

# IAU

## Horizons

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International Association of Universities (IAU), founded in 1950, is the leading global association of higher education institutions and university associations. It convenes and connects 600 Members from around 130 countries to identify, reflect and act on common priorities.

IAU partners with UNESCO and other international, regional and national bodies active in higher education and serves as the **Global Voice of Higher Education.**

## COUNTERING GLOBAL STRIFE THROUGH INTERCULTURALITY?



# MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL



**Dear Members of the IAU,  
Dear Readers,**

Let us stop for a moment and think about the overall mission of a university in this specific day and age. Let's ask ourselves 'what are universities actually good for in societies caught up in serious turmoil.'

The world is facing serious challenges on all continents. Most recently, university leaders and HE stakeholders, including staff and students are tearing themselves apart over the situation in the Middle East and way beyond. They are asking how their universities should position themselves and what role they should play in the current state of flux and conflicts around the world.

In a similar vein, university associations keep discussing how universities can increase their impact on our societies and possibly contribute to peace-building, especially in places where such endeavours seem to be almost impossible to achieve.

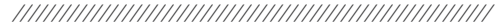
The multiple and multidimensional crises we face, whether individually or collectively, require a great deal more understanding, and we must find ways of communicating even when emotions run high. Universities must provide moral leadership and be in the forefront of demonstrating how to successfully rebuild broken bridges between cultures. They are lighthouses where dialogue must prevail, and analysis and knowledge provide guidance. They are the places to nurture alternative ideas and generate new approaches to old impasses. To uphold such a broad mission, universities have to support each other and come together regularly to reflect on how best to contribute to reducing conflict and ensuring a sustainable future for all.

"We strive as educators to vaccinate humanity against itself" as Patrick Deane, IAU Vice President recently said. Universities are living laboratories that help shape solutions to multilayered issues; they can foster true intercultural and international understanding, unleash talent and generate knowledge yet need international cooperation to act at scale. Renewed and enhanced understanding is needed to contribute to the mission of higher education in its profoundly human dimensions and overall mandate.

Created under the auspices of UNESCO in the late 1940's, the IAU constantly aims at contributing to UNESCO's motto 'building peace in the minds of people' through higher education, and do so in concrete ways. The IAU Board, IAU Members and its various expert communities are unwavering in their commitment to building a truly global higher education community. A community that at its core shares the intent to overcome differences and build on constructive synergies.

The theme chosen for the IAU 2023 International Conference underpins all our endeavours. We offer a dynamic programme and thank all the speakers and participants who have embarked on this important journey towards addressing how universities can improve societies through intercultural learning and dialogue. Our aim is to break down silos and see how higher education can integrate multi-perspective approaches to teaching and learning, research, and community engagement - for the many to benefit from. We hope that the papers in this issue will inspire many constructive conversations.

**Hilligje van't Land, PhD**  
IAU Secretary General

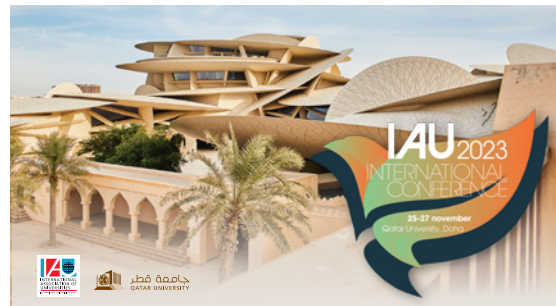


# IAU Horizons 28.2 – Contents

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# IAU EVENTS

## IAU 2023 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



The IAU looks forward to convening its Members and the higher education community during the International Conference, hosted by Qatar University, Doha.

### HIGHER EDUCATION WITH IMPACT: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AND DIALOGUE

In his keynote address at the IAU International Conference in 1990, the UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor Zaragoza, declared that “universality and diversity are not to be construed as opposition, but rather a dialectic, which has as its synthesis interdependence”. More than 30 years later, this message is more important than ever.

Universities provide excellent environments to foster intercultural learning and competence which embraces diversity, treasures differences and is necessary for graduates to thrive in a globalised world. It enhances their appreciation and respect for the other and leads to a more forceful commitment to human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and building peace. The IAU 2023 Intercultural Conference will explore how universities around the world promote and support intercultural learning and dialogue, the impact geopolitics is having on this goal, and the broader implications it has for our society.

Engaged intercultural learning and dialogue is crucial for addressing the complex challenges humanity and the world is facing – many of which are synthesized in UN 2030 Agenda – Transforming our World and the 17 associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Universities have a key role to play in establishing a sense of interconnectedness, in building intercultural competencies,

and in nurturing intercultural understanding and collaboration through teaching and learning, collaborative international research and community engagement. Such approaches will contribute to building global citizenship and social responsibility within and beyond national borders.

The IAU offers a truly global platform to many voices from around the world to reflect on how best to connect different perspectives and knowledge systems. Intercultural learning and dialogue is part of the Association’s DNA since its creation by UNESCO in 1950; it informs fundamental academic values and underpins the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The theme of this conference cuts across the IAU priority areas of work: globally engaged and value-based leadership, fair and inclusive internationalization, higher education and research for sustainable development, digital transformation of HE for society and the global common good.

One of the strategic interests of both Qatar University and the IAU is to shape alliances between cultures and contribute to fostering understanding between them through research, scholarly publications, and other initiatives.

The Conference will bring together perspectives from different regions and countries on how intercultural learning and dialogue enhances or can enhance the relevance of higher education and its impact on society while nurturing a culture of peace.





“ In the midst of chaotic globalization, diversity is essential to realizing a harmonious society. [We thus must consider] the role that universities play in helping students learn not only to “understand different cultures,” but also to “recognize the necessity of different cultures.” ”

**Yoshiaki Terumichi**  
**President of Sophia University, Japan**, will be speaking on the panel of Plenary I: The Intercultural Imperative in a De-Globalizing World?



## Discover speakers’ first thoughts on the programme sessions:

“ In a world increasingly interconnected, students with strong intercultural competencies are better equipped to engage in cross-cultural collaboration, have more cultural sensitivity, respect for diversity and the ability to address complex, interconnected challenges. ”

**Darina Saliba Abi Chedid**  
**Director of the International Center for Human Sciences (CISH), UNESCO, Byblos, Jbeil, Lebanon**, will be speaking on the panel of Breakout Series II: Interconnectedness and intercultural competencies in teaching and learning



“ The complexities of today’s world require for us as educators to challenge traditional assumptions about the typical manifestations of internationalization such as mobility of students, and to think and act beyond the conventional. ”

“ Open science is a direct contribution to fulfill the human right to science, as long as we prefix that its implementation occurs in an unequal world. ”

**Fernanda Beigel**  
**Principal Researcher at CONICET, Head Professor National University of Cuyo, Argentina**, will be speaking on the panel of Plenary II: Opening Knowledge for Humanity in an Interconnected World.



**Francisco Marmolejo**  
**President of Higher Education, Qatar Foundation, Qatar**, will be speaking on the panel of Breakout Session III: Moving Beyond Mobility – Broadening the Scope of Internationalization



“ Higher education is more than a path to a prosperous future; it's a journey of cultural discovery... Through the intercultural dialogue fostered in our universities, we're stepping into a future where our differences are our greatest strength. ”

**Ivan Nyamasekpor**  
**Programs Officer, All-Africa Students Union**, will be speaking on the panel of Plenary I: The Intercultural Imperative in a De-globalizing World?



### About the Host: Qatar University



جامعة قطر  
 QATAR UNIVERSITY

Since its inception in 1977, Qatar University (QU) continues to serve as Qatar’s primary institution of higher education and has become today a beacon of academic and research excellence in the region. QU is committed to providing high-quality education in areas of national priority. Underpinning this commitment is the goal to align its colleges, programs and courses with established international standards and best practices. As a result, QU has been successful in its accreditation initiatives, earning the endorsement of numerous leading international accrediting bodies through its eleven colleges. QU is advancing its goal to become a leader of economic and social development in Qatar through collaborations and partnerships with industry, government, academia, business and civil society in Qatar and beyond.



Discover conference resources:

[www.IAUDoha2023.net](http://www.IAUDoha2023.net)

# IAU ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ITS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## Values-based Leadership

### UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

Techniques, skills, and talent in higher education management are essential for the sustainable running of a university, but by no way sufficient.

Higher education management deals with finding the best possible solutions to the complexities that present themselves, leadership deals with affecting change. Moreover, the ever-broadening range of the complexities faced by universities requires a broader sense of leadership as well. Traditional models of leadership are oftentimes based on a hierarchical structure in which the power resides with the office holder (and, according to Max Weber, wielding the charisma that is attributed to that position *ex officio*). Today, we know that that is not enough. Successful universities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, just as most other large organisations, confront and manage the complexities they face with a leadership model that relies on interdependence and empowerment. One that encourages crossing boundaries to effectuate change, a leadership model which embraces multi-disciplinarity and diverse skillsets, one that is bound to influence others as much as it is open to be influenced by others. It is a model that understands growth and development of people as one of the core maxims of leadership to achieve organisational sustainability and success.

University systems are different all around the world. They are bound by the contingencies they operate in. Leadership is a core aspect of quality higher education if informed by values and a sense of responsibility. Leadership must constantly evolve to address emerging challenges and opportunities. IAU endeavours to strengthen capacities of university leaders and enhance cooperation among HEIs across the world, whilst also invigorating university leadership to maximise their impact on communities at all levels.

The IAU has therefore carefully crafted a new **Executive Leadership Programme (ELP)** that heeds to this fact by focusing on common issues and challenges shared by most. Yet it is radically global in its outlook at the same time. The ambition of IAU is to support university leaders across all higher education systems and types by designing a programme in which eminent former and current university leaders





share their experiences and principles of leadership across ten modules. The ELP covers both central aspects of higher education management while also seeking to support university leaders to navigate the contextual and political dimensions of university leadership. In short, the ELP provides a framework with which to confront the big managerial, ethical, economic and societal questions universities face.

The programme starts and ends with in-person meetings, held in conjunction with the IAU annual conference, and continues online throughout the year. It is designed for current or emerging heads of institutions, and participants will be awarded a learning badge after the successful completion. It is designed in modular form, and each of the ten modules consists of a thematic workshop and two action leadership sessions – separated into current and emerging leaders for real peer-to-peer engagement.

The curriculum consists of ten modules cutting across the following themes:

- **The Changing Mission of Universities**

Universities are increasingly expected to engage more in the betterment of society and clearly communicate not only what they are good at, but also what they are good for. This module will engage with the changing dynamics of the university mission and adopt guiding principles to build civil and academic leadership for just decision-making and action.

- **Building Partnerships Across the Global Higher Education Landscape**

This module focuses on the broader university landscape and defines commonalities across diverse higher education systems and thus build a global perspective to inform the development of meaningful cooperation and building an international network of peers across the world.

- **Navigating the Strategic Planning Process**

This module investigates the mechanisms that help define and implement the institutional mission, inform the decision-making, and provides tools for taking corrective action.

- **Effective Governance, Risk Management, and Oversight**

This module addresses theory and practices regarding institutional leadership, management, and governance, and aims at coming to a better awareness of one's own style of leadership.

- **Budgeting, Financial Strategy, and Administration**

This module engages with principles of university administration and finances and will discuss how to define university's business and budget model. Its intention is to build resilience through better accountancy standards, human resource policies, and procurement procedures to ensure the smooth running of the institution.

- **Diversifying Income Streams and Fundraising Strategies in Higher Education**

This module will cover financial strategy and fundraising methodology through improved mission clarity and value-based donor and grant appeal.

- **Creating and Managing Effective Teams**

This module focuses on interpersonal management skills and how to empower a team to take joint action and responsibility for the successful development of their institution.

- **Leadership in the Transformation of Higher Education**

This module considers what it means to be a critical observer, mediator, and driver of change on the way to shaping sustainable universities of the future that are innovative, equitable, and inclusive.

- **Charting a Sustainable Future for Higher Education**

It explores innovative approaches on leading for lasting and transformative change, collaborate on best practices, and forging a path towards a more environmentally conscious and socially responsible higher education landscape.

- **Defining and Communicating the Role of Higher Education in Society**

This module will discuss how to communicate and leverage the importance of the university for the local community and society at large and how to build multi-stakeholder engagement through value-based cooperation between universities, civil society, the private sector, and public institutions.

The Executive Leadership Programme will start on 25 November at the IAU 2023 International Conference and we are very much looking forward to welcoming the first cohort of participants to this first edition. The next edition will start in conjunction with the IAU 2024 International Conference in November 2024. Please register your interest to participate in the 2024-2025 edition.

## GET INVOLVED

➔ Learn more about the ELP programme on the IAU website and confirm your interest in signing up for the next cohort.

For more information, please contact:  
Andreas Corcoran at [a.corcoran@iau-aiu.net](mailto:a.corcoran@iau-aiu.net)



## Internationalization

Internationalization of higher education is an inevitable process in the era of globalization and a deliberate strategy for improving quality and relevance of higher education and research. IAU focuses on the academic rationales, the equitable and collaborative nature of the process and aims to minimize the adverse effects of international interactions when these take place in highly unequal and diverse contexts among HEIs with different resources, needs and interests.

### INTERNATIONALIZATION: A POWERFUL TOOL FOR INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND TO FIGHT RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

It is a general assumption that internationalization of higher education offers increased capacity for individuals at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), being them students, academic or administrative staff, to learn about other cultures and to improve their intercultural skills and competences. It is also assumed that internationalization is key in promoting intercultural understanding and thus fighting racism and xenophobia.

However, one might question how effectively these benefits of internationalization are brought about as well as the level of importance of these compared to other aspects of internationalization.

The 6<sup>th</sup> IAU Global Survey on Internationalization of Higher Education was conducted between January and June 2023. It received replies from 722 HEIs in 110 countries and territories all around the world. Two of the questions in the survey are particularly interesting to discuss the questions raised above.

### Global, international, and intercultural knowledge, skills, and competences: a key benefit of internationalization

To identify the most important benefits of internationalization, respondents were invited to select up to a maximum of three benefits from a pre-defined list.

While “Enhanced international cooperation and capacity building” (62%) is identified as the most important benefit of internationalization, the option: “Increased global, international, and intercultural knowledge, skills, and competences for both students and staff” was selected by a bit more than half of the respondents (51%). It is more common than benefits such as “Improved quality of teaching and learning”, “Enhanced prestige/profile of the institution” and “Improved graduate employability”.

However, when considering the data by region, it shows that the results are not the same all around the world. While in North America (60%) and in Latin America & the

Caribbean (61%) “Increased global, international, and intercultural knowledge, skills, and competences for both students and staff” is even the most important benefit, and in Asia & Pacific (55%) and Europe (49%) it is the second most important benefit. In Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa & the Middle East its relevance decreases drastically to 30% or less and it is not selected among the three most important benefits.

Geographic location plays a role in the relative importance attributed to global, international, and intercultural knowledge, skills, and competences, however, it is not easy to understand which other factors, also inside each region, influence such relative importance.

### Internationalization, intercultural understanding and racism/xenophobia

The other question which is interesting to bring into the discussion of this article is the one examining the relation between internationalization and intercultural understanding and racism/xenophobia. Respondents were given the choice between four options describing such relationship both inside the institution and in local communities. Two options were suggesting a negative correlation between internationalization and intercultural understanding and two a positive one, the four options were:

1. Internationalization has not really helped to increase intercultural understanding, on the contrary, racism/xenophobia increased both at our institution and in the local community
2. Internationalization has not helped to increase intercultural understanding; racism/xenophobia is present both at our institution and in the local community, but has not increased
3. Internationalization has helped to promote intercultural understanding and reduce racism/xenophobia at our institution, but not in the local community
4. Internationalization has helped to promote intercultural understanding and reduce racism/xenophobia at our institution and in the local community

It is encouraging to note that 86% of HEIs chose one of the two positive options and only 14% a negative one. It is even more encouraging that more than half of HEIs (52%) reported a positive effect of internationalization in reducing





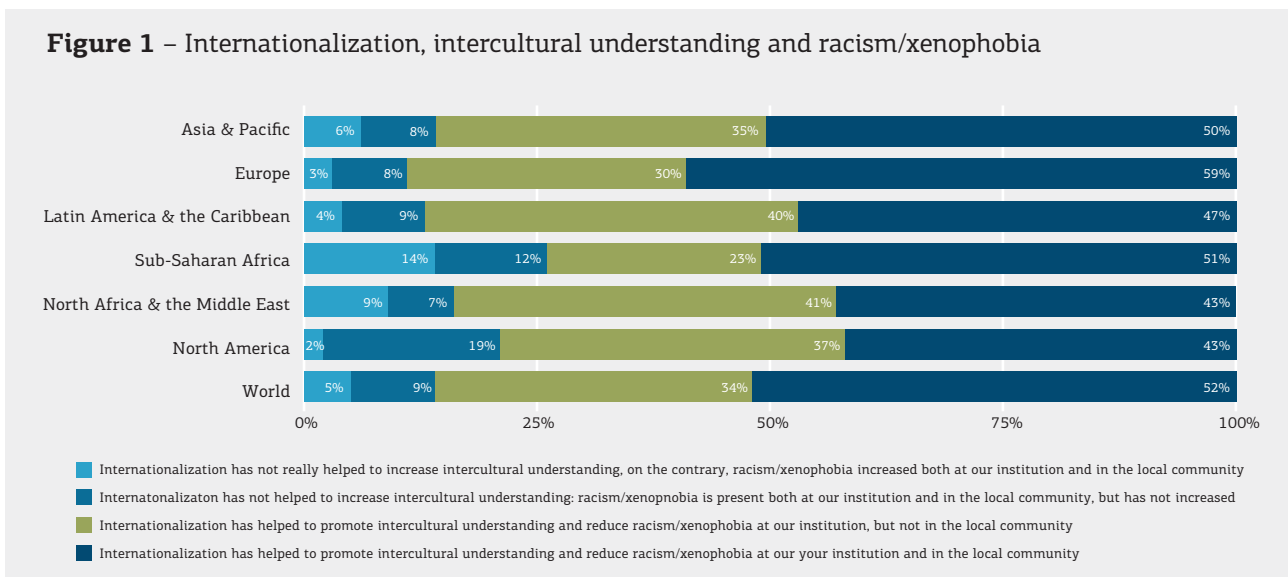
racism/xenophobia both at institutional level and in the local community and that only 5% reported a negative effect of internationalization on racism/xenophobia.

At regional level the overall picture is similar to the one at global level, but there are small differences. For instance, one quarter of HEIs in Sub-Saharan Africa reported a negative effect with 14% even reporting that racism/xenophobia increased both at institutional level and in the local community. On the other hand, in Europe the percentage of HEIs reporting a positive effect of internationalization on intercultural understanding and for the reduction of racism/xenophobia both at institutional level and in the local community reaches 59% (Figure 1).

It is important not to forget those HEIs at which internationalization did not have a positive effect and to understand the causes for such an outcome, yet, they remain a tiny minority and it is reassuring to note the beneficial effect of internationalization on intercultural understanding and on the reduction of racism/xenophobia.

### Conclusion

At a time when racism and xenophobia seem to be on the rise, the results of the 6<sup>th</sup> IAU Global Survey on Internationalization show how internationalization is fundamental to promote intercultural understanding and to fight racism and xenophobia. Internationalization leads to increased global, international, and intercultural knowledge, skills, and competences for both students and staff and its positive effects do not remain confined to HEIs, but also bring about positive impact on local communities and society. At slightly different degrees, HEIs around the world seem to be aware of this positive impact of internationalization. What is probably missing or not sufficiently developed is communication about these positive effects, based on facts and highlighting the success stories to demonstrate and emphasize the societal impacts of internationalization. Internationalization is a powerful process which helps foster intercultural understanding and fight racism and xenophobia. This defining aspect of internationalization must be recognized and maybe further strengthened to make the world a better place to live together in harmony.



**GET INVOLVED**

➔ **Use the results of the 6<sup>th</sup> IAU Global Survey on Internationalization of Higher Education!**

The results of the 6<sup>th</sup> IAU Global Survey on Internationalization of Higher Education will be published in Open Access in 2024 including an analysis both at global and regional level.

The survey results serve both researchers and experts in the field and but they also attract the interest of policy makers and higher education media. There are multiple possibilities to use the survey results, for instance to conduct further research, to benchmark an institution’s internationalization process at regional and global level, or to conduct a revision of internationalization policies, strategies and other activities.

**If you are interested in organising an event, learning more about the survey results or working with the IAU to conduct further research, please contact: Giorgio Marinoni at [g.marinoni@iau-aiu.net](mailto:g.marinoni@iau-aiu.net)**



## Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development

Universities play a key role advocating, educating and leading the way for a more sustainable future. For many years, IAU has been fostering actions for sustainability in support of *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the related Sustainable Development Goals.

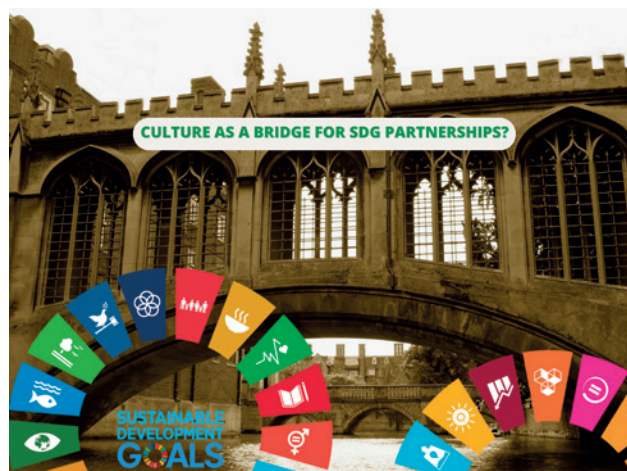
### A CULTURAL DIMENSION TO THE SDGS – A KEY ENABLER FOR INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS?

Seeing interculturality as an indispensable dimension for global understanding requires us to take a closer look at the cultural dimension of sustainable development. The UN 2030 Agenda with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a transcultural framework to address local and global challenges. To find solutions to 'glocal' issues, connecting different knowledge systems and fostering intercultural learning and dialogue at the university and beyond is crucial. This will be explored further during the session: *UN 2030 Agenda: a transcultural framework with multiple solutions?* at the IAU 2023 International Conference in Doha.

At the heart of the UN 2030 Agenda are five pillars: people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace, also known as the 5Ps.<sup>1</sup> Next to the economic, environmental and social dimensions, culture and creativity are part of all SDGs in a transversal manner. Other UN agendas refer to culture as the 'fourth dimension'<sup>2</sup>, with heritage, identity and emotional and psychological implications.

According to the report of [IAU's third global survey on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development \(HESD\)](#), published in January 2023, only a few respondents (8%) indicated that their main understanding of sustainable development was based on a socio-cultural dimension. The largest group of respondents (73.1%) have a holistic understanding of Sustainable Development, which encompasses economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

Culture is mentioned specifically in Target 4.7 of SDG 4: *Quality Education*, which calls for education to promote a culture of peace and non-violence, an appreciation of cultural diversity, and culture's contribution to sustainable development. However, culture is referred to indirectly in many other SDGs next to SDG 4, for instance, in SDG 11: *Sustainable Cities and Communities*, which stresses the importance of socio-cultural aspects of life in cities, or in SDG 8: *Decent Work and Economic*



Credit: UNESCO MONDIACULT 2022 Conference

*Growth*, where culture and tourism are important dimensions considered, and for SDG 17: *Partnerships for the Goals*.

While partnerships and innovation are broadly recognised as enablers and accelerators of sustainable development, culture has been considered on its own and not as linked as education to the SDGs. UNESCO advocates strongly for the link between culture and sustainable development, notably since the adoption of the [Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies](#) was adopted in May 2013, at the UNESCO conference in Hangzhou, China. More recently, UNESCO's [MONDIACULT 2022](#) conference, called for culture to be included as a specific objective in its own right among the next United Nations Development Goals.

1. See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ipo/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2017/02/2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development-KCSD-Primer-new.pdf>

2. See [https://cultureactioneurope.org/files/2022/01/af\\_culture2030goal\\_2021.pdf](https://cultureactioneurope.org/files/2022/01/af_culture2030goal_2021.pdf)

3. Toman, I., van't Land, H., & Harris, M. (2023). Accelerating Action for the SDGs in Higher Education. International Association of Universities (IAU), Paris, France.



Certainly, partnerships are always in some way intercultural and require mutual understanding, careful consideration, patience and agency. Ideally, culture serves as a bridge to understanding new contexts and opening up pathways to solutions previously not considered. At the same time, cultural differences can also present an obstacle that requires effort to overcome.

Many examples of intercultural approaches can be found among the IAU Global HESD Cluster members – a network created by the IAU in 2018 to exchange good practices for the SDGs and promote universities' engagement with the goals. The dynamics of the IAU HESD Cluster encourage action and engagement with the different SDGs. 16 universities each lead an SDG specific subcluster of universities from all 5 continents. These subclusters or networks of satellite universities develop projects around 'their' SDG. The Cluster facilitates cooperation, intercultural and peer-to-peer learning, joint events, and the sharing of good practices for SD. Furthermore, the work of the IAU global HESD Cluster is brought to the attention of international organisations or governments through IAU's advocacy work.

Some recent examples of good practice from IAU Member universities including the cultural dimension are the publication of a 'Culture for SDGs Toolkit' with the participation of several Canadian Universities;<sup>4</sup> Youth engagement and cultural immersion programmes at Siam University, Thailand; or a strategic approach to equipping their graduates with intercultural skills in theory and practice at the Institute of Intercultural Management and Communication (ISIT), France.<sup>5</sup>

4. See <http://iau-hesd.net/actions/6120/cultureforsdgs-toolkit>

5. See: <http://iau-hesd.net/universities/4111-institute-intercultural-management-and-communication-isit-paris-pantheon-assas>

Furthermore, with the Cluster, IAU promotes a whole-institution approach, as well as a whole-sector and intercultural approach. 'Culture' is also to be understood as an institutional culture, disciplinary culture and working culture. Different cultures adopt different approaches to solving a problem. Analysing, understanding and connecting various approaches can help solve complex and 'wicked' challenges on the way to achieving the 2030 agenda.

Since the early 1990s, the **IAU advocates for the key role higher education can play to foster a more sustainable future**; two IAU Policy Statements underpin this commitment: the [IAU Iquitos Statement on Education for Sustainable Development](#) (2014) and the [IAU Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Development](#) (1993). The Association supports and informs the **Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and is part of the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development (ESD for 2030) initiatives. Through engagement with members at events, through publications, and providing by sharing tools and offering visibility through the [HESD Global Portal](#), – a platform collecting higher education's actions for Sustainable Development (SD) since 2012 -, teaching, learning and research initiatives, and transformative leadership are being facilitated.



## GET INVOLVED

and support IAU HESD:

➔ **Read the IAU 3<sup>rd</sup> global HESD Survey Report, presenting data from 464 institutions globally:** <https://iau-aiu.net/Accelerating-Action-for-the-SDGs-Read-the-Report-of-the-3rd-IAU-Global-Survey>

➔ **Learn more about the IAU global HESD Cluster in the Strategy and Working Plan 2022-2024, here:** [https://www.iau-hesd.net/sites/default/files/documents/iau\\_hesd\\_working\\_plan\\_and\\_strategy\\_2022.pdf](https://www.iau-hesd.net/sites/default/files/documents/iau_hesd_working_plan_and_strategy_2022.pdf)

➔ **Contribute to the IAU Global Portal on HESD and share your initiatives with the**

**global higher education community!**  
[www.iau-hesd.net](http://www.iau-hesd.net)

➔ **Find the latest report on the activities of the IAU HESD Cluster from 2022-23 here:**  
<http://iau-hesd.net/sites/default/files/documents/clusterreportactivities2022.pdf>

➔ **Engage with IAU on X @IAU\_HESD**

**For more information, please contact:**  
Isabel Toman at [contact@iau-hesd.net](mailto:contact@iau-hesd.net)



## Digital Transformation of higher education

The digital transformation of society is inevitably reshaping the higher education sector and it impacts the way HEIs operate at all levels, from governance to teaching and learning, from the content of curricula to knowledge production and research activities. The IAU supports institutions in this process of transformation that higher education institutions are reacting to, interacting with and shaping to remain relevant in increasingly digitalised societies.

### WHO DOES THE THINKING? GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) created a significant buzz when OpenAI launched the first version of ChatGPT in November 2022. In only two months, it reached 100 million monthly active users, demonstrating the rapid uptake of the tool. As part of the Global IAU webinar series on the *Future of Higher Education*, a session devoted to this topic was framed by the question: *Who does the thinking? The role of generative AI in higher education*. This article builds on the outcomes of that conversation.

So why is generative AI so important? We are at yet another important crossroads in the history of humanity, where technological developments propose new features that imitate or extend capabilities that used to be unique to humans. The invention of the printed press, radio, television, computer, Internet, and the smartphone are examples of other technological inventions that have impacted how humans communicate, disseminate, and access information. Now that generative AI tools become accessible, it poses questions about the place these tools should occupy in society. ChatGPT is trained to process and respond to natural language prompts; both the spoken and written language are associated with a distinct human ability. This overlapping juncture between the capabilities of humans and machines points towards essential questions about what it means to be human and its role in society. The great challenge is to understand and decide how to make use of generative AI whether it concerns higher education or the world of work.

What are the promises and threats for higher education? At this stage, there is only limited research available to inform decision-making at higher education institutions. As stated in the preamble of the IAU Policy Statement on Digital Transformation: *“The pace of [technological] development tests human capacity for understanding, analysing and regulating new opportunities and risks”*<sup>6</sup> – generative AI is a good example of that. At IAU we believe that it is essential to generate conversations about this topic, bringing together experts



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from different parts of the world to discuss how to steer the way forward.

### Lesson number 1: Understanding the potential and limitations

Although the speed at which ChatGPT generates text is impressive, it is important to recall that it does not have any consciousness, it is not capable of judging, analyzing, understanding, or verifying the veracity of the information it produces. This implies that the outputs could be erroneous or filled with AI hallucinations. Yet, the tool can process information and identify patterns in digital output much faster than any human being. It is “trained” to produce sentences based on human digital production on the basis of statistical probability. As such, it cannot generate new and original ideas, but it can compose a text based on a combination of the different outputs at its disposal. This means that the quality of the text produced by ChatGPT is highly dependent on the digital output that feeds it. Hence, its usefulness will be dependent on the information that it has access to (created by humans),

6. IAU Policy Statement on digital transformation: [https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau\\_policy\\_statement\\_dt\\_2022.pdf](https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau_policy_statement_dt_2022.pdf)

for it to remain relevant over time. The alternative is almost too gloomy to imagine – a stagnated state of information and knowledge being reproduced over and over again in different forms of text production. Thus, the first important message is to acknowledge that while the tool can imitate certain abilities of humans, it remains a machine and cannot replace the human ability to think, understand, analyze, add judgements, discuss different arguments, draw conclusions and develop new ideas.

### Lesson number 2: Banning or embracing the tool?

At this stage, higher education institutions have been responding in various ways. There are examples of how generative AI is being used and integrated into the learning process, while there are other examples where institutions are banning its use in order to limit misuse such as plagiarism. Whereas before, plagiarism would typically be when someone used outputs of another human being without giving proper references, now with tools such as ChatGPT plagiarism extends to using machine-generated output without proper referencing. While some tools can detect plagiarism based on human text, they fail to detect plagiarism based on ChatGPT. One of the important questions of the debate has therefore been, should higher education be banning or embracing the use of generative AI? In the webinar conversation, there was broad agreement among the experts that it won't be possible to ban its use. Generative AI already forms part of society, and there are different tools being developed and integrated into the different systems that we already use in our daily work. Thus, attempting to ban it seems to be a short-sighted solution that will not prepare students to live in a world where information, among others, can be accessed through generative AI models. The important question is rather how to embrace and frame its use. There is no one solution. Its potential would also very much depend on the specificities and learning outcomes of the different disciplines. However, it is essential to discuss how the tool can be used in a constructive manner, to build conversations about its limitations, and to underline the importance of academic integrity and ethical conduct in order to steer the use of generative AI *for good*. With guidance on the principles and values informing the use of the tool, it is possible to embrace opportunities while limiting risks. However, it means placing trust in deontology and moral obligation of students and staff, where right or wrong is framed by a series of guiding rules and principles.

### Lesson number 3: Data – how to get it right?

As mentioned above, the quality of the text generated by ChatGPT depends, among others, on the quality of the digital output that it accesses. The more data the tool has access to, the better it can integrate different representations and nuances of our world. There is a need for careful curation of the information to ensure that the system uses authoritative information and not misinformation. This remains one of the biggest challenges. How can we ensure equal and fair

representation in the dataset? When asking ChatGPT what percentage of its data is in English, it replies that *'the specific percentage of the training data in English for ChatGPT is not publicly disclosed by Open AI.'* However, it does confirm that the majority of the dataset is in English. Yet, so is the majority of research outputs and digital outputs in general. The unequal participation in knowledge generation and contribution to the overall digital output of the world are mirrored in data used by ChatGPT. This means that inequalities and biased representations that currently exist are unfortunately replicated and potentially amplified in tools like ChatGPT. The second issue of concern is that this tool is designed and developed by a private company, curating the data and deciding how to develop the tool. What is the moral obligation of the company to ensure fair and equal representation of information? This remains an essential limitation and an important risk if users are not equipped to see these weaknesses. Yet, it is important to stress that this problem of data and representation is not specific to generative AI, it is a common problem within society.

### What is the way forward for higher education?

These are just examples of the many important aspects which were discussed during the webinar session. There are no single solutions or easy answers to many of the questions that generative AI is provoking. We find ourselves in uncharted territory, seeking to explore new opportunities while identifying potential threats and risks. It is now that we must bring together our collective intelligence and knowledge to discuss the principles and values that should frame the use of generative AI in higher education to ensure that it is used for good.

#### GET INVOLVED

➡ See the full IAU Webinar on generative AI at the IAU YouTube Channel access it here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE\\_GKsdTPAs&t=181s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE_GKsdTPAs&t=181s)

➡ Access the IAU Policy Statement <https://www.iau-aiu.net/New-IAU-Policy-Statement>

➡ Register for the Institutional Site Visit hosted by Utrecht University on 3-4 April 2023. The University will showcase how it has been transforming to support the implementation of Open Science. Learn more about this unique opportunity on [www.iau-aiu.net/technology](http://www.iau-aiu.net/technology) (Site Visit)

For more information, please contact: Trine Jensen at [t.jensen@iau-aiu.net](mailto:t.jensen@iau-aiu.net)



# IAU KNOWLEDGE HUB

## New IAU Publications

### IAU HESD Survey Report: *Accelerating Action for the SDGs in Higher Education*



The report presents the findings and analyses trends from the third global survey on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD). IAU conducted the survey in 2022 and received 464 responses from higher education institutions in 120 countries. The findings show that higher education and partnerships are essential to address the global challenges identified in the UN

Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to build a more sustainable future together. Furthermore, the survey looked closer at partnerships, leadership and strategy for SD and the relatively new concept of Climate Change Education (CCE).

Download the report on [www.iau-aiu.net/Publications](http://www.iau-aiu.net/Publications)

### Shaping the future of Teaching & Learning and Internationalization



In 2022, the International Association of Universities (IAU) launched the Report *Higher Education One Year into the COVID-19 Pandemic*. The findings of this report revealed to what extent Teaching and Learning (T&L) and Internationalization activities had been disrupted by confinements and other physical distancing measures. These findings led to the

development of a qualitative research project placing focus on specific aspects of transformations in T&L and Internationalization.

The results of this qualitative research project show to what extent the exceptional experience HEIs during the pandemic has generated changes and transformations that remain beyond the pandemic, as the project was conducted at a time where HEIs were no longer forced to rely on digital technologies to continue their operations. The findings are divided into two sections focusing on the impact of T&L and Internationalization respectively.

Download the report on [www.iau-aiu.net/publications](http://www.iau-aiu.net/publications)

### Higher Education Policy (HEP) HEP 36/2 – June 2023



The second issue of Higher Education Policy in 2023 was released in June and papers looked at, amongst others, the quality of distance education in for-profit institutions in Brazil; how higher education has been transformed in 15 post-Soviet countries; the processes of policy experimentation in China's education reforms; Swedish university responses towards internationalization and the interplay

between external higher education environments and institutional positioning.

### HEP 36/3 – September 2023

September's issue of Higher Education Policy looks at effectiveness of incentives for degrees in high-need content area (i.e., STEM, language-related areas, and special education) in the US, how student recruitment staff within HEIs responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, whether the Bologna Process enhancing employability among Spanish university graduates, China's 'soft power' in South East Asia, and the expansion and diversification of higher education in Brazil.

You can consult the full list of articles and abstracts here: <https://link.springer.com/journal/41307/volumes-and-issues>

### IAU partners with University World News for SDGs Hub



The IAU and University World News (UWN) have partnered to support the work of universities by providing them opportunities for

visibility through the UWN's SDGs Hub.

In view of the critical importance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UWN dedicates a news section of their website to highlighting the work of universities, and the higher education sector as a whole, in pursuit of the SDGs. IAU Members interested in publicizing their sustainable development achievements on the UWN SDGs Hub are invited to contact **Isabel Toman** at [i.toman@iau-aiu.net](mailto:i.toman@iau-aiu.net)

# IAU WORLD HIGHER EDUCATION DATABASE (WHED)



In collaboration with:

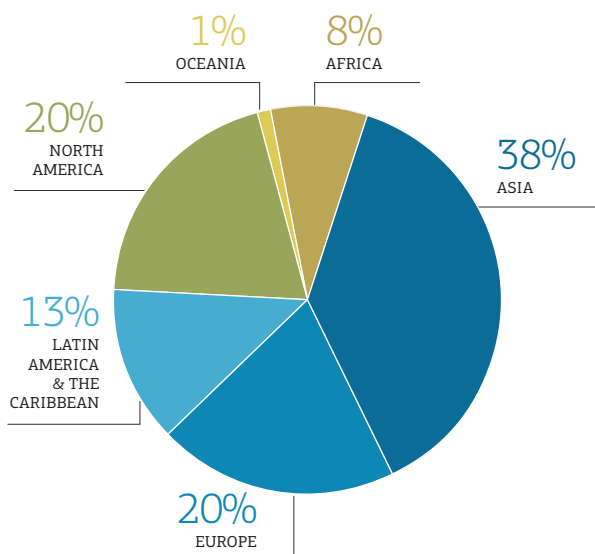


The IAU's *World Higher Education Database* (WHED) is a unique reference portal, is freely available online, providing authoritative information on accredited higher education institutions (HEIs) in some 196 countries and territories; it also provides comprehensive information on national education systems and credentials. As the WHED only includes officially verified information provided by national competent bodies (Ministries, HE Commissions, UNESCO Delegations etc.) it is regarded as a trusted source of information on accredited HEIs. It is continuously updated and currently lists just over 21,000 HEIs and this number is growing each year. The breakdown by region is available in **Figure 2**. The WHED is the only official source of information on HEIs at the global level; it is maintained in collaboration with UNESCO.

The WHED is also a useful tool for researchers as the valuable information it contains can be used for analysing education systems and looking at university data, such as founding dates, degree levels available, and the fields of study within each institution and country. As an example, the World Health Organisation has used the WHED data to look at institutions offering disciplines related to health research<sup>7</sup>. Most recently, the US published the **US 2023 Economic Report of the President** where they reference the WHED<sup>8</sup> as a resource to compare US colleges with bachelors-degree focused institutions in other countries.

The IAU regularly collaborates with various stakeholders by providing WHED data via extractions for various purposes. For instance, for research, for databases such as internal information and recruitment systems for overseas student and staff applications, including onboarding and credential evaluation. If you think a data extraction from the WHED could be of use to you, please do contact us and we will be happy to advise you.

**Figure 2 – Geographical distribution of HEIs in the WHED**



The WHED helps users understand the education systems in place in each country, and also assist credential evaluators in the recognition process of overseas credentials. The WHED thus facilitates a more fluid circulation of knowledge and talent, especially within the framework of the *UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education*. The Global Convention came into force in March 2023. To help with the implementation of this new convention, IAU added a unique identifier 'the Global WHED ID' to each institution listed in the WHED. The aim is to help facilitate identification and thus recognition around the world.

## Updates

IAU has, over the past year, been updating information on institutions in the USA. The USA presents its own particularities due to the large number of degree programmes and study areas offered. Next, we will be moving on to Africa, which currently makes up 8% of the WHED (1,777 institutions currently listed).

7. <https://www.who.int/observatories/global-observatory-on-health-research-and-development/monitoring/worldwide-status-of-higher-education-institutions-offering-disciplines-related-to-research-for-health>

8. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ERP-2023.pdf>

## GET INVOLVED

If your institution is in the WHED and you wish to update your university profile, please let us know.

The IAU is currently updating Africa as a region in the WHED: we rely on and welcome information from the national competent bodies in Africa. Please do contact us if you wish to contribute to updating the data we currently hold on your country's education system.

➔ **Learn more:** <https://whed.net/About.html>

**For more information, please contact:**  
Andreas Corcoran at [a.corcoran@iau-aiu.net](mailto:a.corcoran@iau-aiu.net)



## IAU Membership News

IAU is pleased to welcome 17 new Members from 14 different countries into its global community. We are grateful to all our Members for their incredible support and engagement.

Sign up for the Newsletter and follow IAU on social media to receive updates from IAU on activities and to be informed of opportunities for engagement. Make sure to share news or updates that would be of interest around the world to be published in the News from Members section on the IAU website.

For questions about membership, contact [membership@iau-aiu.net](mailto:membership@iau-aiu.net)

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### Institutions

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Learn more at:  
[www.iau-aiu.net](http://www.iau-aiu.net)



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# Responsible Futures



**The IAU is pleased to partner with Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK), for the international adaptation of the Responsible Futures programme.**

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# IN FOCUS

## Countering Global Strife through Interculturality?

by **Trine Jensen**, Manager, HE & Digital Transformation, Publication and Events, and **Andreas Corcoran**, Deputy Secretary General, IAU

In his keynote address at the IAU International Conference in 1990, the UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor Zaragoza declared that *“universality and diversity are not to be construed as opposition, but rather a dialectic, which has as its synthesis interdependence”*. More than 30 years later, this message is more important than ever. The IAU 2023 International Conference is thus dedicated to *Higher Education with Impact: The Importance of Intercultural Teaching and Dialogue*. In the same vein, the contributions to this edition's 'In Focus' is centred around: **Countering Global Strife through Interculturality?**

Universities have a key role to play in building intercultural competencies, nurturing intercultural understanding, and establishing a sense of interconnectedness in a world that seems increasingly polarised and divided, and marked by the erosion of social coherence and human freedoms. How does academic responsibility figure in this context of rising geopolitical tensions and national protectionism? How do we facilitate international collaboration and foster a culture of peace? How can universities leverage their influence and stem breakdowns in civic discourse? And how does this converge with the growing demand on universities to actively engage in knowledge diplomacy? In brief, how can universities sustain and build intercultural ties and empower global citizenship and social responsibility?

These are the challenging questions that leaders of higher education institutions responded to in this collection of 16 articles offering different perspectives. The pieces are anchored in different countries and higher education systems, with their very own cultural and socio-political environments. What binds them together, though, is a shared affirmation – not only of the importance of interculturality in today's world – but also of the unique role higher education institutions play in transcending differences: *‘In a world increasingly defined by its interconnectedness, the problems we grapple with know no borders’*.

The many aspects that come to the fore in this rich collection of articles range from the role of higher education institutions in an increasingly interconnected world, but also extend to the at times awkward position of HEIs implicated in geopolitical tensions at times blurring the boundaries between political interests and core academic virtues, such as institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

One strand of argumentation espouses how internationalization processes can contribute to building intercultural competencies and global citizens, yet there are also examples which show adverse consequences of internationalization which in fact translate into growing inequality.

Many attest that universities are places of truth-seeking and unbridled curiosity and thus by necessity interested in interculturality. Yet, it is also stressed that university leaders have an important role to play in steering the institution toward a supportive organizational culture that builds capacity to nurture intercultural understanding and competencies across all aspects of teaching, learning and research. The importance of the humanities and ethics for marrying students to universal human values through integrating them into a technologically enriched curriculum is also highlighted as one of the challenges in today's rapidly changing world.

Inasmuch as this collection of articles reaffirms the demand and need for interculturality, they raise the issue that these at times intangible ambitions are difficult to measure and assess, as they are part of the complex facets that shape individuals through their lived experience, a process that goes beyond higher education.

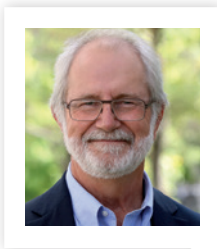
This notwithstanding – without minimizing the challenges we face – reading these aspiring efforts of the global academy to foster engaged and interculturality sensitive citizens, shows that there is fertile ground for cultivating a culture of peace.

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## 01 “Stay the Course”



by **Patrick Deane**, *Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Queen’s University, Canada, President, Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory and Vice-President, IAU*

For two years, 2014-2016, I served as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), an organization founded in 1940 with the name Friendly Relations with Overseas Students (FROS). The original name said it all: the purpose of FROS was to cultivate cross-cultural friendship and understanding through education at all levels. As a typically Canadian response to the outbreak of war in Europe the previous year, its founding makes sense—even more so if one recognizes that the losses and suffering of the 1914-1918 war were still very much alive in our national consciousness.

“Typically Canadian” it might have been—a preference for global cooperation over conflict has characterized the country since confederation in 1867—but it was not unique. UNESCO, founded in 1945, was dedicated to a similar but even more ambitious goal: “to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture.” The progressive and deliberate internationalization of the modern academy has its origins in that post-war consensus, as of course does the International Association of Universities (IAU). While momentum and motive have varied over time and across different cultures and nations, the general trend has clearly been towards increasingly higher levels of cooperation between culturally and geographically distinct institutions, increased student and faculty mobility, and broader social and political recognition of the important role universities can play in raising the global influence of the societies and nations within which they are located.

“Until the appearance of COVID-19,” I want to say, but while it is undoubtedly true that the pandemic disrupted that trend in ways not yet fully understood, the context for international academic cooperation has shifted because of a number of other factors that are at best only indirectly related to it. Geopolitical developments like the rise of nationalism, protectionism and xenophobia represent a fundamental challenge to the “friendly relations” philosophy which has underpinned universities’ commitment to global engagement since the 1940s.

One might say that these recent developments merely underline the importance of the mission as articulated by UNESCO on a global scale, or by FROS in my Canadian context, and that what is required is simply a doubling-down on that work. I believe that is true, but at the same time, it is important to recognize

“When they are not instrumentalized by governments or political ideologies, exploited by business and special interests, or otherwise distracted from their goal of enlightenment and understanding, universities remain one of the greatest sources of hope for all people and for our planet.”

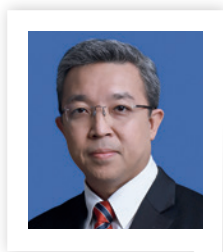
that some of the challenges we face arise from our success rather than our failure in creating a global academy. The issue of research security, for example, has become extremely fraught in recent years precisely because the level and quality of international research cooperation creates (or is perceived to create) easy opportunities for espionage. Similarly, the more international our student bodies become, the more likely they are to be animated by global tensions and alignments. Paradoxically, the more consequential universities become internationally, the more attractive their governments may find them as potential tools for securing geopolitical advantage—serving the very opposite of “friendly relations.” With that kind of interest in universities inevitably comes a threat to autonomy and academic freedom.

There is no doubt that certain aspects of the current global situation—nationalism, protectionism and resurgent racism in particular—can be seen as a reaction against 75 years of growing internationalist orthodoxy. Human migration on the scale currently prevailing is fuel to that fire, but it is also a strangely parodic fulfilment of the internationalist dream—one in which, as it turns out, friendly relations are fine, but self-interest ultimately prevails. To some extent that is true in the university sector, even as the march towards realizing a truly global academy continues (witness the addiction to high-fee-paying international students in institutions of the developed world).

The important point in all of this is that the work universities have done towards advancing global understanding and cooperation is not vitiated by being imperfect and incomplete. Nor is that vision to blame for reactions against it or against globalization, the homogenizing economic process with which it is often mistakenly identified. When they are not instrumentalized by governments or political ideologies, exploited by business and special interests, or otherwise distracted from their goal of enlightenment and understanding, universities remain one of the greatest sources of hope for all people and for our planet.



## 02 Bridging the World through Interculturality: Reflections from the Vice Chancellor of Universiti Malaya, Malaysia



by **Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor**,  
*Vice-Chancellor, University of Malaya, Malaysia*

In a world increasingly defined by its interconnectedness, the problems

we grapple with know no borders. This new age presents multifaceted global conundrums, necessitating an evolved mindset. It is clear that championing diversity, advancing understanding, and uplifting interculturality is the order of the day. I'm compelled to posit that interculturality isn't just a virtuous perspective but a pragmatic antidote to today's global tensions.

Central to interculturality is an appreciation of the vibrant mosaic of cultures, languages, traditions, and viewpoints that make up our global community. Malaysia's multicultural ethos exemplifies how disparate backgrounds can harmoniously merge, forging a robust society. By valuing and harnessing our differences, we catalyze conversations that lead to breakthrough solutions.

Regrettably, the specters of intolerance and extremism loom large, feeding off misinformation and prejudice. Through enriched intercultural interactions, education, and dialogue, we can dismantle the fallacies that empower such ideologies. Universiti Malaya stands as a beacon in these initiatives, creating an environment where students from a myriad of backgrounds converge to share, learn, and ideate. This commitment to interculturality reverberates throughout our curriculum and lively campus activities, underscoring our dedication to fostering global connections.

Additionally, interculturality is the compass guiding us through another paramount global challenge: sustainable development. Aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, Universiti Malaya tailors its approach to cater to the diverse perspectives of our international students, fostering

“Regrettably, the specters of intolerance and extremism loom large, feeding off misinformation and prejudice. Through enriched intercultural interactions, education, and dialogue, we can dismantle the fallacies that empower such ideologies.”

extensive international collaborations and curating student mobility programs to reflect this ethos.

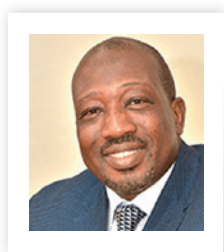
In the delicate world of diplomacy and global affairs, understanding cultural nuances is invaluable. By honing intercultural prowess, our diplomatic and negotiation processes can transpire with enhanced empathy and regard. Malaysia's diplomatic maneuvers, renowned for their balanced and inclusive nature, are a testament to our unwavering belief in interculturality. As Vice-Chancellor, I too am unwavering in my commitment to mould graduates adept in fostering global partnerships and contributions to peace initiatives. A shining example of our commitment is the UM Global Buddies program, which has innovatively adapted to the digital landscape during recent challenges.

Academia, inherently, is a quest for knowledge that transcends boundaries. Interculturality augments this pursuit, presenting scholars with a plethora of diverse insights. This is vividly captured in programs such as Exploring Asia @ UM, which immerses students in culturally enriching experiences.

Navigating the digital age necessitates heightened intercultural astuteness. In a landscape where ideas disseminate rapidly, often devoid of proper context, the perils of misinterpretation are rife. At Universiti Malaya, our emphasis on media literacy and digital acumen stands as a bulwark against such challenges, ensuring our students are equipped to traverse the digital domain with discernment.

In closing, I reiterate: addressing global discord via interculturality is not just idealistic but a concrete strategy befitting our era. Leading Universiti Malaya, it fills me with pride to helm an institution that embeds intercultural comprehension in its very fabric. By elevating dialogue, mutual respect, and cross-cultural engagements, we carve a path toward a harmonious global future. This journey to true interculturality demands concerted effort, and it's a voyage we must undertake with solidarity. Let us architect bridges of understanding that reach across divides, crafting a luminous legacy for the generations to come.

## 03 Interculturality and the role of Universities



by **Nana K Poku**, *Vice Chancellor and Principal, University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa*

Universities are not repositories of programmatic schemes for human betterment; nor is their purpose to develop or disseminate benevolently-intended ideologies for countering human strife.

“What makes universities unique is the ethos common to all of them: a home for unbridled curiosity and a passion for learning; a deep appreciation of the importance of preserving, deepening, extending and conveying knowledge; and an arena where talent and determination are the only criteria for entry.”

So, when set against the nature and scale of deprivation and conflict and the forces driving them, the role of Universities worldwide is really quite modest—but it is also vitally important.

The idea and ideal of the university are founded on the pursuit of truth in every facet of human life and endeavor; this inherently requires forms and degrees of interculturality that are scarce and often fleeting. Universities are more than research institutes or centres for discipline-specific teaching and learning—although they contain both. What makes universities unique is the ethos common to all of them: a home for unbridled curiosity and a passion for learning; a deep appreciation of the importance of preserving, deepening, extending and conveying knowledge; and an arena where talent and determination are the only criteria for entry. Universities are truly universal in their welcome to men and women from anywhere, regardless of race, culture, creed or class—a fact which makes universities oases—or better still, beacons of interculturality. We unite in our pursuit of knowledge and in doing so, forge the kinds of inter-personal understandings that extend well beyond the necessity of common cause into an appreciation of common humanity.

In creating and sustaining a community of scholars we accomplish so much more than an accommodation of difference, or grudging acceptance of others. True intercultural appreciation does not arise from abstract ideas but from lived experience—and there can be few places better than a university for making this possible. And no one should suppose that universities are elite ‘bubbles,’ without impact in the world outside their gates. In contrast, we welcome ever more diverse cohorts of students to join us every year. The large number of young undergraduates who undertake degrees is particularly heartening because for many, their university career is the embodiment of the oft-expressed belief that ‘another, better world is possible.’ Within universities, people not only learn and learn how to learn, they also come to appreciate that the unfamiliar cultures, languages and values of others are as deep-rooted and coherent as their own; and that human differences are an integral part of the richness of life and life’s possibilities.

All the while there is the intellectual project that all universities embody: our work to extend the frontiers of knowledge in every field, from cosmology and biotechnology to philosophy and anthropology. Of course, governments and

the public at large often look to universities for breakthroughs that address immediate human needs: new medical diagnoses and treatment protocols; the urgent development of vaccines; and advances in materials science, to name but a few. At the same time, both public and private universities are expected to enable young people to be well-equipped for the burgeoning knowledge economy that is already upon us.

But, let us not ignore the importance of the humanities and the social sciences, which have at their heart searching enquiries into what it means to be human; the extension of our empathy, and critically, approaches to the perennial question, ‘How shall we live?’ In our time, that means how shall we organize life at every level of organization so that human rights are fulfilled, that gross injustices are not an unalterable structural condition, and that humanity thrives rather than fractures because of the diversity of its cultures and polities.

There is so much to learn about how, in rapidly changing circumstances, we can achieve peaceful co-existence within and between societies. Contrary to popular belief, facts do not speak for themselves. So, we need to train ethicists as well as technologists; lawyers and legislators as well as innovators and entrepreneurs. As Geoffrey Vickers once observed, there are no ‘solutions’ to the problems of human co-existence: instead, we must think and feel our way. The more inclusive—that is, the more interculturality we undertake this work, the better and more enduring the outcomes will prove.

Of course, universities are not at a remove from the stresses and tensions that are inevitably part of the constituencies that comprise them and those they serve. But we are the custodians and guardians of a centuries-long tradition of research, teaching and learning, whose very *raison d’être* both requires interculturality and obliges us to meet every countervailing challenge to it. It is a proud history and a necessary endeavour. As social, economic and environmental pressures mount on our societies, universities are at the forefront of maintaining and advancing interculturality, not only for the sake of these precious institutions, but for the betterment of humanity at large. For all that our aspirations are lofty, the work is humble, requiring patience, diligence and faith that each increment of progress will cumulate in a brighter human prospect. And so we continue.

#### 04 Universities in a multipolar world



by **Marie Clarke**, Full Professor Education, Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University College Dublin, Ireland



Universities now operate in a multipolar world. Countries engage through different levels of cooperation in pursuit of their respective interests, where democracies and non-democracies share an interest in finding solutions to specific problems (Blake, 2023). This multipolar world is further complicated by war, geopolitical tensions, conflict and the use of emerging technologies as weapons (UN, 2023). In this changing context the norms of global research and science are severely challenged (Marginson, 2022). The multipolar context underlines the tensions emerging from security and national competitiveness, ethical infringements and encroachment on academic freedom. Understanding the role of higher education in this new context is an important element in addressing the challenges that currently exist (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2016). Universities need to reflect on the role that they play in the contemporary world and their future trajectory will depend on how they respond to the multipolar global order (Bhardwaj and Kumar, 2023).

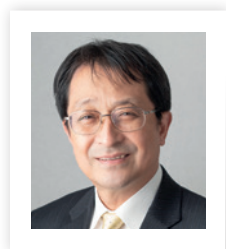
Multipolar trends in research and international student movement are becoming increasingly evident. The geography of global science is shifting from the West (Europe and the USA) towards the East (Asia-Pacific), and from the Global North (established economies) to the Global South (Selencia, 2023). During the period 2015-2019, the four fastest growing research areas in global south countries were AI and robotics, energy, materials science, and nanoscience. In 2019, Cameroon had the highest publication intensity in AI and robotics on the subcontinent. In Ecuador, research output on robotics and AI grew ninefold, representing one of the highest rates in the world (Selencia, 2023). International student movement is also responding to multipolar trends (Glass and Cruz, 2023). The rise of transnational education zones supported by state investment and the growth of regional hubs has resulted in increased intra-ASEAN student mobility. Regionalisation in South America, the Arab States and Africa suggests that these patterns will continue into the future (Jafar and Knight, 2020).

In this changing world the dialogue and collaborative aspects of public diplomacy are crucial and universities are part of a public diplomacy that is being transformed. In the past, science and cultural diplomacy were emphasised as part of the necessary contribution of universities to society. More recently, the focus has shifted to knowledge diplomacy, emphasising education, research and innovation, the development of relationships with diverse groups outside of the university sector and the use of collective resources to address needs and strengthen relationships between countries (Knight, 2020). The expectations placed on universities in terms of peace building,

“In this changing world the dialogue and collaborative aspects of public diplomacy are crucial and universities are part of a public diplomacy that is being transformed.”

sustainability, supporting human rights and the development of expertise in digital innovation and strategic foresight (UN, 2022) suggest that knowledge diplomacy has an important role to play. Aligning knowledge diplomacy with intercultural dialogue promotes mutual understanding, reciprocity and developing shared understandings with culturally ‘different’ others as opposed to accepting difference (Castro, Lundgren & Woodin, 2019). The Council of Europe (2008) argued that universities should promote intercultural dialogue in the public sphere and viewed it as a public responsibility for higher education and research with intercultural literacy as a core aim (Wächter, 2009). For UNESCO (2017) intercultural dialogue was understood as providing the foundations for social cohesion and peace. The changes presented by this new multipolar world order enhance the potential for universities to further enhance their knowledge diplomacy and intercultural dialogue while developing what Marginson and Rhoades (2002) described as multi-scalar glonacal thinking. This approach sees universities as simultaneously active in local, national, regional and global domains. Adopting this lens universities can directly contribute to developing new approaches to a world order, and offer a unifying vision based on ethics, mutual respect and finding solutions to the common challenges faced by all humanity.

## 05 Beyond the Borders



by **Kyosuke Nagata**, *President, Japan Association of National Universities (JANU) & University of Tsukuba, Japan*

One of the various challenges we are facing today is the “Border.” Words such as country, climate, race, culture, and customs come to your mind when hearing the word “Border.” Academic institutes, including universities, can overcome these walls by fostering human resources. In this article, we would like to take up some of them and consider how we can overcome them from an academic point of view.

Firstly, it is essential that human resources try to understand and appreciate the differences in perceptions on both sides of the boundaries. Let us consider Japan, our country, as an example. It is an island country and isolated geographically. Thanks to the internet, we can easily communicate with people beyond the Japanese islands, and we have overcome the problem of physical distance. However, face-to-face contact remains meaningful, and thus crossing over a country Border remains key. Real interactions on campus can be embodied in the form of joint research projects between universities. The University of Tsukuba, for instance, has joined a shared-campus framework named “Campus-in-Campus” with strategic overseas partner universities to carry out transborder educational and research exchanges across borders and institutional boundaries.



“We need to overcome not only physical distances but also psychological ones to truly go beyond a country border. Understanding difference, as well as recognizing it, is the first step to overcoming this Border.”

This agreement removes the barrier between two universities located in remote areas – even transcending national borders – by allowing each student to take classes at both campuses and make use of the joint laboratories. Furthermore, the university has established a dozen joint laboratories. Students and faculty/staff members would come to think, “Your campus is our campus, and ours is yours.”

However, we may face another Border: the difference of cultures. We need to overcome not only physical distances but also psychological ones to truly go beyond a country border. Understanding difference, as well as recognizing it, is the first step to overcoming this Border. Once we enter a foreign country, we need to obey the law of the country. Some of the rules we may find confusing at first, but we gradually understand what the rules mean, come to experience its cultures, and appreciate the history and traditions of that country. At the same time, we recognize the features of the circumstances in which we grew up and reconceptualize the shape of the cultures we belong to. This is exactly the way forward for overcoming the Border, and it is this kind of attitude that is required to overcome other “barriers”, Borders,” such as those between majority and minority, etc.

From a more academic point of view, we would like to focus on the “Border” between academia and industry. At times, it is difficult for academia to cooperate with the industry because companies usually tend to be interested in practical and applied research, and fields that researchers want to study do not necessarily match the industry’s interests. Educational institutes are the ones who can solve this problem by developing human resources who can understand and bridge the interests and cultures between companies and academic institutions. The University of Tsukuba developed a new system of alliance in the form of a laboratory under one roof, focused on carrying out research which is of interest to both academia and industry to overcome this wall. Both the national research institutes and companies, participate in the research. We believe that this system contributes to the development of human resources, that are able to play an active role in ushering in a new era. The students develop into researchers seeking their specialized area, while creating new value through this alliance system.

We can identify various other “Borders” for universities to overcome. The radical transformation of global society has brought confusion and unrest to our lives, among others pollution, infectious diseases, financial crises, and terrorism, all of which have impact beyond national borders. The task

of solving problems concerning energy and environment, or industrial and economic revitalization, needs to be shared at the global level. Solutions for the above-mentioned issues will require innovation that surpasses contemporary convention and will depend on maintaining relationships between universities at all levels, local, regional, and global. We are eager to collaborate with universities all over the world and are grateful to IAU for providing a forum that facilitates precisely that.

## 06 Realigning priorities in higher education to enhance the path to global citizenship



by **Fadlo R. Khuri**, *President, American University of Beirut, Lebanon*

For far too long, leading universities across the globe have emphasized the same questionable premise and made the same short-sighted claim to students, parents and donors alike: that our principal purpose is to educate and graduate leaders. In an era where academic statespersons are in even shorter supply than they are in the increasingly polarized political arena, we must ask the following questions of our academy: How are we leading? And leading towards what exactly?

Today, competition for resources, students, and scholarships among even the most privileged institutions of higher education has reached a point where there is often little to differentiate academic leaders from the political leaders whose populist platforms we frequently blame for crises, where necessary dialogue is drowned out by strident rhetoric. Incidentally, many of the most polarizing leaders are themselves graduates of some of the most elite universities. As such, we must ask what can be done to meaningfully shift the tide and improve the quality of discourse?

We can start by addressing the education and preparation of “leaders.” If that is to remain a priority, how can we better develop genuine leaders who are not merely tribal advocates, but global citizens of a world where uneven wealth distribution and lack of accountability for climate change and disparities in food and medicines have worsened substantially. These threaten

“In an era where academic statespersons are in even shorter supply than they are in the increasingly polarized political arena, we must ask the following questions of our academy: How are we leading? And leading towards what exactly?”



to further destabilize the planet while we witness both the first European War since 1945, and the greatest number of internally and externally displaced citizens in human history.

While there is no single remedy for this unpalatable state of affairs, there are several areas where universities must step up. We must first emphasize the development of citizens, whether or not they become leaders. The journey of global citizenship is predicated on an appropriate balance between a genuine sense of belonging, meaningful empowerment, and accountability towards other living creatures of the planet we are fortunate to inhabit. The study of humanities and ethics is undervalued in modern academia, whereas technical proficiency is increasingly prioritized in the academy and in the workplace. Surely a better balance can be struck, exposing students to universal human values while integrating them into a technologically enriched curriculum.

A second opportunity is to increase academic engagement with early childhood learning and K-12 education. Universities typically have the privilege of developing individuals for a period of 4-8 years, hardly enough time to overcome missed opportunities far better addressed at an earlier age. Exposing youth to peers who are culturally, politically, socially, economically, ethnically, and racially diverse provides a series of teachable moments, ones which, properly embraced, can lead to improved tolerance and openness that can be further reinforced during the university years, underpinning a more permanent embrace of global citizenship.

More collaborative, rather than competitive, approaches between high quality institutions of higher education to solve pressing global problems would also help move us away from the tribalism that the university ranking system has unfortunately accelerated. Rankings may have their uses, but only as a mirror to areas where institutions can focus on self-improvement, rather than cudgels to beat competitors with. While easier said than done, the decision of some of the premier higher education institutions in the US to turn away from rankings in the highly competitive areas of medicine and law suggests that academic leaders are beginning to weigh the cost of what has become increasingly unhealthy competition.

Finally, academia must step up to provide those we serve with the role models necessary to publicly inform and debate the most critical societal issues. J. Robert Oppenheimer's tragedy was brought to life in the recent eponymous movie, which ends with the discrediting of the esteemed physicist and director of the Manhattan Project [1]. The curtailing of Oppenheimer's impact in public discourse after the Atomic Energy Committee confiscated his security clearance in 1954 has discouraged many leading scientists from assuming a role of public intellectual and of conscientious objector over the last seven decades. Reducing the public's trust in and access to scholars with impeccable credentials to explain and debate the science contributed directly to acceptance by many of "alternative facts" that emerged during the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Scientists, and scholars in general, must once more find the courage to step up in the public sphere, and dispassionately explain the evidence, with all the caveats, contradictions, challenges, and risks that entails.

The earth and its inhabitants face vital, destiny-altering choices today. It is not acceptable for leading lights in academia to continue hiding behind the walls of their "ivory towers," competing for prizes certain to become pyrrhic should we fail to step up when most needed. The time to emphasize the education of citizens, and to accept the full responsibilities of citizenship, with all that implies, is now.

## 07 International students: Building knowledge and intercultural competence



by **Hanne Leth Andersen**, Rector, Roskilde University, Denmark

Current debates about identity politics, racism and sexual harassment reveal a clear need to address polarisation, anger, and fear by rebuilding the foundations for inclusion in our societies. We need to ensure that there is fundamental respect for people and cultures in a cohesive society to move towards a better future in a challenged world. As the greatest challenges today are global, collaboration across borders is more important than ever.

Universities as institutions play an important role in building and sustaining intercultural ties and empowering global citizenship and social responsibility. It is therefore as important as ever to promote intercultural education through international programs, and welcome international students at all levels of study (bachelor, master, and PhD).

At Roskilde University (RUC), three out of our seven large interdisciplinary bachelor programs are offered in English and receive both Danish and international students. At the master's level, 12 international programs currently welcome students from abroad, both as full degree students and as exchange students. This has been a tradition since the foundation of the university in the 1970s: with a strong focus on interactive group work and a true student-centred pedagogy, with room for the student's personality, interests, and input to the program – and thus for genuine social and academic meetings between different cultures and approaches.

Regardless of the type of education, much of our interaction is framed by culture. Students bring to the table their personal experience with learning, how they relate to authorities and formal evaluations, exam forms, and how they collaborate

“Intercultural awareness and global citizenship should be at the centre of modern education in order to prevent strife and crises across all kinds of linguistic, cultural, religious, and political divides.”

with fellow students. Their understanding of the aim of the program, and the context in which it takes place, has a major impact on what happens during group work as well as in the lecture hall. Therefore, students are invited to participate in a foundation course that introduces them to the problem-oriented project learning (PPL) approach, which constitutes half of the programs' activities. During this introductory course, students discuss views on teaching forms, education, and culture. To some students, working on a shared project, defining the problem and the methods together, under supervision of a researcher, is new and challenging, and it is important to create the best conditions for their learning experience by sharing thoughts on their personal, educational, and cultural background, interests, and preferences.

The cultural component thus relates to both the learning culture and culture in a broader sense. An important aim is to develop intercultural competence, interculturality, global competence, intercultural citizenship, etc. The labels reflect different approaches and focus areas, as well as possible pitfalls. In any case, institutions and educators should have a deep understanding of the cultural dimensions in education. Indeed, promoting intercultural competence requires actively drawing on the students' knowledge, behaviour, and emotions. In this way, a good and classical definition of intercultural competence is that of knowledge of others, knowledge of self, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and/or interaction, valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors, and relativizing one's self, in a critical cultural awareness (Byram 1997: 34).

When it comes to the choice of language, international programs are very often taught and experienced through English, which may be a common meeting place for many students and researchers, but it is also a limiting choice. Students bring with them many languages, and to exchange in these--and thus also partake in a cultural exchange that comes with the use of foreign language--has great potential. At Roskilde University, it is possible to create groups that work in other languages, but this does not happen frequently. Still, foreign languages are welcomed, and empirical studies on other cultures are numerous. In addition, over the last ten years, the university has developed specializations in German and French (and for a period also Spanish), where the focus is not on language as such, but on language as a tool to unlock knowledge that otherwise would be inaccessible.

Students can integrate knowledge about cultures, texts and other resources transmitted in one of these languages and in

that way get a broader understanding of the field or area they are working with. The extra effort consists in reading original texts or doing interviews with people in their own language and writing a synthesis of their project in the specific language. The idea has been developed together with external collaborators in the private sector, representatives from the ministries, language consultants, high school teachers and members of language promoting networks. The language profiles aim at implementing some of the recommendations of the Danish national language strategy. The initiative is highly relevant given the declining interest in language education as such, all the while Danish companies are looking for graduates with complementary language competences. This is strongly related to the need to create intercultural understanding in all forms of exchange: in business, in politics, and in people's lives.

This approach to language integration is closely related to the research and education on cultural encounters at Roskilde University, which focuses specifically on studying issues and processes that emerge in the encounter between diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives.

Unlike a cultural approach understood as the dissemination of knowledge about a specific culture, the intercultural approach (or interculturality) reflects the interface between different cultures, which will often involve exposing oneself while searching for one's own cultural identity. If there is no interaction, students remain unaffected and unchanged.

All in all, the forms of experiential learning that are central to Roskilde University's pedagogical concept, could be defined as "reflection in action" (Kolb 1984). As the focus shifts from the encounter between cultures to the encounter between people, it is crucial to have the opportunity to interact with people. We find that intercultural awareness and global citizenship should be at the centre of modern education in order to prevent strife and crises across all kinds of linguistic, cultural, religious, and political divides.

## 08 University Education and Cultural Conflicts: The Way Forward



by **G.S. Bajpai**, Vice-Chancellor,  
National Law University Delhi, India

Cultural differences, religious, regional, ethnic, racial and other prejudices leading to conflicts, wars and

destruction are not new. Cultural fault lines appear to be the fundamental reason for differences and conflict in large parts of both the Global South and North. Some of these conflicts are so intractable that they can potentially engulf an entire region, or

“Universities are deeply committed to shared values of pluralism, diversity and openness through dialogue which help us establish a bridge of communication between cultural divides.”

indeed the whole world, into perpetual hatred and bloodletting. We are on the horns of a dilemma having to choose between our desire to break new knowledge grounds through inter-galactic voyages on the one hand and raging conflicts on the other. It is paradoxical. The spectre of resolving the paradox seems to cast a dark pall of gloom over our own agencies and progress. We are faced by the old question, what is the way forward to get out of this maelstrom?

### The Challenge of Cultural Pluralism

The problem of cultural pluralism has both an internal and external face. Internally, we confront cultural differences within our own societies. These differences arise because of contemporary critiques of cultural practices and beliefs. These critiques purport to expose the way traditions perpetuate entrenched status relationships. For example, are religions a source of values to be protected or to be cabined? Externally, the differences between us and others are not merely variant interpretations of common standards. Rather, we have radically different understandings of appropriate social norms. The problems of cultural pluralism reflect a battle between the completing first principles: universalism and particularism. In their most extreme expression, they provide no foundation on which to make any compelling criticism of different cultures. There is no way to make cross-cultural comparisons between values. Are we forced to say either too much or too little? If we focus on the difference itself, we cannot solve the problem. We will keep alternating between the rhetoric of universalism and particularism without any resolution. In this diabolical context, let us see if universities, which occupy an important space in our moral imagination, can help in resolving the dilemma.

### Universities and Intercultural Dialogue

Aware of the cultural pluralism and conflicts around the world, the Council of Europe organized a conference in 2009 titled “Universities as Actors of Intercultural Dialogue in Wider Society” which clearly acknowledged universities as vehicles for the promotion of intercultural and cross-cultural communication. Universities can promote positive communication across cultures in two ways. Firstly, by holding programs on their own campuses for their students and secondly by reaching out to society. The internationalization of education and institutions of higher learning is yet another method that brings people belonging to different cultures in contact with one another as learners. It is an excellent vehicle through which people can learn about each other. The Global

Academic Exchange Network (GIAN) initiative of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, is a commendable initiative which is worth mentioning in this regard.

The service rendered to the community remains one of the objectives of the university since the founding of Al-Azhar in Cairo, Bologna in Europe, or much earlier Nalanda or Taxshila in India. These institutions became well-known and famous because of their international outreach and quest for learning and appreciation of scholarship transcending their own cultural settings. For example, the Chinese traveller and Buddhist monk Hieun Tsang visited Nalanda University in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century to study Buddhism and later began to teach there. There are numerous such examples from around the world that recur on the universal character and openness of universities.

Universities are deeply committed to shared values of pluralism, diversity and openness through dialogue which help us establish a bridge of communication between cultural divides. Dialogue reflects unity of purpose and reason. Institutions of higher learning have a huge role to play in achieving the same.

Universities represent globalised spaces. Therefore, interculturality, multiculturalism, cross-culturality and transculturality are important ideals, not only in theory but also as practices which typically come to life on campus. We need to reform our pedagogy in universities to eliminate stereotyping and discrimination. In my understanding, universities – as platforms of sharing and learning – must draw on their own and other cultural resources to develop a new pedagogy that encourages learners to become truly global individuals.

### Cultural Conflicts and their Antidote

We may have to draw upon the insights of our own historical experience to reduce conflicts that arise from privileging certain belief systems and cultural symbols over others. The Indian intellectual tradition, for instance, overwhelmingly promotes the idea of pluralism. The idea is encapsulated in Vedic writings in form of *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuda Vedanti* (Truth is one but we call it by different names) or India’s civilizational motto expressed as *Vasudhav Kutumbakam* (The world is one family), Gandhi Jee, Ravindra Nath Tagore, Swami Vivekanand and numerous others struggled in their lives to follow the righteous path. They are perfect examples of tolerance and intercultural communication and dialogue. Other non-Western and Western traditions harbour any number of inspirational events and individuals as significant promoters of the ‘principles of universalism’. We thus conclusively emphasise that our resources can provide new perspectives to create an effective pedagogy in the system of teaching in universities.

## 09 An Invitation to Be Universal in Including All and Living in Peace: How Can Universities Support an Intercultural and Interconnected World



by **Berrin Yanikkaya**, *Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Coordinator of Learning and Teaching Unit*, **Canan Aykut Bingöl**, *President/Rector* and **Yesim Ekinçi**, *Vice Rector for Research and Internalization, Yeditepe University, Turkiye*

*"To live like a tree alone and free and in camaraderie like the forests"*

*Nazım Hikmet Ran,  
Invitation, 1940*

The great Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet Ran, invites us to think, our individualities as people as much as institutions and countries, do not prevent us from living side-by-side and co-existing with our own unique and diverse features. Diversity is not an obstacle "to live in camaraderie", it is making every single one of us stronger and more resilient, since our differences complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Universities serve purposes beyond merely teaching, learning, and research. The word "university" derived from the Latin word "universitas," which means "the whole" or "the collective." In its original sense, "universitas" referred to a community or corporation of scholars and teachers, typically engaged in higher education and research. The third mission of universities is to endeavor to create knowledge that reaches beyond the confines of academic settings, ultimately contributing to the advancement of societal, cultural, and economic growth. This also entails being the critical conscience of society. What this means is that universities have a special role and responsibility in shaping and guiding the values, ethics, and intellectual discourse of society. Society here is used as an all-encompassing universal entity.

"The invite" to "Be Universal in Including All and Living in Peace" in the title of this article can be seen as a contemporary interpretation or mnemonic rather than a direct etymological link to the word "university." This interpretation enables us

“The concept of interconnectedness and the understanding of interculturality in higher education stress the interdependence of various disciplines, cultures, and ideas.”

to connect the concept of a university to the broader goals of education and peaceful coexistence. It emphasizes the idea that universities are institutions where people come together to gain a comprehensive understanding of various subjects and disciplines, fostering a sense of universal knowledge and enlightenment. The idea of universities promoting universal inclusivity and peace aligns with their mission to advance knowledge, foster critical thinking, and encourage cultural exchange. Universities bring together people from diverse backgrounds, provide a platform for the exploration of various disciplines, and often contribute to diplomacy, international cooperation, and social progress.

Promoting intercultural understanding and establishing a sense of interconnectedness in a polarized and divided world is a complex challenge, but universities can play a significant role in addressing these issues, as discussed in the different articles. The question is how?

Here are a few ideas to entertain and further discuss collectively, which are intrinsically interconnected:

### 1) Leadership and Vision

It all starts with university leaders exemplifying the values of interculturality and interconnectedness through their own actions and behaviors. Leaders must identify and embrace the fundamental features of knowledge diplomacy such as collaboration, reciprocity, and mutuality and they must involve multiple actors and strategies to address networked activities as part of internationalization efforts.

### 2) Policies, strategies, and roadmaps

At the institutional level, there is a need to develop interculturality aware policies, strategies, and roadmaps. Ideally, these should be supported by national and international policies and frameworks. Equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives need to be enhanced and such incentives must be set forth in teaching and learning, research, and service. Also, policies to address instances of discrimination, hate speech, or conflict on campus need to be prepared.

### 3) People-centered implementation

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to design and implement change models to transform the institutional culture by welcoming diverse faculty and staff, introducing training on cultural competency, conflict resolution and mediation, and



creating physical and/or virtual support spaces where students and staff from diverse backgrounds feel safe, respected, and valued.

#### 4) Curriculum Integration and extra-curricular activities

Intercultural competencies need to be embedded in curriculum design and development, which entails interdisciplinary collaboration, global awareness and global citizenship education, media literacy and critical thinking complemented by extracurricular activities such as cultural events and festivals.

#### 5) Research

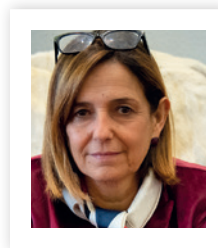
Research collaborations can be the imminent solution to how universities can support intercultural and interconnected environments, as many researchers from different parts of the world have been working together and applying for funding collaboratively. Initiatives such as the EU's Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership schemes and alike can also bring faculty and administrative staff from distinct geographical locations together to reflect on and reinforce an interconnected cultural climate across HEIs. Research, teaching and learning and community engagement need to be envisioned holistically.

#### 6) Engagement

Not only students but also academic and administrative staff need to be encouraged to take part in community service and volunteer opportunities and be exposed to different communities and social issues both locally and globally. Resources and support services need to be provided for marginalized and underrepresented groups on campuses to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met. To gain hands-on experiences, students need to be involved in local and global community service projects which would help them to see the real-world impact of their actions. Also, alumni who have international and intercultural experiences can help in mentoring and guiding current students.

The concept of interconnectedness and the understanding of interculturality in higher education stress the interdependence of various disciplines, cultures, and ideas. As the epigraph from Nazım Hikmet alludes, just as trees in a forest are interconnected through their root systems and support one another, students and educators in higher education can benefit from recognizing their interdependence and the value of collaboration across boundaries. The quote encourages a sense of unity and collaboration, which is essential for an interconnected and intercultural world, universities can and must prioritize the policies, initiatives, and actions to make it happen every single day.

## 10 Countering global conflict through interculturality?



by **Antonella Polimeni**, Rector,  
Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

We are living in a time of great complexity, which presents us with a wide range of cultural, political and environmental challenges.

Global conflict is undoubtedly one of the emerging critical issues for present and future generations, and as universities, we must reflect on the role that knowledge can play in identifying pathways to peace and development. In this context, the role of universities is to allow anyone who can to rise and contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and communities.

I am convinced that an important objective is to overcome the inequalities that are one of the main ingredients of conflicts; to do so is to carry out – in addition to research of excellence, quality education and dialogue with the community – the “Fourth Mission” as defined at this university that it is my honour to lead. In other words, universities must implement policies aimed at inclusion, recognition, and respect for each individual, promoting equal opportunities, combating violence and all forms of discrimination, improving legality, peace and sustainability, be it social, economic or environmental.

Knowledge emancipates because it makes people aware that crises can have multiple answers and because the exchange of different ideas strengthens the ability for dialogue and mediation. Much can be done in this field also with specific training modules in geopolitics and interculturality. At Sapienza, we have designed special programmes in “Intercultural and Linguistic Mediation,” precisely to address this challenge and face global conflicts with peaceful values and an educational mission.

The values of teaching are an important asset for spreading interculturality, but so are the human resources that underpin it. Thousands of our students and researchers travel abroad, and just as many are hosted in bilateral exchanges with over 1,000 partner universities in 87 countries.

Sapienza is one of the largest universities in Europe in terms of the number of students, and we have a tradition of hospitality, which is a value for us, in the light of which we work to ensure that the right to study is guaranteed. This is why we have specific measures in place to facilitate access to university studies, including enrolment facilities that are modulated according to the country of origin of our international students, who number more than 11,200.

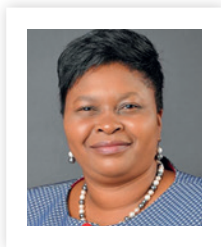


“Universities must implement policies aimed at inclusion, recognition, and respect for each individual, promoting equal opportunities, combating violence and all forms of discrimination, improving legality, peace and sustainability, be it social, economic or environmental.”

It is a virtuous circle in which Italian and international students arrive at Sapienza and leave it, bringing with them an expertise enriched by the values of dialogue, in order to spread interculturality and to oppose, at first hand, conflict as the first and only option to resolve disputes.

Moreover, since the beginning of the conflict on Ukrainian territory, we have taken steps to welcome researchers and students from war zones, sending an important signal of solidarity and commitment to strengthening peace through research and knowledge as a tool for growth and unity among peoples.

## 11 Higher Education Institutions and Development of Intercultural Competencies: Critical ingredients



by **Sunungurai Dominica Chingarande**, Vice-Chancellor, Women’s University in Africa, Zimbabwe

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a critical role in developing various competencies needed to counter strife in today’s globalised world. Intercultural competence is the ability to function effectively across cultures, to think and act appropriately and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds – at home and abroad. It has five main dimensions which include attitude, knowledge, interpretation and skill relation, exploration and skill interaction, and critical cultural awareness [1]. This competence is important for all students, and hence it has to permeate all disciplines. As such, one may question what is it that HEIs should do to develop intercultural competencies and foster peace?

**Create inclusive campus infrastructures:** A fulfilling intercultural experience demands an investment in the necessary infrastructures; however, such is not always readily available. This is particularly the case in HEIs in the global south. Campus infrastructures refer to the HEI physical, digital, academic, emotional and policy infrastructures as described below [2].

Type of infrastructure	Why it is critical
Physical	Comfortability and safety
Digital	Openness and ubiquitous accessibility
Academic	Multi-skill development
Emotional	Belongingness and connectedness
Policy	Guiding framework for cultural diversity

The types of infrastructure are not mutually exclusive, hence this discussion will focus on policy and academic infrastructures which indirectly link with the rest.

The starting point for inclusive campus infrastructures in their various forms should be a policy framework for equity, diversity and inclusion. While enrolment policies in many HEIs are presented as broadly inclusive, fee structures remain largely exclusionary, especially for students from or in the global south, hence, students are denied opportunities to gain practical experience with others from different cultures. The role of collaboration between HEIs and other players, as well as professional development programmes on interculturalism, should be further explored in order to bridge this gap.

**Capacity building of faculty:** Faculty members are often not prepared to develop intercultural curricula due to limited knowledge and experience in the area. This inability to develop diverse curricula represents a significant barrier to developing intercultural competencies among students. It is therefore important that HEIs invest in developing staff competencies in pedagogy, interdisciplinarity and human rights. Two lessons can be drawn from a study in Africa on *Bridging the Gender Gap at Women’s University in Africa* [3]: first, while most HEIs promoted women’s access to university education through affirmative action in select instances, they had not significantly invested in developing staff capacity in gender responsive pedagogy. Thus, the learning experience remained exclusionary. Similarly, faculty understanding of pedagogical issues linked to interculturalism is critical for the development of intercultural competencies. Such would encourage the

“Investments in developing staff competencies should be prioritised if universities are to be effective in their role of addressing global strife and to avoid propelling cultural hegemony which could inspire backlash”



development of pedagogies focused on building students' skills for negotiation, intercultural sensitivity, understanding of different world views and fostering attitudes of respect and acceptance. For example, De-Hei et al (2018) established that when the group learning process improves, students' verbal interaction and participation also improves. This suggests that the development of intercultural competence depends on clearly perceived quality of collaboration, that is experienced in practical rather than abstract terms [4]. Secondly, while universities have introduced compulsory gender modules for students, no similar programmes have been developed to equip staff and to influence their attitudes towards embracing gender equality. In the same vein, it is not sufficient to only introduce compulsory university-wide modules on interculturalism to develop intercultural competencies. Critically, staff should also be exposed to international experiences so that they may impart knowledge from a position of authority and experience. Simply, fostering intercultural competencies require interculturally competent staff. Hence investments in developing staff competencies should be prioritised if universities are to be effective in their role of addressing global strife and to avoid propelling cultural hegemony which could inspire backlash.

Capacity building for interculturalism does not only concern teaching and learning but should permeate all faculty duties, including research, innovations and community engagement.

In the same way that HEIs review their curriculum to embrace Sustainable Development Goals through Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Change Education, it has become imperative that the curriculum be designed with a view to embrace interdisciplinary interculturalism for the development of the necessary intercultural competencies in order to address these goals.

## 12 ESD integration in the university curriculum to foster intercultural competence



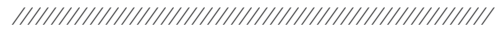
by **Yutaka Maeda**, *President* & **Keiko Ikeda**, *Vice-Director*,  
*Institute for Innovative Global Education, Kansai University, Japan*

The concept of ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) has become increasingly integrated as part of higher education

“ Intercultural competence in STEM for example is becoming increasingly important due to the global nature of scientific research, technological innovation, and engineering projects. ”

in recent years, particularly in Japan. The concept was proposed by Japan at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. UNESCO has since been the lead UN Agency to coordinate global efforts based on the outcomes and recommendations of the “UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)” (2005-2014) and the “Global Action Program on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (GAP)” (2015-2019). ESD programs are designed to promote understanding, awareness, and skills related to sustainability issues, such as environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability. Among various key themes within ESD, three concepts are particularly relevant for international education: (i) social responsibility, in which students learn about human rights, social inequalities, poverty reduction, and community engagement, (ii) cultural diversity, and (iii) global citizenship, where the study encourages students to recognize their responsibilities as members of a global community and to contribute to positive change on a global scale. The inclusion of ESD in higher education is also driven by the increased promotion of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in secondary and primary education in Japan. This increased awareness pressures higher education to also embrace ESD to meet the expectations of the incoming students. Kansai University's (KU) various interdisciplinary programs focus especially on sustainability, in which students who pursue different majors engage in projects together to consider the complex interactions between environmental, social, and economic systems. ESD curriculum methods involve collaborative learning, which foster teamwork, intercultural communication skills, and the ability to design new solutions. It also engenders opportunities to leverage knowledge diplomacy on very practical grounds. The international education programs at KU focus on providing a wide range of opportunities for cross-cultural encounters for all of our students, and generating learning through a careful reflection process, in which learners look back on their own actions and thoughts and sublimate their learning based on their reflections. They include COIL-based and blended mobility programs (students participate in both on-line and on-site study abroad activities). With over 120 global partners, KU seeks to create diverse, multilateral, interactive, and collaborative learning at both UG and PG levels. Harnessing the advantage of technology, we have been able to include international students who are currently facing a geopolitically challenging time. KU offers this opportunity in their early years of study on campus, to broaden individual perspectives from their limited local surroundings to a global scope that includes various situations occurring in different parts of the world. The purpose is to nurture intercultural sensitivity and competency to embrace diversity, equity, and





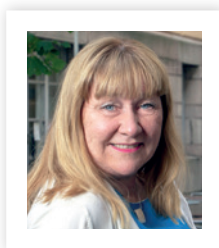
inclusion. Intercultural competence in STEM for example is becoming increasingly important due to the global nature of scientific research, technological innovation, and engineering projects. The closer our world becomes to be a technologically advanced society, this fundamental competence will play an even more important role for success.

We believe that intercultural competence is not something that can be cultivated independently from other affairs. As we work together in diverse activities, we are confronted with "diversity" such as individuality, differences in values, and in the ways of thinking that underpin a culture of an organization or a workplace. Educational interventions that foster skills such as intercultural understanding and the ability to respond to different cultures are necessary. What we would want to see happening is the cultivation of true human intercultural competences, rather than a superficial conceptualization of culture(s).

Without intercultural sensitive skill and mindset, international projects – even those of immense scale involving international cooperation and state-level relationships – are unlikely to be successful. The university's responsibility is to nurture the next generation of decision-makers and global citizens, who will consider sustainable development as a top priority when dealing with complex issues.

Since many challenges to be addressed are global in nature, the education experience will also require collaborative education across multiple universities to instil global perspectives. Emphasis on interculturality in university education is indeed a necessity to make this a reality.

### 13 Responding to global strife under challenging political settings



by **Hanna Snellman**, Vice-Rector, University of Helsinki, Finland

The result of the general election held in Finland in April 2023 saw a considerable shift towards the right,

with a populist anti-immigration *Finns Party* (FP, sometimes referred to as *True Finns*) winning the second most seats. With the leadership of the biggest party, a centre-right *National Coalition Party*, a government coalition was appointed on June 20 by three more moderate parties, and the *FP*.

Emboldened by their election success, the FP sought to set significant new restrictions to immigration in the new government's Policy Plan. While most of these restrictions targeted asylum seekers, low-skilled immigrants and their

family members, the debate very much reverberated with highly skilled immigrants, including university teachers, researchers and international students. The progress made in the previous 10-12 years in easing immigration, needed to offset the very acute demographic challenges of Finland, seemed to be severely deteriorating.

In the days and weeks following the government appointment, media and private citizens started unearthing racist comments made earlier by several new ministers representing the *FP*. One minister was already forced to resign, but currently, even his replacement rests on shaky ground. The future of the government coalition remains unclear at best.

Quite interestingly, many FP key players hold university degrees, and some have even been employed as researchers. Could this be construed as universities having failed in educating tolerant and civically minded citizens? Do universities bear responsibility for their graduates' and even former faculty members' racist behaviour? How can universities be asked to counter global strife, if they cannot even exclude outright racists in their own territory?

These kinds of questions seem very legitimate, and warrant careful consideration in terms of education provision, and instilling institutional values in faculty, staff, and students. However, it seems that there is also something akin to survivorship bias at play. The fact that there are some "bad apples", ignores the fact that the very large majority of graduates are, in fact, constructive and well-adjusted members of society. Perhaps it would be unrealistic for any university to be able to educate 100% of students against xenophobic or racist tendencies, especially since these are likely to develop before enrolling. This, however, does not suggest that nothing can or should be done. After all, universities have the responsibility to prepare their graduates to be fit for a world of work, which today is much more international and interconnected than ever before. According to the University of Helsinki's institutional strategy, we generate understanding for the benefit of society through responsible and ethical research and teaching – for the world.

In addition to formal training, including components and other content of the regular curriculum and specific courses for issues related diversity, equality, and inclusion, universities also have unprecedented opportunities for promoting intercultural awareness and understanding through their internal operating

“Perhaps it would be unrealistic for any university to be able to educate 100% of students against xenophobic or racist tendencies, especially since these are likely to develop before enrolling. This, however, does not suggest that nothing can or should be done.”

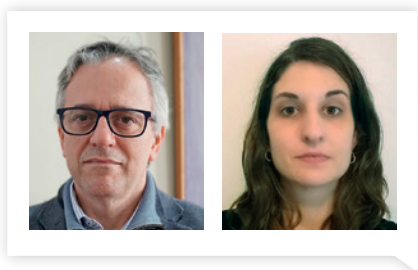


environment. By hiring international members of staff and faculty, and enrolling a substantial number of international students on exchanges, other mobility periods and for degree studies, universities are in a strong position to instil a spirit of and skills for intercultural encounters, provided that ‘internationals’ are purposefully integrated into the mainstream of the university community.

Today’s universities are also more interconnected and linked with international partners, despite temporary setbacks, such as the war in Ukraine and the pandemic. These connections add a further layer for providing internationalisation opportunities for all students, faculty, and staff, and they very much serve the purpose of alleviating global strife. As an example, the University of Helsinki is a member of the European university network Una Europa. Diversity and cultural sustainability are both cross-cutting principles, which feed into all collaborative actions. The network published a set of guidelines in September 2022 [on engaging with diversity in European Universities](#), with clear and concrete recommendations. Embracing diversity is presented as the foundation of overcoming local and global conflict.

To cut a long story short, universities are very well equipped to serve their societies, as well as the global community, by providing a broad scope of internationalisation opportunities. We should not lose sight of the fact that our actions in this regard are already quite successful and through continuous development, we will be able to make an ever more positive impact for our world in the years, decades, and even centuries to come.

## 14 Latin American Universities in the Search for Interculturality in and for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Revisiting Manifestos



by **Rodrigo Arim**, Rector and **Carolina Cabrera**, Associate Professor, Universidad de la República, Uruguay

We come from a public university located in the southern cone of Latin America, which is one of the most unequal regions of the world. A region that time and again, has endured powerful attacks on its democratic system. Most evidently so through

“ We strongly believe in the reintroducing of discourse and debate in decision-making mechanisms within higher education, and for nurturing connections that emerge from the interdependence among all levels of education. ”

various civic-military dictatorships having left hundreds of people unaccounted for.

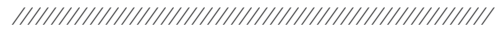
The region is culturally and socially very diverse moulded by intricate and, oftentimes, painful historical processes. There are African and indigenous communities for instance with origins dating back to the conquest of South America. They were displaced as enslaved populations and transferred to these latitudes as part of the European migration movements. The same applies to Asian bondservants, who were uprooted and forced to leave their homeland due to wars and crises. This has led to culturally rich societies that are however deeply and socially unequal.

Latin American universities, established during spells of democratic government are characterized by a high degree of institutional autonomy and with a significant system of self-administration. Among their fundamental purposes, are education, research with social value, and societal engagement. These institutions were typically created in parallel with national administrations in charge of training a significant percentage of these countries’ professionals. Their historical identity comes to the fore in the “Manifiesto liminar de Córdoba”, written in 1918, in which “free men from South America” were called upon to document their accomplishments.

This history depicts the democratic nature of Latin American universities ever since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, in their structure and operations, the interests, aims, and peculiarities of the most underprivileged populations – Black people and Indigenous Americans – have been vastly marginalized. These minorities were relegated to the fringes of university dynamics, focused rather on contributing to their well-being, than showing an interest in integrating them into and within the university itself.

Against this backdrop, many countries in the region have high enrollment rates compared to global standards; with some institutions ranking highly among the world’s top universities. This rapid growth in higher education is a commendable achievement, yet much more needs to be done to foster multiculturalism.

Universities have contributed to framing discourse about interculturalism, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leading to informing national policy and priorities. Despite these achievements, it is vital to acknowledge the importance of multiculturalism; for



this purpose, it is important to pursue the following changes in academia, i.e. to:

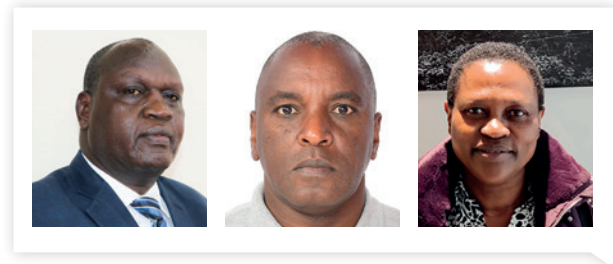
- Expand access to higher education and success, increasing the number of lower-income students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Revise curricula to be inclusive and representative of different cultures and acknowledging that medical curricula have historically centered around white heterosexual males. In the same manner, the judicial syllabus has been based on a societal ideal that excluded the perspectives and cultures of minority communities.
- Integrate knowledge systems of different cultures including indigenous and other minorities.
- Strengthen social engagement by incorporating culturally pertinent topics and by involving various social organizations and local and aboriginal groups in higher education.
- Improve the general link with local and aboriginal groups.
- Establish connections between educational systems of countries with similar histories.

These components, as expressed also at UNESCO's 2022 World Higher Education Conference, are deeply intertwined with comprehending and addressing marginalized segments of society, encompassing women, diverse cultures, and the interplay of international and regional factors. These considerations should underpin all university objectives and ensure that they are reflected in the institutional policies to adapt to contemporary global and local realities.

Effective policies are required to safeguard a universal right to higher education and to be embedded within the research agendas. Many of these challenges refer to the fact that academic recognition and prestige models – whether individual or institutional – rely on metrics that do not reward research at the global level that incorporates the aforementioned topics. For example, these aspects do not have specific recognition in standardized frameworks for comparing academic quality between universities.

Finally, we strongly believe in the reintroducing of discourse and debate in decision-making mechanisms within higher education, and for nurturing connections that emerge from the interdependence among all levels of education. The different priorities listed above can serve to inform debate and democratic exchanges and contribute to the mitigation of various forms of violence emanating from the stark polarization that characterizes our societies today.

## 15 Love-Centered Integrated Teaching/Learning, Research, and Service for Quality and Relevant Higher Education



by **Isaac Sanga Kosgey**, Vice Chancellor, **Eric R. Masese**, Senior Lecturer, and **Eunice Kamaara**, Professor of Ethics, Moi University, Kenya

We are experiencing an unprecedented global crisis, characterized by economic, socio-cultural, moral, religious, and political tensions and divisions within and across countries and regions. This global strife manifests itself in active violence (as in Ukraine and Sudan) and latent violence which threatens to erupt at any time. Global strife is complexly intertwined with climate change, diseases, human rights abuses, poverty, and corruption. Education remains key in disentangling this complexity, building intercultural competence and consequently, peace and resilience.

Higher Education Institutions of (HEIs), revered as bastions of inquiry, analysis, and innovation, bear the responsibility of cultivating and disseminating knowledge, skills, and values that match the needs of society, both locally and globally. Regrettably, this mission encounters significant hurdles where the core pursuits of HE—teaching, learning, research, and service—lack synchronization, are characterised by rigid compartmentalization of disciplines, and prioritization of technical proficiencies and tangible outcomes. The prevailing paradigm of development, framed predominantly through the lens of neo-liberal capitalism, which often perceives non-Western and non-material values as obstructive impediments, further compound this challenge [1].

This is contrary to the overarching aim of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDGs place values (including respect for persons and their inherent dignity) which promote just and inclusive active partnership at the core of development efforts. Values move development discourse beyond abstract aggregates to addressing discrimination

“ Without values, development remains illusionary. ”

and other root causes of inequality, that lie at the heart of poverty, disease, climate change, and violence among other global development challenges. Without values, development remains illusory.

Paradoxically, within HE, there is a lack of well-defined methodology for incorporating values into the process of translating knowledge to practical development. For example, the concept of "internationalization of higher education" is advocated for under the assumption that preparing students with international awareness and intercultural competence effectively equips them for the intricacies of an interconnected global future [2]. Yet, the outcomes of this awareness and competence remains unspecific and unclear, due to a lack of analysis of the underlying values in this endeavour. Unsurprisingly, internationalization of HE has often exacerbated inequalities and injustices, with benefits accruing only for some individual institutions and sectors.

This raises the question: what must intercultural competence in HE consist of for it to build and sustain socially responsible and resilient citizens for effective local action and global peace? We respond to this question in two points in the context of transforming HE to promote impactful, sustainable, intercultural competence and awareness, and consequently, global peace:

### The multiplicity(ies) and complexity(ies) of a human being

Effective education necessarily recognizes the multifaceted and interconnected nature of human beings. A human person embodies various dynamic identities that are shaped by their interactions with other people, over time, and by all aspects of their environment including beliefs systems. This lays a foundation for addressing complex global challenges and promoting sustainable peace and development.

In HE, collaborative experiential learning with an interdisciplinary approach is paramount. This approach requires active participation of HE institutions, local communities, international partners, and industries in co-producing, co-assessing, and co-implementing knowledge. For effective and mutual collaboration, the stakeholders have to humanize the pursuit of sustainable development and foster a sense of shared responsibility for global peace. This inclusive and cooperative endeavour would ensure effective and sustainable consideration of and response to the diverse needs and aspirations of the world and all creation therein.

### Mainstreaming Spirituality in HE Teaching/Learning, Research and Service

At the core of human life and development is education, the process through which humans create and transfer knowledge, practices and skills from one generation to another. Healthy interrelationships, here interpreted as spirituality,

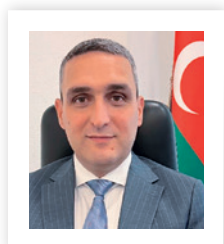
necessarily promote the quality, relevance and impact of the process. Recognizing the multiplicity and complexity of humans and recognizing the need for healthy relationships is the foundation of education and development. Yet, in HE, spirituality is overlooked and sometimes dismissed as irrational, while prioritizing empirical disciplines for material profits for individuals at the expense of healthy interrelationships. This reductionist view undermines the essence of human beings and their interconnections with the entire environment.

The consequence of individualistic insatiable greed, "which places short-term profits above long-term peace and prosperity" (Alung San Suu Kyi), leads to global strife. For global peace and sustainable development, fostering healthy interrelationships through individual acts of compassion and civic responsibility is indispensable. African spirituality, embodied in *Ubuntu*, emphasizes loving relationships with oneself, and nature (living and non-living, visible and invisible), including the supernatural, recognizing the unifying spiritual force within each person. Integrating Ubuntu values in HE can lead to greater interconnectedness, care, compassion, and mutual respect among human beings, contributing to a peaceful and flourishing global community. Cardinal Newman observes: "An academical system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils, is an arctic winter; it will create an icebound, petrified, cast iron university, and nothing else" [3].

### Closing Remarks

Quality and relevant HE for global peace integrates teaching and learning, research and service with all stakeholders working together systematically in respectful interrelationships towards clearly set outcomes. African sages say: "Yes we can" (Barrack Obama); "All of us have a God [love] in us- and that God is the spirit that unites all life, everything that is on this planet" (Wangari Maathai); and "If people can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite" (Nelson Mandela).

## 16 Will the university become a center of socio-mental development?



by **Shahin Bayramov**, Rector, Mingachevir State University, Azerbaijan and IAU Board Member

The higher education landscape is currently undergoing significant transformations in response to globalized processes and technological advancements. These

“While the state's influence is diminishing, with some exceptions, and the market's influence is on the rise, universities grapple with challenges to their identity, spirituality, and cultural foundations.”

changes encompass various aspects of the educational process, including tasks, technologies, and conditions. These transformations have led to the widespread adoption of new educational practices. While the term "informational" characterizes the quantitative capabilities of the information environment, it is equally apt to label this era as a "semantic era." In this context, information can convey meanings that shape the direction and dynamics of contemporary global shifts.

In light of these changes, the acquisition of various skills has become invaluable for modern university graduates. This includes the ability to discern underlying intentions amidst information wars and "double standards." Embracing open, dialogic communication based on mutual understanding and collaboration has also emerged as a crucial competency. As a result, it has become evident that universities need to prioritize teaching comprehension within communication.

Addressing this need involves nurturing the socio-mental sphere of individuals through targeted learning initiatives. It is essential to underscore that simply focusing on raising awareness and developing competencies is not enough to produce capable graduates. The term "socio-mental" extends beyond the conventional interpretation of "mental," encompassing not only the content and functional dimensions of consciousness but also the technological aspects, methods, and mechanisms employed to comprehend texts, events, and more.

Consciousness employs a structured approach that transforms received messages into various virtual forms, each with differing levels of complexity. The quality of understanding hinges on the forms that consciousness has mastered. Consequently, speech encompasses more than just the content of mental processes.

The pertinence of philosophical and sociological comprehension in education arises from the current crises afflicting the higher education system. Widespread dissatisfaction with its outcomes, institutional rigidity, and the disconnection between specialist training and societal needs underscore the need for transformation. The nature of the entire education system must change not in the sense of changing the very foundations and directions of teaching, but to adapt to the nature of modern activity and to transition and implement educational innovations into practice. Such will ensure countries' entry into and maintenance of position in the global information space

and knowledge economy. This transformation, however, does not imply a complete overhaul of teaching's core principles and directions. Instead, it necessitates aligning educational activities with the implementation of innovations, facilitating countries' integration into the information-driven knowledge economy, while bolstering its global standing.

Higher education is becoming a main source of innovative economic development, which is especially important for countries like Azerbaijan. Establishing strong institutional links between education and the state has thus become increasingly critical. It is worth noting that the dissemination of higher education often requires the support of the state apparatus, material resources, and financial assistance.

The modern university in Azerbaijan, shaped by European scientific thought, has historically maintained close ties with the state and relatively indirect connections with the market. However, the current global landscape, marked by the shifting dynamics of the market-state due to intensifying globalization, has placed universities in a scenario of constant evolution. While the state's influence is diminishing, with some exceptions, and the market's influence is on the rise, universities grapple with challenges to their identity, spirituality, and cultural foundations. This changing landscape involves an interplay of university, market, and state, fundamentally altering the dynamics that were once confined to the university and state. This transformation invites a reevaluation of the role of universities in this new context, possibly encompassing discussions of academic values like freedom and autonomy.

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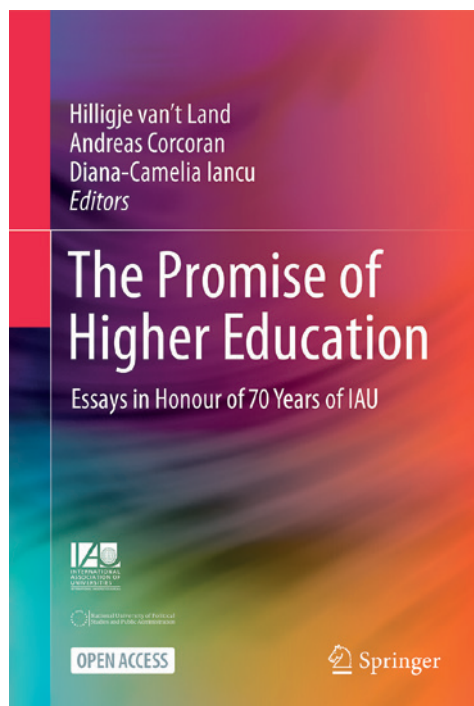
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