

Investigating internationalization of higher education in the post-pandemic era

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Abstract

Literature shows that the internationalization of higher education has already started at the regional level and has spread globally. The internationalization of higher education is an idea whose time has come, for there are advantages to a synchronized system across the globe. However, some challenges and opportunities for the future come with this necessary concept. The dominant education systems that are currently in operation are Eurocentric in nature and not representative of all the cultures and values of the beneficiaries of the institutions of higher learning. In this paper, we use the Ubuntu philosophy as a lens to suggest that the global South, particularly the African continent, needs to be rigorously involved in the conceptualization of the internationalization of higher education. In this way, the cultures and values of the African people will not be excluded on the global scale. This paper argues that to maximize participation in the discourse on education internationalization; scholars must consider two points: firstly, the use of education technology in the post-pandemic era will have to be contextualized; secondly, no voices for the internationalization of education must be silenced at the negotiation table. Through the use of literature, this paper suggests that contextualizing education technology and including all nations in the negotiations may result in a genuinely representative internationalized education system.

Keywords: internationalization, higher education, future education, COVID-19 pandemic, education technology

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1. Background and Introduction

As our world is becoming more competitive and globalized, the Internationalization of Higher Education has been positioned as one of the transforming approaches that serve to encourage the sharing of the best innovative practices and experiences through academic and research collaboration between different education systems and offers support for promoting responsible global citizenship and skilled individuals through interaction from different socio-cultural contexts. However, before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, many concerns hampered the prospects of internationalization of higher education (De Wit & Altbach, 2021; Gu & Teng, 2020; Hudzik, 2020; Wang, 2020).

This study defines internationalization of higher education as integrating curricula that accommodate different socio-cultural contexts, where no nation dominates other nations. This study informs education stakeholders worldwide to take necessary actions to address inequality by effectively integrating curricula that accommodate different socio-cultural contexts, especially in education. Consequently, the process of creating equal and practical education in the world requires scholars to explore the possibilities of the internationalization of education in the post-pandemic era as the means of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function, and delivery of education which is the stance that can promote teaching and learning engagement, global citizenship, innovation and exploration. For intellectuals to give thought to an integrated education system, scholars need to consult history: study the past to understand the present and use the present to help determine the future.

As globally accepted, education has been a human endeavour for a long time because teaching and learning have always been necessary. Formal education began in the ancient era (The Association of African Universities (AAU), 2018; Pacho, 2013). Over the centuries, different education systems were introduced and used in specific countries, regions, and kingdoms, and they operated in isolation. Higher education in the African continent has existed for many years now. It seems as old as the kingdom of Timbuktu, the Pyramids of Egypt, or the towers of Ethiopia. The Al-Azhar University, the oldest University in Africa, still exists in Egypt today (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Al-Azhar University institution was built to facilitate Islamic education and is still considered to be the number one university that is still well organised to offer education with its own founded traditional model. All other universities worldwide have adopted Western learning styles (Kotecha, 2012 a). Today, higher education in Africa is dominated by learning institutions shaped by colonialism and is organised in the European teaching and learning style. The era of colonisation in Africa in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries was known as the ‘scramble for Africa’ (Ezeanya-Esioubu, 2019; Roessler, 2011)). Colonisation introduced education systems that were foreign to the indigenous people and disturbed the indigenous education systems that were in place before the advent of the Europeans. Decolonisation managed to undo the domination of nations by other nations; however, it failed to undo the structures that had been established, such as the education systems (Pacho, 2013; Tabulawa (2013)). The traditional African model of education experienced a shift to systems practised from the early colonial era where teaching and learning were anticipated to serve the intended interests of the colonialists (Pacho, 2013; (Ezeanya-Esioubu, 2019). Africans attended schools that were built by missionaries and other agents of colonialists whose programmes were planned and well-versed by a Eurocentric world system. This Eurocentric style of education continues to exist in many learning institutions in Africa, whereby content taught was subjective in favour of Christianised mission school education and metropolitan lifestyle is still taking place in Africa today. With the noted reality, it is vital to say that in the 21st century, we have education systems established by the West. Many countries follow the education system of the West, but the idea of a unified education system for the whole globe has not been well explored.

Colonial education systems are historically primarily rooted in the deculturization of brown and black

(Tabulawa, 2013). This process continues to exist in many education systems in Africa that have been affected by the Western model of learning, and this happens in curriculums, materials, values, interactions, and education policies. For example, many African countries are still under-utilising their local experts in planning or developing education policies (Wandela, 2014). A salient example of the ‘big results now’ slogan which is currently practiced in Tanzania, was copied from Malaysia. One may identify that this slogan cannot work in Tanzania since Tanzania has a different learning environment. Depending on education policies, planners from Western countries unfamiliar with the teaching and learning environment have negatively affected many African education systems because of copying some of the ideas that cannot work in Africa (Wandela, 2014). Furthermore, Pacho (2013) noted that Western education systems continue to be practised in many African countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Tanzania, South Africa, and Nigeria. This is because the Western education system has discouraged the traditional education system practised in Africa before the introduction of colonial rules and education systems. For example, the Shona, Chagga, and Dinka education systems are not being practised today.

Moreover, most of the education systems in Africa emphasise using English or French as the language of instruction, isolating their local languages. For instance, in Uganda, Kenya, Congo, Somalia, South Africa, and Tanzania, English is used as a language of instruction, which has brought many challenges (Paschal & Gougou, 2022). It is important to note that language is essential in ensuring students’ success. Still, lack of proper understanding of the English language has caused students’ dropouts, lack of interest, and an increased rate of absenteeism in schools (Hiza and Paschal, 2023; Kotecha, 2012; Kem Ramadas and Kruger, 2012).). From these salient examples, (Shamaieva, Paschal & Gougou, 2023) suggest that ecosophy in language education perspective can help in delivering teaching and learning of cross-cultural communities effectively. Thus, the internationalization of higher education will help in decolonising education and make it inclusive because no country or community will be marginalised, and the demand for adequate and innovative skills will be met. This means that even African nations will acquire a well-balanced education, which is required to prepare Africans to live confidently economically, socially, and politically as global citizens in this fast-changing world.

1.1 Objectives of the study

This paper contextualises the use of educational technology in the post-pandemic era. Moreover, this article calls participants from different socio-cultural contexts to participate at the negotiation table to give their voices and point of view on the internationalization of higher education in the pandemic era.

1.2 Conceptual framework

We argue that the concept of Ubuntu must inform the discussion around the internationalization of Higher Education. Ubuntu has been conceptualised as African humanism, an individual-centred attitude towards the world (Kaunda, 1966). Ubuntu emerges from Nguni and Bantu languages of Africa. In the Zulu language of South Africa, Ubuntu implies being human. On the other hand, Ubuntu means ‘I am because you are’. This concept has existed for a long time; however, the former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, initiated the idea in the present times and made it known to the Western world.

The concept of Ubuntu states that our ‘being and becoming’ depend on others. It has also been described as a universal way of life. One of the strengths of this concept of Ubuntu is that it does not promote the idea of a homogenous culture but that of a heterogeneous one, a culture that suggests that our strength is in our diversity. Ubuntu is also described as a concept that accommodates other people without dominating others and focuses on human relationships (Pinar, 2014; Letseka, 2011; Mbigi, 1997). Msila (2008) states that Ubuntu recognises the uniqueness of people. It encourages consensus instead of universal sameness on matters such as education. A school’s success or failure depends on whether Ubuntu has been embraced (Lefa, 2015). If the concept of Ubuntu is adopted, then the internationalization of Higher Education will conceptualise curricula that will highlight our different cultures, races, and customs. The Ubuntu philosophy encourages a sense of togetherness

that is brought about through active facilitation and a resilient connection to the world and to our communities. In addition, Ubuntu offers a theoretical foundation for thinking, planning, and working together to shape social realities.

The global North has dominated education ideologies over the centuries; there is a significant absence of contributions from the global South on the critical matter of education. In this modern, post-colonial, post-pandemic era, scholars in the global South, specifically Africa, must contribute significantly to this discourse. The pedagogies that dominate schooling are products of the global North and do not always fit into the local contexts. For example, in his book *Teaching and Learning in Context*, Tabulawa (2013) argues that the learner-centred pedagogic approach advocated for by the West is not suitable for the socio-cultural context of African countries. He advises that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' regarding pedagogies; therefore, the pedagogies used in schools must be influenced by the socio-cultural context of different countries.

In their paper on Ubuntu pedagogy, Ngubane and Makua (2021) argue that the pedagogies that dominate schooling in Africa are informed by Western philosophies and philosophies from elsewhere, and they have detached the learners from their cultural roots to some extent. They advocate for Ubuntu pedagogy to be used in African countries. The Ubuntu pedagogy is informed by the Ubuntu philosophy, which focuses on restoring African indigenous values and cultures in different educational settings. In light of these studies and discussions, we argue that the concept of Ubuntu protects all African countries and other continents: the global North and the global South. It allows us to have a consensus on education's purpose, function, and delivery. At the same time, it will enable us to maintain our unique cultures and beliefs in the different parts of the globe where we find ourselves. While it is essentially an African concept meant to guard Africans from losing their identity, it can also function as an umbrella concept to protect people of all races, cultures, religions, and genders from being dominated by the other. Our discussions on the internationalization of education include structuring curricula that accommodate different socio-cultural contexts, and no nation will dominate other countries. As we explore the possibilities of the internationalization of education, we must consider educational technology and recognise the existing technological divide. We must contextualise our use of educational technology to accommodate our different contexts. We also need to ensure that all nations bring their ideologies to the table so that we can produce curricula that will accommodate all participants. These two points may take us closer to the desired goal of internationalized education.

2. Method

The paper is a qualitative reflection through a critical paradigm to provide various lenses and views in exploring the internationalization of education in the post-pandemic era. This approach is similar to Martinez and Partin's (2023) and Papadopoulos's (2023) studies based on literature review materials *Inclusion/Exclusion* Criteria. Therefore, scientific procedures were used to identify, select, and analyse relevant research and publications, using specific search criteria considering the topics' scope and repository source, publication year, and relevance. So, investigations took place on browsers or repositories like *Google Scholar*, *Google*, and *open edition journals* considering the research papers published from 2009 to 2023 and related to our article scope. We selected 100 published materials in this work. However, only 58 published materials were included in this final review. For relevance, material Inclusion/Exclusion was based on relevance to the internationalization of education, COVID-19 pandemic response strategies in educational system, and sustainable education in the post-COVID pandemic and implication in a constructivist perspective. Each selected research paper (books, articles) was analysed to extract the appropriate valuable part in understanding how education stakeholders in local, regional, and international areas can collaborate and cooperate for a resilient Higher Education in the post-pandemic era. Consequently, a convenient number of more than 28 research papers was selected according to our literature review materials *Inclusion/Exclusion* Criteria. In this critical literature review, critical analysis was organised based on the objectives of the study. The results aimed to design a situational, transforming approach that could be employed to support education through technological integration in schools and build a global discourse based on equality in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era.

2.1 Internationalization of Higher Education

Integrating global scopes in higher education is highly required to achieve national, regional, and international development (Shaydorova, 2014). The need for qualifications that are internationally recognised has encouraged collaboration among neighbouring countries as far as higher education is concerned (Paschal, 2022). The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) is one of the regions that have taken up responsibilities to provide cooperation and integration of relevant perspectives and frameworks in higher education. Given the stated point of view, there has been exponential growth of students enrolling in higher education abroad to pursue their studies. As a result of these international cooperation, students from one country can now be registered to study in another and even work in those countries while they are learning. This collaboration has yielded positive results (Kwaramba, 2012). For example, The Saint Augustine University of Tanzania collaborates with universities in South Africa, Kenya, America, Finland, Germany and from the Netherlands. These collaborations include collaborative teaching, academic exchanges, and research with these higher education institutions worldwide to encourage innovation and global citizenship. Muyaka et. al. (2020) in their study on internationalisation perspectives of Kenyan universities, noted a lack of a comprehensive and shared understanding of the internationalisation process among the institutional stakeholders in Kenyan universities hence compromising their capacity to utilise the process to advance the quality of their academic programmes. The study recommended investment in training on internationalisation to ensure clarity of what the process constitutes, its rationale and its underlying values within the unique context of Kenyan universities. The end game is to be able to produce globally employable graduates. Universities are now seeking to enhance their visibility as ‘world-class universities’. “Academics are expected to intentionally ensure that classroom interactions encourage intercultural dialogue, design curricula that address the needs of their diverse students, form strong networks with other universities for knowledge sharing, participate in collaborative research, publish their work in recognised international journals and design curricula that can instil intercultural skills in all their students” (Lee et al., 2014; Slee, 2010).

In Europe, internationalization of higher education has been effectively implemented as a need for cooperation and partnership to cope with the competition between other nations such as China, Russia, and Korea (De Wit, (2011). The reason for internationalizing education in Europe was to enhance quality education to improve the competencies and innovation of students and staff members. De Wit and Altbach (2021) posit that internationalization evolves all the time, and they list challenges for the future because of the constant shifts that are taking place in this globalized world.

Internationalization is used to benefit those students who travel from one country to other nations to learn. However, recently, there has been a shift to more virtual platforms because of issues like the COVID-19 pandemic-related lockdowns. Students can now be educated at foreign universities without physically travelling. However, while technology is a good innovation, there is a challenge with the technological divide. The technological divide refers to unequal access to technology. (Paschal and Mkulu (2020; Gougou, Paschal, & Shamaieva, 2023) confirmed that the development of science and technology is unequal. Each country has attained different levels of development and challenges. For instance, in Africa, technology development is not satisfying due to the fact that there are inadequate facilities, internet connection, and lack of skilled individuals to train the majority.

De Wit (2011) demonstrates the reasons for the internationalization of higher education as a constructive strategy for development since it is used as a tool for continuing professional development and multilateral partnerships among the members. Knight, (2010) pointed out that the internationalization of higher education contributes to opening new opportunities, challenges, and benefits among countries in this fast-developing world. Thus, international competence, global citizenship and employability skills are highly needed in this fast-changing world. The universities or institutions of higher learning are believed and accepted to be a source of these skills and knowledge. Attaining an international education opens several opportunities. From this standpoint, the internationalization of education is essential for enhancing members with innovative talents for

responsible and active citizenry (Paschal, 2022; Bangani, 2020). Moreover, some benefits of the internationalization of education are: improved academic quality, increased international awareness among students and teachers, and development of global citizenship among participants.

To achieve the internationalization of higher education, college leadership, government leaders, policymakers and faculty members are encouraged to support the enhancement of international education (UNESCO 2020; Knight, 2010); Paschal 2022). Members should be involved actively in international activities with colleagues, educational institutions, and research centres across the globe (Paschal, 2022). The availability, accessibility, affordability, and transferability of teaching and study abroad programs for educators and learners should be effectively achieved (Kammoun, 2018). Furthermore, Shaydorova (2014) demonstrates that effective integration of international scholars, students, and visiting learning institutions, developing international co-curricular dimensions, units, increasing international research and student enrolments are the key factors that can help in internationalizing higher education. As we sit around the global table to deliberate the integration of international and intercultural dimensions into education's purpose, function, and delivery, all must participate.

2.2 The use of educational technology in the post-pandemic era

Technology is among the most critical elements in associating and communicating (Opondo & Paschal, 2023; Gougou, Paschal & Shamaieva, 2023)). Given technology's vital role in people's lives in this ever-changing world, it is critical to encourage society to promote technology (Mahona & Pacho, 2021; Paschal & Mahama, 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, technology in education became an indispensable tool for teaching and learning. More than 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries were affected by the shutting down of schools (UNESCO, 2020). In Africa, about 297 million learners were involved when schools shut down. Educational technology was introduced to ensure that learning did not stop. However, in March 2020, only 39.3% of the population in Africa had an internet connection, which meant that educational technology was not accessible to many learners (Bangani, 2020). Learners in disadvantaged communities were discouraged by the brunt of this educational disruption, and as a result, the social divide between learners on the continent widened.

A quick survey of the condition of the schools in African countries during the 2020 lockdown revealed the scale of the technological inequality among African countries (Paschal & Mkulu, 2020). There were challenges because most teachers were not technologically equipped (Paschal & Pacho, (2021), and neither teachers nor their students knew how to use the online platforms. Another huge challenge was the absence of internet connectivity in some regions, especially in the rural parts of the countries; meaning that even if the teacher used the WhatsApp platform, some of their learners lived where internet access was poor and could not benefit from digital learning. For Africa to participate in the visualised internationalization of higher education, much preparation is needed in terms of educational technology. The era beyond the coronavirus pandemic will require more use of educational technology. Yet, at this point, technological inequality remains an issue. Some continents are advanced regarding educational technology, while others, such as Africa, struggle even with networks, so we propose contextualizing educational technology. For example, the educational technology platform that may be of help on the African continent is WhatsApp; it is affordable since it does not use large quantities of data like Zoom (Paschal, Pacho & Adewoyin, (2022), and cell phones are available to most people. Even those in rural parts of the country will have at least one cell phone per household. Other platforms that are affordable are radio and television. Lessons can be presented on the radio and TV for learners to learn in the comfort of their homes. However, these lessons need to be synchronised to produce the desired outcomes. As noted above, there is abundant evidence that the pandemic has amplified social gaps among people worldwide, as follows:

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically affected the education of students without digital tools and with limited internet access. To some extent, universities have tried to deliver their instruction using educational technology, which has been effective and has led to improved teaching and learning experiences and good academic performance. These positive experiences will not be forgotten after the pandemic era; educators and

their students will find an exciting desire to continue with digital teaching and learning in their contexts. For example, MacDomhnaill et al. (2021) revealed the impact of high-speed internet connection availability on student engagement with digital learning in Ireland. Stimulatingly, (Paschal & Ismael, 2023; Iglesias-Pradas et al. 2021) showed that the use of educational technology in distance education during the time of COVID-19 increased student engagement and academic performance and demonstrated strong support for the idea that some universities could successfully promote remote teaching by using educational technology. In Portugal, higher education institutions, such as colleges and universities, have implemented the use of technology both in face-to-face as well as in remote teaching and learning since 2008 when parents, students, educators from lower and higher levels of education, as well as the entire Portuguese Ministry of Education were trained to use e-learning for both face-to-face teaching and in an online classroom.

Moreover, in Finland, a wide range of transforming education using technology had been realised even before the pandemic, and many educational projects had been carried out using digital devices (Gezici et al., 2021). Tekin and Polat (2014) report that higher learning institutions in Malaysia have established e-learning facilities and have already gained access to 4G technology to access video-based learning libraries. As the world struggled to ensure that education continued during the pandemic duration, some countries continued to enjoy teaching using educational technology even though some technologies needed to be updated. From this standpoint, teaching and learning with educational technologies will continue to be supported in the post-pandemic era.

Contrary to the above, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed challenges in higher learning institutions: most educators and their students were not sufficiently technologically trained. Both educators in higher education and their students had little experience using online platforms effectively. Moreover, insufficient network connection in some regions, especially the rural parts of the countries, was a massive challenge to supporting digital instruction, as Wang and Xu (2022) noted in *Global Higher Education Technology Trends and Opportunities in a Post-Covid-19 Context*. The researchers noted that the pandemic had negatively affected the instruction and research in higher education globally as most higher education institutions were forced to shift to distance teaching, learning and research which resulted in poor instruction and poor student engagement and academic performance (Wang & Xu, 2022, p. 113). Blundell et al. (2020) demonstrated that the pandemic worsened teaching and learning in schools, noting that the use of technology introduced in response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic made teaching and learning poorer. From this standpoint, digital education would not inspire generations to continue with the comprehensive use of digital instruction in the post-pandemic era.

The significant challenges in implementing educational technology in many countries have inspired scholars to rethink higher education. Mahona and Pacho (2021) point out that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education requires the reassessment of internationalization. They explain that the epidemic's effects on higher education institutions were critical catalysts for both developed and developing countries to rethink the internationalization of higher education and to support its effective transformation, including distance learning, mass media, and digital teaching for pedagogical continuity. The fact that face-to-face teaching was not possible during the pandemic affected the global and national education system and compelled the transition from traditional ways to technological and blended learning approaches (Paschal, Pacho & Adewoyin, 2022; Gezici et al., 2021). These studies recommended the standard policies, practices, and challenges encountered during the application of educational technology in higher education that emerged, focusing on three geographical regions: Africa, Asia, and North America. Wang and Xu (2022) noted that in all areas of the world, education systems shifted to distance learning, international cooperation and collaboration through online platforms in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic opened the era of digitalization growth in the education system to provide an opportunity to save the academic year in rural and urban schools (Paschal & Mkulu, 2020). It was a priority to maintain teaching activities, continuity, and effectiveness.

According to selected studies (Gülşah, 2021; Wang & Xu, 2022; Bangani, 2020), most countries encounter some challenges, whatever the continent. For example, in Nigeria (Wang & Xu, 2022), as in most higher

education institutions in Africa, public universities were debating the issues around synchronous meetings and asynchronous meetings (Crawford et al., 2020) mainly owing to availability of hardware and internet connection (Swiss, 2020). The teaching environment stakeholders experienced in this kind of situation revealed the challenges of the digital gap for Higher Education Digital Transformation regarding the internationalization of educational issues. However, the private universities were better prepared and experienced more rapid transition to distance learning (Adeoye et al., 2020; Olojede et al., 2020; Osamudiamen et al., 2021; Obiakor & Adeniran, 2020). All in all, the internationalization of crisis management measures through learning management systems (LMS), (Zoom, Team, and other sharing platforms) was not often adopted, and we noticed that in most African universities, low technology like WhatsApp and Telegram were used for blended learning and teaching.

In Asia and North America, the authors (Gülşah, 2021; Wang & Xu, 2022) noted that the challenges encountered were a lack of teacher preparation for distance learning, including pedagogical experience and technological capacity, lack of infrastructure and hardware devices, administrative pressure and financial challenges. In this observation on the internationalization of higher education in all these countries, the literature mentions that educators in higher learning institutions lacked technological literacy (Cai & King, 2020) and online teaching pedagogy (Bozkurt et al., 2020). This study observed that higher education institutions in Africa were not alone in encountering difficulties with technological integration to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

2.3 Rethinking a Sustainable Higher Education

In this section, we use the work of Gülşah (2021), (Pacho) 2021, Karen Macgregor (2015); and Wang and Xu (2022) to reflect on the requirements for building a sustainable education system that can be used to overcome uncertainties through technological integration in higher education institutions. The authors recorded that all countries encountered difficulties in applying the global measures of distance learning or blended learning for many reasons: inadequate materials, unfamiliar environment, technological mastery, and adaptability in the teaching context. These findings imply equity and call for all global nations to contribute to finding approaches that can be used to ensure equal access and sustainability of education in the post-pandemic era. In other words, communication between higher education stakeholders requires a collaborative and cooperative partnership for effective internationalization of higher education at regional and global levels. Africa's experience can be helpful to improve decisions taken to solve many challenges in Africa and other countries. In Africa, three strategies were used for pedagogical continuity.

Firstly, universities and education institutes established partnerships with the government to negotiate with internet service providers for reduced-price or offer free internet access, new infrastructure, or free access to other services, including educational platforms (Wang & Xu, 2022). Secondly, to overcome limited resources, low technological platforms using mobile devices and apps (WhatsApp, Telegram) were adopted to reduce the digital resources gap, contextualise the pedagogical transformation and provide quick adoption of the new approach: blended learning for a good digital transition in higher education institutions. The aim was to maintain essential education management and learners' engagement in effective alternative teaching through inclusive technology. This strategy was adopted by many African higher education institutions in developed and developing countries to provide equal education to both rural and city areas in challenging environments. The advantage of the accessibility, affordability, low cost and mastery of this low technology utilization by students and teachers ensured access to essential learning material and fundamental educational activities. This strategy used online platforms to maintain critical educational management through the mobile chat app. In Ivory Coast, Nigeria and many other countries, the contextualisation of technological integration successfully provided continuity in rural and urban universities. The third strategy was building bilateral or multilateral cooperation, strengthening the education system and responding appropriately in various teaching contexts.

In the beginning, Africa was not involved in actual decision-making. The experience and resilience have shown that in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, the internationalization of higher education can benefit all

countries and continents by blending learning and 21st-century skills appropriation by including local expertise in international policy decision-making. It also means that in the internationalization of higher education institutions in the post-pandemic era, Africa needs to share and learn in partnership with most stakeholders worldwide, as this issue is a global concern. The aim is to improve teacher preparation and the quality of online teaching, blended learning and the effective transition from the traditional approach to technological inclusion in pedagogy by building technical competency through various techniques such as trainings, workshops, community service, lifelong learning to support the stakeholders; and training programs sponsored by international associations (El & Refaat, 2021; Kara 2021; Wang & Xu, 2022). So, no voices must be silenced at the negotiation table for the internationalization of education. The western countries have dominated education ideologies over the centuries. There is a significant absence of contributions from the African countries on this critical matter of education; this needs to be addressed.

Mishra (2020) questions the post-COVID-19 pandemic era in the paper “*Rethinking Higher Education and Skilling in India Post-COVID-19 Pandemic*”. The author notes that, even if paradigms and frameworks of higher education existed in any country, the standard of teaching and learning did not seem adequate in times of disruption. If foresight for a global crisis had been applied earlier, the situation might have been mitigated. The COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges that emerged from lockdown could affect the lives of millions of students and the future workforce worldwide if not appropriately addressed. A predictive scenario approach in India (Mishra, 2020) notes that including a new pedagogical approach, new market network policies, and teaching and learning strategies to overcome the epidemic calls for rethinking the education systems in a global and contextual view of internationalization. The discourse about universal sustainability and resilience in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era includes an engagement at the national and international levels to design an effective response for higher education growth. The author maintains that reform is required in this context to provide more flexibility in the quality of teaching, learning, and skill mapping for the job market and lesser outcome mapping in research and innovations to find models for solutions to the challenges during disruption between the public and private institutions, and investments in branded, elite and ordinary education; in differential access in urban and rural India; mainstream and vocational, students with internet access and those with or without even access to food security. The main educational challenges encountered were the lack of quality or adaptiveness, which raised concerns about the digitization of education and about extending variety and enrolment matrix into the digital space to drive the knowledge economy and Industrial Revolution 4.0 in the hope of making the opportunity for higher education inclusive and impactful. This paper is critical as a resource to support and accelerate the transformation of the education system paradigm in the post-epidemic era. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all the traditional policies and compelled stakeholders to adopt a blended, hybrid and digital learning approach to support pedagogical continuity. The discourse on digital integration in academic, professional, and sustainable society development, considering technology in economy, environment and society, requires its promotion through a dialogue on civilization. In the post-pandemic era, Africa must share and learn from the experience of the higher education institutions of the North to be a contributor in this race to a better, more resilient education system able to overcome uncertainties; one that provides equity and equality through an internationalized education for all. The voice of Africa is required to adapt technologies to our context and build a sustainable internationalization spinal board of a global and local higher education institutional depth transformation. A paradigm in higher education is to engage in disruptive, global transit networks for robust reform and in facing the context of the challenge in this contested space, providing stakeholders with access to primary, digital education. In this dialogue, no voice can remain silent. In times of disruption, the resilience and the approach of the students, faculty and institutions or policy-framing bodies are tested.

Shai et al. (2021) analysed this internationalization perspective in their innovative paper, “Rethinking the Renewal and Internationalization of the University of the Gambia in the post-Covid-19 era”, published in *African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning*. Using the University of Gambia, a West African higher education institution, as a case study, the authors question a university’s ability to be renewed in the

post-epidemic era. Indeed, the post-epidemic era demands that university governance and academic leadership should rethink a strategy to provide equity, cooperation and a better ranking of African higher education institutions in the international higher education landscape. This higher education institution governance and common need calls for a discourse between northern and southern universities. In this interdisciplinary paper, the authors maintain that the present and future sustainable higher education system must renew and reclaim its space in the international higher education landscape through collaborative and inclusive decision-making. In the post-pandemic era, internationalization of higher education institutions requires a dialogue to give university stakeholders, both in public and private space; online and offline; in developed and developing countries, the opportunity to build a standard and flexible approach of university sustainability in the changing context. No voice must be silenced, and the universities' publics must adopt inclusive decision-making for everyday well-being in the post-pandemic era. As an African case study, this article (Shai et al., 2021) is beneficial in revealing that all voices must be heard in the internationalization of higher education institutions to overcome contextual challenges and build a sustainable environment for higher education activities. We strongly recommend adopting an inclusive decision-making approach to rethinking university governance and academic leadership in a post-pandemic era as a theoretical lens.

Li (2021) sees the internationalization question as very important for the effectiveness of every education system according to neo-nationalism, academic identity and internationalization issues. In a conceptual article, Li first critically reviews China's strategy for higher education internationalization by examining the concept of academic identity through the lens of academic nationalism and academic internationalism in the Chinese higher education context. COVID-19 pandemic transformed academic identity and governance regarding the debate on the appropriate university approach for an excellent international academic strategy. In the Chinese context, the author calls for an effective strategy for higher education internationalization to discern its underlying rationale and what it encompasses. For Li (2021) the article has implications for Chinese academics in balancing their identities for better global collaboration and sustainable higher education internationalization amid geopolitical tensions in an era of flux; it is also useful in our review in rethinking higher education institutions suitability. The article provides insightful questions about the discourse on the post-COVID-19 era as it recommends collaboration and internationalization of the higher education institutions' cooperation, regardless of the institution or the country. In the discourses for a more resilient and sustainable educative system, the African voice must be included in adapting policies according to the global and specific challenges in these transformative education trends. The China case study represents an important lever to rethink the educational way forward in the post-pandemic era.

In his empirical reflection, "New Directions in Higher Education in the Post-Covid-19 Era-Global Perspective", Japee (2021) poses two questions about the higher education institution's prospects in the future: What features will the universities of the future have? What should professors, administrative staff and university leadership do to be prepared for the future? The post-Covid-19 pandemic era demanded a rethink of the evolution of higher education institutions hence the need for evolving and adapting newer trends of knowledge dissemination. This transformation of the university governance and academic leadership included curricula reconstruction, academic skills updates, flexible digitalization, and took into account technologically driven changes. The author insists on adopting digitalization and a leadership strategy in higher education institutions for better resilience of the universities in a dynamic context. Even if the COVID-19 pandemic has been seen as a pretext, Japee (2021) sees it as a real opportunity to force a discourse, dialogue and engagement for sustainable university governance; calling for refinement of the academic policy and strategy for a sustainable educational system able to overcome the emerging issues and challenges faced by all higher education institutions. As with many research statements, this paper is interested in designing a post-pandemic era digital benefit plan in higher education institutions in Africa and the world. This fact underlines the emerging issues and challenges faced by all higher education institutions presented in Japee (2021) as an attempt to redefine a new view of higher education resilience. Such resilience would be a sustainable academic system based on an inclusive exchange of skills, experience, and resources for the growth of the university in an internationalization movement that

includes the environment (health, green economy), economy (employment, innovation, knowledge and skills transfer) and society's academic responsibilities.

Before the pandemic grounded travel, academics travelled for conferences, board meetings, collaborations, fieldwork, seminars and lectures (Tullia & Glover, 2021). The academic landscape quickly adapted to meet internationalization goals within the context of sudden grounding of travel. In his discourse, Kajee (2022) points out that the Covid-19 pandemic forced higher education institutions to rethink, redesign, and respond in real-time. It tested the ability and readiness of higher education institutions to adapt and respond effectively to the changes. Kajee's (2022) paper aims to appraise the voices of students and academics working in teacher education during the rapid, unplanned move to digital teaching and learning through an interpretative paradigm and case study design. Through in-depth reflection, the author questions the ability and readiness of the higher education institution sector to adapt and respond to the changes. Kajee's (2022) article about the digital transformation required in university governance and academic leadership points out that the COVID-19 pandemic called for a global academic reaction to the worldwide internationalization efforts. This pedagogical transformation disrupted in-person teaching and learning practices. It resulted in new contextual challenges of digital resources, academic staff and students' readiness for learning in digital environments; and connectivity and access to internet services and facilities in developed and developing countries. The author reported the challenges as distress, discomfort, and frustration that students and staff in emergency remote teaching and learning suffered. Consequently, Kajee (2022) calls for South African higher education institutions in the post-pandemic era to develop a dialogue that includes all the higher education institution stakeholders at national and international levels for sustainable university governance able to overcome uncertainties faced by the academic, economic, environmental and societal disruption influencing the university results.

Kajee (2022) maintains that implementing sustainable pedagogical approaches requires broad consultation, particularly with key stakeholders, such as academics and students. In reality, the pedagogical approaches must emerge from a discourse and inclusive dialogue, allowing university stakeholders to give voice to university governance design and academic leadership practice for effective digitalization and stakeholder engagement that involves professors, lecturers and students in the policy-making of academic transformation. This paper provides useful, critical reflections on the advantages of including local stakeholder voices and all the higher education institutions' key decision-makers for a more resilient educative system that can easily overcome digitalization challenges, meet internationalization trends and create the best collaboration or increase international educational cooperation.

In brief, rethinking sustainable higher education institutions internationally in the post-pandemic era is a question of equity and sustainability of education by using internationalization to support the higher education stakeholders' skills and to create opportunities for inclusive education and alternative contextual solutions with a blended learning approach. Consequently, internationalization of higher education in the post-pandemic era matches a common rethinking which includes all the actors for sustainable transformation (Gülşah, 2021; Wang & Xu, 2022). The authors assert that if, before the pandemic, internationalization was limited to international student recruitment and collaboration (cooperation) between different higher education institutions at the regional and global level, the COVID-19 pandemic measures showed that imbalanced technological access was a relevant common concern. Indeed, during the COVID-19 outbreak, this imbalance in access and mastery of technology in higher education was a substantial challenge in Africa; thus, the necessity of raising the resources to provide a pedagogical continuity (Gülşah, 2021; Wang & Xu, 2022). North America, Asia and many countries encountered this exact situation.

Exploring internationalization in higher education institutions post-COVID-19 means a call to action regarding contextual environments. Difficulties experienced by higher education institutions' stakeholders during the transition to online classes were extensive: infrastructure problems, such as connectivity issues and lack of infrastructure; serious challenges included financial costs, regulations, the digital divide, and cultural leap for teachers, students and academic leaders. In addition, inadequate national social policies on internationalization in

higher education led to a need for fair participation in higher education. For this transition to be a reality, communication is critical among western and African countries through collaboration, cooperation and the transfer of technological mastery. This can be achieved by researching a sustainable educative system when all the nations across the world are involved in educational dialogue. This dialogue means including everyone for a better plan. It also means that, regarding contextual difficulties, no voice must be silent in pointing out challenges, finding solutions and proposing the best way to internationalization and cooperation between north and south universities. Gülşah (2021) asserted that the most critical issue to focus on is that internationalisation in higher education should be addressed from a more intercultural perspective. Internationalization as the means for sustainable higher education needs to apply a situational and transformative leadership approach, which includes views from national and international actors to adapt the solutions regarding all teaching contexts. In this discussion, Africa must have one voice to share how technological resilience was possible during the pandemic and how the education system can be improved by contextualized technical integration to support pedagogical continuity in a world of uncertainty.

3. Conclusion

This paper aims to highlight that even though the internationalization of higher education is a desirable and valuable idea, it may exclude other people's values on the global stage if poorly conceptualized. Philosophies from Europe and different continents inform the education systems that are currently in operation. This is a challenge because the systems exclude the cultures and values of the people of Africa. The paper uses the Ubuntu philosophy to balance things by suggesting the inclusion of all races, cultures, and peoples in conceptualising the curriculum for internationalized higher education. The paper further highlighted the technological divide that exists because of the different socio-economic situations we find ourselves in. The recent COVID-19 pandemic-related lockdown and the need for remote learning underscored this reality and how this impacted education in many African countries as opposed to countries in other parts of the world. We conclude by stating that if we contextualize the use of educational technology and ensure that all nations bring their ideologies to the negotiating table so that the curricula developed will represent all participants, then we will be a step closer to the desired goal of internationalized education.

3.1 Implication of the study

This study provides insights to educators to adapt diverse teaching methods that can foster learning to a more diverse student population with varying cultural backgrounds. Their approaches should incorporate global perspectives into their curriculum and apply diverse teaching methods to engage learners from different countries. The internationalization of higher education can pave a way for educators to cooperate with other educators and scholars from other countries across the globe. This partnership can improve quality of education and research in general. Moreover, educators can benefit from internationalization of higher education through leveraging technology for online collaboration enabling them to reach a wider audience. Learners will get wonderful opportunities to connect with other students from different countries to enrich learning and networking for employability.

4. References

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