

Knowledge is not a one-way street

Leave no knowledge behind, Roundtable A03A, 2 December 2020, report by Robin Bredeveld

Educational partnerships and alumni networks are needed, both on an intercontinental and a global level, so that no knowledge is left behind. That's what the speakers of this roundtable agreed upon. Representing a variety of organisations, they discussed the future of knowledge cooperation with and between Africa, Europe and beyond.

As Freddy Weima, director of Nuffic, said, kicking off the proceedings: 'Strong internationalisation and international cooperation strategies are needed on a policy level.' Not just internationalisation, but also the way in which internationalisation takes place needs to be re-evaluated. Hilligje van 't Land, secretary general of the International Association of Universities, stressed that 'the two-way flow [of knowledge] is not a good one. We need a circulation of ideas.' In circular flows, everyone contributes to knowledge and is affected by the others' supply of it. Cooperation should never be linear (developed in Europe or the US and targeted at Africa) but should equally come from the African continent and be implemented in European curricula.

As Abednego Corletey, head of the IT Unit of the Association of African Universities, highlighted, fair deals between the global North and the South in knowledge cooperation must be established to build balance. To do so, international policies between Africa and Europe should be further established. The time in which we live comes with fast digitalisation, which might lead to higher accessibility to knowledge. But policies should ensure that this access becomes inclusive.

To guarantee that not only standardised knowledge is supplied, Corletey stressed that we need 'cooperation for the sharing of indigenous knowledge'. This knowledge should be taken into account in international policy and educational institutions. The participants in the panel agreed that education is diverse and should therefore not appear as a one-way street.

How to create such a balanced, circular flow of knowledge? One of the first steps is dialogue. Dialogue in which every stakeholder gets the opportunity to participate. The second is inviting all forms of knowledge, making it a win-win situation for all. The participants saw *Africa Knows!* as a step in the right direction as the conference provides a platform for appreciating the diversity of knowledge. As Weima concluded: 'This conference is a way to forge new partnerships and to find new connections.'

Takeaways

- Global educational partnerships and alumni networks are needed

- Cooperation between Europe, the US and Africa should be circular, not linear
- Indigenous knowledge should be shared with and valued by the world