their own, based on their own particular blend of ontological, professional and geographic principles. That said, neither their selection of approaches nor their choice of terminology implies any particular preference or inclination of GUNi in one direction or another.

In this abridged print version of the report, the following pages introduce the experts’ contributions through their respective abstracts. The complete version of their contributions can be found at the report’s website: www.guni-call4action.org.

What makes the report unique is that it will be a living document. Throughout the period 2022-2025, new contributions will be added in the form of papers, videos, interviews and podcasts, giving voice and bearing witness to new ideas, contributions and actions relating to higher education institutions and systems as they move in the direction of Agenda 2030 along the lines marked out by the GUNi vision.

In this respect, it is important to note that the report aims to be a stepping stone in a wider, more ambitious project entitled “GUNi International Call for Action (2022-2025): Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies”. This project will be one of GUNi’s key strategic lines of action for 2022-2025 and will seek to encourage and help HEIs around the world to deploy the actions and changes that are needed to adapt and become more relevant, inclusive, effective, innovative and socially responsible. The overarching aim is for the International Call for Action and the special issue website to become a key open space for contributions to the transformation of HEIs around the world.
Higher Education in the Arab World: Challenges and Post Corona Pandemic Prospects

Amr Ezzat Salama

Abstract

It is high time to reconsider the future of higher education in the Arab world and worldwide. The global pandemic has revealed a reality that needed to be challenged while working on developing methods to overcome its challenges. Most of these challenges that go back decades are due to the nature of the emergence and development of Arab higher education institutions, and the shape of the Arab national educational systems. We may not be exaggerating to say that higher education (specifically university schooling) is the key to the success of any country economically, socially, scientifically, and even politically. Based on this point of view, the countries that have planned for improving their societies economically, socially, scientifically, and even politically, tended to pay special attention to the quality of education in general with focus on higher education in particular. Accordingly, governments would allocate suitable proportions among states’ budgets to higher education and scientific research. For these reasons, this article approaches the reality of Arab Higher Education through its indicators, exposing its challenges and concluding with a series of recommendations.

Since the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has opened the door wide to a reconsideration of the future of higher education in the Arab world and across the globe. It has revealed a reality that needs to be faced while working on developing methods to overcome the challenges involved. These challenges go back decades. They are not only related to the conditions imposed by this global epidemic, but many are also due to the nature of the emergence and development of Arab higher education institutions (HEIs) and the shape of the Arab national educational system, which began its current journey in the form of the institutions of Cairo University (King Fouad) in 1909. It continued to develop through to the end of the mid-twentieth century, by which time there were ten universities. At the start of the 1960s, these institutions increased in number and grew steadily until the early 1990s, when private universities began to spread significantly in the Arab world.

It is no secret to anyone with an interest that higher education – especially at university level - is viewed as one of the main and most important elements for supporting human development in societies. University education provides individuals with the basic skills required for the labour market, as well as providing the necessary training for individuals in all different specialties, whether they are teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, businessmen, sociologists, or the owners of any other business. All of these trained individuals can consequently develop and improve their analytical capabilities and skills to drive the local economy, support civil society and enhance children’s education, as well as increasing their ability to make critical decisions that will ultimately affect the entire community.

It is no exaggeration to say that higher education (specifically university schooling) is the key to any country’s economic, social, scientific and even political success. Based on this point of view, countries that have planned for the economic, social, scientific and even political improvement of their societies have tended to pay special attention to the quality of education in general, with a focus on higher education in particular. Accordingly, governments will allocate suitable amounts of their state budgets to higher education and scientific research. Universities are also given a major role in shaping economic, social and scientific policies by offering multiple scenarios and solutions to deal with emergent political issues, whether national or foreign. Higher education is not really where it should be, and competitiveness will not be achieved unless rational, strong, honest, patriotic and honest university leaders are qualified enough to show the way.

Arab universities have been absent from the global competitive arena when evaluated through international university ranking criteria, specifically with regard to:
the quality of their programmes, operations, research products and their subsequent outputs, whether in terms of graduate competencies, research production or the quality and quantity of services catering to their host communities. The latest QS classification for the year 2022 reveals that only eleven Arab universities are among the top 500 universities in the world, as shown in table 1 below:

Table 1. Ranking of Arab universities in the Arab world and internationally according to the QS classification for the year 2022 (top 500 universities)1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Arab Ranking</th>
<th>World Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King Abdulaziz University</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar University</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Fahd University</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American University of Beirut</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates University</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Saud University</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan Qaboos University</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American University of Sharjah</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalifa University</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imam Al-Qura University</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 432 million, representing approximately 5.5% of the world’s population of around 7.5 billion (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). In the Arab world, there are about 1,000 universities, of which 402 are public and private universities under the umbrella of the Union of Arab Universities. There are dozens of other foreign universities, or branches of those foreign universities, especially in some Arab Gulf countries. More than 13 million male and female students are enrolled at all Arab universities, with about 309,000 faculty members, 75% of whom hold a doctorate degree and 25% a master’s degree.

The ratio of students to faculty members in Arab universities is about 1:3.6. In Jordanian universities the proportion is 1:2.8, while it is 1:1.5 in the United Kingdom and 1:1.2 in the United States. The average ratio globally is 1:2.5. According to experts, the ideal ratio seems to be 1:15–20.

With regard to enrolment rates in Arab universities, these are still low in general. The enrolment rate in the Arab world is 30 individuals for every 1,000 citizens. As examples, this ratio is 20 in Egypt, 75 in Kuwait, 50 in Saudi Arabia, 44 in Lebanon, and 48 for every 1,000 citizens in Jordan. In developed countries, this ratio is 40 people for every 1,000 citizens.

The cost of a student in higher education in the Arab world is also still modest compared to developed countries. The average cost per student in Arab countries is about $2,500 per year. For example, the cost per student in Jordan is around $3,166 per year, in Egypt it is $1,500 and in Sudan it is about $600 per year. In contrast, this average cost is higher in the United States, standing at 40,000 Dollars. 34,000 Dollars in public universities and 44,000 Dollars in private universities. It is around 39,000 Dollars in the UK, and 35,000 Dollars in Japan.

The Challenges Facing Arab Higher Education:

Despite the tremendous successes achieved by Arab higher education on a quantitative level, the accomplishments on a qualitative level are still below expectations and ambitions. The reality shows the poor quality of this education stream, with low levels of output compared to developed countries. Looking at the state of the Arab educational system at its two levels - general and higher - you can see that it is today facing a number of huge challenges, as well as a succession of severe crises which have taken place in recent times. At higher education level in particular, during this evolving digital era, HEIs in Arab countries, like those in many other developing countries around the world, are currently facing several challenges. These major challenges can be summarised as follows:

a) Increased demand for higher education: there is a great desire, an intense massing and an overwhelming need to enrol in university education in most Arab countries, something which could be called the phenomenon of “student enrolment overcrowding”. This phenomenon creates other problems and obstacles such as: a rise in dependency rates and a drop in the level of academic graduates, resulting in the creation of an inverted pyramid for the productive segment of citizens in society. The situation is intensified by the knowledge that about 65% of Arab university students are enrolled in the humanities, while about 35% enrol in scientific, technical and technological disciplines. This shows the weak demand for technical education in particular.

b) The decline of basic education outputs has led to a rise in success rates among secondary school graduates. This is due to many reasons, including political and economic factors. As a result, large numbers of school graduates have joined higher education without actually being qualified for it.

c) Lack of human and financial capabilities: most universities suffer from a lack of human and financial capabilities. Most Arab countries are unable to meet their needs in this regard except in limited numbers.

d) Weaknesses in higher education inputs (students, teachers, curricula, administration, educational facilities, etc.).

e) Weaknesses in staff competencies: about 35% of the faculty members in Arab universities are graduates of Western countries, while the others are graduates of the same Arab universities or other institutes. Most of them lack research and technological competencies, are unable to use the English language technically and professionally, and there has been a spread of apathy among them, perhaps due to a lack of competitiveness, which has led some specialists to describe them as “upper secondary school teachers” and to call Arab universities “post-secondary traditional schools”.

f) Student apathy: the main indicators of apathy are tardiness and absence, academic laxity, a lack of seriousness, low interest, irregular study, disorderly behaviour and increased violence and student quarrels.

g) Limited job opportunities: the increasing unemployment rates among young graduates have caused high levels of frustration, raised the level of educational weakness among them, and prompted some of them to obtain higher university degrees (master’s and PhD) to use their spare time in the hope of being exposed to better job opportunities.

h) Dominance of academic education due to the increase in students’ interest in academic education and their reluctance to pursue technical education. The percentage of those enrolled in technical education programmes is no more than 10% of the total number of students enrolled in the higher education sector. This is what is known as the inverted pyramid.

i) Lack of accountability: the concepts of accountability, responsibility, follow-up and transparency are not provided for in the laws and regulations in force at most Arab universities.

j) Weakness in keeping pace with rapid technological developments: the world today is immersed in the information age, with its three revolutions (digital science, information technology and genetic biology) all massively accelerating.

k) Poor scientific research due to a lack of financial capabilities (only 0.05% of national income is allocated to research). This has resulted in a widespread mood of dissatisfaction because of the absence of incentives and a possible lack of research capabilities.

l) Highly centralised administration with governmental policies that prevent universities from being independent. Universities are thus unable to implement their own plans and take steps to enhance their distinguishing qualities and individuality.

m) Lack of equity and justice in academic opportunities: there is unfair distribution of academic opportunities due to students in diverse circumstances being subject to unified standards. The swelling of student numbers beyond the institutions’ ability to absorb them and the exclusion of a segment of students whose grades fall below the required scores has also led to unjust academic opportunities.


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Study plans have not kept pace with knowledge and the deterioration of its outputs. Consequently the outputs of the educational system in Arab universities are incompatible with the needs and requirements of the labour market. There is a mismatch with development priorities in their broadest sense, as indicated by several comparative studies. This is due to the fact that Arab higher education is typically a traditional form of education, based on lecturing and memorising information, in a way that is more like an upward continuation of school education in terms of style, method and curriculum.

The qualitative challenge faced by Arab higher education is more complex than the challenges of academic opportunities. This complexity is multi-dimensional and related to funding, scientific research, institutional governance, educational technology, educational culture, international university rankings and social responsibility. The elements related to the qualitative challenge faced by Arab higher education can be summarised as follows:

- Educational technology: the weakness of the technological structure and the scarcity of its provision to faculty members and students inside universities and their own locations prevents flexible access to knowledge, especially under emergency circumstances.
- There is a lack of accountability in the educational process at the level of coaching, study plans and educational practices.
- The lack of strategic and continuous evaluation of institutions’ performance has hindered the achievement of measurable indicators.
- Study plans have not kept pace with knowledge changes in academic disciplines, especially in humanities and educational programmes that lack genuine updates.

Recommendations

Given the painful reality of Arab HEIs, the fact that they are not treated as a priority national issue in most Arab countries, and in spite of the positive intentions and serious determination to reform this sector, it is necessary to make the next decade the decade of Arab higher education reform and development, through a number of procedures and policies that will need to keep pace with change, including:

- Restructuring the basic education system in the Arab world so that classification will be scaled according to academic stages built on the quality of students’ skills, talents and abilities.
- Granting universities sufficient financial and administrative independence, as is enjoyed by universities in the developed world. Setting up the requirements for academic freedom in these universities is an essential need. There is also a requirement to change the pattern of the relationship between governments and HEIs from a state-controlled system to a supervisory model, in order that they may be subject to accountability and good governance processes.
- Increasing internal funding for HEIs and centres of scientific research and innovation.
- Strengthening national crisis management centres and educational institutions to enable them to face current and future challenges such as epidemics, natural disasters, wars and any other unusual circumstances.
- Enabling university leaders to build their capacity with the required skills and knowledge, especially in the fields of management, finance, psychology and information technology. Special training and development programmes need to be implemented.
- Adopting digital and e-learning approaches by integrating them into the learning and teaching process.
- Establishing virtual universities in the Arab world to provide real and serious educational opportunities for the traditional and non-traditional segments of students who need flexibility in terms of time and admission criteria.
- Developing the e-learning environment in terms of technology, preparation of human cadres, motivation and customised training for both professors and students.
- Developing special centres to enhance and develop the electronic content of study plans.
- Creating new disciplines that are compatible with technological developments and market needs in order to provide future jobs for the coming years. These new occupations will be in great demand, including, but not limited to, artificial intelligence, cyber security, robotics, systems and data analysis, online tutors, medical engineers, geneticists and others.
- Restructuring the entire higher education system in the Arab region to facilitate the movement of students and researchers between national, regional and international universities. It is necessary to support cooperation and joint scientific research, as well as adopting unified systems to measure and assess skills and educational accomplishments.
- Higher education administrations in the Arab world need to adopt the higher education globalisation project and enact permanent governing legislation to guarantee the success of the project.
- Reviewing all the study programmes catered for by educational institutions with a view to modernisation. These programmes should ensure that graduates acquire appropriate skills which are attuned with changing technology and the information revolution.
- Linking scientific promotions of faculty members to which the results of scientific research and innovation are linked with scientific publishing and the adequacy of addressing needs of society.
- Promoting joint programmes that ensure the hassle-free flow of knowledge to local educational institutions and research and innovation centres.
- Generating multidisciplinary study programmes in HEIs.
- Promoting continuous higher education and keeping it updated to improve the quality of professional and technical knowledge and skills and produce new skills related to economic and social growth and the rapid changes in labour market needs.
- Supporting vocational and technical education through increasingly specialised programmes in order to acquire skills that are vital to the achievement of sustainable development.
- Adopting educational policies that guarantee the link and harmony between theoretical, applied, professional and technical education paths in order to provide opportunities for the transition between these paths according to controlled arrangements.
- Developing an Arab framework which is similar to the one in the European Union to address the qualifications issue, in accordance with the best practices and international standards in this field. The Arab qualifications system is the primary tool for raising the level and quality of education and training. The development of a comprehensive Arab system for qualifications would lead to the integration of all types of education and training in a coherent system of a unified and transparent framework in line with the requirements of the labour market. This will contribute to achieving a number of goals, including enhancing trust and credibility in Arab qualifications and achieving a healthy comparison and alignment between Arab and international qualifications. It will also enhance the competitiveness of Arab cadres and provide them with broader and greater opportunities in the global labour market. It will help to standardise and upgrade education and training standards and increase compatibility in educational and training systems by establishing unified, transparent and neutral standards for credentials, as well as promoting the recognition of all categories of certificates. These steps will help facilitate special procedures for the recognition and equivalence of university degrees and encourage the transfer of students between Arab and international public universities and HEIs to complete their studies and also to work in these countries.
- Establishing an integrated digital platform for vocational education that will serve as an important and modern tool for disseminating science and knowledge and contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals related to quality education. There should be adoption of up-to-date standards for quality control and governance of digital education and an exploration of the best implementation mechanisms for their inclusion in the general platform.

Conclusion

Arab higher education indicators today suggest that there is more work to be done with regard to the future of higher education, in terms of keeping pace with global knowledge contexts and their changes, while
Towards a More Effective Social and Public Role for Higher Education Institutions in the MENA Region

Leila El Baradei

Abstract

The role of higher education institutions (HEIs) has been redefined in the twenty-first century, with heightened expectations about how they can better serve society. More emphasis is given to the quality of the education provided, and more attention is directed to the competencies graduating students acquire, preparing them to serve their nations better. Many HEIs in the MENA region remain hampered by challenges, including limited academic freedom, low performance in international rankings, ineffective governance, and a gap between the educational content provided and the needs of the labour market. However, the current paper points out how HEIs can better serve society and highlights some success stories. Amongst the suggested reforms for a more effective social and public role for HEIs in the MENA region are: focusing on the production of relevant, impactful research that benefits society; figuring out creative and effective ways to communicate this research to different stakeholders; intensifying community-based learning and students’ community development activities; building a stronger link between theory and practice in all disciplines; providing non-economically oriented education, and a better match between the curricula taught and market needs.

Higher Education institutions (HEIs) have an important public service role to play. Traditionally, universities have mainly focused on education and research: first educating young people and preparing them for the job market, and then producing research that occasionally got read but was more often than not shelved and rarely utilised beyond the confines of HEIs.

Moving into the twenty-first century, expectations are changing, and the role of HEIs is being redefined. It is no longer sufficient to count the number of graduating students, focusing on outputs. There is now more emphasis on outcomes, that is, the quality of education they have acquired, the competencies and skills they have developed during their time at the HEIs, and the extent to which these competencies prepare them for what lies ahead and make them ready, not only for the job market, but also to develop their nations in all possible ways. Similarly, it is not enough to produce theoretical research, although this is undoubtedly important, but additionally to come up with research that can be put to good use in benefiting society and contributing to its development.

This paper mainly focuses on the expected social and public role of HEIs in the MENA region, presents some of the challenges faced, highlights selected achievements and points to some possible recommendations for a more effective social and public role.

There is huge diversity in the conditions of HEIs in the MENA region. The region is sometimes used to refer to anything from 19 to 24 countries (Chen, 2021). There is also huge economic diversity between the countries in the region. 12 countries in MENA are part of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), with bountiful resources, while other countries are resource challenged (Wan et al., 2016). The number of enrolled students at HEIs per country also varies widely, with Egypt having the biggest number of enrolled students at HEIs, with more than 3.3 million in 2019/2020 (Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics [CAPMAS], 2020). Historical and political contexts have affected the governance of HEIs in the region in many different ways and over time there have been repeated attempts at reform. One of the latest trends in reforming HEIs in several parts of the MENA region is the move towards establishing branches of international universities in the region, as has happened in Qatar, in the United Arab Emirates (Wan et al., 2016), and recently in the new Administrative Capital in Egypt. Despite the attempts at reform, the majority of HEIs in the region still face severe challenges.

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Challenges faced by HEIs in the MENA region:

- Limited academic freedom: The most significant challenges facing HEIs in many of the countries in the MENA region relate to restricted academic freedom, difficulties regarding data collection and fieldwork, and the reduced transparency exercised by governments in public policymaking in general. Without academic freedom, we cannot develop critical thinking in students, a much needed and called for competency that would prepare them for their jobs later on, and enable them to lead the development of their nations.

- The pandemic situation: COVID-19 presented a huge challenge to HEIs in the MENA region and to all universities globally. However, many of the HEIs in the MENA region were relatively unprepared, technologically-wise, to shift rapidly to online teaching during the peak times of the pandemic that necessitated intermittent periods of lockdown in many educational institutions. Two years of the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us all that we do not need to be in class and in face-to-face sessions in order to continue with the learning process. Many faculties managed to continue their operations amid the pandemic by relying on Zoom sessions, but some were more successful than others.

- Increased competition: HEIs in the region face increasing competition, not only from the private sector and non-profit universities opening up at an escalating rate on a local level, but also from the splurge of new private universities opening up branches in the region, Gulf countries being a case in point. Additio-

- Limited resources: Some public universities, like in Egypt, face challenges, especially in some faculties, such as Law and Commerce, related to high student density in lecture rooms and a very high faculty/student ratio. Faculty are underpaid and often resort to moonlighting in order to make ends meet, seek parallel part-time employment in private universities, or travel for years on end to work in better paying Gulf universities; all issues that have a negative impact on the quality of their teaching and research.

- Perceived gap between theory and practice: In some HEIs, graduate students complain about outdated curricula and the insufficient links established between taught theory and what happens in practice. In many of the MENA HEIs, the emphasis is still placed on memo-

- Pressure to prepare students for employment: The ques-
tion of whether HEIs manage to adequately prepare their students for employment is constantly being raised and debated. Employers look for specific sets of competencies and skills and HEIs either unintentionally fall behind, or intentionally disagree about limiting their knowledge dissemination to fitting market needs.

- Increased number of private universities that sometimes focus more on profit maximisation than on education quality: Anecdotal evidence has pointed to cases of forgery certificates for students who did not meet the degree requirements in several private universities in Egypt, Bahrain and Jordan, although this situation was later rectified through the establishment of stricter oversight by national regulatory and accreditation bodies in the different countries.

- Ineffective governance of universities: All issues that have a negative impact on the quality of education in private universities, especially in public universities, to be creative in fund raising or resource allocation, and acts as a disincentive against their focus on improving research or education quality (Salmi, 2020). In Egypt for example, public universities have their hands tied regar-
ding their financial management. Salaries are fixed and government-subsidised tuition is capped (Radwan, 2016). Many schools in public universities have started revenue generating ‘special programmes’ that are dis-

How HEIs could have a more effective social and public role

There are many different ways in which HEIs might have a more effective social and public role and overcome many of the challenges faced. In presenting each of the suggested reforms, one or more good practices currently taking place in HEIs in the MENA are also highlighted in the boxes.

Producing relevant research in the various fields

This requires a number of things: firstly, more investment in higher education by governments and incentivising faculty to do more high impact and society relevant research. More financial flexibility needs to be given to universities to recruit qualified professionals who can produce the needed research, giving them an attractive compensation package and the time and resources to enable them to be more productive, as well as implement a performance appraisal system for faculty that is research intensive. Additionally, academic freedom needs to be guaranteed as a key prerequisite for the production of research in all fields. Universities in the region also need to reconsider their mission and stop perceiving themselves primarily as teaching universi-
ties, rather than research universities (UNIMED, 2021).

Science to Benefit the Community: The School of Science and Engineering at the American Uni-

Science to Benefit the Community: The School of Science and Engineering at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the test kit for Virus C developed by Professor Hassan El Azzazy: As Egypt has the highest rate of virus C infections in the world, the invention of a detection kit was of great importance. This is what Professor El Azzazy, Professor of Chemistry at AUC, managed to do. He led the invention of a fully automated robotic machine for hepatitis C diagnosis and was the first to turn his invention into a spinoff company, D-Kimia, which was also recognised as the first university spinoff in Egypt in 2013. Azzazy won first place in the industry section of the Arab

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Innovation and Entrepreneurship competition, organised by the Arab Science and Technology Foundation, in recognition of his commitment to responsible business (AUC News, n.d.).

Effectively communicating the findings of the research produced to different stakeholders

Faculty often produce research that literally never sees the sun. HEIs can develop partnerships with industry to better understand and respond to their needs, so there is a higher chance of the research produced being relevant to the problems encountered by industries in the various sectors of the economy. More investments in conferences, seminars and webinars open to the public and creative communication means simplifying research results and disseminating them to the diffe-

Support for Policymakers and Effective Commu-

nunication of Research Findings: The Public Policy Hub project at the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (HGAPP): Established in 2017, the Public Policy Hub (PPH) is a pilot project that aims to build the capacity of young Egyptian scho-

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Students, where students who can afford to pay are offered a bet-
ter-quality educational service in the same institution.

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The motto of the PPH is: “Where Rigour Meets Creativity”. They are able to combine the rigour of scientific research, guaranteed via the presence of faculty mentors, with the creativity of the young researchers. It is a win-win situation where the government receives sound policy advice on problems they are working on and the young university graduates are exposed to the reality of policymaking outside of their lecture halls.1

Nurturing student clubs, philanthropic and community development activities & offering community-based learning classes and programmes: There are a lot of students’ activities in many HEIs in the MENA region, all of which take different shapes and forms, whether they are student associations, clubs or projects. Further nurturing and mentoring are required because these activities are sometimes even more important than the set curricula in building the life-long skills that prepare students for their later careers.

Building a stronger link between theory and practice in all disciplines
HEIs in the MENA need to move away from an emphasis on memorising knowledge to using knowledge to solve real life problems. This paradigm shift should be reflected in all aspects of the education process, from the design of curricula, to assessment methods, faculty training and evaluation.

Linking Theory to Practice: The Egyptology Programme at AUC: Through the work of the distinguished Professor Salima Ikram, Professor of Egyptology at AUC, the name of AUC is constantly mentioned in BBC news programmes and National Geographic documentaries featuring archaeological missions and discoveries throughout Egypt, where Professor Ikram plays a leading role. She teaches during the academic year and spends the rest of her time excavating in different parts of Egypt, often accompanied by her students (BBC, 2015). Making this important link between what the students study in class and their first-hand experience of excavations with a prominent ‘archaeologist extraordinaire’, as Professor Ikram is referred to in the media, is a great added value.

Providing “non-economically oriented and democratic education” (Amsler, 2017) where higher education is available to all members of society and not only those who can afford to pay, offering scholarships and fellowships to make their educational services affordable to qualified students who cannot afford to pay, is one way in which HEIs can ensure diversity within their institutions and contribute to social equity and mobility. Governments need to understand that higher education expenditure is an investment in the future and that the educational service in HEIs should be available to anyone who is qualified regardless of their ability to pay. If free education for all is unaffordable and inefficient, perhaps a move towards funding scholarships and fellowships that are a mix between merit and needs-based should be considered.

There are many examples of generous externally funded scholarships at undergraduate level, and fellowships at graduate level, that are offered by private universities in the MENA region in order to attract qualified students who cannot afford to pay and also ensure diversity in the student body. Examples include the LEAD program that was funded by the USAID at AUC for top-performing students from the twenty-seven governorates of Egypt and continued for ten years. Also ongoing is the US Department of State’s funding for “Tomorrow’s Leaders Undergraduate Scholarship Programme (TLU)” for qualified students from eleven different Arab countries to study either at AUC, the American University in Beirut (AUB), or the Lebanese American University in Lebanon, fully covering their tuition, housing and other study expenses (U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative, n.d.).

Support for Start-ups: The Venture Lab at the School of Business: AUC’s venture lab was recognised as the Best Accelerator/Incubator Programme in North Africa at the Global Start-up Awards in Copenhagen. To date, the AUC Venture lab has helped create more than 8,500 jobs and graduated 233 start-ups (AUC News, 20 December 2021). The American University in Cairo News [AUC News] (20 December 2021). AUC Venture Lab Named Best Accelerator/Incubator Program in North Africa. The American University in Cairo (AUC) News. https://www.auc.egypt.edu/news/auc-venture-lab-named-best-acceleratorincubator-program-north-africa

Providing a better match between taught curricula and market needs: this includes developing students’ entrepreneurial skills and helping them develop their own businesses and start-ups. There are a number of initiatives that have successfully found a better match between students’ skills and market needs, as shown in the examples below.

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Integrated Student Development within the Frame of Transformational Learning in the MENA Region - Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Societies

Iman Elkafas

Abstract

In a world in constant transformation, the job-for-life career pattern that universities traditionally prepared students for, has been replaced by the need to deal with a highly uncertain labour market. This new uncertain, intertwined global world, which faces unprecedented challenges, needs graduates who possess up-to-date knowledge and new skills and competencies that allow them to impact and lead these global changes successfully. The author presents a comprehensive model of student learning and development that she has developed and applied, which has proven successful in preparing university students to succeed in the current world. The model integrates students’ academic development with multiple aspects of human development, such as emotional, physical, and intellectual. The model describes how the different units in a university join forces to develop a well-rounded student. This article explains the model in detail, states the requirements for success, and provides the experiences of some students who benefited from the model.

Introduction

Our rapidly transforming world has challenged higher education’s traditional pattern of preparing students for a job-for-life career. There is now an urgent need to deal with the high level of uncertainty and unique threats and disruptions facing the world. These current and unprecedented challenges require that graduates not only possess the most up-to-date knowledge in their specialisations but also master the competencies needed to address these challenges successfully.

The author developed and applied the ProSPER model of student learning and development in Egypt and then it was adopted and adapted by institutions in the MENA Region, through the Association of Arab Universities (AArU). The author has also lectured about the model in universities and academic platforms globally. This practical model has proven successful in providing university students with competencies to succeed in a changing world, as shown in their testimonials. The ProSPER model integrates students’ academic development with selected aspects of human development, namely the emotional, physical, spiritual/artistic, and rational/intellectual development, together with the professional development needed, in a format that constitutes a student’s learning experience while at university. This article explains the model in detail, states the requirements for its success, and provides examples of universities that used the model, as well as the experiences of some of the students who benefited from the model.

What is PROSPER

ProSPER refers to the five aspects of student development that form the integrated components of the model. These five aspects are Professional (Pro) development, Spiritual (S) or artistic development, Physical (P) development, Emotional (E) development and Rational (R) or intellectual development. Each aspect has, in turn, components that were developed and refined when the model was first applied in Egypt (The American University in Cairo – Leadership in Education and Development Program).1

Description of how the model has been applied

As stated, the model was first applied as part of the LEAD Program of AUC in Egypt. Students joining the...
AUC LEAD Program were selected on a competitive basis. Once selected, they followed a roadmap that focused on developing their competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and targeting the mentioned five ProSPER aspects of their development:

1) Professional development: Offered them online and in-person courses to strengthen their employability and entrepreneurship skills, such as problem-solving, stress management, time management, crisis management, organisational skills, leadership skills, project, and risk management, etc. This aspect of development also included local internship opportunities related to their specialisations, as well as international opportunities for a semester abroad or to attend training or conference in another country to develop international competencies and get close exposure to diversity and ability to interact and integrate with other business cultures. Individual and business ethics were essential components of all activities in this aspect, together developing the sense of being part of a global responsibility to promote and ensure sustainable living and inclusiveness.

2) Spiritual development: Focused on developing the artistic side of each student. Students were required to explore their unknown creative side and practise a type of art that refines their souls, including painting, music, singing, theatre acting, designing etc. Students were mentored by volunteer faculty members during the process and are required to track their own advancement. This program also includes open-air trips and linking the students with appreciation and care for the environment and the preservation of nature. Focus on individual, group and global ethics and developing them in the student are also part of this component.

3) Physical development: Focused on three elements. First, offering nutritious food to students during their stay at the university together with providing sessions on good nutrition and how to eat and stay healthy to increase the ability to think and move. Second, students were required to regularly practice any sports available at the university or a partner organisation. Students were mentored by volunteer faculty members during the process and are required to track their own advancement. This program also includes open-air trips and linking the students with appreciation and care for the environment and the preservation of nature. Focus on individual, group and global ethics and developing them in the student are also part of this component.

4) Emotional development: Encouraged students to bond with their communities and neighbouring surroundings through having each of them join a local community service entity that served an underprivileged sector of the society, i.e., orphans, disabled, senior citizens, etc. Students discussed the choice of organisation with their mentor and regularly reported on their activities and contributions. This aspect also included visits to different Egyptian provinces to increase their awareness of Egyptian culture(s) and support their feeling rooted and integrated into their environment.

5) Reasoning and intellectual development: In addition to being offered courses in problem analysis and solving, reasoning/thinking, and addressing complex, interrelated matters, students were encouraged to read and research subjects inside and outside the classroom. Students were mentored to apply a comprehensive interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach and find solutions to an existing social, environmental, or economic problem. This included holding learning events and discussing and benefitting from the experience of guest speakers as part of researching the subject. Events were held at the end of the research time, where the students presented their research, findings, and recommendations to an outside audience representing multiple sectors of the society. Mentoring was provided throughout the research period, which could vary from three months to more.

Enrolled Students’ Evaluation

A system was designed to evaluate students enrolled in the Leadership Development Program. The evaluation system monitored and evaluated five elements of student performance in the program and assigned points to this performance. The elements included: Maintaining good academic performance, demonstrating involvement with the community through local community service, participation in and benefiting from extra-curricular activities including program workshops, conferences, events, trips, etc.; physical development and improvement in fitness through nutrition and sports; and learned and applied attitudes and ethics. Students were periodically given scores on each of these five elements by their mentors. The program administration recognised high performers.

Program Evaluation and Model Expansion

Regular program evaluation took place, allowing for feedback and necessary alterations to the model’s application. The model was later adopted by Helopolis University for Sustainable Development in Egypt, by the National Youth Council of Egypt,17 and by KAUST University in Saudi Arabia,18 where it served as the basis for student recruitment and development programs. Helopolis University prides itself on its website for “empowering its students to be champions of sustainable development in different spheres of life” and for “combining academic teaching, scientific research, and practice with a unique humanistic core program to develop curious and creative minds that can reflect and act to shape a better future for all.” KAUST University, in turn, proudly itself in providing a “collaborative learning environment and a distinctive educational experience that encourages KAUST students to think beyond the laboratory building in a spirit of discovery, collaboration, excellence, curiosity, integrity, and a passion for doing good that will inspire a better future for the world.” According to KAUST, education is provided in a “work-play-live environment, where students and faculty live together on the shores of the Red Sea, enjoying an exceptional quality of life, from schools to recreation to health care.”19

The ProSPER model has recently been adopted by the Arab Association of Universities (AArU) as part of its 2019-2024 Strategy and as an integral part of the Association’s approach to Transformational Learning.20 AARU’s mission emphasises the importance of new holistic approaches in preparing the graduates: “AArU facilitates and supports Arab Universities and higher education stakeholders in the development of new holistic approaches in preparing the graduates: AArU facilitates and supports Arab Universities and higher education stakeholders in the development of new holistic approaches in preparing the graduates: AArU facilitates and supports Arab Universities and higher education stakeholders in the development of state-of-the-art transformational solutions to prepare graduates who master the knowledge and competencies needed to strengthen and serve their national and regional communities, and integrating globally to address shared challenges and produce impactful results.” AARU transformational learning approach, as will be explained later, places the student at the centre of the learning process and targets student development in the five aspects of ProSPER. The author advised on these different forms of adoption and adaptation of the model.

Requirements for the model’s success: the concept of transformational learning

For the model to reach its maximum impact, different units, as well as individual members in universities, should commit to offering and making accessible the tools supporting the development of the five aspects of ProSPER. System and institutional-level changes may be needed to facilitate this process. The Association of Arab Universities (AArU) has described the requirements for ProSPER’s success within its adopted approach of Transformational Learning in Arab Universities. The following are the highlights of the approach that tie into and facilitate the successful implementation of ProSPER.

For ProSPER to succeed, learning rather than teaching needs to be the focus of universities. The innovative design of integrated continuous student learning experiences is key. The idea is for students to learn almost without being aware of it. The core is to create a learning-living environment in universities. An environment where students find every element needed for their holistic development, and where attentive students are linked to challenges and opportunities in the societies into which they will emerge.

The enabling environment includes a redefinition of the classroom, the role of the instructor, the pedagogical practices and - above all - a redefinition of the goals of the universities. This is reflected in four main dimensions: placing students at the centre of the learning process, moving towards interdisciplinarity and multi-disciplinarity in designing curricula, international cooperation, and digitalisation of education. It is also reflected in a change in the value definition of the insti-
Student Testimonials

Nada Radwan
The LEAD was not only about academia, but it was also a whole new lifestyle. The reflection retreats, the discussions with high profile guest speakers, the research we conducted and the reports we prepared all affected my way of thinking and being. I became more flexible and open to different opinions. I learned to love and embrace our differences.

Alaa Mosbah
The LEAD program helped me discover my real passion for writing and filmmaking and shifted my career from medicine to innovative art. I spent a semester abroad in New York, an experience I wrote about in my first published book.

Dr Eng. Naglaa El Agroudy
In all the positions I pursued, my coworkers and supervisors commended my efficient problem solving, multi-tasking, project management, initiative-taking and communication skills. I attribute all these skills to the LEAD program.

Hend El-Taher
While it exposed me to the international environment through its study abroad component, the LEAD program enhanced my sense of belonging through its Egyptian provinces’ component. Being part of a highly diverse program has given me the confidence to join and enjoy different cultures and environments.

Ramadan Moussa
I benefited tremendously from the public speaking courses and the annual conference that we prepared from A to Z as students. This shaped my career as a diplomat. The multi-disciplinary and holistic handling of conflicting issues also impacted my current way of seeing things.

Lobna El Shafie
One of many amazing things that the LEAD Program instilled in me was the belief that there was a way out of all challenges. We just needed to be attentive to a possible solution. The solution was to be found not only in academia but also through learning from the diverse communities that we always took part in. We learnt to have a holistic multi-angle approach to addressing every challenge.

Amira Hassanein
The deep community engagement, the opportunities to exercise our own leadership, the celebration and appreciation of a balanced life where one pursues extracurricular interests, the resilience we built with the responsibility and trust that was provided, and our own community of students where I personally sought intellectual and moral nourishment were for me the core of my cherished program.

Ahmed Khalifa
The Program paid special attention to preparing us as ethical entrepreneurs and leaders. This gave me an edge in my post-graduate career in the United States IT industry and empowered me to find my way with an entrepreneurial and ethical spirit and build a successful career in a very competitive environment.

Ereny Zarif
In addition to a wide array of extra-curricular activities, I loved the cultural exchange through the semester abroad component and the summer internships in big corporations. Although I felt overloaded back then, later in my career, I appreciated the emphasis on independence, resilience, innovation, hard work, teamwork, self-confidence and open-mindedness. This equipped me to take on daring assignments internationally.

Amr EL Saady
I enhanced my communication, networking and community engagement skills through the extra-curricular component of the Program. This empowered me to shape my career, focusing on the community and the importance of communication for resolving difficult issues.

Laila Fouad
My favourite was the community involvement and service component. I volunteered to teach Arabic and English to the University housekeeping staff. This made me realise that I loved teaching, strengthened my communication skills and later led me to my current job as a math teacher.
Mohamed Zain
LEAD was a fully integrated program working on the multidimensional development of its students. Community involvement and service, together with ethical development and concern for the environment, has marked my life forever.

Sara Taraman
We were provided with a safe space to mature, realise our full potential, and explore the world around us. Experiential learning, ethics, professionalism, diversity, and inclusion formed the core of the program. My current workplace has three other LEAD graduates working with me. Our colleagues say, “If you want it done right, give it to a LEAD”.

3.2 North America
Remaking American Higher Education: Innovation in a Time of Disruption

Steven H. Mintz

Abstract

Although American colleges and universities receive much more public and private support than their foreign counterparts, enroll a proportion of college-age population, and attract many more international students, American higher education is beset by pressing challenges, such as affordability, student debt, low levels of degree attainment, high levels of inequality, and questionability of student learning and post-graduation employment outcomes. These challenges have prompted widespread calls for innovation in curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment, delivery modalities, and credentialing. This essay will look at the distinctiveness of American higher education; how the post-secondary landscape is shifting; the challenges and forces that are driving calls for innovation; barriers to innovation; and the kinds of innovation that are most likely to gain traction in years ahead.

The Distinctiveness of American Higher Education

Although American colleges and universities resemble those in the United Kingdom and Europe with their grassy quads and limestone and sandstone-clad gothic and Georgian architecture, fact, higher education in the United States differs sharply from its foreign counterparts.

The most obvious distinctions involve the number and variety of institutions. The American higher education landscape consists of over 4,000 public and private institutions and includes non-profit and for-profit colleges and universities, selective and open-enrollment institutions, 2- and 4-year schools, secular and religious institutions, predominantly face-to-face and fully online providers, and residential and commuter campuses.

Other distinctive features of American higher education include profound differences in mission, size, and cost. The higher education ecosystem in the United States includes technical institutes, military academies, music conservatories, religious seminaries, and art schools, as well as specialised institutions that train healthcare workers, airline pilots and mechanics, and information technology specialists. Institutions range in size from fewer than a thousand students to online institutions with enrolments that top 140,000 learners.

The challenges facing American higher education are many. First of all, there is a demographic challenge. As the high school-aged population has fallen, especially in the Northeast and Middle West, many institutions, desperate to tap new markets, aggressively pursue international students, community college transfer students, military veterans, working adults, family caregivers, and students from lower-income backgrounds. In general, these non-traditional students require greater investments in student services and academic and financial support. Many attend part-time, and many have no support from one institution to another.

Another source of concern is that completion rates are lower for part-time and transfer students, and low for community college students (Hanson, 2021). Yet another challenge involves cost. Tuition, fees, and room and board have risen much faster than the cost of living and even faster than housing and healthcare, resulting in very high levels of student debt. Among the factors contributing to rising costs are pressures to institute new academic programmes, increasing expenditures on financial aid, technology, energy, and campus maintenance, compliance with government mandates, and rising expectations about facilities and student support services. The result is a business model challenge, as institutions strive to limit costs while increasing revenue.
Then, there are learning and workforce readiness challenges. The learning outcomes of a college education are highly uncertain, and rightly or wrongly, there is a widespread perception in the business world that college graduates are inadequately prepared for the workplace. There is a post-graduation challenge — many graduates flail and flounder for years before landing a steady job. According to some recent studies (Redden, 2020; Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, 2022), 40 percent of graduates wind up in a job unrelated to their degree, and that at 30 percent of colleges, nearly half the degree holders earn less than high school graduates.

Equal challenge also arouse widespread concern. These include the fact that Black, Hispanic, and students from low-income backgrounds are concentrated in the least selective, least resourced institutions. Also, Black, Hispanic, and female students tend to enrol in majors with lower post-graduation earnings. At the same time, students who start at a community college and transfer to a 4-year institution often discover that the courses they took do not count toward general education or major requirements.

Then, too, there are pressing political challenges. A growing number of voters express doubts as to whether colleges offer an adequate return on investment. Also, there is concern, especially pronounced among Republicans, that freedom of speech and diversity of opinions on campus are threatened.

These challenges have prompted widespread calls for innovation. How to make higher education more affordable and accessible, increase graduation rates, provide a better return on investment, enhance student learning, and better prepare graduates for the workforce — these are but a few of the problems that innovators are trying to solve.

The Shifting Higher Education Landscape

The United States’ higher education landscape is much more diverse than the public generally assumes. The stereotypical selective residential institutions that connote higher education in the popular imagination actually comprise a minority of institutions. Only 50 to 60 institutions are considered highly selective, admitting a third or fewer applicants. Nearly half of college students attend a 2-year institution, and one in five or six are in fully online programmes (CollegeData.com, 2022).

The higher education landscape is in a state of flux. Competition for students has intensified. Demand for master’s degrees has swollen. A spate of institutional mergers and acquisitions has occurred, while multicampus institutions (like North-eastern with nine campuses) have multiplied.

Among the most important shifts in the higher education ecosystem are these:

1) The boundaries between high school and college are blurring, as secondary school students increasingly acquire college credits through early college/dual degree programmes, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate programmes.

2) Alternative credentials are proliferating. Alternatives to associate’s, bachelor’s degrees, and master’s degrees include an expanding universe of job-related certificates and certifications and shorter, accelerated programmes like edX’s MicroMasters and Coursera’s MasterTrack.

3) Alternative providers are partnering and sometimes competing with existing institutions. These range from technology giants like Google and Microsoft, museums like the American Museum of Natural History and the New-York Historical Society, foundations like the Glider Lehman Institute of American History, coding academies, boot camps, and low-cost and even tuition-free providers, like the University of the People.

4) New educational models are emerging, including competency-based approaches, self-paced, self-directed learning, earn-learn programmes, and stackable models, some of which are organised around demonstrated competencies rather than seat time and award credit for prior learning.

5) New platforms and educational marketplaces have arisen, including the MOOC platforms Coursera and edX.

6) The number of faculty off the tenure track has risen sharply, while many online institutions have embraced new staffing models that replace faculty subject area specialists with coaches, course mentors, and designated graders.

Contrasting Conceptions of Innovation

Innovation in American higher education is taking diverse forms. There are, currently, four dominant approaches to innovation in higher education:

Disruptive innovation

The most radical disruptors want to create cheaper, faster, more flexible pathways into the job market that can better suit the needs of working adults, family caregivers, and degree completers who do not have the time or resources to pursue a traditional on-campus education. To cut costs and trim time to degree, disruptors like Western Governors University, which currently enrols over 135,000 students, has (Ehrmann, 2021):

• Adopted a staffing model that replaces traditional faculty members with less expensive coaches and course mentors.

• Substituted “master” classes, designed by teams of content-area, instructional designers, pedagogues, and assessments specialists, for those created by individual instructors.

• Offers self-paced, self-directed courses with multiple start dates and flexible calendars.

• Awards credit for prior learning.

• Features a “competency-based” approach that emphasises mastery of job-related skills rather than seat time or credit hours.

By targeting adult learners, the disruptors found a niche that many existing institutions have failed to serve adequately due to their limited start dates, long semesters, and higher costs.

Technological innovation

Technology, many innovators believe, holds out the prospect of personalising education and guiding and supporting students more efficiently and proactively.

By monitoring student behaviour, learning analytics makes it possible to identify struggling or off-track students and trigger interventions in near real-time. The most sophisticated data-informed approaches, like those utilized by Georgia State University, track literally hundreds of variables, including student engagement, persistence, and performance in individual classes, delays in declaring a major, changes in majors, and shifts in the number of courses taken, and then respond with behavioural nudges or other forms of support (O’Bryan & Shah, 2021).

Technology, proponents argue, can also enhance the learning experience itself. The University of Michigan, for example, has introduced a number of technological tools to improve students’ learning outcomes at scale (University of Michigan Center for Academic Innovation, 2022).

• M-Write, an automated essay grading software, analyses students’ written responses to prompts and questions to identify students who need additional help in understanding course concepts and provide immediate feedback on their writing.

• ECoach is a personalised advising and educational support platform that informs students about their professors’ learning goals, provides study tips, updates students about their progress in their classes, and enables students to study course material collaboratively. Future iterations will help students select majors and inform them about study abroad, internships, and research opportunities.

However, the history of instructional technology is largely a history of disappointment, due, in part, to the fact that technology designers clung to a rather poor understanding of the learning process, typically involving scripted instruction and drills. More recent innovations, in contrast, adopt a constructivist approach to learning in which students actively process information and engage in problem-solving and project creation.

New tools give students the opportunity to collaboratively annotate texts and images, curate content, construct timelines, map concepts, mine texts, visualise data, create infographics, digital stories, podcasts, Word Clouds, and virtual museum exhibits and contribute to class blogs and virtual encyclopedias.

Pedagogical innovation

The goal of pedagogical innovation is to improve the quality of teaching and reduce achievement and equity gaps by bringing the insights of the learning...
• That instructors can enhance student learning by...

• Students learn more when an instructor guides, models, and applies information while reducing test-taking anxiety.

• Deep learning and conceptual understanding require concepts over time strengthens cognitive understanding.

• Retrieval practice: an interpretive framework, or a casual model.

• Engagement is central to learning, and students are more motivated to persist when they consider the content meaningful and relevant and believe that their abilities and skills can be developed through sustained effort and practice.

• Students learn more when an instructor guides, models, scaffolds, and supports student learning and provides regular, substantive feedback and when students interact with one another, for example, by taking part in discussions and debates, or engaging in role-playing activities, or participating in collaborative inquiry or problem-solving.

• That instructors can enhance student learning by embracing certain empirically validated pedagogical practices, including:

  • Frequent low-stakes quizzes: Frequent quizzing helps students strengthen their ability to remember, retrieve, and apply information while reducing test-taking anxieties.

  • Interleaving: Learning is improved when students study a variety of topics rather than focusing exclusively on a single subject.

  • Mental modeling: Comprehension increases when students extract underlying patterns and principles from the instructional material and construct an explanation, an interpretive framework, or a casual model.

  • Retrieval practice: The effortful recall of facts or concepts reinforces memory and understanding.

  • Spaced practice: Spreading the study of content and concepts over time strengthens cognitive understanding.

Metacognition: To become self-regulated learners, students must learn how to monitor and critically evaluate their thought processes, knowledge, and skills.

Big challenges stand in the way of pedagogical innovation. Doctoral programmes do not emphasise training in teaching, and few colleges require or incentivize faculty to adopt evidence-based instructional approaches. The classroom largely remains a black box, and student course evaluations are notoriously unreliable and often biased. Meanwhile, models of “effective” instruction, like TED talks or public television documentaries, do not reflect the importance of social interaction, timely, substantive feedback, and active engagement and processing of information in facilitating learning.

Curricular innovation

The goals of curricular innovation are three-fold:

  • To rethink educational pathways to bring more students to success. One example is the idea of math pathways – math classes that are better aligned to students’ areas of interest. Thus, students in the arts and humanities might benefit from courses in quantitative reasoning, those in the social sciences from classes in statistics, and those in the sciences from calculus. Another example is the idea of structured degree pathways that provide students with more coherent educational trajectories that are carefully sequenced and have clearly defined learning objectives.

  • To integrate career preparation across the undergraduate years.

  • To incorporate more applied, experiential, high-impact, and educationally purposeful activities (including mentored research, supervised internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, service-learning, and community engagement) within the undergraduate experience.

The innovations that I myself favour most strongly combine elements of each of these approaches. Innovation, in my view, is imperative because today’s dominant educational model does not serve many students well. The problems are:

  • Distribution requirements that entail a grab bag of discipline-based introductory courses that tend to do little to provide students with broad perspectives on the arts, humanities, and natural and social sciences or to help undergraduates develop their communication or numerical skills, essential civic knowledge, and cultural literacy. Meanwhile, most students do not get help with study and test-taking skills or assistance with choosing a major and creating a degree plan that would help them graduate successfully in a timely manner.

  • The expectation that students take five classes simultaneously if they are to graduate in four years is at odds with the kinds of jobs that they are most likely to pursue after graduation. If we are to improve career readiness, we need to consider other ways to ensure that graduates get windows into the job market and acquire job-related skills.

  • Extra-curricular activities, which instil a sense of belonging and give students opportunities to develop the social, intercultural, leadership, and soft skills that will serve them well in later life, are optional, and many students today lack time to take advantage of these activities. It makes sense, in my view, to figure out how to integrate these opportunities into the co-curriculum.

  • Limited numbers of advisors, which means that when students experience problems, no one notices, and help is not readily available.

So, what should we do?

1) Reassess the purpose of a college education.

   In addition to being about career preparation and credentialing, we should embrace a more ambitious conception of the purpose of undergraduate education. In my view, a college education should be development mental and transformational. It should promote the growth of the whole student, emotionally, socially, physically, and ethically as well as cognitively.

   It should expose students to the arts and culture and enhance their aesthetic sensibilities. It should also free students to think in fresh, analytical, and informed ways and help them bring historical, ethical, and cross-cultural perspectives to bear on current issues.

2) Reconsider what we teach.

   There is nothing wrong with specialised, discipline-focused courses, but we should also expand students’ opportunities to study bigger issues from multidisciplinary perspectives. Students would also benefit from more coherent and integrated degree pathways consisting of intentionally aligned, synergistic courses. Thus, a biomedical pathway might include courses in chemistry and physics that draw examples from the human body, arts and humanities classes that focus on the literature of pain and illness, representations of the body, and the history of disease, medicine, and public health; and social studies classes that examine epidemiology, health policy, and the impact of social structure, behaviour, and values upon health.

3) Rethink how we teach.

   A host of interesting ideas about pedagogy are circulating that instructors might consider. These include inquiry, case, decoding the discipline, interdisciplinary, gamified, policy-oriented, and project-based approaches. There is also social-emotional learning and culturally responsive and trauma-informed pedagogies. Each of these approaches offers a way to provide a learning-centred education that cultivates students’ technical, research and soft skills, promotes students’ social and emotional development, and fosters greater interaction with faculty and classmates.

4) Make equity a high priority.

   Unfortunately, inequities pervade the academy. Low grades and course withdrawals often correlate with a variety of variables. Women and students from underrepresented and low-income backgrounds are frequently less likely to major in high-demand fields. The first step in addressing these inequities is to conduct an equity audit to identify disparities based on gender or race or ethnicity, or some other social variable such as transfer status. Next, it is helpful to survey students to isolate the factors that contribute to equity gaps and to review low-stakes assessments that might indicate areas of potential problems. Then, it is essential to engage in a process of reflection and analysis to determine how disparities might be best addressed.
5) Make the transfer process more seamless.

Even at institutions where transfer students constitute a majority of graduates, it is often the case that these students face barriers to success. Problems many transfer students encounter include delayed evaluation of transcripts, transferred credits treated as electives, course unavailability, gated majors, and placement tests that channel transfer students into non-credit remedial courses.

Best practices include aligning 2- and 4-year gen ed and major requirements, expediting transcript evaluation; improving onboarding of transfer students; offering targeted programmes and services (including bridge programmes, a one-stop resource centre for transfer students, peer mentoring, and co-requisite remediation, which substitutes credit-bearing courses with supplemental instruction, for remedial courses).

An exciting innovation is co-enrolment, in which a student is simultaneously accepted at neighbouring 2- and 4-year institutions and can take classes and receive advising from both.

6) Reimagine how we assess student learning.

Instead of relying largely on high-stakes examinations and term papers, faculty should consider alternative modes of assessment. These might include frequent low-stakes quizzes, authentic assessments (like a letter to the editor, a memo, a proposal, or a policy brief), a multimedia or poster presentation, a performance task, a project, a presentation, a podcast or video story, or a student portfolio.

To remain relevant, institutions, even institutions as time-honoured and deeply entrenched as colleges and universities, must adapt and evolve to meet new realities. Higher education in the United States must adjust to demographic shifts, changes in student interests and needs, and the evolution of the economy and workplaces. Pedagogy, too, must adapt. Even at residential campuses, students are less content to sit in lecture halls and seek alternatives, including practicums, research opportunities, maker spaces, internships, and clinical and field experiences.

For far too long, American higher education has been institution- and faculty-centred rather than learner-centric. It is not that colleges and universities do not provide students with a host of services and activities. It is certainly the case that many schools regard students as customers that need to be aggressively recruited and treated with kid gloves. But a customer focus is not the same as a learner focus, which involves commitments to bringing all students to mastery, designing learning experiences that are engaging, immersive, and experiential, introducing pedagogies and modes of delivery that meet the needs of all students and providing frequent feedback and interaction, wrap-around support, and intensive mentoring.

Too often, curricula, schedules, pedagogies, assessments, and workload policies reflect the interests of departments rather than what we know about teaching and learning, students’ developmental needs, or the challenges faced by today’s growing number of non-traditional students.

In my eyes, those takeaways underscore the need for continued innovation, experimentation, and a focus on student development across all dimensions.

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Trends in Canadian higher education institutions: Recognising the importance of community engagement and research for social impact

Joanne Curry and Stephen Dooley

Abstract

In a changing and complex world, higher education institutions (HEIs) and funding bodies have identified the benefits of linking students, faculty, and researchers more closely to people, institutions, and enterprises in their communities. In addition to building connections, enhancing research relevance, supporting innovation, and raising economic productivity, there is also a moral imperative to engage, especially for public institutions with a social and fiduciary responsibility to help their communities address the accursed problems of our time – from climate change to inequality, from supporting the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) to addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. An increasing number of academic institutions have embraced this challenge, and while the road is long, winding, sometimes potholed and forked, research shows the value of engagement often comes not so much from reaching a destination but the process of getting there.

This paper discusses key ideas and shares good practices regarding community engagement, community partnerships, and community-engaged research in Canada’s higher education sector. Using examples from Simon Fraser University (SFU) and other Canadian HEIs and organisations, we identify challenges, opportunities, and strategies to help universities, research funders, and their communities achieve their best results together.

Introduction – Community Partnerships and Institutional Approaches

Structurally, HEIs have always engaged with their communities, as with professional schools, liaising with the accreditation bodies that are essential to fulfilling their mutually supportive functions. Tactically, policymakers have also long understood the practical and often profitable benefits of linking universities with the businesses and agencies that thrive on research assistance. In Canada, for example, the federally funded Canada Foundation for Innovation demands such linkage as a condition for funding university-based initiatives.

Recently, however, an increasing number of HEIs have come to recognise the strategic advantages of community engagement, including the broad benefits that accrue to students, staff, and faculty who are closely engaged. These HEIs are supplementing their educative and research efforts with the full range of financial and physical resources to link more closely with and better serve community interests.

The “whole institution” concept challenges institutions to bring all their assets to bear to connect with and support communities.

Simon Fraser University (SFU) partnered with the IW McConnell Family Foundation to commission the 2017 report, Maximizing the Capacities of Advanced Education Institutions to Build Social Infrastructure for Canadian Communities. The report identifies five sets of instruments that HEIs can leverage to foster community and societal wellbeing: financial, physical, relational, educational, and research. HEIs across Canada are now embracing these practices, looking for ways to increase their social impact by embedding “whole institution” engagement in their strategic plans in a manner that not only recognises the unique attributes of the communities it serves but also views the community as a key collaborator.

Social procurement, social infrastructure, and inter-institutional collaborations

Numerous institutions, from SFU in British Columbia to York University in Ontario, are using social procurement to advance the wellbeing of their communities, helping to reduce poverty, promote economic and social inclusion, and support local economic development and social enterprise. As purchasers of millions of dollars in goods and services, higher education procurement departments can achieve unprecedented community benefits merely by incorporating social and environmental factors in their purchasing practices.

The British Columbia Collaborative for Social Infrastructure (BCCSI) has developed a social procurement guide (Simon Fraser University, n.d.). The BCCSI was founded by SFU, the BIC Institute of Technology, the University of Northern BC, and Vancouver Island University, with funding from the McConnell Foundation to scale up social infrastructure practices. Another BC initiative, the Community Scholars Program, gives charitable and non-profit organizations across the province expanded training and access to library journals (Simon Fraser University, 2021).

In Ontario, Georgian College is partnering with Ashoka Canada on a Community Benefits Purchasing project (Georgian College, 2020), and York University has committed to an institution-wide social procurement strategy. SFU is also a leader in planning, building, or renewing campus infrastructure in a way that supports community development, a category explored in another thought piece commissioned by the McConnell Family Foundation in partnership with SFU.

City-university partnerships

There is also an emerging trend among HEIs to widen and deepen mutually beneficial partnerships, specifically with local governments and First Nations. Many cities and universities are formalizing their collaborations by entering into agreements or creating joint structures to support work in priority areas. At its three campuses in Burnaby, Vancouver, and Surrey, SFU has strategically built out formal civic-university collaborations, promoting connections up and down their respective hierarchies, capped with formal mayor/president relationships. Innovations include the co-founding of Vancouver City Studio, a programme that inspired a stand-alone entity that now operates City Studios throughout the world (CityStudio Vancouver, 2022). Innovation districts, civic innovation labs, and joint projects are also well underway.

Elsewhere in Canada, the University of Calgary (2022) and the University of Saskatchewan (2018) have developed local government partnerships to improve knowledge and technology transfer and advance community economic and social development. Both city and university partners realize the benefits of collaboration, each providing dedicated people and resources to support the work. 1

SFU has several signature community programmes, including:

a) SFU Public Square holds a space for authentic conversations with communities to learn together and work towards equitable and sustainable solutions to our world’s complex challenges.

b) The SFU Surrey - TD Community Engagement Centre promotes collaboration, resource sharing and co-creation of ideas, facilitating and aligning university and community capacities to identify and address key societal issues affecting Surrey’s City Centre and surrounding neighbourhoods.

c) The SFU Community Leaders Igniting Change (CLIC) programme, a partnership with the City of Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition and Envision Financial, is

1. For factors in building local government-university relationships, see Curry (2016)
a leadership programme for marginalized community members that recognizes that all humans have assets and lived experience that can be further developed. Participants, most of whom have never previously been on a university campus, engage with peers to identify local issues and craft responses that promote social wellbeing and belonging.

Indigenous relationships

Image: Tsatia Adzich (Métis) - 2016 convocation speaker; conferred a Bachelor of Arts degree by Simon Fraser University in BC, Canada, in Communications & First Nations Studies

Inspired by the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), HEIs across Canada have begun to address the lack of academic, research, and community-level relationships with Indigenous peoples. Calls to action include developing institutional plans and strategies (see SFU, UBC, and UVictoria), hiring Indigenous faculty and staff, creating new Indigenous pathways, launching programmes for Indigenous language instruction and incorporating Indigenous culture and ceremony into events and convocations. Universities Canada has published principles (Universities Canada, 2015) to guide these efforts. As part of these comprehensive approaches, universities, colleges, and institutes are working more closely and formalizing relationships with their local First Nations. In BC, the role of the local First Nations in economic and social development is prominent. The nations of Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh are now among the largest holders of developable land in Vancouver.

Measuring and recognizing campus-community connections to support institutional learning

Since 2019, sixteen HEIs representing diverse communities and post-secondary institutions have immersed themselves in the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification (2021) - a system that strives to support institutional learning and transformation to nurture deeply rooted and pervasive community engagement. A similar project has also run in Australia.

During a three-year pilot, the 16 Canadian HEIs strengthened their learning community by reflecting on the importance of community-campus connections and the roles of HEIs in social justice, truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities, values inherent in bilingual and multi-cultural societies and equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The Canadian Pilot Cohort of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (2021) is now in the last stages of launching a framework that will welcome, inform, and engage other HEIs that seek to better understand, evaluate, measure, and improve their effectiveness and impact within their respective communities.

One of the pilot’s findings is that signature programmes can serve as beacons of excellence for community engagement. Programmes with a demonstrable social impact can catalyze further public and institutional support for programming and research allocation. Further, while it is important to measure success, it is equally important to celebrate, both within the institution and with community partners.

Community-Engaged Research

There are many related terms and definitions of community engagement (CE) and community-engaged research (CER). Many institutions are using or adapting the Carnegie Foundation (2001) definition of CE as a ‘collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity’. Community-Based Research Canada (CBR Canada) interprets community-engaged research as ‘a research approach that involves active participation of stakeholders, whose lives are affected by the issue being studied, in all phases of research to produce useful results to make positive changes’ (Neilson et al., 1998, p.12).

Where community engagement can take on a great diversity of forms - learning, dialogue, volunteerism, community-centred education programmes, etc. - community-engaged research aims to address a special question or problem through an applied research paradigm. They all have in common that they are rooted in reciprocity, power-sharing, mutual participation, and action-orientation with project outcomes that are practically relevant to community members, making positive social change and/or promoting social equity. Researchers and practitioners do not jump in and out of community work; they show up, take the time to build relationships, and work as equal partners with community members.

It is important not to treat ‘the community’ as a single, homogenous entity.

While it is tempting to see one community when looking outside the university walls, there are always multiple, diverse communities, some with competing ideas and perspectives. It is important that university strategies take account of this as they pursue connections and deploy resources.

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Peoples of Canada). Historically, Indigenous communities were ‘researched’—as subjects, not participants. While Indigenous peoples are now striving to be more self-empowered, to re-imagine and govern their own research processes (Lichnarch, 2004; Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2012), and working with settlers as allies (Flicker, 2018; Held, 2019).

The concept of community-driven research is also embedded in other contexts, such as patient-oriented research. The Fraser Health Authority in British Columbia, Canada, has launched a Patients Partnership in Research programme designed to engage patients along a spectrum from consultation, to involvement, to collaboration and empowerment in research. Here again, funding agencies are exploring how to provide funds directly to community organizations. In 2017, the Canada Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC) was created to improve the coordination of Canada’s research funding agencies: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI). SSHRC’s flagship ‘Connections and Partnership Grants’ have been bridging capacity and knowledge exchange between campus and community for almost two decades in the social sciences and humanities. But challenges remain. For example, programmes rarely include funding to support and pay salaries of community partners or for the time of community participants.

CIHR is also a leader in community-driven and community-engaged research, and researchers, with more being awarded through CIHR’s Patient-Oriented Research Strategy. A growing number of community-based ethics boards, such as the National Inuit Strategy on Research, are developing standards, practices, and reciprocal agreements with HEIs that align priorities and expedite ethical reviews.

For example, a growing number of community-based research initiatives have been bridging capacity and knowledge exchange between campus and community for almost two decades in the social sciences and humanities. But challenges remain. For example, programmes rarely include funding to support and pay salaries of community partners or for the time of community participants.

The CRCC and other philanthropic and governmental funding bodies, such as the Vancouver Foundation, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, are now requiring community-driven, participatory research in several of their grant programmes. Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are also increasingly common considerations in policy development across higher education and public institutions, civil society, and corporate sectors. It is now standard for higher education institutions to require funding proposals and projects to include EDI consideration. This is even more important in addressing local challenges faced by Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, members of the LGBTQ2S communities, immigrants, refugees, and international students.

Academic research ethics rules can also create tension with community partners.

In the OCOV research study (Our Community, Our Voice Steering Committee, 2016), some community members grew impatient, awaiting approvals from the university research ethics board. The requirement for institutional approval of research partnerships can also seem inconsistent with the principle of co-creation, where the community is allowed oversight in all aspects of the research. As discussed in the literature (Christensen, 2018; Stoecker, 2008), there are many instances where institutional standards do not match the community’s ethical approach, particularly in the area of informed consent for marginalized or vulnerable youth. Yet, significant progress is being made to align institutional and community ethical standards.

For example, A growing number of community-based ethics boards, such as the National Inuit Strategy on Research, are developing standards, practices, and reciprocal agreements with HEIs that align priorities and expedite ethical reviews.

SFU’s Vancancy Office of Community Engagement partnered with Hives for Humanity to support the development of Research 101, a community-based project that produced resources for ethical research in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES). This included a resource card on informed consent and a manifesto for ethical research (Empowering Informed Consent: Environments for Ethical Research (CIHR), delivered through workshops (online during COVID), for community participants, graduate students, and interested faculty and staff.

Internationally, Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon lead the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium for Training and Education in New Delhi, India. As of the date of publication, K4C has hosted seven cohorts with 125 participants.

Another emerging opportunity is increased training of Indigenous and BIPOC scholars and researchers, with more being awarded tenure track positions.

While there is a long way to go, and it would be wrong to assume that all these scholars are interested in community engagement and research, there is a growing network of Indigenous scholars in this space. For example, Dr Charlotte Loppie from the University of Victoria is part of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research. Working through the BC Network Environment for Indigenous Health Research (BC NEIHR), Dr Loppie is partnering with BC’s First Nation Health Authority (FNHA), the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) and Métis Nation BC to foster “capacity development as well as knowledge sharing and mobilization among British Columbia’s Indigenous Peoples” (Loppie, 2021).

We can also look forward to more academic opportunities for Indigenous and BIPOC persons, given the growth in equity, diversity, and inclusion policies at HEIs across Canada and globally. SFU recently hired a Vice-President, People, Equity and Inclusion to provide strategic leadership across the university on EDI initiatives, including faculty and staff recruitment, retention, and engagement.

At the same time, training in community-engaged research techniques will become even more prevalent for community organizations and individuals across Canada and worldwide. Community-Based Research Canada (CBR Canada) developed the Community Based Research Excellence Tool (CBRET), delivered through workshops (online during COVID), for community participants, graduate students, and interested faculty and staff.

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Conclusion

The considerable— and often mutual— benefits that accrue from community engagement and community-engaged research are such that the process is often an end in itself (Dooley et al., 2012). No matter what other goals and benefits are being sought, engagement also supports capacity building in the community and enriches university connection, effectiveness, and impact. For example, in the OCOV study (Our Community, Our Voices), 11 recent retirees were hired as peer research assistants. These individuals brought important assets, informing the project and enriching the results while also gaining skills and social capital through interactions with the research team and other community members.

All forms of community engagement are important in informing and supporting best practices in community development. But practitioners must remember that there is no single approach or set of procedures to fit every programme. In both community engagement and community-engaged research, authentic relationships are the primary prerequisite for success, and these take time to build and nurture.

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The Coming Transformation of U.S. Higher Education

Arthur Levine

Abstract

The United States is experiencing profound, unrelenting, and accelerating demographic, economic, and technological change. The nation’s population is changing racially, ageingly, moving, and coming from abroad. The country is undergoing a transformation from an industrial to a knowledge economy. New digital technologies have emerged with the power to recast our lives and the world around us.

Change of this magnitude and scope, which last occurred during the Industrial Revolution, is rare. One of its consequences is that all our social institutions, which were created for past times, are compelled to change in order to meet the demands of the emerging order. As a result, U.S. higher education will once again be transformed as it was during the Industrial Revolution.

New Realities

That transformation will be driven by four profound and jarring new realities, none of higher education’s own making.

1) New content producers and distributors will enter the field, the program consists of a five-course certificate Program. Created to fill labour force needs in the rapidly growing information technology sector, the program is now offered online at a fraction of the cost of traditional higher education.

Coursera differs from traditional higher education in that it offers classes, specializations, and certificates from businesses and non-profits outside higher education. The businesses are leaders in building and supporting the global, digital, knowledge economy, and their practices and products are at the cutting edge in areas such as technology (e.g., Google and Microsoft), finance and management (e.g., Goldman Sachs and PricewaterhouseCoopers) and merchandise and sales (Alibaba and Amazon). The non-profits, which are of equal renown, include the American Museum of Natural History, Museum of Modern Art, World Bank, Johns Hopkins, Moscow State University, Peking University, Princeton, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, and Yale, to name just a very few.

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While an
3) The industrial era model of higher education focusing on time, process, and teaching will be eclipsed by a knowledge economy successor rooted in outcomes and learning.

The shift from teaching to learning and from fixed time and process to fixed outcomes will occur for three reasons. The first is educational. The current model assumes all students learn the same things at the same time. In reality, if the time and process of education are held constant, student outcomes will vary widely. This is because different individuals learn the same subjects at different rates. Even the same individual learns different subjects at different rates.

We have an education system with fixed times and processes, but no most effective way to educate people but because of the era in which it was created. It is a product of the Industrial Revolution in which production was tied to the clock and production processes were standardized. The Industrial era university mirrors these practices.

Educationally, it makes sense to focus on the outcomes we want students to achieve, what we want them to learn, and what methods to be taught. Imagine taking your clothes to a laundry. The proprietor doesn’t ask you how long you want them washed. And for a good reason. It’s an absurd question. Your only concern is that the clothes be clean when you pick them up, irrespective of how long it takes. The outcome is what matters, not the process. The same is true of education.

The second reason is equity. In the current higher education system with fixed times and processes, some are of such short duration as to be below the credit radar screen. This is a ragbag of disparate curricular practices, growing increasingly heterogeneous and which cannot be translated into uniform time or process measures. The one common denominator they all share is that they produce outcomes, whatever students learn as a consequence of the experience.

4) The dominance of degrees and “just-in-case” education will diminish, non-degree certifications and “just-in-time” education will increase in status and value.

American higher education has historically focused on degree-granting programs intended to prepare students for careers and life beyond college. This has been described as “just-in-case education” because its focus is prospective, teaching students the skills and knowledge that institutions believe will be necessary for the future.

In contrast, “just-in-time education” is present-oriented and more immediate, teaching students the skills and knowledge they need right now, as in “teach me a foreign language, or about pandemics or a new technology right now.” “Just-in-time education” comes in all shapes and sizes, largely divergent from traditional academic time standards, uniform course lengths, and common credit measures. It is driven by the outcomes a student wants to achieve. Only a small portion award degrees; most grant certificates, micro-credentials, and badges.

Since 1979, when Yale offered the first certificate program for students who studied science rather than the more prestigious classical curriculum, certificate programs, generally sub-baccalaureate in technical fields and post-baccalaureate in the professions, have become commonplace. A study of four-year institutions more than 40 years ago found that 21% of arts and sciences colleges and 28% of professional schools awarded certificates (Levine, 1978). They are even more common at two-year schools, which in 2018 granted 852,504 associate degrees and 579,822 certificates (Bustamante, 2019).

However, degrees have always enjoyed a far higher status and are regarded as far more valuable credentials.

Several factors are likely to reset the balance between them. First, there is a growing perception that degrees are declining in value in the labor market, which may prove no more than a temporary blip. For instance, a number of major employers have announced they will no longer require college degrees for employment, including Google, Ernst and Young, Penguin Random House, Hilton, Apple, Nordstrom, IBM, Lowe’s, Publix, Starbucks, Bank of America, Whole Foods, Costco, and Chipotle (Glassdoor Team, 2020).

Additionally, public opinion polls have found that a growing percentage of people believe the value of a college diploma has declined. For example, in 2019 Gallup poll reported that a decreasing proportion of Americans consider a college degree very important—51% in 2019 versus 70% in 2013 (Marken, 2019).

A second cause for a possible reset is that periods of profound change like the present and the Industrial Revolution produce curricular flux. For instance, changes were made in credentialing during the Industrial Revolution. New degrees were established like the PhD, the associate degree, and the earned master’s degree, previously more honorary than academic. Programmes awarding certificates multiplied, too, particularly after the development of continuing education. Since 1799, when Yale offered the first certificate program, students who studied science rather than the more prestigious classical curriculum, certificate programs, generally sub-baccalaureate in technical fields and post-baccalaureate in the professions, have become commonplace. A study of four-year institutions more than 40 years ago found that 21% of arts and sciences colleges and 28% of professional schools awarded certificates (Levine, 1978). They are even more common at two-year schools, which in 2018 granted 852,504 associate degrees and 579,822 certificates (Bustamante, 2019).

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Demand for just-in-time upskilling and reskilling will dwarf traditional “just-in-case” enrolments, shifting the enrolment balance in degree and non-degree programmes, raising the status of micro-credentials, and spurring the production and distribution of content by non-traditional providers. The pandemic accelerated this because of the tens of millions of unemployed workers it produced.

Assessment will become largely formative, real-time and individualized, seeking to guide students in mastering competencies, sometimes called direct and authentic assessment. Earlier, this was likened to the workings of a GPS. Only the final formative assessment will be summative as it demonstrates the student has mastered the competency.

Certification, at least in the short run, will be a combination of degrees and micro-credentials. The longer-run future of degrees is less certain—a combination of micro-credentials in general and specialized studies may achieve the same results for students as a traditional baccalaureate degree.

Transcripts will become lifelong records of the competencies people achieve throughout their lives and the certifying authority for each.

Higher education will shift from the analogue to the digital, some institutions using digital technology in support of existing analogue programmes; others in parallel to current analogue programmes, and the remainder as replacements for existing analogue programmes. This will occur in all sorts of permutations within institutions as well.

The higher education faculty, whose numbers can be expected to decline, is currently composed of subject matter experts engaged in teaching and research. It will be diversified to include learning designers, instructors, assessors, technologists, and researchers, reflecting the nation’s demographics. The competition for this talent both within and outside higher education will be fierce. Talent is likely to overshadow institutions, and with an abundance of competing providers, an agent may be more valued than tenure.

Tuition, which is now largely credit-based, will become subscription-based and tied to outcome attainment, which is Coursera’s funding model.

As the higher education system of the global, digital, knowledge economy coalesces, a number of the historical staples of the industrial model will fade away. They will become the equivalent of buggy whips in the automobile age or slide rules in a time of calculators. For example, in the industrial model of higher education, it made perfect sense to define and develop academic practice around the clock, but in competency- or outcome-based education, the clock becomes irrelevant. As a consequence, historical practices such as credit hours, Carnegie units, credit-based courses, semesters, two- and four-year degrees, measuring faculty workload or student status in credits taught or completed lose their meaning and utility. They become artefacts to be discarded in what Henry Adams called the “ash heap” of history (2008).

A-F grading is similar. It is a comparative measure of student performance relative to peers and the subject matter being taught. However, competency-based education, rooted in absolute standards, is essentially pass-fail. Students have either mastered a competency, or they have not. As a result, A-F grading and the products thereof such as dean’s list, class rankings, and graduation honours defined by grade point average will atrophy as outcome-based education gains popularity. Beyond the loss of familiar practices, new quality control methods can also be expected to emerge. Because content from a multiplicity of providers will be omnipresent and the source of student learning will be immaterial in outcome-based education, a new kind of educational institution is likely to emerge. That is, a certifying or validating institution, which does not create or disseminate content, but instead assesses student learning, guides student learning, certifies student learning, credentials student learning, and records student learning. In the short run, one can imagine many such organizations using different definitions of competencies to assess students. As consensus grows regarding those definitions, standards and practices will become increasingly uniform, and the number of such institutions can be expected to decline.

This institution and the shift to outcome-based education will put the current accreditation model at risk. Accreditation, the peer review, quality improvement, and self-policing agency for the academy, comes in two forms—institutional and programme accreditation. Originally created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to bring order and common standards to a higher education system lacking in both, accreditation’s focus is and has always been on providers, which are still assessed largely on the basis of the best higher education practices of the industrial era. In this time of change and innovation, accreditors and accreditation are increasingly viewed as being slow, outdated and discouraging of change. This is not surprising because the reason for creating accreditation was to standardize. Unless accreditation is able to shift its focus from the process to the outcomes of education and from institutions and programmes to students, it will lose its utility. The time for accreditation to act is short.

Every college and university in the U.S. will be affected by these changes but in different ways. Ten to twenty per cent are likely to close (Korn, Belkin & Chung, 2020). At particular risk are small, private, low selectivity and low endowment colleges in the Northeast, Midwest, and the Middle-Atlantic States, which are demographically challenged and weak financially.

Some colleges and universities will be able to adapt incrementally, particularly wealthy institutions which will have the luxury of time to observe what works at colleges and universities that are forced to change more quickly. Research universities and elite residential colleges will have an advantage here.

The rest of higher education will be disrupted. At greatest risk are regional universities and community colleges with high part-time, working, and older adult populations, the students who are currently leaving traditional higher education and enrolling in rising numbers at lower cost, 24/7 alternative providers.

This is a unique moment in higher education history. Colleges and universities must not wait for the future to happen to them. Policymakers and institutional leaders have the capacity to shape the future of higher education.

References


Internationalization and North America’s Competing Priorities

Grace Karram Stephenson

Abstract

This report on the internationalization of higher education in North America examines global activities and policies related to HEIs in Canada and the United States. The region is largely defined by the disparate priorities of players at federal, provincial, institutional and individual level – with international education plans reflecting the distinct priorities of each. The recruitment of foreign students is still the dominant government and institutional-level manifestation of internationalisation. However, many HEIs are broadening their strategic mandates to prioritise other aspects of internationalisation. Over the last decade, global activities have been negatively influenced by polarising political figures who have risen to power in the United States (federally) and Canada (provincially). Their influence has altered patterns of student mobility and faculty recruitment. Furthermore, key global crises such as climate change have galvanised academic efforts, creating knowledge diplomacy linkages across the region. New forms of research funding are promoting collaboration with non-HE players to improve institutional impact. While institutional and national competition and revenue generation are still driving factors in internationalisation, new initiatives for peace and understanding are emerging as stakeholders begin to prioritise sustainable higher education for the global community.

Introduction

Internationalisation of higher education in the North American context often centres on the recruitment of full-fee paying foreign students. Higher education institutions (HEIs) across the region have come to rely heavily on the revenue generated from international student tuition fees. As a result, many of the policy, programme and research landscapes focus on the retention and perpetuation of migrant student inflows. However, with all forms of migration, student mobility is increasingly complex and impacted by global politics and national security concerns.

Beyond the recruitment of foreign students, there are a host of international higher education strategies and programmes which offer an alternative perspective on internationalisation and suggest that governments and institutions in North America are moving away from an exclusively revenue-focused approach. King (2020) called this the “maturation” of internationalisation, represented by a plateau in the competitive scramble for students or overseas programmes. Instead, internationalisation is now being defined by complex questions about the quality and equity of international initiatives (Sabzalieva, 2020; Stein, 2021). This report considers these distinct approaches to internationalisation by examining the implications of student recruitment, geo-politics, the Covid-19 pandemic and calls for equity in Canada and the United States of America (USA). Although the geographic definition of North America includes three countries (Canada, Mexico and the United States), Mexico is commonly accepted to be part of the Latin American region in political analyses. This report therefore refers to North America as a region of two countries: Canada and the USA.

are of equal renown, include the American Museum of Natural History, Museum of Modern Art, World Bank, Yad Vashem and many more.

To understand the potential impact of these new providers, we need to look at what they are actually offering.

There is a Google’s Information Technology (IT) Certificate Program. Created to fill labour force needs in the field, the programme consists of a five-course sequence on computer networking, operating systems,

Higher Education Policy Landscape in North America

Canada and the USA are both large landmasses of approximately 9.75 million square kilometres. Canada has considerably less habitable land than its southern neighbour and is home to only 38.5 million people, 66% of whom live within 100km of the border with the USA (Government of Canada, 2019). Canada has 223 universities (public and private) and 213 technical-vocational colleges or institutes (CMEC, 2021).

In contrast, the USA has a population of 332.5 million (US Census, 2021). There are 3,982 degree-granting institutions in the USA and numerous vocational institutions and trade schools (USNews, 2022). Both countries have a combination of public and private HEIs, with the majority of Canadian HEIs being publicly funded in comparison to a relatively small private sector. The USA has a robust private sector as well as large state-level public institutions, including both universities and community colleges.

The defining feature of the political systems in both Canada and the USA is decentralisation, with Canada’s 10 provinces and the USA’s 51 states having distinct responsibilities from those of the national-level government. Education is one responsibility clearly demarcated for the provincial or state parliaments and this includes higher education (Jones, 1997). Similarly, higher education systems in both countries have strong, Anglo-heritage origins that contribute to a strong community colleges.

Although influential in building international research networks, this is still fairly minimal as a driver of internationalisation compared with federal government players (Helms et al., 2018). Provincial or state governments play a more active role in higher education than their federal counterparts, most have limited their involvement in internationalisation to the recruitment of foreign students. Provincial-level governments are instrumental in drafting international education strategies and many provide network support for institutions as they recruit foreign students (Ontario, 2022).

Global Research Collaborations and Knowledge Diplomacy

At institutional level, cross-border research collaboration is a significant part of internationalisation in North America. HEIs and their international partners are working to tackle many of the large-scale crises that transcend borders. Climate change, human trafficking and over-fishing are just some of the cross-border challenges on which researchers are working to fix through global collaborations (BPR1, 2018; IOF, 2022; UC3, 2022). Knight (2019) identified these activities, in which universities collaborate to find solutions to global challenges, as knowledge diplomacy. North American scholars have contributed significantly to knowledge diplomacy through partnerships within the region and overseas. Increasingly, government funding agencies are designing partnership grant opportunities that require collaboration between more than one institution, as well as community partners for this type of collaborative problem-solving.

The Limits of Government Leadership

The significant decentralization in higher education governance has implications for internationalization policy and programmes. Specifically, federal governments play a very minimal role in policy or programme development, but act as an essential gatekeeper in terms of visas and immigration as it relates to the recruitment of foreign students (Tambit et al., 2020). Federal governments have released international education strategies, but research suggests that institutions are not led by these documents when developing their own internationalization programmes. Instead, government strategies summarise and advance ongoing activities rather than setting a vision for innovation (Helms et al., 2018).

In terms of the internationalization of research, federal governments do provide incentives related to global activities where research funding is concerned. Federal research councils are able to impact the global networks of researchers by establishing funding priorities that require international collaboration (Karram Stephenson et al., 2020). This is shown to increase publication rates, which in turn improve global rankings (Metcalfe, 2012). Although influential in building international research networks, this is still fairly minimal as a driver of internationalization and institutions are still the main drivers of internationalization compared with federal government players (Helms et al., 2018).

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International Relations and Political Polarities

A number of factors have altered foreign student flows over the last ten years, the most significant of which were political fissures, both regional and global. In 2016, the election of President Donald Trump in the USA had far-reaching impacts on internationalization as it relates to student mobility. Early in its administration, the Trump government implemented a travel ban on students from seven Muslim countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen) (CNN, 2017). Although the banned countries were not among the top sending countries of foreign students to North America, the implementation of the travel ban diminished the general image of the USA as a welcoming nation (Van De Walker & Slate, 2019). This resulted in the USA receiving fewer student applications than expected. It also had the effect of seeing Canada’s numbers increase slightly in what was known as the Trump Bump, as students chose to travel to Canada instead of the USA (Sabzalieva, 2020). Some analysts argue this corresponds with Canada’s rise to third place in the number of international students globally. As a result, however, student numbers remained steady.

Canada, however, has not been without its own controversial political figures. The election of several conservative provincial governments has led to a decrease or restructuring of funding for higher education and entrenched the reliance on international students as a funding source. More recently, the 2022 Canadian “Convoy” uprising led to border closures and an occupation of public spaces in the capital city of Ottawa. This event may have lasting repercussions on the image of Canada as a peaceful study destination.

Beyond the internal politics which threaten the welcome of international students, turbulent international relations have also led to alterations in student mobility flows. For Canada, a significant cessation of foreign students occurred after relations with Saudi Arabia deteriorated when Canada’s federal government criticised the Saudi legacy of human rights abuses in 2018. The King Abdullah Scholarship, which had covered the living costs and tuition fees of these students, was cancelled. Initially, analysts anticipated that 7600 undergraduate students would be removed from Canadian HEIs within a matter of months (Honsell, 2019). Fortunately, concessions were made for graduate students, many undergraduate students made other arrangements to continue their studies and only 2000 students were forced to leave.

Most concerning for HEIs that depend on the revenue from international students is the ongoing trade conflict between the USA, Canada and China. In 2018, Canadian authorities arrested the CEO of Huawei International in support of a USA complaint against the company. Two Canadian officials were then arrested in China and a stalemate ensued. Since Chinese students represent 40-60% of international students going to North America, there are concerns that the heavily reliance on these students is unsustainable in the face of diplomatic breakdowns.

Ultimately, political fluctuations in North America have had a significant impact on the internationalization of higher education as it relates to student mobility. This uncertainty raises questions about the primacy of North America as a leading destination for international students in years to come. It also suggests that governments, while being limited in setting the strategic goals for internationalization, can in fact have a strong negative impact when international relations are threatened.

The Impacts of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic

More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on student mobility. In March 2020, the Covid-19 virus arrived in North America and required massive shutdowns of in-person classes in higher education. At the time of writing this report (March 2022), most HEIs in North America had resumed in-person activities for undergraduate classes and research laboratories. Where in-person courses were not available, governments were working to distance courses count toward immigration points (Immigration, 2020). Restrictions on international travel were a significant result of Covid-19 virus prevention and had a significant impact on the internationalization of higher education. It is estimated that in the USA there was a decrease in international student enrolment of 16%, with a further reduction of 43% in new enrolments (NAFSA, 2020). This represents a loss of almost 10 billion USD for local economies (NAFSA, 2021). In Canada the pandemic had similar negative effects, with a 17% decrease in enrolment and upwards of 7 billion CAD in lost revenue (Government of Canada, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic response on international research collaborations was also significant in the short term, with most conferences being cancelled in spring 2020. However, by autumn 2020 most organizations had made the transition to online networking, which has remained strong over the last 18 months. Three potential implications for internationalization can be seen. First, the new reliance on online collaboration has significantly decreased the cost and ease of international research collaborations in disciplines that do not require the sharing of infrastructure. Second, however, for disciplines in which international collaborations require shared infrastructure, distance has significantly delayed research programmes with international partners. Lastly, for professors in the early stages of their careers as well as graduate students, the lost opportunities for international collaborations that are afforded by conferences has significantly altered their career patterns as they lack access to in-person networking.

International branch-campuses (BCBs) founded by North American HEIs have also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Most institutions also required virtual learning for their branch-campus and this resulted in the nature of the relationship between the home institution and branch-campus changing throughout the pandemic. Most significantly, many branch-campuses improved their student-care programming to model that of the home campus, adding services like mental health counselling which had previously been absent from cross-border programmes (Meriali et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for the internationalization of higher education will continue to unfold over the coming years. Important research is underway to capture the shift as organizations like the American Council on Education (ACE) in the USA lead the way with large-scale surveys on how internationalisation activities have responded to Covid-19 restrictions (ACE, 2022).

Equity, Race and Indigeneity

Beyond student mobility, internationalization in higher education is also being re-defined by student activism and demands for equity. Although HEIs in North America have regularly been home to student activism, the nature of activism in the last five years has had distinct international connections. The most impactful movement, on an institutional level, is the call for name changes at well-known institutions. Student protesters have demanded that administrators change the names of buildings and institutions or remove monuments that are linked to founders with histories of oppressive behaviour, often including slavery or indigenous genocide.

These student movements in North America are part of a global network which began in South Africa called Rhodes Must Fall. South African students initiated this
To remove references to Cecil Rhodes, whose colonial legacy has had a far-reaching impact. The movement was picked up by students at Oxford University in the United Kingdom where Rhodes’ statue stands. In connection with this movement, North American students have demanded name changes at many faculties or institutions, including Harvard in the USA and Ryerson University in Canada. The global connections of student activism present a new aspect of internationalization that is extra-curricular and emanates from the student level, yet has a significant impact on HEI identity and institutional change.

Race-relations at HEIs in Canada and the USA are currently being redefined by two social movements in broader society: Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the USA and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Canada. The BLM movement began in 2020 after the tragic murder of a black man by police in the American state of Minnesota, and resulted in protests against campus police in the USA and Canada. New scholarly concepts such as white privilege or micro-aggression echoed from this event and led to new priorities in academic recruitment, with the inclusion of underrepresented communities and new forms of equity training for academic workers.

In the Canadian context, the discovery of unmarked graves of Indigenous children who were forcibly placed in residential schools led to strong displays of public grief and calls for accountability in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a national inquiry with recommendations on how to restore peace with Canada’s Indigenous communities (Munroe, 2021). The framework of “Truth and Reconciliation,” as a national restorative process, is another example of a movement with international ties that started in the global South and has been adopted by policymakers and academics in North America.

Both BLM and TRC have raised questions about the supposed diversity of internationalization. Scholars have suggested that cross-border movement is not a prerequisite for inter-cultural activities in nations like Canada and the USA, where significant diversity exists within the population (Sabzalieva, 2020). Rather, significant work needs to be done locally to improve the representation of racialized groups in HEI campus communities. Many professors and students have also built North America-wide networks of solidarity in response to these movements. One such initiative is the Critical Internationalization Network, an example of a community of scholars who are attempting to redefine current global university trends with equity at the centre.

Conclusion: The Potential of Internationalization

In conclusion, governments, HEIs and students in North America have many overlapping and competing priorities related to the internationalization of higher education. These range from student recruitment to research collaborations and activism for equality. Unfortunately, all of these efforts are housed within a global political framework that is increasingly fragile. Global health crises, trade wars and populist movements threaten both the mobility of students and the research partnerships that have been at the centre of North American internationalization. Amid this fragility, however, student activism and knowledge diplomacy present a new picture of internationalization as a way forward in a fragmented world, as the global connections of students and researchers contribute to more equitable internationalization with the potential to tackle major global challenges.

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3.3 Asia Pacific


Towards Societally Embedded Higher Education: A Panoramic Overview of Asia & Oceania
Rajesh Tandon and Niharika Kaul

Abstract

The social commitment of higher education has gained much public attention during the pandemic in the Asian region. With scientific research under deep public scrutiny, the societal relevance of teaching and research in higher education has now become publicly debated. Several strands of this discourse go beyond the traditional service learning or co-creation of knowledge methods. Finding contextually relevant knowledge solutions for diverse socio-geographies around the region has been focused upon in community-led actions for adapting to climate impacts, increasing at a phenomenal pace within the region.

Given the huge diversity of the region, the nature and profile of the higher education system varies greatly. Yet, the pace of enrolments and demand for inclusion of the hitherto excluded has been growing. Greater attention is demanded to bring higher education institutions into a life-long learning framework, so that new ways of linking formal learning with life stages of populations can be envisaged. Several such categories comprise the elderly, the migrants, the displaced, and refugees, given their increasing numbers.

The region is also finding a disconnect between the ‘official’ language of higher education and local languages in communities and regions. Implanting European institutional models and languages in higher education on the diverse Asian territory, with a diversity of indigenous communities and languages, is now being challenged through new ways of learning. The disruption of face-to-face education due to the pandemic in the region has forced the creative emergence of many hybrid models.

This paper, therefore, will use illustrations from the diverse Asian territory, with a diversity of indigenous communities and languages, to re-position the public purposes of higher education to be more directly embedded in local societies.

Introduction

“In HEIs, what is taught, what is researched and what is served derive purpose from being responsive to the context” (Hall & Tandon, 2021, 293).

Higher education institutions (HEIs) today serve a critical role in preparing the next generation of socially responsible individuals, at a time when global crises like the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change have increased structural, social and economic inequalities globally. In order to meaningfully contribute to addressing societal challenges and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, HEIs have to produce local knowledge solutions with communities around them. Becoming responsive to local challenges requires making their teaching, research and service missions locally rooted and contextually situated (Tandon, 2018).

In a sense, there is greater demand and need for Higher Education (HE) systems to become far more embedded in the societies they are part of than has been the case lately. Over the past few decades or so, the rapid expansion of the knowledge economy around the world has implied stronger global inter-connectedness of HEIs and a stronger focus on producing talent, entrepreneurs and patents, all based on the perspective of a knowledge economy. This trend has been most dominant in the Asian region, where engines of the knowledge economy such as China, Taiwan, Korea and India are global suppliers of knowledge products and talent (ADB, 2007).

Further separation of HEIs and the society they are located in has been fuelled by global competition and ranking systems that were restricted to the USA, UK and Australia until recently but have spread rapidly to many Asian countries, led by China, India and other English language HE systems. Pressures to compete with rankings have resulted in further separation of HEIs and the society they are located in (Hall & Tandon, 2021).

The whole current system of global rankings is inherently exclusionary: “the notion of a one-size-fits-all, competitive framework is inappropriate, in that it is not in the best interests of a collegial and diverse higher education. It matters not how ‘inclusive’ the rankings are, how multifaceted and complex they may be, or the extent to which they allow for culturally different models of higher education to be included and celebrated. Rankings are wrong because they are, by their very nature, othering” (Hall & Tandon, 2021, 71).

Global university rankings are designed to preserve colonial hegemony and retain power and control over production and use of knowledge in the hands of the privileged few: “Those ‘top’ universities, too, are predominantly white in terms of their staff and students, due to their particular positions within those countries’ institutionally racist education systems. Furthermore, rankings implicitly support epistemicide (Santos, 2016) through their continued promotion of exclusive and culturally White forms and structures of knowledge production and dissemination” (Hall & Tandon, 2021, 74).

For HEIs to be inclusive and shed these colonial practices, there needs to be a systemic change in understanding HEIs purposes, and the patterns that determine their value, governance systems and funding (Hall & Tandon, 2021).

As the world begins to re-construct a fairer, safer and more just society after the pandemic, it is beginning to be realised that HE systems have to be transformed significantly so that HEIs are embedded in their societies and responsive to them. The demand for a rapid increase in enrolments in HEIs in the Asian region is being fulfilled through mindless multiplication of standard models of teaching and research, irrespective of local, regional and national societal needs and challenges. Within this trend of greater societal expectations from HEIs to re-focus their societal contributions in the post-pandemic era, several new directions are emerging around the world. In the Asia/Oceania region, many such efforts to transform HE systems and HEIs are beginning to show promise. This article provides a panoramic overview of such initiatives in Asia & Oceania.

Co-creating Knowledge

One of the growing expectations from HEIs is to produce knowledge in partnership with other social actors such that knowledge solutions can be acted upon to improve the socio-economic conditions of communities. Over the past several decades, research processes in academia have become narrowly defined and excluded by disciplinary boundaries and detached from societal realities (Tandon & Pandey, 2019). New approaches to producing actionable knowledge are also promoted through climate change adaptation solutions, such as the Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA). The ARA is a collaborative endeavour to scale up funding and capacity building for action-oriented research that facilitates climate change adaptation, especially in developing countries (ARA, 2021). In particular, it aims to overcome some of the major barriers that action research faces today in terms of a disconnect between research and the interests and needs of the most vulnerable sections.

The ARA emphasises the transdisciplinarity of research and its co-production through joint efforts: “Research is transdisciplinary, collaborative (South-South and North-South) and co-produced from the outset with multiple stakeholders and users (local and international partners, grassroots organisations, decision makers, and the private sector in addition to researchers). Dominant traditional research practice often excludes grass-roots actors. Research processes that enable authentic inclusion of many voices and sectors from the outset have been shown to enable accessible and actionable solutions and meet the needs of those most vulnerable to climate risks” (ARA, 2021, 2).

Co-creation of knowledge is undertaken when research is framed contextually, in partnership with local actors and community members living in that region, who face those challenges on a daily basis and are able to co-create sustainable solutions to deal with these challenges. In Brazil, a national movement transformed into a network of universities and anti-poverty social movements through the co-production of knowledge, as explained below: “Co-creating grassroots knowledge from below has been at the heart of this social movement/network that has resulted in changes to laws, creation of cooperatives and more” (Hall, et al., 2015; 10).

In HEIs, what is taught, what is researched and what is served derive purpose from being responsive to the context” (Hall & Tandon, 2021, 293).
To address inequities in academic knowledge produc-
tion, community-based research and community-based 
research partnerships are key mechanisms that can 
enable a mutually beneficial relationship between com-
munities and academia (Hall, et al., 2015). They view the 
knowledge of community leaders, indigenous commu-
nities, and other community stakeholders as valuable to 
the research process, and treat them with respect 
(Tandon, et al., 2016).

For example, the Mizan K4C Hub, located at Universiti 
Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) has been working with the 
Orang Asli Indigenous Communities. Over the past few 
years, they have used community-based participatory 
research methodology to understand their experiences 
and challenges in their daily lives. Researchers from the 
USIM built trusting relationships with the community 
over time, and undertook a rapid study with them. The 
findings were used to advocate for policy to support 
the communities’ loss of livelihood by presenting it to 
the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhamak) 
(Kaul, 2021).

Many HEIs are beginning to practice multi-disciplinary 
research triggered by the need to find community-dri-
sed solutions during the pandemic. All study disciplines 
have the potential to significantly contribute to address-
ing challenges in different socio-ecological contexts and 
politico-economic systems (Tandon, 2017). This means 
that every problem can be looked at from several 
dimensions, and instead of dividing study topics into 
narrowly defined fields, different disciplines must work 
together through mutual sharing and learning strate-
gies to understand the topic holistically.

Several similar stories have emerged in the region. 
During the pandemic, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) 
produced a 3-D Face Shield through the involvement of 
the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Design 
and Architecture in a cross-disciplinary initiative. Such 
endeavours made UPM a socially responsible universi-
ty to the research process, and treat them with respect 
to the local communities facing the pandemic (Talib, 2020).

Similarly, Pandit Ravishankar Shukla University (PRSU) 
conducted research to study the impact of Covid 19 on 
informal female workers and their socio-econo-
mic conditions, health and psychological conditions in 
Chhattisgarh, India. The research findings sugges-
ted that care work had increased for them, they faced 
increased domestic violence, not only at the hands of 
their husbands but from their children and parents-in-
law, and lost their livelihoods overnight. In this manner, 
PRSU was able to co-create actionable knowledge by 
partnering with the women in their local community 
(NU, 2021).

Different innovative strategies have emerged within 
Community-Based Research (CBR) for co-creating 
contextually relevant knowledge that responds to the 
needs of the communities which participate in them:

“Participatory theatre, for instance, aims to 
combine entertainment with an exploration of atti-
tudes and to share knowledge in order to stimulate 
positive social changes” (Tandon, et al., 2016; 17).

Another creative example of CBR methodology is the 
’Saree Project’, an arts-based data collection method 
used by Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) with female 
domestic workers in India (MFF, 2020). The Project 
involved these women writing/drawing/painting their 
experiences of sexual harassment on pieces of cloth 
and stitching the pieces onto a saree that is one of the 
traditional Indian garments worn by women, including 
the women domestic workers in the region. 
Therefore arts-based research has gained popularity in 
academia, especially since it fosters co-creation of 
knowledge, learning and teaching each other, involving 
“people as whole human beings” (Tandon et al., 2018).

In several countries, new HE policies are beginning 
to recognise the societal relevance of valuing local 
knowledge and the use of community-based partici-
patory research (CBPR) in training the next generation 
of researchers. The National Education Policy of India, 
launched by the Government of India in July 2020, has 
now mandated a compulsory course on community 
engagement and social responsibility. As a part of this 
policy, a programme for building the capacity of Master 
Trainers in CBPR has been launched recently (UGC, 2021).

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MOKA) has 
mandated community partnerships for all Islamic Higher 
Education Institutions in the country. These principles 
promote participation, empowerment, inclusiveness, 
gender equality, environmental care, accountability, 
transparency, and sustainability. Community service 
planning is undertaken through preliminary research 
or using existing research emerging from learning pro-
cesses, for integration of community service with the 
other two university missions (dharma) of research and 
teaching. This is one of the most promising examples of 
integration of research with the teaching mission in the 
region (MORA, 2014).

Likewise, the Māori principle of ‘Ako’ is central to 
knowledge and learning in New Zealand. ‘Ako’ means 
both teacher and student; research training sessions 
eventually relate to developing skills and time needed to do so; these concepts are fundamental to a 
Māori ontology and their inclusion in training help 
sure its relevance. Additionally, the broad spectrum 
of learners that engage with Ako present a rich oppor-
tunity for knowledge-sharing in such research training 
sessions; in this sense, the principle of Ako (people as 
both teachers and learners) is made evident (Tandon et al., 
2016).

An equally powerful example of integrating the three 
missions of HEIs can be found at Visva-Bharati Santini-
ketan in India. Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, a university 
set up by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore more 
than a hundred years ago, has been undertaking PhD 
field research toward improving local community con-
ditions. The partnership approach to research and 
teaching at the university is best manifested through 
a long-standing tradition of inviting the local commu-
nity to enter the campus for continuous interactions 
through several festivals, including “Poush Utsav”, 
Holi Festival and various “melas” hosted by the university 
that allow for local artisans and craft persons to sell 
their handmade crafts to people. (Hall & Tandon, 2021).

Finally, the ‘Kampus Sejahtera’ or ‘balanced campus’ 
initiative at USM is based on the Malaysian philosophy 
of maintaining balance in research and teaching with 
the community. The University USM believes that a balanced 
living in all aspects of human life, from spiritual to phy-
sical, intellectual, cultural, ethical, and environmental, 
leads to a balanced society, an approach that is inte-
grated into its research and teaching practices (Hall & 
Tandon, 2021).

One example of service-learning facilitated through 
such partnerships is the “Color Your Dreams” project 
initiated by the faculty of Architecture, Van Lang Uni-
versity in Vietnam, to provide inspiration in using 
acrylic and architecture models for hearing 
impaired children in Hy Vong Binh Thanh School for 
Hearing-Impaired Children. The programme is initiated 
as students from the university work with pupils over 
ten weeks, where they learn and practice using acrylic 
and models, stone material and outdoor activities for 
creating artwork. Students at the university learn how 
to communicate with people with disabilities, and train 
them in their area of study, as well as do group work, project 
management and lesson planning (Vietnam Campus 
Engage, 2020).

Locally rooted teaching and learning

A core function of all HEIs is teaching. Current conver-
sations in HE policy circles in many countries of the 
region are beginning to promote such teaching in an 
engaging manner, where students can explore the rele-
ance of theories and concepts in the real world of their 
local and regional societies and contexts. While earlier 
practices of engaged teaching were limited to a few 
social science disciplines, there is now an increasing 
trend to make such practices institution-wide. Recent 
mandates by University Grants Commission (UGC) in 
India encourage such engaged teaching for all faculties 
and courses (UGC, 2020). Many creative ways of enga-
gement with local communities are evolving, intuitively 
based on the formats of ‘service-learning’ practised in 
other regions.

A major push for service-learning as integral to all 
teaching in the region has come from United Mission 
Board. The United Board values the intellectual, social 
and spiritual sensitivity that service-learning inculcates in 
learners. It approaches service-learning beyond the 
idea of outreach; service-learning is seen to integrate 
the community’s knowledge and needs with student 
action in the field that fosters learning.

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management and lesson planning (Vietnam Campus 
Engage, 2020).
Mainstreaming life-long and life-wide learning in higher education

As the pandemic has created more stark divisions in accessibility to education globally, higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure no one is left behind. Adult and lifelong learning principles form the foundation for building an inclusive and diverse learning ecosystem in higher education institutions.

“Like education in all domains, rather than being reactive or adaptive (whether to change in labour markets, technology, or the environment), adult education needs to be recontextualized around learning that is truly transformative... Participation and inclusion go hand-in-hand with emancipatory visions of adult education, which includes an appreciation of informal learning – the knowledge and capabilities acquired outside formal schooling settings. Adult education policy will need to recognize informal learning across the lifespan as part of prioritizing inclusion and participation” (UNESCO, 2021, 114, 115)

A multi-level entry system of education, where adults from different age groups and backgrounds can enter academic courses at different levels of accreditation, is the need of the moment. Vocational education and training need to be mainstreamed in higher education institutions instead of functioning as a separate field for skill upgradation. It is necessary to look beyond the prism of skilling; it is a means of valuing experiential knowledge and respecting diverse forms of knowledge. The HEIs can create systems for ‘recognition of prior learning’ such that practical knowledge can be certified and accessed to higher education is enabled (Kaul & Tandon, 2020).

One of the largest sections of hitherto excluded ‘students’ are senior citizens. As post-retirement and early retirement careers and interests get articulated by the elderly (whose life span could be nearly 20 years after retirement), a nationwide system of HEIs was launched in China some decades ago. A range of Senior Citizens’ Universities (SCUs) emerged in China as the ageing population in the country expanded. These universities offer the elderly specialized courses covering sports, recreational activities, health, and technology, among other subject areas. Community-based teaching centres have also been established in China, enabling the elderly to attend universities near their houses. The elderly are repositories of experiential knowledge, and through these academic courses available for them, they can build on their experiential knowledge and enrich their and others lives further (People’s Daily Online, 2021).

Another interesting development triggered by the pandemic is closer linkages between HEIs and community education centres. Historically, HEIs have operated without links with educational centres that served other sections of society. This linkage is already showing promise, as exemplified by the use of community education in China during the pandemic. The East China Normal University founded Shanghai Municipal Institute for Lifelong Education (SIMILE) as the first research institute for lifelong education in China. SIMILE’s work on how community education promotes community development proved that community education was critical in helping community residents cope with the Covid-19 crisis. The process of caring and connecting people’s hearts and minds during the crisis by colleges in certain districts in Shanghai was very useful for those communities. Community support and linkages helped maintain confidence and a sound mental state among residents and facilitated joint efforts to fight the pandemic at an individual, family, and community level. They provided a path for residents to learn to live and prepare for the crisis (Li, 2020).

Opportunities for education and learning for other sections of the population displaced from their liberty (e.g. persons who are somewhat limited in the post-secondary education system. One such category is those imprisoned at an early stage of their life, not being able to acquire skills to return to a meaningful life of dignity in society. Some HEIs in the region are actively creating educational opportunities for prisoners, as seen through the ‘College Education Behind Bars’ programme in the Philippines. The University of Southeastern Philippines (USeP), the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and the Social Entrepreneurship Technology and Business Institute (SETHi), a non-profit organisation, are conducting this programme to provide educational opportunities to persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) while they are detained at the Davao City Jail.

Once the PDLs are admitted to the course after an interview and examination, they can proceed with their four-year college education, through the academic courses complemented with a rehabilitation program. In addition, parolees undergo a probation period where they maintain contact with the SETBI team, who connect them to potential employers. This programme not only recognises the potential that prisoners can have to contribute constructively to society but also as knowledge holders who should be treated with dignity. At the same time, it teaches the instructors to use innovative means to enhance learning within a drasti- cally different environment from what they are used to (Zafra, 2021).

Forced migration, climate impacts (floods, droughts, cyclones, fires, etc.) and wars continue to displace a large number of communities from their ‘homes’. Such forcibly displaced populations are increasing within this region too. Many become ‘refugees’ in their own lands, many move to other jurisdictions, some become refugees; many others live as ‘refugees’, seeking shelter in different cultures and unknown communities. Education opportunities are rather rare for such populations, as they face constraints of language, access to formal educational institutions for continuing education and upgrading their skills to become productive in the new context. An important example from the region is an initiative by the University of Technology Sydney’s (UTS) faculty in Australia and Cisarua Refugee Learning Centre (CRLC) in West Java, Indonesia, for conducting teacher training both digitally and on-site, and for conducting research together. The CRLC was started in August 2014 by a small group of refugees and is entirely refugee-led. Having partnered with CRLC, perceptions and myths about refugees being dangerous or helpless have been altered through a continued, mutually trusting relationship between HEI faculty, researchers and refugee communities (UTS, 2019).

Conclusion

Higher education in the Asia/Oceania region is now at a crossroads. The national HE systems are under pressure to focus more clearly on local and regional linkages after the pandemic. With greater attention to further policy support to local economic enterprises, circular economy and efficient use and regeneration of natural resources, HEIs are being encouraged to orient their teaching, research and service missions and related activities to local societal contexts, challenges and opportunities.

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The examples presented in this article illustrate three critical ways in which HEIs are demonstrating increased societal embeddedness. Enhanced demands for local knowledge solutions are encouraging co-creation of knowledge in partnership with many social actors, local communities and local governments. A new generation of researchers are learning these methodologies of community-based participatory research to facilitate the co-creation of knowledge. The use of local languages to promote greater inclusion of learners as well as understanding local knowledge systems is also gaining greater momentum in the region, as several examples illustrate. Life-long learning opportunities for hitherto excluded sections of society has also become a priority for several HEIs and is also being incentivised through national policy support.

The dynamic HE systems of this region are undergoing important changes that may further embed teaching and research into the aspirations and challenges of local communities, regions and societies. This may indeed make HEIs even more relevant to local societies and may generate more public support for them.

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The Future of International Higher Education in East Asia

Futao Huang

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to argue about the future of internationalisation of higher education (IHE) in the principal East and South-East Asian countries. The article begins with a brief introduction to the main IHE changes that took place in IHE in the main countries in the region from the late 19th century to the early 1990s. The third section aims to depict the general trends and outcomes of IHE in the main countries in the region. The article concludes by discussing the future of IHE and the potential challenges facing IHE in Asia.

Introduction

The internationalisation of higher education (IHE) in Asia has been described by Huang (2015) as a three-phase process that began in the 19th century, when many countries began to build their modern higher education systems by learning from Western models. Like other regions, radical changes have taken place in IHE since the early 1990s. While more similarities can be found in the region in recent years, differences in the understanding of IHE, its related policies and strategies and the approaches to it are also obvious and considerable among the countries and systems in the region. With respect to the study of “internationalisation in higher education,” although the past decades have seen a huge and multifaceted range of literature interpreting the term, most of the existing research is concerned with specific themes or aspects of IHE in one country or a small group of countries, and a comprehensive description of IHE at regional level is still hard to find. The purpose of this article is to argue what the future holds for IHE in the region, with a focus on the main East and Southeast Asian countries. The section below offers a brief introduction to the main changes that took place in IHE in the main countries in the region from the late 19th century to the end of the 1980s. The third section aims to depict the general trends and outcomes of IHE in the main countries in the region. The article concludes by discussing the future of IHE and the potential challenges facing IHE in Asia.

The concept of IHE is not only an inherently controversial term, but also a changing notion and perception. For example, some researchers suggest that IHE basically includes internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad. The former refers to the acceptance of international students and academics, hosting international conferences, integrating international perspective and content into teaching and research activities, and the use of foreign languages in both teaching and research. The latter mainly involves transnational and borderless education, as well as cross-border education (Crowther et. al., 2001). Further, Knight claims that “internationalisation at national, sector and institutional level is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2008).

This article proposes that “IHE is primarily concerned with the process of undertaking exchange activities, ideas and values in higher education and research in different countries and cultures. Its main forms cover the cross-border movement of students and academics, educational programmes and campuses, the provision of English-taught programmes in non-English countries, and the quest to enhance the international and global competitiveness of national higher education and research. In the article, examining all the nations in Asia, even those in East and Southeast Asia, would be risky and indeed impossible. There are many reasons for this. First, compared with Europe, East Asia not only has advanced economies like Japan, Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong, but also emerging economies such as China and Malaysia. Second, compared with China, Japan and Korea, the English language is more widely used as one of the primary academic languages in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia. Third, the tradition and heritage of academia in Asia may also have significant impacts on the degree of international mobility of both students and academics in individual systems. Finally, though market-driven mechanisms have been gradually introduced into higher education in all systems since the mid-1990s, the nature and pace of marketisation varies substantially across the five cases. Higher education in Hong Kong is highly marketised. Japan’s higher education system is more rigidly regulated by government. Case studies in the region thus primarily consist of the main countries and systems in two sub-regions: Northeast Asia, including countries and systems like China, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong of China; and Southeast Asia, represented by countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam.

Changing phases

From a historical perspective, changes in IHE in the main Asian countries can be practically divided into four phases:

In the first phase (late 19th century - late 1920s), many countries in the region established modern universities and higher education systems modelled on Western ideas and patterns. As Western models had a predominant influence on the modernisation of Asian higher education, and contemporary universities in many Asian countries were basically Western institutions shaped by the particular Western power that was the colonial ruler (Altbach & Selvaratnam, 1989). It could be called the westernisation phase of Asian countries. In addition to the adoption of Western models, many Asian countries such as China and Japan also translated foreign academic books into local languages, dispatched domestic scholars and students to Western countries and invited foreign experts and scholars to Asia (Ministry of Education, 1981).

From the 1920s onwards, when Japan established its modern higher education and research systems with an emphasis on nationalism and militarism, the Japanese educational model and conventions were exported to Korea, Taiwan and some South Asian countries as a measure of control in the colonisation of these countries. Japan’s higher education during this period primarily took the form of exporting Japanese academic values and standards to certain East Asian countries and areas. During this phase, the Japaneseisation of higher education or Japanese colonisation was one of the most important features of IHE in some Asian countries and systems (Ebuchi, 1997).

In the third phase, the intense ideological conflicts between capitalist countries led by the USA, the UK and other Western countries and communist countries represented by the former Soviet model. By the late 1980s, international activities were undertaken more within each group separately almost no academic and cultural exchange activities were carried out or emphasised between different country groupings. Clear examples are the Americanisation of higher education in Japan, Korea and Taiwan since the late 1940s, the predominant influence of British ideas of higher education in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, and the introduction of almost all aspects of higher education from the former Soviet Union into China since the early 1950s.

The internationalisation of Asian higher education moved into the fourth phase after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Increased economic globalisation and the rapid growth of higher education and IHE have together generated demand in Asian countries for new policies and activities to respond to the changing context at global, regional and national level. New IHE developments in Asia are discussed in the following section.

Trends and outcomes

Despite differences in the approaches to IHE and the focus placed on its activities across individual countries, some common IHE trends at regional level are identified below (Huang, 2015; Huang & Welch, 2021).

First, at regional level, the regionalisation of higher education, in particular intra-regional collaboration in personal mobility, teaching and research activities, as well as academic and educational networking, have
become increasingly important policy issues in most Asian countries (Molly, 2012). Since the late 1990s, while closer collaboration between individual countries in Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia has gradually developed in trade and higher education as a result of a constitutional effort to consolidate ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and South Korea), the three countries have also undertaken a wide range of collaborative activities in higher education based on the Campus Asia Project that was launched in April 2010 (MEXT, 2011). Under this project, the three countries formulated national policies and strategies to further integrate their higher education systems in broader fields. These initiatives include the provision of financial support to build intra-region university networking and design joint curricula and joint degree programs that combine the strengths of the countries in various academic fields. Further, while the traditional academic and cultural links between Australia, Europe, the UK and the USA, between India and the UK, between Japan and the USA, and between Korea and the USA have been emphasized as before, stronger links and new partnerships have been built between China and its neighbours, in both Central Asia and Southeast Asia, based on the New Silk Road initiative, especially since 2013.

Second, there has been more active cross-border movement of students in the main countries in the region. As an example, China had accepted nearly 500,000 inbound international students as of 2017 (Xiaojuan, 2018), Japan had accommodated over 300,000 international students by 2020 if the number of students in the main countries in the region.

Third, on the one hand, there will be growth in the numbers of bright scholars and students from the region and beyond, as well as forging important new relations within the region and helping to develop world class institutions of higher learning. Third, on the one hand, there will be growth in the number of outbound students from Asian countries going to Western countries to pursue advanced degrees, increased research collaboration between Asian and Western countries, and a rise in the number of international branch campuses and transnational educational programmes built on the basis of international collaboration and partnership between Asian and Western countries. On the other hand, with the emergence of regional centres of learning and educational hubs, and the creation of ‘model’ universities in Asia, a greater emphasis will be placed on internationalisation at home. This is not only limited to efforts to incorporate international and global perspectives, orientations and contents into university curricula, strengthen internationalisation and inter-cultural interactions between local students and international students, undertake internationally or globally-focused research activities, use digital technology innovatively, and ensure all students can benefit from these activities within one country, but also to expand intra-regional collaboration in Asia.

Finally, it seems that much closer and more direct collaborations and partnerships will be built up between government, industry and business, and higher education institutions and academia in order to facilitate IHE in individual countries and across the region. While national governments still maintain strong leadership and impose various regulations on higher education institutions, and industry and business continue to affect IHE by posing new demands, individual universities will be delegated more authority and autonomy to create institutional internationalisation strategies and engage in international activities based on their missions and goals. Further, in some countries like Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, more efforts will be made to achieve closer and more comprehensive collaboration between government, private industry and business and higher education institutions in order to facilitate a higher degree of IHE and pursue global academic excellence.

In terms of challenges, first, because the proportion of East Asian immigrant/mobile academics is much higher outside than within Asia, it can be assumed that the regionalisation of students and academia in East Asia is lower than in either Europe or North America. In particular, the large percentage of students pursuing advanced degrees and seeking employment outside Asia may have a direct correlation with the issue of brain drain in some countries in East Asia, though in recent years both China and Korea have been able to achieve a partial reversal of brain drain.

Second, it is possible that a wider gap in the degree of IHE between individual countries and systems at regional level will emerge. Some countries and systems like China, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong will attract more inbound international students and high-skilled talents from other countries, while other countries like Vietnam, India, the Philippines and Myanmar will have more outbound students and face the issue of brain drain. Further, at national level, there will be a similarly wider gap between selected universities and other universities in terms of funding, and social and academic reputation, as national governments try to increase the international competitiveness and academic excellence of a few selected universities. The gradual formation of a more rigid hierarchical structure of higher education...
tion and the research system in countries like China, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia provide good examples of this.

Finally, although many Asian countries are trying to develop the distinctive features of national higher education and research systems, there seems to be an increasing convergence in higher education and research in some countries brought about by the desire to climb league tables. This may result in a new dependency culture and Anglo-American hegemony.

Arguably, if the main countries in Asia aim to achieve a brighter future for IHE, they need to make tremendous efforts to work together to promote national economic prosperity and development, create a stable and peaceful environment in the region, foster academic systems with national distinctiveness, global appeal and competitiveness, and make more favourable institutional governance arrangements. Most importantly, huge endeavours are required from national governments and academics in Asia to establish centres of learning or excellence at global level by enhancing academic capability.

References


The Future of Higher Education focused on the specific perspective of India

Vidya Yeravdekar

Abstract

India has had a rich tradition in learning and education since ancient times. From time immemorial, India has always been a centre of learning. The traditional and conventional “Guru” (teacher) – Shishya (student) tradition and the “Gurukulam” model of imparting education have endorsed India’s contribution to the cause of education. Universities like Takshashila (600 BCE to 500 AD) and Nalanda (500 to 1300 AD) attracted scholars from the world over to India in pursuit of knowledge. The Indian higher education system today is the third-largest in the world with 38.5 million students studying in more than a thousand universities and over 42,000 colleges and 11,779 stand-alone institutions. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) is 27.1%, which means that 27 out of 100 students in the 18-22 age group are studying in higher education (AISHE Report 2019-20). With the world’s largest higher education system, along with a demographic advantage, India’s focus is to create an education ecosystem which is not just best in ‘the world, but best for ‘the world. The country is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st century. The Indian education system has already demonstrated its quality by producing some of the best minds to have contributed to the world. CEOs of a number of top global companies were educated in India. The new education policy announced by the Prime Minister of India on 29 July 2020 has further strengthened the existing education system towards the creation of an education system that will create global citizens with deep-rooted Indian values.

Introduction

India has had a rich tradition in learning and education since ancient times. Subsequent to the glory of Nalanda and Takshashila, in 1857, the first three universities, viz the University of Bombay, the University of Calcutta, and the University of Madras, were set up in the presidency towns. After three decades, the fourth university, i.e., Allahabad University was established in 1887. Again, after three decades, the fifth and sixth universities arose at Mysore and Banaras in 1916. These universities, modelled on the University of London, were affiliating, examining, and regulating higher education bodies in India. (Prabhuj, 2006). A little more than half a century has passed since the Government of India initiated a planned development of higher education in the country, with the establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1953 and its formalisation into a statutory body of the Government of India in November 1956. Its purpose was to coordinate, determine and maintain university education standards in India. The policy for developing higher education has been mainly governed by the 1986 “National Policy on Education” (as modified in 1992) and its 1992 Program of Action. The 1986 Policy and 1992 Action Plan were based on the two landmark reports, namely, the “University Education Commission Report” of 1948-49 (popularly known as Radhakrishnan Commission) and the “Education Commission Report” of 1964-66 (popularly known as Kothari Commission). These two reports laid down the basic framework for the 1986 National Policy for Higher education. The Radhakrishnan Commission on University Education had set up goals for developing higher education (Keav, 1972). After independence, the Government of India established the Ministry of Education, later renamed the MHRD on 26 September 1985, and again renamed the Ministry of Education in the 2020 National Education Policy.

Today, the Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world. There were only 20 universities and 500 colleges with 0.1 million students at the time India attained independence (MHRD, 2010). However, over the last three decades, there has been an exponential increase in the number of educational institutions, teachers and students. Today, the Indian higher education system has exponentially advanced in infrastructure, calibre, and reach.

Open and distance learning has also expanded, thereby playing a significant role in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio. Measures such as online courses and digital repositories, funding for research, improved student services, credit-based recognition of MOOCs, etc., are taken to ensure it is at par with the highest quality in-class programmes.

Internationalisation of education is facilitated through institutional, student and faculty collaborations, also allowing Indian institutions to set up off-campuses abroad, although the bill to allow foreign universities to establish their campuses in India has not yet seen the light of the day.

Several of the latest initiatives brought about by the Ministry of Education, along with furthering the efforts of the Human Resource Development Ministry, have resulted in a systematic change of the HEI framework in India. It is getting sophisticated and more convenient, along with incentivising universities to perform and function better.

Quality and Ranking Framework

The establishment of a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 was an important step for the accreditation of all colleges and universities in terms of quality and sustainability in the Indian education system (NAAC, 2022).

In addition to the UGC, other professional bodies were also established for the recognition or accreditation of institutions and bodies, e.g., the All India Council on Technical Education (AICTE), the Bar Council of India (BCI), the National Medical Commission (NMC), the Indian Nursing Council (INC), the Council of Architectu- re (CoA), the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) etc. (UGC, 2020). They are empowered to monitor different plans and policies, promote research activities, allocate grants, revise and formulate examination systems, evaluate curricula, organise training programmes for teachers and professionals and assess and ensure the quality of higher education in their respective areas.

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)

In 2015, the Government of India’s Ministry of Education (previously Ministry of Human Resource Development) launched the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) to evaluate and rank institutions based on factors such as teaching resources (faculty-to-student ratio, percentage of PhDs among lecturers), research output, graduate outcomes (employment rate and median salary of graduates, etc.), the extent of inter- nationalisation, and perceptions of quality among the public, employers and academic institutions (Ministry of Education, 2021). The NIRF has gained momentum and the confidence of the public as it covers all kinds of institutions. It also observes transparency in the announcement of the results of rankings. The national ranking is used as one of the mandatory criteria to decide which universities can be granted autonomy, and their eligibility in the Institution of Eminence (IOE). Another thing that the NIRF helps institutions to understand their performance each year and to know their competitors and peer performers. Indian authorities are determined to advance Indian HEIs further in international rankings and establish world-class universities. The NIRF is now preparing Indian institutions/universities to enter international rankings such as QS & THE to position them among the top 500 universities in the world.

Institutions of Eminence

The UGC has launched the Institutions of Eminence scheme to implement the Government’s commitment to empower ten public and ten private HEIs and help them become world-class institutions. These institutions are called ‘Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities’. The public institutions are eligible to receive up to 10 billion Indian rupees (about USD$143 million) each in additional funding over a period (IOE, 2022). The incentive that the IOEs create is for other institutions to aim for the level of excellence to achieve worldwide recognition. This project will also be considering additional institutions to explore their potential fully.

Graded Autonomy Regulation

Recognising the need to create an enabling environ- ment whereby HEIs can become institutions of global excellence, autonomy is pivotal to promote and institu- tionalise excellence in higher education. In this regard,
India’s National Education Policy (NEP)

The vision of India’s new education system has accordingingly been crafted to ensure that it touches the life of each and every citizen, consistent with their ability to contribute to many growing developmental imperatives of this country on the one hand and towards creating a just and equitable society on the other. India’s new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century, replacing the thirty-four-year-old 1986 National Policy on Education (NPE). It is built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability, this policy is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, suited to 21st century needs and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each student.

The 2020 National Education Policy has been introduced at the right time to complement the process and vision of creating quality institutions, a culture of innovation, and a highly-skilled workforce. Indian higher education needs to transform into something that can, in the long term, contribute to many growing developmental imperatives of this country.

The NEP was formulated after a very detailed consultative process, unprecedented in depth and scale. The consultation involved over 2 lakh suggestions from 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats, 6600 Blocks, 6000 ULBs, and 676 Districts. From January 2015, the MHRD initiated a collaborative, inclusive, and highly participatory consultation process. In May 2018, the Ministry prepared ‘Some Inputs for the Draft National Education Policy, 2016’. In June 2017, a Committee for the Draft National Education Policy was constituted under the Chairmanship of eminent scientist Dr K. Kasturirangan. The policy was formally launched in July 2020, the tenure of three Ministers of Education, Government of India. It is a robust and prosperous education policy.

Some of the important features of this new NEP are to increase GER in higher education to reach at least 50% by 2035, provide holistic and multidisciplinary education for flexible and innovative curricula of all HEIs, which will include credit-based courses and projects in community engagement and service, environment-specific education areas, value-based education to embrace the development of humanistic, ethical, constitutio nal, and universal human values of truth, peace & love, scientific temper, citizenship values and life skills. Lessons in service and participation in community service programmes will be an integral part of holistic inculcation, global citizenship amongst students. The policy is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society and global knowledge superpower by making both school and college education more holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, suited to 21st century needs and aimed at bringing out the unique capabilities of each student.

Some innovative recommendations of the NEP 2020

a) Academic restructuring: The curricular and pedagogical structure of school education follows a 3+3+4 design, corresponding to the age ranges of 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years, respectively. It will consist of the Foundational Stage (in two parts, i.e., 3 years of pre-school + 2 years in primary school in Grades 1-2; both together covering ages 3-8); with flexible, multilevel, play/activity-based learning and the curriculum and pedagogy of National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The undergraduate degree will be of 3 or 4 years’ duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications; a certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a bachelor’s degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary bachelor’s programme shall be the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to encompass the breadth of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the student’s choices.

b) Holistic Multidisciplinary Education: The policy envisages a broad-based multidisciplinary holistic education at the undergraduate level for integrated, rigorous exposure to science, arts, humanities, mathematics and professional education in all fields, having imaginative and flexible curricular structures, creative combinations of study, integration of vocational education and multiple entry/exit points. Holistic and multidisciplinary education will help develop well-rounded individuals who possess critical 21st-century capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethos of social engagement, soft skills, such as communication, discussion, and debate; and rigorous specialisation in a chosen field or fields. Such a holistic education shall be, in the long term, the approach of all undergraduate programmes, including those in professional, technical, and vocational disciplines. A new vision and architecture for higher education has been envisaged with large, well-resourced, vibrant multidisciplinary institutions.

Higher Education Institutions will be transformed into large multidisciplinary universities, colleges, and HEI clusters/Knowledge Hubs, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students. A university will be a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning that offers undergraduate and graduate programmes with high-quality teaching, research, and community engagement. The definition of the university will allow a spectrum of institutions that range from Research Intensive Universities, Teaching Intensive Universities and Autonomous degree-granting Colleges (AUs).

c) The National Bank of Credit (ABC): The ABC will digitally store academic credits earned from various recognised HEIs so that degrees can be awarded, taking into account credits earned. The academic bank of credit will function like a commercial bank. Students will be account holders to whom the bank will provide credit accumulation, credit transfer and credit redemption services. These credits can be deposited in student accounts. After accumulating credits, a student can redeem them to obtain any academic degree.

d) The National Research Foundation (NRF): Aims to catalyse and expand research and innovation across the country. The main focus of the NRF will be to enable a research culture to permeate through our universities, helping to develop a research culture in the country through suitable incentives for outstanding research. It also aimed to undertake major initiatives to seed and grow research at State Universities and other public institutions where research capability is currently limited. The NRF will provide funding for research in all disciplines. Successful research will be recognised and, where relevant, implemented through close linkages with governmental agencies as well as with industry and private/philanthropic organisations.

e) Internationalisation of HE: This will be facilitated through institutional collaborations and student and faculty mobility, allowing entry of top-ranking global universities to open campuses in India. These initiatives will also help achieve larger numbers of international students studying in India and provide greater mobility to students in India who may visit, study at, transfer credits to, or carry out research at institutions abroad, and vice versa. Courses and programmes in subjects such as Indology, Indian languages, Ayush medical systems, yoga, arts, music, history, culture, and modern Indian relevant curricula in the sciences, social sciences, and beyond, meaningful opportunities for social engagement, quality residential facilities and on-campus support, etc. will be fostered to attain this goal of global quality standards, attract
greater numbers of international students, and achieve the goal of ‘internationalisation at home’.

India will be promoted as a global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs, thereby helping to restore its role as a ‘Vishwa Guru’. An International Students Office will be set up at each HEI hosting foreign students, to coordinate all matters relating to welcoming and supporting foreign students. Research/exchange collaborations and faculty/student exchanges with high-quality foreign institutions will be facilitated, and relevant mutually beneficial Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with other countries will be signed. High performing Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries, and similarly, selected universities, e.g., those from among the top 100 universities in the world, will be allowed to operate in India. A legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India. Furthermore, research collaboration and student exchanges between Indian and global institutions will be promoted through special efforts. Credits acquired in foreign universities will be permitted, where appropriate, as per the requirements of each HEI, to be counted for the awarding of a degree.

The NEP 2020 has carved a new path for India and the world. Everybody is watching this transformation of the Indian education system. India was considered a ‘Vishwa Guru’ when universities like Nalanda and Takshasila attracted a large number of scholars and students from across the world. The Government is now working hard to restore this glory by involving the participation of various stakeholders to implement the New Education Policy. The implementation of the National Education Policy has gained momentum, and the world will surely see a lot of changes in the Indian education system in the future.

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### Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific

#### Yang Rui

### Abstract

The Asia-Pacific region is attaining a greater global presence. Seen largely as an area of progress and growth, its recent development in higher education has been widely acknowledged. This is even more remarkable when compared with other non-Western societies. Modern higher education systems have been well established throughout the region. Over the last decades, most states have transformed their higher education systems from elite to mass form. With high R&D investment, research has continued to grow rapidly. Asia-Pacific societies now openly aspire to elevate some of their universities to world-class status. At the same time, higher education in the region faces a number of challenges. As private institutions have become key higher education providers in various countries in the region, one prominent issue is quality. Another key priority for most states in the region is to provide equal access to and equity in higher education. An additional notable concern is a growing gap between spiralling enrolment and plateauing public finances. Tracing the cultural roots of higher education systems in the region, this paper offers a panoramic view of higher education development in the Asia-Pacific region.

### Introduction

Due to the lack of an official definition of the Asia-Pacific region and its boundaries, the list of Asia-Pacific countries depends on the context. It boasts some of the world’s oldest residential universities and venerable higher learning traditions, such as Takshashila in ancient India in the fifth century BC, China’s Taixue during the Former Han period (206 BCE-8 CE), and the House of Wisdom in Baghdad during the Islamic Golden Age dating back to the eighth century (Tandon, 2008). However, modern universities in the region are all based on European academic models as the result of Western imperialism and colonization in the nineteenth century (Altbach, 2004). Decoupled from their indigenous traditions, all Asia-Pacific higher education systems have sustained a strong Western influence, as shown by the German model on the Japanese system, the British in India, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, and the French legacy in Southeast Asian nations such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Some fast-growing economies in the Asia-Pacific have demonstrated successful development models over the past decades., the region has become the most significant contributor to global GDP reaching a 34.9 per cent share in 2019 (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Home to 60 per cent of the world’s population, the middle classes are fast-growing with a burgeoning demand for higher education. Previous decades have witnessed remarkable progress, including a vast expansion of higher education and rapidly expanded access in nearly all countries throughout the region. Meanwhile, higher education development has met a number of challenges, from quality control to inequalities. With significant differentiation between the experiences of a few Western societies, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and the non-Western majority, this chapter focuses on the latter. It shows that while the immense complexity of the region poses a great challenge to make sense of its higher education trends, some features of the development have been identified and comparable.

#### Institutional Infrastructure

The most prominent achievement in higher education in the region is an unparalleled growth in the post-secondary sector over recent decades. Most Asia-Pacific nations are non-Western. Their modern universities were established based on Western experiences as an approach to learning advanced knowledge. As late-comers in contemporary higher education, their development means, to a great extent, becoming similar to Western systems and institutions, especially in infrastructure, standards, measures, and organizational behaviours. It is thus positive to note that, within a relatively short period in history, many of them have learned remarkably well from the West about how to institutionalize their modern higher education systems.
and institutions. In this regard, the societies have made substantial progress in higher education by learning from the West. A Western-style higher education system has been established throughout the region.

As noted above, the Asia-Pacific region has long and rich traditions in higher learning. Yet, modern universities are an imported concept for most of its non-Western nations. Although the oldest institutions of higher learning emerged millennia ago, modern higher education systems were only introduced from the West as social institutions since the nineteenth century. This foreign transplant has now taken root in all societies in the region, with differing paths and trajectories in higher education development. Some nations have progressed extraordinary well. Japanese universities, for instance, have long been a global science and technology powerhouse. China’s achievements in higher education are particularly impressive. Swiftly achieving the world’s largest number of students and teachers and becoming the second largest producer of scientific papers. 

While China’s modern higher education system has been well established as contributing to the rise of Chinese power, most other systems in the region have also grown substantially. For example, student enrolment in higher education increased significantly from 626 per cent in Thailand to 2119 per cent in Vietnam during 1980-2011. From 2000 to 2013, gross enrolment ratios in higher education rose from 6.6 to 29.7 in China, 9.5 to 31.5 in India, 14.9 to 31.5 in Indonesia, 25.7 to 37.2 in Malaysia, 28.8 to 38.8 in the Philippines, 35.1 to 51.2 in Thailand, and from 10.5 to 25.6 Vietnam (Welch, 2016, p. 42).

Again, China’s story is particularly stunning. In 2020, 41.83 million students enrolled in its 2,738 regular and 265 adult higher education institutions, a gross enrolment rate of 54.4 per cent. Annual postgraduate admissions reached 11 million (116,000 and 990,500, respectively) at doctoral and master’s levels, and a total of 3,389,600 at-school postgraduate students. Teaching and administrative staff reached 2,688,700 with 1,833,000 full-time teachers and a student-teacher ratio of 18.37:1. There were 771 private higher education institutions, a gross enrolment ratio of 7.1 per cent, and a student-teacher ratio of 18.37:1. There were 771 private higher education institutions, a gross enrolment ratio of 7.1 per cent, and a student-teacher ratio of 18.37:1. There were 771 private higher education institutions, and 265 adult higher education institutions, a gross enrolment ratio of 7.1 per cent. Having some of the region’s best-state universities in teaching and research, Hong Kong is now home to eight publicly funded universities, of which most enjoy an international reputation. 

In addition to the most developed higher education systems in advanced nations in the region, a modern (Western style) higher education system has also been well institutionalized in a wide range of societies from Taiwan to Thailand and Chile. Manifestations of such infrastructural establishment are in various key aspects, including institutional organization, curriculum, degree structure, and mode of governance.
Teaching and Learning

As a prime part of the totality of modern universities, teaching and learning practices in all Asia-Pacific societies are required to be informed by Western concepts and approaches in higher education governance, many multinational and non-Western societies to learn about others, it is even more urgent for Western institutions to understand each other. Yet, they are not conscious and connective (Tu, 2009). What has been going on in the Asia-Pacific, except perhaps China, is that the knowledge is regarded as superior and seen as the only way to compete in the global market. This has caused a series of quality and equity issues, especially in developing countries with widening gaps between rich and poor. Private institutions are generally seen to have part in low- and middle-income countries and insufficient time in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam in Asia, and even more so in many countries in Latin America for an extended period (Mendoza, 2020). Some countries in the region have continued to struggle with a variety of issues related to gaps in higher education between social classes, ethnicities, genders, and geographical regions (Hawkins, 2016).

Future Orientation

Most of the main spiritual and philosophical traditions emerged simultaneously and independently in China, India, Iran, Israel, and Greece during the Axial Age (Jaspers, 2010). They continue to define us when we are amid a second Axial Age, an era of dramatically accelerated cultural evolution with a new global consciousness and connectivity (Tu, 2009). What has been much neglected in the current debates is that all traditions are rooted in the same soil, and they are not on an equal footing. While it is imperative for Western systems to learn about others, it is even more urgent for non-Western systems to synthesize their own intellectual traditions with the dominant Western tradition. As a Western-style higher education system has been institutionalized throughout the region, Western knowledge is regarded as superior and seen as the only knowledge that counts. While universities are “a key site of struggle, where local knowledge meets global knowledge in a battle to represent different worlds in different ways” (Penneycook, 1996, p. 64), the inte-
intellectual mind on Asia-Pacific campuses is often more Western than indigenous. The impact of colonialism on most Asia-Pacific higher education systems has been profound and enduring, disrupting local traditions and raising thorny issues of how to preserve local strengths, epistemic, linguistic, administrative, and cultural, in the face of often imperious imports (Welch, 2019).

In this regard, Asia-Pacific higher education systems have much to learn from each other. Over the past decades, tremendous strides have been made by East Asian universities. A growing number of their scholars have demonstrated a good grasp of East Asian and Western traditions in their fields, with a distinctive bicultural identity. This is indeed a remarkable achievement that positions East Asian universities and scholars nicely for even greater future success. Such a bicultural intellectual condition embraces Western learning as one of the most important elements of their modern knowledge systems (Reagan, 2000). In the context of globalization, it is fast gaining significance. Integrating East Asian and Western ideals of higher learning, it has great implications for university development within their own region and beyond.

References


Global and Regional Engagement for Sustainable Development: the Case of Chinese Higher Education

Roger Y. Chao Jr.

Abstract

This chapter presents China's key higher education developments, particularly in its quest for quality, regional and global recognition of Chinese higher education and increasing global and regional influence in higher education. Key policies and initiatives, such as the 985, 211 and double-world-class university projects, increasing scholarships for Chinese and foreign nationals and establishing university networks, and the belt and road initiative will be presented to highlight China's global and regional engagement, which contributes to both national and regional sustainable development. How Chinese higher education institutions are empowered and used to initiate and address quality higher education, contribute to national development, and China's international relations policies will also be discussed. Furthermore, this chapter argues that path dependency, capacity, and international relations contribute significantly to China's higher education system and institutions engage at global and regional level is also informed by the development of its respective higher education sector and national policies, including international relations and foreign policies.

Introduction

With all United Nations Member States adopting the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), multiple stakeholders, including higher education institutions, contribute in various ways to the achievement of the SDGs. However, increasing globalisation and regionalisation of the world order requires an understanding of how national higher education systems and their institutions engage globally and regionally in relation to their contribution to sustainable development at local, national, regional and global level. Much of higher education institutions' (HEIs) contribution to society has been attributed to their three missions: teaching, research and extension (which is often termed as the “third mission”) and is frequently linked to their relationship to multiple stakeholders, particularly with regard to support for national and local economic development and innovation (Perkmann et al., 2013). This stereotyping of higher education institutions is unwarranted and undermines their contribution to sustainable development, in particular their global and regional engagement and how these institutions’ teaching, research and engagement activities contribute to sustainable development, taking into account the dynamic and complex relationship between key social agents and institutions (e.g. higher education institutions), contexts, historical development and strategic ambitions (Thomas et al., 2022). How a country’s higher education system and its respective institutions engage at global and regional level is also informed by the development of its respective higher education sector and national policies, including international relations and foreign policies.

Considering that China has the largest population (roughly 1.44 billion - Worldometers, n.d.) and higher education system in the world, this chapter looks at the case of China to understand how global and regional engagement in higher education contributes to the achievement of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. It argues that path dependency, capacity and international relations contribute to how a country, and its higher education system and institutions, engages with its local community, contributes to national sustainable development and promotes its higher education and graduates beyond national borders. It also sets out China’s key higher education developments, policies and initiatives, particularly as part of its quest for quality, regional and global recognition of Chinese higher education, and increasing global and regional influence in higher education.

Developments in Chinese Higher Education

With over two thousand years of history, China has one of the oldest education systems in the world. Tracing back to the fourth century BCE when Confucius established a private academy, Confucian heritage remains influential in modern Chinese higher education (Wu & Zha, 2018). However, modern Chinese higher education has had to adapt to a changing neoliberal reality, increasing globalisation and regionalisation of the global world order. Chinese higher education has experimented with various models, including the Soviet Model (after 1949), which focused on specialised institutions. Since the 1980s, in the era of reform and opening, China has learned and adopted higher education models from the developed world (Wu & Zha, 2018). The current modern Chinese higher education system and its institutions is the result of various Western influences, including the Japanese model with a strong imprint from the French and German traditions of the 1890s-1900s, the American model of the 1920s and the more centralised European model of the 1930s (Cai & Yan, 2017). Massification of education has contributed to increased participation in modern Chinese higher education. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) database (n.d.), the gross enrolment ratio increased from 2.97% and 7.59% in 1990 and 2000 to 24.20% and 58.42% in 2010 and 2020, while the female participation rate in Chinese higher education also increased from 2.47% in 1994 to 24.96% and 63.93% in 2010 and 2020, respectively. In 2020, 14.9% of higher education enrolments in China were in private higher education institutions, reflecting the opening up of Chinese higher education to private sector providers in recent decades. According to China’s Ministry of Education (2020), there were 41.83 million students (including 8.46 million students attending online HEIs) in 2,738 higher education institutions in 2019 (MoE, 2021). Postgraduate enrolments also increased from 1.981 million (1.639 million & 342,000 in Master’s and Doctoral programmes) in 2016 to 2.864 million (2.44 million & 424,000 in Master’s and Doctoral programmes) in 2019 (MoE, 2017, 2020). The expansion of public and private education providers resulted in a significant increase in higher education institutions in China from 1,071 and 2,305 in 1999 and 2009 (Shen, 2018), to 2,738 in 2020 (MoE, 2021). Private higher education institutions have increasingly provided undergraduate and vocational-technical education, particularly for those that did not manage to pass the National Matriculation Test ‘gaokao’ (Shen, 2018). Furthermore, the number of international tertiary education students coming to China increased from 36,386 in 2006 to 225,100 in 2020, while outbound international tertiary education students from China increased from 818,604 in 2015 to 1,061,511 in 2019 (UIS, n.d.).

This success story of Chinese higher education reform is the result of various continuous reforms linked to China’s open-door policy in the economic sector, which has shifted from a centrally planned to a more market-oriented economy. Although education reforms began in the 1980s, the most prominent ones were undertaken in the 1990s, focusing on strategies that emphasised decentralisation, liberalisation and privatisation, with key themes including the massification of higher education, quality assurance, transformation of higher education governance, restructuring of higher education institutions, and building world class universities (Cai, 2013; Cai & Yan, 2017; Wu & Zha, 2018), mostly to serve the needs of China’s economic development.

Global and Regional Engagement

As indicated in the previous section, Chinese higher education has significantly addressed the capacity issues relevant to its national economic development, and paved the way for increasing global and regional engagement in higher education to advance global recognition, further increase quality in key disciplines, and provide a mechanism for knowledge, higher education and science diplomacy. This global and regional engagement can also be seen in relation to the contribution made by higher education and its respective institutions to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Knowledge brokerage should be a key function of universities, and public engagement and linkage and exchange mechanisms supporting higher education institutions’ developmental and entrepreneurial missions need to be strengthened as countries seek to advance the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (Richards-Kennedy & St. Brice, 2018). Increased
Recent decades have shown that China’s diplomatic discourse and behaviour place significant importance on people-to-people exchanges in foreign relations. According to Liu (2015), the link between people-to-people exchanges and diplomacy is fundamentally assumed to relate to communication activities and increasing the number of players in diplomacy, as well as the production, management and distribution of public goods. It is also about strategic arrangements, optimisation of operating mechanisms and enhancement of communication competences for improved mutual understanding and cooperation. Moreover, the focus on people-to-people exchanges is aligned with the Chinese concept of ‘Guanxi’, which is often understood in terms of ‘an intricate and pervasive relational network’ bound by reciprocal obligation, assurance and mutuality (Kavalski 2018a, p.90, 2018b).

People-to-people exchanges can also be seen in terms of global and regional engagement in the higher education sector. During China’s G20 Presidency in 2016, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted China’s overarching approach of “innovative, coordinated, open and shared development, to which the role of higher education as part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (Xinhua, 2021). This reinforces the strategic role of prosperous, beautiful and amicable home together”.

In spite of criticisms of the use of Confucius Institutes as a basis for China’s soft power and influence in the global world order, these institutes are seen as a form of globalisation and contribute to the enhancement of partnerships and cultural understanding around the world. Confucius Institutes are Chinese culture and Mandarin language programmes funded by China and staffed by Chinese nationals and exported around the world (Hubbert, 2019). First announced in 2004 under the aegis of Hanban (Confucius Institute Headquarters), 550 Confucius Institutes and 1,172 Confucius Classrooms have been established in 162 countries and regions with more than 2.3 million registered students by 2019 (Qiao et al., 2021).

In relation to China’s quest for global recognition and enhancement of the quality of its higher education institutions, several world class university initiatives have been launched: projects 211 and 985 and the Double First-Class University project. Projects 211 and 985, launched in 1995 and 1998, are aimed at attracting high-level elite universities for national economic and social development strategies and world-class universities, respectively (Shen, 2018). There are currently 112 universities in project 211 and 39 universities (increased from the initial 81) in project 211 around 65,000 cooperative universities initiatives, the Alliance aims to jointly address regional and global challenges, especially those related to higher education and economic, scientific and technological development. The CAS Fellowship Programme for Senior International Scientists, 2022). Since 2009, the CAS has implemented several international talent programmes, including the CAS Fellowship Programme for Senior International Scientists and the CAS Fellowship Programme for Young International Scientists, which has attracted over a thousand foreign scientists to conduct research at its institutes. The CAS-TWAS Fellowship, since 2004 the CAS has invited around 50 scientists a year from developing countries to study or conduct research at its institutes (Chinese Academy of Sciences, 2022).

Examples of China-led university networks include the establishment of the Asia University Alliance (AUA) and the University Consortium of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (UCMSIR) in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Spearheaded and hosted by Tsinghua University, the AUA is composed of 15 elite universities from different Asian countries, including Peking University, the University of Tokyo, Seoul National University, the National University of Singapore and the University of Malaya. By strengthening collaboration among its member institutions, the Alliance aims to jointly address regional and global challenges, especially those related to higher education and economic, scientific and technological development. The AUA also organises people-to-people exchanges (e.g. the AUA overseas study programme and the AUA staff exchange programme), conferences and joint research programmes (Asian Universities Alliance, n.d.).

Highlighting the Silk Road spirit of ‘peace, friendship, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit’, the UCMSIR (2022) was established to provide a platform for educational cooperation to facilitate exchanges and cooperation in areas of inter-university communication, talent cultivation, discipline building, technological innovation and social service. The consortium currently has 66 member universities (52 in Asia, 7 in Europe, 4 in the Americas and 3 in Oceania). Both university networks highlight the need for international cooperation, mutual learning and benefits, and can be seen as part of China’s regional (AUA) and global (UCMSIR) engagement in higher education.

Chinese higher education institutions listed in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings has significantly increased from 10 to 53 in 2010 and 2022, respectively, with 6 institutions listed in the top 100 (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2010, 2022).

Aside from the focus on improving the quality and international recognition of Chinese higher education institutions, China has also engaged in increasing the international presence of universities in China and Chinese universities abroad, increasing inbound and outbound international student mobility and establishing university and discipline-focused networks.

Following the opening of the University of Nottingham Ningbo China in 2004, the number of Sino-Foreign Cooperative Universities in China had increased to nine by 2018 (Lu, 2018). Chinese higher education institutions have also been expanding their presence abroad, as seen with the establishment of Soochow University in Lao PDR (2011), the Tongji University Florence Campus (2014), Xiamen University in Malaysia (2015), and the Peking University London Campus (Huang, 2022). Furthermore, the number of transnational institutions and programmes in China had significantly increased to 154 institutions and 1,187 programmes by 2021 (Huang, 2022).

The establishment of the China Scholarship Council (CSC) in 1986 contributed to the growth of inbound and outbound international student mobility in China. Reporting to the Ministry of Education, the CSC provides support for different types of international academic exchanges with China, including: foreign students in China, Chinese students abroad and Chinese research institutions that wish to cultivate exchanges with faculty and staff at foreign universities. In 2018, CSC scholar-ships financed 65,000 foreign students in China and an equal number of Chinese students abroad. Each of these groups is examined in detail below. It is estimated that there are currently about 530,000 Chinese foreign students studying in China and seven percent of Chinese students studying abroad (also roughly 65,000) (Fedeiski, 2020).

A thousand foreign students studying in China in a given year (roughly 65,000 students) and seven percent of Chinese students studying abroad (again, approximately 65,000 students). Furthermore, since 2011, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) has been committed to delivering breakthrou-
Chinese higher education institutions’ engagement with networks is not necessarily China-led, as can be seen with the Japan-led Collective Action for Mobility Programme of University Students in Asia (CAMPUS Asia), established through the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), in partnership with the ASEAN-China Centre, including the ASEAN-China Network for Cooperation and Exchanges among Engineering and Technology Universities (ACNET-EngTech), the ASEAN-China Arts Colleges Alliance (ACACA) and the ASEAN-China Alliance of Private Higher Education Institutions (ACAPHEI) (SEA-MEO-RIHED, 2021).

Although China’s Belt and Road Initiative, launched in 2013, is often associated with promoting economic integration and infrastructure development across Eurasia and beyond, education is strategically positioned as one of the enabling factors of the Belt and Road objectives (Xu, 2021). Close people-to-people ties are one of the main goals of the Belt and Road Initiative, along with policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade and financial integration (MOFA, 2019). When presenting the progress of the Belt and Road Initiative, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019) highlighted the fact that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) upholds the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, in line with the Silk Road spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and benefit. The achievements of the BRI, as reported in the education component of closer people-to-people ties, include: setting up the Chinese Government Scholarship-Silk Road Programme, mutual recognition agreements of higher education qualifications with 34 Belt and Road (B&R) countries, opening 153 and 149 Confucius Institutes and Classrooms, respectively, in 54 B&R countries, and scholarships for Master’s and Doctoral programmes.

Global and regional cooperation, including people-to-people exchanges, forms a significant foundation of China’s international relations policy. This is clearly reflected in China’s 2016 national plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which included guaranteeing 12 years of free education for children with disabilities and delivery of President Xi Jinping’s pledge to provide 120,000 training opportunities and 150,000 scholarships for other developing countries by 2020, including scholars from least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS) and African countries (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2016).

China also strengthened ASEAN-China cooperation by transforming ASEAN-China dialogue relations (from 1993) into a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2021. On the 10th anniversary of ASEAN-China Relations, China’s President Xi Jinping highlighted the importance of people-to-people exchanges (Xinhua, 2021). President Xi promised to enhance cooperation through mutual recognition of diplomas, launch the China-ASEAN Science, Technology and Innovation Enhancing Programme, support the establishment of a China-ASEAN Knowledge Network for Development, increase the number of China-ASEAN Young Leaders Scholars, and support a programme for 300 young scientists from ASEAN to come to China for exchanges in the next five years (Xinhua, 2021). In line with China’s vision and initiatives (including the Belt and Road Initiative) to build a community with a shared future for the world, China’s 2035 education modernisation plan aims to provide higher level and more open education, strengthen educational and humanistic exchanges, promote the exchange of hearts and minds among people for civilised exchanges, and make greater contributions to the creation of a better future for mankind (MOE, 2019 cited in Zhu, 2019). Furthermore, the 2035 education modernisation plan places significant emphasis on a change in the way and mode of development in the international context (Zhu, 2019).

As China’s higher education is mostly driven by national policies, the country’s national strategy, including international relations and foreign policy, has a significant influence on the development and initiatives of Chinese higher education institutions. The Belt and Road Initiative, China’s commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the importance placed on people-to-people exchanges, provide the framework and corresponding support for Chinese higher education institutions to engage globally and regionally by establishing universities networks, enhancing academic and student mobility and research collaboration, and contributing to socio-economic development in their respective communities, country and region and the rest of the world.

Chinese higher education institutions not only contribute to education and science diplomacy, but also to the achievement of China’s commitments to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. China’s focus on the massification of education (including increasing access to higher education), its increased focus on Science & Technology and contributions to national socio-economic development and higher education’s role in addressing the challenges posed under the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda should be seen within a complex framework which includes path dependency, capacity building and international relations. Although China’s national development agenda and international relations & foreign policy sets the framework for China’s higher education policies, individual Chinese higher education institutions are encouraged and supported in their initiatives for global and regional engagement with other higher education institutions, particularly the Belt and Road countries.

As suggested in this article, understanding China’s higher education institutions’ contribution to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda should be seen within a complex framework which includes path dependency, capacity building and international relations. Although China’s national development agenda and international relations & foreign policy sets the framework for China’s higher education policies, individual Chinese higher education institutions are encouraged and supported in their initiatives for global and regional engagement with other higher education institutions, particularly the Belt and Road countries.

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Riding the Waves Higher Education Globalization in Oceania: Responding to the Pandemic, Rising Geopolitical Tensions, Decolonisation and Climate Change

Christopher Ziguras

Abstract

After the end of the Cold War, universities in Oceania played a pivotal and relatively uncontroversial role in building international linkage for three decades, facilitating transnational flows of knowledge, students and scholars. Greater enmeshment in global knowledge production networks was widely seen to generate a wide range of social and economic benefits, albeit unevenly distributed. Very quickly, that unquestioned openness to educational globalisation came to be seen as problematic. Internationalisation is now challenged by new geopolitical tensions that position internationalised institutions as sites of vulnerability to hostile actors, as well as by calls for universities to be held accountable for the greenhouse gas emissions caused by a culture of hyper-mobility. The COVID pandemic, of course, prompted a much more rapid reversal of internationalisation, with nearly all of Oceania closing borders to international travellers for most of 2020 and 2021. While we will only really know the long-term impacts of these challenges with the passing of time, we can see some early signs of strategic reorientation on the part of governments and universities in the region.

In this paper, we consider separately the experiences of two groups of states in Oceania because their contexts are starkly different. Firstly, we consider how the international engagement strategies of the two high-income countries in the region, Australia and New Zealand, are being rethought. The latter part of this chapter considers the experiences of universities in the South Pacific.

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, universities in Oceania played a pivotal and relatively uncontroversial role in building international linkages for three decades, facilitating transnational flows of knowledge, students and scholars. Greater enmeshment in global knowledge production networks was widely seen to generate a wide range of social and economic benefits, albeit unevenly distributed. Very quickly, that unquestioned openness to educational globalisation came to be seen as problematic. This chapter provides a brief overview of the key structural features of higher education internationalisation in Oceania before considering a range of global challenges with which universities are now expected to engage. The chapter considers separately the unique experiences of universities in the South Pacific island states, including Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and French Polynesia. In Australasia, the market-based model has come under increasing political pressure, as the pandemic highlighted just how dependent universities are on international enrolments, and geopolitical tensions led to a defensive strategic lens now being applied to international partnerships. In the South Pacific, the call for decolonisation of higher education is increasing scrutiny over how universities engage with global knowledge systems in ways that prioritise local social and economic development.

Australasian internationalisation

Australia and New Zealand's first universities were established in the nineteenth century as colonial outposts of the British academic world, and, from their early days, they were tightly enmeshed with the academic system of “the old country” (Pietsch, 2013). The Anglophile universities of the antipodes maintained extensive links with British and North American higher education systems for over a century, and by the 1990s had become key nodes in regional academic networks, supported since that time by policy settings and market conditions that promoted an eagerness to engage with the Asia Pacific region, and East Asia in particular.

Australasian universities are heavily internationalised in various ways. Prior to COVID, they had among the highest proportions of international students in the world, peaking in 2019 at 32% of all students in Australian universities (including offshore programs and campuses) and 16% in New Zealand (Australian Government, 2022; New Zealand, 2022). Education has become a major export industry in both countries, representing the fourth or fifth most valuable export industry in each country, and in some areas (such as the State of Victoria and the city of Auckland), it is the single most valuable source of foreign earnings. After years of commitment to outbound mobility, Australian students learn abroad as part of their university studies at a higher rate than nearly any other country, with 19 per cent of Australian undergraduates having moved abroad in 2019 (International Graduate Insight Group, 2020).

COVID, China and Climate Change

The pandemic caused two crises in Australian international education. The first focused on the financial impact on universities, and the associated loss of academic and professional staff jobs resulting from the closure of borders and a significant drop in international enrolments. Those concerned about universities’ dependence on international students saw the downturn as an opportunity to proclaim ‘I told you so’ to a receptive national media, but it is doubtful that universities will decide to actively reduce international enrolments and associated revenue in the post-COVID era, to limit future vulnerability.

The second crisis concerned the plight of international students who remained in Australia and New Zealand during the pandemic, which revealed underlying vulnerabilities, particularly in Australia. In recent years, the international education sector was primarily focused on ensuring the welfare of a growing international student population, especially concerning workplace exploitation, accommodation and engagement with the broader community (Farbenblum & Berg, 2020, UNSW Human Rights Clinic, 2019; Ziguras, 2015). When the pandemic hit, strict lockdowns meant that many international students in Australia and New Zealand lost their jobs and access to campus life and social engagement, on top of the anguish of not being able to travel home, were their concerns about the welfare of their families and friends. International students in Australia experienced higher levels of financial insecurity as they were not able to access main emergency support payments, whereas, in New Zealand, equivalent programs were available to temporary residents and locals alike. Two-thirds of international students working in Australia prior to COVID lost all or nearly all with only 17% of local students whose employment was subsidised by COVID support programs (Lawrence & Ziguras, 2021). This experience starkly highlighted the vulnerability of hundreds of thousands of temporary residents in Australia, who are able to study and work, but who do not have access to the same legal rights and social safety net that protect the rest of the community (Marrison et al., 2010; Peter Mares, 2016).

While the effects of the pandemic will hopefully be short-lived (international enrolments are bouncing back in both countries in 2022), rising geopolitical tensions threaten to have a much larger impact on international academic engagement. And ironically, it is these countries’ success in the global education market that makes them highly vulnerable to political sensitivities. Australia and New Zealand both draw a majority of their countries’ success in the global education market that makes them highly vulnerable to political sensitivities. Australia and New Zealand both draw a majority of their international students from Asia, and China is by far the largest source country accounting for nearly 40% of international university students in Australia and 50% in...
NZ (Australian Government in pre-COVID times, 2021), Infometrics & National Research Bureau, 2016). Educa-
tion is not alone in being so dependent on China, which is the largest trading partner for many industries in both
countries. The political relationship between China and Austra-
lia, and New Zealand deteriorated from 2017 when allegations
regarding the allegedly covert influence campaigns were raised in both countries (Hartcher, 2019). In the following
years, Australia and New Zealand repeatedly aggravated the Chinese government, for example, by blocking
Huawei from involvement in the development of 5G networks on grounds that the Chinese company posed a security risk, blaming China for malicious
cyberattacks, and criticising Chinese policies on a range of issues, including its occupation of the South
China Sea, treatment of the Uyghur minority, and the Hong Kong national security law. In response, China
engaged in economic coercion against Australia, bloc-
ing the importation of a range of Australian products,
including coal, barley, wine and lobsters. Chinese
government media began warning students of the risks
involved in studying in Australia (Wan & Xu, 2021), but
there has been no definitive action to restrict student
mobility so far.

There have been two responses to this situation in
the higher education sector – decoupling and secu-
ratisation. Decoupling involves strategic economic
disengagement with China, but governments prefer to
say market diversification. Australia has sought to find
other markets by China and so far has been able to limit the costs of China’s economic coercion (Wilson, 2021). The priority of Australia’s 2021
ten-year international education strategy is diversifica-
tion (Australian Government, 2021). This is not a wholly
new concern, and the policy explicitly addresses a range of forms of concentration, but the significance of
its elevation to primary importance in the new strategy
is not lost on the sector.

Securitisation refers to the reframing of activities in
terms of security concerns and the consequent down-
grading of other ways of understanding the activity
(Buzan et al., 1997). We see this happening to interna-
tional education worldwide, as commercial, cultural and
developmental logics become subsumed by a concern with the security risks posed by the cross-border move-
ments of students, scholars and ideas. It is not that geopolitical concerns are a new feature of internatio-
nal education; for centuries, educational mobility was put to work in the service of colonial empire-building in the
Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries (Pietsch, 2013) and then repurposed to assist in the integration of
Cold War blocs in the late Twentieth Century (Ziguras, 2018).

Australia and New Zealand’s success in international
engagement is predicated on the belief that just as China’s rise since the 1990s makes these countries’ education systems
particularly vulnerable in an increasingly tense world,
Concerns have been raised in both countries about universities being sites of intellectual property theft, partic-
ularly concerning dual-use technologies, about foreign students and scholars being encouraged to work on behalf of their governments, for example, by being asked to report to the authorities on compatriots, demonstrate on campus against perceived slights to their home country, and create a culture of self-censor-
ship on campuses due to fears of antagonising foreign
governments.

The impacts have been strongest in Australia, where
after several years of work, governments and uni-
versities have arrived at a new set of guidelines for
international engagement, which involve far higher
levels of scrutiny both within institutions and by the
government (University Foreign Interference Taskforce, 2021). There has been a ratcheting up of pressure on
institutions to align their strategic objectives and risk
assessment frameworks with Australia’s geopolitical
orientations, the most recent iteration is a parliamen-
tary enquiry into national security risks affecting the
Australian higher education and research sector (Com-
monwealth of Australia, 2022).

Antipodean universities have embraced the United
Nations Sustainable Development goals, both as a
guide informing decisions on curriculum development and research priorities and as a means of articulating
the real-world relevance and impact of their work. Four of the top ten universities in the 2021 Times
Higher Education Impact Rankings, which assessed con-
tributions made to achieving the SDGs, were Australian institutions (O’Malley, 2021). While such rankings do
need to be treated sceptically, these results do indicate the degree to which these universities have explicit-
ly adopted the SDGs as a means of expressing their aspirations and achievements. This newly articulated
commitment to addressing global challenges is forcing
Australasian institutions to move away from a narrow
and quite self-interested focus on revenue generation and
brand-building. Climate change is major concern,
with a succession of institutions pledging to transition
to carbon neutrality quickly, and this will likely trans-
late into a reduction in travel by university staff and
students. Helping this shift was two learnings from the
pandemic, first that there are now good alternative
means of international engagement through videocon-
ferencing and second, that universities can save a large
amount of money by curtailing travel.

Higher Education Internationalisation
in the Pacific

The international engagement of universities in the
South Pacific is starkly different. While Australasian uni-
versities are, on the whole, well-established, large and
well-funded and thus able to consider themselves as
‘world-class’ institutions (Salmi, 2008), universities in
the South Pacific are comparatively small, financially
constrained and focused on the training needs of local
communities (Healey, 2022).

Just as Antipodean universities were created as
outposts of the British higher education system, the
oldest universities in the South Pacific were established
by foreign governments as part of broader efforts to
develop modern state institutions. In 1965 the Austra-
lian government established Papua New Guinea’s (PNG)
four universities – the University of PNG, PNG University
of Technology, the University of Goroka and the Papua
New Guinea University of Natural Resources and Envi-
ronment. PNG was a United Nations Trust at that time,
under Australian administration, but even after inde-
pendence in 1975, the close relationship has continued,
with Australia remaining PNG’s largest donor and PNG
being Australia’s largest development assistance recipi-
ent. Similarly, the University of the South Pacific (USP)
was established in 1968 by the governments of Austra-
lia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom as a regional
university modelled on the University of the West Indies
established three years earlier. To serve its Pacific terri-
tories, France created the French Pacific University in
1987, which later split to form the University of French
Polynesia and the University of New Caledonia. These
remain very much integrated within the French national
higher education system, adhering to the same policies
and regulations, curriculum and academic calendar as
in France.

The region’s other universities have postcolonial origins,
having been created either by national governments as
public universities – including the National University of
Samoa (1984), Fiji National University (2010), Solomon
Islands National University (2013), National University of
Vanuatu (2020) – or private universities established by
a community group – University of Fiji (2004) and Christ’s
University in Pacific, Tonga (2004). Regardless of their
histories, all these universities’ international engage-
ments are framed by the significant disparities that exist in relation to Australia, New Zealand and France.

Decolonisation and Climate Change

From their inception, all higher education institutions
in the South Pacific have faced the challenge of tai-
loring and adapting imported established systems,
curricula and pedagogies to suit local needs. In recent
years, there has been a renewed focus on such ques-
tions through the lens of decolonisation. We see this
expressed in the considerable interest in research on
Pasifika students’ approaches to learning, with scholars
endeavouring to move beyond deficit models through
a deeper engagement with traditional ways of sharing
knowledge (Boon-Nanai et al., 2022, Matapo & McFa-
illicCarthy, 2022; New Zealand, 2020). There has also, in recent years, been a methodologically rich
ly informed studies of educational policy, governance
and administration, leading to a more sophisticated
recognition of the importance of social context and in
particular the significance of collective identities and
relationships between social groups (Wright, 2022).

The challenge of decolonising the curriculum invari-
ably involves rethinking the place of a wide range of
approaches, including a range of Western intellec-
tual traditions, the utilitarian demands of employers
and governments, and various local religious and cul-
tural traditions. Take the example of ethics courses,
which are compulsory in Fiji’s universities. White & Mua
(2022) describe internal academic debates about what
should be taught. These courses encompass intellec-
tual traditions including ‘good governance’, democratic
citizenship, utilitarianism, religious moral beliefs, pro-
fessional ethics, indigenous cultural traditions, and
universal human rights, among others. Debates focus on what combination of these is most appropriate for particular student groups, with strong divisions between professional faculties that advocate for narrow professional ethics courses, government figures more concerned with ‘good governance’ in an effort to overcome corruption, and humanities and social science scholars interested in a more socio-cultural approach.

Another pressing issue for South Pacific universities is the degree to which professional education and licensing should be harmonized with international standards. Australia and New Zealand have entered into a large number of mutual recognition agreements for professional qualifications (82 and 41, respectively), but only one of these involves the South Pacific, an accounting agreement between Australia and PNG (APEC, 2022; Ziguras, 2021). Aligning professional education facilitates vastly greater employment opportunities for graduates who are prepared to work abroad, which is a significant issue given the small populations and limited graduate opportunities in island states. For example, Fiji National University is seeking international recognition for its engineering programs under the Washington Accord framework and has obtained recognition of its radiography program by Australian licensing bodies (Healey, 2022).

While climate change is, of course, a growing priority for universities globally, it is an existential issue for universities in the Pacific, as their communities grapple with the impact of rising sea levels, increasing intensity of storms, and changing rainfall patterns, among other impacts. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2018 adopted the Boe Declaration, which identified climate change as “the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the people of the Pacific”. Research and teaching into both the impacts and the potential adaptation strategies is therefore of critical importance. Given the scale and complexity of the challenge, this requires multinational cooperation in funding, research and implementation.

The impact of the stark economic inequalities between the South Pacific on the one hand and Australia, New Zealand and France on the other is moderated by the fact that a large proportion of the population of most Pacific island states live abroad. There are more Tongans living abroad than in Tonga, for example (Lee, 2009). These diasporic networks already play a key role in higher education, in particular at the level of doctoral training and research and can be harnessed further in order to tackle the challenges of decolonisation, harmonisation of professional qualifications and climate change responses.

Conclusion

While the experiences of these two regions – Australasia and the South Pacific – are quite distinct, universities in both are being called upon to engage more strategically in a politically charged global environment. This shift has profound implications for university leadership, who are now called upon to justify their international activities more explicitly to a range of stakeholders. In Australia and New Zealand, the expansion of the global education market is ever; it is no longer enough to apply a decision-making rubric, which in effect resembles ‘it is international and therefore good’, and ‘it generates a small surplus, so let’s do it’. In the South Pacific, university leaders face competing pressures to serve local communities and value local knowledge while also increasing alignment with international standards, especially in relation to professional education, in the hope that greater integration into global knowledge systems will provide greater opportunities for skilled graduates. This is at once a re-politicisation of internationalisation, in some ways harking back to the Cold War concern with alliance-building, although globalisation has made international relations much more complex since that time. Now, as well as concerning who we are partnering with, university leaders need to be able to explain what type of international benefits will accrue from this activity, how these will benefit local communities, and whether they will contribute to addressing the most important global challenges we face.

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A European Vision for 2030

Thomas Ekman Jørgensen

In the spring of 2021, the European University Association (EUA), representing more than 800 members across the continent, published its vision for 2030: “Universities without walls” 1. This document lays out the idea of universities that are deeply integrated with the rest of society at the local, national and international levels. Universities are spaces where diverse learners with different goals are part of the university community - for longer or shorter periods, they will be places of encounters and cooperation with many different partners.

Sustainable development is and will continue to be a fundamental guiding principle for this societal engagement, focusing on the interplay between the goals of protecting the environment and providing wellbeing across the planet. This work will require new levels of cooperation between disciplines within universities as well as with external partners.

While working with these partners, universities will also stand firm on their values. They will be places of academic freedom, with respect for evidence-based debates, and areas of respite to think about new ideas and new perspectives on society and the universe. Serendipity and the dedication to knowledge, research and education for their own sake are not in contradiction to providing solutions to societal challenges.

Looking more concretely at the future and the role that the larger context plays for realising the vision of a university without walls, EUA published a follow-up report on scenarios. 2 This report looked at possible developments in geopolitics, digitalisation and the role of democracy in Europe, and how these would affect the ambitions outlined in “Universities without walls”. These showed that the main risks to realising this vision would be one-dimensional thinking and utilitarianism.

One-dimensional thinking supposes that universities have one function, being either ivory-tower institutions purely engaged with the production of knowledge for its own sake or cogs in the macro-economic machinery to increase competitiveness. Universities are not only producers of knowledge for its own sake and contributors to competitiveness; they are also vehicles for cultural and inter-cultural exchanges, critical debates, social inclusion and much more. Moreover, universities can combine all these functions in ways that create new questions and new knowledge. Likewise, with utilitarianism, universities are institutions with their own values and goals, they are not vehicles for policies developed elsewhere. Therefore, they should not, as is often the case in geopolitics, become instruments in a struggle between global powers. This is also true for learning and teaching, which are much more than tools for providing learners with labour market-relevant skills.

University values must be protected, for example, from democratic backsliding, but also from being controlled by commercial interests. The digital transformation is particularly relevant here, as the pandemic has boosted the digitalisation of universities, which comes with the risk of being dominated by the commercial interests of technology companies.


Interdisciplinary research, multidisciplinary teaching: How universities can contribute to handling the major challenges of the 21st century

Karl Tombre

Abstract

The broad transitions of the 21st century are the Environmental and Digital Transformations of our societies and our economy. The challenges raised by these transitions are complex, and the associated problems will not be solved by a purely technological approach. In this multi-faceted world, comprehensive universities have the advantages of a long tradition in applying scientific methods to understand complex questions and gathering all the disciplines associated with human knowledge under the same roof. What they still lack to a certain extent is the habit of pushing for extensive interdisciplinary approaches. By developing interdisciplinary research programs, fostering cross-disciplinary profiles through an evolution of their curricula, and adding interdisciplinary work to their modality programs, universities can evolve to be major players for the success of these broad transitions of our world.

The role of universities

Universities are among the oldest institutions in the world. Since their foundation in the Middle Ages, they have been based on the principle of educating students, not by merely teaching a predetermined curriculum, but by exposing them to critical thinking, debating issues and questioning established truths. This means that they have been and continue to be major players in the constant increase in humankind’s global knowledge. Academic freedom has always been an important aspect of this university “DNA”. Medieval disputations in theology and philosophy developed into what we now know as scientific research, in all knowledge areas. University teaching is based on research, and research is in turn strongly connected to education.

This is still the very essence of a university: learning to question existing knowledge and increase our global understanding of complex issues, using an approach referred to as the scientific method. As early as classical
The case for an interdisciplinary approach

Although there has been controversy about the precise role of science in the Industrial Revolution, which many perceive to have been mainly driven by technological and entrepreneurial skills, the fact that British industrialists and engineers were educated in Newtonian mechanics is perceived as an important factor for this revolution having its origins in Britain (Blek & Lipsy, 2004). In any case, this was the beginning of a nearly two-century-long period where science and technology fed each other, and the world was profoundly transformed by technology. Alas, the burning of fossil fuels to meet the rapidly increasing energy needs of this new age probably marked the start of a global warming process which has led the world to the present situation, amplified by the threat of a shortage of critical resources.

The Digital Revolution was kicked off by another context, that of the second World War. There was a need for automated computation for intelligence and the development of new technologies such as mastering nuclear fission. Progress in both basic science and technology was ripe for the overwhelmingly fast development of a new era, over just a few decades. Those of us who studied computer science in the 1980s have certainly seen the astonishment in our students’ or children’s eyes when we explain that the smartphone that they all routinely use far exceeds, in terms of computing power and memory capacity, not to mention access to online services, anything we had access to or could even dream of at the time. We have entered a Digital age, which deeply impacts not only the way we work, but also the way our human societies are organised, the way we interact with each other, and the way we think about our economic, political and social environments. And there are increasing concerns about the imperfections in the ongoing development. As noted by Ann Dale (2005), disciplinary research often appears as vertical stovepipes, making cross-sectoral discourse problematic. To overcome this, a growing number of universities have set up interdisciplinary research institutes or programmes devoted to cross-disciplinary challenges. This is done orthogonally to their disciplinary departments. While this acknowledges the benefit of cross-disciplinary collaboration to fully understand complex questions, such constructions cannot avoid a number of obstacles (Pickett et al., 1999):

- the lack of existing conceptual frameworks to conduct research in emerging interdisciplinary areas;
- the time and hard work needed to develop a common language, but also a “common meaning”; and
- the temptation to return to one's disciplinary “comfort zone” when the inevitable critical impulse points out all the imperfections in the ongoing development.

But when enough time and strategic priorities are provided, such interdisciplinary research institutes can be powerhouses for emerging knowledge and good science in many fields.

Interdisciplinary educational programmes should evolve to encourage systems thinking, which allows learners to understand the whole by understanding the connection between the different parts. The authors stress that “traditional hyper-specialised education programmes show all their uselessness as they pivot on the building of sectorial knowledge and languages” (Saviano et al., 2016). The challenge is to be able to go past these differences in order to cover all the dimensions of a specific problem as an interdisciplinary team. We do not dream of universal minds mastering all these dimensions alone. Nevertheless, we believe that providing a certain level of “shallow” understanding of the dimensions which are not covered by one’s few “deep” fields of knowledge, and by learning to share a common reference framework and a common language, such teams can be efficient in developing innovative solutions. As noted by Uhlenbrook and de Jong (2012) in a paper on the expected competency profiles for the water professionals of the future:

“Regardless of the number of people in the team and the depth of their specialised knowledge, together they will not get anywhere if they do not effectively work together. Finding a common language, understanding the basics of other disciplines and being able to integrate outside specialist knowledge are essential skills for successful team work.”

In an exploratory study aimed at evaluating the emergent attributes of T-shaped expertise in two educational programs, Conley et al. (2017) concluded that “current logical models assert that these individuals will be more ‘responsible’ innovators, as they possess both a deeper and broader understanding of the complex, interconnected ‘wicked problems’ facing our society.” Many interesting connections are actually worth explo-
Interdisciplinary mobility

The major challenges posed by Environmental and Digital Transitions are of a much broader scope than those of individual countries. Especially in Europe, we need a Europe-wide approach, as no national model is strong enough to build global leadership and strong innovation for these challenges. The diversity of languages, cultures, managerial approaches, economic environments, and political and regulatory frameworks that we have in Europe is a major asset, rather than a hindrance, for training truly European engineers, managers and leaders who are able to deliver to society. Inside Europe, what better place than its comprehensive universities, which are unique institutions with the necessary interdisciplinary approaches, in both research and education? As honest brokers in a world full of competition, they would clearly be valuable custodians of knowledge fields, where crossing disciplines, crossing curriculum tracks and crossing borders is easier than it is in industry. Curricula must be open to the great variety of profiles needed for the society and economy of tomorrow. It should be natural to think of universities as connecting civil society, political decision-makers, academia and economic interests.

Europe was the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. As we have seen, Europe’s universities undoubtedly played a role in the success of that revolution. We firmly believe that Europe and its universities can again play a major role in developing the necessary interdisciplinary skills and approaches to innovation that are needed for the Environmental Revolution.

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Conclusion

While our universities certainly have many assets, they still need to work on their ability to foster interdisciplinary approaches. They need to be places widely open to dialogue between knowledge fields, where crossing disciplines, crossing curriculum tracks and crossing borders is easier than it is in industry. Curricula must be open to the great variety of profiles needed for the society and economy of tomorrow. It should be natural to think of universities as connecting civil society, political decision-makers, academia and economic interests.

Promises and risks of digital research and education

Stephane Berghmans, Jean-Claude Burgelman and Thomas Ekman Jørgensen

Abstract

This article explores the consequences of the digitalisation of higher education and research: as research data and data from digitally enhanced learning has grown, so have the possibilities for using this resource for the public good, as well as harvesting it for commercial purposes. In this situation, the academic research system must look to preserve its digital sovereignty through the possibility of making research results and data open through Open Science, but must also work to control the data generated by its various activities. Large technology companies can and are using this data for commercial services, at times competing with universities, and potentially undermining university values.

The article argues that we find ourselves at a crucial moment in this development, where universities must act in order to retain control of their activities and avoid dependence on large, commercial stakeholders, while recognising data as a 21st century common good.

Robert Maxwell is mostly remembered today for the massive and highly influential (for good and bad) publishing empire he created, which included newspapers like The Sun, The Mirror or the infamous The News of the World. He even owned the sticker firm Panini and TV channels such as MTV in Europe through Maxwell Cable TV. What he is less remembered for among the general public is the establishment of the modern scientific publishing industry. Academic publishing predates Maxwell of course but it was highly inefficient, slow and mostly financially unsustainable. He created Pergamon Press, which we would today describe as a disruptor in the world of science, with Open Access for scientific publishing. It obviously let it go in the 1950s, allowing it to be managed by commercial interests, but never got it back. Despite decades of the Open Access movement, followed by the more recent emergence of the Open Science movement, as well as attempts to take scientific articles out of the black boxes in which they are locked, there has been limited success in regaining full control. The path to full ownership of research output by its creator, the academic community, is still a long way off. Worryingly, the start of this century poses a new threat to universities. This one is very similar in its premise to the loss of scientific publishing, but with potentially far direr consequences. As the world undergoes full digitalisation of what we say, write, do and increasingly think (via AI), consciously or even unconsciously, these material and immaterial actions have become digital data points. While digitalisation of the subject of science and science itself can hold the promise of better and more reflective research, digitalisation also opens the door to more marketisation. Every day we read stories in the press about how, in a data driven economy, everything that is digital or moves in the digital sphere can be monetised. In such a world of large digital platforms and technology companies that are constantly looking for new avenues of profit, the academic world offers an attractive way of diversifying their business. Just as in our daily life, the question the academic world therefore faces is who will be in control of all of the data it directly or indirectly creates? Just as for scientific articles, the question today is will this data be put in a black box and closed or will it be made openly available and hence traceable and reusable?

What data are we talking about? First, we should probably not be too worried about the data being generated by research itself. Major battles are still to be won in order to regain control, but data from research output is on its way to being better managed as a resource for science, with Open Access for scientific publications slowing increasing and research data being made FAIR, as in Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Let us not forget though that this will not
happen without significant budgets being allocated to the required open infrastructure and, importantly, to the training the next generation of data-savvy academics and data stewards. However, as digital makes analogue more efficient, finding this budget will mainly be a matter of choice. More worryingly, big technology companies have already entered the education space with their own training programmes. These include Google and Amazon, partly working alone and partly providing training through universities, and Microsoft, which offers specific training for a fee via LinkedIn. Similarly, MOOC platforms are moving towards a model where most of the revenue comes from selling credentials directly to learners rather than hosting courses produced by universities. The move from non-profit to for-profit has already taken place for these types of online credentials, as non-profit MOOC platforms are being bought by commercial education companies. Here, all the data that can be gathered on learner behaviour is potentially valuable for selling education services. Nothing has yet been decided or even defined with regard to the usage data that is being generated through the use of digital platforms used for educational or research purposes. Who should own such data? Or should it even be owned, as it is after all being generated through public investments?

The times are as ripe as they were when Maxwell intervened and changed scientific publishing. While it cannot be argued that the situation around data in higher education is as intractable a state as it was then, there are other parallels. We have seen unprecedented growth in data around all university missions. The situation is so complex that it requires a dedicated level of professionalism in academia, as a single university is no longer able to tackle these challenges on its own. That is also why we are seeing the emergence of digital platforms as the major providers of funding while sustainable models are sought. It remains to be seen whether even single (European) countries can tackle the issues on their own.

Public investments are a major element of data in academia and not just because they enable its complexity to be addressed. This is a key defining feature in itself, as stated in the 2017 UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, which urged us ‘to treat public funding of research and development as a form of public investment, the returns on which are long term and serve public interest’ (UNESCO, 2017). Building on this, UNESCO went further in its 2021 Recommendation on Open Science, recognising the significant value of science as a common good. The whole academic enterprise, including research data, could and should therefore be considered as a common good and access to it should be a universal right. The current global pandemic is probably the best example of such a need. Some even argue that it is a turning point which demonstrated that it was only through the swift global opening and sharing of data that researchers were able to make rapid progress. Yet despite the importance of opening citations, key publishers’ contributions were slow to be obtained, as was the case of Elsevier’s recent decision to open its citations, or have yet to be achieved, as was the case of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the American Chemical Society and the University of Chicago Press. This is due to commercial publishers trying to protect their newly developed and highly profitable business, in light of a more than likely decrease in their old business model (subscriptions). In essence it is not more than what digital platforms do: giving away part of their services for free and monetising new needs.

Another recent example of publishers’ interference is their attempt to establish over-restrictive criteria in their guidance for researchers when they select a repository to manage, share and preserve their data. The Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR), supported by many other organisations, expressed its concerns over the nature of the proposed set of criteria and the lack of transparency in the process through which they were developed. While it might be in the best commercial interests of some publishers to impose guidelines that favour their own repositories, these should not substitute or conflict with guidance already available to researchers from their universities, disciplinary communities or funders. It remains important to strengthen and expand the existing repository ecosystem to ensure the adoption of good practices. However, researchers must have a real choice, including the option to choose community-managed institutional, national, domain or generalist data repositories.

In 2020, Elsevier offered universities in The Netherlands a contract that went well beyond reading and publishing scientific articles, and included research information, research assessment and Open Science. While the move was not surprising given the datafication of academia and its increasing marketisation, it did cause Dutch universities to stop and think. As a consequence, they developed a strategy aimed at safeguarding academic and digital sovereignty (Jansen, 2020). While sovereignty is most often linked to a territory or jurisdiction, they defined digital sovereignty as their ability to act and make decisions autonomously. They also defined academic sovereignty as the protection of an independent academic community that can ensure transparent and reliable knowledge creation. Both academic and digital sovereignty safeguards academic contributions to the long-term benefit of the economy, society and democracy.

Key to the Dutch universities’ approach was the development of guiding principles to ensure open research (meta) data and data analytics, and to raise awareness in the research community. These principles are trusted and transparent provenance, openness of metadata, openness of licensing and availability, open standards and interoperability, open collaboration with third parties and academic sovereignty through governance. They are now being implemented and used in negotiations with publishers and other providers of digital services. However, such an initiative cannot just be limited to the Netherlands, as it can help assess which data and services are critical for universities and must therefore be publicly controlled to safeguard academic sovereignty. New answers will need to be found to transform today’s challenges into universities’ future opportunities.

The issues concerning the digitalisation of teaching and learning are somewhat different from those of Open Science. As increasing digitalisation of universities leads to more data, through digitally enhanced learning or digitalisation of university management, there are increasing possibilities for private companies to offer data-based services to universities. Education technology (EdTech) is a rapidly growing field of investment with billions of dollars’ worth of investment being made globally every year. Such services not only aim to enhance learning and teaching, but also to offer holistic university management structures that will enable data-driven management of the institution as a whole. These services will be plugged into wider
platforms, such as the Windows operating system of Google’s Chrome browser, with the potential for more data to be harvested.

Attitudes to marketisation differ in Europe, as do they in the world. Some embrace the possibilities that data-driven services offer. Universities across Europe generally want to begin using these new technologies, for example, for learning enhancement, while at the same time reporting the need for capacity building in terms of funding and improving the digital skills of staff. Aggregated data on student and researcher behaviour gives university leadership precise tools and evidence to improve student access and retention. Data on international cooperation can target international relations with partners where researchers are already well connected – or develop new relations where they are not. In systems that are under pressure financially, EdTech can hold the promise to increase efficiency and deliver better experiences for students.

The political landscape and framework conditions around these areas are in flux. The European Union is launching new legislation to regulate the digital area, reigning in big technology companies in terms of how much they can use their dominant positions in the market and giving them new obligations to manage the content provided through their services. New regulation also concerns data and the use of artificial intelligence. For the latter, education is explicitly mentioned as an area of ‘high risk’ which requires high levels of transparency and human oversight.

However, it is clear that this type of legislation will only be partially able to establish a clear framework for the activities of universities. The framework conditions for universities and other types of knowledge institutions need to take into account the wish and duty to make their results open while avoiding being dominated by private, for-profit interests in the data economy. The Dutch discussion about digital academic sovereignty is an example of trying to come to terms with this balancing act. It would be an illusion to think that this autonomy can be retained through consensus within the academic community only: private providers and economic interests have long since made their entrance on the scene. The question is then how to protect universities and their values against dominance by these providers of everything from cloud storage to short courses.

One answer is legislation. At the time of writing, the European Union has plans to reconsider its legislation on data and copyright in light of the needs of the research community. Other, more ambitious proposals have been raised in the European debate. The Rector of the University of Amsterdam, Karen Maex, has notably called for a Digital Universities Act, which would give universities autonomy over the data they produce so that this data could not be used by technology companies to increase their power over what universities do.

Another idea is to balance the power of technology companies by providing open-source solutions created by the universities themselves. This would alleviate concerns among users about how their data is used and by whom, as the universities would design solutions that are fully transparent. However, it does require a certain critical mass of developers able to build and maintain software of a comparable quality to what is produced by large technology companies or other EdTech providers with large investor backing.

Infrastructure is also central. The pandemic demonstrated how private providers like Zoom or Microsoft Teams were able to meet the infrastructure requirements to move learning online. Voices have been raised claiming that public – or at least publicly controlled – infrastructure is needed in order to retain control of university data. This strategy would be similar to the initiatives that led to the European Open Data Cloud in the 2010s. However, it would be dependent on adequate and sustainable public investments, as well as the continued political will to coordinate such a structure at European level.

One possible outcome of these developments would be a highly uneven approach to digitalisation and universities’ ability to retain control. Some countries will have the economic and political capacity to implement meaningful regulation and make investments in public infrastructure – as well as investment in professional staff at universities. In these countries, universities might be able to retain control. In other countries, resources might be so scarce that it would be difficult not to use the economically cheap and efficient solutions that large technology companies can offer, even if this means loss of control of the data that universities generate. Inequality absolutely must be part of this debate.

Finally, science is by default global and it will therefore be a delicate exercise to balance the need to regulate access and use of data across the globe with the de facto need to collaborate as academia already does.
Conclusion and outlook: European universities, the green and the digital transition

Thomas Ekman Jørgensen

European universities are increasingly focused on contributing to sustainable development and, in particular, the green and the digital transition. There is a notable change from the earlier paradigm where universities pointed to their contribution to economic growth and competitiveness. Now, attention is being focused on the broad scope of their missions and how they provide solutions to the sustainability challenge.

The green and digital transition are especially pertinent for Europe's universities. These two topics form the red thread of European Union policies, and they are broadly perceived as the main challenges, as is clear from the European contributions to this report.

This focus is not only about universities as suppliers of societal demands: it also includes the dynamic between universities and their framework conditions. These conditions are shaped both by commercial and political stakeholders, and universities shape them in the continuous development of their missions: innovation in learning and teaching – including digitally enhanced learning – interdisciplinarity, international cooperation and Open Science are some examples that have been mentioned in the contributions.

European university policies have been extraordinarily dynamic in recent years. Transnational alliances between universities are deepening, and there is a renewed sense of purpose in the European Union as well as in the Bologna Process. The pandemic has also given many European countries an impetus to invest in developing their education and research systems. Political initiatives combined with the universities’ awareness of their responsibility in the common challenges could be an accelerator of change for the years to come; this is definitely a space to watch.
Presentation of the Regional Chapter on African Higher Education

Ramon Torrent

HAQAA2\(^2\) is an EU-funded project developed within the framework of the AU-EU partnership that was formally established in 2000 at the first Africa-EU Summit in Cairo, the sixth edition of which was held on 17-18 February 2022. The HAQAA2 implementing team includes the Association of African Universities (AAU), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA), and is led by OBREAL Global.

OBREAL Global was honoured when, as leader of the HAQAA2 project, it was asked by GUNi to coordinate the Regional Chapter on Africa of the Special Issue of its World Report on “New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030”. The content of the chapter largely coincided with the work already initiated within the framework of HAQAA2’s policy component. Most contributions to it will therefore be developed and extended (and be given continuity, which is certainly an advantage) within this HAQAA framework.

The chapter begins with two introductory pieces offering an overview by two distinguished professors with a wealth of knowledge and experience: Wail Benjelloun (Morocco) and Juma Shabani (Burundi). This is followed by a presentation from a regional perspective, prepared by a leading regional institution, the Inter-University Council of East Africa (one of the eight official institutions of the East Africa Community), and co-authored by its Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary, Professors Gaspard Banyankimbona and Mike Kuria. It continues with four contributions on topics that are highly relevant in the African context and in terms of GUNi’s Special Issue of its World Report, all written by leading and experienced specialists: Transforming Curricula by Charmaine B. Villet (Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Namibia), Research and Innovation: Learning and Innovation Strategies by Mafini Dosso (from the Ivory Coast, currently working and Innovation: Learning and Innovation Strategies by James Jowi (founder of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission), and Quality and Quality Assurance by Jeffry Mukora (from Mozambique), with extensive experience in this area at national and regional (continental) levels. The last contribution deals with an issue too often forgotten in academic literature: the need for data (and data collection) in order to engage in well-informed policy-making; it has been written by one of the members of the HAQAA2 Policy-and-Data Unit implementing team, Professor Kibrome M. Haile (a former Law School Dean at one of the leading universities in Ethiopia). Finally, the Secretary General of the Association of African Universities (AAU), Professor Oluosola Oyewole, offers an overview from the AAU’s perspective.

All these contributions are comprehensive, and demand and deserve careful reading and reflection. Without intending to summarise them, I will therefore attempt to draw from them some very general conclusions that could serve as a basis for further policy-oriented work.

The conclusions will mainly be methodological, as I am not African and history tells us that it is highly advisable for non-Africans to refrain from meddling with the substance of education systems in Africa.

The premise for the conclusions is as follows: higher education policy is defined and implemented at many levels. The two basic levels will always be (i) the “regulated”, i.e. the universities (or, more generally, Higher Education Institutions, known as HEIs) themselves, endowed with autonomy to a greater or lesser degree, and (ii) the “regulators” at national level, i.e. governments and parliaments. At world level, the United Nations family of organisations, mainly UNESCO, offers a multilateral framework whose effective impact will however always be very limited as governments are extremely reluctant to relinquish their independence in an area as sensitive as education (including Higher Education). In the middle, between the national and multilevel, regional integration processes that can embrace higher education may appear. This is certainly the case in Africa, where two integration processes coexist and overlap: that of the Regional Communities and that of the Continental (the African Union, with an important continental Education - and principal education officer in the East African Community, i.e. the universities (or, more generally, Higher Education Institutions, known as HEIs) themselves, endowed with autonomy to a greater or lesser degree, and (ii) the “regulators” at national level, i.e. governments and parliaments. At world level, the United Nations family of organisations, mainly UNESCO, offers a multilateral framework whose effective impact will however always be very limited as governments are extremely reluctant to relinquish their independence in an area as sensitive as education (including Higher Education). In the middle, between the national and multilevel, regional integration processes that can embrace higher education may appear. This is certainly the case in Africa, where two integration processes coexist and overlap: that of the Regional Communities and that of the Continental (the African Union, with an important continental player bringing together, at least potentially, all universities: the Association of African Universities). The conclusions are as follows:

1) The different levels for HE policy definition and implementation in Africa can be adequately articulated. Not all HE aspects can or should be dealt with at all levels. This will only lead to a duplication of efforts and contradictions. Being overambitious at one level necessarily leads to a dispersion of efforts and ineffectiveness.

2) Most overriding challenges faced by African higher education seem to have been well identified in Professor Benjelloun’s contribution: i) Massification, ii) Reform of Organisational Structures, iii) Quality, and iv) Employability.

3) The topics concerning the existing processes of African integration also seem to have been well set out by Professor Shabani: i) Recognition of Academic and Professional Qualifications, ii) Harmonisation and Convergence, including Quality Assurance, and iii) Integration and Networking of Institutions and Infrastructures.

4) Professor Shabani’s and other contributions strongly emphasise the fact that African integration in higher education (as in many other areas) must combine and adequately articulate the regional and continental levels. The current, very important, role of regions is well addressed and illustrated in the IUCAs Contribution, co-authored by Professors Banyankimbona and Kuria). And Professor Haile’s contribution also explains very clearly how regions could and should be used as building blocks of continental integration.

5) On issues of substance:

- Professor Villet’s contribution offers a very convincing argument on i) the need to accept that classrooms cannot remain anchored in the past, ii) teachers should no longer be seen as those who possess a disciplined body of knowledge and skills to pass on to the learner through deliberate instruction, and iii) curricula should no longer be conceived as an accumulation of separate courses and credits. It also offers an appealing guiding principle for the decades ahead: the task of advancing the higher education philosophy is not only to understand the university or even to defend it, but to help in changing the institution (in particular, by applying a transformative approach to curricula design and implementation).

- Professor Villet’s arguments are backed up by Dr. Dosso’s contribution. She argues very forcefully that he universities, as one of the elements of the quadruple helix – academia, civil society, industry and government – should feel obliged to contribute to harnessing the emerging technological and innovation potential and opportunities to the benefit of local communities; and ii) this requires novel place-based and people-centred policymaking approaches. These place-based, “one-size-fits-all” policies should help to create, capture and redistribute more value locally by upgrading the learning and innovation capabilities of local players. And it is pretty obvious that these objectives will not be achieved if curricula remains anchored in the past and at least some of Professor Villet’s proposed transformations do not take place.

- Dr. Jowi’s contribution showcases how African higher education systems have advanced in the field of internationalisation and singles out both the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead. Among the former, i) the historical and growing knowledge divide between developed regions (the North) and Africa, ii) brain drain, and iii) curriculum reforms arising from internationalisation activities that lead to knowledge epistemologies and content from other world regions dominating the curricula of most African universities. Among the latter, i) improvement in capacity and management, ii) international research collaborations, and iii) the possibility of reversing African diaspora, turning it into a “brain-gain”.

- Dr. Mukora’s contribution explains a success story that proves that optimism about the future of African continental integration is not unfounded: i) the production, at continental level and within the framework of HAQAA1, of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA), and ii) the ongoing endeavour, within the framework of HAQAA2, to produce a User’s Guide. It also points to the necessary interaction and complementarity between the continental and regional levels of African integration in Higher Education.

- Underlying all this is an overarching issue: the need to gather adequate data to be used in well-informed policymaking, as explained in Professor Haile’s contribution.

All in all, the chapter achieves the goals of any venture in the field of knowledge production: systematising existing knowledge, contributing new knowledge and laying the foundations for further future advances.
From a wider political perspective, I will end this pre-
sentation with the last sentence of Professor Oyewole’s 
overview from the AAU’s perspective:
“Africa has a very young population. Education is the only viable way of equipping these youths for the future. Special attention should be given to youth development in Africa by ensuring that Africa builds up the youths that will drive its deve-
lopment. This effort must also embrace the higher education sector as the apex and the server of the entire education system”.
It summarises why we and everyone else should care about African higher education.

Challenges and perspectives of North African universities: a window on african higher education
Wail Benjelloun

Abstract
North African (NA) Higher Education (HE) includes some of the oldest universities in the world and boasts a prestigious history in both sciences and humanities. The colonial interlude introduced new methods of education but left a barren tertiary landscape, and the newly independent countries quickly established national universities that successfully trained their admi-
nistrative, scientific and technical cadres. Today, the NA university system faces other challenges linked to four major factors: massification and sustained educatio-
nal demand, reform of organisational structure, quality and employability. From an employment perspective, NA countries are losing the contribution of more than a third of their human potential in spite of educational expansion, through inappropriate curricula and trai-
ning and through an inability to incorporate youth into economies that are also growing. To remedy the situa-
tion, actions such as economic diversification and the introduction of quality labour-intensive value-added economic initiatives should be facilitated, as should the encouragement of entrepreneurship and access to finan-
cing for job-creating investments. Looking to HE in the African Continent from NA can be of interest because of common historical references, missions and objectives, as well as challenges.

Introduction
Looking at Higher Education (HE) in the African Conti-
nent from North Africa (NA) can be of interest because the similarities in terms of historical references, mis-
sions, objectives and challenges do not seem to be limited to the region but also embrace most nations of the continent.

All HE systems in North Africa stem from traditions that are deeply rooted in the region’s history and reflect the high value placed on education and training in NA societies. In many cases they serve as social equity mechanisms, enabling transitions from relatively depri-
ved to empowered status. They also frequently serve as national think-tanks and sources of social commentary. The future of NA universities will depend on their ability to successfully overcome the major challenges facing them as they seek to harness the potential of young people in the region in order to meet its development needs.

Historical perspective
The countries of North Africa share a deep-rooted educational tradition, having established some of the world’s oldest schools, universities and HE institutes. Al Qarawiyine in Morocco (859), Ez Zaytouna in Tunisia (864) and Al Azhar in Egypt (972) are all renowned Uni-
versities Magistrorum et Scholarum founded in the ninth and tenth centuries. Enrolled at these universities were students from a series of equally famous meder-
sas (secondary) and msids or kuttab (primary) schools in all the major urban centres, which taught Arabic and Islamic theology. During the colonial period, the occupying powers established schools to serve their administrative needs, with classes taught principally in French or Spanish. In Morocco, under “the Berber Dahir” promulgated by the French in an attempt to separate the Arab and Amazigh populations, a limited number of “Schools for the Sons of the Elite” were also establi-
shed, with French instruction. In Algeria, the Khaldunia and the Tachfiniya (Tlemcen) medersas were destroyed by the French colonial power in 1873 and replaced by three colonial medersas in Constantine, Médéa and Tlemcen. These were founded to train secondary-level students in religion, law and education (Janier, 2009), with the aim of facilitating the territory’s administration.
In Egypt, the Mansouryas (religious schools) coexisted side by side with the madrasas (modern schools). NaPo-
Leon founded the Institut Français in Cairo in 1798. Early in the 19th century, Mohammed Al Pasha sent the Egyptian Missions to France to perfect mastery of the French language.

In the Maghreb, a series of higher education institutes were established which catered principally to French nationals and provided research on the natural and cultural wealth of the countries. In the period leading up to Moroccan independence, nationalist figures and organisations started what was known as the free school movement, with modern curricula and teaching in both Arabic and French. In Egypt, Egyptology studies were founded. Overall, educational opportunities for the local populations remained extremely limited. For example, when Algeria gained independence in 1962, the adult literacy rate was 87% (Adam, 1964).

With independence, North African (and especially the Maghreb) countries quickly realised that the construction of viable sovereign administrations depended on the development and generalisation of education. In Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, the main principles governing the national educational system were the nationalisation of teaching cadres, the unification of curricula, the Arabisation of all teaching programmes, and equitable access to education (from primary through to university). Given the limited budgetary and/or available human resources at the time, the costs of these commitments were to prove onerous. Educational institutions at all levels were placed under close government adherence to these principles. The historical national universities of the region were led by Cairo University, founded in 1908. The University of Benghazi (Libya) followed in 1955, Mohammed V University was launched in Rabat in 1957, the Tunisian University was created by Law No. 60-2 of 31 March 1960 and the University of Algiers, which had been created by the French in 1910 and essentially catered to colonists' needs, was transformed in order to meet national requirements in 1962. The University of Nouakchott was established in 1981.

Generally speaking, HE in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia includes universities under Ministry of HE supervision, as well as a series of prestigious and highly selective Institutes of Higher Studies (IHS), access to which is generally far less open; they either report only to the Ministry of HE or are jointly supervised by another Ministry in their area of specialty. This has led to a two-speed system (Université de Rouen, 2019; Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2018; Dhoui, 2016) with different levels of quality. These figures should be considered in light of unemployment statistics (CREAD, 2013), showing that in the 15 to 24-year-old age group in all three Maghreb countries, nearly half of whom hold university degrees, unemployment was over 20%. This is perhaps an indication that in addition to the appropriate economic decisions that may need to be made, university programmes should also be re-evaluated in terms of their quality and appropriateness for the job market.

A quick look at the current situation in NA HE points to some significant challenges which fall into four intertwined categories: massification, reform of organisational structure, quality and employability.

Massification
University-age student numbers continue to increase significantly in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, and to a lesser degree in Mauritania and Libya, because of their demographics. Massification has required additional funding for the construction of new facilities and the acquisition of additional equipment. It has resulted in increased class sizes, decreasing faculty-to-student ratios, and generally challenging the quality of higher education. Massification has also been a contributing factor in the increasing numbers of university student drop-outs, given the difficulties in ensuring appropriate student support and guidance. All NA HE systems have had to develop new strategies to face these challenges. The following brief national summaries reflect the current demographic pressures in the region:

There are 17 public universities in Egypt, 16 private universities, 89 private higher education institutions and 51 public non-university facilities. In 2018-19 the Egyptian HE system included 3.1 million students, a 4% increase relative to the 2.99 million reported in 2017-18. Libya has 14 (10 accredited) public and 19 private universities, of which 7 are accredited by the National Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. In 2020-2021 there were 400,000 students in Libyan universities, in a system under reconstruction after being severely affected by the anti-Gadhafi uprising and the continuing political and financial turmoil.

Tunisia has 13 public universities with 203 schools and 24 Higher Institutes, a relatively stable situation since 2014-15. These were complemented by 26 private institutions in 2018-19. Total enrolment in 2018-19 was 350,000 students, up from 339,619 in 2014-15. The private sector consisted of 63 institutions in 2016, serving some 30,000 students - roughly 8% of the student population.

There were 1.7 million students in Algerian HE in 2018, with over 2 million expected for 2021-2022. The Algerian university network is composed of 50 universities, plus 13 academic centres and 31 Higher Institutes, making a total of 94 HE institutes or institutions. An embryonic private sector with a dozen institutes now hosts 1% of the HE student population. The drop in oil revenues has impacted the budget of a system where students pay no tuition, room or board fees.

Morocco has 14 public universities, 73 public HE institutes not affiliated to universities, 5 PPP (public-private partnership) universities, 5 private universities and 150 private HE institutes not affiliated to universities. In 2021-2022, 1.2 million students are enrolled in the Moroccan HE system, a figure that stood at 100,000 at the end of the 1980’s and 420,000 in 2011. Currently, public university programmes account for 95 percent of student enrolments, whereas private and PPP universities and institutions receive no more than 5% of the total HE student population.

Mauntania has a relatively small HE environment, largely based in Nouakchott. In recent years, five private universities have been established alongside branches of some international universities. There were 19,371 HE students in 2017, compared to 19,243 in 2013.

Reform of organisational structure
NA educational systems have undergone a series of reforms, resulting in not only pedagogical but also organisational changes as they moved to align with international standards. While all North African countries mention university autonomy in the laws currently governing public higher education, such autonomy remains limited in view of public universities’ nearly complete reliance on government funds for their annual budgets, which they can spend only under the stringent control of government financial authorities. Their ability to spend, invest, generate funds or generally engage in economic activities remains under close supervision and their status is in fact closer to that of an administrative entity. Teaching staff are civil servant employees of the HE ministry, and hiring and firing are subject to civil service process. Finally, leadership positions are closely monitored and, no matter the procedure for nomination/election, are consecrated by a high-level executive decree. In spite of these obstacles, which seem to be linked to the historical development of higher education in the region, significant progress seems possible given the interest in HE shown by all university players and all segments of society and the pressure they are currently exercising to influence HE policy. Health and Education are considered by NA societies at large as the main factors influencing development at this stage and their management is being closely followed by a wide spectrum of stakeholders in all five countries, ranging from students to parents to regional councils.

Quality assurance
Another major challenge to NA HE is posed by quality and quality assurance (QA) mechanisms. The lack of quality and inappropriate design of curricula and programmes is frequently cited as a reason for inappropriate recruitment, resulting in graduate unemployment. NA countries established their quality assurance agencies rather late, starting in the second decade of the 21st century, no doubt influenced by European partners and their adoption of the LMD procedure for nomination/election, are consecrated by a high-level executive decree. In spite of these obstacles, which seem to be linked to the historical development of higher education in the region, significant progress seems possible given the interest in HE shown by all university players and all segments of society and the pressure they are currently exercising to influence HE policy. Health and Education are considered by NA societies at large as the main factors influencing development at this stage and their management is being closely followed by a wide spectrum of stakeholders in all five countries, ranging from students to parents to regional councils.

While the Tunisian QA framework was established with the objectives of encouraging a culture of quality within higher education institutions, implementing a national quality enhancement programme and fostering the expertise necessary for higher education evaluation and quality (Décret no. 2012-1719, République Tunisienne, 2008). This decree constituted a legal framework providing for the establishment of an active National Authority for
for Evaluation, QA and Accreditation by 2011. A com-
monly used decree (Décret n° 2012-1719, République Tuni-
sienne, 2012) appointed the agency as a contract-
tual partner for universities with two functional roles: a
quality enhancement responsibility and an evaluation, ac-
creditation and standardisation function. It opera-
tes under the supervision of the ministry in charge of
higher education. The Tunisian national strategy for HE
additionally laid down a number of qualitative objecti-
ves aimed at reaching the standards of OECD countries.
Quality HE thus became a principal concern of natio-
nal policy.
In confirmation of the anchoring of North African HE
to international standards, the Tunisian QA programme
sets its own quantitative references, and the Tunisian
national strategy for HE has adopted qualitative objecti-
ves aimed at attaining the standards of OECD countries.
Quality has thus become a primary focus in Tunisian
higher education, scientific research and technology
policy (Methani, 2009).
Tunisian universities were encouraged to establish com-
mits to monitor the quality of academic programmes
at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels and to improve
teaching methodology, curricula, infrastructure and
equipment, as well as making financial and administra-
tive management more efficient. Competitive access to
financial incentives was made available to support this
initiative. The committees are in charge of producing
internal evaluation reports, monitoring the established
programmes, in particular those related to quality, and
formally monitoring quality enhancement.
Up to September 2009, the national higher education
system included 162 committees at institutions, with
1200 members, 300 of whom were representatives of
socio-economic partners. QA activities were centra-
lised in each university under the supervision of a QA
committee. The quality of the socio-economic part-
ners was meant to facilitate university relevance and
improve graduates’ employment prospects through the
setting up of business incubators and business hubs.
The financial sustainability of the Tunisian quality enhan-
cement programme in higher education remains highly
dependent on competitive funds managed by the
Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and
Technology, which apportions funding to universities
on the basis of a contractual process. This contract-ba-
sed approach was meant to bolster decision-making
autonomy and reinforce universities’ capacity to nego-
tiate objectives, as well as closely monitoring outcomes
through the use of well-defined indicators.
The early years of the quality enhancement activities of
the Tunisian agency focused on management capacity
enhancement, institutional accountability, better use of
public funds and reinforcing competitiveness for emplo-
yability. Under its evaluation mandate, the agency has
sponsored the training of 120 experts through its own
programmes and cooperation with European partners.
The apparent contradiction between “decision auto-
omy” and “financial dependence”, which generally
characterises the university function in NA countries,
had thus now also been incorporated into the legal
framework governing the Tunisian quality assurance
agency. The 2008 decree in fact allowed universities
to switch their legal status from former “public institu-
tions” to specific “public institutions of a scientific and
technological nature”, if they met certain financial, bud-
getary and managerial requirements. This specific legal
framework is similar to French legislation and allows
universities more administrative and financial flexibili-
ty and autonomy. Thus far, only the Virtual University
of Tunis has met the stringent criteria established to
obtain this status.
The situation in Morocco is not very different. The
Moroccan Agency was established by Royal Decree no.
1-14-130 (31-7-2014), based on Law 80-12, as applied
through Decree no. 2.15.813 (Royaume du Maroc, 2015).
The National Agency for Evaluation and QA (ANEAQ)
has been placed under the authority of the government
department in charge of HE and scientific research and
is subject to the regulations and prerogatives of the
Minister of Economy and Finance with regard to the
running of public institutions.
The Agency is charged with evaluating the higher edu-
cation system, with the aim of guaranteeing quality. It thus evaluates both public and
private universities and institutes, as well as research
centres, with reference to their specific missions and
scientific projects. It undertakes the assessment and accredit-
ation of graduate and Master-level edu-
cational tracks, as well as the evaluation of Doctoral
Schools to determine the quality of training pro-
grammes and the research work undertaken under their
supervision. The Agency also evaluates work under-
taken at national research centres and programmes
conducted within the framework of national and inter-
national cooperation programmes. In addition to its
mission of quality enhancement in the higher education
sphere, the Agency may also be asked to undertake spe-
cific missions for universities or other ministries that run
educational or research facilities, or for departments
such as the Higher Council for Education, Training
and Scientific Research and the Hassan II Academy for
Scientific and Technical Research. These prerogatives
give the Agency potentially interesting territorial reach
within the national regionalisation programme (Com-
misson Consultative de la Régionalisation, 2010). The
Agency may also be mandated to undertake quality
enhancement evaluations for foreign organisations,
within the framework of cooperation agreements with
the government of Morocco.
ANEAO is under the supervision of an Administrative
Council presided by the Head of Government and com-
posed of two representatives of the Ministry of Higher
Education alongside 12 other members, including
representatives of other government agencies, past
presidents and presidents of public universities and
an elected staff member of the Agency. The Administrati-
ve Council has wide powers in managing the Agency’s
affairs including budget allocation, services and inter-
nal regulations. The Agency went into full gear in the
academic year 2017-2018, evaluating the curriculum
accreditation and reaccreditation files of all public and
private universities and institutes.
The sustainability of the Moroccan system has been
assured through government salaries for ANEAO
employees and the payment of evaluation fees for each
submitted track, with accreditation valid for 3 years for
Bachelor-level tracks and 2 years in the case of Mas-
ter-level tracks. A select number of faculty serve as
experts in these operations. Until the creation of ANEAO
there was no reliable mechanism to compensate faculty
who served as accreditation experts. The special status of
ANEAO has now facilitated this process.
Algeria has taken a more gradual approach to QA. The
Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and
Technology established a National Commission for the Implemen-
tation of QA in HE (CIAQES) in 2007 and the
first phase of approach which seems more decentralised
and oriented towards internal evaluation within each
university. The Commission has also sponsored QA
campaigns that involve several universities organised
as consortia. In much of its work, the Commission relies
on and builds upon the work of university quality com-
nittees (CIAQES, 2016; CREAD, 2011). During its first
phase, the CIAQES thus oversaw the launch of quality
assurance cells in each university institute, and the
appointment and training of directors for these units
(RAQ, responsable des cellules d'assurance qualité).
These structures and associated experts are respon-
sible for local internal evaluation processes, thereby
implementing QA operations in universities. The esta-
blishment of standards was one of the main missions
assigned to CIAQES and was carried out in cooperation
with the local RAQs, for whom it represented the cul-
minal project of the training given to them in 2012
and 2013.
The National Book of Standards includes all the usual
norms and standards in the fields of training, research
governance, and public affairs, and also oficial to other
fields of national importance: university life, university
infrastructure, university-socioeconomic environment
relations, and inter-university cooperation and mobil-
ity. The document outlines the objectives to be attained
for a desired state of function through 123 objectives and
the measurement of 219 criteria to determine their
attainment. The Standards were first presented at an
international seminar in 2014, and were published in
2016.
After having successfully established quality assuran-
cell in universities and higher education institutions,
supervised the training of quality assurance managers,
and defined a national quality standards document, the
final mission of CIAQES remains the creation of a natio-
nal QA agency. The process has been rather slow and
complex. The Agency was managed to be set up and
set up functional quality assurance cells and this may be
due to the fact that not all have developed at the same
pace. In 2017, the Ministry of HE and Scientific Research
launched an operation to generalise internal evaluation
in all Algerian universities in preparation for the launch
of a fully-fledged quality assurance programme.
In terms of financial and administrative sustainability,
CIAQES signed a cooperation agreement with the
Secretariat General of the Ministry of Higher Educa-
tion and Scientific Research, and is thus under ministry
supervision and dependent on its funding.
In Egypt, a National QA and Accreditation Commit-
te (NQAAC) worked for five years to promote quality
assurance plans among higher education institutions,
prepared the national law for accreditation and sought
its endorsement by the Egyptian parliament, and laid
Employability

The limited progress made in terms of QA and curriculum development, coupled with a high demographic growth rate and economies that are growing without creating sufficient jobs, has resulted in a difficult situation in terms of unemployment, especially among young people (15-24 years old) and women, in all five NA countries. In addition, a Gallup survey in 2011 showed that more than half of unemployed young people in Egypt and Tunisia were seeking government jobs. In 2019, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), NA countries reported an average youth unemployment rate of 30.2%, compared with a world average of 13.6% (Webmanagercenter, 2021). In 2020, the CIA World Factbook placed Algeria among the ten countries worldwide with the highest youth unemployment rates, over 39%. In NA, only Libya reports a rate of 25.7%.

Mauritania today has a youth unemployment rate of 44%, of which 27,000 are diploma holders between 19 and 35 years of age. In spite of the country’s natural resource opportunities, the economy cannot cope with the 50 to 60,000 new graduates each year. Efforts to remedy the situation involve professional training programmes, the private sector and university reform (Kassataya, 2021).

Tunisian unemployment was reported at 18.4% in 2021 for the general population (15.9% for men and 24.1% for women). For young people between 15 and 24 years of age, unemployment at the end of 2021 had reached 42.8% for men and 41.7% for women. As for HE diploma holders, at the end of 2020 unemployment was estimated at 30.1% (17.6% for men and 40.7% for women) (Statistiques de Tunisie, 2021). Public sector employment constitutes a large share of total formal employment. More than 70 percent of non-agricultural employment in Egypt and Libya is in the public sector (Mottaghi, 2014).

It is clear from the above figures that NA countries are losing more than a third of their human potential in spite of educational expansion, due to inappropriate curricula and training and an inability to incorporate youth into economies that are also growing. This seemingly paradoxical situation merits close analysis and the identification of solutions to avoid the resulting painful losses in terms of GDP and innovation, and the consequent potential social upheavals. In order to remedy the situation, actions along the lines of economic diversification and the introduction of quality labour-intensive value-added economic initiatives would be essential. This would increase resource opportunities, the economy cannot cope with the 50 to 60,000 new graduates each year. Efforts to remedy the situation involve professional training programmes, the private sector and university reform (Kassataya, 2021).

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Continental and regional integration of higher education in Africa: an overview

Juma Shabani

Abstract

The process of integrating a higher education system can be seen as a series of activities that contribute to the construction of a higher education area. The methodology used to develop the African higher education area is different from that used in Europe, which was supported first by the European Community and later by the Bologna process. In Africa, it will build on the achievements of regional economic communities and will be sustained on three main pillars: (a) the legal framework for mutual recognition of qualifications; (b) the processes of harmonisation, homogenisation and convergence, including quality assurance; and (c) the integration and networking of academic and research institutions and infrastructure.

This contribution analyses the challenges and opportunities related to the establishment of effective quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms at all levels; the development of joint training and research programmes; the harmonisation of higher education qualifications and the use of national and regional qualifications frameworks. This framework includes the African Continental Qualifications Framework and the Regional Conventions on mutual recognition of qualifications and Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs).

Introduction

The process of integration of a higher education (HE) system can be conceived as a series of activities that contribute to the construction of a higher education area. As previously noted, the creation of the “Ecole Normale William Ponty” in Saint Louis, Senegal, to train the human resources of this area. In Africa, this process started at least in 1903 with the creation of the “Ecole Normale William Ponty” in Saint Louis, Senegal, to train the human resources needed for French-speaking West Africa. This process continued and has led in the recent past to the creation of other joint regional institutions, including centres of excellence and the Pan-African University, and to the establishment of mechanisms for mutual recognition of qualifications at regional and continental levels.

The methodology used to develop the African higher education area is different from the one used in Europe, which was supported first by the European Community and later by the Bologna process. In Africa, it will build on the achievements of regional economic communities and will be sustained on three main pillars: (a) the legal framework for mutual recognition of qualifications; (b) the processes of harmonisation, homogenisation and convergence, including quality assurance; and (c) the integration and networking of academic and research institutions and infrastructure. I will address each of them in turn in this contribution.

1. The legal framework for mutual recognition of qualifications

This framework includes the African Continental Qualifications Framework and the Regional Conventions on mutual recognition of qualifications and Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs).

1.1. Mutual recognition of academic qualifications

The African Convention, known as the Arusha Convention, was adopted in December 1981 in Arusha, Tanzania. The implementation of this Convention has faced several challenges, mainly caused by (a) the diversity of HE systems and languages of instruction inherited from colonisation, (b) the deterioration of HE quality since the 1980s and (c) the ineffectiveness of the regional committee in charge of implementation of the Convention. These challenges partly explain why, by 2001, only 21 countries and the Holy See had ratified the Arusha Convention (Shabani & Olebukola, 2017).

In 2001, the Regional Committee proposed revising the Convention in order to address the identified challenges and make the provisions necessary to enable the Convention to contribute to the construction of an African HE space and the development of a global convention on the recognition of qualifications (UNESCO, 2014). The revision of the Arusha Convention spanned from 2002 to 2014, when a revised Convention, called the Addis Ababa Convention, was adopted and signed by 16 countries. The revision process mainly involved UNESCO, the Commonwealth of Learning and the African Union (Shabani & Olebukola, 2017). While the Convention is a major instrument for promoting the mobility of students, academic staff and researchers and for strengthening accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms, it is noted that academic staff and quality assurance agencies were not adequately involved in the process. This may partly explain why the revision took such a long time. The Convention entered into force in December 2019 after ratification by 13 State Parties.

The revised Convention contains new objectives related to the establishment of effective quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms at all levels; the development of joint training and research programmes; the harmonisation of higher education qualifications and the use of national and regional qualifications frameworks (UNESCO, 2014). It is assumed that the potential benefits that will be derived from these objectives should convince countries to ratify it. However, at present, the ratification process seems to have come to a halt.

Conventions on the mutual recognition of qualifications are also implemented at regional level, particularly in the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) member states. CAMES was established in 1968 in Niamey, Niger, to harmonise and coordinate higher education policies and programmes in its member states. Currently, CAMES is composed of 19 countries (CAMES, 2023). In 1972, in Lomé, Togo, CAMES member states adopted a regional convention on the mutual recognition of qualifications. The ratification of this convention led to the establishment of the Programme for Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees (PRED). This programme is implemented through regional colloquia that bring together experts from CAMES member states and partner organisations.

1.2. Mutual recognition of professional qualifications

In Europe, the mutual recognition of professional qualifications is governed by Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005, as amended by other Directives. In Africa, each regional economic community and the African Union have adopted protocols containing commitments on the free movement of people and services. The idea behind these protocols is the so-called Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs). However, these agreements face several very important challenges, which are discussed in the section below.

1) The East African Community (EAC)

The EAC consists of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and South Sudan. The EAC Common Market Protocol entered into force in 2010 following ratification by State Parties. It provides for five basic freedoms of movement, including the free movement of people and services, and rights of residence and establishment. In accordance with Article 11 of this Protocol, State Parties have committed to harmonising their curricula and accreditation procedures to promote the mutual recognition of qualifications and facilitate the free movement of people and services. To this end, four MRAs for accountants, architects, engineers and veterinarians had been signed by 2016 (EAC, 2017).

Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have signed all four MRAs. Burundi has not yet signed the MRAs for engineers and veterinarians. Tanzania has not yet signed the MRAs for architects and veterinarians. Negotiations on the MRAs for surveyors and lawyers were concluded in 2016 but have not yet been signed. Negotiations on the MRA for pharmacists are under discussion. It should be noted that South Sudan has not yet been included in these MRAs.

Despite the signing of these agreements, the number of professionals who benefit from them is very limited. This is mainly due to the challenges faced in implementing these MRAs, including incompatibilities with national policies and a varying political will for integration.

A 2014 World Bank study of legislation in the EAC identified 63 measures that are incompatible with the liberalisation of trade in services within EAC State

1. See: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378425_eng/
PDF/378425Eng.pdf.multi.page=11

2. See the last consolidated version of December 2021: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02005L0036-20211210
Parties (World Bank, 2014). For example, In Kenya, (a) registration of foreign professionals is subject to proof that such specialised skills are not available in the country; (b) foreigners cannot practice law-related professions without the supervision of a local lawyer. In Uganda, (a) registration of foreign engineers is allowed for residents who have been in the country for 6 months of each year for the past 5 years, (b) an accountant must have several years of experience and be a member of one of the 15 international accountants’ associations in order to obtain a work permit, (c) applicants to the legal profession must be resident in this country and have five years’ experience in an approved country, (d) architects are required to practise on a temporary and supervised basis (World Bank, 2014). The EAC has embarked on a process of removing the identified barriers to the implementation of MRAs. In November 2021, the EAC secured funding to facilitate the cross-border movement of professionals through the use of digital technologies (Jowi, 2021).

2.2. Quality assurance and accreditation pathways

Harmonisation of accreditation and quality assurance in Africa is promoted through two initiatives: the Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in African Higher Education (HAQAA) project and the Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF)

The implementation of the LMD reform has required the revision and harmonisation of existing programmes or the development of new programmes according to a competency-based approach, and the implementation of effective accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms for these programmes. In view of this perspective, the Council of Ministers decided in 2006 to entrust CAMES (2006) with the mandate of accreditation of institutions and programmes in its member states. The process of programme accreditation by CAMES takes an average of 17 months. It is open to public and private higher education institutions in member states and beyond that have been previously accredited at national level and have already graduated at least one class of students. This approach is different from the accreditation mechanisms used in other parts of Africa. In the EAC, the Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), which has the mandate of promoting comparable higher education standards and systems, has defined accreditation guidelines and standards that are used by State Parties to develop their own benchmarks and credit programmes at national level. There is also a difference in the concept of credits used in countries implementing the LMD reform where the credit transfer and accumulation system is compatible with the European system and other countries. For example, while the LMD system requires 130 credits to obtain a PhD degree, 540 credits are required in the EAC and 360 in Southern African Development Communities (SADC) countries.

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1) The HAQAA 2 Project

HAQAA 2 is a joint initiative of the African Union and the European Union, funded by the latter, designed to consolidate the results of the first phase of the project (HAQAA 1) implemented between 2016 and 2018. HAQAA 1 contributed to the implementation of the PAQAF and the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM), and developed the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) in Higher Education, which were finally endorsed at AU level.

HAQAA 2 has been implemented between 2019 and 2022. It will contribute to promoting a quality culture in higher education institutions; strengthening the capacity of quality assurance agencies to implement the ASG-QA; strengthening the capacity of the African Union to implement the PAQAF and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA); and coordinating the feasibility study for the establishment of the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency.

2) The Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF)

The PAQAF is a conceptual framework to promote the harmonisation of quality assurance and accreditation of higher education in Africa. It was adopted by the African Union in 2016. It comprises six tools and activities that are at different stages of design and implementation, namely (Okebukola & Fonteyne, 2014): (a) the ASG-QA, (b) the Continental Qualifications Framework, (c) the African Quality Rating Mechanism, (d) the Addis Ababa Regional Convention, (e) the African Credit Accumulation and Transfer System and (f) the Continental Register of Quality Assurance Agencies.

The ASG-QA and the Addis Ababa Convention have been discussed in the sections above. And a specific section on the issue of the Qualifications Framework follows this one.

African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM)

The AQRM was adopted by the African Union in 2007 to establish a system for assessing the quality of higher education institutions and comparing their performance on the basis of a set of common pre-established criteria. The AQRM is not an instrument for ranking institutions. It is a tool for the self-evaluation of institutions and programmes. It allows for the grouping of institutions that have the same level of quality. The AQRM will therefore facilitate implementation of the ASG-QA through self-assessment and programme harmonisation.
African Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

It has already been mentioned that the concept of credit is not defined in the same way in different African regions. The EU-funded Tuning Africa project was intended to promote a common African definition but the process got interrupted when the third stage of the project failed to take off in 2019. HAQAA-2 has reoriented its work plan to relaunch the process.

The continental register of quality assurance agencies

The PAQAF should support the development of a register of credible quality assurance agencies and institutions and programmes accredited by these agencies.

2.3. Qualifications frameworks

According to Tuck (2007), a qualifications framework is an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competences along a continuum of agreed levels. A qualifications framework is built on qualifications that are recognised in a country or region and are characterised in terms of levels of education, descriptors, knowledge and skills.

The main purpose of a qualifications framework is (Shabani & Okebukola 2017): (a) to ensure the comparability of qualifications and make different pathways through the education system more visible; and (b) to improve international comparisons with the aim of facilitating credit transfer, mobility and recognition of skills, knowledge and competences.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) national qualifications framework was approved by the SADC Council of Ministers in April 2015 (UICEA, 2015) to contribute to the operationalisation of the Common Market Protocol as far as it entails the mutual recognition of qualifications. It covers the last four levels of qualifications, i.e. levels 5 to 8 of the SADC regional qualifications framework.

The African Continental Qualification Framework (ACQF) development process was launched in July 2019 by the African Union in collaboration with the European Union, the German agency GIZ and the European Training Foundation (ETF). It aims to improve the skills and qualifications of African peoples and contribute to the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) and the development of the African Higher Education Area.

2.4. Scope and limits of curriculum convergence processes.

1) The continental approach

Concerning curricula, the African Union adopted a harmonisation strategy in 2007 (AU, 2007) which has mainly been implemented through the Tuning Africa Project. This was a joint project of the African Union and the European Union launched in 2011 to promote the comparability of programmes, the mobility of students and staff and to improve graduate employability.

The Tuning Africa Project was implemented through a consultative process with all higher education stakeholders. It focused on generic and specific skills requirements, credit transfer and accumulation systems, appropriate pedagogical methods, and quality assessment and improvement.

The first phase of the project, implemented between 2011 and 2013, involved 57 universities from 35 countries and several higher education stakeholders. The project focused on harmonisation and curriculum development in the following five areas: agriculture, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, medicine and teacher education.

The second phase, implemented between 2015 and 2018, increased the number of programmes from 5 to 8 and the number of universities participating in the project from 57 to 107 universities in 42 countries. The new programmes covered economics, applied geology and higher education management.

For the East African Community (EAC), the East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE) was approved by the Council of Ministers in April 2015 (UICEA, 2015) to contribute to the operationalisation of the Common Market Protocol as far as it entails the mutual recognition of qualifications. It covers the last four levels of qualifications, i.e. levels 5 to 8 of the EAC regional qualifications framework.

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The Pan-African University was established by the African Union to meet the African continent’s needs for high-level human resources in priority areas of development and researchers capable of generating new knowledge for development.

The Pan-African University aims to (a) promote science and technology and strengthen the quality of higher education and research institutions, (b) strengthen partnerships between universities, African research centres and industry, and (c) increase and strengthen the intra-African mobility of researchers and students (Okebukola, 2016).

The Pan-African University comprises five regional institutes, each located in one of Africa’s five geographical regions and covering the following knowledge areas: Health; Agriculture and Food Security; Science, Technology and Innovation in Kenya; Life and Earth Sciences in South Africa; Water, Energy and Climate Change in Algeria; Basic Sciences, Technolo- gy and Innovation in Kenya; Life and Earth Sciences in Nigeria; and Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences in Cameroon. Each of the five regional institutes will be networked with other institutions in their respective fields of knowledge, creating a network of networks.

3.3. Centres of excellence

Centres of excellence have been established in Africa for several decades as a strategy for pooling the human, financial and infrastructural resources needed to implement training and research programmes in higher education institutions. Several centres of excellence are currently operational in Africa. They have been established with the support of various partners and cover several fields of knowledge.
The development of centres of excellence in Africa has made great strides since the implementation of the NEPAD Consolidated Plan of Action for Science and Technology in Africa (NEPAD, 2005). More recently, the development of centres of excellence in Africa has been supported by the African Centres of Excellence project launched by the World Bank, the EAC Biomedical Science Centres of Excellence, and the centres of excellence established by NEPAD since it became a development agency of the African Union (AUDA-NEPAD, 2020).

Conclusion

African countries are increasingly committed to implementing the integration strategies needed to contribute to the construction of an African higher education area in order to promote mutual recognition of qualifications and the mobility of students and staff.

This contribution intends to identify and very summarily describe all the strategies and initiatives currently being implemented for the integration of higher education in Africa. This analysis shows that African countries are making relatively good progress towards the construction of an African higher education space. The methodology to build this African HE space will be different from the one used for the development of the European space. It will be based on three main pillars: (a) the legal framework for mutual recognition of qualifications; (b) the processes of harmonisation, homogenisation and convergence, including quality assurance; and (c) the integration and networking of academic and research institutions and infrastructure.

The second pillar is particularly important and should cover: (a) harmonisation of curricula using the Tuning Project methodology; (b) harmonisation of quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms by aligning them with ASG-QA; (c) harmonisation of credit transfer and accumulation systems by aligning them with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System; and (d) alignment of national and regional qualifications frameworks with the African Continental Qualifications Framework.

Given the various initiatives undertaken at all levels to contribute to the construction of an African higher education area, it must be concluded that the proposed harmonisation processes should be implemented at both regional and continental levels in a concerted and coordinated manner. Furthermore, African countries also need to make major and sustained efforts to implement the MRAs signed and to advance towards the effective implementation of the national treatment principle so as to avoid discrimination based simply on grounds of nationality.

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A regional perspective: higher education in the East African Community

Mike Kuria and Gaspard Banyankimbona

Abstract

Higher Education (HE) in East Africa dates to 1949 when Makerere College was renamed Makerere University, University of East Africa. Since then, HE in the region has grown to more than 300 universities with over 2 million students today. This contribution argues that HE has always played a significant role in the integration of the East African Community (EAC). It demonstrates that education continued to unite East Africa even after the collapse of the East African Community in 1977, after only about 10 years of existence, before its revitalisation in 1999. The paper traces the evolution of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) from its formation as the Inter-University Committee in 1970 to its current status as EAC’s organ responsible for HE. The paper posits that in the context of the current 6 EAC Partner States, despite the establishment of a regional quality assurance system, there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of harmonisation of education and building a system that allows mutual recognition of qualifications, credit accumulation and transfer, mobility of staff and students, comparability of qualifications, and international recognition. It concludes that, nevertheless, the region is moving in the right direction.

Overview

An Introduction to the East African Community

The East African Community (EAC), initially formed in 1967 by Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, currently consists of six countries. The republics of Burundi, Rwanda, and South Sudan joined after the community was revitalised in 1999, having collapsed in 1977. The community could continue growing as the Treaty establishing the Community provides that a country may be admitted into the EAC if it complies with the membership regulations set out in Article 3 of the Treaty (The East African Community, 2002, pp. 11-12). Growing membership comes with increased diversity. Following the admission of French-speaking countries like Rwanda and Burundi, and with the Democratic Republic of Congo at an advanced stage, the Summit of the Community has, for example, approved the inclusion of French as an official language of the Community (The East African Community, 2021). This is an example of the growing need for deliberate efforts to integrate diverse stakeholders into the Community. Higher education has great potential to play a key role in the EAC integration process and sustaining the unity of the community. The survival of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), which remained a uniting factor despite the collapse of the original EAC in 1977, is a testament to this potential. Collaboration between higher education institutions in the region was maintained by IUCEA, then known as the Inter-University Committee until it was transformed into the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) in 1990. Therefore, it was not surprising that the revitalised EAC recognised IUCEA as one of its surviving institutions. This recognition also underlines the Community’s awareness of the importance of higher education for regional integration.

Higher Education in the EAC

The first university in East Africa was known as the University of London, and in 1970 it gave birth to Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Dar-es-Salaam in the United Republic of Tanzania, and the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Since then, higher education in the EAC has grown in leaps and bounds. While the first three were public universities, there are now over 300 public and private universities, with a combined population of over 2 million students.

The role of higher education in the EAC’s regional integration agenda

One of the four pillars of EAC regional integration is the Common Market. The other three are the Customs Union, the Monetary Union, and the Political Federation (The East African Community, 2022b). The EAC Common Market Protocol (CMP) came into force in 2010 (The East African Community, 2022a) after ratification by EAC Partner States. It provides for five basic freedoms of movement. These are the free movement of goods, persons, labour, services, and capital. It also provides for citizens’ rights of residence and establishment in any Partner State.

Article 102(I) states that “in order to achieve the Community’s objectives, as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty, the Heads of State or Government shall undertake concerted measures to foster education and training cooperation within the Community” (The East African Community, 2002, p. 76). One of the key activities under this article is to “revive and enhance the actions of the Inter-University Council for East Africa”. Article 5 of the Treaty is entitled, Co-operation in the Development of Human Resources, Science and Technology. Clearly and without going into details, education in general, and higher education (HE) in particular, has a significant role to play in implementing all four pillars. Coordinated HE governance in the region is imperative for the Community to reap the full benefits of regional integration. It is, however, not without some challenges. The role of HE in the development and implementation of the visions of the individual Partner States varies slightly from one to another. However, a common thread uniting all of them. Despite the varying timelines of the different visions (Burundi National development plan 2018-2027; Kenya Vision 2030, Rwanda Vision 2050; South Sudan Vision 2040; Uganda Vision 2040; and United Republic of Tanzania Vision 2025), there is a common commitment to review the education systems to ensure that it provides quality education, enhances access and specifically address paucity of skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) subject areas. The Inter-University Council for East Africa’s plays a role in coordinating harmonised development and implementation of the EAC’s higher education system.

The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA)

IUCEA is one of the 8 institutions of the EAC. It was institutionalised in the EAC through an act of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) known as the IUCEA Act 2009. Article 4(I) of the Act states that the purpose of IUCEA is to “advise Partner States on all matters related to higher education” (The East African Community, 2009, p. 5). IUCEA’s purpose and function are limited to advising Partner States and coordinating and networking with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), but this has become a significant instrument to impact the governance of higher education in the Community. Major stakeholders such as the vice-chancellors of member universities, directors of the National Commissions or Councils for Higher Education, and Permanent Secretaries in ministries responsible for higher education form part of the governance structures of IUCEA and are represented in the governing board of IUCEA to ensure that decisions made at the regional level are implemented in the Partner States. In collaboration with these stakeholders, IUCEA developed policy documents, tools and instruments for harmonisation of higher education upon whose consideration, and after recommendation by IUCEA, the Heads of State of the EAC Partner States declared the EAC a Common Higher Education Area (EACHEA) in May 2017 (The East African Community, 2017).

The declaration of the EACHEA means that the Community is working towards a harmonised education system that will facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications, comparable and compatible study programs that enable credit accumulation and transfer and ultimately, the free movement of labour. But before the EACHEA can be operational and its benefits fully realised, there is a lot of ground to be covered because governance of higher education remains diverse in terms of administrative and legal structures in the Partner States. Indeed, in some Partner States, there are legal entities with conflicting mandates internal to the country even without reference to regional practice.

Higher education in the different partner states: institutional aspects

Burundi

In Burundi, the HE sector has been alternatively under the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Today, it is under the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research. Law No.107 of October 29th, 2020, stipulates that the organisation, promotion, regulation and guidance of the HE sector (both public and private) is a Government responsibility. This is done in partnership with the academic and scientific communities and other stakeholders.
At the technical level, the National Commission for Higher Education (CNES, in the French acronym), set up by presidential decree No.100/258 of November 14th, 2014, is the regulatory body charged with the elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of the higher education policy.

The functions of the Commission include, but are not limited to, accrediting universities and other higher learning institutions, public and private, and their academic programmes at all levels of study, and monitoring of compliance of Universities to national, regional and international education standards.

To deliver on its mandate, the CNES has three sub-commissions:

1) Commission for equivalence of university degrees and diplomas tasked to equate qualifications earned at university level outside the country.

2) Commission of HE curriculum development charged with regularly monitoring the relevance of the curriculum developed by universities before approval, and benchmarking best practices at regional and global level.

3) Commission of validation (“entérinement”, in French) of diplomas in charge of final approval of the degrees awarded by Universities.

The higher education regulations allow universities to exercise autonomy and self-governance through their own institutional governing boards, although private Universities are still subject to the Ministry in charge of higher education, to whom they report through the Directorate of National Education, and public Universities report directly to the Cabinet under the coordination of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific research.

Law No. 1/07 of October 29th, 2020, provides two very important directives to be emphasised here:

1) Access to university education in Burundi is open to East African citizens under the same conditions as East African citizens under the same conditions as East African citizens.

2) Commission for equivalence of university degrees and diplomas tasked to equate qualifications earned at university level outside the country.

Kenya

Higher Education in Kenya is under the Ministry of Education, responsible for education at basic, vocational, or tertiary levels. At a technical level, there are bodies tasked with regulating the different levels of education. The Commission for University Education (CUE) is responsible for university education. The Universities Act 2012 (the Republic of Kenya, 2012) assigns CUE the function of accrediting universities, both public and private, and their academic programmes at any level of study. There has been some conflict, sometimes ending in courts (Kenya Law, 2018), when professional bodies, such as the Engineering Registration Board of Kenya (ERB) and the Legal Council of Kenya, threatened not to recognise or register graduates from programmes they considered inadequate, even though duly accredited by CUE.

In addition, CUE is given the mandate to equate qualifications earned at the university level outside the country. However, the Kenya National Qualifications Agency (KNQA) establishes “standards for harmonisation and recognition of national and foreign qualifications” (Government of Kenya, 2014, p. 6). As much as this provides an opportunity to build synergy, it also creates room for conflict, however subtle, in the discharge of duties by the two agencies, and sometimes this has also ended up in court (Owino, 2022).

Universities are awarded charters that grant them autonomy and self-governance through their own institutions, such as Councils, Senates, Management boards and other committees. A university in Kenya may be able to operate for up to 8 years with a letter of interim authority, meaning it can grant degrees before a charter is awarded. An interim authority is valid for four years with a possibility for renewal once. Not all EAC countries have that provision, as will become evident from the foregoing. There is no regional consensus on how universities with interim authorities, registration, or provisional licenses are treated in the region.

The Republic of Rwanda

As in Kenya, Higher Education is under the Ministry of Education in charge of tertiary education. The Ministry is responsible for basic, vocational and technical education. HE regulation is the mandate of the Higher Education Council (HEC), which, unlike its counterpart in Kenya, is only responsible for accrediting private higher learning institutions and their programmes. Only one public university in Rwanda has been established by an official gazette notice. However, HEC is responsible for developing standards and monitoring their adherence in all higher learning institutions. In a departure from Kenya’s practice, the Republic of Rwanda does not permit universities with provisional licenses or letters of interim authority to award degrees. Instead, higher education institutions with provisional licenses must apply to be allowed to award degrees after their first cohort of graduates has finished (Higher Education Council, 2007).

The Republic of South Sudan

South Sudan is the newest member of the EAC, having acceded to the treaty in April 2016. When it declared independence in 2011, it had 9 public universities and 34 private, largely unregulated universities (Akec, 2021). The Ministry responsible for higher education in South Sudan is the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST). A National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is tasked with “policy-making responsibility” (Akec, 2021, p. 16) including developing standards and accreditation programmes for universities. Unlike the rest of the EAC Partner States, where the sister organisations are semi-autonomous, as of November 2021, NCHE in South Sudan is chaired by the MoHEST minister, and membership of the Council includes the Vice-Chancellors of both public and private universities (Bruno Dada, email communication).

The Republic of Uganda

Uganda has a slightly different arrangement from the rest of the EAC Partner States. Education falls under the Ministry of Education and Sports, with separate State Ministers responsible for the various levels of education. There is, therefore, a State Minister for Higher Education. The agency responsible for regulating higher education is the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), which, like its sister organisations in the other Partner States, is responsible for institutional and programme accreditation for both public and private higher education institutions (the Republic of Uganda, 2001). In Uganda, universities with letters of interim authority cannot admit students. Universities can be issued with a provisional license which allows them to admit and educate to graduation, but the provisional license is only valid for three years (National Council for Higher Education, 2005). As in other Partner States, the day to day running of the university is left to a hierarchy that involves university Councils, Management Boards, Senates, and other internal committees.

The United Republic of Tanzania

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is responsible for higher education in the United Republic of Tanzania (URT). The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) is the implementing agency for policies and regulations regarding higher education, in line with the Universities Act Cap. 346 of the Laws of Tanzania and its associated regulations and the Universities (General) Regulations, 2013 (The Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2019). While TCU is responsible for setting standards, registering, and accrediting all higher education institutions, public or private, there is another agency known as the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE), which has its own standards by which it accredits degree-awarding institutions in the Technical and Vocational Education and Technology (TVET) sectors. There are degree awarding institutions that are not established as universities but which nevertheless offer degree programmes sometimes up to the doctoral level. This sometimes creates differences of opinion, especially when those graduating from technical and vocational education institutions want to pursue further studies in higher education institutions under the purview of TCU.

Universities in the United Republic of Tanzania are given powers to independently run their own academic and governance activities, as long as they comply with their respective charters, which are granted by the President of the Republic. The provisions in the university charters are aligned with those in the Universities Act Cap. 346 of the Laws of Tanzania. As is practised elsewhere in the EAC Partner States, the charters provide for the independence of the Senate for all academic matters, the university Management Boards for the day-to-day administration of the university and the University Councils for both academic and governance issues at a higher level (The Tanzania Commission for Universities, 2019).

Challenges

Reforms in higher education in the EAC are not regionally coordinated. The Republic of Kenya has, for example, shifted from its previous B.4.4 system, meaning 8 years of primary education, 4 years of high...
school and 4 four years of university, to what is now refe-
rred to as the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). In
this system, learners will now have a 2.6.3.3 system of
education. This means 2 years of pre-primary, 3 years
of lower, 3 years of upper primary, 3 years of lower secon-
dary school, and 3 years at tertiary level. No other EAC
country has adopted this system yet.

The republic of Burundi is engaged a series of reforms in
its education sector, shifting from its previous 6.7.4
system, meaning 6 years of primary education, 7 years
of high school and 4 four years of university, into a 9.3.3
system. At the university level, the implementation of the
Bologna process started with the Academic year 2011/2012.

Other Partner States are also reviewing their education
system. An Education Policy Review Commission was,
for example, constituted under legal notice number 5
of 2021 in Uganda and is currently soliciting views from
stakeholders to review the entire education system in
the country. In previous years, the diverse education
systems have complicated the process of harmonisa-
tion given the different levels of education. While some
countries such as URT and Uganda were using the
A-Level system, Kenyan students could proceed to uni-
versity without A-Level qualifications under the 8.4.4
system. Students in Kenya would have eight years of
primary education and four years of secondary school
before proceeding to the university for a further four
years. The rest of the EAC Partner States were doing
seven of four years of secondary education, and two years at A-Level, after which they
would qualify to join university. This meant that in
some cases, Kenyan students were deemed unprepa-
red for university studies in some of the other Partner
States, yet they were eligible for university admission in
Kenya and elsewhere outside East Africa. These
conflicts have, at times, complicated the movement of
students transiting from secondary school to uni-
versity level from one Partner State to another. To
resolve the complications, IUCEA developed the East
African Qualifications Framework for Higher Educa-
tion (EAQFHE) (The Inter-University Council for East
Africa, 2015). This framework with 11 level descriptors
can assist interpretation of skills gained by students at
any level, irrespective of the time taken. But, as with
other tools and instruments developed under the regio-
nal framework, its implementation is challenged by
the lack of harmonised regional policy and regulatory
mechanisms to ensure their implementation.

Different regulations and accreditation practices also
make it difficult for mutual recognition of qualifications.

The way forward

The East African Community has made substantive
progress in regional governance and administration of
higher education in its Partner States. IUCEA is the
only institution in Africa, to our knowledge, that has
an enabling multi-lateral legal framework to deal with
higher education at a regional level. The Communi-
y’s governance structure, with different ministerial
Sectoral Councils, provides an opportunity to influen-
se regional higher education policy decisions. In
this context, for example, a very important decision was
adopted to the effect that students studying outside
their home countries will be charged the same fees as
the nationals of their host Partner State. This natio-
nal treatment principle is now operational in the
EAC Partner States despite a few teething problems. IUCEA is, for example, facilitating the EAC Scholarship
Programme funded by the German Development Bank
(KFW), which requires students to study at a university in
a Partner State outside their home countries. They
are charged the same fees as the nationals of their host
countries in compliance with this principle.

By involving permanent secretaries in the Ministries
of Education and the directors of the National Coun-
cils and Commissions for Higher Education in the
EAC Partner States, IUCEA’s administrative structure
ensures that regional standards and guidelines and/or
policies can easily be domesticated and implemen-
ted at a national level. This arrangement has ensured that
tools such as the RoadMap to Quality: A Handbook
for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, developed
regionally, have been domesticated by the National
Commissions and Councils and the standards and gui-
delines therein are used in the development and review
of academic programmes, and the accreditation of
higher education institutions.

Challenges remain in the governance of higher educa-
tion at a regional level in the EAC that will be dealt with
in the implementation framework of the EAC Common
Higher Education Area. As the coordinating entity, the
IUCEA will have to put in place a comprehensive imple-
mentation strategy and concrete plans, including the
development of necessary policy, legal, and regulatory
frameworks at a regional level to actualise the Common
Higher Education Area.

One recent step taken recently in the right direction
is an agreement to implement a voluntary regional
quality-based programme accreditation. Universities
participating in this exercise will become examples of
good practice and will help pilot and eventually main-
tream the regional quality assurance tools, standards
and guidelines. This will ultimately enhance mutual
trust between institutions and hence ease mutual
recognition of qualifications, credit accumulation and
transfer, mobility of students, and crucially, mobility of
labour within the Community. This will be one of the key
areas of focus for IUCEA in the coming years.

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Recent developments in Internationalisation in Africa

James Otieno Jowi

Abstract

Internationalisation is one of the main phenomena influencing HE transformations and developments globally. In recent years, it has grown in importance and has impacted Africa’s HE in a complex way, incentivising change and the strengthening of African Higher Education Institutions (AHEIs) and systems while at the same time compounding some of the challenges they face. African universities have thus begun to take stock of what internationalisation portends to them. It must never be forgotten that AHEIs engage with internationalisation from a weaker position than their counterparts from the developed countries and thus need to develop new ways of responding to global dynamics. Therefore, Africa’s HE must bring a new flavour to the global higher education community to propel stronger developments and engagements with Africa. The COVID 19 pandemic presents an important turning point in Africa’s HE and must bring forth new dynamics, especially on the future of internationalisation of HE. This contribution presents the state of internationalisation in African HE and highlights some of the challenges, risks and opportunities it offers to AHEIs. It briefly explores some contemporary developments in internationalisation in Africa, including the implications of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Africa and internationalisation: introduction and context

Internationalisation has become one of the central issues in higher education in recent years and is a major driver of change in higher education globally (Knight, 2008; Zeleza, 2012), including in Africa where the higher education sector is comparatively recent and perhaps the most marginalised in the world (Jowi, 2012). While there have been various conceptualisations of internationalisation and even calls for a rethink of these concepts (de Wit, 2013; Deardorff, 2012), what is not in doubt is the centrality and manifestation of internationalisation as a major agent of transformation in higher education globally (Maringe, 2010). This is also fuelled by the attendant forces of globalisation and interconnectedness, mainly driven by the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) revolution.

While internationalisation is not a new phenomenon in Africa, there is credence that African universities face internationalisation from a weaker position than universities in other world regions (Teferra, 2008). As such, while universities of global standing and regions new internationalisation positively and as a major opportunity, African universities tend to view internationalisation as bringing forth several risks and challenges (Jowi, 2009). The main rationale for African universities engaging in internationalisation has been to strengthen their institutional infrastructures and capacities for teaching and research. The negative experiences of African universities with regard to internationalisation have partly been due to the various challenges that have confronted the sector and the fact that higher education in Africa is comparatively recent compared to other world regions.

It has been claimed that internationalisation of Africa’s higher education is not new, but as old as the history of higher education in Africa (Teferra, 2011; Jowi, 2009). Pioneering African universities were set up with links to parent universities mainly in Europe (Teferra, 2011) and offered the programmes and certification of those parent universities. The foundations for the development of the higher education sector in Africa were thus adopted mainly from former colonisers and have to a certain extent remained in the system. This resonates with the recent calls for decolonisation of African universities (Nyamnjoh, 2019). At the same time, a majority of pioneering African scholars were trained within these same frameworks (Oyewole, 2010).

Internationalisation has therefore been part of the development of Africa’s higher education sector in major and varied ways, leading some scholars such as Teferra (2008) to consider Africa’s higher education sector as the most internationalised globally. This is more discernible in the curricula and reading lists of most of the courses offered in African universities, with almost entirely Western content and epistemologies.

The last two decades have been viewed as a period of revitalisation of Africa’s higher education and have seen African universities grappling with the serious challenges that have bedevilled the sector since the 1990s. The key areas of transformation include the exponential growth in number of institutions and students, growth in private higher education in most African countries, diversification of academic programmes and some progress in governance and quality reforms. These transformations are a consequence of national, regional and international developments. The sector has continued to face perennial challenges including funding constraints, poor infrastructure, overcrowding, poor quality and governance challenges, among others. These developments have implications for the ability of African universities to engage with internationalisation and other global developments.

Before delving into the next sections, it is important to point out from the outset that Africa is a vast continent composed of 54 countries with several peculiarities, different regions and economic communities and a rich linguistic and cultural diversity. Generalisation is therefore very difficult and could be misleading. This paper takes this into consideration and will thus generally focus on some common aspects and present specific highlights from certain African countries and regions.

Recent developments in internationalisation in Africa

Over the last few years, a number of developments have taken place in Africa’s higher education terrain, with significant implications for the future of internationalisation in Africa. Some are themselves outcomes of the growing impact of internationalisation. Over the same period, internationalisation has continued to gain more prominence in African higher education than ever before. The section below summarises some of the key developments in internationalisation in Africa.

Growth in intra-Africa collaborations

An important recent development is the growth in partnerships and collaborations between African universities themselves. This has in a way created a new trajectory away from the historical trend, which mainly focused on partnerships with universities in other world regions, especially Europe and North America. This development has opened up a new phenomenon with a new dimension for internationalisation in Africa. Jowi (2012) established that intra-Africa collaborations have mainly followed a regional trend, possibly influenced by developments in regional economic communities and regional university associations. Intra-Africa collaborations could also be an outcome of the larger education and research relations that are continuing to emerge. A number of thematically based university networks and consortia have created useful platforms for local engagement and stronger international partnerships. Some examples include the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), in addition to several other interesting initiatives.

Emergence of regional centres of excellence

The growing intra-Africa university collaborations have in recent years been further strengthened by the emergence of African Centres of Excellence located in some leading African universities. These centres have promoted a number of internationalisation activities, in particular student, staff exchanges and joint researcher postgraduate training, with a consequent improvement in the academic quality of the participating institutions or programmes. Most of these centres are supported by international development partners, with a positive effect on the development of the capacities of African universities and the strengthening of quality local training, but at risk of becoming a new way of stemming brain drain. Several such centres have been established in different African universities through initiatives such as the Pan African University, the African Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACEs) supported by the World Bank, and other initiatives by the German Government, among others.

In the East African region, under the auspices of the Inter-University Council for East Africa, several Centres of Excellence have been established, including those targeting skill development. They have provided impor-
The last few years have also witnessed growth in the mobility of students and academics within African universities, largely through regional and continental policy instruments and frameworks. Under the provisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocol, the Southern African region has made significant steps to facilitate the mobility of students within the SADC region, with a majority of mobile students flowing into South Africa. The protocol allows students from universities in the SADC region to pay the same fees as the students when seeking studies in another SADC state.

This is also the case in the East African Community (EAC), where the East African Common Higher Education Area was established in 2016 by the heads of state of the regional economic community, providing more possibilities for higher education collaborations in the region. The EAC has a long history of regional cooperation in education that has in recent years been facilitated by the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), an institution of the East African Community (EAC) that facilitates regional university cooperation through the development of regional policies and frameworks. These developments have been coupled with the commitment of the governments of African countries to supporting development of the higher education sector, including strengthening research and innovation collaborations.

Attempts at harmonisation

Regional and continental collaborations in higher education have led to attempts aimed at harmonisation of higher education systems and the development of frameworks for mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications, thereby facilitating the mobility of both academics and professionals. The East African region has made significant steps towards harmonisation of the education systems of the six countries in the EAC region and has commenced development of the mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications through initiatives including the development of regional qualifications frameworks. The implementation of the recently inaugurated African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could play an important role in furthering harmonisation and mutual recognition of qualifications in Africa.

Mind-set change

Recent years have also witnessed some indications of a change in students’ mind-set towards academic exchanges and even the pursuit of full degree training in other African universities. Previously, students have focused mostly on going to universities in the North and other developed regions. This is slowly changing, with increasing numbers of students opting to take their studies at some universities in the region. This can be seen in the numbers of applications for study opportunities in the regional centres of excellence and other mobility arrangements. A recent study by Sehoole, Olade and Lee (2021) documented the growing trends in African students undertaking their training in other African countries.

Growth in ICTs and digitalisation

The phenomenal growth in ICTs and digitalisation, as will be discussed in the next section, presents Africa with several opportunities to foster internationalisation and strengthen its higher education sector. ICTs are beginning to enable African universities to break down some of the historical and systemic barriers, especially the digital divide which has excluded African scholars and universities from actively participating in the growing knowledge society. As is discussed later, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have constituted an important step towards the deployment of ICTs and digitalisation for teaching, learning and research in African universities.

Africa’s youth boom

It has been noted that enrolment in African universities is rising. However, this is only about 9% of the cohort of young people that should be enrolled in universities. Africa is the most youthful continent in the world today, with close to 60% of the population composed of young people. This is an important opportunity for Africa’s higher education sector and internationalisation. Universities have taken advantage of Africa’s youth to become more accessible and to participate in higher education. This growth in participation could push Africa to become an important region and key frontier for student mobility.

Impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic

The COVID 19 pandemic is unprecedented and has led to equally unprecedented consequences for African higher education and internationalisation. African universities were caught flat-footed by the pandemic, with inadequate capacities to respond to its consequences. Universities in most African countries were thus closed for several months, leading to lasting consequences. The advent of the pandemic has led to a shift to online learning and digitalisation, with several implications for the future of African universities and internationalisation. If utilised strategically and effectively, this could enable African universities to respond to some of the challenges holding back progress of the higher education sector in Africa and its internationalisation.

Investment in, and utilisation of, ICTs and digital technologies is already beginning to enhance access, curriculum reforms, changes in teaching and learning methods, efficiency and cost-cutting in several areas, improvement in quality and even enhanced collaborations which are essential for internationalisation. Several universities in Africa have unprecedentedly held their graduation ceremonies online, offering courses and examining students online, without much complaint from key stakeholders. These developments could have a significant impact on the future of African students mobility. This could be even more the case at postgraduate level, since supervision can now be effectively undertaken on digital platforms. This shift could also reduce the cost of internationalisation activities, especially those associated with travel, as many activities can now be done online. It also has the potential to enable scholars to participate in various academic and research communities and thus strengthen the weak research capacities of African universities.

African scholars and researchers can now easily participate in international conferences and other forums which were hitherto cumbersome due to the associated costs of travel and visa issues. However, a lot still needs to be done for this to meaningfully benefit African universities, including the need for significant investment not only in ICT infrastructures, equipment and software but also in the required human resource capacities, for both students and staff.

Commitment by African governments and international partners

Another key development is the renewed commitment of African governments and international development partners to supporting African higher education. Several international development partners have increased their support for the strengthening and renewing of higher education and research in Africa. The recent European Union-African Union Summit held in February 2022 underscored the essence of scientific cooperation in research and innovation and identified universities in the two regions as key to carrying this out. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2021 also committed to deepening China-Africa relations with a further commitment to supporting education, research and skills development. In the same vein, Africa-India collaborations have focused on higher education and skills development. The World Bank has in recent years spent more of its funding on higher education in Africa (World Bank 2021) than in other regions. Other funders such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) have reformulated their scholarship funding to mainly support enable training in African universities, especially in the centres of excellence. In general, higher education presently holds a much more central place in cooperation between Africa and other world regions.

At continental level, through the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), there is also growing recognition of higher education collaboration as, crucial to achieving the aspirations of the continent, including unlocking its potential. Part of this has been highlighted in the initial section of this paper.

Making internationalisation work for African universities: challenges and opportunities

The developments discussed above present African universities with a number of opportunities. Amidst these opportunities, there are also challenges and, at times, risks. The next section summarises these opportunities and challenges.

Opportunities

Internationalisation presents several opportunities, some of which have not been fully utilised by African universities in order to respond to some of the persistent challenges they have been facing. For instance, African universities have been deficient in research capacities compared to their counterparts in...
other world regions. Despite calls to enhance funding for research, African governments only spend about 0.3% of their gross national product on research. This cannot turn around the weak research and innovation capacities of African universities. In this context, African institutions seek internationalisation as one of the ways of enhancing research productivity in African Universities (Jowi, 2021). While it is debatable whether this has been a deliberate or strategic development, it is notable that there has been sustained and progressive growth in the international engagement of African universities in the area of research. Through internationalisation, some universities have been able to develop high quality academics and researchers, improve their research infrastructures, develop viable research centres and are now able to participate and contribute in knowledge production. It has been noted that the research output of African universities has increased tremendously in the last few years, partly due to these efforts.

Although brain drain has been viewed as one of the serious challenges posed by internationalisation, the African academic diaspora could be turned into a great ‘brain gain’ opportunity for Africa through various programmes such as the Carnegie Africa Diaspora Fellowship Programme (Zeleza, 2019), which brings top African academic diaspora back to African universities for a stay of a couple of months. These are just some examples of the opportunities that internationalisation offers African Universities. With responsive strategies and support mechanisms, African universities could enjoy many more benefits of internationalisation.

Challenges

There are several studies that have documented the challenges that internationalisation poses to African universities (Zeleza 2021, Mohamedbhai, 2016). Compared to other world regions, African universities face monumental challenges in their quest for internationalisation. This has led to claims that internationalisation has not worked well for African universities, partly due to leadership challenges. It must be also noted that in addition to these challenges, Africa also suffers from inadequate research capacity for research, teaching, innovation, supervision, etc., African universities also have weak capacities for management of internationalisation. Universities in most African countries do not have offices to coordinate internationalisation activities, neither do they have offices - where they exist - have capacities to implement their mandates. Internationalisation opportunities - in particular access to international research funds or collaborative projects - seem to be concentrated in a few universities - the usual suspects. Therefore, even if funds for research and academic partnerships to and with Africa might be increasing at world level, they seem to be concentrated in just a few countries and institutions, thus continuing to aggravate not only the extra-regional but also the intra-regional divide.

Conclusion

Internationalisation is growing in importance in African higher education and will remain a major factor influencing the sector in the coming years. While it portends several challenges and risks to African universities, it is still a significant opportunity for African universities to participate in the global knowledge society. Several universities have embraced online learning and digitalisation, which could open up opportunities for enhancement of access, quality, research, postgraduate training and partnerships and collabora- tion between institutions, among other aspects. Growing intra-Africa collaboration is another very important evolution, and is already fostering academic mobility, research partnerships, and contributing to the development of various consortia, as well as bringing a new and more meaningful flavour of interactions between African universities. If this evolution is adequately managed, and research and knowledge generation capacities are enhanced, internationalisation could make a decisive contribution to Africa’s development. As Mohamedbhai (2017) noted, African universities need to focus on what works for them and not internationally respond to or adapt developments that might be more relevant to other world regions. In addition to this, Africa must be able to establish its role, agenda and contribution to internationalisation and develop supportive strategies and policies towards this, rather than take an ad hoc approach to these important issues.

However, in order to grasp the opportunities and minimise the risks, it is imperative for more effort to be put into consolidating African universities and development of systems for better management of internationalisation. Support for continuous research and training on internationalisation in Africa needs further emphasis. These are areas where African organisations such as the African Network for Internationalisation of Education (ANIE) could play a key role and thus need the support of other collaborative partners to further them in Africa.

Internationalisation also seems to be a necessary framework in order to manage, from an African perspective, a series of challenges that African higher education systems necessarily face: first, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emerging shift it has brought to African higher education; second, dealing with climate change and other emerging issues; third, benefitting from Africa’s youth boom, promoting student mobility on that basis and using it to create an important reservoir for developing the much-needed cohort of young talent to turn around Africa’s development; fourth, the harmonisation of education systems, the development of mutual recognition agreements and enhanced mobility and university cooperation, especially in the different regions of Africa, fifth, to create the basis for the proper implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), if it is successfully consolidated.

Of course, the traditional collaborations with Europe and North America, which have contributed immensely to the growth and internationalisation of African higher education, still need further strengthening, in addition to the emerging role of initiatives from countries like China and India and all the South-South initiatives. But this strengthening would be optimal if it were matched by, and developed within, intra-African cooperation.

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New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030 - Part 3: Regional Approaches

James Otieno Jowi, 465
Abstract

The Higher Education sector on the African continent has seen exceptional growth over the last two decades, although enrolment rates continue to lag behind global figures. There are, however, deep concerns over the quality and relevance of the education students receive. This contribution defends an urgent focus on developing graduate competencies that will withstand the waves of change and the uncertainty of the global future. The curricula of most African universities continue to follow the traditional approach of accumulation of separate courses and credits. This approach is no longer able to meet the demands of the global society, which requires graduates to solve complex problems using creative, innovative and ethical thought and practices. African Higher Education Institutions should embrace a Transformation philosophy to curriculum thought and practice to attain the “Africa we want”. The question “Who will lead Africa into a bright future?” Requires universities to reflect on the challenges facing the continent and define what kind of citizens will be able to handle the challenges most effectively. The task of an adequate philosophy of higher education is not only to understand the university or even to defend it but to help change the institution.

Introduction

Higher education (HE) is perceived to be crucial and strategic to the comprehensive development of nation-states globally. Including African countries, which want to respond to the global challenges of the 21st century. This is evidenced by the number of national councils for HE (NCHEs) created in many African countries in the last decade, as well as by the number of regional education bodies and protocols established to work on improving the quality and transferability of HE qualifications in African HE Institutions (AHEIs) and to leverage their ability to contribute to quality teaching, research and national development goals.

Over the last two decades, Africa has experienced unprecedented growth and development in its HE sector, many young Africans have become better educated as enrolment rates across AHEIs increased dramatically. And the African Union (AU)’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), a part of Agenda 2063, places HE at the centre of its ambitious plan to see at least 70% of high school graduates on the continent moving on to tertiary education. According to QS, Rethinking Higher Education in Africa (March 31st, 2021), this is eight times the current Sub-Saharan average of 8%.

However, “These developments ... came with different concerns/challenges over issues of quality and relevance.” (Nyamnjoh, 2019, p.46) Further, although the current enrolment rates lag far behind global rates, there is a huge concern about the ability of African economies to absorb such a large increase of tertiary-level graduates into their labour markets. The COVID-19 pandemic has revitalised African interest in HE, opening huge opportunities for innovation and showcasing deepening existing inequalities in access to and quality of higher education. The Association of African Universities (AAU) has taken on an activist role in the revitalisation of HE in Africa and has designed a series of interventions to improve the difficult situation that HEIs in African countries are facing. Other initiatives such as the Africa Centres of Excellence, Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering & Technology, the Pan African University, Harmonisation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in African HE (HAQAA) are all part of various efforts by the AU and the AAU to improve African Higher Education.

However, few of these key interventions and initiatives are really focused on the strategic role that curriculum innovation and transformation play in HE.

Transforming Curricula in African Higher Education Institutions: An African necessity

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New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030 - Part 3: Regional Approaches

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How to approach curricula?
Since the dawn of the post-colonial era, African scholars have expressed that African universities should mirror their societies and cultures by Africanising the university and its curricula. However, the transformation of AHEIs to reflect African society and culture in curricula, teaching, and learning did not really materialise. Many reasons have been offered for this, beginning, of course, with the role of neo-colonialism and the strong desire of African nation-state universities to be acceptable in the eyes of former colonial rulers and the larger global HE community.
However, as scholars across the Continent continue to debate what the Africanisation of AHEIs will mean in practical terms, some critics are of the opinion that the Africanisation project is silent on the pertinent issue of transformation and transformative pedagogy that could effectively deliver courses that will develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions that African youth need to change the social and economic realities in their communities.
Furthermore, the debate usually takes place within economic agendas of strongly market-oriented nation-states that emphasise competition, economic efficiency and consumption. Many view this, again, as another neo-colonialism of the African higher education system, seeking to make HE a marketable product bought and sold by unit standards. The system of business principles and statistical accountability has resulted in an obsessive concern with the periodic and quantitatively assessed evaluation of every facet of university functioning. ... excellence itself has been reduced to statistical accountancy.
We have to change this if we want to break the cycle that tends to turn students into customers and consumers... the free pursuit of knowledge has become the free pursuit of credits [Mbembe, A., 2015, p. 7].
Scholars like Mbembe are concerned that current quality assurance processes have taken on a life of their own at the expense of the University’s mission to educate students to lead productive lives, conducting research and creating new knowledge, serving as engines of change and social mobility, protecting diverse viewpoints, and defending important shared values. And many would agree that there is a need for AHEIs to focus on the development of graduate competencies that will withstand the waves of change and the uncertainties of the global future. Such competencies are firmly embedded in graduates’ ability to develop a critical and analytical mindset, ability to solve complex problems and continue learning (Life-long learning).

Transforming curricula in African heis
Conceiving curricula
The curriculum operationalises the academic plan for learning and teaching. Being at the centre of a university’s educational efforts, it often becomes the locus of the sharpest controversies, dealing with questions such as: Why knowledge is it of the most worth? What knowledge should be introduced to the learner? What is valuable to the learner as a person and as a member of the community/society? Given our global interdependence on issues around climate change, environmental sustainability, global pandemics and growing social and economic inequalities and injustices, HE is now all the more confronted with how it is responding to these matters.
The term curriculum traditionally is broadly defined as the course of study that includes goals for student learning (skills, knowledge and attitudes); content (the subject matter in which learning experiences are embedded); instructional methods and activities; instructional resources (materials and settings); evaluation (methods used to assess student learning as a result of these experiences); and adjustments to teaching and learning processes based on experience and assessment.
From a traditional perspective, curriculum design focuses on preserving subject disciplines that are transmitted as undisputed truth and value to the younger generations. The teacher is seen as possessing a disciplined body of knowledge and skills to impart to the learner through deliberate instruction. This still looks and sounds familiar, nearly axiomatic, to many current-day African university lecturers.
Critics of the traditional educational orientation argue that this way of educating younger generations leads to the upholding of the status quo/conforming to hegemony and leaves little room for the cultivation of innate ability, self-discovery and the ability to explore and grow (mentally, morally, spiritually) through active interaction with their natural and social environments. It often leads to an inability to reflect and self-correct, to apply education to solve human problems, and improve the quality of life for all humankind.
An alternative to the traditionalist approach comes from the proponents of the transformative approach to curriculum development, implementation and evaluation, who posit that the most profound learning takes place when learners are actively involved in their own learning through experiential activities, projects and complex problem-solving. This way of learning encourages them to discover knowledge and co-create new knowledge rather than passively assimilating knowledge given to them by a teacher. It encourages exploration, self-discovery, learning by doing and leads to innovation that can bring about the social and economic betterment of society.

Curricula Reform: An African necessity
Since its earliest years, AHEIs have been struggling with ensuring the relevance, applicability and integrity of their academic programmes. Scholars since the 1950s and 60s have called for designing an educational “of Africa for Africa” that should liberate Africans from the yoke of colonialism. However, the operationalisation of the concept of Africanisation of HE curriculum and study programmes has remained largely elusive. Even those African universities that have become Africanised over time because more African academics occupied management and teaching positions, the struggle to ensure that curricula in AHEIs reflect African values, beliefs, ways of knowing and knowledge construction, learning, teaching and research practices, remains vague and incoherent.
A look into the African Union Commission (AUC) documents and information indicates that the Commission sees as the objective of HE in Africa in the 21st century: to increase access and ensure quality education provision, ensuring that higher education is responsive to Africa’s priorities and relevant to the labour market. It sees HE as a progressive force that plays a crucial role in the transformation of African society and economies and calls on HEIs to adopt African approaches to the education development agendas of their institutions. It also calls for the promotion of student-centred learning and outcomes-based study programmes aligned with the needs of stakeholders. It promotes Arts, Culture and Heritage and focuses on science and technology to accelerate the continent’s transition to an innovation-led, knowledge-based economy. Combined with a focus on women and girls’ education and empowerment, community programmes in Agriculture development and innovation, and the protection of rights to access information, among others, it appears that the Commission is making the right moves in the right direction. What is not so clear are the basic curricular principles and practices that should drive the transformation of the higher education curriculum that will deliver the “Africa we want” or the values, principles, beliefs and practices that need to underlie the transformation of teaching and learning in higher education.
The fact remains that many classrooms across many AHEIs, continue to resemble those of the 50s, 60s and 70s. Academics continue to lecture to students, who passively receive knowledge taught as absolute, eternal and unchanging, framed in a cumulative curriculum (subject content attained at one level is added to the next higher level) and compartmentalised in distinct and separate academic disciplines. Of course, there are exceptions, however, the pace at which African university curriculum and instruction are transforming is often left wanting. Community and industry leaders continue to decry the inadequate skills of graduates who are unable to problem-solve, communicate through writing and speaking, engage in ethical decision-making, work in teams, learn/re-learn and unlearn, and disengage from community and civic life. The mandate to implement transformation across most universities is clear, but what is not so clear is the curriculum transformation framework that could guide HE through the transformation process.

Transforming African HE curricula
At the theoretical level, the need for a shift of focus is globally acknowledged: from subject/discipline knowledge and what teachers do, to what students are learning:
1) From learning goals focusing on mastery of content and content coverage to a demonstration of broad competencies and relevant learning outcomes.
2) From learning in distinct disciplines to integrative learning across the curriculum (wicked problem solving).
3) From changes in subject matter as the main means to improve learning, to innovations in instructional and assessment methods (integrating ICTs).
Employers rate the attainment of these above-mentioned competencies/skills highly, and often consider them more important than the subject content areas from which students are graduating. However, they do not feel that graduates attain them, leaving a gap between the education received and the competencies and skills needed in the workplace.

In this context, an increasing number of African scholars argue that African HE needs a very deep and broad transformation project. A transformative philosophy and approach to curriculum planning, development and implementation in HE will encourage students to analyse African development challenges and needs, pushing them to develop action-oriented solutions to development issues through inquiry, case studies, peer collaboration, research and complex problem solving and problem learning. Students will establish deep connections and relationships with local communities and economies through this approach. Thus, they argue, if well implemented, could ensure a transformation in learning, teaching, and assessment approaches in HE, and ensure greater connectedness with local and regional communities and industries. It could also have a transformative impact on local and global problems and issues that are collaboratively identified without regard for subject area boundaries, to encourage the cross-curricular application of subject discipline knowledge that comes to bear on the identified problem. It encourages linking learning and the building of learning communities. It integrates reflection, action, theory and practice as well as social and personal realities in its methodological ethos. It ensures that African knowledge systems, cultural traditions and values and language systems are used together with scientific knowledge and practices for the improvement and development of individuals, communities and nation-states.

A transformation curriculum in HE recognises that the traditional curriculum focused on subject content, and organised in distinct disciplines, is no longer able to meet the demands of an emerging world society that requires graduates to solve complex problems using creative, innovative and ethical thought and practices. The curriculum has to answer questions such as what graduate competences and skills/outcomes are most valuable in modern-day local and global society, how universities can best facilitate the development of these competences/skills in their graduates, what knowledge and assessment experiences are needed, what structural and procedural changes should universities make to achieve the goals, and what role should staff and the community play to ensure the goals are achieved.

For African students to succeed in this new learning environment where key competencies replace the focus on subject content mastery and where interdisciplinary, problem-solving, focus on the developmental learning needs of students must be master concepts that can improve retention rates and support students at risk of dropping out while facilitating their transition from university to the world of work by intentionally integrating what they are learning to other disciplinary perspectives, community challenges and the world of work.

A transformative approach to HE curriculum teaching and learning encourages students to view and interpret gate issues and problems from several perspectives, including a deep consideration of diversity (of thought and practice), and to integrate indigenous knowledge and alternative worldviews to complex problem-solving. It also encourages the acquisition of values of respect for all forms of life and human dignity as required for social harmony in a diverse world, as espoused by UNESCO.

Transformation university curricula to respond to local and global challenges also requires an intense look into the structural adjustments universities need to make to support processes for transforming HE. The key is to not only change the way things look but also make to support processes for transforming HE. This approach, not transform the basic tenets of the Africanisation of HE curricula but supports it and provides concrete guiding principles to operationalise HE transformation in teaching, learning, research and community engagement. Its main purpose is the empowerment of learners to see the world differently, so that they can challenge and change the status quo as leading agents of change. This is particularly pertinent to the current education, climate, health and economic challenges on the African continent. The transformation curriculum encourages collaborative complex problem-solving by using different forms of knowledge/s and practices, including indigenous knowledge/practices, and practically engaging students in action-oriented inquiry to find solutions to enduring problems. The curriculum is organised around local and global problems and issues that are collaboratively identified without regard for subject area boundaries, to encourage the cross-curricular application of subject discipline knowledge that comes to bear on the identified problem. It encourages linking learning and the building of learning communities. It integrates reflection, action, theory and practice as well as social and personal realities in its methodological ethos. It ensures that African knowledge systems, cultural traditions and values and language systems are used together with scientific knowledge and practices for the improvement and development of individuals, communities and nation-states.

A transformation curriculum in HE recognises that the traditional curriculum focused on subject content, and organised in distinct disciplines, is no longer able to meet the demands of an emerging world society that requires graduates to solve complex problems using creative, innovative and ethical thought and practices. The curriculum has to answer questions such as what graduate competences and skills/outcomes are most valuable in modern-day local and global society, how universities can best facilitate the development of these competences/skills in their graduates, what knowledge and assessment experiences are needed, what structural and procedural changes should universities make to achieve the goals, and what role should staff and the community play to ensure the goals are achieved.

There is limited research evidence of AHEIs accepting a transformative epistemology and methodology for their transformation processes. Reports suggest that many former advantaged universities stopped short of effecting their own transformation processes. If HE is to transform from its traditional (some would say elitist) focus on the transmission and preservation of subject discipline knowledge, to a focus on the technical and economic roles of students in a rapidly changing social and technological world, it requires a university cultural revolution. After all, in the words of Barnett (2017), the task of an adequate philosophy of HE is not merely to understand the university or even to defend it but to change it. As stakeholders engage in this process of change and deliberate with one another, the process itself also becomes a form of emancipation that serves both individual intellectual development as well as social progression.

Transformation Learning in AHEIs

Who will lead Africa into a bright future? This question requires the academy to deeply reflect on the challenges facing the continent and nation-states, and define what kind of citizens will be able to handle the challenges most effectively. How should we educate our students to live responsible, creative and productive lives? After all, students are the ultimate recipients of education.

The traditional model of university teaching excellence recognises universities for their comprehensive array of course disciplines, the research funding they obtain and the publications that arise from such sponsored work, their technology transfer and community engagement programmes supported by dedicated staff and infrastructure. In short, the institution’s excellence is mainly based on the scholarly efforts of its academic staff combined with evidence of its community outreach. Although this institutional achievement model will continue to be part of the academic culture, there is an increasing shift to a new pattern of achievement based on collaborative use and production of knowledge based on the characteristics of the communities and regions the university serves. In this scenario, students play a much more active role.

For African students to succeed in this new learning environment where key competencies replace the focus on subject content mastery and where interdisciplinary, problem-solving, focus on the developmental learning needs of students must be master concepts that can improve retention rates and support students at risk of dropping out while facilitating their transition from university to the world of work by intentionally integrating what they are learning to other disciplinary perspectives, community challenges and the world of work.

To move in this direction, academic staff should be exposed to innovative instructional methods that are integral to the curriculum transformation efforts. Although lectures and small group discussions will continue to be present in the university classroom, active, collaborative and interdisciplinary learning should become more commonplace in university classrooms in AHEIs than what is currently the case.

Transformation teaching in AHEIs: In defence of important values

Transformation is unavoidable, especially to allow univers- ities to continue nurturing multiple points of view and standing for timeless values such as the pursuit of learning free from external constraints, research important questions of every kind, and the importance of enlightened reasoning. In the world of Big Data and giant transnational companies owning and managing them, the academy’s ability to access raw data for creating new knowledge might become more challenging and protecting these values is becoming more and more imperilled.

The local and global changes surrounding the university landscape have placed an incredible amount of pressure on academics who are affected by limited resources for teaching and learning, requirements for income generation, improving flexible modes of delivery and study, technology, curriculum, and continuing scrutiny in relation to quality and standards. A further challenge brought on by the pandemic is that academics have to work with students remotely while at the same time preparing them more carefully for a
local and global world dominated by forces out of their control. The fact that a teacher’s physical presence in the classroom is no longer a requirement for teaching may be a welcome reprieve from the ever-escalating cost of traditional instructional methods, but the cost of investment in computerised teaching systems and online learning courseware may be hard to come by in most AHEIs. This situation could perpetuate the many inequalities witnessed across the higher education landscape on the continent, leading to an ever-widening social, political, cultural and economic gap.

It is clear that higher education is operating in a very fluid and unpredictable environment. A transformative approach informed by adaptability and flexibility is becoming a condition for the survival of these institutions. As AHEIs will have to increasingly compete with industry to recruit and retain top research talent, collaboration with other universities is essential. And as our intellectual work is increasingly being replaced by machines, the ethical and philosophical issues that will be raised can only be addressed by understanding the Humanities and our African human conditionality. Therefore, universities should guard to exclusively respond to market needs but to also be motivated by their values and missions at a time when a deep understanding of the Humanities is more important than ever.

In the words of Paulo Freire, what is needed is a pedagogical approach that “demythologises” and unveils reality by promoting dialogue between teachers and learners to create critical thinkers engaged in inquiry in order to create a new constantly changing social reality (Freire 1970, 2009). This is the process of problem-solving education, aligning its meaning with the intrinsic view that education is ultimately aimed at human development.

Conclusions

The Africa HE sector has seen unprecedented growth over the last two decades. However, this progress in the dimension of access has taken place on a very traditional canvas. The challenges of employability, and contribution to the overall African development and to the reduction of inequalities, and the solutions to global problems, will not be adequately faced without adopting a transformative approach to curriculum design and implementation. AHEIs must be encouraged to adopt a transformation approach to curriculum thinking and decision-making to ensure the development of graduates who have the skills and attributes to make meaningful impacts on their countries’ social and economic struggles, and who are able to face an uncertain job market with the enduring competencies needed.

Answers to the questions of What knowledge is of the most worth? What knowledge should be introduced to the learner? What is valuable to the learner as a person and as a member of the community/society? should guide the vision and mission of the university and should broadly define its course of study.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with including the perceptions and views of the marketplace in curriculum conceptualisation. However, the widening social and economic inequalities across the continent (and globally) raise ethical and philosophical questions that require a full understanding of the Humanities for a university education to address them. Even the prolific expansion of information through the use of ICTs requires students and teachers who are critical thinkers able to discern the nature of knowledge, its origins, how it is created, by who, and to which purpose.

References


Research and innovation: Learning and Innovation strategies for sub-Saharan Africa

Mafini Dosso

Abstract

Emerging dynamics and novel actors are shaping the transformations of sub-Saharan Africa’s research and innovation systems. In the last decade, new strategies, instruments, alliances and networks have flourished in the region, shining a light on innovative local solutions and tremendous technological potential. Long-term transformations are possible but not sufficient for the sustainability and for research and innovation to deliver benefits for society. Indeed, local actors are confronted with shared regional and global challenges and ecosystem-specific barriers hindering learning, creativity, and innovation processes.

This contribution addresses the major evolutions in regional learning and innovation strategies and the challenges of their sustainability. It calls for innovation to the new ‘rules of the game’, fast-evolving youth-led digital ecosystems, rising science integration, and best practices cases in science excellence and research and innovation networks. Sub-Saharan African researchers and innovators are thus undoubtedly on the rise. However, more inclusive stakeholders’ coalitions, challenges-oriented and place-based strategies would be key for achieving transformations through research and innovation, leaving no one and no place behind. Furthermore, monitoring these rapid changes becomes even more pressing in order to ensure that their impacts do not remain uneven and unequally distributed for the times to come.

Introduction

Research and Innovation (R&I) are already transforming sub-Saharan African countries and still struggling on several fronts: to cite a few only, the implementation of the AfCFTA (U.A, 2018; CNCED, 2019), the consequences of the regional ‘spaghetti bowl’ of agreements (Byiers et al., 2019) and the multi-faceted capability gaps and rising multiform inequalities, as well as the existence of acute policy implementation bottleneck at all levels. Harnessing the emerging technological and innovation potential and opportunities to the benefit of local communities thus requires novel place-based and people-centred policymaking approaches. These place-based, ‘no-one-size-fits-all’ policies should help to create, capture and redistribute more value locally by upgrading the learning and innovation capabilities of local players. From the perspective of fostering local innovation ecosystems, each stakeholder in the quadruple helix – academia, civil society, industry and government – has a role that, in most countries, would require place-based capabilities to be enhanced or constructed in order to achieve prosperity for everyone and everywhere.

Research and innovation strategies for sub-Saharan Africa

Mafini Dosso

Research and innovation institutions are gradually being constructed to address sustainability challenges

Recognition of the role of research and innovation in solving developmental challenges has prompted the elaboration of related strategies or instruments in many countries of the sub-Saharan African region. In addition to the publication of the African Union (AU)’s science, technology and innovation (STI) and education strategies (STISA 2034 and CESAA 16-25), the decade has been marked by the increased commitment of some RECs in STI strategy-making and integration. In the last decade, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has further strengthened its STI policy coope- ration, building upon the protocol signed in 2008. The Western African Community (ECOWAS) adopted a dedicated STI protocol in 2012, while the East African Community (EAC) has recently operationalised the East Africa Science and Technology (S&T) Commission. Nevertheless, advances at policy elaboration and operationalisation level remain very heterogeneous across RECs, which are also expected to fulfill multiple thematic institutional roles beyond the R&I domain. In the regional communities where some common R&I frameworks exist, tracking progress is another challenging task for both them and the Member States.

Besides the ongoing adoption of thematic or sectoral agendas and conventions, the construction of African R&I systems relies on the creation of continental institutions and organisations, some of which are directly or indirectly related to the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA). Those directly related to STISA include the African Scientific, Research and Innovation Council (ASIRC), a technical advisory body, the African Observatory for Science, Technology and Innovation (AO-STI) and the Pan-African Intellectual Property Organisation (PAPO) established by African Union statute in 2018. The same year marked the adoption of the revised statute of the Pan-African University (PAU), which is a network of five thematic institutes covering Earth and Life Sciences in Nigeria, Water and Energy in Algeria, Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences in Cameroon, basic STI in Kenya and Space Sciences in South Africa. In 2019, the Pan-African Virtual and E-University was officially launched. While these initiatives might be acclaimed, their sustainability is still very much in the balance owing to the lack of funding, managerial and academic staff, and complete institutional and operational processes. Recent reviews suggest that many pieces are missing from the regional STI policy puzzle, including understanding, capabilities and instruments, action plans, monitoring and evalua- tion practices, as well as traceable financial support (See AUC, 2014, progress report AU 2019a, AU 2019b).

At national level, favourable policy responses have also been diversely implemented and some remain at the announcement stage. Several countries in the region have now adopted STI policies (UNESCO, 2021). The picture varies depending on the geographical sub-re- gions. In West Africa, countries such as Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Togo, Liberia and Sierra Leone do not yet have an explicit STI policy. Nevertheless, like other coun- tries, they have reinforced their STI institutions through different instruments (thematic ministries, directorates, commissions, sectorial policies, etc.). In Central and Eastern Africa, some countries such as Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda have ela- borated explicit STI policies; Kenya and Rwanda have already engaged in revision phases. These improve- ments suggest that R&I policy learning is taking place in sub-Saharan African economies, but may be too slow amid global socio-economic and technological trends and African trade integration.

Combined efforts of the public and private for-profit and not-for-profit sectors could help to make faster joint progress towards the 1% target of GDP invested in R&D.

Slight increases in research and development (R&D) funding, human capital and outcomes have been observed over the last decade. This trend has also been marked by the important participation (and orientation) of international donors and partners. In sub-Saharan African, the highest ratio is 0.83% of GDP invested in R&D in South Africa (2018 UNESCO data), while most coun- tries are not even half-way, except for countries such as Senegal and Rwanda. More collective efforts from both the public and the private – for-profit and not-for- profit – sectors would help to make faster and smarter joint progress towards the 1% target of GDP invested in R&D. While funding remains a major issue at stake,
the collection of R&D and innovation data is still not anchored into the habits of national statistical institutes, research centres and universities. To address these issues, the African Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI) and UNU-MERIT have organised throughout the decade a series of capacity-building programmes as part of the Design and Evaluation of Innovation Policy in Africa. The regional training series targeted African policymakers, government officials and other stakeholders involved in STI activities. The series covered countries from Eastern and Southern Africa and two Regional Economic Communities (SADC and COMESA), as well as Western African countries and ECOWAS (Iizuka et al 2018; 2015).

Table I. Sub-Saharan African Countries participating in African Innovation Outlooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIO 2010</th>
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<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>Tanzania</td>
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Local initiatives for science excellence and integration are taking off (too slowly) in sub-Saharan Africa

In the area of scientific excellence and integration, sub-Saharan Africa has become a flourishing ground for international initiatives through the establishment of regional Centres of Excellence, network building and thematic capacity-building programmes for HEIs and research organisations. Launched by the World Bank and participating governments, the Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE) programme has provided support to more than 40 thematic centres in West and Central Africa (phase 1) - Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo - and East and Southern Africa - Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia - (phase 2). Target fields include science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), the environment, agriculture, applied social sciences, education and health. The programme provides financial and technical support to HEIs and research centres to enhance higher education quality and the market and industry relevance of postgraduate students.

The success of the project has led to further extensions towards other international development partners and within African networks. For instance, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Inter-University Council for East Africa (UCEA) and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity-Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM). The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be the framework for the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACEI-EF) project for the period 2021-2026. The new ACEIs focus on novel (sub-)theematic areas such as sustainable cities; sustainable power and energy; social sciences and education; transport, population health and policy; herbal medicine development and regulatory sciences; public health, applied informatics and communication; and pastoral production.

In 2019, with the operational leadership of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), five continental Centres of Excellence (CoEs) were endorsed by the African Heads of State and Government. The CoEs, one for each geographical region of Africa – Central, East, North, South and West –, should support the implementation of the National Development Plans of Member States, REC strategies and other continental thematic programmes and frameworks: Rural Resourc- es and Food Systems (Senegal, West Africa), Climate Resilience (Egypt, Northern Africa), Human Capital and Institutions Development (Kenya, East Africa), Science, Technology and Innovation – STI – (South Africa, Southern Africa), Supply Chain and Logistics (Central Africa, Country TBC).

Regional and international collaboration enable improvements in local absorptive and learning capabilities. R&D collaboration is instrumental in sharing best practices, physical and faculty resources and creating synergies on common developmental priorities. Thematic scientific networks and alliances have also been reinforced or created, such as the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) in 2015.

Source: African Innovation Outlook 2019 (AUDA-NEPAD, 2019)

Notes: The survey covers research and experimental development (R&D) or innovation in products, processes and organisational and marketing methods. Some countries only provided one category of data.

A key issue is illustrated by the African Innovation Outlook 2019, where only 23 African countries provided R&D survey data (see Table I), the figures being even less accessible with regard to innovation data, despite the pro-innovation policy discourse. In addition to the absence of more than half of the countries, R&D expenditure data by institutional sector are incomplete and in general only refer to spending by governments and higher education sectors. Another challenge for the countries covered relates to overestimations due to the inclusion of support staff as R&D professionals, thus limiting the reliability of comparative analyses. In the field of data collection and interpretation, the support of the African Observatory for STI and RECs could play a key role. Relevant experiences are for instance the African STI Indicators initiative (ASTII) and the capability-building initiatives led by the AOSTI. They enable practice-sharing and learning-by-interacting, which are key to improving the measurement and monitoring of R&D&M activities on the continent (AUDA-NEPAD, 2019).

The Institut Pasteur de Côte d’Ivoire (IPCI): a long-standing commitment to excellence in health science in West Africa

The IPCI is a state-owned industrial and commercial establishment (EPIC) under Ivory Coast’s Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Its missions include research, training, diagnostics and epidemiological surveillance. The Institut Pasteur de Côte d’Ivoire hosts the CeReB, the first regional biobank conforming to international standards in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa (inaugurated in 2019), and since 2021, a high-throughput genome sequencing laboratory, a key part of the infrastructure for Western Africa’s fight against the pandemic.

Source: IPCI (provided in January 2022)

1. See: https://ace.aau.org/about-ace-impact/
3. See an updated list at https://africanscientists.africa/academies-of-science/
4. See the impacts at https://www.africainsights.org/impacts/
Endorsed by a summit resolution of the AU Heads of Government, AESA was set up through a partnership of the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), the AUDA-NEPAD and founding and funding global partners. In parallel, several national science academies have been revived or established in countries such as Botswana and Rwanda, with the most recent one being in Malawi. In the field of STI studies, the African Network for Economics of Learning, Innovation and Competence Building Systems, or Africanics, was founded in 2012 in Tanzania. It is a regional chapter of the Globelics network that brings together thousands of scholars, researchers, practitioners and policy analysts worldwide.

The trends have coincided with an unprecedented surge in the digital presence of traditional African universities and the development or creation of national virtual universities. Unlike in English-speaking countries, which have been pioneers in online education and learning, the phenomenon is relatively more recent in many French-speaking countries, for instance in Burkina Faso (UV-BF was established in 2018), Ivory Coast (UVCI in 2015) or Senegal (UVS in 2013). These new higher education modes are helping to combat the saturation of physical higher education systems in sub-Saharan Africa. Their sustainability largely depends on how well countries can alleviate the related technological, socio-economic, digital literacy and political constraints.

The emerging youth-led technological boom brings more “games” to African towns and innovation ecosystems

The African technology revolution is on its way, as suggested by the exceptional growth of urban technology ecosystems, digital start-ups and start-up networks in the last decade. Several factors are at play, such as globalisation, the rapid diffusion of ICTs, the rise in venture, corporate and development funds and the spread of collective innovation and learning spaces and technology hubs. At the end of the year 2021, Briter Bridges recorded at least 1031 innovation hubs, usually concentrated in capital or main cities, spanning 53 African countries and more than 7000 start-ups. 53% of these innovation hubs are co-working spaces and communities, while more than 45% run support programmes. These hubs provide services such as capacity-building, incubation and acceleration programmes, co-working spaces and support structures for African entrepreneurs at different stages of the innovation value chain, from ideation to the market (Briter Bridges and AfriLabs 2021; Dosso, et al., 2021).

AfriLabs, the Pan-African voice of hundreds of innovation hubs and communities

Created in 2011, AfriLabs is the largest innovation hubs network. As of January 2022, it connected 320 innovation hubs across more than 50 African countries and the diaspora. AfriLabs offers financial mentorship, networking opportunities and capacity-building resources.

AfricA Technology Revolution: Start-ups and Innovation Hubs

New hubs are engaging a growing variety of corporate, not-for-profit, university and development players and target very diverse sectors, for instance creative industries (art, fashion and entertainment) such as the 360 Creative Innovation Hub in Lagos (Nigeria) or women-focused tech-entrepreneurship such as the Ghana-based Women’s Haven Hub or Femmes360 in Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of Congo). Overall, fintech companies from the traditional quadrangle – Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt and Kenya – attract the biggest share of African start-up funding. Nevertheless, more countries, tech sectors (for instance, agriculture and agri-tech, ed-tech, clean-tech, gov-tech, legal-tech, logistics, health-tech or space technologies, among others) and companies are coming in, and French-speaking Africa is recording increasing numbers of hubs, start-ups, deals and financing inflows. These changes have undoubtedly been accelerated by the social distancing and lockdown restrictions amid the pandemic (Briter Bridges, 2021; UNDP, 2020).

Start-up networks and organisations and networks of innovation hubs are making an important contribution to the interconnection of start-ups, hubs and local innovation systems. They also showcase local innovative solutions, challenges and ecosystems’ needs. Nigeria-headquartered AfriLabs is such a network, spanning the whole continent. In addition to the capacity-building, certification and networking programmes, African innovation networks have amplified the voices of young digital entrepreneurs, particularly with regard to the international and African private sector and policymaking circles.

A number of foundations, forums and prizes have been established on the continent to encourage and support young innovators, scientists, digital entrepreneurs and start-ups. The Next Einstein Forum (NEF) is a platform launched in 2016 with the aim of connecting science, society and policy. The NEF has four major programmes including the global gathering, the policy institute, a public engagement online platform and a community of scientists including the best young African S&T champions. The annual TREMPLIN START-UP UEMOA awards promote digital start-ups’ solutions in agriculture and the agro-industry and their Enterprise Support Organisations (ESOs). Participating countries belong to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU; UEMOA in French): Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The rise of African prizes and forums and the faster adoption of national digital plans signal a broader policy commitment to ICT-enabled innovative solutions and local tech-entrepreneurial ecosystems. However, some critical gaps persist, for instance in terms of sustainable funding, basic and advanced infrastructure, technology literacy and legal instruments and frameworks. Indeed, very few states have national cybersecurity and data protection laws, and most countries have not ratified the 2014 Malabo Convention on cybersecurity and personal data protection. In terms of start-ups’ legal frameworks, Senegal has already passed a Start-Up Act, while other countries such as Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda have launched draft legislation or related consultations.
Some directions for the future of research and innovation (R&I) in relation to sustainable transformations in sub-Saharan Africa

Diffusing the innovation culture beyond the core of R&I systems

Recent evidence, media premières and success stories have put the spotlight on the potential and challenges of Sub-Saharan Africa’s researchers and innovators. The last decade has witnessed the gradual construction and strengthening of R&I institutions and the rise of innovation hubs, R&I networks, communities, alliances and scientific centres of excellence. Some impacts of these changes are already visible, even if they may take time to be captured by the commonly used R&D&I measures. Meanwhile, their sustainability largely depends on how well we can keep them alive, bring them together and scale them up to address the challenges of local communities and economies. From the perspective of achieving sustainable transformations, our collective efforts should thus go towards improving the diffusion of innovation, entrepreneurial and learning cultures, well beyond our science and nascent urban technology ecosystems. In other words, it is also about nurturing an innovation culture – creativity, innovative thinking and a mind-set for change, learning from successes and failures, etc. – across schools, colleges, craft federations, traditional, emerging and creative industries, chambers of commerce and industry, SME federations and civil society organisations, as well as within local and central administrations, among other stakeholders.

The ongoing EU-funded ACP project for the Promotion of Research, Innovation and Digital Culture in Central Africa (PRICNAC), for instance, supports innovative projects proposed by multi-stakeholders and multi-country and cross-sectoral initiatives spanning public and private sectors. Novel sources and updated instruments for challenge-oriented R&I funding

The unprecedented funding inflows for technology start-ups and R&I-oriented development projects have greatly supported the emergence of local R&I dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa. Although some improvements can be observed in the funding of African research capabilities by science institutions, they mostly still rely on international donors and government-related sources. While the interconnection with the global innovation system might be much praised, the sustainability of local research and innovation systems may be at stake owing to potential mismatches with local players’ priorities and long-term development models. In addition to the setting up or strengthening of national funding sources, novel instruments and models should also be identified to support challenge-oriented R&I projects. Additional efforts should therefore be made to involve the private sector, thereby enabling the development of innovative funding instruments, and to better leverage emerging innovation networks, successful start-up founders or private philanthropic funding.

Improving the funding for R&I is not enough. The directionality and prioritisation of R&I is even more important for impactful investment. This means that shared visions for transformations through R&I should be constructed and that R&I projects should be jointly matched to the vision, the underlying objectives, and the available and accessible resources. Revisions of priorities are of course possible, even encouraged, but will often require monitoring and evaluation capabilities and routine-like practices. From a dual evidence-informed and place-based perspective, dedicated mappings of R&I stakeholders, the scientific, economic and entrepreneurial potential, and the innovation challenges in the formal and informal sectors are essential for the elaboration of sound R&I roadmaps and action plans. (UN IATT & European Commission, 2021; Foray, et al., 2021; Dosso, 2019).

Strengthen the capability of stakeholders to make R&I participatory approaches a reality

Broadening and spreading innovation and learning cultures is a long-term and collective undertaking. The dynamics observed in the sub-Saharan Africa economic, R&I and technology landscapes are still a cause for optimism and hope, which some have hailed as part of the “Africa Rising” narrative. However, the impacts of these changes risk remaining too uneven and unevenly distributed for the times to come.

In the region, several initiatives have been deployed to foster participatory R&I dialogues, for instance targeting HEI-industry links. However, they are often under-financed, under-staffed and discontinued. Besides these resource gaps and the absence of long-term commitment, awareness and adequate capabilities are also missing across the quadruple helix players for the establishment of sustainable participatory R&I dialogues and decision-making models. Inspirational cases of collective discovery processes and multi-stakeholder dialogues exist in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, within and outside the R&I domain. Although they can hardly be copied, the learnings and experiences could relevantly inform place-based strategies with a view to achieving sustainable transformations through research and innovation in sub-Saharan Africa.

References


Development and Implementation of the ASG-QA in African Higher Education Space: What are the challenges?

Jeffy Mukora

Abstract

Quality assurance of African higher education is at the top of the continent’s development agenda. Prompted by the imperative to enhance the quality of higher education, the African Union (AU) and the European Union came together to support the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Initiative (HQAQA) since 2015. One of the achievements of the HQAQA Initiative in its first phase is the development of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) in higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies. The ASG-QA is a continental tool that addresses all levels of quality assurance (institutions and regulatory) and their important links. The tool is envisaged to engender institutional cultures of quality and enhance the quality of higher education in Africa. This contribution reviews the progress made to identify recent developments, challenges still to be faced, and actions required to implement the ASG-QA fully.

The concepts of quality and quality assurance in higher education

The origin and definitions of the two concepts

Quality is a much-debated concept in higher education due to the significant number of players in the field (Mishra, 2007). Quality in higher education means different things to different stakeholders.

Ball (1985) defined quality as “fitness for purpose”; from this perspective, quality is achieved if the product or service fits its predetermined purpose (Harvey & Green, 1993). In the 1990s, five interrelated conceptualisations of quality were given by Harvey and Green (1993); namely: quality as exceptional, as transformati-
Harmonisation of higher education in Africa

Harmonisation and revitalisation of higher education have become ‘buzzwords’ in the strategic educational frameworks of the African Union. The most documented effort in continental higher education harmonisation is the adoption of the Second Decade of the Education Action Plan (2006-2015) by AU member states. Principles and goals that recognise the need for and importance of harmonisation are clearly outlined in this document.

At the end of the decade, a landmark strategic document entitled “Harmonisation of Higher Education Programmes in Africa: A Strategy for the African Union” (CESA 2016-2025) was issued, providing general direction for improving capacity and quality in higher education at continental level. As stated in one of its guiding principles, “harmonised education and training systems are essential for the realisation of intra-African mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation” (African Union Commission [AUC], 2016, p.11).

As a means of pursuing its continental objectives for higher education, the AU has set up the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) as an overriding framework for quality assurance; developing adequate IQA mechanisms and systems are essential for the realisation of intra-African mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation. (African Union Commission [AUC], 2016, p.11).

The term ‘quality assurance’ also signals a diversity of purposes, such as accountability, control, improvement/enhancement, public information, public reassurance/confidence and resource allocation. It also has different scopes, such as programme evaluation, programme accreditation, programme review, institutional evaluation, institutional audit, institutional review and institutional accreditation. Finally, it also applies to a diversity of methods such as peer reviews, inspection, compliance models and excellence models, as well as a diversity of outcomes: public and private information reports, recommendations, approvals and accreditation decisions.

Quality Assurance

In the context of quality assurance in higher education, it is argued that during the 1980s, the notion of “quality” was transformed into “quality assurance” because of the growing importance attached to the “fitness for purpose” definition of quality (Westerdijen, 1999, Harvey, 2004-2019).

Quality assurance in higher education in Africa does not have a single purpose, a single method or a single operational definition. It can, and does, mean many different things in different contexts.

For Vroegjosten (1995), quality assurance is a “systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and quality improvement” (p. 18), while for Woodhouse (1999), it refers to the “policiestatures, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced” (p. 30). This definition allows a distinction to be made between internal quality assurance (IQA) and external quality assurance (EQA). IQA refers to the policies, attitudes, actions and mechanisms implemented within an institution or programme to ensure that quality standards are met. EQA, on the other hand, refers to the policies, attitudes, actions and mechanisms of an external body which assess the operations of an institution or programme in order to determine whether it is meeting the agreed standards.

The term ‘quality assurance’ also signals a diversity of purposes, such as accountability, control, improvement/enhancement, public information, public reassurance/confidence and resource allocation. It also has different scopes, such as programme evaluation, programme accreditation, programme review, institutional evaluation, institutional audit, institutional review and institutional accreditation. Finally, it also applies to a diversity of methods such as peer reviews, inspection, compliance models and excellence models, as well as a diversity of outcomes: public and private information reports, recommendations, approvals and accreditation decisions.

Quality vs. Quality Assurance

Torrent (2016, 2022) introduced a distinction between Quality as one of the dimensions of HE policy and Quality Assurance as one of the instruments of this policy (only one of the instruments, but not the only one). This is used to make progress in the Quality dimension. This distinction is not considered in this contribution but should be applied in further work on the topic.

ASG-QA: one of the tools for the PAQAF

The African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA), developed in the context of the Africa-EU Partnership, were published at the end of 2018 (AUC, 2018). They are part of a larger process in Africa that aims to ensure the implementation of the Pan-African Quality Assurance Framework (PAQAF) and, as just mentioned, were developed under the Harmanisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Initiative (HAQAA Initiative), funded by the European Commission. The HAQAA Initiative was meant to:

- Continental Register for QA agencies and quality assured higher education institutions - to be developed.
- And in the framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, the EU has funded two ambitious projects: ACQF (concerning the second of these instruments) and Harmonisations, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in African Higher Education (HAQAA-1, 2016 2018; and HAQAA-2, 2020-2022), which covers the first ASG-QA. The ASG-QA delineate the minimum standards for higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies with regard to how they evaluate and ensure quality - an instrument which provides a common language for quality standards.

In this contribution, we document and analyse the development and implementation of the ASG-QA, which have gone through the drafting process (2016-2017), the pilot phase (2019) and the ongoing development of the User’s Guide (2021-2022).

The broad objectives of the ASG-QA are to support higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Africa in implementing good practices for quality assurance; developing adequate IQA mechanisms; and assisting higher education institutions in assessing their own quality through self-assessment.

Specifically, they are intended to:

1. Provide a common framework and understanding of quality assurance among stakeholders;
2. Develop mutual trust and hence facilitate recognition and mobility of students and human resources across borders;
3. Ensure quality improvement/enhancement through self-assessment, external review and continuous monitoring and evaluation;
4. Promote transparency and accountability by providing appropriate information to the public;
5. Promote a sustainable quality culture in HEIs, alongside the AQRM

The drafting of the ASG-QA started with the establishment of a Technical Working Group, the members of which represented the five regions of the Continent and had skills in the four AU languages - English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. This was followed by a mapping study of the standards and guidelines for higher education already in use in African countries. Email questionnaires to national QAAs and desk research were employed.

The ASG-QA were developed taking into account the diversity of purposes, models, methods and outcomes of quality assurance in Africa. A lot of consultation with regional quality assurance networks, the HAQAA Advisory Board and the African Union Commission (AUC), Vice/Chancellors of HEIs, student organisations, ministries and governing bodies of higher education was carried out. The online consultation received about 310 respondents from 40 countries. The ASG-QA were also benchmarked against the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and other international standards and guidelines.

The ASG-QA are based on the principles of autonomy, identity and integrity of higher education institutions.

Objectives of the ASG-QA

The broad objectives of the ASG-QA are to support higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Africa in implementing good practices for quality assurance; developing adequate IQA mechanisms; and assisting higher education institutions in assessing their own quality through self-assessment.
6) Support the production of relevant teaching and learning resources, as well as student assessment instruments;

7) Promote the international competitiveness of Africa’s higher education system.

The intention is for the ASG-QA to advance quality improvement and assurance in higher education in Africa, support mutual trust in order to facilitate mobility and recognition across borders, and offer information on quality assurance in African higher education.

Content

The ASG-QA are presented in 3 parts:

Part A: Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) of higher education institutions, including standards and guidelines for open and distance learning (ODL).

Part B: External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Part C: Internal Quality Assurance for Quality Assurance Agencies (QAA)

The 3 parts are interconnected and together form the basis of the quality assurance framework for higher education in Africa. The 3 parts should not be seen as separate entities but read as a whole, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The ASG-QA have clusters of standards and guidelines for each part. The standards set out the minimum agreed and accepted levels of practice for quality assurance in higher education. They should therefore be taken into account and adhered to by those concerned in all types of higher education provision. The guidelines explain why the standards are important and describe how they might be met and implemented.

The ASG-QA are framed as minimum standards or requirements that must be complied with, but individual institutions may complement them with additional standards reflecting their own context. The ASG-QA were defined and proposed as a set of generic principles in Quality Assurance (QA), i.e. describing the areas which should be covered by QA arrangements but not establishing the ways in which they were to be implemented. In fact, there was no intention that the standards and guidelines should dictate practice or be interpreted as prescriptive or unchangeable. Nevertheless, they were designed to be applicable to all African HEIs and quality assurance agencies, irrespective of their structure, function and size or the national system in which they are located.

Part A: Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

Part A has clusters of 13 standards and 97 guidelines. These are shown in table 1

Part B: External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Part B describes the methodologies (or standards) used by QAAs for external quality assurance in higher education programmes and institutions. Part B is meant to ensure that the internal work undertaken by institutions is directly relevant to any external quality assurance that they undergo. Part B has a cluster of 7 standards and 32 guidelines as shown in table 2.

Part C: Internal Quality Assurance for Quality Assurance Agencies

Internal Quality Assurance for Quality Assurance Agencies is done through self-assessment of their respective policies, practices, procedures and activities, and through an external review by another relevant body or peer organisation. This part addresses the question, ‘who guards the guard’?

Part C has a cluster of 8 standards and 34 guidelines as shown in table 3.
The ASG-QA are now available in four AU languages: English, French, Arabic and Portuguese.

The 2018 Pilot Exercise

A pilot exercise was run in 2018 in order to test the soundness or fitness-for-purpose of the methodology for the external review of quality assurance agencies in Africa, using the standards in parts B and C of the ASG-QA.

The methodology consisted of a self-assessment report by the agency, a site visit by a panel of three experts who interviewed key internal and external stakeholders, and a review report written by the expert panel. The methodology was tested through four pilot reviews of established agencies (AMQA-Sup in Senegal, CNQA in Mozambique, NAQAAE in Egypt and ZIMCHE in Zimbabwe). In addition, the methodology was partly used for four consultancy visits to newly established agencies or ministries preparing to establish an agency (AMQA-Sup in Mali, Togo, Cameroon and Morocco).

For the consultancy visits, ministries were requested to select certain standards to focus on, rather than being evaluated against all the standards in parts B and C of the ASG-QA.

Taking the asg qa forward under haqaa 2: the user guide

The HAQAA Initiative was established to support the development of a harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, regional and Pan-African Continental level. HAQAA2 (2020-2022) is financed under the EU’s Pan-African Programme and builds upon, upscales and promotes the results of HAQAA1.

The general objective of HAQAA2 is to improve the quality and harmonisation of African higher education and support students’ employability and mobility across the continent. Concerning QA, its specific objectives are to:

• Strengthen the capacities of quality assurance agencies to implement African Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance and enhance cross-regional coordination.
• Strengthen the capacities of the AU in implementing the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF).

In order to achieve these objectives, HAQAA2’s work plan includes training and capacity building for IQA and EQA, and the promotion of the ASG-QA as a tool for building internal and external QA systems.

In this context, a Task Force has been established to take the ASG-QA forward under HAQAA2. Its main functions are to:

• Assess the review methodology and its impact on the 8 countries that applied it/held it in 2018 (Mar – July 2020).
• Interview the agencies and experts who participated and come up with recommendations for improvements and adjustments in the next round of agency reviews that will take place under HAQAA2.
• Debate the pending questions relevant to the agency reviews.
• Develop the User’s Guide and Tool Kit for the implementation of the ASG QA in QA agencies and in universities, upon debating the appropriate for such a tool, which would respect the diversity of ways in which the ASG QA can be applied.

The Task Force members represent key organisations, have hands-on experience in applying regional QA-related principles and guidelines and agency reviews, have knowledge of continental harmonisation processes in Africa, and possess technical knowledge of both IQA and EQA. Many of the members were involved in the drafting of the ASG-QA or the implementation of other activities of HAQAA1 in 2015-18.

In September 2020, the Task Force held three online focus groups to explore the experiences of the external reviews of quality assurance agencies and the consultancy visits to ministries of higher education, which took place in 2018 under HAQAA1. The reviews and consultancy visits served to support the implementation of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) in African external quality assurance frameworks.

Two of the focus groups (one in English and one in French) were aimed at representatives of the participating agencies and ministries (14 participants from 7 different countries) and one was aimed at the experts who conducted the reviews (8 participants from 8 different African and European countries). The participants discussed how the methodology of the agency reviews could be improved, the challenges in using the ASG-QA, and the outcomes of the reviews. All participating agencies and ministries commented that the review process had been useful to validate existing arrangements and provide external advice and recommendations for further development. Several participants provided examples of concrete changes that had come about as a result of the exercise.

In terms of possible improvements to the methodology, the main topics discussed included the need for additional training for agencies and experts, clarification of social aspects of the ASG-QA, better support for the experts to understand the local context, and support for agencies and ministries to follow up on the outcomes of the reviews and consultancy visits.

The outcomes of the focus groups are being combined with the results of surveys conducted with the agencies, ministries and experts, and an analysis of the review reports, which were also conducted by the Task Force in summer 2020. This information is being used to refine the methodology for the next round of agency reviews taking place in 2022 and to develop training for agencies, ministries and experts. So far, eight agencies and ministries from across Africa have registered for a review or consultancy visit. Applications are still being received.

The focus groups also served as an opportunity for African agencies and ministries to exchange information and experiences on recent developments and current challenges in external quality assurance in their respective countries, including financial sustainability and dealing with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The same Task Force is also preparing a Users’ Guide for the ASG-QA. The publication will include additional guidance on each of the standards of the ASG-QA, including case examples of how the standards can be implemented in various national and educational contexts. Furthermore, the Users’ Guide will clarify how the ASG-QA relate to existing national and regional standards that are already established across Africa. It is hoped that the Guide will provide practical support to higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies and national authorities in developing their quality assurance frameworks in line with the continental standards.

The major challenges

The implementation of the ASG-QA faces a number of challenges at both institutional (HEI) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) level. At Institutional level, there are at least three challenges: (a) a lack of public awareness of the ASG-QA, their process and the benefits to higher education institutions in improving/enhancing quality, (b) inadequate human capacity, and (c) underdeveloped quality cultures within higher education institutions.

At QAA level, three major challenges can be identified: (a) internationalisation and professionalisation of expert panels, (b) the use of students on review panels, and (c) the independence of QAAs.

These challenges are briefly analysed in what follows.

A lack of public awareness of the ASG-QA, their process and the benefits to higher education institutions in improving/enhancing quality.

Even though the ASG-QA have been translated into the 4 AU languages, published on the Internet and recommended for implementation, and their main ideas disseminated at conferences, seminars and workshops, most higher education internal stakeholders (teachers, students and technical and administrative staff) are not fully aware of their existence. This is worsened by the shortage of studies systematically examining how HEIs are implementing Part A of the ASG-QA. The few representatives of higher education institutions who do attend conferences, seminars and workshops have not taken on the task of disseminating the knowledge within their institutions.

Inadequate human and financial capacity

The quality assurance systems of higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Africa are still at an early stage of development and thus confronted by the challenges of costs and capacity development. Operating a quality assurance framework at an HEI or QAA requires a substantial budget and well-trained, experienced staff. As noted by Shabani (2013), at least 60% of quality assurance agencies lack the human and institutional capacity to implement
their mandates effectively. A major concerted effort is needed to build capacity in HEIs and QAAs.

**Underdeveloped quality cultures within higher education institutions.**

Most higher education institutions in the continent do not have well developed internal quality assurance frameworks. Quality assurance is taken seriously (on paper) when preparing for accreditation, but once this has been achieved, its risks being shelved, when what matters is it becoming a continuous process. Developing and promoting a sustainable quality culture is important to ensure that: a) everyone in the institution has a collective and individual responsibility for maintaining and enhancing quality, and b) everyone understands the structural elements in place, and this is supported by committed leadership through trust, a good communication strategy and the involvement of all stakeholders. To achieve a successful implementation, quality assurance practices and processes should be embedded within the strategic plan of a higher education institution, but most higher education institutions in remote areas do not even have strategic plans.

**The internationalisation and professionalisation of expert panels.**

The involvement of international experts is considere good practice in EQA, but many quality assurance agencies in Africa lack the financial capacity to hire international experts to form part of review panels because of the relatively high costs of travel, accommodation and daily allowances. The other challenge has to do with the professionalisation of experts. Most of the panel members are academic staff with their own teaching load and are not trained experts in quality assurance, even though they participate in capacity development programmes to prepare them for evaluations.

**The involvement of students on panels of external experts/peer reviewers.**

The concept of student involvement in external quality assurance is clearly stated in Part B, standard 4 of the ASG-QA, where it is expected that peer reviewers will be drawn from different stakeholders, including students. Whilst students’ contribution to teaching and learning is unquestionable, their involvement as members of external experts in external quality assurance processes in the African Higher Education Space has not been fully researched and tested.

**The independence of QAAs.**

Most quality assurance agencies in Africa fully depend on government funding to function effectively. However, standard 5 in Part C of the ASG-QA states that ‘the QAA shall be independent and autonomous in its operations, outcomes, judgements and decisions’. In some cases, organisational independence is compromised by the fact that the nomination of CEO/Chairperson/President of the QAA is done by the government and at times it is difficult not to take orders from the appointing officer. In other cases, the appointment of divisional directors is done by the Minister responsible for higher education and not by the Council Board.

**Concluding remarks and the way forward.**

This contribution has reviewed how the ASG-QA were developed under HAQAA1 and how they are being taken forward under HAQAA2. As no discussion of policy or practice concerning quality assurance can take place without an explicit and clear contextual definition of the use of the word ‘quality’, the contribution started by defining what quality and quality assurance are and then gave a context in which the ASG-QA were developed, including what the ASG-QA offer and what they do not.

In light of the challenges highlighted in this contribution, some steps can be recommended in order to facilitate the implementation of the ASG-QA in both higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies in Africa:

- Higher education reform initiatives are complex, and require time, adequate resources, strong political will and academic cooperation and perseverance to work successfully. It seems impossible to carry them out by decree. Stakeholders’ involvement is an absolute necessity. For the ASG-QA to succeed, both external and internal stakeholders should therefore be involved and form part of the process, and their capacity in the area of quality assurance, both in higher education institutions and QAAs, needs to be strengthened. The efforts being made by the HAQAA2 Initiative in building capacity for both IQA and EQA should be multiplied in terms of numbers in order for the implementation of the ASG-QA to be successful.

- In parallel, HEIs should be challenged to come up with learning programmes that deal with quality assurance in order to improve institutional capacity in developing quality assurance units and running quality assurance agencies.

- Dissemination projects should be accelerated and implemented so that the ASG-QA reach every corner where teaching and learning takes place. Quality can only be assured by those responsible for providing higher education.

I strongly believe that these steps will facilitate the implantation of the ASG-QA within the African higher education space and establish a strong foundation for future development.

**References.**


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New ways to solve the data collection problem in African Higher Education

Kibrome M. Haile

Abstract

CESA (Continental Education Strategy for Africa) 2016-25 represents the commitment of African countries, under the framework of the AU, to transform education and training systems in Africa, considered critical for national development and international outreach. For this to be effective, it requires informed data-based policymaking at various levels of decision-making. However, despite efforts at continental and regional levels, collection and accessibility of timely, relevant and comparable HE data remains a serious problem in Africa. It is necessary now to build upon previous often unsuccessful experiences and look for new ways of addressing the issue. This contribution introduces developments towards such an approach, born out of the work of HAQAA2’s PDU Development Team. The approach focuses on data collection in the regions and uses the regions as building blocks for a continental solution. It follows consultations with relevant stakeholders in the continent, considers the relatively meaningful progress being made towards HE Integration and data collection in the regions and the need to complement these developments and avoid redundancy, is cognizant of the differences in the level of preparedness and practical necessities of the various regions and is informed by the output of the RI process in Africa.

Introduction

African Countries, not unlike other nations all over the world, have placed the revitalisation of Higher Education (HE) at the centre of continental development. In an interconnected and dynamic regional and global economic environment, where knowledge is a key competitive advantage, it is impossible to overstate the aptness of such a decision. Especially because, notwithstanding the challenges persisting in African HE (AHE) systems, research has shown that HE has a relatively large and statistically significant effect on the growth rate of per capita income in the continent (Iyiyah-Brempong et al., 2006). Any hope of sustaining and enhancing this contribution largely depends on the availability of accurate and relevant policy data and informed policy decisions by policymakers at all levels.

The AHE sector is increasingly expanding in terms of enrolment as well as the number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and fields of studies being offered in such institutions. Notwithstanding the positive aspects of such expansion, there are important dimensions of the HE sector that require our immediate attention. Developments from within and outside Africa have presented a continuously changing HE environment necessitating the concerted and informed efforts of all relevant HE stakeholders. In today’s global knowledge-based economy, it is imperative, more than ever before, for AHE decision-makers to develop policies and strategies responsive to local needs and global challenges to ensure HE in the continent becomes more relevant, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and socially responsible. This requires informed and data-based policymaking at all levels of the decision-making process.

HE data is important for various actors in the sector. Students making decisions about which institution and field of study to enrol into, governments, international organisations and development partners allocating finance and funding, as well as every other stakeholder in the sector would greatly benefit from the availability of accurate and relevant data for analysis. Aside from being a crucial input for policymaking, monitoring and evaluation, widely accessible data will also facilitate the harmonisation of education policies. Especially in a regional context, where mobility of students and labour is bound to be higher, data accessibility plays a crucial role in facilitating credential recognition and compatibility of qualifications. Publicly available and accessible data is also an essential ingredient in ensuring accountability in the HE sector.

One higher common denominator persistent in all the efforts done so far by stakeholders in the AHE landscape and researchers alike is the lack or absence of relevant, accessible and timely policy data. The HE data problem in Africa has serious implications for timely and relevant policy making, effective coordination and cooperation between stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation of regional and continental strategies and policies; the successful implementation and follow up of global agendas like those of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as other broader economic and political goals set at the regional and continental levels.

The HAQAA2 Initiative (Harmonisation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in African Higher Education) has supported a series of online policy dialogue events entitled ‘CESA Higher Education (HE) in Focus’ between May and June 2021 with a common thread linked to data collection for policymaking. HAQAA2 (2019-2022) is a Service Contract financed by the European Commission in support of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. It is implemented by a consortium consisting of OEARE Global (lead), Association of African Universities (AAU), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). (1)

The events were proposed as part of the Policy Component of HAQAA2, which supports the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), of the African Union (AU) and specifically for the CESA Cluster of stakeholders responsible for HE. The events were organised in close collaboration with the respective CESA Higher Education ‘Sub-Cluster’ coordinators, who oversee a range of topics, from curricula reform to quality assurance and leadership in HE. Six online events were held as round table discussions, webinars and debates, open to all relevant higher education stakeholders in Africa, with the participation of different linguistic groups across the continent. (2)

More precisely, this online event series was part of the groundwork for the development of a ‘Policy Data Unit (PDU)’ in Africa, which will drive a new approach and process for generating comparable higher education data across the continent, rooted closely in CESA and the different African Union structures which support it.

‘CESA HE in Focus’ examined different priority topics of the CESA Higher Education Cluster and generated recommendations for data and capacity building needs around these areas at the regional and continental levels. The conclusions and recommendations resulting from these events served as an important source of inspiration for the PDU Development Team set up by HAQAA2. Recommendations were made at various levels, including the institutional, national, regional and continental/Pan-African, and how they interconnect.

On the backdrop of this, the PDU Development Team is conducting a Mapping of Existing African HE data sources focusing on current HE data collection efforts, opportunities, caveats and data needs of the various regions of the continent. The team is also organising regional focus groups in which experts and representatives of the relevant stakeholders from each region participate. Informed by this process, this contribution outlines the necessary process and potential architecture for more coherent and comparable data collection in Africa.

The current move towards continental integration in Africa, in which the regional economic communities serve as important pillars, makes HE harmonisation one of its focus areas. This presents a unique opportunity to devise a new approach to solving the HE data problem in Africa. The suitable and preferable approach is based on the regions, building upon their own regional political structures, processes and plans. Practically, this means the establishment of regional data collection mechanisms through the active involvement of the relevant stakeholders at national, regional and continental levels. This can be achieved by establishing Regional PDU. Regional PDUs will be designed in a manner responsive to the data and capacity building needs of the particular regions while at the same time having the required commonality to serve as the building blocks for a continental database as envisaged under CESA.

1. A brief look at attempts to solve the problem of HE data in Africa

Most data collection conducted in Africa is done through ad hoc projects of a limited geographical scope and/or a limited period of time. Furthermore, most ad hoc data collections focus on a specific dimension of higher education, such as institutional mechanisms for quality assurance, qualification frameworks, accreditations and standards, credential recognition and comparison. Studies such as the OECD’s OECD Higher Education Reviews of the African Region (2017) and the UNESCO’s UNESCO Global Education Database (2018) provide important insights into the contexts and challenges faced by African higher education systems. However, these studies are often limited in scope and lack the longitudinal data necessary for a deeper understanding of HE trends and developments.

2. The event agendas, bios of speakers and recordings can be found at https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/cesa-in-focus

1. See: https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/

2. The event agendas, bios of speakers and recordings can be found at https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/cesa-in-focus
mic demography, enrolment, gender parity, research output or accredited programs and disciplines. This information can easily become outdated because the data collection exercises are ad hoc and have not built-in mechanisms to update changes that take place on the ground. Though not yet off the ground and fully operational, the most promising data collection efforts are found in the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and REC affiliated University Associations.

### a) Major efforts at the Continental Level

Various attempts at solving the problem have been made at the continental level, ever since the AU identified HE as an area of focus in its Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015). The adoption of the Plan of Action signaled a clear political will and intent toward integrating HE in Africa. The AU established a ‘complete revitalisation of higher education in Africa’ as one of its goals and called for a ‘systems approach’ to be developed for this purpose (AU, 2006). This was followed by endorsement by the third Conference of Ministers of Education of the AU, a ‘Strategy for Harmonisation of HE Programmes in Africa’ in 2007. One key result of the strategy was ‘cooperation in information exchange’. Information exchange was believed to be an ‘essential and initial’ building block for an effective harmonisation strategy. Hence, it was stated that participating countries will make their information on HE programmes available to a central database accessible to all. This result area remains unattained even after more than 15 years of its proposal.

As a continuation of the Second Decade of Education for Africa, which came to an end in 2015, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by AU Heads of States and Governments at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve its Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve for Africa, which came to an end in 2015, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by AU Heads of States and Governments at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve for Africa, which came to an end in 2015, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by AU Heads of States and Governments at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve for Africa, which came to an end in 2015, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by AU Heads of States and Governments at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve for Africa, which came to an end in 2015, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by AU Heads of States and Governments at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve for Africa, which came to an end in 2015, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by AU Heads of States and Governments at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve for Africa, which came to an end in 2015, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was adopted by AU Heads of States and Governments at their Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session on 31st January 2016 in Addis Ababa (AU, 2016). CESA is meant to serve.

CESA recognises that harmonised education and training systems are essential for realising intra-Africa mobility and academic integration through regional cooperation. This, among other things, presupposes and requires the collection, management and use of comparable HE data. Furthermore, CESA acknowledges the pervasiveness, leadership and accountability in education management. It needs no mention that relevant, accessible and timely data is crucial to ensure accountability in education management by enabling regulatory bodies and the wider populace to monitor the performance of HEIs and the sector as a whole. It will also contribute improving good governance and leadership through evidence-based policy analysis and decision making. For that reason, CESA aims, as one of its strategic objectives, to ‘improve management of education systems as well as build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and use’ in the continent (AU, 2016, Strategic Objective 11). Even though CESA has four more years to go, concrete steps toward realising this strategic objective need to be taken right now to ensure its achievement at the end of CESA’s implementation.

### b) The experience from the regions

Along with the efforts being made at the continental level, the regions have undertaken several steps toward the integration of HE. In terms of taking concrete steps toward HE harmonisation, the regions seem to be in a more advanced state of integration, albeit each at a different pace. Perhaps, this is not unexpected considering the overall regional integration at the REC’s level is making much more progress than at the continental level (Oloruntoba, 2016).

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Protocol on Education and Training, signed in 1997, provides the main framework for cooperation in education and training in the region. Articles 7 and 8 of this Protocol explicitly refer to the sector of HE and training, as well as research and development. In particular, article 7 (D) (h) identifies the establishment of a regional database as one of the spheres of cooperation in HE in the region. SADC Ministers of Education have also adopted in 2010 SADC Education Manage- ment Information System (EMIS) Norms and Standards. The norms and standards were intended to serve two broad purposes: to guide countries in developing or improving and maintaining national action plans; and to build a regional comprehensive and sustainable EMIS; and to facilitate the harmonisation of EMISs to contribute toward the development of regional and continental EMIS networks.

West Africa is home to one of the most organised and considerably functional RECs in Africa – the Econo- mic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975. Under the Treaty of ECOWAS, member states agreed to cooperate in the full development and use of their human resources. In particular, they decided to strengthen cooperation among themselves in the fields of education, training and employment; and harmonise and coordinate their policies and programmes in these areas. Additionally, ECOWAS has adopted a Protocol on Education and Training and a Convention on the recognition and equivalence of degrees, diplomas and certificates and other qualifications.

In Eastern Africa, the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (EAC) envisions the harmonisation of HE and training systems in member countries to enhance the development of human resources and mobility of people, labour, and services. Furthermore, the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) also plays a critical role in developing and harmonising HE in the region. Its mandates are clearly stipulated under the IUCEA Protocol of 2002 and the IUCEA Act of 2009, which also mainstreamed the IUCEA into the EAC Frame- work. It currently has member universities from the six EAC countries and various areas of cooperation among these universities. The EAC was declared by the Summit of Heads of State a Common HE Area in 2017, further deepening the integration in the region.

Northern and Central African regions have shown relatively slower institutional level regional integration in the area of HE. However, regional associations still have sig- nificant initiatives like the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) and the Association of Arab Universities (AARU), focusing on aspects of HE relevant in the regionalisation process.

In addition to taking concrete policy and legislative steps toward HE integration in the regions, the RECs and University Associations affiliated with them are also taking steps toward addressing HE data collection, management and coordination in their respective regions. Under the auspices of SADC, the Southern Africa Regional Education Association (SARUA) is building a regional education data collection mechanism. The IUCEA in EAC has mainstreamed the role of an action plan to build a regional database to collect education data from member ins- titutions (IUCEA, 2016). In the meantime, it is currently working on a data collection initiative focused on staff demography, among other things. In Western Africa, the regional block has developed and adopted EMIS standards and guidelines to guide the regional education data management process.

Overall, even though the AU has a prominent role in setting the HE regionalisation agenda in Africa, the regions are further ahead in turning those agendas into policies and legislations that translate that agenda into domestic policies of member states.

### 2. forging a new way forward: regional PDUs

In the ‘CESA HE in focus’ events, the following were put forward as the key reasons behind the inadequacy of data for policy formulation in Africa: inadequate funding for research and data collection, inadequate well-trained personnel for data collection and analysis; a weak political will to mobilise, and inade- quate technology and facilities for data storage and retrieval. Therefore, solving the problem in Africa needs to address these key factors.

However, it needs to be pointed out that the extent and nature of these factors vary greatly from one region to another and the approach to solving the problem needs to take into account this difference. This requires, first of all, establishing data collection mechanisms – PDUs – in the regions. This “regional approach” is not new as it has already been utilised in areas like quality assu- rance, accreditation, qualification and recognition of studies and awards. The work in these areas can signifi- cantly inform the proposed approach.

Once PDUs are set up at the regional level, under the auspices of the RECs, interventions to address the key challenges identified above can be tailored specifically to the needs of the particular region. The already advanced state of HE regionalisation in the regions will help address the lack of political will of member states or, at least, make securing political buy-in less restricti- ve. However, it should be noted that this too will require careful sensitisation, consultation, and negotiation. And setting up PDUs at the REC level can be presen- ted as a building block toward setting up a continental data collection mechanism, fitting perfectly well with the overall approach being followed for integration in Africa.

Regional PDUs should be linked to national HE data collection mechanisms to facilitate timely data trans- fer. This will require setting up such mechanisms in countries where one does not exist or enhancing the capacity of existing systems. Since it will be targeted at a relatively small number of states in a particular region, building facilities and infrastructure as well as data collection, management and maintenance will be somewhat easier to undertake. Furthermore, putting to work adequate and skilled human resources, fami-
lier with the education systems of the regions, and with the needed specific knowledge of languages would be helped by setting up regional data units. It will also help provide comparable and disaggregated data accurately representing the reality of each region and countries in the region. Given the different levels of readiness of the regions, the regional approach will also help identify the specific capacity needs of the regions and guide where exactly capacity development will have to be directed. Particularly, the regional data units will be designed to take the state of data collection in each region into account and, hence, help avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. This consideration is not limited to the technical level only. Rather, the overall level of HE harmonisation and integration in the regions will be taken into account. Among other things, factors like the existence of capable agencies at the national level to ensure the quality of data; the existence of regional standards and guidelines for data collection to ensure comparability of data; level of harmonisation of HE systems and qualifications; regional and national policies and laws on HE will be taken into account.

Irrespective of the level of harmonisation, HE policy priorities and objectives at the national, regional and continental levels will differ in various aspects. As such, the data needs at these different levels of HE policymaking too will differ. The data collection approach needs to reflect these differences and can be designed in a manner that complements the data collection in the institutional and national levels while at the same time filling the gap in HE data that is most relevant for goals set at the regional and continental levels.

Additionally, the PDUs will also undertake policy analysis based on the data collected and provide input for policymakers in their respective regions. This will complement the assessment of the performance of HEIs in the regions, which will have already been enabled by the availability and accessibility of HE data, while at the same time contributing towards mitigating the dearth of the availability and accessibility of HE data, while at the same time filling the gap in HE data that is most relevant for goals set at the regional and continental levels.

Conclusion

The centrality of education in solving Africa’s various challenges and ascertaining its competitiveness in a fast-changing global economic system has now been acknowledged by all stakeholders. With this conviction, the AU, its member states and the RECs have taken different measures to ensure the sector contributes to the sustainable development and overall betterment of the continent and its people. However, the African education sector in general, and HE in particular, face a multitude of challenges significantly hindering it from playing its central role.

One such major challenge in the HE sector is the availability of relevant, timely and relevant data. So far, African HE data collection is largely disintegrated, done in an ad hoc manner, and only covering a particular geographic area, a specific HE issue or done over a limited period. Generally, the inadequacy of funding for research and data collection, inadequate skilled human resources, weak political commitment, and inadequate infrastructure and facilities are blamed for the inadequacy of data for policy formulation in Africa. Since adopting the Action Plan for the Second Decade of Education in Africa, the AU and its member states have adopted different strategies for solving the data problem in Africa. However, the efforts made at the continental level have shown no meaningful progress so far. In the context of their regional integration, the RECs have taken significant concrete steps to harmonise the HE collection in their respective regions. As part of this integration and harmonisation, many of the RECs have adopted legislative and policy measures creating a suitable environment for cooperation and coordination between their member states on various issues, including education and training.

This enabling environment makes a regional approach to solving the HE problem more suitable and preferable. First and foremost, the existence of a legislative and policy framework for cooperation and coordination on HE in SADC, EAC and ECOWAS will help address the challenge emanating from a lack of political will. The experiences in these regions can be built upon to expand the same experience into the other regions. Secondly, there are already several initiatives at the institutional, national, regional and continental levels pertaining to HE data collection. Building upon and supporting these initiatives, as well as introducing a carefully designed division of labour in data collection based on the data needed at each level will help avoid redundancy and duplication of efforts. Thirdly, the extent and nature of the key reasons behind the inadequacy of policy data in each region vary. Hence, solutions to the challenges faced in the regions need to take into account the particular characteristics of each one of them. Furthermore, data collection designed for each region need to be curated to the identified data needs of the regions.

Fourth, creating region-specific data units helps identify capacity needs in each region and tailor assistance accordingly. Fifth, by presenting current and relevant information and comparable data on HE in the respective regions, the regional approach will facilitate the assessment of HE performance and harmonisation in the regions. Sixth, due to the small number of countries in each region, fulfilling the necessary infrastructure and facility for data collection, effectively coordinating with national systems and managing and maintaining data will be relatively easy. Seventh, the regional data units will greatly contribute to regional policy-making by providing policy analysis specific to the regions. Finally, once set up and functional, these regional data units will eventually serve as the building blocks for a continental level data unit.

References


Conclusion. The Future of Higher Education in Africa. The Association of African Universities (AAU) perspective: a Summary

Olusola Oyewole

Introduction

While Africa has been identified with higher education for many centuries, modern higher education, and indeed, modern Universities, have their origin in the colonial histories of many African countries. The history of higher education in Africa cannot be dis- counted from its colonial legacies. Hence most institutions in Africa have been patterned after their colonial pasts.

The early objectives of higher education in Africa were to provide workforce to serve the civil service of colonial governments. This trend continued following the early periods of independent nations in Africa. Over the years, the countries became independent, but many are still using the colonial curricula to provide their graduates.

Today, African higher education has to change; it must respond to evolving trends and face many challenges.

Challenges confronting higher education in Africa

The major challenges confronting higher education in Africa include:

1) Irrelevances of curricula
2) Weak quality assurance mechanisms
3) Poor funding
4) Deteriorating infrastructures
5) Inadequate access despite evident massification in classes
6) Poor teaching methods, which are still teacher-centred
7) Scarce research and weak innovation.

Moving into the future

As we move into the future, African higher education will need to take appropriate actions to confront current challenges. The strategies to be adopted must be multifaceted at the political and technical levels. The following actions need to be worked upon:

1) At the political level, strategies will need to be executed through national governments, regional collaborations, and the continental African Union Commission, creating synergies and avoiding contradictions. Efforts should be made to implement the vision and activities of the African Union Agenda 2015 to 2023. Governments of African nations should understand, ratify and apply the 2014 Addis-Ababa Convention on comparability and transferability of degrees, diplomas, and certificates.

2) Intra and Inter-African collaboration. Africa and African countries need to collaborate with other regions of the world to develop higher education. Such collaborations will enhance mutual learning, joint-agenda advancement, synergy and visibility, and promote mobility of staff and students involved in higher education in Africa.

3) Enhancement of Quality Assurance in Africa. This will involve the appropriate development of national, regional, and continental qualification frameworks in Africa.

4) Improve funding for higher education in Africa. Funding is required to meet some emerging needs, including infrastructural development and creating improved access to higher education in the continent.

5) Curricula reforms. Without curricula reforms, African institutions cannot provide the graduates Africa needs to drive its development. The focus should be to bring forth graduates with the appropriate skills and competencies for their workplace expectations. Africa needs to provide graduates that will create new jobs and have an entrepreneurial spirit for creativity and innovations.

6) Research should be given a special place in Africa. One of the lessons of COVID-19 in Africa is that the continent needs to develop its own knowledge base. It is not beneficial to fully depend on the innovations and research results of others in the face of a worldwide pandemic. African researchers should be encouraged to embark on research to solve African challenges and create African solutions.

7) Digitalization, Technical, and Vocational Education needs to be given a special place in the African higher education systems. Universities in Africa will need to reinvent themselves to creatively evolve Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) into their programmes to be relevant to the needs of the time.

8) Capacity Building. One of the missions of higher education is to train future scholars. As we move into the future, strategic capacity building needs to be embarked upon. African higher education system needs to reinvent itself to build the future researchers and the future academics for the continent.

The role of the association of African Universities

The Association of African Universities (AAU) was established on 12 November 1967 in Rabat, Morocco. With over 400 member universities across all the regions and nations of Africa, AAU is the continental higher education body that serves as the lead agency to the African Union on higher education issues.

The vision of AAU (2023) is “to be the leading advocate for higher education in Africa, with the capacity to support its member institutions in meeting national, continental and global needs”. The mission of AAU (2021) is “to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education in Africa and strengthen its contribution to Africa development”.

The AAU was set up with the following objectives:

1) To promote interchange, contact and cooperation among university institutions in Africa.
2) To collect, classify and disseminate information on Higher Education and Research, particularly in Africa.
3) To promote cooperation among African institutions in curriculum development and determining equivalence of degrees.

Final considerations on higher education, education, youth and development

Africa has a very young population. Education is the only viable option to equip these youths for the future. Special attention should be given to youth development in Africa by ensuring that Africans educate the young in such a manner that they will drive the development of Africa. This effort must also embrace the higher education sector as the apex and the server of the entire education system.
3.6 Latin America and The Caribbean

No region left behind: global responsibility in the face of inequalities. The future of universities in Latin America

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Abstract

The universities of Latin America face a host of pressures, but also a number of new developments. The aim of this work is to present the perspective of a group of men and women who make up the core team of the GUNi presidency in Latin America. Together, they address current trends both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic across an array of countries. Above all, they reflect on a renewed, equitable future of public goods and social justice, laying out strategies and goals to bring about such a future, both at the regional level and in each of the selected countries. In this vein, they analyse change processes, look at new institutional components, and examine trends and comparisons. As a point of reference, they draw on the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES-UNESCO, in its Spanish initials), which was held at the National University of Córdoba in Argentina in 2018. The event, which served as a key gathering place for associations, networks, universities, rectors, ministries and governments, now stands as a renewed point of departure for one of the most solid and consolidated intellectual and academic currents in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Introduction

Universities in Latin America are under question. First, they are institutions under dispute as commercial or business visions are set against others in which the state and the various options imposed as public policy predominate. Second, their relevance as the institution that used to be at the heart of knowledge production and scientific and technological innovation is questioned in light of the power of high-tech, global or transnational companies. Universities have been in a period of long transition. From the 1990s to the current time, they have been changing substantially. New functions have been added such as innovation (their fourth mission). Their governance and the power of their administrations have been redefined, and they have resorted to resource diversification. Standards for the organisation and assessment of their academic bodies have been modified and they focus on society from a perspective of interculturality and social responsibility. The management of knowledge production and transfer has changed and curricula have been adapted to cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, with the generation of initiatives to strengthen ties with the community. Centralised structures have been replaced by multcampus structures and local sites. Face-to-face locations have been combined with online or distance platforms. Consequently, universities are increasingly unrecognizable institutions if we compare them with the old days of cloisters and classrooms; closed or semi-isolated cubicles and laboratories; independent, unmovable campuses within a quasi-state; or teaching institutions focused on professionalisation.

In the midst of all these processes of change, structural alterations, new components, trends and contrasts, this article presents what is happening in a specific region, that of Latin America. It is based on a joint analysis by the GUNi regional working group and draws on the experience gained through the organisation of a major regional meeting (the only one at world level), in preparation for the World Conference. This was the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES-UNESCO), which was held at the National University of Córdoba, Argentina, in 2018. CRES convened and constructed a space of reference for associations, networks, universities, rectors, ministers and governments. It has become the benchmark for coordinating the expression of a very solid, consolidated current of thought in Latin America and the Caribbean on the diversity and integration of universities. This article reports on the advances, setbacks and current perspectives of universities. It also proposes a set of future initiatives to advance in the
discussion of a new situation of equity, inclusion and sustainability, so that no region is left behind. It consi-

ders the conceptual approach that at international level is contained in Concept Note of the GUNI World Report of 2022.1

1. General context of higher education in Latin America

We are facing a trend situation that must be addressed in a critical way. The aim is to promote changes that should be maintained and supported at public policy level by states and universities – particularly public universities.

Our regional situation is one in which there is a severe cyclical crisis and systematic processes of interven-
tion to establish new mechanisms of control by the government and other prominent actors, as described in this article. These mechanisms have threatened university life, university autonomy and the right to academic freedom. In other nations, this is not occu-
rning in such a systematic, aggressive way but enormous difficulties are still faced.

The most serious, critical trend in the region is the extreme commercialisation of the education service that constrains, hierarchises and segments the formal structures of higher education for the public and social good. For-profit, low-quality education options are promoted, with an instrumentalist view focused on earnings and shaped by the demands of a mercantilist, individualistic economy and the alleged advancement of global cyberculture. In response to these positions, political-educational and strategic reflection is requi-


ted to challenge the predominant technocraticism and the instrumental and economistic rationality and make way for critical and creative thinking, supported by the autonomy of universities and their projection as insti-
tutions of public good and guarantors of a universal human right.

At the start of the twenty-first century, out of the total number of higher education institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean (8,756), there were 1,917 private univer-
sities, 1,023 public universities, and just over 5,800 higher education institutes of all types and levels. In the entire region, around 14 million students were enro-
lled in further education. In total, this represented 259 higher education students for every 10,000 inhabitants, with a gross enrolment ratio of 28.5%. In most coun-
tries, women’s participation already exceeded 50% of enrolled students. In some countries of the Caribbean and the Southern Cone, it represented over 60% of total enrolments. In comparison, the gross enrolment ratio in countries of North America and western Europe reached 57%, with 51.7% of women’s participation.

Sixty per cent of enrolment in postgraduate higher edu-


cation is concentrated in three countries: Brazil (28%), Mexico (17%) and Argentina (14%). These countries are followed in order of importance by: Peru (6%), Central America (6%), Chile (4%), Bolivia (2%) and the Carib-
bean (1%).

Countries that have between 75% and 100% of higher education students in public institutions are Cuba, Uruguay, Bolivia, Panama, Honduras and Argentina. Countries that have a greater percentage (between 50 and 75%) of students in private institutions are Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. In an intermediate position, that is, countries with high percentages of students in both the public and private sectors, are Ecuador, Mexico, Venezuela, Paraguay, Peru and Guatemala.

However, the trend of increasing participation of private higher education institutions has been rising constantly in the region.

In terms of the distribution of students by knowledge area and degree, the strong trend of concentration in social, business and legal sciences has been maintai-
ned. The number of students in these fields was 35% of the total in some countries (such as Argentina, Chile and Surinam). 40% in others (for example, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Panama), and up to 50% in others (El Salvador). In sciences, the regional average was around 10% and in some cases it was liti-
gly higher. The percentage of students in engineering subjects fluctuated between 7% (Argentina) and 29% (Colombia). If the percentages of students enrolled for Social Sciences, Administration and Law is added to the percentages of students in Humanities, Arts and Educa-
tion, the figure reaches over 60% of the total.

Researchers mainly work at higher education institu-
tions, particularly in public universities, where there are 85% of the total. This represents 0.87% of researchers in every 10,000 members of the economically active population (EAP). In terms of scientific publications, Latin America and the Caribbean produce only 2.6% of the total number of publications worldwide.

The general situation of the advance of knowled-
ge is very uneven, from a comparative perspective. Knowledge generation is highly concentrated in a few coun-
tries and not very dynamic. This is due to factors such as brain drain and the low number of higher education students in universities of the United States or Europe [122,806] than in the region ([33,548]), low investment in higher education (between 0.5% and 1%) and the fact that postgraduate studies are mainly concentrated in three countries: Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. Most of the investment in research and devel-
opment comes from the state (60.8%) and is received by a handful of universities and researchers, most of which are also in the three countries mentioned above (338,653 researchers in Brazil; 51,685 in Argentina and 43,592 in Mexico).

This has a negative impact on opportunities for social advancement, job mobility and entry into formal, stable jobs for graduates of secondary, upper secondary and higher education, due to the segmented structure of the education system that can be evaluated at the socioeconomic disparities found at national and region-

al level.

However, the reduction in public resources and the pri-


At the start of the new century, some countries started a process of redefining their legisla-
tive and normative guidelines and promoting systemic changes in universities. These included far-reaching reforms supported by the vision of progressive governments that faced and regulated the extreme pri-

vatization, and introduced policies and programmes for inclusion and the re-evaluation of academic life. Above all, these countries promoted institutional initiatives of the state as the promoter and guarantor of higher education as a public good, and of the commitment to population segments that had been permanently exclu-
ded from this level of studies. This opened a regional debate on the alternatives for the future, with to-ing and fro-ing, advances and setbacks that were closely related to the changes that took place in various Latin American governments.

2.1 Two phases in the processes of change

The processes indicated above should be compa-

red with what happened in two contrasting phases in public policy on higher education in the region. First, in around 2010, which is the cut-off year for this cycle, some countries presented legislative initiatives on public policy and on assertive, inclusive program-

mes that substantially improved access, retention and the organisation of higher education institutions, and encouraged the creation of new universities. From 2018 (also a cut-off date for the cycle) to the current time, governmental changes occurred in many of these countries that totally overturned the progressive policies and democratisation that was being construc-
ted, and shifted to the opposite site, that is, towards

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repressive, far-right regimes that have led to an extre-

mely worrying climate of persecution of universities and a reduction in their resources, affecting public universities above all.

Between 2018 and 2020, movements that had an impact on elections or coups of a “new type” (unlike those during the 1960s and 1970s with direct military and police intervention) took place under the pretext of electoral movements or the outbreak of mass student and civil society protests. This situation affected efforts to expand enrolment, create universities and promote projects to include groups and sectors that have been excluded from this educational level (as in Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay and Argentina). It altered constitutional projects, proposals of broad, inclusive development and far-reaching academic reforms.

2.1.1 First phase

Around the first decade of this century, various govern-

ments, notably in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia and Uruguay, accepted social demands to expand the capacity of higher education systems, based on an emerging reorganisation of public policy and various actors who demanded a great transfor-
mation in universities. This was seen on a mass scale in the demands of the Chilean student movement (2011-2014), that of Puerta Rica (2011-2012), Colombia (2011/2020) and Mexico (2011-2012), to mention just a few cases. These were a qualita-
tive shift in the way the sector presents its demands on regulations and policies, and in the main trend in the academic world of a traditional agenda to debate the public and private issue. Demonstrations have gone beyond the institutional level to reach the political arena nationally or sub-regionally.

From other perspectives, in the cases of Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru or Uruguay, and even in the Central America and Caribbean countries, the discussion of a new agenda for all of higher educa-
tion was received with great interest in the university communities and even beyond them in other sectors of society and in national political life. This was the case in Ecuador, for example, where the Organic Law on Higher Education (LOES, 2010) was approved after strong university student action. This made it possible to redefine public policy on higher education in the country. In Brazil, significant affirma-
tive programmes were introduced for minorities and sectors that are traditional excluded. This led to a con-
siderable increase in post-gra studen et rates (particu larly or doctoral degree level) and in scientific research. Among these experiences and reforms, some academic innovation schemes, concepts, policies and program-
mes have been organised and promoted that confirm a new wave of changes in higher education in the region. They are based on the combination of public and private education. They are located in places where there is low coverage of traditional higher education institu-
tions or of large private universities. By 2012, there were 176 of these centres with over 30,000 students. Since 2014, Colombia has moved away from a predominantly private higher education system. Now the public sector accounts for just over 50% of total enrolment.

- **Argentina**: this is the country along with Brazil that, during the government of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, took the initiative to create new state-subsidised public universities. It is perhaps the country that has most strongly defended and legislated on the public good. This is evidenced by the fact that, in just a few years, important national univer-
sities were created within and outside the perimeter of Greater Buenos Aires. These include the expansion of subsites of the emblematic University of Buenos Aires (UBA), with 12 regional centres (in areas of high depriva-
tion) and the others in the interior of the country. They are the forerunners of a new decentralisation system, particularly in the provinces of Córdoba, San Luis and Entre Ríos, among others.

- **Brazil**: public higher education institutions were also created, with the establishment of a federal network of 38 education, science and technology institutes and 18 new universities, under academic innovation schemes. Examples are the Federal University for Latin American Integration (UNILA), the University for International Inte-
gration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB) and the Federal University of ABC. These institutions have structures, academic offerings and a direction that is strategic for Brazil. They are fundamental to disrupt the vision of the traditional university that transcends its own references. Furthermore, since 2004, the govern-
ment has offered full and partial grants for low-income students in private institutions. Since 2012, 50% of places in federal higher education institutions have been reserved for students from public schools. These places are free and racial quotas are applied.

- **Colombia**: also with the aim of increasing coverage levels in a country with a high concentration of private universities, Regional Higher Education Centres (CERES) have been promoted. These have a public-private form of organisation and financing and are run under blended models that combine public and private face-to-face and online education. They are located in places where there is low coverage of traditional higher education institu-
tions or of large private universities. By 2012, there were 176 of these centres with over 30,000 students. Since 2014, Colombia has moved away from a predominantly private higher education system. Now the public sector accounts for just over 50% of total enrolment.

- **Ecuador**: as a result of the enactment of the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES), considerable changes in the higher education system were promoted during the government of Rafael Correa. Notably, four new univer-
sities were created that are considered emblematic. These are the National University of Education (UNAE), the Amazon Regional University (IKIAM), the University of the Arts (UNARTES) and the University of Experimen-
tal Technology and Research (YACHAY). All of these are public universities, designed to foster a transformation model, as stated by their lead minister: “Since 2008, the government in Ecuador has publicly started to address Ecuadorian universities with criticism and proposals. With this action, the government has initiated a process of transformation in the higher education sector that has not been seen since the return to democracy in 1979” (Ramírez, 2010).

- **Mexico**: for decades, the Mexican state has not con-

tributed to the creation of new federal universities. However, it has established a number of institutions with dual federal-state funding. These include the Autonomous University of Mexico City (UACM) and the University of the Wetland of the State of Michoacán (UACIMH), which have alternative models fostered and sponsored by their own local governments. In addition, the main federal and autonomous universi-
ties have promoted the creation of alternative sites, such as sub-campuses or campus extensions. In 2018, there were 127 federal universities (technical), 30 new campuses as extensions of consoli-
dated universities and 4 federal universities (goals that have not yet been met).

- **Paraguay**: this country only had one university in the past. However, by the beginning of the century, seven further universities had been established in the country, in response to the growing demand for higher educa-
tion. This led to a notable increase in the private sector above the trend in rate of growth, as has occurred in other countries in the region.

- **Peru**: since the start of this century, 21 public univer-
sities have been created in this country. However, the growth of the private sector has also been constant. In 2012, a moratorium was declared to suspend the growth of public institutions, in order to reconsider policies in the sector and redefine the regulatory fra-

mework for a new period, with a focus on models of “research universities”.

- **Uruguay**: as in Paraguay, the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean and Central American countries, for decades just one university existed in this country. It was considered the bastion of higher education and the creator of sector policies: the emblematic University of the Republic. By the 21st century, a new institu-
tion has been created, the Technological University of Uruguay (2013). Furthermore, the establishment of a new public university (specialised in teacher training) is under discussion in a country where, like Argentina and Cuba, public institutions are much more predominant than private institutions.

- **Venezuela**: In the midst of considerable controversy at university level regarding the relationship between quality and quantity, the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela proposed extensive regionalisation and crea-
tion of university and non-university sites. As a result, at the beginning of the century, 232 sites and extensions of higher education institutions existed, of which 59 were situated in the urban area of Caracas. Neverthe-
less, enrolment at private higher education institutions stood at 77% of the total. To increase coverage levels, university villages, territorial polytechnic universities and twenty new universities of a public nature were created throughout the country, as part of a strategy that focused on the “universali sation” of the gross enrol-
ment ratio. The new universities include the Bolivarian University of Venezuela, the Film and the University of the Armed Forces. In 2012, 69 intermediate universities (technical), 30 new campuses as extensions of consoli-
dated universities and 4 federal universities (goals that have not yet been met).
This general overview of change is clearly incomplete because it should include the three universities that are being developed in Bolivia (UNIBOL), the many new sites of national universities, or joint integration projects that are shaping a new scenario. Examples are the projects promoted by the Association of Universities of the Montevideo Group (AUGM) and MERCOSUR or those planned by the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), to mention just some of the impressive multi-national efforts being made in higher education, science and technology. However, the region is entering a new period of institutional expansion and academic and social innovation, in which the establishment of knowledge and learning platforms, the extensive use and handling of new technologies and the management of innovation processes is beginning to become apparent and ties with the idea of a “Latin American knowledge society” or a “common space of knowledge”, from the perspective of emphasising the social good of studies and university research.

2.1.2 Second phase: the transition

This period ended between 2017 and 2020, with regime change in several countries. As a result, the environment of creation and innovation in new and traditional universities began to change significantly.

At the start of 2019, the first civil disturbances of the period were triggered in Haiti when various corrupt actions associated with the PetroCaribe scheme of President Martelly and Jovenel Moïse’s government were made public. This led to major protests associated with the PetroCaribe case and the management and reprisals against the University of Puerto Rico, the most important university in the country. This was added to the economic and infrastructure crisis experienced during the natural disasters suffered by the population. The result was mass protests of citizens and students, which brought about the dismissal of the highest level of government that had been dependent on the United States and led by Ricardo Rossello. The unstable conditions continued during an electoral period that was subject to the interests of Donald Trump’s government.

In the continental part of Latin America, civil and university protests proliferated in 2018 and above all in 2019. They occurred in response to the controversial reform proposal in Panama. In Ecuador, they were sparked by cuts in subsidies and the polarisation of the government led by former president Lenin Moreno and then the current government of banker Guillermo Lasso. In Colombia, a national strike was held against the govern ment of Iván Duque. Like his predecessor, Duque had adopted measures that set back what had been achieved in previous governments, particularly in the area of higher education. In Bolivia, a coup was staged against the presidency of Evo Morales with clear overtones of racism, religion and political reprisals by the popula tion’s middle and upper classes. In Chile, during Piñera’s government, in a context of polarisation and debate on university reforms, the government decided to increase the price of public transport. Mass protests broke out that converged on the demand for a new constitutional change in several countries.

What had been achieved in these countries is vanishing fast. This brief review of some of the events experienced during the last decade in the region shows that what has been achieved in some countries to bring about substantial changes in the university system can collapse from one year to the next. This is causing conflicts of great educational and social reach. The outlook for the region continues to be extremely unsettled.

In a few more years, we will see the results of the events and changes that are underway in Chile, Uruguay, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia, among other countries. This will enable a different situation to be revealed that could increase the certainty of the agreements that have been signed and approved by a considerable number of universities, as in Córdoba, Argentina, during the UNESCO Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES-2018), and those signed at government level to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promoted by the United Nations (UN).

3. The transition and the future: five case studies

3.1 The right to higher education in Argentina: internationalisation and national integration based on academic collaboration networks

The discussion on university democratisation has gained central importance on research agendas in the last 15 years in Argentina, based on the formulation of higher education as a public good and its increasing appreciation as a universal right that should be guaranteed by the states (Chiroloú, 2018; Chiroloú and Iazzetta, 2005; Del Valle, Montero, and Mauro, 2017; Lucardi, 2018; Rinesi, 2015). This discussion is connected to strong university mobilisation in the region, particularly in the framework of the last two Regional Conferences on Higher Education (CRES) in Latin America and the Caribbean (2008, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia; and 2018, Córdoba, Argentina). In this section, we review the main university transformations of the country after its democratisation. We focus on the policies of the last 15 years and how these are associated with the formation of an autonomous way of processing university internationalisation, based on a supportive, regional proposal.

In Argentina, this path is linked to a series of historical transformations that strengthened the tradition of public universities and the progressive process of massification. This process began with the University Reform of 1918, with its demands for a democratised university from an introduction to a new political agenda, associated with the social problems and the situation in Latin America. In this pathway to obtain rights, President Perón’s 1949 decree on free university education should also be considered; it was the starting point for the massification of the system. Other factors are the debates in the 1960s on the role of the university and scientific and technological production in processes of national liberation, and the creation of dozens of new state university institutions, especially in the 1970s and the 1980s.

However, other trends counterbalanced this democratising perspective. They include the emergence of international cooperation agencies’ guidelines and the establishment of a private subsystem of university education in the 1960s. Another trend was the wave of neoliberal reforms, implemented under the conception of education as a deregulated, denationalised service and the suspension and devaluation of public institutions, and translated into greater governmental pressure through evaluation and selective financing policies. In Argentina, these reforms were expressed in Law 24.521, which is still in force today, with some amendments introduced in 2015.

The political scene in Latin America changed at the start of the twenty-first century; governments of social and progressive movements in many countries that gained political power with strong social support. As a result, CRES of 2008, supported by UNESCO, confronted the hegemonic conceptions of the previous decade and proposed that higher education should be considered a social and public good, a fundamental human right, whose guarantee should be a priority of states.

In this phase, which coincided in Argentina with the governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2003–2015), a new cycle of democratisation of the university took place that was made effective in many actions. First, eighteen new universities were created (some based on existing institutions but most completely new) in various parts of the country and in municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires that have a large proportion of vulnerable people. Second, funding of research institutions and
organisations increased considerably. In this pathway, notable actions were the creation of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and the restruct-
uring of salaries and access to the scientific research career in Argentina. Third, a series of social policies were devised to promote the consolidation of secondary education and promoting
admission, retention and graduation in further edu-
cation. These included university grants and Progresar
(grants) grants for upper secondary and further edu-
cation. Initiatives were taken to support the promotion for adolescents in public schools, secondary school completion plans for adults, direct transfers such as the universal child
allowance to stop people from dropping out of upper secondary education for economic reasons, and initia-
tives for tutors to support new students, to name just the most emblematic. Fourth, it was stressed that the
knowledge generated by the university and the scient-
ific-technological system should benefit various 
sectors and contribute to the reduction in social inequalities. These innovations coincided with a certain degree of inertia in the
previous agenda. Although initiatives were promoted that tended to make the right to higher education effective, they were not reflected in comprehensive, 
complete regulatory reform.2

These national policies were also coordinated with the internationalisation strategies of MERCOSUR, which were a fundamental component of the configuration of a permanent regional accreditation system for the academic quality of qualifications (ARCU SUR) based
2. In the analysis in this article, we do not address science policies. However, these kept in step with university policies and followed similar trends. They included an initial set of initiatives to “recover” what had been “lost” in the previous administrations and in the hierarchisation of the activity. Then, policies were introduced to restructure and inject funds into the budget, to expand, to improve infrastructure and to support the promotion of higher education in scientific collaboration. Finally, they reached a certain notion of the right to science as a step to promoting social and economic development. A comprehensive list of the measures included a discussion of the purpose of scientific and technological research to many areas, production sectors and social agents, the assessment of the research and even the promotion of non-commercial open access to the results of research financed with public funds. This action was not without certain contradictions, particularly regarding the internationalisation of
internationalised assessment criteria (Perrotta, 2017a, 2017b).

3. In 2003, a process decided on the need to create new university regulations. However, this was thwarted by political circumstances that went beyond the university framework. In 2015, driven by the educator and former president of the National University of Cordoba (UNC), unions and student organisations passed a reform of the law from the neoliberal years was defined to guarantee in legislation the conception of the university as a right in Argentina, its cost-free status, unrestricted access and commitment to social

on an experimental mechanism developed between 2004 and 2006. In addition, considerable qualitative and quantitative advances were made in mobility ini-
tiatives and in the implementation of policies to create academic networks. These included initiatives such as MERCOSUR’s Studies and Research Higher Education Unit (NEIES), launched with MERCOSUR’s operational plan for the Education Sector, 2011–2016. From NEIES, thematic networks and networks for reflection on the process of the internationalisation of higher education could be developed, in line with the challenges of regional integration.4 The first action of NEIES was to launch an online journal called Integración y Conoci-
mento5 (Integration and Knowledge). Subsequently, seminars were held. Later, progress was made in sub-
jects for research networks on subject areas that were defined as priorities: internationalisation, assessment, 
institutional diversification, recognition of qualifications, democratisation, university outreach, university extension, online higher education and the role of uni-
versities in environmentally sustainable development. The formation of university networks established 
greater interaction between institutions and their academic communities. It enabled new advan-
tage to be taken of the capabilities of each one to boost individual strengths. It provided a starting point for
knowledge to be shared horizontally and vertically (among universities and between these and disadvan-
taged sectors of society). It also began a process of developing new forms of regional coordination and integration (Gazzola and Dridiksson, 2008, Gazzola and Goulart Almeida, 2006; Zarur Miranda, 2008). At the same time, these new forms of interuniver-
sity cooperation required the creation of synergies and complementarities, which challenged the identity of universities. The networks generated regional studies on the priori-
ty topics. This stimulated a regional field of knowledge, as the research was developed regionally, beyond the 
closed views of national realities. In this way, an important political arena was formed to reflect on the
internationalisation of higher education and the role of universities in strengthening the process of regional integration (Perrotta and Del Valle, 2018).

These networks had a recognisable impact on CRES 2008 proposals. This was not only due to their capaci-
ty to mobilise and propose an approach to counteract competitive internationalisation, but also because of their ability to generate support and synergies
served to occupy an empty discussion space around CRES 2018. For example, networks that are part of various programmes, such as the Programme for the Promotion of the Argentine University (PPUA)6 in the Programme for the Internationalisation of Higher Edu-
cation and International Cooperation (PIESCI) or NEIES of MERCOSUR, helped to organise the regional talk "Evaluation of the Declaration of Cartagena de Indias and Contributions to the Regional Conference of Higher Education 2018" (Buenos Aires, 10 November 2017). This event brought together over 350 researchers in the field of higher education studies from the entire region and a set of university actors (teaching unions and students) to discuss the main achievements and challenges of the last ten years and to generate pro-
posals for the next regional conference planned for the following year. (7)

This coordination, together with similar examples found in other parts of the continent, served to create a suffi-
ciently solid framework for the conference in Córdoba to reaffirm the principles established in Cartagena. 
Some advances in the discourse were even made in a regional political context that was more adverse to the
extension of rights. The change in government that took place in December 2019 in Argentina created the opportunity to discuss one of the main topics that was pending from the 2003–
2015 period: the approval of a new higher education law that fully consolidated inArgentinian regulations the perspective of the university and knowledge gene-
ration for the public and social good. The new
law would incorporate the democratising innovations highlighted above and give direction and meaning to the
future of the Argentine university system. The

reform would also involve including in regulations the supportive, cooperative method of regional integra-
tion that had been introduced since CRES 2008. In this approach, it is considered that higher education is an instrument of development and cooperation between nations and that the right to higher education goes far beyond the individual question of access, retention and

capacities for educational investment. As a result, the path of development that had been travelled up to that point was interrupted and the perspectives outlined in 2014 were abandoned. Between 2016 and 2018, the process of formulating and managing education policies became more centralised and strongly driven by market logic. The government that took over in 2019 did not formulate new educational policies. Instead it applied an authoritarian, morally conservative discourse that was supposedly aligned with neoliberal economic principles. With this discourse, it aimed to justify disinvestment in the area and the degradation of public higher education institutions.

In response to this situation, public higher education institutes are trying to strengthen their coordination to withstand government attacks and maintain their activities. In turn, private higher education institutions are experimenting with new institutional and educational formats that enable them to increase their efficiency and competitiveness. In both sectors, there is a reduction in resources and tension in the social demand for higher education in terms of potential students and the opportunities for enrolled students to devote time to their studies. The context is one of increased unemployment and devaluation of salaries in reais. The relative value of university qualifications is decreasing. The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened this situation and contributed to the distancing of student bodies from higher education institutions and the precariousness of labour relations. The digitalisation of teaching has limited the learning conditions and highlighted educational shortfalls. At the same time, the spread of an anti-science discourse associated with the authoritarian, morally conservative discourse of society. Another factor is the job stability of teachers and researchers as public servants.

One of the limitations that universities and higher education institutions face is the need to be less bureaucratic and more democratic. The university curriculum is conservative in its tradition to train professionals by prioritising contents, without focusing more on moral development based on the public sense of higher education. Even when the governance model is organised around collegial spaces, as in the public sector that generally concentrates power at teaching level, there is little dialogue with the surrounding society. When dialogue exists, it is focused on extension projects. In the private sector, the governance is more similar to business management and there is a predominance of training that only involves teaching activities. In both sectors, experiences of participation and public debate do not match the possibilities and the need to democratically organise society and the academic community. access to education, cultural activities and the construction of academic and social capital are not reinforced. Expanding the training opportunities that are offered to students depends on strengthening the university as a leading institution of tertiary education, with assurance of the material conditions required to meet its role of a public space for knowledge generation and the full development of individuals.

3.2.2 Skills and competencies

Higher education courses in Brazil were constructed on the basis of the minimum contents considered necessary to work in a profession. In the 2000s, activities relating to changes in relations in Brazilian society have focused more on anti-racism and anti-sexism in specific disciplines, research and extension activities, study groups, and even talks and conferences. The impacts on society of structural violence based on class, gender and race have entered the agendas of groups that involve university actors. However, the link between theoretical discussion and practical action is found almost exclusively in activities that do not form part of the compulsory curriculum.

The same situation can be found in other forms of inter- and intra-institutional life, in curricular life, in professional practice. Placements in education are not compulsory in all courses and, although students must complete the workload of complementary activities, these activities do not guarantee the instrumentalisation of training that has a close relation with practice. There is a huge gap between the extracurricular opportunities in institutions focused on teaching, which account for the majority of enrolled students, and those available in research universities. In research universities, there are opportunities such as start-up grants for research, teaching and technological innovation; tutorials; extension projects; student organisations, juror enterprises; cultural activities; and administrative work. Through academic socialisation, these spaces enable the development of soft skills, cultural repertoires, a connection with the field, authentic experiences, in some cases scientific and professional competencies that are part of the social dynamic. One goal of the National Education Plan is the incorporation of extension activities as part of the curricular of undergraduate courses. This is a challenge that higher education institutions are facing currently. Therefore, to advance in citizenship skills training, the compulsory curriculum would need to increase the inclusion of outreach or extension.

3.2.3 Research and innovation

Universities are central actors in the National Science, Technology and Innovation System. Most Brazilian researchers are university lecturers and students who carry out research activities as part of their job responsibilities or with grants. In recent decades, their impact on the productive sector has gone beyond basic and applied research, and technology parks have been established. Some universities have established technology development units that are generally associated with training for entrepreneurship and for pedagogical innovation. From the decade of the 2000s, the organisation of specialised higher education institutes that have links with the production sector, thematic areas or regulated professions gained strength. In 2008, the federal government established a federal network for professional, scientific and technological education. Federal institutes were created to coordinate professional education in secondary and higher education courses with applied research. The aim was to promote regional development with technological solutions in multi-campus institutions.

Brazil is one of the countries with closest ties to the open access movement. In this sense, as shown by the large number of journals that are published without charging subscriptions or publication fees. Some pioneering initiatives were essential to achieve this success. One example is the creation of the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) programme in 1998 by the São Paulo Research Foundation (Fapesp) in association with the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (Bireme) of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), which is associated with the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, the Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology (IBICT) of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovations translated and adapted Open Journal Systems (OJS) software for journal editing, management and publication, developed by the Public Knowledge Project [PKP] in the United States, and available the Electronic System for Journal Publication (SEER), which is widely used in Brazilian institutions and encourages the adoption of international publishing standards for electronic journals.

Based on the open access movement, in 2005 the IBICT launched, with the support of researchers from several Brazilian states and Open Access to Scientific Information. The Manifesto promotes the registration and dissemination of Brazilian scientific output, in line with the open access to information initiative. Due to this initiative, Brazil now has broad coverage of institutional repositories that provide scientific articles and access to open access.

The country is a leader in this area globally. Currently, the main Brazilian universities and research institutes are working to construct platforms to share research data in open access, a concern that is expressed in the National Action Plan for Open Government. The presence of research ethics committees is increasing in the research area. This has been particularly notable since 2012, with the increased need for collegiate assessment of projects that involve humans. The committees in research institutions are coordinated by the National Committee of Ethics in Research (Conpe),
an organisation that is associated with the Ministry of Health, in the CEP/Conep System, which also has a database integrated into the Plataforma Brasil. In addition, ethics committees exist on the use of animals in research. They are regulated by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. However, training in research ethics is still not very visible in higher education institutes.

3.2.4 Sustainability

By law, environmental issues must be addressed in higher education courses. However, the approach is not uniform and the position of higher education institutes on the environment is ambiguous. Teaching, research and extension activities highlight the problem and call into question actions and initiatives that attach the biomass and exploit natural resources, leading to degradation of the natural environment. However, universities do not tend to have well-established systems for environmental protection in their processes of consumption and waste production. The separation, handling and discarding of waste still do not follow the basic standards required to reduce environmental impact. State or corporate funding of research does not show uniformity and the position of higher education institutions is associated with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. However, training in research ethics is still not very visible in higher education institutes.

In terms of the social sustainability of higher education institutes and their republican legitimacy before society, the topics of access and retention of students are relevant. This is because the existence of higher education institutions is associated with the relations they form with the new generations in the student body. In Brazilian society, in which most of the population has a low income, free education is still a relevant topic. Although only around 25% of places on undergraduate courses are free, this proportion is crucial to the access of population segments that cannot afford the monthly payments and to avoid a greater increase in the fees charged by the private sector. Public higher education institutes, in which education is free, have been affected by budget restrictions, including those applied to resources for supporting students, in a situation in which around two-thirds of students come from low-income families. The composition of the student population has changed, particularly since 2012, with places reserved for students from public schools, and specific racial and income quotas. These criteria have been used to award federal grants in private higher education institutions since 2000. In addition to problems in financing education, the research that is carried out in the public sector faces sustainability challenges. The pattern of expansion in the previous decade led to the creation of new higher education institutions and the Programme to Support the Restructuring and Expansion of Higher Education Institutes (REUNI). The aim of this plan was to make more efficient use of university resources with an increase in the number of places, above all in courses at night. This increase, which was carried out from the perspective of internalising the offer, still lacks consolidation of the physical infrastructure for teaching and research, the institutional infrastructure to support students, and pedagogical innovation. Government discourse ordered public higher education institutions to establish their own sources of income. However, public administration regulations limit these initiatives. The Legal Framework for Science, Technology and Innovation introduced greater flexibility in the management of research resources but it is difficult to assess its effects in terms of the promotion of investment in a period of institutional instability and economic crisis. Non-compliance with contracts by governments discourages the search for income-generating projects, as there are no expectations of autonomy in the use of the resources that are gained. Although private research funding can be found in universities, the academic community tends to distrust the consequences of leaving its agenda on the private interests of potential financiers.

3.2.5 ICTs and digitalisation

At system level, platforms and databases have been developed to manage an increasingly broad, complex set of higher education information resources. These include institutional platforms for regulating undergraduate (e-MEC) and postgraduate degrees (Sucupira), the validation of qualifications from higher education institutions in other countries (Carolina Bon), the management of research resources (Carlos Chagas), academic curricula (Lattes), research ethics assessment (Plataforma Brasil) and continuous training of teachers (Freire, renamed Educação Básica in 2019). These resources are organised by the ministries and their autarkies. Therefore, there is an ecosystem with digital government resources at national level. Its architecture also influences the information systems developed by higher education institutes to manage the data of a student body that is increasingly numerous, and to promote a set of activities that are increasingly sophisticated.

Throughout the 2000s, undergraduate courses were developed in distance mode, initially through public university projects supported by government programmes. The Open University of Brazil (UAB) was established as a system in 2006 to coordinate public higher education institutes and face-to-face support centres. Its priority was to offer initial and ongoing training for teachers who worked in basic public education. Thus, it internalised the offering of higher education in this decade and the following one, the offering of undergraduate distance learning courses by private higher education institutes increased to the extent that some of them changed their focus to this mode of delivery. In 2019, the offering of places on undergraduate courses in the private sector was greater for distance than face-to-face courses, and over 35% of enrolments were for this mode. This expansion was not accompanied by an efficient process of supervision, and the processes of evaluation and regulation were insufficient to ensure the quality of the training. As a result, the quality of student training is becoming more distant from the framework of higher education as a process of socialisation and a broader, deeper cultural experience.

The construction of virtual learning objects in Brazil is evident in initiatives such as the Ministry of Education Platform for Digital Education Resources, which was created in 2015. However, the incorporation of digital elements into everyday teaching in higher education was a challenge in the period of emergency distance teaching during the pandemic. The situation revealed that training teaching staff to use resources is an element of digital inclusion. In addition, students need to learn tools so that they can handle information technologies, particularly students who did not have access to these resources in their educational trajectories and do not use them in other areas of their lives. It is important to consider that one factor in the gap between students and technology is financial shortage, which is reflected in limited access to equipment, an internet connection and knowledge, and precarious study conditions in the domestic environment.
lisation of extension activities continues to be limited, despite the great potential associated with values and practices cultivated in the Latin American region. Further collaboration is restricted by the language barrier, given the Brazilian academic community’s low knowledge of Spanish for regional integration, and English, the lingua franca of the global scientific community. Other limitations are the lack of systematic development of professional skills for internationalisation and an institutional culture of bureaucratic rigidity, associated with the lack of autonomy of higher education institutions before the legal system.

3.3 Colombia: a look at democracy and higher education

“Death is not democratic” stated South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2018) in his analysis of the social process triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. Han stressed that people’s social class and status affects the probability that the pandemic has a catastrophic effect on their lives. The emergence of Covid-19 has revealed the inequalities that cause disproportionate effects on well-identified populations: poor people, those debilitated by informal work or unemployment, and those that belong to an ethnic group.

The value of these positions is that they draw attention to the fact that the crisis that is currently underway is not just a health crisis. The heart-breaking effects on our societies of the existing social and economic conditions. These conditions have been hidden behind palliative discourses of “the fight against poverty”, “equal opportunities” and “social mobility”. However, the fragility of social policy is clear: after months of palliative discourses of “the fight against poverty”, 89% of deaths caused by Covid-19 were concentrated in the most socioeconomic disadvantaged classes of society. This means that approximately 93% of students in the country are facing some kind of barrier (exclusion, inequality, insufficient quality) that prevents them from fully exercising their right to an education up to the completion of further studies. In addition to the shortfalls in preschool education, which would benefit the structural problems suffered by upper secondary education and, obviously, higher education. Children under five and young people (aged between 14 and 28 years) are the population that is most exposed to violation of the right to education. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (2020), 33% of the young population did not study or work in 2020 (for women, this percentage stood at 42%, for men 23%).

The factors of inequality in the access to higher education are clearly identified in Colombia (Mora, 2016):

- In Colombia, the highest educational level and the type of education received by a population segment is strongly correlated with their socioeconomic class. While 89% of people in classes 1 and 2 report a maximum educational level of upper secondary, 62% of people in classes 5 and 6 state that they have reached university level. This is even more problematic if we consider the high degree of social immobility that exists, as the probability that children have the same educational level as their parents is between 70% and 80%. Furthermore, young people who are in the fifth quintile of the population (the richest) have levels of educational coverage that are ten times higher than those in the first quintile (the poorest).

- Although women reported a coverage rate similar to that of men in higher education and although the dropout rates that affect them are lower, disadvantageous gender relations persist within the higher education system (in terms of entry into “traditionally feminine” degrees) and in postgraduate studies. Indeed, women comprise 45% of teacher training graduates and only a third of those who complete a doctoral programme.

- In terms of ethnicity, only 7.4% of indigenous adults attend a higher education institute, while the ratio for Afro-Colombians is one in every five. In contrast, 35% of young people who do not belong to a specific ethnic group attend a higher education programme.

This situation is worse if we consider that the group of young people who cannot continue their academic training in higher education or enter the job market (“ninis” - young people who neither study nor work) is much larger in Afro-descendant or indigenous populations. Indeed, in the national Afro-Colombian population, 30% of youth do not work, look for work or study. The figure for youth in indigenous populations stands at 42%. In contrast, in the population that is self-defined as not belonging to an ethnic group, 23% of youth are not working, looking for work or studying. These figures are also affected by the spatial gaps that separate rural and urban areas. If the analysis focuses only on the rural area, the “nin” indicator rises to 46% for the indigenous population, 42% for Afro-Colombians and 40% for the other youth. Notably, three quarters of the young indigenous population and a fourth of Afro-Colombians live in these areas, compared to a fifth of the remaining population.

- In the population that reports having some kind of permanent disability, only 2.3% have a higher education level, whether it is technical, technological or professional, only 1% have completed their further studies and only 0.1% have taken postgraduate courses.

These are the populations that will suffer the effects of the pandemic in a disproportionate way. In addition, according to the figures of the National Administrative Department of Statistics and of the Economics Education Laboratory (LEE) of the Pontifical Javeriana University, only 43% of people have access to a mobile or desktop internet connection, only 17% of students in rural colleges have internet and computer access, and 96% of municipalities are not ready to implement online classes.

It is clear that equal access, retention and educational achievement require an enormous budget commitment by the state. This is the only way to guarantee universal access to higher education and to reduce the inequalities in access to information and communication technologies. However, public universities are underfunded by $18 billion Colombian pesos. Their revenue from enrolment and services has also dropped: both items fell by 51% in March and 66% in April 2020. This worsened the financial limitations that public universities face and increased the negative effects of underfunding in the areas of coverage, educational quality and student welfare. All of this has occurred in a context of widespread student demands for the state to cover the cost of enrolment in all public universities in the country (“Matrícula Cero”, Zero Enrolment). Students from several universities started a hunger strike and organised mass protests to make this demand a reality. As a result of the pressure, part of the national government accepted the demand and announced a “Matrícula Cero” programme for 2020 and 2021. In 2021, 97% of students enrolled in public higher institutes (technical and technologi- cal universities and institutes) are expected to benefit, that is, around 695,000 students from socioeconomic classes 1, 2 and 3 (the most vulnerable in society).

In turn, private universities have asked the government for financial support to maintain the employee payroll, loan facilities for institutions and students, postponed payment of interest and repayments, and the definition of certain exemptions from tax payments. In addition, competition has increased – in some cases at the expense of educational quality considerations – to attract new students and maintain the enrolment numbers by defining incentives of reductions in the enrolment fee, promises of discounted enrolment fees in following semesters, partial payment of enrolment fees in instalments, financing of enrolment fees through the creation of solidarity funds, reductions in registration costs and partial or full grants.

All of this is happening in a context in which higher education institutions are facing an increase in costs associated with improving ICT infrastructure, university welfare, teacher training for the shift to online teaching and the application of biosecurity protocols. These efforts contrast with the weak response of the Colombian state to the pandemic. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), in
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This has increased inequality and poverty, especially in the context of the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This situation is evident in the figures presented by the National Institute of Statistics and Census. In the third semester of 2019, before the pandemic, the labour force participation rate was 81.8%, the employment rate was 74.7%, the unemployment rate was 11.4% and the underemployment rate was 11.6% (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2019). In the quarter from May to July 2021, these figures changed significantly, as the labour force participation rate nationally was 59.9% and the employment rate 49.4% (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2021), while the national unemployment rate stood at 17.4% and the underemployment rate was 15.5% (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2021). In all these items, women were more affected as they had higher rates of unemployment and underemployment.

Costa Rica is a country whose economy is based on trade and services (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2021). It was greatly affected by the restriction measures adopted due to the pandemic. However, it was also affected by the lack of protection measures driven by powerful sectors associated with the Costa Rican Federation of Chambers and Associations of Private Enterprise (UCCAEP) and related groups that have considerable lobby capacity and participation within the Government of the Republic itself. These are the same sectors that during the pandemic promoted from the labour market flexibility that led to suspension of contracts, reduction in the working day and dismissals without any repercussions for companies. They were also behind the increase in taxes for poor and middle class population segments and public institutions, whose funding has been cut. In addition to these measures, salary increments were frozen in the public sector. Proposals were constantly made to impose more taxes on the working sector and exempt or eliminate taxes and social responsibilities of big businesses, reduce working days, increase working hours and close or privatise institutions, without establishing any far-reaching palliative measures for those who are most affected. At the same time, tax avoidance and evasion was facilitated for companies, while serious cases of corruption between private companies and employees of public institutions became known (Núñez, 2021).

In addition, the policies that the government has implemented to address the health crisis have been contradictory in terms of the need to preserve people’s life and health. To avoid infections, the government introduced quarantine, physical distancing, hand washing protocols, suspension of activities and limitation in the capacity of premises, among other measures. However, the measures were relaxed depending on the needs for commerce to open and the promotion of tourism activity.

Thus, closure and distancing measures have varied over time and given way to measures that are considered necessary for “economic reopening”. First, came the policy of “El martillo y el baile” (the hammer and the dance. Miranda, 2020), which involved commerce opening (the dance) or closing (the hammer) depending on the health situation. After this came “Costa Rica trabaya y se cuida” (Costa Rica works and looks after itself, Chavarría, 2020), which was based on greater opening and individual responsibility to avoid infection with Covid-19. At the same time, the vaccination process has been executed slowly, as the country depends on purchases made from Pfizer and AstraZeneca, which arrive in small quantities every week, and on donations.

Many people have lost loved ones, their jobs, their livelihood, their future projects and their physical and mental health, but public policy has not focused on caring for life and protecting people. People protecting people do not seem to be a key topic for the parties that are preparing to start the electoral campaign in 2022, most of which promise to further plunder public funds.

This is the context in which policies of funding cuts in public education are promoted at preschool, primary and secondary level, which are governed by the Ministry of Public Education, and at higher education level, which is comprised of private universities whose policies are coordinated by the National Council of Rectors (CONARE).

Basic preschool, primary and secondary public education have been adversely affected by the financial crisis before the pandemic, the difficulties caused by the pandemic and the negative impact of the state’s restructuring policies.

At the start of the pandemic, school buildings were closed and education was moved online. However, limited internet coverage, a lack of equipment and inadequate conditions affected around 425,000 students, most of whom live in poverty (Rodríguez, 2021).
One in every four teachers did not have an internet connection (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021) or training to use digital tools (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021). Furthermore, 58% of families stated that they were not ready to support the distance education of their school-age members (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021). Shortfalls in services and physical infrastructure (for example a lack of drinking water) were also faced. A total of 64% of education centres (2,996) do not have suitable infrastructure and health conditions at the entrance or during class, and 87,410 education centres were under health orders in 2021, which are attended by approximately 21% of the enrolled population (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021). In addition, difficulties were noted in access to education for students at education centres in rural areas.

The Ministry of Public Education established a series of measures and alternative platforms for communica- tion between teachers, students, and parents, and the delivery of food parcels to around 430,000 students who normally attend school dining halls. All of this was carried out with the support of the education centres’ teaching and administrative staff, whose main task was to try to avoid infections and keep students linked to the education system (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021).

In April 2021, 80% of a total of 1,206,800 students in 5,276 educational institutes and services attended face-to-face classes. Classes were subsequently suspended due to conflicts about careless policies in the face of Covid-19 infection (Castro, 2021). The academic year was restarted in July 2021. Out of all the education centres, 67% currently work in blended mode and 33% face-to-face (Dirección de Prensa y Relaciones Públicas, Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2021). However, considerable shortages have been identified in the processes of public education compared to those of private education, where classes were not suspended (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021) and students have more resources to adapt to online education. These factors did not prevent the Ministry of National Planning from proposing cuts of 300 billion colones from the education budget for 2022 (Chacón, 2021). This adds to the application of the “Fiscal Rule” (9), which in itself reduces the current expenditure of public institutions (Molina Manzo et al., 2021).

In the five public higher education institutes, online classes were also imposed from 12 March 2020. Students and teachers had to adapt their courses to online platforms that had not been used frequently in the academic population, except in the State University of Distance Education (UNED). This caused disruptions, uncertainty and anxiety. The authorities indicated that the academic year should continue, despite the fact that some students and teachers had no internet con- nection, equipment or suitable spaces for carrying out the processes of distance education. In the University of Costa Rica (UCR), student residences closed abruptly without supporting or monitoring the student body from rural areas who had to return to their places of origin. Furthermore, the amount of grants was cut.

For students who had no equipment or internet con- nection, universities gradually managed to provide SIM cards and tablets using loans from institutional funds and donations of the teaching staff. Instead of a drop in enrolment, an increase was observed, particularly in UNED and UCR (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021).

However, the fatigue, stress and psychosocial impact on the student body can be seen and there are mental health alerts in the university communities. As a result, universities must implement mental health measures (Vida UCR, 15 July 2021). However, these measures do not address the complexity of the current situation in terms of the pandemic and an education system tied to banking and focused on productivism and com- petition that does not generate wellbeing (Arce and Caamaño, 2021). Although the grant programme has been extended, there is a need for the implementation of the “Fiscal Rule” (Guevara, 20 April 2021), and systematic reductions in universities’ budgets.

In effect, public higher education institutions have been subjected to a series of budget cuts since 2018, which have been justified by the economic crisis. However, these cuts form part of attacks made by political and business sectors, central government, the Legisla- tive Assembly and the traditional media on the public institutional structure and particularly on universities. On several occasions, the need to eliminate university auton-omy and academic freedom has even been proposed (Caamaño, 2020a; 202b). The purpose of these attacks is to further develop the model of corporate university, whose agenda is dictated by companies and the government.

Governed by the dictates of international organisa- tions, the government, the National Council of Rectors (CONARE) and members of the academic community, the universities in Costa Rica have accepted the cor- porate or university-business model that is presented as the ideal in other parts of the world, to compete on the international knowledge market. Several mecha- nisms have been implemented to transform the Latin American model described in the Córdoba Reform. These include “a) commercialisation through assess- ment mechanisms; b) the structure of privatisation through patents, copyright, innovation and entrepre- neurialism c) monetarisation; and d) labour market flexibility” (Caamaño, 2020b, pp. 106-107).

The University of Costa Rica is an institution that has many structural inequalities. It has 65 to 70% of its staff on temporary contracts (León, Kikut and Villalobos, 2020), maintains outsourcing of cleaning services under high levels of job insecurity (Muñoz, 2020), and gender inequalities exist (Mesa, 2018; Chaves, 2021; Córdoba, 2021), despite the humanistic discourse that is still maintained in some sectors. It is a university that has worked to find the way to save itself from the adverse political context by trying to form partnerships with powerful sectors rather than with those who suffer from the plundering. Faced with the latest flashpoints in the struggle, the institution offi- cially withdrew the strike against the Fiscal Law in 2018 and against the processes for approval of the Framework Law of Public Employment. This reveals the internal contradictions and resistance of a university sector that still sees the link with society as a funda- mental factor for universities (Caamaño, 2020c).

In fact, the universities made an economic contribution during the pandemic, as they accepted a budget cut of 48 billion colones to help to resolve the health crisis (Sociedad, 2020). In addition, in the health area, with the opening of vaccination centres, the universities helped with “production of cotton buds, lab coats, protective masks, prototypes of ventilators, protective capsules for intubation, serum from hyperimmunised horse plasma and saliva tests to detect Covid-19” (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2021). They have contributed to educa- tion, tourism, business development, psychosocial support in crisis situations, and other areas. However, in the same way that the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) – which provides support nationally during the health crisis - has been maintained, it has been suggested that the universities have salaries that are too high and that they do not control their spending. This criticism has been made despite the fact the universities have applied measures to reduce salaries (Córdoba, 2021).

Even with this adverse outlook, the universities do not stop to think of themselves in a way that goes beyond the economic perspective that is imposed not only from outside but also from within, among powerful sectors associated with international organisations and the government.

3.4.1 Perspectives for the future?

The dominant sectors, led by the guidelines of the OECD, an organisation that Costa Rica joined this year, and the World Bank, force universities to continue along the same path. Efforts are focused on standardisation through assessment, which ends up being a goal in itself. To achieve this, Chile is taken as a model and the Foro and Pisa tests are applied (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021), despite the difficult situation of the education system in material terms. The domi- nant sectors propose increasing the commercialisation of universities to obtain funding (Programa Estado de la Educación, 2021), which would eventually eliminate university autonomy, critical thinking and academic freedom. This is the approach of the State Educa- tion Programme (2021), the “think tank” financed by CONARE to repeat in each annual report what has already been established by international organisa- tions mentioned above. Its view is economistic and it does not focus on education as a right but, as proposed by the World Bank, on assessment, standardisation and control (CLADE, 2021).

In the context of the crisis, negotiations with the Inter- national Monetary Fund (IMF) and the pre-electoral year, the measure to reduce the budget by 48 billion colones will be of great Opportunities to change the policies of dispossession in the short or medium term cannot be seen.
To counteract this discouraging trend, the propos- 
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al made by academic sectors and organisations that still see education as a right should be focused on an in-depth discussion of the model of university and society that has been promoted; a discussion that the university authorities avoid. This open, democratic discussion should take into account all levels: teachers, students and administrati- 
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ve staff, as the first objective should be to democratise academia. Only in this way can the need to decommer-
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cialize and return to public ownership be put forward, so that education is defended as a human right and a common good, rather than considered merchandise. The aim is to work on the crisis that is being expe-
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rienced in society and education, and to find forms of management that respect human rights, which include the labour rights of staff who work in education insti-
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tutions. To achieve this, we can start by attacking the structural inequalities established in the statutes, regul-
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lations, procedures and bureaucratic practices. This process involves casting out the neutral, managerial 
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language of universities today and instead describing the workings of universities today and instead describing the workings of universities in a way that is alternative, intercultu-
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ral, associated with the public good, fair and sustainable in the mid to long term. In some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as is now being proposed in Mexico, free higher educa-
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tion and its progressive universalisation is established in legislation and is a constitutional requirement. It is accompanied by measures that are open to the access and re-
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tention of school age groups that experience inequality in the exercise of fundamental rights, through compensation and social welfare policies (for example, an extensive system of grants or affirmative action programmes focused on the inclusion of sectors that are traditionally marginalised, such as country people, indigenous people and Afro-descendants). From a comparative perspective and considering the changes that are arising, the efforts that are being made should be focused on defining a new education reform in Mexico, as the new government is progressi-
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ve and anti-neoliberal. This government is promoting 
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ls in the area of higher education, knowledge, science and technology that are centred on achieving greater access to free education, to introduce a new national education reform and obtain the necessary scientific independence. However, in this context, the capacity of the higher education system appears to be segmented in a socio-institutional way, in direct relation with the various population segments. Thus, the son or daughter of a worker or a peasant farmer will have some oppor-
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tunities to access basic education or a technical career. However, they are less likely to be able to enter and stay in higher education. In contrast, the offspring of the upper-middle and upper classes can enter, remain and rise through all the educational levels if this is what they wish, whether it is free or not. Therefore, in general, it can be seen that the tendency to commercialise and segment the higher education system – not its “diversification” as presented in the Anglo-Saxon world and in countries with greater edu-
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cation coverage – has increased. However, this has not helped to compensate for inequality and it has not pro-
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vided the opportunity to reach greater equity in access and retention of highly vulnerable or disadvantaged sectors of the education system, such as indigenous, Afro-descendent, rural and very poor urban popula-
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tions or women in these sectors. The above indicates that inequality has prevailed over efforts and policies that have not managed to get to the heart of the issue. In other words, progress has been made beyond the mere declaration in favour of free education or affirmative action policies. This is because the implementation of effective mechanis-
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s of substantial improvement in the distribution of income, to foster equity and fight inequality, has not been established as a priority.

3.5 The terms of the debate

The current proposal for educational reform in Mexico (2018–2021) establishes that the state should guarantee the right to all education of a public nature. However, there are differences in how the legislation has been drawn up to achieve a shift from the phase of mas-
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ification to the phase of universalisation of higher education. In other words, the legislation states that it is compulsory to offer this education level to all those who request it, only on the basis of their merits, but it does not manage to overcome the inequality that exists in terms of their socioeconomic or geographic condi-
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tions, their ethnicity, race or gender. Therefore, a distinction should be made in the defi-
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nitions of state policy regarding two concepts: the compulsory nature of higher education and its free status. In international law, the state is obliged to make higher education accessible, above all when the desired univer-
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sal coverage has been reached in basic and secondary education. This comes under a concept that empha-
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sises a progressive transition, in which free education appears as the main factor for this gradual process to reach a situation of universalisation. In Mexico, this sequence of scaling up has often been halted or cut back, with cycles of contraction and highs and lows in public resources and in investment in higher education. Dramatic changes in the orientation of education policy in the last three governments of PAN and PRI (Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto) also met that agreements on responsibil-
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ity to guarantee a fundamental right have been violated or limited. Considering the situation, actions undertaken during these governments focused on expanding coverage, commercialisation and an assessment of the system’s quality but not on retention. They were even less focused on guaranteeing satisfactory graduation for the progressive entry of higher university graduates into the various professional job markets; the promotion of a new “education model” (as proposed unsuccess-
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fully during the six-year term of Peña Nieto) to generate fundamental changes for the continuous cognitive pro-
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gress of students; the conditions for constructing an alternative curriculum; and even less the production and transfer of new science and technology knowledge. Rather, what was a constant was a series of program-
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mes that were not very effective over time and did not manage to expand the social capacities of compre-
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hsensive learning. Neither did they manage to have a positive impact on economic development rates, which would be expected to be generated by an improvement in education systems and knowledge worldwide. Therefore, based on the experience of the past, the terms of the debate on universalisation, the coordina-
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tion of a higher education system and its free status which are the main areas covered in the current gover-
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nment’s higher education reform – should shift from discourse to action. This could be achieved through mid-
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to-long-term action programmes in the midst of the current general uncertainty (that has been aggra-
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vated by the Covid-19 pandemic). To add another aspect of the current circumstances, in the context of a lack of organisation in the implementation of state policies, the current six-year term has been marked by the frequen-
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cy and recurrence of social conflicts in the education system, above all led by students and women (when a common trend in the past was the concentration of conflicts among teachers). All of these conflicts have been related in some way to the topic of free education, access or violence. In the exact opposite position, until the shift from words to action occurs, what has been imposed is the idea that education is not and should not be free. The argu-
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ment is that what is offered is a service, albeit public, of individual benefit. Therefore, a logic has been upheld that continuously grows, spreads and is reproduced, with the argument that free education favours those who are already favoured or those who are in a position to pay for their education. In this argument, it is consi-
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dered that free education gives more guarantees to the
richer classes than to the more disadvantaged, or the rights are violated.

In international legislation it is clearly established that the state is obliged to guarantee free higher education. However, the willingness of institutions and the main academic actors alone, the lean economic conditions and profound inequality in which we live (which is a central topic in the Agenda 2030 for Development Goals), the conflicts, rampant violence, increasing migration and the inequity in which education systems move represent enormous challenges but above all tremendous difficulties to achieve these goals as established for 2030. This has led to a very interesting agenda that covers topics including increasing access to more young people and adults and constructing a knowledge society that has scientific independence. Given the close relationship between knowledge output, new paradigms of learning and research, and the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds, universities’ social responsibility to the public in general is a crucial part of any future agenda.

3.5.2 Higher education reform: redesigning the system

In this section, we evaluate the legislative proposals that were presented and approved by the Chambers of Deputies and Senators in 2019, during the first year of the government of the presidency of López Obrador. We look at their main scope and content and their fundamental principles and objectives.

The starting point for the proposal to carry out a new education reform was the repeal of the first “structural” reform of the previous six-year term, the educational reform. The new reform was proposed to overcome what was seen as a failed attempt (another of many) to overcome decades of backwardness; to introduce comprehensive change coordinated from within; and to create a more inclusive, inclusive education system with gender equality and excellence in the current six-year term. The terms of what the reform would achieve in higher education are presented, with their objectives, breaking and turning points, and how they would be implemented in the short, medium and long term, based on the approval of national legislation on this subject (the Third Article of the Constitution).

Likewise, a series of recommendations of a programmatic nature are presented, which the author considers could be included in the framework to redesign the higher education system in Mexico. No previous reform has managed to have a real impact on the purposes, principles and processes of the educational task, particularly in reference to what is learnt, the methods, languages, content, curriculum, teaching and administrative practices, improvement of infrastructure and the central and consistent role that is concentrated in just four universities that are mainly public, national, federal or state institutions.

The relationship between research and innovation in the context of highly complex application is also poor and very limited. Currently, the number of people served by higher education stands at 4.3 million students (66.5% in public institutions, and 33.5% in private), which corresponds to 39% of the school-aged population.

Public universities have the largest number of research institutions. These benefit from the support provided by the National System of Researchers (SNI), which is comprised of over 30,000 academics (21.5 people per 100,000 inhabitants). This group expanded from 5,700 people in 1990 to 28,000 in 2018. Research grantholders number 450. By research area, only 5,800 of the 30,000 academics work in the area of social sciences and humanities.

The science and technology capabilities by states in the Republic are very uneven. Fifty per cent of the investment in National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) programmes (for example: national laboratories, international mobility grants, grants for national and postgraduate studies, SNI researchers, programmes recognised in the National Register of Quality Postgraduate Programmes, CONACYT centres or research incentive programmes) is concentrated in just 5 or 6 states.

The topic of financing was and continues to be one of the areas of greatest conflict in the relation between universities and the state; public subsidies are concentrated in universities that operate independently or depend strongly on state government resources, have experienced decades of fluctuations in the amount they are allocated, as defined by the different governments. The 1% of GDP that was agreed as necessary by the Chamber of Deputies years ago has never been reached. In some cases, the operating conditions, year on year, have reached such an alarming level that at least 12 of these universities, particularly state institutions, are in a state of financial and operational crisis that has led to paralysis and frequent problems. However, the main problems of social quality and relevance, inclusion and equity, and reversal of the conditions of inequality in access to the system persist and have been deepened, at the level of public responsibility and that of private responsibility, which has achieved considerable dynamism and growth.

3.5.3 In search of what is lost: the core areas of the higher education reform of López Obrador’s government

The terms presented in the education reform laws, in the formulation of the Third Article of the Constitution and in the General Law of Higher Education (see the version of October 2019), are supported by principles and objectives in a vision and a public policy to reverse the conditions of backwardness in the country, as mentioned above. The aim is to support a great transformation in the national education system. In May 2019, the constitutional reform of the Third Article was approved. This revoked the previous attempt at a neoliberal reform that never materialised, for the good of the country. In this new formulation, the compulsory nature of higher education is established as well as the gradual transition to free education throughout the entire system (as already established in some countries of Latin America). It is proposed that the higher level of education should be governed under the terms set out in Parts VII and X of this constitutional article.

Part VII indicates: “Universities and all other higher education institutions upon which the law has conferred autonomy, shall have the powers and responsibility to govern themselves for all purposes of educating, doing research and promoting culture in accordance with the principles established in this article, respecting freedom to teach and do research and freedom to analyse and discuss ideas; they shall determine their curriculum and freedom to analyse and discuss ideas; they shall determine the ways and conditions under which they establish the terms for the engagement, promotion and tenure of their academic personnel; and they shall manage their assets […] labour relationships both with academic personnel and with management personnel shall be governed by Section A of Article 123 of this Constitution, under the terms and in accordance with the prescriptions established by the Federal Labour Law, subject to the nature pertaining to a specially regulated work, in a manner consistent with the auto-
nomly, freedom of teaching and research and the goals of the institutions referred herein.”

Part X of the Third Article of the Constitution states: “The compulsory nature of higher education is the responsibility of the state. Federal and local authorities shall establish policies to promote inclusion, retention and continuity, under the conditions indicated in the law. In addition, they shall provide mechanisms to access to this type of education for people who meet the requirements stipulated by the public institutions.”

In addition, for the higher level, various provisional articles are included in which it is established: “The state legislatures... shall have a period of one year to harmonize the legal framework on this subject, in accordance with this decree.” The fourteenth provisional article states: “Together with the content of the principles of compulsory higher education, the necessary resources shall be included in the federal budget and the budgets of federative entities and municipalities, under the terms of Parts VIII and X of the Third Article of this Constitution; in addition, a special federal fund shall be established to guarantee in the long term the resources required to ensure the compulsory nature of the services referred to in this article, and the long-term nature of the infrastructure.”

With this education reform initiative, the investment that López Obrador’s government should reach is 1% of GDP by the end of his six-year term. In addition, coverage should increase from the current 39% of the corresponding age group to 55% of the population in this group, so that the gross enrolment ratio approaches a level of “universalisation”. To reach these goals, as and other more specific ones, during October 2019, the General Law of Higher Education (LGES) began to be discussed. This would replace during October 2019, the General Law of Higher Education of 1978. To reach these goals, as and other more specific ones, during October 2019, the General Law of Higher Education (LGES) began to be discussed. This would replace during October 2019, the General Law of Higher Education of 1978.

The conclusive analysis characterising the existing educational backwardness is noteworthy. It describes: “corruption in the education system [...] fictitious schools, false diplomas, a lack of school manuals, discretionary granting of awards, sales of places, irregularities in public spending and tailor-made tenders.”

The LGES also highlights the levels of regional, socio-economic, and gender inequalities, and describes the negative indicators of quality and efficiency throughout the education system. This is demonstrated by a population that is poorly qualified and the gap between what is learnt and the type of work that large segments of the population carry out. It is considered that an education supported by the aforementioned principles will drive social transformations within the school and the community, so that “learning and knowledge will become the cornerstone of prosperity and well-being in Mexico.”

Regarding education level, an increase from the 42.7% gross enrolment ratio in 2020 to 50% in 2024 is planned. This would mean that the population of enrolled students would reach 5.5 million. The goal is to reach universalisation in 2040 with a 65% gross enrolment ratio (6.7 million students).

However, in comparative terms, in Mexico (and perhaps in other parts of the world) there is no recent experience of an education reform that has been implemented purely by issuing, discussing a law on higher and university education, regardless of how advanced and focused the law may be. The most difficult task comes when the laws, regulations and programmes have been approved and when there is clarity in how to introduce a transformation strategy into the system of knowledge generation, teaching, culture, science and technology.

The General Law of Higher Education (April 2021) was approved in the context of a public policy with high acceptance and legitimacy, as found in Mexico. However, to be able to show that the relation between what is proposed and what is put into practice can be shaped by the general frameworks that have been defined and with a strategic and programmatic vision that has a broad scope and high ambitions, a change strategy is required based on the broadest principles and paradigms of modern education. Programmes are also needed that are feasible, operational and have an impact in the short- and mid-term. The plan for the future is established; now the political will and necessary action is required to achieve it.

To create a coordinated system of higher education, with a defined operating structure at local, state and national level and objectives that draw on experiences that could be useful as comparative references, the great debate that has arisen on public education policy, particularly at the level on which this article is based, must overcome decades of persistent failures. It must overcome institutions’ lack of action in response to their precarious conditions, their constant internal conflicts, a lack of financial resources and a lack of leadership that goes beyond the position of the
In general terms, in the evaluation of this reform initiative, it should be considered that the country continues to have a disjointed, unstructured system that is diverse but not complementary, autonomous but not cooperative, increasingly complex but not for this reason, repressive or authoritarian, and that the development of a knowledge society that is sustainable and provides wellbeing for everyone.

The definition of a public policy for the future should consider the minimum requirements of a socio-political, paradigmatic construct (on the organisation and management of new knowledge and learning). If not, universities will find themselves with a contradiction because all references will be to the present instead of what they want to obtain within a future time frame.

The starting point should be to uphold, as a principle, education as a public and social good rather than education that can be commercialised. This will stop education from becoming a mere service or merchandise, and schools a place for profit. For the next generations, deciding to maintain and reproduce a “blended” system (public and for profit) such as that which exists now, where the guarantee of quality education is subject to the collection of fees or payments made by families or students, would represent a total setback.

General conclusions of the chapter

Unlike the situation in other areas of the planet, the universities of Latin America and the Caribbean have constructed their unique past and present on the basis of full institutional autonomy and collegial, participative governance. The predominant model, with considerable differences between countries, is that of public higher education. They are one of the few social institutions that have repeatedly adopted a critical stance or mobilised (particularly their main actors: students and teachers) against brutality, injustice and the authoritarian excesses of governments or the rich and powerful, whether they are local, national or international. However, they have also mobilised to defend the public good, freedom and equality, human rights and even their own existence.

In recent decades, universities have faced the veiled and often blatant violation of their autonomy through external assessment and accreditation bodies and the imposition of indicators that lead them to compete with each other, to obtain the scraps of extra resources labelled ‘of quality and excellence’. They have also had to face the trend of growing privatisation up to now, and above all commercialisation, which ensured over time the reproduction of class and elite interests that do not represent the interests of the majority.

This information is fundamental, not to say extraordinary, given that it refers to the region that has the highest rate of private sector involvement in education in the world, even though it is in the part of the planet with the greatest inequality and inequity.

Despite everything, the public university continues to have the highest participation of cohorts of social demand for admission; a monopoly on knowledge generation and scientific and technological development; and a monopoly on innovation in course offering at curricular level and in the graduate profile. It maintains its position as an institution that leads in all fields of culture dissemination. As if this were not enough, it also leads processes of integration and internationalisation through its contributions of papers in scientific journals, literature, and the safeguarding of the historical and natural heritage of each country, as well as in many other areas. In contrast, the private higher education institutions hardly manage to organise degrees that saturate the already saturated market of the liberal professions and barely make a contribution, apart from some exceptions (no more than ten higher education institutes in the region), to knowledge in the country or the world.

In the last two decades, the public university in the region has promoted the main structural changes in its platforms for coordination in networks and associations, and the regionalisation of higher education; and internalisation in its curricula and in the direction of its research and scientific and technological innovation. It has promoted the best of its activity in the field of knowledge generation, despite the evident backwardness compared to leading global indicators.

The presentation of an alternative is based on a context of urgent need, as there is not much time for governments and the main associated actors and sectors to implement this. The costs of ignorance, falling behind in technology and science, backwardness and social inequity shall soon be translated into risk conditions and a true social and economic catastrophe. Therefore, this task is one that must be assumed with responsibility and urgency by the current generation. The next generation will have other problems.

This raises the possibility of constructing a scenario of a new university rooted in new points of greater horizontal cooperation between institutions and sectors, organised into networks and community spaces, and working in collaboration, without losing institutional identity.

This situation of university transformation, which seeks to promote an alternative model of university, characterised as an institute for the production and transfer of the social value and knowledge and the relevance of academic tasks, is supported by the organisation of academic structures and processes into networks. It is also maintained by horizontal cooperation that prioritises joint (or interinstitutional projects) projects, greater job mobility of academic staff and students, the homologation of courses and qualifications, joint ownership of resources, and a supportive social educational focus.

Educational values are shared and are focused on changing the content of knowledge and disciplines, the creation of new social skills and capabilities that seek to relate national or regional priorities with work in new areas of knowledge, and innovation that seeks to diversify risk. This scenario is sustained by greater participation of the communities and increased diversification in how resources are obtained.

This reflects the idea of an innovative university with social relevance and impact. The aim is to envisage the possibility of an active, dynamic social institution, based on the training of active, productive, innovative employees. A knowledge institution that has a high level of commitment and responsibility to social change, democracy, peace and sustainable development is a universal priority in the field of knowledge. The value of the knowledge that it generates and transfers is presented as an organisational principle, as the key to its changes, focused on the nature of its educational processes and on the profile of an institution that responds to the challenges of democratic transition and development with wellbeing.

There are two reasons for analysing the joint responsibility of the university in the above scenario. The first is to demonstrate that we can revert a situation such as...
as that experienced now, where backwardness and the lack of active participation of public universities, as central actors in a process of change, is limited. An alterna-

tive can be proposed that seeks in a clear, committed way for knowledge and innovation to be considered as a public good and as strategic instruments in the fight against poverty and inequality, to overcome the struc-
tural backwardness of the social debt in education. The second is to promote the democratization and greater participation of civil society, based on state policies that are of great benefit to the population.

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This paper addresses the future of universities from an epistemological standpoint rooted in the Global South. To that end, the text is organised in four sections that seek to: 1) describe the transition from a monocultural, western university to an intercultural one; 2) lay out the need to create a learning university that can put forward a strong alternative to the interference of technology multinationals in education; 3) analyse the importance of university for the good life, and 4) emphasise the role of the university in a turbulent world.

Today’s universities are undergoing a growing process of commodification. Education has become yet another fetish of capitalist speculation and an object surrended to the private and infotechnology interests of neoliberalism, which is having a profound impact on its quality and on the equality and equity it is expected to promote. This is perhaps the most logical explanation as to why access has become one of the biggest challenges for policies in the South. However, making universities free is pointless if they remain bound to the culture of merit that reproduces elitism, now academic in nature; to the neoliberalism of entrepreneurship to justify the destruction of work; to the precarity of the majority while an internal caste perpetuates the fetish of capitalist speculation and an object surrendered to the world of life, dependent on data delivered by present-day science, and it is a message without empirical basis, at a time when nature-dependent development is a dystopia and hope is shifting towards the right, as pointed out by Jacques Rancière (1995). The question of the future, therefore, was a straight line and the future was always free for us to inhabit. Neither the former nor the latter is true. The truth is that the present is not a mimetic reproduction of the past and the future does not depend solely on the foundations we lay today. As pointed out by historians, there are breaks and continuities. Many situations, stories, tales and traditions take place along the dominant timeline, while others emerge from elsewhere in an effort to break with tradition and routine, to turn things around and take them somewhere radically different.

We belong to a time that is not the same as yesterday and whose temporality is being condensed into unprecedented accelerations, as pointed out by Eric Sadin in La société de l’anticipation (2020), thus, we are forced to reinvent other temporalities, new spaces and routines based on the importance of living with and in favour of the defence of common values, rather than within the parameters imposed by the digital transformation or entropic economic models. Heading towards the unknown, towards something we are unable to think about or even imagine, but that exists as a possibility and needs to be turned into a probability through strengh, is perhaps the greatest challenge to reclaiming the future of the emancipatory university.

Uncertainty about the future of the world university is based on data delivered by present-day science, and it would seem that there is no future for anyone. Time is running out for a revolution, utopias are not possible, nature-dependent development is a dystopia and hope is a message without empirical basis, at a time when enjoyment is not complementary but instead offers a break from the world of life, and individualisation is submerged in obsessive individualism due to self-aggrandisement by the technologies at hand. These have taken control of our innermost being, while the freedom of libertarians is gaining increasing ground in the disastrous, irresponsible policies of the right, which is shifting towards the far right, and part of the left, which is shifting towards the right, as pointed out by Jacques Rancière (1995). The question of the future, therefore,

Universities and the future: a Southern perspective

Freddy Álvarez

Abstract

This paper addresses the future of universities from an epistemological standpoint rooted in the Global South. To that end, the text is organised in four sections that seek to: 1) describe the transition from a monocultural, western university to an intercultural one; 2) lay out the need to create a learning university that can put forward a strong alternative to the interference of technology multinationals in education; 3) analyse the importance of university for the good life, and 4) emphasise the role of the university in a turbulent world.

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relates to something we are searching for in advance, because it has been anticipated as a nightmare by the capitalism of the digital transformation or because the future being left by neoliberalism has been reduced to the urgency of survival and death.

Against this backdrop, I will try to present four challenges faced by higher education in the South, at a time when conflicts are increasing, the atmosphere is tense and violence is sharpening its teeth.

1. From the Western, monocultural university to an intercultural university that brings us into contact with other worlds and new realities.

The world university we are familiar with has its roots in the West and represents the vision of the Western world. Therefore, the colonialism of power referred to by thinker Anibal Quijano (2000) is also the coloniality of knowledge studied by Walter Mignolo (2000).

Power and knowledge go hand in hand, as pointed out by Michel Foucault (2007). The power that dominated invasions and wars now dominates through knowledge and wisdom; thus, such an assertion constitutes grounds for questioning the university. The new twist in the new domination lies in the new discourses that break with the State, while the dissonance between capitalism and democracy continues to intensify. Today there is no need to create the servility of the slave obeying the master referred to by Kojève (1971); merely providing the object of our criticism. In other words, criticism of the object of our criticism. The university gives rise to crowds of individuals acting like the tsars of global digital capitalism are so concerned about money that they only want to sell devices through the propaganda of disruption and by pigeon-holing innovation into technology. Capitalism cannot progress without creating new consumption addictions. For example, we depend on the internet and can no longer live without it. The same happened with cars, just as people were convinced that they could not live without the notion of the 19th-century state. We depend on many unnecessary things, and perhaps it is time to revise our lifestyle and go back to basics to curb the predatory capitalism that once destroyed nature and is now taking control of our privacy.

2. From the university of teaching to the university of learning with an alternative, firm vision in the face of the intoxication caused by technology multinational.

We university professors still form part of the medieval tradition of the chair. We seek legitimacy in it through the supposed knowledge we must transmit to the younger generations. Each of us, in our specialisation, forms a whole that is less than the sum of the parts. The method is the same as that of the medieval Catholic church: each one possesses an unquestionable truth. We are forced to convey the supposed truth from a ‘pulpit’ to the students (the congregation), who are not allowed to question it.

The notion of disciplinary fields is not possible in the traditional university. We do what we have always done, we say the same things and even tell the same jokes, as if the world had not changed or science had stood still for years. Similarly, each discipline reproduces its own beliefs about learning. Professors have nothing to learn from pedagogy; it is child’s play, they think. Students learn because they listen to us, as if learning were the intersection between the professor’s voice and the student discovering the truth. We do not realise that there is a destructive contradiction in the notion that obedience is required to free oneself through knowledge.

Despite the static culture of the university, which has settled comfortably into teaching territory, learning to learn plays a bigger role than expected. At least we now know that teaching is not the same as learning, and that learning does not imply giving up teaching. However, the act of learning to learn can say everything and, at the same time, say nothing.

Corporations like Google and Microsoft stand most to benefit from the learning to learn trend that represents the new paradigm in education, i.e. extreme digitalisation, which confuses the use of technologies with learning. Due to the inherent interest in digital capital, the effects are unimportant because they are presented as mere collateral damage.

There is nothing more harmful to education than falling into Manichean positions that seek romantic adhesion or adhesion based on the demonisation of technologies. Human beings have always needed technology, and not just computers, but also shoes, clothes, cutlery and so on. Plato (2020) referred to techne as a phar-makon in two senses: it can cure us but also poison us. However, we are at a point in time when we need to take more critical positions as educators. It is not enough to merely point out that we have made progress in terms of digitalisation and coverage, a vital objective according to most research on education in times of pandemic (IESALC/UNESCO, 2021, OECD, 2021). Use or non-use is a false dichotomy. We need an educational and intercultural dialogue with technologies. Writing, thinking and with the body are concerns at odds with technologies, which give rise to depression, distress, acceleration, confusion between knowledge and information, truth and post-truth.

3. From the university of ideas to live well to the university for good living.

The university of the Middle Ages was appealing because of its ideas. Listening to Peter Abelard in Paris was a unique experience because he introduced the possibility of understanding the world in a different way, of understanding why we lived and thought that way. The invention of the university gave rise to a place that had previously been the exclusive domain of monks and God-related matters, so nonbelievers, sinners and worldlings began to grasp notions unrelated to the immortality of God and the gender of angels.
Complementarity is the resolution of one’s own-sided political vision. The creation of the capitalist system in the English school of economic thought emerged as a new way of understanding the economy and its relationship with the world; another way of understanding and living. This system appropriated science and, consequently, the university. It was necessary to master nature as part of anthropocentrism and appropriate all non-human species in the environment.

The apothecary vision of the world and capitalism spread to every corner of the planet, and capitalists’ greatest achievement was that everyone wanted to be like them, think like them, live like them and dream like them. Within this endeavour, some rather worrying notions of life began to spread. Education of the individual came to the fore, being free was only possible in a Western, capitalist world, living was a matter of economic sufficiency, and organising oneself politically was a matter of European intelligence. Universality belonged to them and everything outside resided in error and/or ignorance. We shifted from the dogma of faith to the dogma of Western knowledge.

It was necessary to live well and, to achieve that, it was crucial to have money for yesterday’s consumption and today’s connection. The university of modern science was aligned with the notion of living well because it was based on the idea that science was neutral and autonomous and, at the same time, it was called upon to intervene in nature.

The university of the future may have to consider a science for good living that does not involve abandoning science but instead requires models that benefit Life, with a capital L (Acosta & Martínez, 2009). Today, more than ever, we need a university linked to ideas, to life, especially the lives of migrants and lives at risk from climate change and the enormous inequality engulfing us.

Scientific innovation in the modern world took us to another level. To escape the faith that hindered knowledge, we needed not only reason, but a method. That is why humanity created science, as it was the most reliable way of comprehending what was real. At the time, science was not aware of its colonial limits because of its own-sided political vision. The growing precariousness puts the vast majority in an unprecedented situation, in rootlessness, which is evident in migrants and entire populations, victims of climate change and its effects.

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Most universities have focused on preparing students for a particular profession according to the Napoleonic model, the most widespread in the world. The professions we prepare for are not compatible with the world of the future; we continue training for professions that relate to a world that is no longer relevant.

The challenge is to intervene in nature.

Learning to become is about breaking away from the primary of being that ensnares us in immobility and predetermination. There are no guarantees; higher education must change, simply because we are moving towards an increasingly turbulent, unstable planet, as Donna Haraway (2019) clearly points out.

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4. From the university of being that teaches professions for an orderly world to the university of becoming that teaches professions for a turbulent world

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Rethinking the university for a new global and local context

Hugo Juri and Manuel Velasco

Abstract
In the past two decades, revolutionary events have affected education, including the now ubiquitous presence of smart mobile devices and social media and the emergence of MOOCs. These technologies have sparked major transformations alongside other advances in IT, big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning, as well as the neurosciences. During the pandemic, all of these changes became normalised around the world and we now face an immediate future of profound social, employment, geopolitical and ethical change. Universities must respond to such change quickly. We are confronted by the fresh challenges and paradigms of the New Education, which will need to take on the traditional roles of the university and also cope with new actors, new students who have different requirements, such as young people who are native to social media or workers who need to refresh their skills or retrain. New tools will also emerge to expand the range of educational opportunities. To this end, it is urgent to adapt today’s universities to new models of administration and education that can respond with agility to increasingly faster changes in the local and regional context and to the needs of a society that not only calls on its universities to respond, but also places its trust in them. Universities must accept their social commitment with optimism, seriousness, versatil- ity, speed and courage in order to make the necessary changes that society requires of them.

Introduction
The dizzying changes that are now taking place in higher education are the result of a host of developments, not least of which is the emergence of MOOCs (massive open online courses) (Vega Cruz et al., 2013, Martínez et. al., 2014). The changes, however, are not merely technological in nature. They involve many aspects of higher education. Indeed, the healthcare emergen- cy posed by the Covid-19 pandemic has revived and intensified a large number of them. Among the most significant issues that universities need to address is access to quality higher education for all, expanding the boundaries of inclusion in every respect (García, et. al., 2021, Márquez et. al., 2021). For instance, subjects linked to climate change need to be included across the breadth of undergraduate education so that all university graduates can assume their share of responsibility in caring for our common home (Canaza-Choque et. al., 2021). Moreover, the explosion of technology and inno-vation has substantially changed research methods and our policies on the appropriate use of science and technology (Colina, 2021, Leyva Vázquez et. al., 2021). All of these changes call for rethinking the training of teaching staff as well (Gómez et. al., 2021, García Vélez et. al., 2021). Yet all of this was only a foreshadowing of the transformations that have now come with advances in the fields of IT, augmented reality, the metaverse, big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning, the neurosciences and more (Juri et. al., 1991, Caballo et. al. 2014, Sancho-Vinuesa et. al., 2015, Lorente Ruiz, 2021, Giró-Gracia & Sancho-Gil, 2022, González Torres, 2021, Gorospe et. al., 2021, Aragoneses et. al., 2021, Román, 2021, García Vélez et. al., 2021).

Today, all of these tools cut transversally across all social activities and education. To some extent, the changes became normalised globally during the pandemic (which in turn made even more visible the wide disparities that exist between and within countries), and they brought us face to face with the prospect of an immediate future of profound social, employment, geopolitical and ethical change.

The new scenarios call for universities to take on a shared leadership role with other social actors, align themselves with public policies, contribute to the Sustain-able Development Goals (Ramos Torres, 2021) and meet the emerging needs of the labour market. At the same time, they are also called on to work with other institutions to solve some of the numerous social, eco- nomic and technological problems that confront the societies in which they are immersed (Díaz-Canel Ber- múdez et. al., 2020, Moya et. al., 2021).

Immersing themselves in the societies where they find themselves cannot be regarded today as simply one more mission of universities. Rather, it must be a central focus in the design of the policies that govern university education, research and management. Universities must respond quickly to all of these changes in order to continue fulfilling their purpose as a public good and as an institution moving forward together with the society to which they belong, especi-ally in times of uncertainty like the present.

Originalities, universities sprang up and thrived in envi- ronments that were complex, but generally predictable within a particular range of certainty. The reality in which they were immersed enjoyed a reasonable margin of stability. The levels of stability, however, had already begun disappearing before the pandemic in response to the rapid pace of innovation and the application of new technologies, and the outbreak of Covid-19 brought stability to an end once and for all. As a result, it is now necessary and urgent to adapt universities to a new world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (known as a VUCA environment) that repres-ents the most pertinent features of the existing reality.

To do so, we must first rethink the university itself, not only generically and overall, but also in terms of each institution in particular, based on where it belongs locally and territorially. Second, we must engage in this thinking in terms of an existing context in which the generation and transmission of knowledge are no longer exclusive to universities. Third, we must take into account the momentous weight of universities in the transmission of values, not only as a key element in the New Education, but also as the seedbed for a more just and equitable world and a building block in the construc-tion of a better society.

As a consequence, it is now necessary to review a number of aspects like university governance, to learn new things and to unlearn others. It has become necessary to furnish universities with a more agile management system, develop more versatile models of curriculum adaptation, devise quicker processes for the construction of new educational proposals, and push forward with many other improvements.

Lastly, the basic question in a context of this kind is: what must we do so that our universities are prepared scientifically, academically and culturally to success-fully meet the challenges ahead?

The case of the National University of Córdoba
The National University of Córdoba (Argentina) is more than 400 years old. It has a traditional offering of degrees. At the same time, its academic units are physically, administratively and academically quite remote to cater to more than 130,000 students in person. The university enjoys a great deal of autonomy in its gover-nance, but there is very little academic or scientific work as a whole or in cooperation among its faculties. Most of its academic programmes lead to a degree after five or six years of study, rather like the pre-1997 European model, which is very widespread across Latin America and the Caribbean.

The National University of Córdoba is undergoing a rapid conversion to a flexible educational model adapted to the current needs of blended training models, with flexible, multidisciplinary programmes and credentials based on the acquisition of renewable competences and knowledge, but accompanied by enduring ethical and cultural values.

To tackle the changes of university governance, the National University of Córdoba has split its executive team in two: one group is in charge of the management and administration of the institution, while the other group is responsible for observing the latest trends and developments.

In the Argentine university system, we are following the predominant models to promote the implementation of a system of academic credits that is similar to the Euro-pean Credit Transfer System with short cycles for first degrees, accompanied by the 3+2+1 system.

We have also developed a virtual campus as members of edX, which is a consortium created by Harvard Uni-versity and MIT that offers new online credentials, such as MicroMasters and badges, and has trained more than 160,000 students in 100 countries in the past year. At the same time, our virtual campus has furnished voca-tional training to tens of thousands of workers.

In addition, the university has created a new physical campus (known as North Campus), together with other social actors in the territory. The new campus plans to...
offer combined pathways that may involve a secondary school specialising in technology, a polytechnic institute, a trade school, and university studies.

In terms of values, the National University of Córdoba was the original venue of Argentina’s 1918 university reform, whose impact spread across the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean. On the centenary of the reform in 2018, the university hosted the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES, in its Spanish initials), which was organised jointly with the Internatio-

nal Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC, in its Spanish initials). The event drew thousands of participants from universities across the region in preparation for the upcoming World Higher Education Conference in Barcelona, becoming the only region thus far to do so.

The UNESCO regional conference reiterated the funda-

mental values of the universities of Latin America and the Caribbean, such as the human right to education, education as a social public good, the need for a local sense of belonging in the first place, the rejection of the education as a social public good, the need for a local sense of belonging in the first place, the rejection of the final Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC, in its Spanish initials). The event drew thousands of participants from universities across the region in preparation for the upcoming World Higher Education Conference in Barcelona, becoming the only region thus far to do so.

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The case of the University of Meaning

The second model of innovation in higher education comes from the University of Meaning (‘Universidad del Senor al mundo’) sponsored by Pope Francis as a global university under the auspices of the Scholas Occurren-

tes Pontifical Foundation. The university was founded on 5 June 2020, which was World Environment Day, but also the same year as the New Education Programme.

The University of Meaning is public, free, multicultural and intercultural. In some respects, it is similar to the United Nations University. However, its governance is distributed more evenly across a host of micro campu-

ses in collaboration with universities on every continent. The university focuses on educational pathways that take an up-to-date transversal view of fundamental ethical, social and cultural values, which are trans-

versally targeted at students in every discipline, in an educational context that is ecumenical.

Drawing on the assistance of associated local universi-
ties, the University of Meaning uses a system of ECTS academic credits and offers a curriculum with option-

al and compulsory subjects. The university and its students are at one and the same time part of a global educational experiment, and part of the team of resear-

chers conducting the experiment.

Final thoughts

Technological advances have an impact in every area of development. Not only is higher education not immune from the effects, but it is actually called on to lead the processes of social transformation in its territory. The pandemic sped up the processes of transfor-

mation and the incorporation of technology into everyday activities. Accordingly, we face new challenges in the context of new paradigms in higher education, which must now add new social requirements to its traditional roles and adapt itself to new students, some who are native to social media and others who are workers in need of refreshing their knowledge or retraining to stay employed in their current jobs or find new ones. Moreo-

ver, they must do so using new tools, both tools that exist now and future tools that will expand educational opportunities.

As a result, it is urgent for today’s universities to adapt to new models of administration and education that can respond with agility to increasingly faster changes in the local and regional context and to the needs of a society that not only calls on its universities to respond, but also places its trust in them.

Universities must accept their social commitment with optimism, seriousness, versatility, speed and courage in order to make the necessary changes that society requires of them.

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In the course of history, no other institution has preser-
ved, shared and advanced human knowledge as much as the University. Over the centuries, it has always made
enormous contributions to the growth of the society in
which it exists. Over time, the role of the University has
evolved and widened, involving teaching, research and
extension and, more recently, innovation, through
knowledge transfer.

In recent decades, we have a scenario of research
development throughout Latin America and the Cari-
bbean (LAC), that has not been reflected, as it should,
in innovation and the consequent impact on the social
and economic development of the region as a whole.
Innovation, the main development factor in the 21st
century, is based on basic and applied research. It is an
expression of research and generates its most visible,
but not unique, results in the business environment.
Thus, in our region, we have enormous unrealized
potential to create mechanisms and processes to trans-
form the knowledge generated in Universities and
Research Centres into wealth and social and economic
development for society.

The gap between scientific research and innovation in
the region is confirmed by indicators such as the Global
Innovation Index 2021, which identifies the degree of
innovation of countries in the world. LAC countries
have performed very poorly over the past few years. In a
ranking of 131 countries, the best-positioned LAC coun-
tries are Chile (53), Mexico (55), Costa Rica (56), Brazil
(57), Uruguay (65), Colombia (67), Peru (70), Argentina
(73) and Panama (83).

In the process of social and economic development,
being part of a broad and complex network of rela-
tionships with other institutions and social actors.
Innovation has its origin and driving force in the gene-
nation of new knowledge. In a broader view, especially
since the technoscience revolution in the second half
of the 20th century, education and ST&I are increa-
singly related to the process of social and economic
development.

Over time, the University transforms itself from an inst-
itution focused on teaching (an institution that
combines its resources in the area of research (with
teaching and research extending to society) with a new
mission, focused on the economic and social develop-
ment of the society in which it operates. It stimulates
the emergence of innovative environments and an
entrepreneurial culture. Thus, Universities experience
a new tension in their role in society as institutions
with a triple mission: teaching, research (both deplo-
yed by extension) and innovation.

Universities have gone through two major changes
since their creation in the 17th century in Europe (Uni-
versity of Bologna), centred on the transmission of
knowledge from teachers to students.

The first significant change in its mission took place in
the 19th century, especially in Germany, adding research
as the University’s second mission, while extension is
the unfolding of teaching and research. These transfor-
mations still have their consequences and challenges,
varying tensions between those activities in many
Universities. At the same time, particularly
in the LAC region, a second significant change
took place in the second half of the 20th century.

The concept of Entrepreneurial University emerged
from experiences at universities such as MIT, Stanford
and Harvard, adding a new mission focused on eco-
nomic and social development. It is Innovation, in
the context of the University’s Third Mission in developed
countries, and the Fourth Mission, as we claim, within
the scope of LAC.

This new position assigns the academy as an important
economic and social development vector. Since then,
the University has lived with the tensions generated
by the new environment.

In the LAC countries, the teaching-research-extension
tripod always characterizes the university, with the
transfer of innovation being a new dimension that acqui-
res its own strength. In developed countries, however,
extension does not have the programmatic strength
that our region gives it, which is reflected, for example,
in international university rankings, which ignore
extension completely. At the national level, extension
indicators are rarely included in budget matrices.

Due to regional tradition, in the LAC context, the third
mission initially referred to social and cultural exten-
sion activities, such as the deployment of teaching and
research. It is necessary to expand this concept, and
it makes more sense to speak of the University’s fourth
mission, given the strategic importance of innovation
today.

This does not mean that there is Extension in the sense of
social and cultural activities only in our region. In
developed countries, several universities emphasize
such activities, expressed in their organic structure as
territory and commitment, social or civil responsibili-
ty, community commitment or engagement. There are
networks or coalitions with this theme.

In LAC, some universities consider innovation and tech-
nology transfer as extension. However, the organic
structure of many institutions confirms our view that
the university today has four missions. Most of our public
universities have, in their organic structure, as Pro-
Rectories of Teaching (Undergraduate and Gradua-
tee), Research and Extension, in addition to sectors of
Science, Technology, Transfer and Innovation. Although
the compositions vary (Graduate Studies and Research,
Research and Innovation), the four missions are there.

The emergence of the Third (or Fourth?) University Mission

The (third or fourth) mission emerges from the second
revolution in the Universities, when innovation and
entrepreneurship are added as a focus of their perfor-
mance. Thus, society starts to expect a growing role in
the process of social and economic development from
universities, leading to the concept of Innovative or
Entrepreneurial University.

The impacts of the second academic revolution are sig-
nificant for universities, generating new challenges and
opportunities, which require profound rethinking. Insti-
tutions are encouraged to find new ways and positions
in their relationships with other actors in society.

The change in mission requires a new formatting of
academic structures, essential to respond to the new
reality adequately. The level of this change prompts a
review of the impacts on the university’s vision of the
future and organizational structures, as well as on its
relationship with society. However, the preservation of
the institution’s core values is fundamental, being
an important aspect for the formulation of new strategies
during the institutional planning process.

The vision of this new mission generates many dis-
cussions, whether of a conceptual nature or types of
activities and relationships involved, such as knowledge
capitalization, entrepreneurship, innovation and
technology transfer, which are similar to the North
American model. In addition, there is tension in terms of
value between them and activities that do not include
these relationships. This generates delays in the neces-
sary transformations. The challenge is to transform the
university without losing its identity and autonomy.
In other words, advances should not represent a destruc-
tion of the other roles of the university.

There are currents against the university’s involvement
with the demands of the productive sector. Whether
understanding innovation as part of extension or taking
it as a separate dimension, it is important to overcome
such contradictions, considering that the two views
must lead to knowledge transfer to society. This repres-
ts a more strategic and active reach of the university
in society in general, for economic and social deve-
lopment, through entrepreneurial activities and by
supporting the innovation process.

For this to occur, the university must have technology
and transfer centres or institutes, as well as research
ethics committees and technology protection and
transfer offices. Adequate and inductive institutional
regulations should allow researchers to have partners-
ships with industry and create mechanisms that ensure
that part of the resources collected by the transfer
activity reverts as an investment for research in
the various areas of the University. A part of the resour-
ces generated may, for example, create scholarship
and research funds for the University itself, supporting
areas not covered or less covered with this possibility
of interaction, such as the humanities, arts and basic
research. This would guarantee the balance of ope-
rating and production conditions among the various
areas of the university.

The challenges of university renewal

Innovation is the responsibility of all actors in the qua-
druple helix: governments, companies, universities and
organized civil society. It involves knowledge, creativity
and courage to change and transform reality. Innova-
tion can and must occur in all areas of knowledge and
not just in technological areas. An economic concept of
innovation involves changing the behaviour of agents
in the market or the work environment, understanding
it as the effective application of new ideas in a given
context, generating added value. Furthermore, contrary
to common sense, innovation does not necessarily
involve technology, but it will always involve the crea-
tivity to apply the new and the courage to transform.

In this broad vision of innovation, we can identify
possibilities in all areas of knowledge. From the most
obvious ones, such as companies in the technology
areas, which generate start-ups and new employment
and income opportunities, but also in areas such as
social service or the social sciences (actions in com-
munities that improve people’s quality of life and social
indicators such as the HDI). Likewise, in the areas of
government (advances in management methods and
processes), education (new pedagogical methodolo-
gies and educational technologies), visual arts, etc.
There are examples of possible innovations in all areas
of the university.

Several authors, such as Henry Etzkowitz (2017), Derek
Bok (1984) and Burton Clark (2003a), highlight aspects
that present themselves as challenges in this context:
• Controversies about entrepreneurship in the acade-
mic area: the emergence of conflicts of interest is a
symptom indicating the process of change is underway,
as it only appears when relationships begin to intensify
and become more complex.
• The breaking of the ivory Tower: the University has
to approach real problems, not only social but also
economic, cultural and environmental. In this context,
the University starts to act in an organic way inserted
in society and as a protagonist and vital force in the
development of the territory where it operates.
• Separation and integration: the productive action is
to ignore conflicts of interests but to regulate and
mitigate the impasses between legitimate conflicting interests.
• Confluence of interests: in an integrated approach, research and the commercialization of research results will combine in a single model.
• Finally, it is essential to guarantee respect for institutional and founding values, focusing on the integral education of people and academic autonomy and freedom, which must not be overcome by short-term market or political interests.
• In this sense, literature identifies five characteristics that involve critical issues to prepare the University for the process of institutional change and total fulfillment of its missions:
  • A forceful and clear direction forward, accepted by the central administration and by the various academic departments, which should reconcile the new managerial values with traditional academic values.
  • Expanded peripheral development: the development of new institutional structures and mechanisms should be encouraged in order to meet new demands, such as interdisciplinary research centres, innovation environments, etc.
  • Diversification of funding sources: it is necessary to expand funding sources, whether for the sustainability of research or of the University, complementing public resources.
  • The stimulation of academics: the main change factor lies in university departments and all their collaborators accepting the process, encouraging them to participate in the transformation.
  • The development of an integrated entrepreneurial culture: creating an integrated culture, represented by a shared vision, is critical for the success of change, generating an institutional perspective.

A reflection on the topic

Nowadays, the University, involves integral performance in the Science-Technology-Innovation triad. What is new in this approach is the aggregation of innovation as inseparable from Science and Technology. By incorporating the term innovation, we are highlighting three fundamental aspects: interaction with society (to identify demands), companies (since it is in this type of organization that innovation occurs) and government (as a process facilitator). In other words, innovation means research and development plus knowledge transfer to society.

The innovation process at the University involves a series of steps, the fundamental condition being the construction of a new institutional culture. Once this complex stage is completed, some concrete actions must follow:

• Organization of research at the University, focusing on the demands of society, creating interdisciplinary research centres and development mechanisms with multiple funding sources.
• Fostering innovation: stimulating priority research areas, allocating research resources in a planned manner, creating mechanisms to encourage innovation (policies for protecting the intellectual property of the knowledge generated, rules for participation in future economic results, incentives for innovative researchers, etc.).
• Knowledge transfer: transferring results to public and private companies that produce the resulting goods or services and allowing academics to become entrepreneurs.
• Creation of a robust innovation ecosystem, involving structures and actions aimed at developing an innovation environment (scientific and technological parks, incubators, accelerators, innovation hubs, co-working spaces, fab labs, circular labs, etc.) to enable interaction among the actors of the quadripole helix.

The University itself is an environment of potential innovation. To develop this potential, the importance of institutionalizing the new vision of the University is highlighted, as well as institutional mechanisms that make it viable. The will of some leaders is not enough. Institutional policies (in the areas of technology transfer, mediation of conflicts of interest, research projects with companies, patent protection, incentives for patents and patent licensing, etc.) and the development of innovation environments (such as technology transfer offices, research ethics committees, technology parks, incubators, innovation networks, fab labs, circular labs, etc.) are important to create the conditions for the development of a climate focused on innovation and entrepreneurship (culture change). A clear and shared strategic vision at the institution is the starting point for the process of transformation and renewal of the academic environment.

Conflicts of interest must be well managed. Opposite models involve a total separation of academic (knowledge generation) and business (commercialization of generated knowledge) activities, adopted by several US and Israeli universities, or the search to integrate research and business activities on the same institutional vision. The most suitable solution for each institution must reflect its culture and that of the society in which it operates.

Other relevant challenges involve maintaining the University’s integrity while generating revenue from intellectual property and research results, focusing on sustainability; researchers’ satisfaction when carrying out their activities in an environment focused on teaching and research, and constant risk management throughout the change process. The inclusion of the humanities and arts in the process of change, either directly in the approach to companies, or indirectly, as a field of study and research, or by critically monitoring the process to ensure that the University’s identity and values are maintained, is strategic.

The University operates in a context of complexity and uncertainty, where new interfaces with society are required. The balance between demand and responsibility, flexibility and adaptability are important aspects, and it is essential to preserve academic values expressed in the teaching and research activities that the University develops in all areas of knowledge.

The university must be adequately prepared to face the challenge of its new mission. To work in networks (inter- and externally), cooperate intensively in research efforts, nationally and internationally, are challenges that the Institutions must face.

Another dimension involves the resources for this process to take place. Central and regional governments are important, especially in the initial stages of investment for innovation. Robust sources of investment must be found and protected to foster this virtuous circle between research and business innovation. It is essential that any resources invested by governments, as well as those arising from innovation, are not used as an excuse to reduce public budgets at universities. Likewise, the university’s autonomy must always be preserved, as it cannot be linked to interests that compromise its social role and the free production of new knowledge. All of this requires legislation that facilitates transfers but preserves the values of the university institution and its multiple roles.

The Global Innovation Index indicates that our countries must pay increasing attention to the actions needed to improve our position, which does not reflect the size and potential of our economies. Certainly, the role of public research institutions is fundamental for reversing this situation and effectively supporting the region’s social and economic development process.

Final Considerations

Universities that overcome the challenges will be those that will recognize and honour their strengths, respecting their values, while innovating with conviction.

The economic results of innovation and knowledge transfer from universities to society, if well-conceived and implemented, can generate new sources of institutional sustainability and new investments to strengthen basic research and different areas of knowledge.

It is clear that when addressing innovation at the University, especially disruptive innovation, the focus is on change, transformation. Innovation is always challenging. If it is not challenging, it is not transformative. If it is not transformative, it is not disruptive.

At a university, harmonizing a culture of innovation with a sustainable long-term vision is the great challenge.

Overcoming this challenge involves people capable of generating the possibility of change, simultaneously promoting the conditions for a critical analysis of this process and its internal and external consequences.

Universities traditionally have a history of cooperation and networking because relevant and disruptive knowledge is not produced in isolation. This generated a culture of work among peers, nationally and internationally. However, today, we need new transnational mechanisms and instruments, autonomously generated by multilateral organizations and respecting regional realities, to stimulate and induce cooperation, always at the service of environmentally sustainable development, simultaneously in all humanity’s social and economic dimensions.

We must focus on the purposes of creating a LAC space for innovation, with solidarity and social responsibility
as founding values that must always characterize us as a regional block, sharing the same challenges and opportunities for development. We should strive to create a government body aimed at integrated regional management of SL&T, as the coordinator of the Regional Conference on Higher Education (known as CRES), Francisco Tamarit, has defended (2021).

This perspective is important so that our countries are not condemned to consume solutions generated by developed countries with a social, cultural, environmental and economic context very different from ours.

This vision, which is supportive, responsible and regional, must reconcile the humanities and the arts with science and technology, to form free, supportive, committed and innovative citizens to face the great challenges of society, such as those expressed in the T7 Sustainable Development Goals.

This balance between tradition (institutional and academic values) and renewal (new opportunities and demands from society) is the differential that the best universities of the future are building today.

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Edges of the public in higher education and knowledge governance in Latin America

René Ramírez

Abstract

In the past two decades, revolutionary events have affected education, including the now ubiquitous presence of smart mobile devices and social media and the emergence of MOOCs. These technologies have sparked major transformations alongside other advances in IT, big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning, as well as the neurosciences. During the pandemic, all of these changes became normalised around the world and we now face an immediate future of profound social, employment, geopolitical and ethical change. Universities must respond to such change quickly. We are confronted by the fresh challenges and paradigms of the New Education, which will need to take on the traditional roles of the university and also cope with new actors, new students who have different requirements, such as young people who are native to social media or workers who need to refresh their skills or retrain. New tools will also emerge to expand the range of educational opportunities. To this end, it is urgent to adapt today’s universities to new models of administration and education that can respond with agility to increasingly faster changes in the local and regional context and to the needs of a society that not only calls on its universities to respond, but also places its trust in them. Universities must accept their social commitment with optimism, seriousness, versatility, speed and courage in order to make the necessary changes that society requires of them.

1. Introduction

In 2018, the III Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES 2018) celebrated the centenary of the University Reform movement in Córdoba (Argentina) (IESALC-UNESCO, 2018). It was undoubtedly the biggest event of the decade, with government authorities and the various bodies of the higher education system coming together to discuss and establish the strategic lines to be followed over the next decade. The region was the only continent in the world to hold a collective meeting on that scale, in anticipation of UNESCO’s 3rd World Higher Education Conference in 2022.

Beyond the wider discussions of the challenges facing higher education systems in the region, CRES 2018 endorsed the agreements reached in the Declarations of the Regional Higher Education Conference held in Havana (Cuba) in 1996 and the World Higher Education Conference held in Paris (France) in 1998 and Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) in 2008, which defended the principle that Higher Education should be treated as a public and social good, a human and universal right, and a duty of the State.

Among other equally important matters, one issue in particular was added to the public debate: the notion that defending public higher education is not enough if knowledge governance is private and commercial. In the transition that capitalism is currently undergoing, accumulation is increasingly taking the form of profit transfer through processes in which information and knowledge are expropriated from a global general intellectual to large transnational corporations.

While there was a clear understanding of the shift in modern-day capitalism and the danger posed to global well-being by the privatisation and commodification of higher education as a public good, as seen in the current pandemic, the Declaration also stated that: “We should consider knowledge as a universal human right and a collective right of the people, for it is a social and common public good promoting the sovereignty, wellbeing and emancipation of our societies and the construction of Latin American and Caribbean integration.” (CRES, 2018).

This article aims to place a spotlight on what it means to regain a sense of higher education and knowledge as a public good. On that basis, it will outline the strategic reasoning behind the guidelines set out in the CRES 2018 Declaration on the importance of regaining a sense of knowledge governance as a public good at the global level. Before doing so, the article examines the transition that capitalism is undergoing in order to
understand the vital role that knowledge and the higher education system play within the dominant system of accumulation.

2. The production of knowledge as a scarce resource in cognitive capitalism

On 1 May 2014, 3,000 people received a re-tweet that read: “We remind users that we are all working for Twitter right now. Happy globalised workers' day” (Adriaral, 2014).

This tweet summarises a paradigm shift that is occurring globally. The world is undergoing a transition that is re-structuring our daily lives and, in doing so, creating a new international division of labour (and new forms of exploitation). In this transformation, the material objectification of science is becoming less and less significant in the process of accumulation, while increasing importance is given to the co-operative coordination of intellectual, creative (innovative) and linguistic-communicative work that is generated in society, in productive processes and in the appropriation of natural resources (renewable or not), within the framework of the private appropriation of information and immaterial production. Such mutations exacerbate old labour exploitations and create new ones. Some sociologists consider this metamorphosis of accumulation “cognitive capitalism” (Hardt and Negri, 2011; Vercellone, 2009).

This does not mean that labour is now lighter, or that the processes of automation and technological advances have now fulfilled modernity’s promise to free us from the tedium of business and increase our leisure opportunities. On the contrary, the way we are currently seeing in the context of the pandemic is, on the one hand, that we work longer because connectivity creates the obligation to be productive 24/7; and, on the other hand, as “immaterial labour” is legitimised and the wholly new spirit of capitalism translates into Silicon values, the concrete materiality of the practices and knowledges involved in human care and sustenance has become even more pressing, while remaining undervalued.

To evaluate these circumstances, we could draw from Marx and say that there are four levels of surplus value usurped by the owner of the means of production: direct, which dispossesses the worker in situ; coope- rative, in which the time gained by collective labour is expropriated, indirect, in which the capitalist also expropriates the value produced by the worker who stays at home doing unpaid work, and which are the conditions of possibility of paid work – conditions that, historically, have been sustained by the devalued care and sustenance work done mostly by women and other population groups considered “inferior” under regimes of patriarchal-economic inequality; and, mediate, which refers to the contradiction between the exploitation of labour and its natural conditions of valuation, which are progressively conceived as being the sphere in which accumulation cycles the cycles of natural reproduct- ion – both of the natural environment and of human nature itself, which are inextricably linked.

To these four categories of usurped time, cognitive capitalism adds another: the time required to generate the information, knowledge and expertise produced in everyday life, a large part of which is processed through big data and expropriated by large transna- tional platforms that monopolise the management, storage and circulation of information.

The internet of communications exists alongside the internet of logistics and the internet of things, which allows a higher level of cognitive extraction. However, other even more violent processes occur alongside the extractivism of data mining. Thus, “immaterial labour” is legitimised and the wholly new spirit of capitalism translates into the net flow of skilled migrants1; 2. contributions made through the scientific produc- tion of South-based research that is appropriated by transnational corporations; 3. biopiracy of genetic resources; 4. extraction of ancestral and tradi- tional knowledge to generate technologies; 5. a new international division of cognitive labour, whereby countries in the South are limited to providing data that are processed by theories originating in the North, with the resulting academic oligopolies; 6. unequal exchange, which undervalues the South’s indigenous (substantive) knowledge and prioritises the North’s (procedural) knowledge to the point of viewing it as the primary source of value, dividing it from market processes; 7. the lens of a supposed “immate- rial accumulation”; 8. reversal of the social function of knowledge, which is privatised for utilitarian profit-making purposes that challenge the collective legitimacy of knowledge and thereby undermine the social dimen- sion of data; 9. cognitive colonialism, whereby globally connected intellectual castes are defended through academic enclaves that sustain discourses and practices of epistemic racism, segregating the imaginary constitutive communities from peripheral nationalities in favour of adaptable welfare ideologies.

These processes are carried out through the ficti- ous construction of barriers so that ideas, access to knowledge, expertise, biodiversity information, etc., are manifested as scarce resources by means of increasingly sophisticated systems of intellectual property and digital technology, and channelled through financial systems (stock markets).

Capitalism as productive expansion that cheapens commodities not mining 1. This exists, instead, it is now controlling values for profit, in an updated form of ren- terism (Maito, 2013). An ownership ethos is therefore imposed on the previous corporate ethos: there is an attempt to re-establish accumulation through proces- ses of patrimonial concentration (Piketty, 2014), the hyper-explotation of labour (Amin, 2009, 2008) and of nature (Bellamy Foster, 2018; Bellamy Foster et al., 2010), and renewed forms of accumulation through dispossession (Harvey, 2005, 2003). These profit-making processes that do not generate wealth require knowledge as a public good to be privatised in order to artificially generate its scarcity.

A new form of rentierism can thus be observed: while Marx maintained that rentier capital smothered pro- ductive capital in pre-capitalist societies, in cognitive capitalism the extracted rent consumes an increasing social surplus due to the greater organic composition of capital. These are two different forms of logic: the rentier generates scarcity, while the capitalist gene- rates productivity. In fact, however, productivity has fallen as a consequence of industrial overcapacity. This is why a stagnation in the rate of profit has led to cog- nitive rentierisation, and not the other way round. The more technologically advanced countries retain more jobs, and industrial competition remains the engine of growth.

This tendency towards cognitive “rentierisation” has also contributed to the current crisis. The pandemic was also caused by attempts to push the frontiers of accumulation through techno-cognitive irrigation to capitalise on the surrounding ecologies, with the sub- sequent emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases.

What is the solution to the crisis of accumulation? The development policies proposed in Latin America in the mid-20th century were geared towards nationalising strategic sectors, taxing profits and establishing com- petition policy. Were they enough? The current crisis would suggest that they were not, moreover, could they be applied again? Not if we consider that, where they were implemented, redistributive regimes were histo- rically based on the profitability of industrial sectors, which were non-existent in Latin America, and that the countries have moved seamlessly from underdevelopment to a kind of “overdevelopment”, characterised by saturated markets. Indeed, beyond the processes of privatising the provision of higher education that the world and the region are undergoing, praxis in today’s capitalism involves the appropriation of knowledge and techno- logies resulting from a form of knowledge governance that seeks new ways of recovering its lost profits.
In this context, public university systems contained within commodified and privatized ecosystems usually end up generating a higher level of private appropriation for large transnational corporations, with a value that is usually generated collectively and whose social impact would be much greater if it was reclaimed as a public good. In this framework, if public higher education is to be defended, it is vital not to overlook the dominant form of knowledge governance that seeks to establish itself within so-called cognitive capitalism.

3. Public issues in the field of Latin American education

In the capitalist transition, universities have become key players in the transfer between the public generation of information and knowledge, and the private and mercantile appropriation primarily by large global transnationals (Delgado Wise et al., 2016). This situation has led to the fictitious creation of knowledge as a scarce resource, facilitating the extraction of value. Thus, cognitive capitalism has created an institutionality that allows it to make the appropriation of the surplus value of social knowledge viable through intellectual property systems that are currently dominant in global trade, producing what Michael Heller in 1998 termed the "tragedy of the anti-commons".

In the knowledge arena, this tragedy means the under-utilisation of scientific knowledge caused by the over-management of intellectual property rights and over-patenting. In other words, in the sphere of knowledge, capitalism has resulted in the knowledge and higher education system in particular, in the context of the knowledge production of the "higher education" or "university" resource. As Hirschman (1970) described it, there is no option to make an "exit", because even this has unavoidable negative consequences of a collective nature. The impacts of knowledge and higher education should not only be seen in individual terms but in their collective effects: if we have well- or badly-trained professionals and scientists, and we produce correct or incorrect knowledge of good or bad quality, the social impact will soon be felt.

Making the system less elitist and more democratic:
Re-establishing the public education system involves the "de-elitisation" of the university sphere, in other words, democratising the process of entering, continuing and graduating from university, and also democratising the decision-making process within the centres of study, i.e. achieving co-governance. The introduction of tuition fees in public universities and the resulting privatisation of higher education provision under neoliberalism (the proliferation of universities, degree courses and self-financed private programmes) have resulted in clear barriers to entering, continuing and graduating from university (Ramírez, 2010: 34-40). One of the other harmful impacts universities were created through a specific appropriation of the concept of autonomy. For example, a model linked to the financial-budgetary sphere was upheld, without its co-governance counterpart. Private universities skipped this crucial aspect and functioned as companies or foundations with promoters and managers who pursued profit above all else. In the case of public universities, under the notion of autonomy, they defended "self-financing" by charging fees for courses and training programmes, which led to the exclusion of low-income students. The challenge here is defending the public sector in this field therefore requires questionning the ivory tower that perpetuates status and social class through the commercialisation or privatisation of the system. It is vital to retain the principle of free education in the fight to guarantee the right to higher education and make the system less elitist.

Market heteronomy and real autonomy: Guaranteeing public higher education means regaining its genuine autonomy and breaking the heteronomy that has arisen around the market and corporate interests. Re-estab-

lishing a public higher education system requires connecting multiple interests to achieve some form of general or collective interest in the university sphere and knowledge. With the aim of allowing the system to "self-regulate", some actors governing the field were in fact co-opted by groups, interests, and particular and mercantile logics (Minteguiaga, 2010). Although they were supposed to represent the common interest of all those involved and of society as a whole, they enabled a process of commodification and privatisation that has been unprecedented in recent years. In Latin America, each individual or indeed group involved took a biased view, protecting their own best interests, and the State was relegated from the regulatory process in order to fulfill the only purpose it served: to guarantee a constant flow of money from university funds which, in turn, were distributed unfairly. This phenomenon caused low-quality educational provision to proliferate, including large-scale social fraud in which degree titles were sold with no subject knowledge required. Ultima-

tely, the prevailing vision of autonomy led to autarky with regard to society, and to heteronomy with regard to the market.

Eradicating the patriarchy through the public domain:
Linked perhaps to one of the most deeply rooted social practices in the region’s society, the strengthening of the public university system must eliminate the patriarchy from the higher educational environment. Patriarchal society stems, among other things, from the sexist private-family relations that persist in Latin America. It is paradoxical that while increasingly more women than men are entering, continuing and graduating from uni-

versity, and with better academic performances and qualifications, the university authorities and staff have always been made up almost exclusively of men. The rectorships of public universities continue to be largely monopolised by men, pushing women and people of other genders out. The issue of patriarchy in the education sheds light on a problem that is often inco-

rectly positioned within the private or domestic sphere, but which is reproduced in numerous areas of public life, including academia.

Endogamy and nepotism: The significant levels of endogamy and nepotism in the sector are exploited a
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democracy. This calls for a broader interpretation than what is proposed under the utilitarian perspective. In this new sphere, knowledge — and the process by which it is generated — must be conceptualised and constructed as a public good for society (pro-commons) and not for market purposes.

From this perspective, it is easy to see why universities — as autonomous entities — are deeply subordinated to the market, in other words, it has become a market heteronomy: it has not disseminated knowledge or its production, but commodified, monopolised and appropriated it privately. A similar situation occurred with the planning of academic provision, which followed a market logic. If the new sphere is to be rescued, it must first regain a sense of autonomy combined with social responsibility, as opposed to the autarchy and heteronomy that have been dominant in universities in recent decades.

The search for truth and quality in democratic debate: It may be argued that re-establishing universities as a public good means re-establishing their legitimacy within public opinion, which contributes to a higher-quality democratic debate. This legitimacy can be regained by maintaining the rigorousness of information and knowledge through theoretical debates and research processes that are generated within its limits, where the search for truth should not be caught between commercial and private interests. The systematic lack of discussion, scientific research and rigour and the clear bias inherent in the system — have caused the voice of universities to be delegitimised. To regain its legitimacy, universities must take the lead once again in conceiving the potential for change within the framework of the new challenges facing the world and the Latin American region.

The general intellect: The decommodification of knowledge means re-establishing it as a collaborative, collective and common good over individualistic and private interests. Knowledge will never be seen as a public good if it is to be produced as part of a collective process, in which social problems with social relevance are discussed, in which responses are developed that respect different knowledge, and solutions are reached that make a commitment to the common good. The production of knowledge per se is collaborative, because it is based on the intergenerational accumulation that has occurred throughout human history. In addition, the new forms of knowledge governance tend towards cooperation. Therefore, if the organisation is collective, the social meaning of knowledge production must be re-established and ownership must be inclined to recognise collective work. On this point, intellectual property should be an exception to the public domain and should be public or collective property in accordance with the social intellect that generates it.

The plurality of knowledge and of knowledge/opinion practices: Re-establishing the public domain means building a system that recognises diversity as part of the social learning process so that democratic debate is democratising. This requires a system whose social pedagogy incorporates both the plurality of knowledge that exists in society, and social and economic denial and impartiality. The public domain cannot be established as such if it does not build an intercultural society (world), and, for some countries in Latin America, plurinationality. In fact, a fundamental part of a sustainable democracy lies in recognising what is diverse, what is other, as being equal (which does not mean homogeneity). In other words, re-establishing the public domain in a diverse society means building systems in which a dialogue can flourish between a plurality of epistemologies without hierarchies of power. The public sphere thus constitutes the de-monopolisation of one knowledge over others. Here, a fundamental break occurs when a pedagogy of service-learning is established, in which people can study in a shared experience in real communities where people live, engage in collective action and work: the public sphere, everyday life, the collective space and ecosystems as true places of learning. This perspective requires a dialogue between reason and opinion in the educational, creative and knowledge-generating process. In other words, it is vital to push for the recognition of knowledge (epistemicide) as well as of opinion, which also focuses a spotlight on the need to re-establish the humanities and the arts. From this perspective, re-establishing the public domain means democratising our ways of learning about the world.

4. Public governance of global knowledge

Usually, when people talk about the crisis of higher education as a public good, they refer to the privatisation of provision and the rise of enrolment in the private sphere. Viewed in these terms, Latin America is no stranger to this global phenomenon, where the majority of enrolments are now private (54% cf. Fanelli, 2018). Undoubtedly, tuition fees, whether state or private, are an economic barrier that makes it possible to resolve the major problems that civilisation is facing, as the CRES 2018 Declaration makes clear: guaranteeing sustainability and peace; preserving cultural diversity, democracy, human coexistence and the reproduction of life.

The III World Conference on Higher Education has an obligation to debate not only the fate of universities but also the meaning of knowledge, and social problems, and unless patriarchal and endogamous hierarchies are broken, it is possible to resolve the major problems that civilisation is facing, as the CRES 2018 Declaration makes clear: guaranteeing sustainability and peace; preserving cultural diversity, democracy, human coexistence and the reproduction of life.

Higher education as a “social public good” cannot be realised unless its autonomy tries to break with market heteronomy and an autarchic provision detached from social problems, and unless patriarchal and endogamous relations are dismantled within universities. Privatisation in the field means cutting institutions off from major national, regional or global debates, or building systems that do not seek to generate truth in order to broaden democratic debate. Likewise, to build higher education systems that constitute a public and social good, it is necessary to defend epistemic equity and equality where knowledge can be generated within the framework of a knowledge dialogue that makes it possible to strengthen pluri-national and intercultural topology.

However, in order to continue the debate on re-establishing public higher education systems both globally and in Latin America, it is important to consider the transition that capitalism is undergoing, which means discussing the governance of knowledge. There may well be free, non-patrimonial universities that have an impact on democratic debates and promote the knowledge dialogue, but if knowledge governance has a market-based, private logic, it will never be possible to break with the tragedy of the anti-commons, and higher education institutions will become a tool for realising capital, which, in the framework of the unequal exchange that generates neoliberal capitalism (Ramírez, 2018), means making them more dependent. This situation has a geopolitical background: disputing the meaning of the knowledge governance at the global level.

The shared function of science and knowledge revolves around the accumulation of capital. Under the current conditions in which the system functions, universities are just another cog in the wheel. In this framework, re-establishing the public and social aspect of knowledge requires building a system with other social purposes that make it possible to resolve the major problems that civilisation is facing, as the CRES 2018 Declaration makes clear: guaranteeing sustainability and peace; preserving cultural diversity, democracy, human coexistence and the reproduction of life.

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5. On this point, it is worth clarifying that the notion of the commons used in this article differs from others with profoundly anti-State connotations. From this perspective, it is generated – must be contemplated and constructed as a public good for society (pro-commons) and not for market purposes.

6. In Latin America, for the most part, not even the transmission of knowledge has been in the interest of the application of the criticality of concepts regarding national situations and problems (Ramírez, 2018).
In 2010, Brazil was a pioneer in the international integration of universities by bringing together the countries of Latin America and Africa to form the universities of UNILA and UNILAB, which grew out of the multilateral foreign policy of South-South international integration pursued by President Lula (2003-2011), in cooperation with countries of the Global North, especially the European Union and its Ibero-American partners Spain and Portugal. Unlike all other Brazilian public universities, both UNILA and UNILAB have been given formal autonomy to pursue internationalisation.

Inspired by initiatives and experiences in international higher education in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, the case of UNILAB is laid out in detail by the author, who was the institution's first rector up to 2013. Putting particular emphasis on the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the paper shows how UNILAB can make headway in the construction of a collaborative model that involves sub-Saharan countries, especially the subregions bordering on or located in the vicinity of Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe, as well as East Timor at the crossroads of Asia and Oceania.

UNILAB is making progress toward consolidation. Now 25% of its students come from African members of the CPLP and its training and research programmes adopt an intercultural approach that is rooted in the northeast region of Brazil. From the outset, UNILAB's relationship with GIUN has been beneficial for its internationalisation, and even more progress is anticipated with contributions from the World Higher Education Conference in Barcelona in 2022.

**Introduction**

Just over 10 years ago, Brazil established two universities with the aim of increasing international South-South integration towards strategic regions for the country. The Federal University for Latin American Integration – UNILA – and the University for International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophone – UNILAB – were created in 2010 at the initiative of former president Lula of Brazil, and were both approved by the national parliament in the same year under federal law. The UNILA and UNILAB projects were developed by Implementation Committees comprising national and international institutions, appointed by the Brazilian Ministry of Education, I coordinated the UNILAB Implementation Committee between 2008 and 2010, and developed its first campus, the Campus da Abolição, which was inaugurated in 2011 by the Minister of Education, Fernando Haddad, in Redenção, in the state of Ceará. The city had been the first to abolish slavery in Brazil (in 1884), four years before the nationwide “Lei Áurea” (the Golden Law) came into force in 1888.

When UNILAB was formally established in 2010, president Lula invited me to become its first chancellor in accordance with the Implementation Committee guidelines. We used the recommendations of UNESCO’s 1998 World Conference on Higher Education as a basis for inspiration. The strategic role that universities must play in building fairer and more cohesive societies is the key principle that underpins UNILAB’s aim to build cooperation and integration, preferably with public universities in Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOPS), in close collaboration with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). This includes universities in East Timor, Portugal and Brazil itself, as well as other regions and territories where the Portuguese language is spoken, such as the Macau Special Administrative Region in China and the State of Goa in India. It is worth noting the strong presence of Portuguese-speaking communities made up of Portuguese, Cape Verdean, Brazilian and other immigrants in many countries of the European Union, Canada and the United States. It is also important to acknowledge the mutual understanding between speakers of Portuguese

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1. See: https://portal.unila.br/
2. See: https://unila.edu.br/
and Spanish in a vast area that is home to 700 million people around the world (Durantez Prados, 2018).

The presence of six PALOPs in different regions of Africa adds exponentially to the relationship with English and French-speaking African countries, in addition to the Bantu languages among others in Africa. Mozambique is a particularly illustrative example, as it is surrounded by neighbours who have adopted English as an official language: South Africa, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania, all formerly British colonies, which explains why Mozambique joined the British Commonwealth in 1995.

The other PALOPs—Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe—have similar relationships with their neighbours and closest countries, and with the sub-regional organisations they are part of. The same can be said of the other regions that comprise East Timor, Goa, Macau, Portugal, Brazil and the communities of immigrants and descendants of nationals from official Portuguese-speaking countries.

The world map confirms the global presence that UNILAB has the potential to represent in a process of international cooperation and integration that can go beyond the Portuguese language itself.

UNILA and UNILAB: deepening international integration

Creating universities that are focused on international integration in Brazil was a bold initiative by former President Lula of Brazil when he reaffirmed and prioritised the integration and international cooperation between Brazil and the countries of Latin America. This was an identifying as the federal university of a particular region or state, in the UNILAB Implementation Committee we proposed to remove any mention of their federal – much less regional – connection. What was the reason for this? Much like the University of Michigan (known as U-M), to distinguish it from the former University of Brazil (UFBR), but without the F of Federal, which was concei-

The National Association of Leaders of Higher Education Institutions (ANDIFES) has also launched a similar programme that allows undergraduate students to take courses at a number of Brazilian public universities.

The Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI – http://www.guninetwork.org/), was created in 1999 to promote the recommendations of the first UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education held in 1998. Today, GUNI is also a leading institution in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals relating to higher education, and in organising the third UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 2022.

UNILAB’s international spirit was one of its key reasons for joining GUNI from the outset. It is one of six Brazilian institutions that are part of the GUNI Network, alongside 250 members from 80 countries in Latin America and other regions. The original proposal for UNILAB and its implementation since 2001 characterise an institution that is legally and structurally prepared to strengthen international cooperation through collaborative networks. It is truly an original idea of how a university can and should prepare itself to act in an interna-

GUNI, innovation as a mission

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Besides sectoral initiatives, an earlier enterprise was launched in 2017, building on more than 10 years of progress made in South-South-North relations. In 2004, the Observatory of European Union-Latin America Rela-

UNILA and UNILAB: deepening international integration

Creating universities that are focused on international integration in Brazil was a bold initiative by former pre-

the conclusions of CAMINO A FIESA 2019 and OBREAL’s Global Meeting of 11 June 2020 (https://obsluglob.org/).

A plan was developed to build collaborative networks that would give a more international focus to the uni-

versity programmes offered in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay, and eventually the whole of South America.

The oldest and most well-established public universi-

ty universities (ANDIFES) has also launched a similar programme that allows undergraduate students to take courses at a number of Brazilian public universities.

Internationalization at OBREAL Global

Besides sectoral initiatives, an earlier enterprise was launched in 2017, building on more than 10 years of progress made in South-South-North relations. In 2004, the Observatory of European Union-Latin America Rela-

UNILA and UNILAB has provided experience for buil-

ding international collaborative networks.

Finding inspiration in international universities

Two previous international experiences provided the inspiration for UNILA’s Brazil project. The institu-

findings in question were conceived decades ago and are still fully operational. The first is the University of the West Indies (UWI), an international multi-campus univer-

sity-based in Jamaica, and the second, the International Institute for Water and Environmental Engineering (IIE), located in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

UWI – originally called University College of the West Indies – was established in 1948 in Mona, Jamaica, by the British government to promote higher education in the British Caribbean colonies. Its main campus is in Jamaica, with four other campuses in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Barbuda, with an Open Campus spread across 17 English-speaking countries and territo-

ties, as well as intercontinental programmes established with Colombia, China and Europe.

The International Institute for Water and Environmental Engineering has been operating since 1968 in Burkina Faso, which is one of the poorest countries on the African continent with one of the lowest Human Develop-

ment indexes in the world at 0.305. The Institute trains engineers specialised in water and sanitation, energy and electricity, environment and sustainable development, civil and mining engineering, as well as management and entrepreneurship, meeting student demand from over 28 countries.

In Brazil, the university that was particularly cited and studied by the Implementation Committee was the Federal University of ABC (UFABC), created in 2005 under former president Lula. It was in this context that intense debates were held between 2008 and 2010, and led to the creation of UNILAB, fuelled by meetings and visits to universities in the CPLP countries, with which cooperation agreements were subsequently signed.

While all the federal universities in Brazil chose to make reference to their regional and federal relationships, each identifying as the federal university of a particular region or state, in the UNILAB Implementation Commit-

tee we proposed to remove any mention of their federal – much less regional – connection. What was the reason for this? Much like the University of Michigan (known as U-M), to distinguish it from the former University of Brazil (UFBR), but without the F of Federal, which was concei-
South-South (-North) Mutual Cooperation

Discussions within the UNILAB Implementation Committee, as well as in missions and working meetings in the CPLP countries from 2008 onwards, gave rise to a series of guidelines to boost the university’s international integration and cooperation, based on the experiences of existing international institutions.

First, there was a proposal to hold a dialogue on double degrees for UNILAB graduates with the public universities in the students’ country of origin. The issuing and awarding of degrees, diplomas and certificates by two institutions of higher education leads to their mutual recognition, although not necessarily to professional practice, which is normally governed by specific legislation. It is worth noting the particular spirit of understanding that underpinned the initiative: joint degrees from two universities, recognised in both countries.

Second, in the ongoing dialogue on the double degree programmes, the curricular itinerary also needed to be decided, taking into account the legislation of the countries and universities involved and the respective national curricular guidelines in each case. Consequently, training became a shared experience, through the fulfilment of credits and curricular practices in both environments. Academic subjects, teaching, research and outreach projects, internships, professional residencies, or any other agreed or required curricular activities or requirements were considered. Discussions were also held on the option of an additional qualification in a third country where part of this training was carried out, which opened up the possibility of a future qualification that would cover all the CPLP countries in Africa, with the inclusion of East Timor and indeed Brazil, through the future broadening of the Mercosur Educational Sector. Portugal was also added, with the possibility – depending on future dialogues and formalisation – of extending the initiative to the countries of the European Union, and even to the wider European Higher Education Area. It should be noted that in 2009, a joint degree through international networks was already being considered as one of UNILAB’s guiding principles, which has now materialised in pioneering initiatives, as we shall see later in this article.

Third, face-to-face and residential training courses are offered at UNILAB, in which students and teachers are dedicated full-time to academic training. Proposals were made to build student residences and housing for visiting teachers, with areas designated for international students and local society to interact with equally diverse regions of the world.

The UNILAB Implementation Committee’s proposals were presented at the first World Innovation Summit for Education – organised by the Qatar Foundation in 2009 – to university chancellors and members from Latin America and other regions, and had a broad impact. The presentation was structured around socio-cultural pluralism, the sustainability of the proposal, and educational innovation, and was delivered to nearly 1000 leaders in the field of education of all levels and types from all around the world. The debates focused on the questions: When, how, under what conditions and by whom will a project as bold as UNILAB be carried out?

UNILAB’s international integration could not have been realised without the law by which it was established, which set out its mission centred on international training and cooperation. This was the basis on which the CPLP Network of Public Higher Education Institutions – RIPES – was created in 2012. The network was supported by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency – ABC – and had links to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the CPLP. It received its own budget from UNILAB itself. RIPES set itself the general objective of strengthening the network institutions in all CPLP countries through the exchange of knowledge, academic mobility, scientific communication and qualified training that would foster the sustainable development of the CPLP member countries.

This explains why Portuguese-speaking African Countries and East Timor are so well integrated with other regions on account of being trilingual or even polyglot nations that speak a more global language such as English and French, and even to addition to their national languages. Portuguese may be the sixth most widely spoken language globally, but in Brazil its 211 million speakers make up the vast majority of CPLP inhabitants, who number around 265 million. Brazil is virtually a monolingual nation, despite having speakers of other languages, especially indigenous languages that have descended from European and Asian immigrants and border regions; however, these are numerically insignificant, despite their intercultural significance and the fact that they represent so many different languages.
Internationalised mutual cooperation

South-South cooperation, which includes Brazilian universities focused on international integration, requires its participants to make a commitment to mutually beneficial exchanges of ideas. UNILAB has a great deal to offer students from CPLP countries, but it is also worth mentioning the benefits to Brazil, especially for students who enjoy the rich intercultural experience of internationalisation at home, based on mutual respect for differences and an acceptance of contrasting worldviews.

South-South-North cooperation has been implemented at UNILAB through the concept of mutual cooperation, which was chosen under the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme that prioritises solidarity between the parties involved in formulating and implementing actions. The Chairs programme was implemented by the chancellor during the period in which I oversaw the creation of UNILAB, and with the support of the academic advisory board of the university’s Implementation Committee. The concept of mutual cooperation applies to South-South relations between countries or institutions seeking mutual benefits between two or more parties, prioritising the exchange of experiences and information, the consolidation of ongoing processes and the design of new initiatives, with the aim of collaborating to support the sustainable development of the parties involved. Safeguarding the interests of the parties involved in formulating and implementing actions while prioritising and emphasising multilateralism.

UNILAB is an example of this, but it also applies to the network of Brazilian federal universities, both in terms of an overall strategy and through increased sectoral or specific projects, such as the OBREAL Global initiative mentioned earlier.

Integration between CPLP public universities, as far as it potentially includes institutions from Portugal and Galicia in Spain, opens up prospects for a connection between UNILAB – through RIPES – and the European Union. OBREAL Global, initially linked to the University of Barcelona but now independent, has a long experience in managing EU-funded projects in cooperation with universities, higher education organisations and other governmental and civil society organisations, which can help to strengthen a strategic vision based on connection between higher education actors and institutions in different regions, thus favouring regional integration as well as socio-cultural and economic development.

UNILAB has huge potential – both in its institutional design with a normative basis in the university autonomy established under the Brazilian constitution, and in the law under which UNILAB was created – to establish itself as an instrument used to promote the international integration of higher education among countries and regions where Portugal is an official language. Now that UNILAB holds the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chair for mutual cooperation, with the support of the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC) it has an important conceptual and pragmatic source of support to meet its objectives.

Future collaborative higher education networks

There are already countless initiatives underway, especially in aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic that initially suspended face-to-face activities in universities and educational institutions at all levels around the world. To provide a thought-provoking example, I would like to mention a number of other initiatives among several fronts: these are just a few inspiring projects among many that are already underway or being initiated every day.

The University of Barcelona is part of the UNI-ECO collaborative network of five universities in various EU countries, led by the University of Montpellier. They offer a shared Master’s programme in sustainable development with an international curriculum, supported by the Mediterranean Universities Union – UNIMED – and the European Centre for Studies and Initiatives in Palermo – CESIS. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals have inspired this and many other initiatives. This project was launched by the European Commission the context of the Erasmus+ Programme, but its foundations and experiences are applicable globally, as the CESIS centre has connections in almost 80 countries.

The second initiative has set itself bold challenges, connecting three non-EU English-speaking universities in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. The initial aim was to boost bilateral relationships between these universities in the field of research into global challenges through a new post-COVID-19 alliance for higher education, while promoting innovative online initiatives that benefit students. In keeping with the goals of the alliance, a dialogue has already begun, seeking high-impact interaction with the global South.

Third, I would like to mention an initiative that began in Latin America after the first UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 1998. It is known as the Latin American Virtual Campus (AULA CAVILA), and can be traced back to an idea that originated at the Extremadura Centre for Studies and Cooperation with Ibero-America (CEXECI) and the University of Extremadura, in Spain. Various universities were brought together under the leadership of Dr. Hugo Juri, current chancellor of the National University of Cordoba, in Argentina, and the idea came about for the Ibero-American Virtual University – UVI.

One noteworthy trend that goes beyond collaborative networks between universities is the system of collaborative networks between different governmental and civil society organisations and one or more universities in a specific area, with the aim of promoting science and technology. A good example of this is the Hub b30, a project carried out in Catalonia around the old B30 road, through a collaboration between economic agents, public administrations and generators of knowledge and R&D. The initiative aims to promote socio-economic development and is coordinated by the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

All of these examples illustrate the importance of committing to building more sustainable, just and supportive societies through higher education, which is a social human right realised through the State and in which universities assert their strategic role in promoting a fairer world and thereby meeting the Sustainable Development Goals established under the 2030 Agenda.

8. See: https://www.ab.edu/web/publico/mens_early/noticias/2021/01/025.html
10. See: https://www.cavila.org/
Arts and cultures for mainstreaming higher education

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Abstract

In recent years there has been a clear repositioning of the arts and artistic production within the academic sphere. This movement has spread to the regional and international scenes and is having repercussions in the university system. In this context, this article aims to reflect on artistic production as a form of knowledge production. The following questions have guided my reflection: to what extent does conceiving the arts in terms of research transform the notion of arts, science and technology? In what sense is this already thought of, acted, represented, and institutionalised as knowledge that reveals an immanent process in both the arts and science? What knowledge is involved? How is it linked to the new conditions of contemporary production in the framework of the so-called economies of knowledge, or cognitive capitalism? When we speak of artistic research, and not of research about art, we are prompted not only to reflect on the socio-political and economic conditions that enabled this reconfiguration of mutually exclusive semantic fields, but also to be alert to the ideological assumptions that the new connections between art, science and technology impose in the context of current socio-economic configurations.

Over the past 15 years there has been a repositioning of the arts and artistic production within the academic sphere. This movement has spread to the regional and international scenes and is having repercussions in the university system. On that basis, the question that needs addressing is whether artistic production can be conceived as the production of knowledge and research. Furthermore, to what extent does conceiving the arts in terms of research transform the notion of arts, science and technology? In what sense is this already conceived, acted, represented, and institutionalised as knowledge that reveals an immanent process in both the arts and science? What knowledge is involved? How is it linked to the new conditions of contemporary production in the framework of the so-called economies of knowledge or cognitive capitalism?

When we speak of artistic research, and not of research about art, we are prompted not only to reflect on the socio-political and economic conditions that enabled this reconfiguration of mutually exclusive semantic fields, but also to be alert to the ideological assumptions that the new connections between art, science and technology impose in the context of current socio-economic configurations.

Research in the arts has thus become an area of opportunity for exploring comparative analyses and alternative research models that shed new light on the intersections between perception, attachment and thought.

We can broadly identify two positions that are debated in the Latin American region: on the one hand, a critique of the growing control over the production of knowledge through accreditation mechanisms and standards that impose their methodological schemes and evaluation criteria on artistic research, thereby reducing its critical influence; on the other hand, a conception that places the emerging forms of contemporary art as performativity, immateriality and creativity at the epicentre of the socio-economic transformations of the knowledge society. In both cases, the role of education and art institutions must be examined in the light of the impact of artistic production on the knowledge economy. The first position describes the fundamental role acquired by academic institutions in the growing commodification of knowledge; this has occurred in the shift from a conception of value as the objectification of material labour to the idea of innovation and knowledge as immaterial "raw material" for the creation of value in the new phase of capital. Artistic production

References


necessary to understand that autonomy is the condition for unrestricted academic (and artistic) work, it is first endorsed as a right and a necessary condition of a university project that is subject to the institutionalisation that tends towards homogenisation and an act of resistance because it expands the limits of what is different. It is perhaps this utopian dimension to be acknowledged as similar through an affirmation of what is different. It is perhaps this utopian dimension that we must learn to teach.

References


New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030

Higher Education in the World (HEIW) is a collective project that has become a benchmark in the higher education sector after seven issues. This series of reports considers the key challenges facing higher education (HE) and its institutions worldwide. This time round, the current context of change calls for a special issue, and the new edition of the Report sets out a broader renewed vision looking towards 2030 and beyond.

The special issue builds on GUNi’s accumulated experience fostering global and regional analyses and producing knowledge for institutional action and public policy-making. Entitled “New Visions for Higher Education towards 2030”, this edition analyses the state of HE in the world and seeks to respond to the need for HEIs to transform themselves in the light of major global changes.

With contributions from over 90 experts from all around the world, this report covers a wide range of topics: from the digital-human future to HEI governance and public service, while also addressing sustainability, labour and citizenship, among other aspects. As a distinctive feature, the report focuses primarily on institutions and introduces regional perspectives, with the aim of ensuring the applicability of the findings. It is hoped that they will be of interest to policymakers and other stakeholders.

Along these lines, this report is conceived as a living document that will evolve over the coming years. All materials are published on a webpage which will be fed with new articles, interviews, videos and podcasts. The report will be a platform for both transformational thinking and action in HEIs.

Moving beyond words, the Report creates a space for active transformation and will constitute the stepping stone for a more ambitious project entitled “GUNi International Call for Action (2022-2025): Rethinking HEIs for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies”. GUNi’s overarching aim is to encourage HEIs around the world to deploy the actions and changes that are needed to adapt and become more relevant, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and socially responsible.

Complete open-content report available at: www.guni-call4action.org