

# FORUM

MEMBER  
MAGAZINE

*Discussing international education*



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“Diversity is the foundation from which equal partnerships can be developed”

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Nico's interest in the history of the Cold War in Southern Africa led to a career in opening the world to his students after the end of Apartheid.

# EDITORIAL

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

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

Following this introduction, a series of articles looks at capacity building in the context of decolonisation, from a description of the iKudu project (a South African–European capacity development project funded by the European Union)

to a reflection by Petra Pistor on new opportunities for cooperation as a result of the digital turn. Writing from Myanmar, James Kennedy challenges the assumptions inherent in Global North perspectives on internationalisation and puts forward five principles as a basis for good practice in collaboration.

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

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



peers in the Global South to boost youth employability.

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

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR  
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IN CONVERSATION WITH  
**WONDWOSEN  
TAMRAT**

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JACOB GIBBONS  
EAIE

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

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

WT: Europe is of course very near to Africa: there are only 14 kilometres between Spain and Morocco, and only 145 kilometres between Sicily and Tunisia, and we have had a strenuous history due to colonialism. In many ways, the whole of Africa has this sense of paternalism, humiliation and exploitation

needs to be done in the areas of fair trade, private investment, and things like bottom-up economic development.

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

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

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toward Europe that has come as a result of that history. But you could say that things have improved in many ways since colonial times.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**WT:** Ethiopia is indeed trying to build its research capacity. The Ethiopian government set the goal of becoming a middle income country by 2025, and one of the major challenges in reaching that goal

thus far has been research and research capacity. The amount of money spent on research and development is around 0.27% of our GDP, which is very small,

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

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even by African standards. This results in limited budgets, problems with infrastructure and facilities, and shortages of qualified personnel.

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

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

Rather than talking about *independence* from 'imported knowledge', I would

prefer to talk about *interdependence*. As much as we would like to be independent and self-sufficient, we must also continue learning from each other.

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

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

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



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

Improvements to research infrastructure and facilities could also encourage

**WT:** The spirit of the SDGs relates to what universities should do and what universities have been doing throughout history, and the SDGs themselves emphasise the importance of global cooperation. Goal 17, for example, talks about revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development, and specifically says that we need to enhance North-South and South-South cooperation and international support for improving effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries. These are initiatives

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

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

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

that cannot be carried out by the North or the South alone.

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