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Chair

UNESCO CHAIR IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

2023 - 2025



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FOREWORD

The UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development serves as a vibrant hub within the School of Education, bringing together a growing community of colleagues and doctoral researchers whose work is focused on education, research, and policy engagement across the Global South in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Chair provides a unique platform that not only amplifies the global reach of our academic activities but also aligns seamlessly with the School's four interwoven thematic strands: Lifelong Lifewide Learning; Theory–Practice–Policy; Diversity, Inclusion and Justice; and Global and Local. These strands underpin our research culture and strategic direction, and the Chair enhances them in mutually reinforcing ways – particularly through its strong emphasis on Africa and Asia, including our institutional presence in China and Malaysia.

Under the leadership of Professor Juliet Thondhlana, the Chair has established strategic partnerships across Africa and Asia. These partnerships have resulted in innovative research and policy-relevant initiatives that are already influencing educational systems, shaping practices, and informing change at various levels. The Chair's growing network of partnerships with leading universities in China, such as Zhejiang University, Zhejiang Normal University, Beijing Normal University, and East China Normal University, further strengthens our School's and the University's engagement in international education and enhances our collective contribution to global knowledge exchange.



The School of Education is proud to support the Chair's expanding role as a strategic actor within UNESCO's Global Priorities, particularly through our close association with the Association of African Universities (AAU). The University of Nottingham's partnership with the AAU, and the hosting of its Europe Regional Office (AAU-ERO) within our School, provide vital infrastructure and institutional backing that enable the Chair to contribute substantively to UNESCO's Priority Africa agenda and the Campus Africa Flagship initiative.

Through her coordination of the AAU-ERO, Professor Thondhlana continues to position the Chair as a key contributor to advancing inclusive, high-quality, and contextually grounded education systems across the African continent and beyond. I am confident that the Chair will continue to make a lasting impact through its commitment to international collaboration, research excellence, and transformative engagement in international education and development.

Professor Volker Wedekind
Head of School, School of Education
University of Nottingham

FOREWORD

As the world grapples with overlapping social, economic, political, technological, and environmental crises, the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme has never been more essential. In an era marked by the escalating impacts of climate change, growing youth unemployment, and persistent poverty, advancing genuine progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a critical imperative.

Higher education holds a pivotal role in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – not only through SDG 4 (Quality Education) as a dedicated goal, but also as a foundational pillar that supports the achievement of all 17 SDGs. As higher education becomes increasingly globalised, international collaboration is critical for fostering quality education that can effectively respond to today's complex and interrelated development challenges. Addressing these issues demands inclusive, interdisciplinary partnerships across sectors and geographies.

In this context, as demonstrated in this progress report, the University of Nottingham UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development has, over the past two and a half years, worked to build robust, strategic, and multi-layered international collaborations. These have brought together academics, practitioners, civil society actors, and policymakers – particularly from the Global South, with a focus on Africa and Asia – to co-create innovative research and development initiatives aimed at confronting some of the multifaceted global challenges of our times.



Aligned with UNESCO's Global Priorities – especially the focus on Africa and the empowerment of girls and women – the Chair has become a proactive partner in the Priority Africa Flagship initiative 'Campus Africa'. Through strategic partnerships with the Association of African Universities (AAU), including hosting its Europe Regional Office (AAU-ERO), and with leading Chinese universities that have robust Africa-focused programmes, the Chair is contributing to the strengthening of African higher education. These partnerships aim to co-weave diverse epistemologies, enhance African knowledge ownership, and elevate the visibility and global impact of African scholarship.

Looking forward, this Chair will continue to champion educational justice, intercontinental alliances, and pluriversal futures grounded in dignity, agency, and respect for diverse ways of knowing in Africa, Asia and beyond.

Professor Juliet Thondhlana
UNESCO Chair in International
Education and Development, School of
Education, University of Nottingham

REFLECTIONS FROM CHAIR MEMBERS



Dr Subarna Sivapalan,
Associate Dean, Research
and Knowledge Exchange,
Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences, University of
Nottingham, Malaysia
Campus

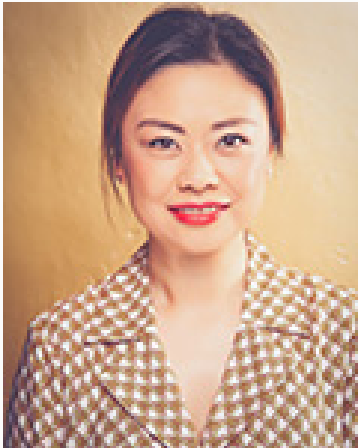
Hosting the UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development Malaysia Office has significantly benefited the Malaysia campus through enhanced recognition of its research and experts within the Asia Pacific region, establishing its experts as key referral points nationally, regionally, and within UNESCO agencies. This has fostered partnerships with the Ministry of Education Malaysia, local agencies, and community-based organisations, leading to the acquisition of research grants, keynote speaking opportunities, and advisory roles in national and international education working groups at the UNESCO level, representing the Chair within the Asia Pacific region.



Dr Yuwei Xu
Associate Professor in
Education
University of Nottingham,
UK Campus

Being a core member of the UNESCO Chair network has enabled me to further grow my work on gender and early childhood education; from a primary focus on China/Asia and the UK to now also include Africa and Latin America. Beyond individual benefits, the network has supported me to provide mentorship and networking opportunities for Global South scholars; through writing for publications workshops, establishing a Global South Childhood Studies Network, and joint books and articles with Global South authors. I look forward to contributing to a new cycle of the chair's work on empowering Global South scholars in international education and development; and on producing knowledge that disrupts a Western-centric dominance.

REFLECTIONS FROM CHAIR MEMBERS CONTINUED



Dr Tingting Yuan
Assistant Professor
in Education and Teacher
Development,
University of Nottingham,
UK Campus

Since joining the University of Nottingham in 2022 as a new staff member, my involvement with the UNESCO Chair has been transformative. Over the past two and a half years, I have participated as a chair member and collaborated with international stakeholders across higher education institutions in teaching and research. The inclusive and innovative environment of the UNESCO Chair at Nottingham has provided remarkable opportunities for personal and professional growth by enabling me to initiate strategic partnerships, lead hybrid events with universities and their UNESCO centres/chairs in China (e.g. Beijing Normal University) and Japan (e.g. Osaka University), and propose tripartite collaboration among institutions (e.g. UoN, Zhejiang Normal University and AAU). The role has deepened my passion for fostering and decolonising international collaborations and has clarified my future research aims on promoting sustainable and just higher education partnerships. I am grateful for how the UNESCO Chair has supported my growth within the institution and look forward to continuing to contribute to its mission.



Dr Alicia Bowman
Assistant Professor in
Education
University of Nottingham, UK

As an Early Career Researcher within the UNESCO Chair, I have been able to address critical issues of gender inequality in academia through a variety of impactful opportunities. My engagement in networking initiatives has enabled me to connect with researchers and practitioners across the Global South working on gender-related challenges. My involvement in research projects focused on developing writing for publication and mentoring skills for ECRs, has provided a foundation for understanding the barriers faced by women in African HEIs. I have successfully secured small grants to further this work and now lead my own project directly addressing the underrepresentation of female STEM lecturers in Ghanaian Technical Universities – a project which is central to my commitment to promoting gender equity. As a Chair member, I have also contributed as a guest lead editor, peer reviewer, mentor and co-facilitator. Moreover, I have collaborated on reports and large funding bids – including co-developing the Theory of Change for a large Centre of Excellence for African ECRs – which has amplified the impact of my work beyond individual projects. I am deeply grateful for the transformative opportunities provided by the UNESCO Chair to address gender disparities in academia and am committed to continuing my contributions to its mission in the future.

GENERAL INFORMATION

2023- 2025 REPORT



ABOUT THE CHAIR

This report details the progress on key activities and engagements in the first two and a half years of the UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development. The Chair is housed within the School of Education at the University of Nottingham and has a global presence through offices at its China and Malaysia campuses. The work of the Chair is also supported by the Nottingham UNEVOC Centre, a key member of the global TVET network, and the Centre for International Education Research (CIER), within the School of Education.

Aim

The UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development aims to bring together key stakeholders from academia, research, industry, government, private sector, and United Nations agencies and civil society to develop strategic and impact-driven transdisciplinary solutions to drive systemic and sustainable change within the Global North and South education and development ecosystem, with a particular focus on Africa and Asia.

Objectives

- O1: Facilitate collaboration to strengthen institutional capacities of higher education, policymakers and civil society in the theory and practice of internationalisation of higher education under the banner of international education and development
- O2: Facilitate knowledge exchange on policy development and community engagement in IHE focused education and development via existing and new international networks
- O3: Identify and coordinate activities that will give colleagues working in diverse disciplines and different education levels/contexts opportunities to initiate and enhance research/teaching on international education and development through internationalisation (for example international partnerships/collaborations, international engagement (conferences/workshops), internationalising activities
- O4: Facilitate and support diverse forms of publications, innovative teaching and other creative outputs
- O5: Contribute to doctoral training and strengthening of supervisory capacity of international partners using virtual training and interactions, organising international workshops and seminars, facilitating North-South, South-South and South-North academic exchanges



Spheres of Action

From its inception, the Chair collective grounded its goals and deliverables in principles of relationality, equity, and knowledge co-creation.

Drawing on the broad objectives outlined in the UNESCO Chair agreement (see p. 9), the team articulated interconnected spheres of action rooted in shared learning, solidarity, and transformative praxis. These are illustrated in Figure 1 and outlined below.

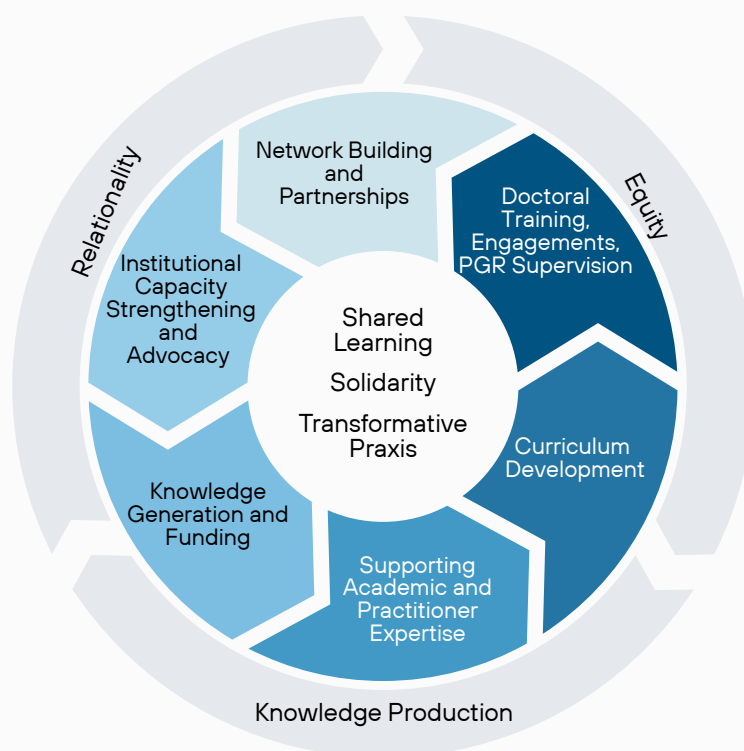


Figure 1. Spheres of Action

Table 1. Spheres of Action Activities

Spheres of Action	Activities
Network Building and Partnerships	formalising IHE partnerships, knowledge exchange, signing new Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), staff exchanges and joint activities
Doctoral Training, Engagements and PGR Supervision	doctoral training; strengthening of supervisory capacity of international partners via joint supervision; workshops, seminars and webinars; academic exchange, and student exchanges
Curriculum Development	co-development of training programmes, curricula, materials and co-training of staff
Supporting Academic and Practitioner Expertise	use online resources and social media to enhance expertise in internationalisation; enhance research/teaching on international education and development through diverse activities including work series, academic/ practitioner exchanges, policy development and academic programmes /curricula development; joint symposia and conferences, with visits to project sites.
Knowledge Generation and Funding	facilitating and supporting publications, innovative teaching, and other creative outputs; as well as joint research activities and publications
Institutional Capacity Strengthening and Advocacy	collaborations to strengthen institutional capacities of higher education, policy makers and civil society in theory and practice of IHE for international education and development

Themes and Topics

The Chair's activities are centred around three interconnected themes, namely (1) International and Global Partnerships, (2) Community Engagement for Social Good and (3) Education Across the Life Course (see Figure 2).

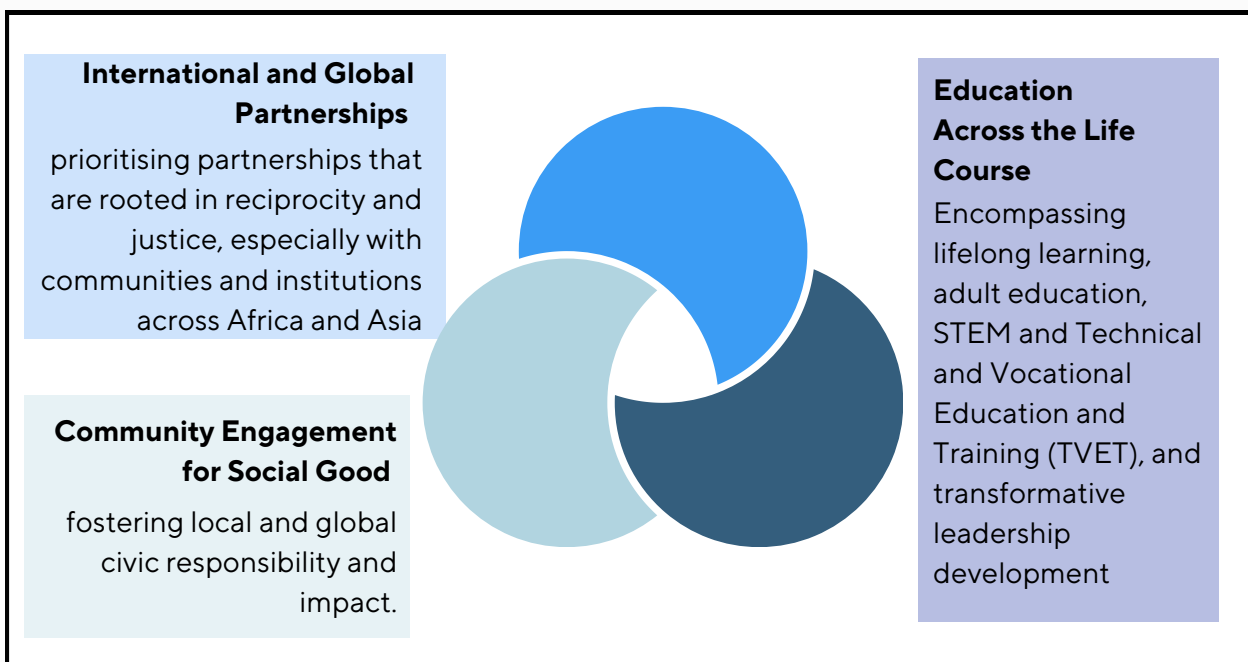


Figure 2. Themes

Themes and associated topics are outlined below.

Table 2. Themes and Topics

Theme	Topics
Internationalization and Global Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Internationalization ○ International partnerships ○ Digital technology ○ Climate Change/Sustainability Education
Community Engagement for Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wellbeing ○ Migrant integration & language education ○ Gender and other inequalities ○ Aboriginal and indigenous communities ○ Forced Migration
Education across the Life Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TVET ○ Educational Leadership ○ Teacher Education ○ Open Education ○ Early Childhood Education ○ Further Education, Adult and Lifelong Education

Chair Members

The Chair benefits from a diverse team of dedicated scholars, whose diverse research interests, expertise and experience drive the Chair's success. Current Chair members are listed below.

Professor Juliet Thondhlana, Holder of the UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development, Head of AAU-ERO, School of Education Global Engagement Lead, University of Nottingham.

Professor Volker Wedekind, Head of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, convenor of the Nottingham UNESCO UNEVOC Centre and Honorary professor at the Centre for Researching Education and Labour, University of Witwatersrand.

Professor Tony Bush, Professor of Educational Leadership, University of Nottingham, President of the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS), Editor-in-chief of the Educational Management, Administration and Leadership (EMAL) journal and Adjunct Professor of Education at the University of Hong Kong (2025-2027).

Professor Christopher Day, Professor of Education, University of Nottingham and Professor of Educational Leadership and Management in the University of Sydney, Australia, and Chair Professor at Beijing Normal University, China.

Dr Yuwei Xu, Associate Professor in Education, University of Nottingham, co- editor-in-chief for Children & Society and Pedagogy, and Associate Editor for Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice. His research focuses on disrupting heteronormative gender discourses as manifested in Global South contexts, empowering all genders in full participation at all levels of life.

Dr Tingting Yuan, Assistant Professor in Education and Teacher Development, University of Nottingham. Her broader research interests include globalisation, public goods and education, international aid of education, China-Africa educational cooperation, international higher education policy and other educational issues within the complexities of global political economy.

Dr Alicia Bowman, Assistant Professor in Education, University of Nottingham. Her research interests include gender, migration, women's empowerment, research capacity strengthening and the expansion of students' capabilities through socially- just pedagogies.

Dr Joanna Al-Youssef, Assistant Professor in Education, University of Nottingham. Her main research interest is in the area of Internationalisation of Higher Education.

Dr Subarna Sivapalan, Associate Dean, Research and Knowledge Exchange, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus and Chair Lead for UNESO Chair in International Education and Development Malaysia Office.

Dr Jo-Anna Russon, Senior Research Fellow, University of Nottingham. Her research is focused on the relationship between the private sector and international development and vocational education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Professor Gary Mills, Associate Professor of History Education at the University of Nottingham, Co-convenor of the Centre for International Education Research and President of the History Teacher Education Network. His research interests are centred on the teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides.

Dr Jalpa Ruparelia, Assistant Professor in Education, University of Nottingham and course lead for the PGCE International. Her research interests are focused on equity, decoloniality, south-north collaborations and STEM.

Dr Frans Kruger, Associate Professor in Education, University of Nottingham, MA in Education Co-Leader and Associate Editor for Education as Change. His research interests are centred around education and social and ecological transformation; critical posthumanism and new materialism and the affective and material turn in education.

Dr Sharon Clancy, Associate Professor, University of Nottingham. Her research is focused on post-16 and adult education. Her writing focuses on class, culture and social justice issues with a psycho-social and historical lens.

Dr Francesca Salvi, Associate Professor in Education, University of Nottingham. Her research focused on climate change education, environmental sociology, and gender studies, particularly in non-WEIRD contexts.

Professor Dalene Swanson, Professor of Education and Director, Postgraduate Research. Her research focuses on global citizenship education and decolonisation.

Dr Imene Kassous, Teaching Associate, University of Nottingham. She is a dedicated youth advocate and researcher focused on autism representation in the Global South.

Dr Zhen Li, Associate Professor in Higher Education, University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus and Chair Lead for UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development Ningbo Office.

Professor Anwei Feng, Professor of Education, University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus, Founder and Vice President of the Chinese Society of Multilingualism and Multilingual Education (CSMME). His research interest is in the area of multilingualism and multilingual education related particularly to ethnic minority groups.



CONTRIBUTION TO UNESCO'S MISSION, MANDATE, PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMME

2023- 2025 REPORT



CAMPUS AFRICA

ALIGNING THE CHAIR'S WORK TO CAMPUS AFRICA

Our work aligns with UNESCO's Priority Africa strategy, particularly the Campus Africa flagship initiative, which focuses on reinforcing higher education in Africa. Whilst our activities may intersect with multiple flagships – namely, Campus Africa: reinforcing higher education in Africa; the General History of Africa (GHA); Fostering cultural heritage and capacity development; promoting the development and use of artificial intelligence in Africa; Harnessing science for sustainable development – Campus Africa is central to our mission due to its direct focus on higher education and its comprehensive framework for action, which is illustrated below in Figure 3.

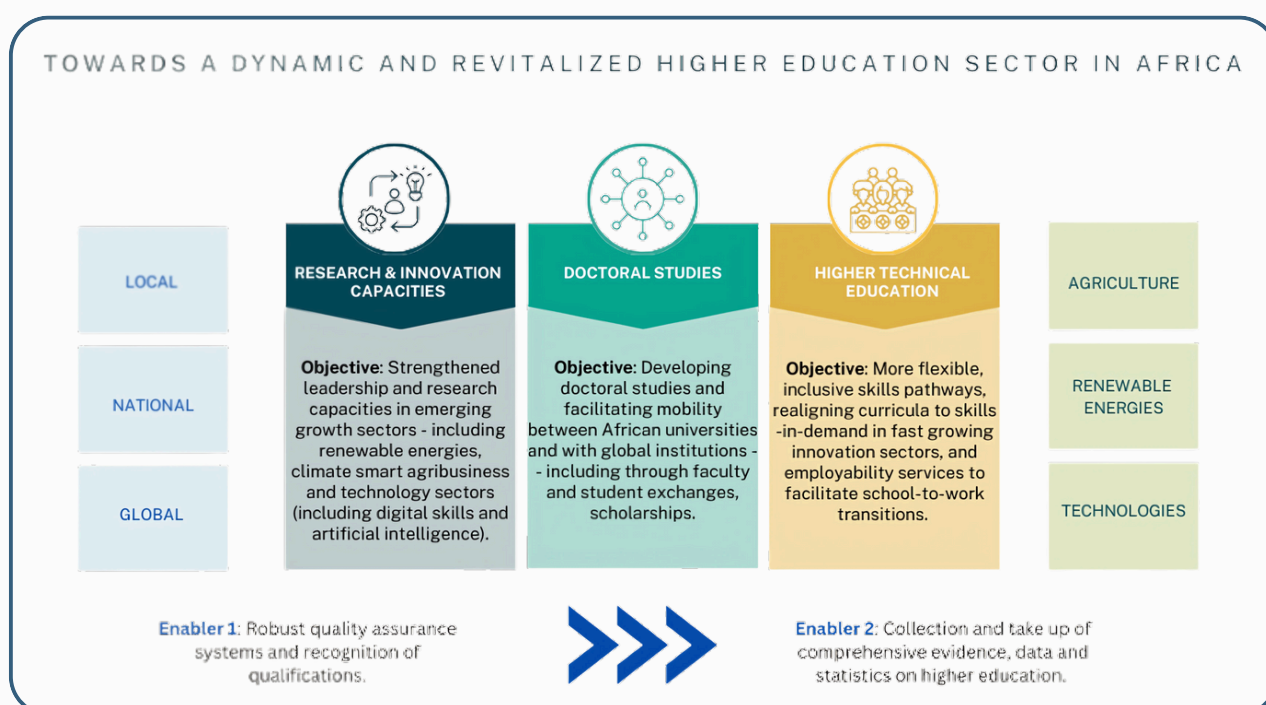


Figure 3. Campus Africa Pillars for Action

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AAU

In line with the Chair's mission to bring together key stakeholders for systemic change in education and development in Africa, one of our core contributions to Campus Africa lies in forging a strategic partnership with the Association of African Universities (AAU) by hosting the AAU European Regional Office (AAU-ERO).

The AAU is a 56-year-old organisation established on 12 November 1967 in Morocco. It currently has a membership of 450 Higher Education Institutions in 48 African countries and its Secretariat is based in Accra, Ghana. It stands as the foremost voice of higher education in Africa. It plays a pivotal role in shaping educational, scientific, and innovation policy; promoting academic excellence; and fostering intra-continental collaboration and global knowledge exchange.



The AAU has deep historical ties with UNESCO. Established in 1967 following a UNESCO-organised conference in Madagascar in 1962, the AAU has maintained a strong and enduring partnership with UNESCO from its inception.

This relationship has flourished through initiatives such as the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25), and ongoing involvement in the Campus Africa initiative.

THE ROLE OF THE AAU-ERO OFFICE

While the scope of the AAU Europe Regional Office is broad, we strategically leverage this partnership to initiate and co-develop projects and activities that align with Campus Africa's objectives.

One such example is our Chair's facilitation of UNESCO and Campus Africa's participation in the upcoming AAU 16th Quadrennial General Conference, "Shaping the Future of Higher Education for Innovation and Sustainable Development of Africa," scheduled to take place from July 21–25, 2025, at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) in Rabat, Morocco as follows:



1. Goodwill message at the Opening Ceremony (UNESCO Assistant-Director General, Ms Stefania Giannini)
2. Keynote Speech (UNESCO Assistant-Director General, Ms Stefania Giannini)
3. Panel Members (Professor Borhene Chakroun, UNESCO Director of Division and Dr Noah Sobe, UNESCO Chief of the Higher Education Section.
4. Facilitation of the AAU-Campus Africa co-development of Executive Leadership Training module on the sidelines of the conference titled: Executive Leadership for Digital Transformation and Change Management. (AAU = African and UoN experts)

Throughout the report we have provided key information on Campus-Africa related projects and activities developed (or under-development; prospective as indicated) through the AAU Europe Regional Office. They showcase areas for engagement by Chair colleagues to support, develop and implement (collaboratively or individually) as well as gaps where it is hoped that colleagues may contribute additional projects.

CONTRIBUTION TO UNESCO'S MISSION, MANDATE, PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMME

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Chair actively contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, and SDG 17, through a multifaceted approach encompassing research, capacity building, and strategic partnerships.



- In relation to **SDG 4: Quality Education**, the Chair's work extends beyond promoting access to education. By focusing on 'Education Across the Life Course', it directly addresses the need for inclusive and equitable quality education, and lifelong learning opportunities for all. This is achieved through specific initiatives in China and Africa such as research into childhood education and wellbeing; the development of environmental education programmes; TVET research and webinars; the co-development of new MA programmes; webinars on internationalisation; training in educational leadership for executive University leaders; and a policy implementation review in Zimbabwe.
- With regards to **SDG 5: Gender Equality**, the Chair directly contributes to the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This commitment is realised through rigorous research studies that expose inequality in academia and shed light on the challenges women face in career progression. Crucially, the Chair supports capacity-strengthening initiatives specifically designed to address these inequities, equipping women with the skills and resources needed to succeed. Projects aimed at emboldening women across the academic pipeline in Africa are also central to the Chair's efforts, fostering a more inclusive and equitable academic landscape.

- In terms of **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**, the Chair facilitates knowledge co-creation and community engagement with a view to fostering social good. These activities contribute to progress in promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, productive employment, and decent work. With a specific focus on Africa, the Chair seeks to address socioeconomic underdevelopment, partly by strengthening the capacities of Early Career Researchers (ECRs). By strengthening their writing for publication and grant writing capacities, the Chair aims to empower ECRs to address local challenges with innovative solutions, and thus contribute, in a targeted way, to economic growth.
-
- Finally, the Chair recognises that achieving the SDGs requires collaboration and partnership, as reflected in its commitment to **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**. The theme of 'International and Global Partnerships' is central to the Chair's approach, emphasising the importance of strengthening global partnerships to support and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is achieved through the establishment of several strategic partnerships in Africa and China, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Engagements with UNESCO and the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chair network

ATTENDANCE AND PRESENTATIONS AT UNESCO CHAIR CONFERENCES

- 30-31 May 2024. "Building True Partnerships with the Global South: Towards a Transformative Partnership Approach", Building True Partnerships with the Global South. University of Birmingham, UK.



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- 18 - 19 July 2024. "Priorities: UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development Activities", Activating UNESCO Chair Contributions to UK and UNESCO Priorities, including Women and Girls' Education and Campus Africa. Activating UK Expertise and Building Partnerships to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal. University College London (UCL), UK.

COOPERATION WITH UNESCO

- The Chairholder is a member of the UK National Commission for UNESCO Research & Innovation Group which *"... supports the UK National Commission for UNESCO in understanding and investigating the potential reach, development, and benefits of the learning and tools emerging from its projects Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage and Local to Global."*



Professor Juliet Thondhlana, UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development and other members of the UK National Commission for UNESCO's Research and Innovation Group (R&I) at Canterbury Christ Church University Heritage Site.

- The Chairholder joined a check-in meeting on 26 February 2025 and gave a short presentation on the Chair's activities in relation to Campus Africa.
- The Chairholder participated in informal information webinars 2024 to answer potential candidates' questions with respect to how to encourage the university's Vice-Chancellor to support the application and funding Chair activities.
- The Chairholder was a member of UK UNESCO Applications Review Panel, 2025
- The Chairholder was invited to join the symposium on UNESCO Chairs held in Riyadh on Dec. 8 2024. The meeting was held with Saudi universities to promote UNESCO Chairs and invite the universities to join the network. The Chairholder, shared her experience of managing the Chair from the application stage to implementation and reporting.
- Christopher Day contributed to the GEM report by UNESCO presented at the G20 meeting in Brazil.
- Dr Subarna Silvapalan has been invited by UNESCO Paris to mentor 3 Malaysian schools under a global action research project for ESD/ASP - 'Transforming futures: Enhancing practice for ESD for 2030 through action research'

KEY MILESTONES, PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

2023- 2025 REPORT



O1: COLLABORATIONS TO STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION, POLICYMAKERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: OVERVIEW

The Chair recognises that internationalisation is often intertwined with colonial legacies, and as such, actively promotes decolonial processes to dismantle inequitable power structures. To support this commitment, and further the University's global engagement, the Chair has brought together a network of researchers within the School of Education to foster North-South, South-North, and South-South research collaborations.

Between 2023 and 2025, the Chair and its members established several strategic partnerships. These are listed in below and are explored in more depth in the pages that follow.

Africa	China	Rest of the World
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Association of African Universities (AAU)• AAU Southern Africa Regional Office (AAU-SARO)• Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zhejiang Normal University• University of Zhejiang• Beijing Normal University• East China Normal University• Ningbo City College of Vocational Technology• UNESCO Chair in Entrepreneurial Education at Zhejiang University, China	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNESCO Chair International Education for Development, George Washington University• UNESCO Chair in Internationalization of Higher Education and Global Citizenship of the University of Guadalajara (UdeG)• UNESCO UK<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Member of the UKNC Research & Innovation Group◦ UNESCO Heritage Pilot Project• Berlin University Alliance

THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES EUROPEAN OFFICE (AAU-ERO)

To amplify the Chair's impact, and in line with UNESCO's Priority Africa initiative, we established a strategic partnership with the Association of African Universities (AAU).

The Association of African Universities (AAU) is Africa's apex higher education organisation. Its mission is 'to *enhance the quality and relevance of higher education in Africa and strengthen its contribution to Africa's development*'. The AAU adopted the strategy of establishing regional offices around the world to help it to respond to its mandate and vision of improving higher education quality as recommended by the AU Agenda 2063. To this end the Association of African Universities Europe Regional Office (AAU ERO) was established on the 26th January 2023.



Prof. Shearer West, Vice-Chancellor of the UoN, Prof. Bakri Osman Saeed, President of the AAU, Prof. Olusola Bandele Ayewola, Secretary General of the AAU and Professor Juliet Thondhlana, UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development and Head of AAU ERO.

Through the AAU ERO office, the Chair aims to drive improvements in the quality of African higher education by fostering strategic collaborations across Africa and Europe, ultimately strengthening Africa's capacity for knowledge creation and dissemination, and directly contributing to UNESCO's Priority Africa agenda.



International collaboration is essential to teaching and research. The university is developing a new strategy for engaging with partners in Africa, at the core of which is developing equitable partnerships with collaborators, so we are delighted to be partnering with the AAU to advance research and innovation across our continents. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together as our collaboration grows further.

Professor Juliet Thondhlana
UNESCO Chair in International Education and Development

Guests who attended the launch event – both in person and remotely – were able to join a panel session on University Collaborations between Europe and Africa: Strengthening Research and Teaching Excellence and a further session on Transformative Partnerships: Advancing the Research Ecosystem between African and European Higher Education Sectors, which featured representatives from Association of Commonwealth Universities Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, as well as the AAU and University of Nottingham.

Other sessions outlined the aims and objectives of the new office and what it can offer to member universities and its current and emerging projects, which include data ethics in education, research writing workshops, mapping the landscape of AI design and use in higher education in Africa and capacity building/executive education with African institutions. Attendees also had the opportunity to find out more about Africa-focused research which is currently being carried out at Nottingham.



Prof. Volker Wedekind, Head of School of Education, Prof. Bakri Osman Saeed, President of the AAU, Prof. Olusola Bandele Ayewola, Secretary General of the AAU and other AAU members.



The Association of African Universities represents over 430 universities in Africa and the setting up of the office in the University of Nottingham is a way of connecting universities in Europe to universities in Africa. I look at this collaboration as a strategy for development through various forms, such as research partnerships, student exchange and mobility programmes. It will promote knowledge sharing between the two continents and also enhance our research capabilities in Africa and across Europe.

Professor Olusola Bandele Ayewola
Secretary General of the AAU

ACCELERATING UON-AAU RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE PARTNERSHIP VISIT

From 18th to 21st March 2025, Professor Juliet Thondhlana, UNESCO Chairholder, and Dr Alicia Bowman and Dr Tingting Yuan, UNESCO Chair members, visited Ghana to strengthen the research and knowledge exchange partnership between the University of Nottingham and the Association of African Universities (AAU).



Professor Juliet Thondhlana (UNESCO Chairholder), Dr Alicia Bowman and Dr Tingting Yuan (UNESCO Chair members) and AAU partners.

The aims of the visit included:

- strengthening the research and knowledge partnership between the University of Nottingham and the AAU;
- evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the British Academy Writing Workshop and identifying existing strengths and gaps;
- co-developing a sustainable model for writing workshops and mentorship, building on the success of the previous workshops;
- planning for one or more joint articles and funding bids; and,
- co-developing concrete avenues for future collaboration.

A key outcome of this visit is a collaborative theory of change for a Centre of Excellence supporting African early career scholars and doctoral students. Next steps involve securing funding for this project and for a collaborative initiative to support Global South scholars in publishing internationally. The latter will be a tripartite partnership between higher education institutions, journals, and journal editors in the UK, Africa, and China.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH CHINESE UNIVERSITIES



Between 2023 and 2025, the Chair strategically established partnerships with four leading Chinese Universities – Zhejiang Normal University, University of Zhejiang, Beijing Normal University, and East China Normal University. – institutions which demonstrate a strong commitment to African higher education.

These partnerships were formalised through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and will help mobilise support for our Africa-based initiatives and advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The collaborations between UoN and these leading Chinese Universities will foster staff and student mobility, knowledge exchange, and joint research projects, strengthening both South-South and North-South cooperation.

BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY AND ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY VISITS AND ACTIVITIES

In June 2023, delegations from Beijing Normal University's Institute of International and Comparative Education and Zhejiang University's Department of Education visited UoN's School of Education. During this visit, our partners explored, accelerated and celebrated our partnerships with them in research, teaching, postgraduate research (PGR) support.



Professor Volker Wedekind, Head of School and Chair Member, Professor Juliet Thondhlana, Chairholder, and Professor Tony Bush, Chair Member, with BNU representatives.

The programme of activities can be seen below:

Programme		
BNU IICE	Friday 9 June 2023	Symposium on 'Transforming Education for International Understanding and Global Justice' This symposium discussed how educational practitioners and researchers collaboratively transform teacher development and school curricula for international understanding in the current global context.
BNU IICE	Monday 12 June 2023	The BNU delegation met our UNESCO Chair team , Centre for International Education Research members (including PGR students), and other staff and PGR students interested in international and comparative education and collaborating with IICE.
ZJU	Monday 19 June 2023	Sandpits on teaching, research and other collaborations with ZJU This event started with an introduction to ZJU's Department of Education and our School of Education, followed by various discussions on how the two universities could collaborate in teaching, research, and other areas. Colleagues and PGR students from ZJU joined online for some of the discussions.
ZJU	Tuesday 20 June 2023	The ZJU delegation met our UNESCO Chair team and senior leadership team to discuss next steps of the partnerships, informed by the sandpits.

The symposium on '*Transforming Education for International Understanding (EIU) and Global Justice*', was a UNESCO-chair led multi-stakeholder symposium with guest speakers from:

- the University of Cambridge (Prof. Susan Robertson)
- Beijing Normal University (Prof. Jun Teng and Prof. Baocun Liu from the Institute for International and Comparative Education)
- a local school in Chengdu China, (which had participated in an EIU project by BNU), and
- a local trust in Bath, England (which had led reciprocal activities with a teacher college in Mufulira, Zambia)



In addition to these activities, the BNU IICE delegation visited the UoN during the 21-23 June 2023. Three IICE professors, Jun Teng, Yimin Gao and Yingmin Jiang visited the Jubilee campus and met the Head of School and UNESCO Chair team to discuss further collaboration. Professor Juliet Thondhlana, Chairholder, along with Dr. Yuwei Xu and Dr. Tingting Yuan, Chair members, visited IICE and Institute for Teacher Education at BNU in Beijing on the 30th June 2023.

Following these visits, a MoU was signed between the Institute of International and Comparative Education (IICE) at BNU and the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. The MoU focuses on developing research collaboration and enhancing learning capacity in the field of international and comparative education, education for international understanding and international development.

The MoU outlines the following collaborative activities:

- Annual visits between faculty and researchers at UoN and BNU.
- Development and publication of a handbook on International and Comparative Education, emphasizing a Southern perspective. This handbook will be published in both Chinese and English versions, by publishers in China and England.
- Collaborative editing of a special issue, led by the UNESCO chair, focusing on education in Africa and Asia.
- Implementation of a post-doctoral research program facilitating visits by IICE researchers to the UoN.
- Hosting a conference in two years, in addition to ongoing regular hybrid research seminars.
- Development of a doctoral student network encompassing Higher Education Institutions in China, the UK, and African countries, in cooperation with AAU-ERO. The AAU and UNESCO chair will jointly recommend outstanding African students to BNU for funded PhD studies at the IICE and the Institute for Teacher Education of BNU.

Further collaboration included a successful application of a Special Issue on 'University-school partnerships (USPs): improving education towards social and global justice' at the International Journal of Educational Research. This has led to a collection of studies from four continents (Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America) which focuses on how USPs can effectively tackle social inequalities and global injustice. In addition to this, two writing retreats were held at IICE-BNU, during April 2024 and April 2025, attended by Dr Tingting Yuan (UNESCO Chair member) and IICE staff, focusing on co-authored papers. Next steps include collaborating on another special issue on '*Community-based approach to empower teacher: China, Africa and Beyond*'.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN EAST CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY (ECNU) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM (UON)

In May 2024, East China Normal University (ECNU) and The University of Nottingham (UoN) signed a MoU to record the universities' plans to collaborate in staff/student mobility and research activities, including Global South-South and North-South knowledge exchange and research projects.



Professor Robert Mokaya
OBE, UoN's Pro-Vice-
Chancellor for Global
Engagement signing MoU
with ECNU representatives

EAST CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY VISIT AND ACTIVITIES

After signing an MoU in May 2024, a delegation from East China Normal University (ECNU) - 19 staff and students - visited the School of Education for a week-long academic program that included an academic writing workshop facilitated by the UNESCO Chair.

Colleagues from the UNESCO Chair, The Observatory for Mathematics Education, The Centre for Research in Educational Leadership and Management, Global Childhoods Research Group, and Higher Education Futures Research Group contributed to the week via formal and informal talks and communications.

Members of The UNESCO Chair led a one-day academic writing workshop as part of the week. The day started with a keynote delivered by Professor Tony Bush and Associate Professor Yuwei Xu, who shared their experiences of editing leading educational journals Educational Management Administration & Leadership and British Educational Research Journal. This was followed by four parallel sessions where delegates met with journal editors to further discuss their intended publishing plans and related questions. Professor Juliet Thondhlana led one of the parallel sessions as Editor of Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, a leading international journal on teacher education.



ECNU Delegates accompanied by Dr Yuwei Xu and his PhD students



Professor Tony Bush, Editor-in-Chief for Educational Management Administration & Leadership



ZHEJIANG NORMAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH VISIT

In May 2025, Professor Christopher Day visited Zhejiang Normal University to continue to develop a collaborative research on '*The Emotional Resilience of Early Childhood Teachers*'. This was a very successful visit: the team at ZNU will submit a proposal for a two-year partnership in the near future, alongside plans to design a leadership programme specifically for leaders of Early Childhood in Inclusive School Classrooms. The outcomes of this visit represent a major step forward in fostering collaboration and developing leadership capacity within Early Childhood Education in China.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN NINGBO CITY COLLEGE OF VOCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM (UON)

During October and November 2024, Professor Volker Wedekind, Head of School of Education, Professor Juliet Thondhlana, UNESCO Chair of International Education and Development, Professor Christopher Day and Dr Yuwei Xu (UNESCO Chair members) visited China to develop new partnerships and consolidate existing ones.

A key achievement from the visit is a new Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Nottingham and Ningbo City College of Vocational Technology, led by the UNESCO Chair of International Education and Development network. The college is located in Ningbo City and its campus is right next to the University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus. This partnership aims to facilitate closer connections between the university's three campuses (UK, China and Malaysia) and the city of Ningbo, focusing on vocational and adult education, which are areas of strength in the School of Education.



Professor Wedekind (HoS, UNUK and Chair Member), Professor Hogsette (HoS, UNNC), Professor Thondhlana (UNESCO Chairholder), Dr Sivapalan, Dr Ng and Dr Xu (Chair Members)

TRI-CAMPUS GATHERING AT UNNC

Colleagues from the Schools of Education and English across the three campuses met in Ningbo in October 2024. The visit, designed to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange, also brought together the UNESCO Chairholder and the UNESCO Chair Malaysia and Ningbo Office leads. Participants engaged in workshops, networking sessions, and brainstorming activities, leading to the identification of several potential joint research projects and initiatives aligned with the SDGs. The event facilitated stronger relationships among attendees and laid the groundwork for future collaborative endeavours that will enhance research impact and address key global challenges. In addition to the gathering, Dr Yuwei Xu was invited to do an academic writing workshop for PGR students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNNC.



Professor Thondhlana (UNESCO Chairholder), Dr Sivapalan (UNESCO Chair Malaysia Lead) and Dr Ng (UNESCO Chair Ningbo Lead)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN ZHEJIANG NORMAL UNIVERSITY (ZJNU) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM (UON) IN AUTISM RESEARCH

Professor Thondhlana (UNESCO Chairholder), Professor Day and Dr Xu (Chair Members) were invited to Hangzhou to celebrate the signing of a new MoU between UoN and Zhejiang Normal University (ZJNU). This partnership will particularly focus on research and teaching collaborations in special and inclusive education, following the launch of a new National Centre for Autism Research at ZJNU.



Professor Thondhlana (UNESCO Chairholder), Professor Day and Dr Xu (Chair Members) and ZJNU Representatives

During the visit, the Chairholder and Chair Members each did a talk on their specialisms to ZJNU staff and students. The talks were highly received and showcased the world-leading research at SoE.



Professor Thondhlana (UNESCO Chairholder), Professor Day (UNESCO Member) and ZJNU staff and students



Professor Day (Chair member) delivering a presentation to ZJNU staff and students

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS WITH GLOBAL SOUTH SCHOLARS

ACADEMIC WRITING WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOLARS FROM HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

Since 2024, Dr Xu has been part of a UK-South Africa team (led by the Open University) that provides training and mentorship to early career lecturers working at three historically disadvantaged universities in South Africa. Dr Xu has also frequently delivered academic writing training at universities in China, Singapore, and Kazakhstan.

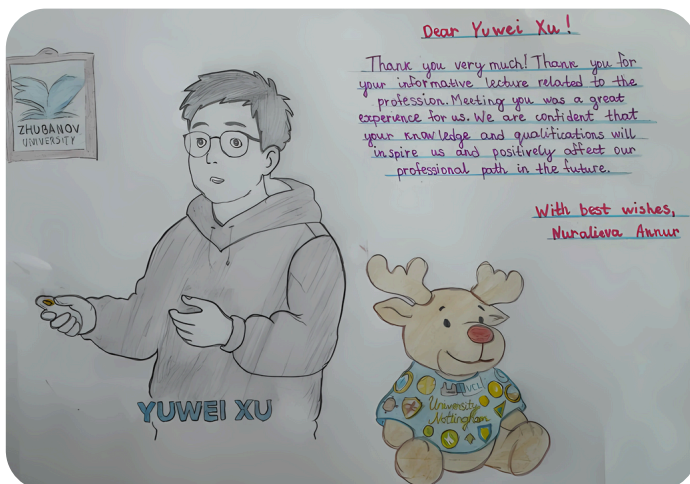


Dr Xu (Chair member) and fellow facilitators

NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF EDUCATORS AND RESEARCHERS IN SOUTH AFRICA, KAZAKHSTAN, AND CHINA

Since 2023, Dr Xu has been a visiting scholar to University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, Zhubanov University in Kazakhstan and Shenzhen University in China. During this period, Dr Xu has delivered lectures and seminars on gender and education, inclusive education, and academic writing to undergraduates, postgraduates, and staff members. These activities align with the Chair's mission to strengthen the capacity of the next generation of educators and researchers in the Global South. These initiatives were highly successful and have led to new collaborations for the Chair, including a new project exploring teacher training for inclusive education in Kazakhstan (in development).

Dr Yuwei Xu (Chair member)
with staff and students at
Zhubanov University,
Kazakhstan



Drawing gifted to Dr Xu (Chair member) by a student at Zhubanov University

GLOBAL SOUTH CHILDHOOD STUDIES NETWORK

With funding from UoN and support from the Chair network, Dr Xu is establishing a Global South Childhood Studies Network. The network's founding members include UoN, the Education University of Indonesia, University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), and Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina. Working on equality, diversity, and inclusion issues in childhood(s) in relation to children living in underrepresented and/or marginalised contexts, this network will promote existing scholarship around Global South childhood. Moreover, we will use this network to capacity-build early career Global South childhood scholars, and to explore joint research projects that disrupt dominant constructions of childhood. Ultimately, the network aims to push the field beyond universal and western-centric knowledge about children.

O2: FACILITATE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN IHE FOCUSED EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHE) FRAMEWORK

Between January 2023 and June 2023, the UNESCO Chairholder, Professor Juliet Thondhlana co-conducted a policy review study to evaluate the extent to which Zimbabwean higher education institutions and key stakeholders had met the national internationalisation of higher education policy implementation targets.

From 2017 and 2020, the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education embarked on an initiative to develop an IHE Policy for Zimbabwe, working under the auspices of the ZIMCHE-University of Nottingham partnership which the Chairholder co-led with Professor Evelyn Garwe.

The IHE policy was designed to harmonise the way Zimbabwean higher education institutions approach internationalisation. The policy guides higher education institutions to develop their institutional policies and strategies, aligning them with national priorities, institutional goals and SDGs 4 and 8.

The process included a baseline study, development of a theory of change (thus, allowing for longer-term impact evaluation), six stakeholder engagement and expert guided policy development workshops, presentation and approval by the Higher Education Minister, representing the Zimbabwean Government. The IHE policy was approved in January 2020 for implementation by higher education institutions. The policy provides targets/milestones for key stakeholders and higher education institutions to attain by 2023. The IHE policy implementation was due for evaluation in January 2023.



This project included an investigation of progress, challenges, and new initiatives related to the implementation status of the IHE Framework across Zimbabwean higher education institutions three years after its adoption. The review sought to identify gaps, policy variations, and areas that require further support or action to provide evidence-based recommendations and solutions to enhance the implementation of IHE in Zimbabwe.

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected through an online survey distributed to academics, administrators, students and staff at Zimbabwean universities. Key informant interviews provided additional insights. The sample included 61 responses. Both qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques were used. Respondents represented a range of roles including executives, deans, directors, academics, students, administrators and support staff. Participation spanned public and private universities in Zimbabwe.

FINDINGS

Findings highlighted that whilst valuable progress had occurred in developing IHE policies, marketing efforts, student mobility initiatives, and research linkages, overall, implementation remained in the early stages. Only a few institutions had comprehensive strategic plans or dedicated coordination structures in place. Curriculum internationalisation and research collaborations also showed limited progress at that point.

Statistical analysis of the survey data found that lack of funding and capacity building were the most significant impediments, accounting for around 20% of the variation in IHE implementation levels. Infrastructure gaps and qualification differences also had notable influence, whilst COVID-19 and economic issues also exacerbated difficulties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the project's completion, several recommendations were made to enhance its impact and ensure long-term sustainability. It was recommended that targeted investments in funding, training, technology, and facilities upgrades be made to accelerate internationalisation. To optimise impact, a focus on capacity building in strategic planning, project management, and cultural competency was advised. It was also suggested that harmonising qualification standards through sector coordination could streamline mobility. Finally, continued benchmarking and support mechanisms were recommended to sustain momentum in the long term.



MALAYSIAN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (EE) / EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD): WHERE IS THE NATION NOW AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

This project aimed to provide strategic curricula, pedagogical and educational leadership and management recommendations to the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) to enable the development of effective professional development support mechanisms and programmes for school leaders and teachers to integrate and infuse EE/ESD and pro-environmental behaviour within formal and informal education at primary and secondary levels.

This project was approved by the Ministry of Education Malaysia and its findings were presented as part of the COP28 Malaysia Pavillion. The findings were also presented to the Ministry of Education's Educational Planning and Research Division and Curriculum Development Division. Findings were also used as part of the consultation document for the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2026-2035.



Dr Subarna Sivapalan, UNESCO Chair member



O3: INITIATING AND ENHANCING RESEARCH/TEACHING ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION

SELECTED RESEARCH PROJECTS

THE ETHICS IN DATA AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES RESEARCH PROJECT

This is an ongoing collaborative research project between the AAU, UoN and the Ethical Data Initiative (EDI). The project team is currently mapping the landscape of AI in Higher Education in Africa. Through a quantitative survey, this research project hopes to understand if and how AI is being used for teaching, learning, research and administrative purposes in African Higher Education. The aim here is to provide evidence for informed policies and collaborations. This aligns well with UNESCO's objective to reinforce the collection and take-up of comprehensive evidence, data and statistics on higher education for decision-making. It also aligns with the AAU's Strategic Result Area 1, which seeks to foster a favorable higher education policy environment across Africa—at national, regional, and continental levels—through evidence-based advocacy.

ENHANCING SYSTEM SUPPORT FOR TEACHER WELL-BEING AND RETENTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A PLACE-BASED, COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AGENDA

This vision grant project proposes the formation of a multi-membership, trans-Atlantic team of researchers from George Washington University (GW) and the University of Nottingham (UoN). Together with key stakeholders from three African countries (Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe), the team will collaborate in the planning, design, and formation of a research and development project focused on teacher retention, and well-being. The project will embody a key UN target of establishing "international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries" (SDT Target 4c). It will: (1) provide research-informed and locally-oriented knowledge about why teachers leave and why they stay in the profession; and (2) ensure the collaborative design of these place-based, multi-membership networks and operational hubs across three different settings. The establishment of this research-with-development design will lead to the foundation of three in-country networks and hubs. These hubs will support the cultivation of localized and research-informed knowledge related to retention and well-being of teachers in each of the three systems.

SELECTED RESEARCH PROJECTS CONT'D

SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN CHILDREN IN YIWU, CHINA

This collaborative pilot study between Zhejiang Normal University and the University of Nottingham seeks to investigate the everyday racism experienced by African children in Chinese schools. Taking a community-based approach (Smith and Sobel, 2010), it explores the school as a community where dominant social discourses are enacted and performed through educational activities by key stakeholders.

SOME STAY AND SOME LEAVE: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHINESE AND UK PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AND INTENTIONS TO CHOOSE AND REMAIN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTINGS

This collaborative pilot study between Zhejiang Normal University and the University of Nottingham aims to explore emotional resilience of preschool teachers in UK and China as well as their intentions to choose and stay in inclusive education settings using creative qualitative approach. The pilot study will provide culturally sensitive insights into promoting teacher well-being and capacities for emotional resilience in both countries. It will also demonstrate the role of epistemic locations and zones of power in shaping teachers' emotional resilience and willingness to work in inclusive education settings. Findings will be compared with experiences of teachers in the context of Africa.



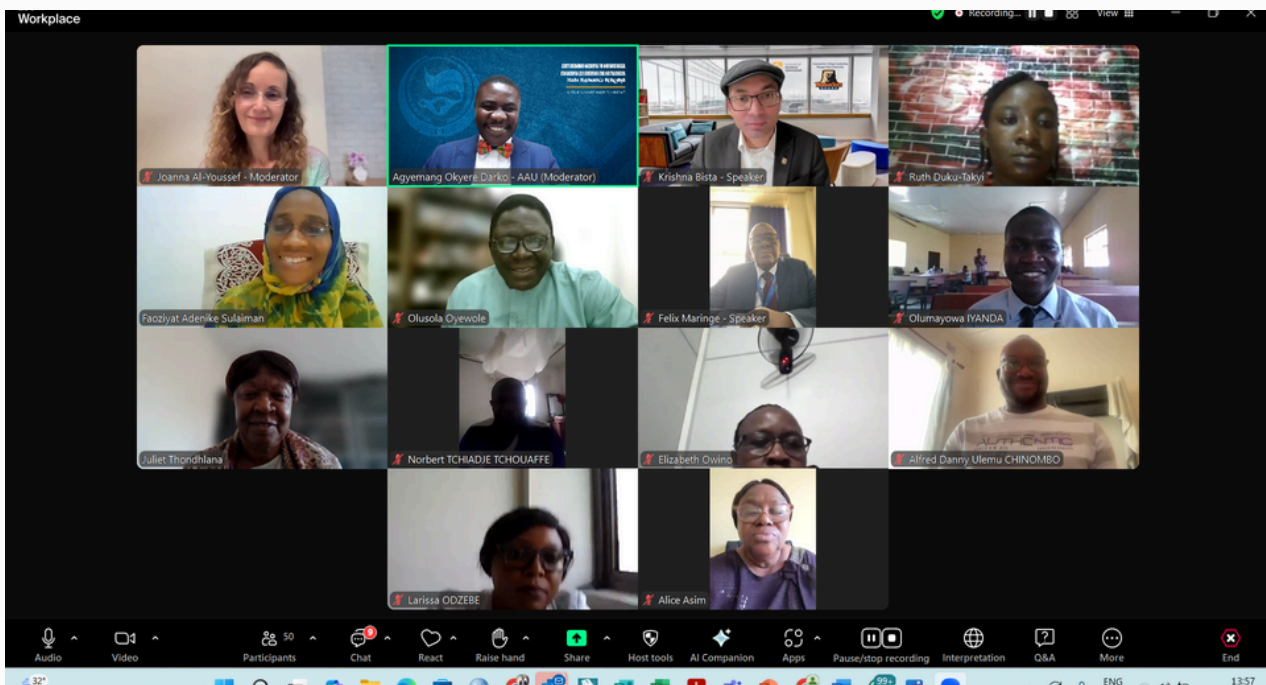
THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION WEBINAR SERIES

The Internationalisation Webinar Series is an ongoing, independent initiative that has convened global educators, researchers, and policy experts since 2007. It is a flexible, community-driven model for rethinking what it means to educate across borders. Its purpose is to critically explore the evolving dimensions of internationalisation in higher education, offering a platform for inclusive dialogue, research dissemination, and policy reflection.

The 2025 series marks a significant step forward in thematically centring African higher education contexts and sustainability imperatives, in alignment with global goals for inclusive, equitable, and context-sensitive higher education development.

The 2025 series is structured around four thematic sessions, including (1) Internationalisation within the African Higher Education Context; (2) Policy and Practice in African Internationalisation; (3) Sustainability, Global Citizenship, and the Future of Internationalisation; and, (4) Looking Ahead: Futures of Internationalisation in African HEIs.

These sessions aim to bring together speakers and participants from across the Globe, creating a space for mutual learning and challenging traditional narratives. In contrast to conference-based or institutional policy dialogues, the webinars are free to access, openly recorded, and intentionally diverse in speaker representation. This positions the series as both a public good and a living archive of internationalisation discourse from a global South and decolonial perspective.



Dr Joanna Al-Youssef (UNESCO Chair member), webinar facilitators and participants.

The Internationalisation Webinar Series have made a meaningful contribution to global higher education discourse by fostering inclusive, critical, and sustained engagement. Key contributions of the 2025 series include:

- reframing internationalisation as a relational and context-responsive process rather than a market-driven goal;
- highlighting African agency in global education discourse;
- fostering equity-based partnerships between institutions in the Global North and South.
- amplifying multilingual and intercultural pedagogies as central—not peripheral—to internationalisation.

Looking ahead, the series intends to:

- Broaden participation through multilingual webinars and regional co-hosting models.
- Integrate creative formats such as storytelling, student panels, and arts-based research showcases.
- Collaborate with regional organisations and intergovernmental bodies to support policy development ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.

THE ETHICAL DATA DISCUSSION SERIES

The Ethical Data Discussion Series is one of the flagship collaborations of the partnership between the AAU, UoN, and the Ethical Data Initiative (EDI), leveraging the expertise of leading scholars in AI ethics, governance, and emerging technologies. The collaboration actively contributes to shaping policy discussions and research agendas aligned with Africa's educational and developmental goals.

The Series promotes the Campaign for Data Ethics in Education, serving as an influential knowledge-sharing platform, engaging diverse stakeholders in conversations about the ethical implications of data and emerging technologies, fostering digital literacy, and equipping educators and students with critical insights into responsible use.

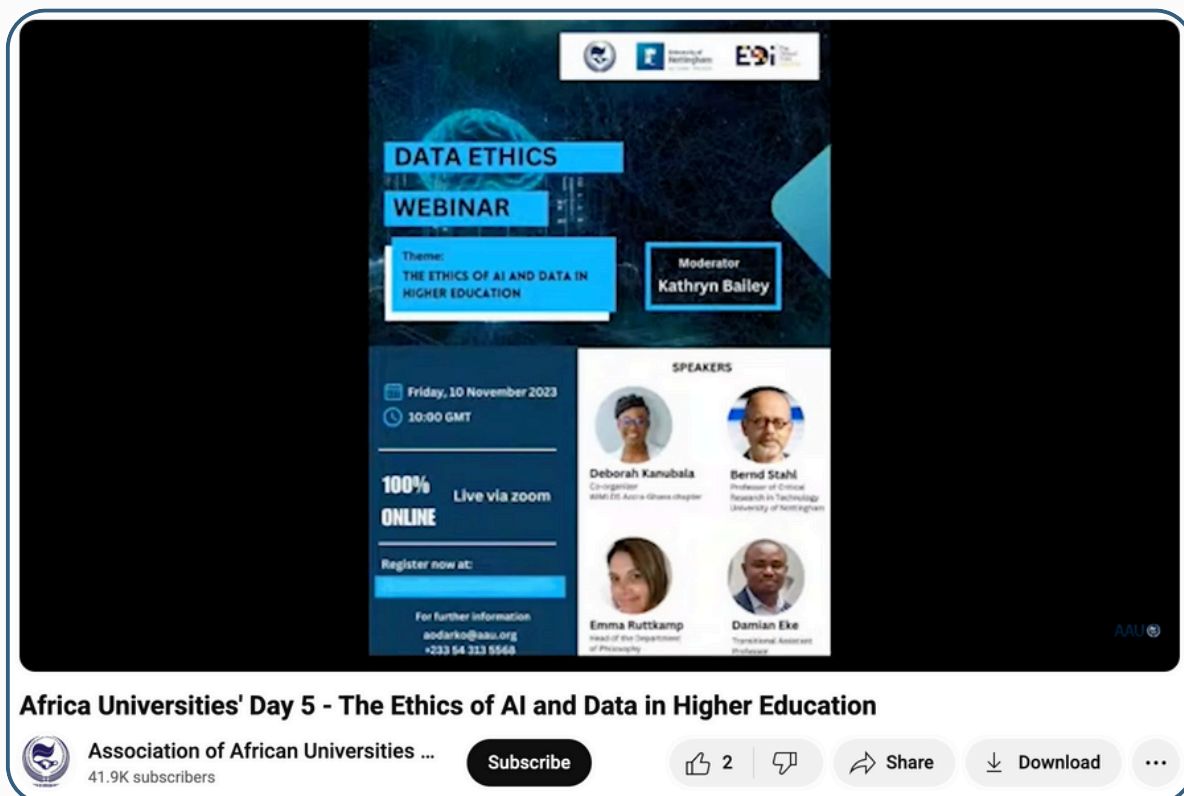
The series explores ethical considerations surrounding digital technologies, data collection, and data-driven research; highlighting the importance of ethical training among digital professionals. In doing so it advocates for the integration of data ethics in all higher education courses with a particular focus on data science education and research. It aims to educate the next generation of data and research professionals about their legal and ethical obligations when it comes to using, reusing, and sharing data. In today's increasingly connected and digitised world, data is everywhere, and its significance cannot be overstated. With the increasing prevalence of big data and artificial intelligence, it has become clear that data ethics is essential in education and for individuals and organisations.



The ongoing set of programmes, originally broadcast on AAU TV, features expert panel discussions on various topics related to data ethics, research, and education.

Topics include:

- Data Ethics Policy in Higher Education
- Human Rights in the Platform Economy
- The Ethics of AI in Higher Education
- Unveiling Bias: Navigating Gender Disparities in Data and AI
- Child Protection in the Age of AI
- Building Resilient Education Systems through Responsible Research and Innovation
- Ethical Challenges of Data and Research in Agriculture



Ethical Data Discussion facilitators and participants

Suggested themes for 2025 include:

- The impact of power imbalances in data and data-driven technologies and research
- Challenges specific to health data
- Data safety - Mechanisms being put in place to protect individuals in the context of AI-driven technologies
- AI and work force transformation
- AI, Institutional transformation and social impact



O4: PUBLICATIONS, INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND OTHER CREATIVE OUTPUTS

OVERVIEW

The Chair has actively fostered a supportive environment for diverse forms of scholarly outputs and innovative practices. This commitment is reflected in the increased number of publications by the Chair members, the use of webinars to facilitate knowledge exchange amongst international partners and the design of several projects aimed to address SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, and SDG 17. Furthermore, the Chair has encouraged its members to integrate international perspectives into their curricula and research, leading to the development of a new Master's programme in International and Comparative Education.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS/ACTIVITIES (CHAIRHOLDER)

BOOK CHAPTERS

- Garwe, E. C., & Thondhlana, J. (2024). Private Provision of Higher Education in Zimbabwe: Contrasts of Provision and Quality. In *Emerging Dynamics in the Provision of Private Higher Education in Africa* (pp. 223-246). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-56882-4_10
- Garwe, E. C., & Thondhlana, J. (2023). Trajectory towards developing skills for the future: A decolonial perspective from Zimbabwe's higher education sector. In *Sustainable and Dynamic Graduate Employability* (pp. 204-222). Routledge India. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003278061>
- Garwe, E. C., & Thondhlana, J. (2023). Higher Education in Zimbabwe. In *Chronicles on African Philosophy of Higher Education* (pp. 107-134). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004543805_009

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- Garwe, E. C., & Thondhlana, J. (2024). *Report on the Status Implementation of the Internationalisation of Higher Education (IHE) Policy Framework*. Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education.
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- Owen, E., Nasir, A., Thompson-Hare., C., Thondhlana, J., Bowman, A., Garwe, E., Jones, K., & Karanja, F. (2025). *Universities in the Global South and Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality): Opportunities for Data-Led Action and Partnership* [Whitepaper]. THE & KPMG.
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FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

- Thondhlana, J., Garwe, E., McGrath, S., Broadley, M., Millar, K. (Under Revision) A Doctoral Training Model to Guide an Evolving System. *A Journal of Further and Higher Education*.
- Feng, A. et al. (Forthcoming 2026). Edited Book. *Glocal Talent Research Project- Nurturing glocal talents in international and transnational higher education*. Routledge.

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

- 2025. Constructing Glocal Citizenship Through the Internationalisation of Higher Education: Navigating the Impact of Historical Imbalances. KU Leuven University, Belgium.
- 2024. The role of strategic partnerships in promoting equitable and quality education for Inclusive Global South development. China-Africa Deans of Education Forum, Beijing Normal University, China.
- 2024. Developing strategic partnerships for tackling global emergencies: challenges and opportunities. Bath Spa University, UK
- 2024. The role of African Higher education institutions in African community-based CO2Compensation. Greening Africa Together, Berlin University Alliance, Germany. Virtual.
- 2024. "Higher Education and the development of strategic partnerships for tackling global emergencies", Global Vision and Chinese Path for Building a Higher Education Power. Zhejiang University Higher Education Forum 2024, Zhejiang University International Campus, November 2-3, 2024.
- 2024. Panelist. International Evaluation on the Academic Degree Programs in Education of Zhejiang University. November 4-6, 2024. Zhejiang University

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS/ACTIVITIES (CHAIRHOLDER) CONTINUED

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

- 2023. Invitation to the 9th UNESCO-APEID Meeting on Entrepreneurship Education, October 26-27, 2023, Hangzhou, China.
- 2023. Building strategic international partnerships in higher education through a UNESCO Chair: towards a transformative partnership approach, UNESCO Chair Conference. University of Birmingham, UK.
- 2023. Decolonizing research methodologies in educational research. Shanxi University
- 2023. Constructing Glocal Talents: The Role of Decolonisation. University of Nottingham, China.
- 2023. Perspectives on Internationalization from the Global South: Collaborations and Marginalization. Sheffield Hallam, UK.
- 2023. Developing a curriculum for global competence: rationale, key concepts and considerations. Xicheng Academy, Beijing, China.
- 2023. Reshaping Modern Classrooms: Teaching and Learning in China. Xicheng Academy, Beijing, China.

CONFERENCES/SYMPOSIA/WEBINARS/SEMINARS/VISITS

- 2023. NINBO Campus Team. "International Symposium on glocal talents development".

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS/ACTIVITIES (CHAIR MEMBERS)

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- Bhana, D., Xu, Y., & Adriany, V., Eds. (2024). *Gendered and Sexual Norms in Global South Early Childhood Education: Understanding Normative Discourses in Post-Colonial Contexts*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003211600>
- Brody, D., Xu, Y., Emilsen, K., & Coles, L., Eds. (2025). *Young Children's Perspectives on Teacher Gender: Contextualizing Gender Stereotypes and Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Education and Care*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003401049>
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- Day, C., Smith, H. V. Graham, R., Athanasiadou, D. (2024) *Teacher Professionalism During the Pandemic: Courage, Care and resilience*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003391661>
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- Bush, T. (2025, 20-26 May). Publishing in International Journals [Keynote presentation]. East China Normal University.
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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

TRANSITIONING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN AFRICA

This ground-breaking book (VET Africa 4.0 Collective, 2023) challenges traditional, and often northern, conceptualisations of vocational education and training (VET); analyses both VET and work in broad, relational and inclusive ways; develops and applies original theoretical contributions drawn from political ecology; and moves beyond 'extractive' modalities of research in this important arena. In terms of 'process', the book has further distinction and originality due to the innovative ways in which the 20 core authors/researchers have combined to form the VET Africa 4.0 Collective and wrestled with the decolonial challenges and dynamics of coproduction and joint authorship within the context of an externally funded international Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) partnership.

DEVELOPING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN TANZANIA: IMPACT OF A BRITISH COUNCIL INITIATIVE

This article (Bush, 2023) presents findings from a British Council funded programme focused on developing instructional leadership in Tanzanian schools. The programme, delivered over six to nine months, incorporated school-based projects and aimed to equip school leaders with essential skills and knowledge. Feedback from participants indicated a significant increase in understanding key concepts such as vision, mission, distributed leadership, and instructional leadership processes, particularly regarding classroom observation. Despite the success of the programme, previous research highlights a persistent challenge: leadership in many sub-Saharan African countries, including Tanzania, often prioritises administrative duties over instructional leadership. This underscores the need for continued emphasis on the practical application of instructional leadership principles.

CULTURAL COLD WARS AND UNESCO IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Cultural Cold Wars and UNESCO in the Twentieth Century (Morgan, 2024) addresses the now-considerable interest in the concept of cultural cold war as a means of advancing ideologies. The book charts the development of the concept in the twentieth century. Structured in two parts, Part I considers the League of Nations' idealist attempts at international intellectual cooperation. It discusses also the first cultural cold war with the Communist International's attempts to advance communism. It also analyses the ideological and cultural appeal of Italian fascism, German national socialism, and Japanese nationalist militarism; and the transition from a wartime alliance to a new cold war. Part II examines the renewal of international intellectual co-operation through the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the context of a second cultural cold war between the capitalist democracies and the communist bloc. The book shows that UNESCO became a site of this ideological competition and an example of its tensions.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS CONTINUED

UNIVERSITIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5 (GENDER EQUALITY): OPPORTUNITIES FOR DATA-LED ACTION AND PARTNERSHIP

This whitepaper (Owen et al., 2025), produced by THE and KPMG, shines a spotlight on universities in the Global South, a region of diverse and dynamic SDG contributions, and presents instances of exemplary best practice and opportunities for collaborative partnership development. It includes a case studies on effective collaboration with the Global South from the University of Nottingham (Thondhlana, Bowman and Garwe) and University of Reading (Jones and Karanja). Examining the performance of six markets (India, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Egypt and a Sub-Saharan Africa aggregated group) across eight metric indicators, it also demonstrates the unique position of universities to enact social change and proposes five recommendations to ensure that policy, practice, funding and institutional capacity are aligned for success.

YOUNG CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHER GENDER: CONTEXTUALIZING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

This book (Brody et al., 2026) draws on ethnographic studies in nine countries across six continents to examine children's perspectives on their male and female teachers. Contributors from China, Brazil, Australia, South Africa, Israel, Turkey, Norway, UK, and the USA present case studies based on early childhood education sites where both men and women work. Using the Mosaic approach, the book uses data collected through various methodologies, along with extensive observations and interviews with setting directors, teachers, and parents. The chapters highlight the children's perspectives on their caregivers and teachers within their socio-cultural contexts. The authors also consider macro-level cultural contexts to enhance the micro-picture from the children's evidence and demonstrate how children's perspectives are influenced by various ecologies and cultural contexts, with intersectionality such as tradition, race, and religion playing important roles. The book ends with a cross-country analysis and recommendations for gender-sensitive pedagogies that consider local cultural gender sensibilities.

O5: DOCTORAL TRAINING AND STRENGTHENING OF SUPERVISORY CAPACITY OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

BRITISH ACADEMY (BA) FUNDED WRITING WORKSHOP AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS (ECRS) 2023-2025

Building on the success of the 2019 British Academy (BA) writing workshop, Professor Juliet Thondhlana, Professor Evelyn Garwe, senior academic mentors (including UNESCO Chair member Dr Alicia Bowman) and journal editors (including UNESCO Chair members Professor Tony Bush and Dr Yuwei Xu), in partnership with the Association of African University (AAU) and the British Council Ghana, ran a 3-day British Academy sponsored writing workshop in Accra, Ghana in March 2024 and a 12-month mentorship programme.



UNESCO Chair members (Professor Juliet Thondhlana, Dr Yuwei Xu, and Dr Alicia Bowman), writing workshop facilitators and participants.

The BA Writing Workshop and Mentorship Programme, which was conducted under the UNESCO chair to support UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa, focused on strengthening the research and grant writing skills of Early Career Researchers and enhancing the mentoring abilities of alumni. It offered a complementary approach by directly addressing the "last mile" challenges in the research-to-publication pipeline.

The programme was particularly notable for its:

- Multi-level mentorship model, combining senior academics and alumni mentors to foster sustainable peer learning;
- Editorial engagement, involving journal editors from both African and international journals to demystify the publishing process;
- Grant writing integration, enhancing ECRs' ability to translate research into funded projects;
- Focus on diverse disciplines, thereby addressing a crucial gap in existing capacity-building portfolios.



Unlike many externally driven initiatives, the BA model adopted a collaborative, context-sensitive, and alumni-led approach, positioning it as a scalable and decolonial model for research empowerment. This aligns with broader continental efforts aimed at improving scholarly writing, publication readiness, and mentorship capacity among ECRs – areas often underemphasised in mainstream institutional reforms.

Key outcomes of the programme include measurable improvements in participants' academic writing, peer-review navigation, grant proposal development, and mentorship skills, all of which underscore its efficacy. Significantly, these improvements were accompanied by tangible outcomes, including high rates of manuscript submissions, acceptances in peer-reviewed journals, successful grant applications, and notable advancements in career trajectories.



“

The Programme has been very valuable. You put a team of young scholars together, you open an opportunity to collaborate. And if you do a presentation, someone can look at you in terms of a role model, in terms of a networking partner, in terms of, the possibility of writing a paper or carving out part of what you have presented to write a paper. So, bringing people together is such a big thing because we are social beings. And once you have had a workshop with people, the network becomes stronger. And through those networks, through the Writing Workshop, through mentorship, gender inequality issues can be addressed.

BA Writing Workshop and Mentorship Programme participant

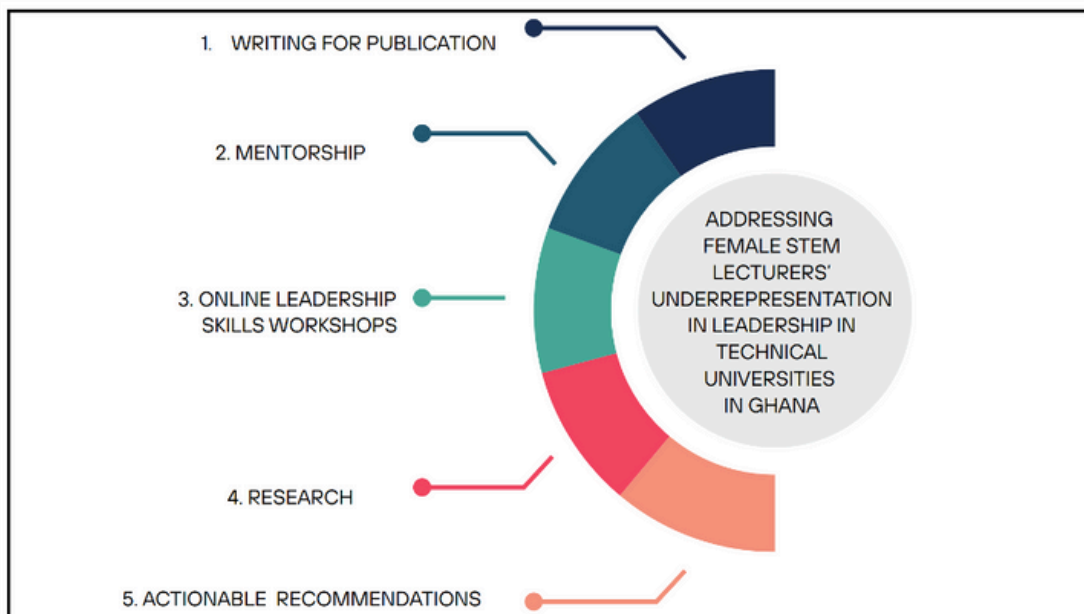
ADDRESSING FEMALE STEM LECTURERS' UNDERREPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA (2024 - 2026)

The 'Addressing Female STEM Lecturers' Underrepresentation in Leadership in Technical Universities in Ghana' project (2025 – 2026) is a qualitative study, with an interdisciplinary scope, led by, co-designed by and with the participation of female Global North and South scholars, designed to primarily benefit women by addressing the barriers hindering their career advancement. It draws on the collaborative partnership between the School of Education at the University of Nottingham (UoN), Ho Technical University (HTU) in Ghana and the Association of African Universities (AAU) and is supported by funding from the British Council's Going Global Partnerships programme.

This project aims to:

- explore the experiences of female STEM lecturers in Technical Universities in Ghana in attaining a leadership position;
- identify the macro and micro level processes that perpetuate the inequities they face in academia;
- examine the impact of capacity strengthening strategies, including writing workshops and mentorship, in addressing gender-based obstacles; and
- put forward recommendations to redress disparities and achieve gender equity in Technical Universities in Ghana.

The project has got several components, which are illustrated below:



Some of the expected benefits of this project include increased leadership opportunities for female STEM lecturers at Ghanaian Technical Universities; enhanced research and career development skills; greater visibility and recognition within their institutions, and amplified voices in shaping policies that promote gender equality. The project could also lead to more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, greater diversity in decision-making processes, and a shift towards a more collaborative and inclusive academic culture.

THE 'ADDRESSING FEMALE STEM LECTURERS' UNDERREPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA' WRITING WORKSHOP

We successfully facilitated the 2-day writing workshop component of this project on Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th May 2025 in Accra, Ghana. Over these two days, participants engaged in insightful discussions and practical sessions on (1) understanding contexts and navigating the publication process; (2) submitting and getting published in academic journals; (3) identifying journals and crafting compelling titles and abstracts; and (4) developing a STEM research paper and understanding the peer review process.



UNESCO Chair members (Professor Juliet Thondhlana and Dr Alicia Bowman), writing workshop facilitators and participants.

The writing workshop was a resounding success. Out of 28 attendees, 27 completed the writing workshop evaluation survey, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Comments provided by participants underscore the impact of this writing workshop in empowering participants through skill development and fostering their growth as researchers and leaders.



“

The most useful answer or comment for me was that leadership is something you do. You should do things, and in doing, you're leading. You're helping others, helping yourself and you are leading. You grow into leadership positions. And also, good research takes time, care and rigour. And I will keep this in mind at all times. Not to be slow, but to know that I believe in the research I am doing. I will be ethical, and I will be a trusted researcher not just a cited researcher.

Writing Workshop participant

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The Executive Leadership Training initiative, which will be launched during the 16th Quadrennial AAU Conference in Rabat, Morocco, represents a strategic investment in leadership ecosystems across African higher education. Anchored in UNESCO's Campus Africa Flagship, the training will contribute to UNESCO's vision of future-ready, resilient, and digitally enabled universities in Africa.

The training forms part of the multi-level leadership development track under Campus Africa, which spans executive visioning, strategic change, digital transformation, and inclusive governance.

Capacity strengthening around digital transformation is viewed as an ongoing process within a long-term strategy for institutional, ecosystem and human capacity strengthening. The Executive Leadership training will lay out a pathway for guiding higher education institutions in effectively integrating AI and digital technologies into their management, teaching and learning practices. Indeed, the intended training is conceived as one "module" or entry point within the broader, integrated Leadership Development Pathway under Campus Africa.

The 2-day training goes beyond traditional conference workshops by positioning digital transformation in the higher education sector as a long-term institutional journey (with post-training mentoring and coaching), one rooted in national and regional ownership, gender equity, and systems thinking. Through experiential learning, contextualised roadmaps for institutional change and post-training engagement, the training will equip leaders not only with knowledge, but with the tools and support to drive measurable, inclusive digital transformation aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 4 and SDG 5).

In particular, the training sets out to:

- Equip leaders and senior managers (including Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors, Rectors) with essential knowledge for understanding the broader ecosystem involved in digital transformation and managing institutional change in African HEIs.
- Enhance institutional resilience and agility in the face of rapid technological and socio-economic shifts.
- Promote gender-responsive leadership by addressing systemic barriers to women's participation in HEI governance.
- Establish a supportive community of practice that facilitates ongoing learning, co-creation of solutions, and scaling of innovations.
- Create a platform for knowledge-sharing and collaboration among leaders from diverse African HEIs.



This project is a collaboration between the Chair (Professor Tony Bush and Dr Luis Torres-Retamal), AAU experts and UNESCO Campus Africa.

FUTURE PROJECTS

2023- 2025 REPORT



CHAIR RENEWAL

Objectives

As noted throughout this report, the UNESCO Chair has spent the past two and a half years laying a strong foundation as follows:

- Developing its networked approach through identifying, enhancing and coordinating a range of activities that give colleagues working in diverse disciplines opportunities to enhance their work on education and international development;
- In the context Priority Africa establishing strategic partnerships that facilitate the development and alignment of projects and activities to the Campus Africa Flagship. Key partnerships reflect this approach:



- With the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Chair was invited to host the AAU Europe Regional Office, launched in January 2023.
- In Asia, the Chair works with Chinese universities that have robust Africa-focused programmes, aligning with African priorities, co-weaving epistemologies and strengthening African higher education's sovereignty, visibility, and contribution to global knowledge systems.

In the renewal period, the Chair network will continue to conduct and consolidate research and impact activities that position the Chair as a collaborator in UNESCO's Priority Africa agenda—championing educational justice, intercontinental alliances, and pluriversal futures grounded in dignity, agency, and respect for diverse ways of knowing.

This will include implementing and promoting the principles of the Africa Charter, thereby prioritising Africa not as a site of intervention, but as a locus of educational transformation. Work in Asia will be approached through strategic, non-extractive collaborations that support African educational futures.

CHAIR RENEWAL

Objectives

In the renewal period, the Chair network will continue to conduct and consolidate research and impact activities that mostly position the Chair as a collaborator in UNESCO's Priority Africa's Campus Africa Flagship.

Objectives (with minor adjustments), include:

- RO1: Facilitate and support research collaborations and publications to enhance understanding of SDGs, challenges and opportunities that impact international education and development in Africa, Asia and beyond.
- RO2: Continue to identify and coordinate activities that will give colleagues working in diverse disciplines and different education contexts opportunities to initiate and enhance research/teaching on international education and development in South-North and South-South-North collaboration.
- RO3: Facilitate collaborations to strengthen institutional capacities of higher education institutions, policy makers and civil societies in Africa and Asia (including China and Malaysia) under the banner of international education and development.
- RO4: Consolidate and expand knowledge exchange on policy making and community engagement in international education and development via existing and new international networks in Africa, Asia and beyond.
- RO5: Contribute to doctoral training and strengthening of supervisory capacity of international partners using synchronous and asynchronous training, webinars and online discussion sessions; co-developing/co-facilitating international research writing workshops; mentorship programs and seminars; and facilitating South-South, South-North, North-South academic exchanges and networking activities.



EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

This project aims to design and deliver an executive education leadership training program for the Association of African Universities' (AAU) member institutions. Co-created with African subject matter experts, this project will leverage the expertise of AAU-ERO to enhance leadership capacities across African higher education institutions. The programme aims to deliver a contextual and impactful curriculum that explores the distinct challenges and unique opportunities faced by research, academic, technical and professional leaders in higher education in Africa. This is a multi-component project that, through a co-creation approach, ensures African perspectives and priorities remain central, driving impact and relevance.

The project will:

- Conduct a comprehensive study to:
 - examine the distinct challenges and emerging opportunities faced by research, academic, technical, and professional leaders within higher education institutions (HEIs) across Africa.
 - identify capacity gaps in leadership to inform the development of responsive, evidence-based training interventions.
 - analyse gender disparities and structural barriers that hinder women's full participation and representation in HEI governance, in alignment with UNESCO's commitment to gender equality (SDG5.5).
- Design a contextually grounded, pedagogically robust leadership curriculum that is modular, flexible, scalable, and adaptable to diverse African higher education environments. The curriculum will promote inclusive, ethical, and transformative leadership aligned with SDG4 and SDG5.5.
- Leverage the AAU to establish inclusive and strategic partnerships with African higher education institutions, government bodies, civil society, and development partners, with the goal of co-creating a sustainable resource model and implementation framework that ensures long-term impact, buy-in and local ownership, and alignment with continental development priorities.
- Pilot the leadership development program in selected institutions, incorporating feedback from stakeholders to enhance relevance, effectiveness, and cultural responsiveness.
- Implement a train-the-trainer model to enable institutionalisation, local capacity building/strengthening, and widespread adoption across the continent, supporting UNESCO's vision of building resilient education systems and strengthening leadership in higher education.





Expected outputs include:

- Reports and publications, including a comprehensive needs assessment report on the challenges, opportunities, and capacity gaps in HEI leadership across Africa; a gender analysis report highlighting structural and institutional barriers to women's participation in HEI governance with actionable recommendations; and peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals.
- Leadership curriculum and training/institutional resources, including a modular, flexible leadership curriculum, tailored to different contexts; training manuals, facilitator guides, and learning resources; a train-the-trainer toolkit to build/strengthen institutional capacity for ongoing leadership training; and a capacity-needs assessment tool for HEIs.
- An implementation framework and clear roadmap, including a sustainable resource and implementation framework co-created with key stakeholders; a scalable implementation roadmap with timelines, resource allocation and monitoring mechanisms.
- Evaluation documentation, including pilot implementation reports with outcomes and feedback; a revised localised curriculum based on evaluations and a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to assess program effectiveness, equity outcomes, and long-term impact.
- Influence national and continental policies to embed leadership development into higher education strategies, leveraging the AAU's role as the AU's higher education implementing body.

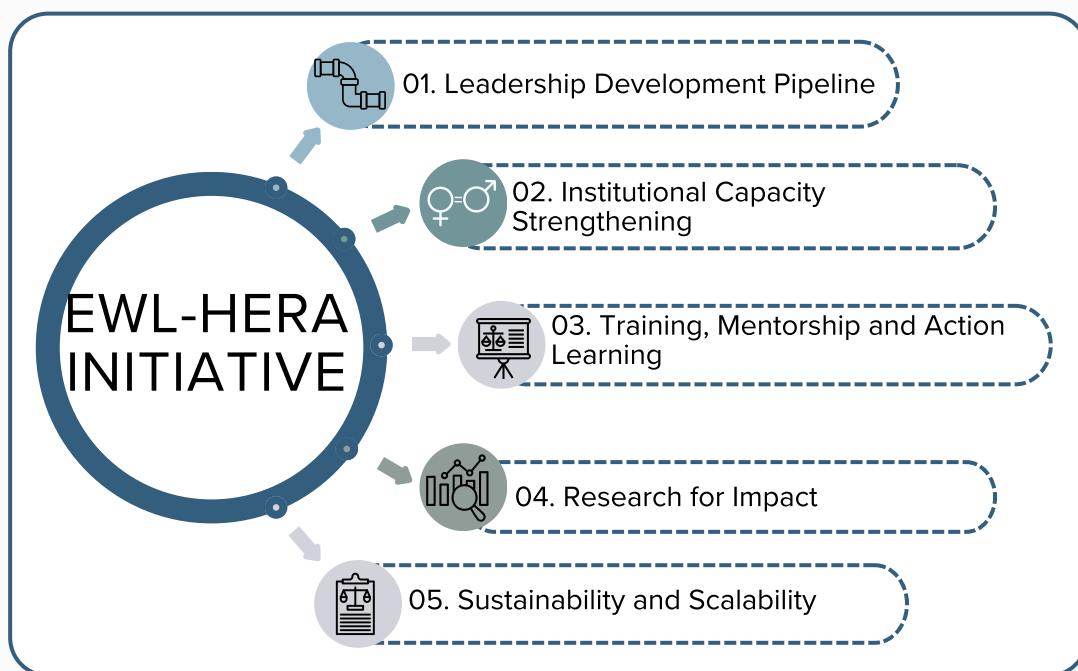
This project is a collaboration between the Chair (Professor Tony Bush and Dr Luis Torres-Retamal), AAU experts and UNESCO Campus Africa.

EMPOWERING/EMBOLDENING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN AFRICA

The Emboldening Women in Leadership in Higher Education and Research in Africa (EWL-HERA) project is a comprehensive, transformative collaborative initiative that seeks to address the significant gender disparities in leadership positions within African universities and research institutions. The project will span a period of 10 years, focusing on creating a sustainable leadership pipeline for women in academia and research, from secondary education through to senior leadership roles in higher education and research institutions by providing participants with training, mentorship, and direct leadership experience at various stages of their academic and professional journeys.

Through a systems-thinking approach and an emphasis on inclusivity, EWL-HERA will create an ecosystem of empowered women leaders who will drive institutional change, produce high-impact research, and ensure that higher education in Africa becomes more responsive to the needs of its diverse populations. By emphasising inclusivity, institutional responsiveness, and systems thinking, EWL-HERA will strengthen organisational capacity for women's leadership in higher education, while integrating 21st-century skills, adaptive co-management, and Southern-led research for impact.

EWL-HERA seeks to achieve this by focusing on five key areas as illustrated below.



The Chair aims to collaborate on specific components of Thematic areas 3 (Training, Mentorship, and Action Learning) and 4 (Research for Impact). Specifically, the Chair aims to collaborate on (1) training, (2) mentorship and (3) capacity building for research excellence activities in order to strengthen the leadership capabilities, confidence and networks for women across different career stages in African HEIs; to increase their representation in leadership positions; and to embolden women researchers to lead initiatives that generate tangible, long-term benefits for the continent.

EMPOWERING/EMBOLDENING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN AFRICA

These activities will directly contribute to UNESCO's Priority Africa agenda and SDGs 4, 5, 8 and 9 as they align with UNESCO's emphasis on building capacity and fostering knowledge production within African institutions. Moreover, the Chair's activities directly support UNESCO's overarching vision of gender equality by strengthening women's leadership skills and increasing their representation in African HEIs. By creating a sustainable leadership pipeline for African women in academia and research, the project aims to contribute to a more equitable representation of women, a key priority within the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its aspirations for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Proposed activities include:

- Offering in-person and online training in areas such as negotiation, public speaking, conflict resolution, project management, and strategic thinking.
- Training women researchers in policy engagement and impact strategies.
- Delivering modular mentorship and training programmes across 10 HEIs.
- Matching emerging women leaders with mentors who are established academics, industry leaders, and international experts in relevant fields.
- Expanding mentorship access through digital and peer-led models.
- Providing training and mentorship to women researchers to help them secure research funding, develop research proposals, and build collaborative networks.
- Collaborating with funders to promote inclusive research criteria.



Expected outcomes include:

- Over 500 women will have completed the leadership training programme, with follow-up evaluations showing a 60% increase in confidence and leadership skills.
- Establish national and regional peer leadership networks.
- 100 senior mentors will be paired with emerging women leaders across the continent.
- Institutionalise mentorship and leadership training within HEI faculty development systems.
- Certify academic leadership pathways linked to career progression.
- 50 women researchers will have applied for international and regional funding for their projects.
- Create a platform for pan-African collaboration and dissemination.

This project is under development. It is collaborative initiative between the AAU, AAU-SARO and the UNESCO Chair/AAU-ERO (Professor Juliet Thondhlana, Dr Alicia Bowman, UoN experts).

THE AAU PAN-AFRICAN INTERDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC WRITING/RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME

This programme provides a comprehensive framework for supporting early-career researchers (ECRs) in diverse disciplines in Africa, enabling them to thrive in their research endeavours and contribute to the advancement of knowledge across the continent. It caters for different research methodologies and publication formats while also providing tailored mentorship and inter-institutional/national research networks. It provides training on a wide range of research skills, academic writing and career development to help ECRs to develop the skills they need to conduct high-quality research and navigate the often-complex world of academic publishing.

This programme aligns with both UNESCO's Campus Africa initiative, which emphasises strengthening research capacity, and the African Union's Agenda 2063, which prioritises human capital development and scientific advancement. By empowering African ECRs to contribute to global knowledge production and address critical challenges, the programme directly supports both UNESCO's vision for a more inclusive and equitable world and the AU's vision for a prosperous, knowledge-based Africa.

Objectives:

- To develop rigorous and original writing capabilities across disciplines.
- To guide participants through the publication process, including journal selection manuscript preparation, and responding to reviewers' comments.
- To provide comprehensive training on research methodologies, data analysis, and presentation of findings.
- To offer tailored advice on grant writing, conference presentations, and networking opportunities. to promote collaborative research.
- To build research impact.
- To foster interdisciplinary collaboration and networking opportunities among participants.
- To offer a variety of mentorship models to meet the needs of different mentees. This could include in-person workshops, online modules, and one-on-one mentorship.
- To address gender considerations and mental health support within the research community.

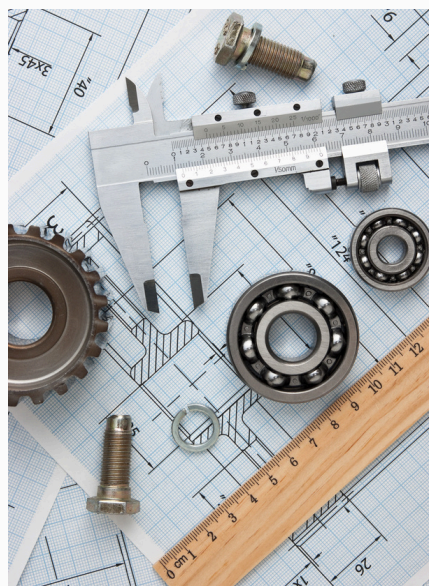


This project is under development. It is collaborative initiative between the AAU, AAU-SARO and the Chair/AAU-ERO (Professor Juliet Thondhlana, Dr Alicia Bowman, Dr Yuwei Xu, Professor Tony Bush and UoN experts).

OTHER FUTURE ACTIVITIES

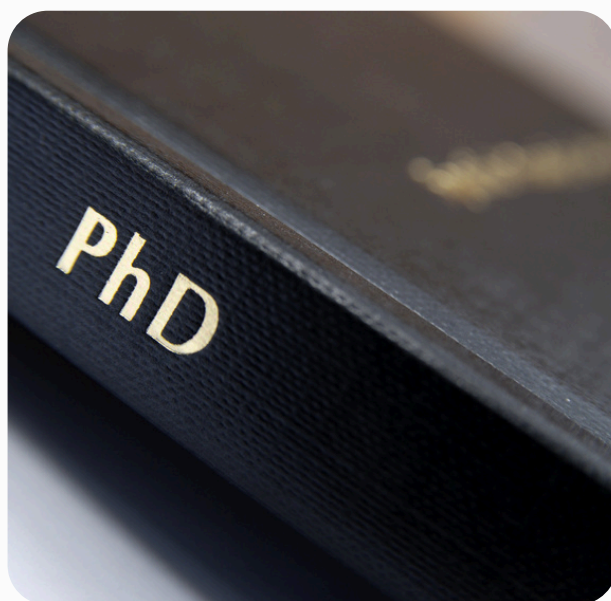
Other key activities include:

- Developing **interdisciplinary modules on international and comparative education, decolonising pedagogy, and education futures** that will feed into two interlinked complementary programmes at our UK and China Campuses, namely the MA International Higher Education at University of Nottingham Ningbo, China and the MA in Comparative Education and International Development. These programmes situate the study of comparative and international education within a complex and changing world where education and education professionals are called upon to play equally diverse and challenging roles in promoting economic growth and competition, while at the same time supporting the development of sustainable and cohesive societies and promoting equity and social justice. It is envisaged that these programmes will be attractive to African students as well as the broader international community.
- Completing the **'Addressing Female STEM Lecturers' Underrepresentation in Leadership in Technical Universities in Ghana'** project. The project's next activities include facilitating three online leadership skills webinars. These webinars will focus on developing leadership qualities, building resilience in the face of uncertainty, and enabling effective communication with, and management of, diverse teams. In addition, a 10-month mentorship programme will be undertaken. A qualitative research study will also be conducted to explore the experiences of female STEM lecturers in Ghanaian technical universities as they strive to attain leadership positions. This study will seek to identify the systemic processes, at both macro and micro levels, that perpetuate the inequities they encounter in academia. It will also aim to evaluate the impact of capacity-building initiatives, such as the writing workshop and mentorship programme, on addressing gender-based obstacles. Ultimately, the research will aim to put forward recommendations to redress disparities and achieve gender equity within technical universities in Ghana. The findings will be disseminated to key stakeholders, and by leveraging the role of the AAU, the project will aim to influence institutional policies to support the career development of female STEM lecturers in Ghanaian Technical Universities.
- Recognising the vital importance of **TVET in Africa**, the Chair will lead the development of a webinar series to encourage a broad discussion about its role. The series will engage different stakeholders, exploring topics such as the changing role of TVET in the continent, TVET and sustainability, using TVET to empower marginalised communities, adapting TVET to the future of work, and highlighting the economic and social benefits of investing in TVET. These webinars will foster participation through panel discussions and Q&A sessions.





- To build upon the success of the '**Internationalisation of Higher Education Webinar Series**', the project will focus on the following future activities. It will broaden participation through multilingual webinars and regional co-hosting models. The project will also integrate creative formats such as storytelling, student panels, and arts-based research showcases. Furthermore, the project team will collaborate with regional organisations and intergovernmental bodies to support policy development ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.
- The '**Ethical Data Discussion Series**' will continue engaging diverse stakeholders in conversations about the ethical implications of data and emerging technologies, fostering digital literacy, and equipping educators and students with critical insights into responsible use. Future topics for this innovative discussion series will address critical issues at the intersection of technology, society, and individual well-being. The upcoming webinars will explore the impact of power imbalances in data and data-driven technologies and research, as well as the specific challenges related to health data. Furthermore, the series will delve into data safety, examining mechanisms to protect individuals within the context of AI-driven technologies. Finally, the webinars will address the transformative effects of AI on both the workforce and institutions, and its broader social impact.
- The team will seek the support of the British Academy and partner institutions in Africa, China and the University of Nottingham in launching a **tripartite partnership for a transformative academic writing initiative** focused on higher education. Building on the success of workshops conducted in Africa during the current Chair cycle, this project will bring together ECRs from African countries and China, fostering a vibrant dialogue around the challenges and opportunities within higher education research, particularly qualitative studies. Through a series of workshops, beginning online and culminating in a face-to-face writing workshop, participants will receive targeted training to amplify the voices of the Global South in high-quality publications.
- A collaborative partnership between the Chair, the Association of African Universities, Zhejiang Normal University, and Beijing Normal University will provide **comprehensive support for African doctoral students studying both abroad and locally**. Capitalising on internal funding from the partner universities, this project will develop vital support mechanisms, including MOOCs and robust network-building opportunities specifically tailored for African students studying in the UK and China.



- Strengthening **existing partnerships with key universities in China**, including Zhejiang University, Zhejiang Normal University, Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University.
- Fostering transdisciplinary collaboration by **consolidating and expanding our inter-university partnerships**. This includes continued and expanding collaborations with the Business School on leadership training, with the School of Computer Science on AI and emerging technologies, with diverse disciplines on gender-related activities, and with different faculties to partner with a wider network of HEIs in Africa, Asia, and beyond.



We will also include associated projects and networks within the Chair, including:



- Completing the **'Gendered transitions from university to work: a comparative ethnographic study of female graduates'** career-decision making and transitional experience' project (Malaysia UNESCO Chair office and international partners). This cross-campus and inter-university project will make a significant scholarly contribution by advancing comparative, qualitative research on gendered labour market transitions in East and Southeast Asia – regions often underrepresented in global academic debates on gender and work. The project will establish long-term international research networks linking scholars, universities, and research institutions across South and Southeast Asia.
- Completing the **'Localising global agendas'** project, which facilitated research and policy dialogue on how international education and development goals are implemented, adapted, or challenged in the Chinese context. This includes consolidating findings from the research project to (1) develop interdisciplinary modules on international and comparative education, decolonizing pedagogy, and the future of education; and (2) hold workshops for PGT and PGR students of future skills for future work.
- The Malaysia Chair office will continue to run and collaborate on **Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Change Education** at K-12 and higher education levels (connecting the Asia Pacific, UK, China and African regions) and teacher education capacity development.

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