The University of Coloniality:
Sustainable development & indigenous knowledge systems.

A case study on how to include local & indigenous knowledge systems within South African education

Figure 1: Sthembiso Sibisi, *Baptism: spiritual healing of the sea*

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Abstract

This paper elaborates on a research gap within scholarship and education which discusses the problems within University education in the Global South, with a case study of education South Africa. As most literature is written by scholars from the Global North without input from people connected with the universities (E.g. Students or professors). The focus of the paper is on knowledge within universities in the South African context to find out on a grassroots level if there are gaps in knowledge or research, discrimination, Apartheid, and Eurocentrism. With as goal, finding and conceptualising the gap in existing research based on the absence of individual opinions on ethnographic levels within the research on universities in the Global South. The research question for the discussion section is then: *What are perceived problems in the education system for people studying or working at UCT and UWC? Adding to that, how is this different from the academic discourse on education in the Global South?*

Therefore, the paper will form a basis to find common grounds and room for cooperation toward reaching the Social Development Goals (SDGs) in Global academia and minimise the gap between the Global North and South in terms of knowledge sharing and cooperation for future generations and research to achieve the SDGs. This paper aims to form the basis for future research on the inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge within the discourse of sustainable development, especially within education. Starting with a narrative review of existing knowledge on the topics needed to create a framework of sustainable development with indigenous knowledge. The main takeaway from the discussion is the story of the people which focuses on the local area of Cape Town, and the struggles of this particular context. The story is shaped by the people who live and experience the everyday life within this context, who expressed as main issues: the absence of a stable energy network, the English language is not native to the area but is standard in universities, not many job opportunities after studying, and the capitalist nature of the institutions. Solutions are briefly discussed, especially focusing on diminishing language barriers and increasing inclusion of the local communities more.

Keywords*: Social Development Goals (SDGs), sustainable development, South Africa, Apartheid, {indigenous} knowledge, education, Global South & Global North.*

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Preamble

"Being in a minority, even in a minority of one, did not make you mad. There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad."
― George Orwell, 1984

Throughout this paper it is vital to keep in mind that I, the author, am still part of the community that should be less involved in the research on contexts I am not a part of: the [white] male scholars from the Global North. Additionally, this quote from 1984 is the start of the paper to emphasise the knowledge within individuals on a local context. Even if a community is incredibly small, they still know best about their own context because they live the surroundings every day. Then, the opinions and traditions you have should count and be taken into account, even though they might sound mad or go against popular belief systems.

Abbreviations & definitions

ANC	-	African National Congress
SDGs	-	Social Development Goals
UCT	-	University of Cape Town
UN	-	United Nations
UWC	-	University of Western Cape

Important definitions

I have opted to include the definition of the terminology of some main concepts to increase the replicability of the interviews with the same meaning behind the jargon used. The definitions are all taken from the Cambridge dictionary (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2023), although these definitions are not inherently inclusive as the wording of '*developed/developing*' seems to also be highly subjective to fit Westernised ideals. However, I opted to still use these for replication purposes and the absence of agreement on the "*right*" terms within academia.

Global North - "*the group of countries that are in Europe, North America, and the 'developed' parts of Asia*"
Global South - "*the group of countries that are in Africa, Latin America, and the 'developing' parts of Asia*"
Education - "*the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this*"

Introduction

Baptism: spiritual healing of the sea, hanging in the MOCAA (Museum Of Contemporary Arts Africa) in Cape Town painted by Sthembiso Sibisi, introduces the coloniality of life outside the bubble of eurocentrism beautifully (Figure 1). Outsiders join into local traditions and change the scenery to fit within foreign ideologies. The ship in the background, together with a tourist watching closely, shows how the Western world has infiltrated the identities of the Global South. Changing the local context, and knowledge structures as well as directly changing the environment to fit into the Western ideologies, leaving out the local knowledge and necessities for the communities affected by Westernised Globalisation. Although this is a more visible factor of the gap created between the Global South and North, the same happens within knowledge and education.

Therefore, this paper elaborates on a research gap within scholarship and education which discusses the problems within University education in the Global South, with a case study of South Africa. The literature discusses the numerous problems within the educational system in South Africa, as this is modelled after the Western ideal university. In essence this means they also cultivate their hierarchies, racial and gendered power relations, epistemologies, and ethnocentric constructions of what constitutes knowledge, and in which bodies and geographies it is supposedly located and enunciated (Hendricks, 2018). However, most literature is written by scholars from the Global North without input from people connected with the universities (E.g., Students or professors). Therefore, within the capstone project, I want to include these people in the discourse of their education.

More specifically, I will outline the existing narrative on South African education systems and sustainable development within this context, but the eventual goal is to show how to include indigenous knowledge in all sectors of sustainable development. Consequently, this paper will take an ethnographic approach on how the (indigenous) knowledge of the people within Cape Town universities can help in reshaping the eurocentric approach towards education which is inclusive and helps the local context flourish. Then, the ethnographic part focuses on problems students and staff face in their daily lives while working and studying at the universities in Cape Town. The research question for the discussion section is then: "*What are perceived problems in the education system for people studying or working at UCT and UWC? Adding to that, how is this different from the academic discourse on education in the Global South?*".

The overarching theme and narrative of the paper is a case study on how to include indigenous knowledge systems within South African education, and find out how important the inclusion of the local context is for sustainable development to be inclusive. In addition, I will focus on knowledge within universities in the South African context to find out on a grassroots level if there are gaps in knowledge or research, discrimination, Apartheid, and Eurocentrism. Two universities are included, UCT and UWC. UCT has colonial roots while UWC is situated in the midst of the Cape flats surrounded by different townships.

Consequently, the paper will be a basis for future research within specific regions and contexts as the focus lies on identifying key stakeholders with valuable local and indigenous knowledge. This is vital to understand the local context and tailor sustainable solutions and development to increase the positive effects of certain implementations within the context of the SDGs (United Nations, 2015) and make sure of negative consequences, such as the replication dilemma (Ringov, Liu, Jensen & Szulanski, 2015) or coloniality (Maldonado, 2007; Mignolo, 2007), will be prevented. Additionally, this will also close the gap between current and future literature, with the input of local and indigenous knowledge well-presented in future research.

The methods used are anthropological, via unstructured interviews with people studying or working at UWC and UCT, to gather their local and indigenous perspetives. With the goal of ensuring an orienting framework focusing on sustainable development being helpful in a situation and does not merely ticking the boxes of the SDGs. The methods will suffice as a first introduction of the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and local perceptions to the literature of sustainable development within the context of education in Cape Town, which is the used case study.

The aim is then also to outline possible discrepancies between the research and the "real situation" as experienced by the local communities to pinpoint the point where indigenous knowledge and experiences fit into the context of research and how this can be used to increase effectiveness, suitability, and sustainability within the notion of Sustainable development and the SDGs (United Nations, 2015). Therefore, the paper will form a basis to find common grounds and room for cooperation toward reaching the Social Development Goals in Global academia and minimise the gap between the Global North and South in terms of knowledge sharing and cooperation for future generations and research to achieve the SDGs. To add to that, the focus is also on addressing the lack of inclusion of the local context in literature about the Global South. As many reports are written by scholars from the Global North, without including the local scholars or context within the academic discourse.

This is as criticism of the SDGs (United Nations, 2022a) starts to surface on racial equality and Eurocentrism with the goals. Causing a discrepancy in the achievement of the goals, as this might not be sustainable development but merely achieving set goals. Creating a situation of self-fulfilling prophecies (Müller-Mahn, Moure & Gebreyes, 2020) as the goals are met but this might then not help in sustainability as a bottom-up approach, such as the theory of change (Taplin, Clark, Collins & Colby, 2013), is needed. Additionally, there is an obvious absence of Global South, and especially African, scholars in different disciplines such as International relations (Smith, 2009).

Positionality

Before I dive into the literature and main topic of this paper I find it vital to briefly go into my positionality to frame the paper in an open way, focusing on the future and progress rather than trying to make up for the past. The research gap I have identified exists due to the absence of local scholars able to do participatory research which adds to the Eurocentric nature

of the topic of university education within Cape Town. However, I am also a part of this Western scholarly community, as part of the University of Groningen. Therefore, I have tried my utmost best to include the local perspectives and leave my norms and values on the airport, but it has to be taken into consideration when reading this paper that I am a Western scholar and not part of the universities I have researched.

The openness and willingness to talk from the people I have spoken to really helped me to get the most out of the research and grasp as much information and culture as possible, which make up for the paper that is written. I hope this gives a better understanding and basis for future research on the inclusion of the "*influenced*" in the literature about (university) education to sustainably develop education everywhere for everyone.

The distinction and nature of the Global North and Global South

As this paper aims to form the basis for future research on the inclusion of indigenous knowledge within the discourse of sustainable development, especially within education, it starts with a narrative review of existing knowledge on the topics needed to create an orienting framework of sustainable development with indigenous and local knowledge included. The review of academic papers will focus on six different topics which all focus on setting the stage for future research.

First, the distinction between Global North & South is explained to understand the dynamics and lack of inclusivity of local scholars in current research about the Global South. This is followed with a brief introduction to the case study on Africa, starting with the notion of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007.) and how this influences South Africa. This is then followed by a brief history of the country. After this, the topics of sustainable development (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019; UNDP, n.d.), bottom-up change & the Theory of Change (Taplin, Clark, Collins & Colby, 2013) are introduced, as they are vital to understand the argument for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the discourse of sustainable development. The last part of the narrative review focuses on the literature of indigenous knowledge and the importance of the inclusion for science in different sectors.

Globality in a divided world: the distinction of the Global north and South in academia

International relations theory has to learn still about African dynamics and African scholarship (Smith, 2009), just as other fields of research. For example, in Global sustainability to ensure the future of sustainable development is inclusive. A necessity arises to Globalise the Global in the discourse of Sustainable development and the SDGs (United Nations, 2015). Currently, inequalities arise in the publishing of papers and research, creating a marginalised group of academia from the Global South (Collyer, 2018). "*publishing is of central importance to the creation and sustenance of global inequalities in academic knowledge production*" (Collyer, 2018. p.69). The current mechanisms which support the publishing of papers and research create inequalities for scholars from Global South regions which heightens the barriers to publishing for these scholars. Thus, the current systems adhering to these values favour Global

North research above all and marginalise other research into a lesser state of research, or sometimes even pseudoscience (Popper, 1963).

This is while the academic labour market is continuously internationalising and the need for a Global knowledge network becomes even more prevalent (Larner, 2015). However, again the definition of "*global*" in this context can be contested by still having to pinch through this and look for the existing distinctions between Global North and Global South in academia. Thus, viewing the Global as still being Eurocentric. This non-shift can partly be explained by the democratisation of curricula, accelerated by Globalisation. However, this also increases the favouritism of the Global North over the Global South (McGregor & Park, 2019). This favouritism further strengthens the two-sided Global North and South ideology over a globalised world, as Globalisation encourages conformity to neoliberal norms (Spivak, 2013).

Spivak (2013) characterises differences between this globalised era as an epoch where "*global*" has replaced postcolonial, digitally-assisted postmodernism has replaced modernism, and neoliberal policy has replaced ideological politics. Thus, highlighting the exclusion of certain parts of the world and the global epoch is still not global as per the definition of Global. Oxford Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) defines global as *covering or affecting the whole world.* Thus, classifying the current epoch and more importantly, current worldwide curricula seems insufficient from a linguistic point of view. Additionally, current Globalisation trends play a role in sustaining and expanding the ideological dominance of the Global North over the Global South (McGregor & Park, 2019).

Coming back to the neoliberal norms of Global North education, the framework upon which this is based centralises economic rationality. This economic rationality is seen as an overarching theme for understanding, evaluating and governing social life (Shahjahan, 2014. p.221). For education, this means that power structures are altered to reduce human values to economic ones and competition is vital, sometimes even above cooperation. An important notion in this discourse is the international student, a pawn who pays more to attend a Global North institution. Globalisation also increases the consumer base which in turn maximises profit. Thus, next to international students (especially Global South students) being part of representativeness and different perspectives they also play an important role in the economic well-being of educational institutions (Shahjahan, 2014).

This neoliberalist framework of Global North education focuses on maximising profit and then also excludes appreciation of difference, complex inequality, and the reconstruction of group status and realities, but it also naturalises existing levels of marginalisation and social division (Gyamera & Burke, 2018. p.450). The fact that the Global North still poses a dominant placement over the Global South in regard to education creates minimal a gap between the Global North and South, and maybe even coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007) of education within the global context (McGregor & Park, 2019).

Coloniality in (South) Africa

The last decade in (South) Africa highlights the problematic influence the Western world imposes on all levels of society, economy, and environments. A fundamental problem within Africa, especially South African, universities arises in the institution itself. The African university is modelled after the Western ideal university which in essence means they also cultivate their hierarchies, racial and gendered power relations, epistemologies, and ethnocentric constructions of what constitutes knowledge, and in which bodies and geographies it is supposedly located and enunciated (Hendricks, 2018). Thus, leading to "*rigged*" institutions fundamentally aligning to norms, values, and cultures outside of the South African context.

The institutionalisation of Western norms in non-Western institutions gives room for the interpretation of non-decolonised universities within South Africa (Hendricks, 2018). This conforms to Wa Thiong'o (1992) and the notion of decolonising the mind, highlighting that colonialism went much further than merely military, political, and economic domination. Suppression was most influential on the mental universe of the colonised where control was put upon them via culture and how people perceive the world in terms of the individual and the world. Coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007) plays again an important role here to conceptualise the long-term effects of colonialism and couples modernity and colonialism together as intrinsically linked (Hendricks, 2018) to prove the influence the colonialists still have on the world but under the umbrella of modernity.

"[Coloniality] refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production, well beyond the strict limits of the colonial administration, it is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience"
- (Maldonado-Torres, 2007. p.243).

Coloniality then plays an important role in explaining the institutionalisation of African universities, and the fundamentally Western ideals on which these universities are built. A framework to deconstruct the coloniality within universities can then be built upon the decoloniality of power, knowledge, and being (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Decoloniality of power encompasses the deconstruction of the world as put into zones of people and lesser people, decoloniality of knowledge focuses on power relations within knowledge production and the decoloniality of being highlights how humanity within non-Western communities became questioned and the area objectified.

Coming back to the common understanding of modernity, the concept within Africa mainly entails essentially becoming like the West (Hendricks, 2018). This also relates to the colonised past of Africa, where education was key for the liberation of the colonised. Through education, a more affirming narrative of Africa and its peoples can be articulated, and a different path to socio-political and economic development can be imagined, through which an African

Renaissance (Hendricks, 2018) can be expressed. This is to change the status-quo of African universities. Historically there has not been much room for freedom within the limited access to higher education on the continent as well as the education being too expensive for most people. Thus, resulted in the same neo-liberalist thought systems as in the West, disconnected from the Pan-African ideal and free of its moral imperatives (Mkandawire, 2005).

A brief history of South Africa

To briefly contextualise the situation in South Africa further, this section will focus on highlighting factors in recent South African history which might have influenced the progress and development of the education system within the country and also highlights why South Africa differs from other countries within the area. The most prevalent contextual factors in South African recent history are the period of colonisation and the Apartheid regime thereafter. "*Apartheid*" was used as a slogan in the elections in South Africa in May 1948. These elections brought radical nationalists into power in South Africa (Dubow, 2014). The country was, and still is, filled with segregated communities and even within local and immigrant communities this segregation is visible (Thompson, 2001).

After the time of imperialism and colonisation of the land, a tumultuous period arose within South Africa. This period is clouded with human rights violations and ethnic segregation. This caused oppression for a majority of non-European and non-white ethnic groups in the country. This segregation, Apartheid, caused the formation of numerous social movements fighting against this regime, most notably the African National Congress (ANC), which as of now has delivered multiple presidents for the country in the free democratic last decades (Booysen, 2011). Only in 1994, the start of the democratic reign of President Mandela ended the Apartheid regime, which had divided the population on a racist colour basis. Mandela himself was imprisoned for most of the regime and even before his 1990 release, he was a symbol for freedom fighters and a main figure within the ANC fighting against the Apartheid-government (Boehmer and Lodge, 2008 & Mandela and First, 1990).

Apartheid is one of the factors which separates South Africa from other neighbouring African countries. This is still prevalent within the educational system of South Africa, as the '*whites*' in South Africa comprise 7.8% of the total population but occupy 74% of the permanent academic faculty at the top South African universities (Cape Town, Wits, Stellenbosch, Johannesburg, KwaZulu-Natal & Rhodes) in 2017 (Albertus, 2019), with numbers for professors rising even till 88% whites. Another study (Sadiq, et al., 2019) found that white academics are promoted approximately 1.85 years faster than Non-whites in South African education. In addition to the study period, different problems arise after graduating as South African students have major trouble finding jobs in their field of study. Thus, a university degree still does not mean much in many cases in the South African context (Albertus, 2019).

These indicators all fall short of the ideals set by the United Nations (UN) in their SDGs (United Nations, 2015), which focus on the quality of education for all regions within the sphere of influence of the UN (UNDP, n.d.). Therefore, according to these SDGs, change is needed

within this system of education to reach the SDG on education as planned. However, to adequately address and change the system there needs to be a situation where change is formatted according to the local situation and indigenous knowledge has to be taken into account. This is to format sustainable development to actually be sustainable for the local context.

Sustainable Development

Therefore, the focus of this paper on the sustainable development of the educational system within the Global North and Global South further emphasises the inclusion of local context within the SDGs set by the United Nations (United Nations, 2015). This is to create an open space within the United Nations for development and achieving the SDGs while also actively working towards minimising the Eurocentric-skewed nature of some goals and giving the Global South, and in this case South Africa an equal voice to design sustainable development in the local context.

This goes into the notion of whether Africa has a voice (Smith 2009). Additionally, the focus on education is vital in this notion as this is part of SDG 4, focusing on quality education for everyone. As: *"Providing quality education for all is fundamental to creating a peaceful and prosperous world. Education gives people the knowledge and skills they need to stay healthy, get jobs and foster tolerance"* (United Nations, 2022b). The focus lies here in ensuring inclusivity en equitability within quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning within this notion. The targets within this SDG focus on increasing the opportunities for all people, from children to adults as well as increasing the level of facilities and substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers (UNDP*,* n.d.).

A way to create this open space and ensure a sustainable flourishing future that adds to the SDGs is the '*theory of change*' (Taplin, Clark, Collins & Colby, 2013) which can form a basis of practicality, something missing within the SDGs. The SDGs are mainly focused on goals and targets which have to be achieved to create a sustainable world following the three pillars of sustainability (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019). Namely; Social (people), environmental (planet), and economic (profit). However, there is not a certain path created which can help to create a sustainable and practical idealogy which can be a framework for bottom-up sustainable development and also be a blueprint for practically changing.

Additionally, this blueprint can be difficult to create as the targets and goals of the SDGs cannot be achieved globally by implementing the same solution globally (Replication Dilemma (Winter & Szulanski, 2001)), different solutions and opportunities must be tailored to a context to be the sustainable development the opportunities entail to be. Thus, the inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge to create this bottom-up approach is vital as the local people know the history, culture, environment and overall society better than outside researchers focusing on sustainability in their understanding of the concept and Globalisation, especially in terms of climate change and mitigation (Apraku, Morton & Gyampoh, 2021).

Why does indigenous knowledge matter in the framework of sustainable development?

Research on global climate conditions, adaptation, and sustainable development is very much focused on large-scale attempts to measure and adapt toward a sustainable future (Apraku, Morton & Gyampoh, 2021). Therefore, there is little focus on small-scale adaptations and the usage of local knowledge within the framework of global sustainable development. However, indigenous knowledge is used within different contexts to plan and adapt toward the mitigation of various topics within small-scale communities (Apraku, Morton & Gyampoh, 2021).

To assess the necessity of indigenous knowledge within sustainable development and education we need to define the term as such. Indigenous people are defined as *"culturally distinct ethnic groups with a different identity from the national society, draw existence from local resources and are politically nondominant"* (Melchias, 2001) and the World Bank (People, 1991) commonly uses *"social groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the dominant society that makes vulnerability to being disadvantaged by the development process."* Thus, this comes back to people living in a territory before the formation of the nation-state of that territory. They maintained a great part of their distinctiveness in terms of linguistics, cultures, social, and organisational characteristics (Battiste 2005; Eyong, 2007).

Then going further to the knowledge of the indigenous community, this refers to what indigenous people know and do, and what they have known and done for generations. Thus, practices evolved through trial and error and proved flexible enough to cope with the changing world (Melchias, 2001). However, one has to take into account that this definition is racially based to favour colonial powers' way of working, as knowledge defined as "trial and error" within the notion of indigenous knowledge strives away from the "*science*" in the colonial world (Battiste 2005; Eyong, 2007). Therefore, this paper will use the definition of indigenous knowledge as defined: *"the set of interactions between the economic, ecological, political, and social, environments within a group or groups with a strong identity, drawing existence from local resources through patterned behaviours that are transmitted from generation to generation to cope with change"* (Eyong, 2007). This means, put simply, that the poeple who experience a context will know all details of this context and can find the deadlocks and spaces where development is possible, while they might struggle with different problems than the problems visible to the outside world.

However, it is important to note that there is a difference between this indigenous knowledge and the perceived problems of people within the context as indigenous knowledge is focused upon local traditions and practices (E.g. language & culture) while perceived problems of the people within a context are not always based upon language and culture but also on surroundings. For example, load shedding in Cape Town is not connected to language, culture or traditions but is a perceived problem of the local community in South Africa.

Bottlenecks of sustainable development

Additionally, due to the Globalisation of the world, coloniality, neo-colonialism, commercialisation, modernization, the lack of efficient codification, and multiple other

bottlenecks of sustainable development the usage of this type of indigenous knowledge diminishes rapidly in favour of global solutions (Apraku, Morton & Gyampoh, 2021; Battiste 2005; Eyong, 2007). The dominance of Western knowledge also adds to the disembodiment of education from the local context (Owuor, 2007). This has turned into the creation of Eurocentric knowledge systems, which reject, ignore, and neglect indigenous knowledge systems (Battiste, 2005). Resulting in perspectives holding the belief that Eurocentric methodologies are progress and indigenous knowledge is considered to be frozen in the past, even going as far as belittling the African context (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019).

In contrast, every society has its history and practices, which often guide development and exist in the context of their learning and knowledge from the places where they have lived, hunted, explored, migrated, farmed, raised families, built communities, and survived for centuries despite sustained attacks on the people, their languages, and cultures (Battiste 2005; Eyong, 2007). These are still suffering from colonialism due to the prejudiced nature of many scholarly articles about Africa, as indigenous knowledge systems are distorted to confirm different hypotheses and colonial anthropologists have described African cultures as raw, uncooked, primitive and uncivilised in a bid to justify the high-handed colonisation scramble (Eyong, Mufuaya Foy, 2004).

Consequently, the development of indigenous knowledge and technology in colonised places has been destabilised and some of the existing processes of technical growth and the indigenous manufacturing capability were deliberately undermined to facilitate European exports (Eyong, 2007). This is while indigenous knowledge systems have positive social-cultural and ecological influences on the local area and small-scale sustainable development (Eyong, 2007). Thus, the usage of more local knowledge will help to reduce the dependencies, created by colonialism, on outside states and help in serving the knowledge base of their indigenous groups and to encourage Indigenous Peoples management. As they encourage indigenous peoples to sustainably maintain, manage and use their natural resources while strengthening indigenous ecological knowledge in the process (Eyong, 2007). In addition, this would safeguard the sustainable development of indigenous communities at the crossroads of Globalisation.

Thus, it is vital to include the usage of indigenous knowledge in the context of sustainable development as well as change the perspective of indigenous knowledge in terms of seeing it as "*inferior*", while the local context and knowledge are a necessity to understand the local context. Therefore, they need to be considered when discussing education within the non-eurocentric context to accurately find results on what the universities entail within the Global South, even though this might differ greatly from what the Eurocentric world is used to.

This can be achieved through the usage of local people in the creation of developments, the people that are mainly influenced then are included in policy-making processes that involve and affect them. They will then try to find solutions which help them progress in their daily business. If sustainability is also added to this framework the new situation will focus on achieving sustainable development through locality. Consequently, this means small scale

solutions feasible to achieve fot the influenced people rather than high-up created policies not tailotred to a specific location.

Methods

The goal of this paper is then to have a case study, education in UCT and UWC, and find out what the people who experience this case study on a daily basis struggle with. Identifying these struggles can help to find possible solutions which can (sustainably) develop this local context. If this is possible and problems can be identified by the people, properly tailored solutions and policies can be implemented.

The first part of data collection took place in Kaapstad (South Africa), where students and scholars were interviewed in informal settings, to remove the threshold of formal interviews within a set academic location and reduce the tension on such topics as opinions on the differences between the Global North and the Global South. Additionally, I have joined different social events to get a full overview of university life in Kaapstad. In this situation, I had to make sure to actively re-assess my position as a student from the Netherlands, which has to be acknowledged especially during the interviews in South Africa, as mentioned in my positionality. Most data collection has been done in casual non-structured interviews where I took field notes, more formal interviews or email conversations with questions have also been added to the data collection in South Africa because the time for interviews was limited but the data collection should not be rushed.

The field site has been the UWC and the UCT. Where the participants have been gathered via my network and using the snowball method to get to know more students and scholars who fit the profile of participants I needed to collect valid data. In addition, during the time spent at both universities, I randomly approached students and staff also to ask them about their opinions as well.

The interview guide, as stated in the Appendix, was used for reference in asking questions, but due to the informal and unstructured nature of the interviews, these questions have not always been asked literally. Additionally, the use of terms such as "Global North & South" is not used in all disciplines of science but no standardised alternative is used. This led to the necessity of considering that the jargon of the research had to be discussed before diving into the topic, to make sure there was a mutual understanding of the questions asked.

Limitations

Then different limitations have to be considered when researching and reading this paper. The research has been done in a relatively short period of time by doing interviews withpeople I happened to find wandering around campus. Thus, it is difficult to measure if the people are a representative sample of the group of people within the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of Western Cape (UWC). Additionally, the connection between the literature review and interviews is not inherently interconnected as the interviews sometimes miss this indigenous knowledge part. Consequently, due to the short nature of the research, a generalised overview of

the whole picture is impossible. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to better understand this local context and form a stepping stone for future research to create a framework for sustainable development with the inclusion of local knowledge systems within education and other parts of development.

The story of the people

The focus of this discussion is on two different universities within Cape Town, UCT and UWC. These were chosen as they both have different but very similar histories, both disagreeing with Apartheid but still having opposite histories (University of Cape Town, n.d.; University of Western Cape, n.d.). UCT is placed above the city, looking down on the Cape flats and existing because of imperialist efforts of the past. In contrast, UWC places itself in the midst of the Cape flats, surrounded by townships as a pinnacle of local development.

Then, the focus of the literature review has been on writing down the narrative of academia on why we should include indigenous knowledge in research, especially with regard to sustainable development. This story of the people is supposed to be the starting point of this inclusion. As this is what the local people have told me, they have talked about what bothers them, what helps them, what moves them, and a multitude of other topics of relevance for them. It is, therefore, the story of the people, and not the story of me, the researcher, making further arguments on why I think local engagement and inclusivity of indigenous knowledge is vital. This as, the indigenous knowledge I have is not relevant for a discussion about sustainable development of education in Cape Town. However, the story of the people will start with a short introduction of the different universities to address the full context of the situation.

The main takeaway from the coming section will then be the multiple struggles the people within UWC and UCT face on a daily basis. These problems include, the lack of jobs found after graduation, the problems with electricity within Cape Town, and the eurocentric nature of the educational system in South Africa. Thus, the story of the people is the story of indigenous knowledge of the people within education on UCT and UWC, and discusses topics which move the people within this context, what is important for them to include in sustainable development. In addition, this is also the starting point for a framework which is broader than South Africa, and focuses on the stories of the people within a variety of topics and contexts relating to sustainable development. Figure (2) shows a simple orienting framework which depicts the sphere of influence indigenous knowledge usage can have on academic research within a certain context. This adds upon the linear framework where a problem is researched and a solution is created based on the research, without taking into account contextual factors in that framework.
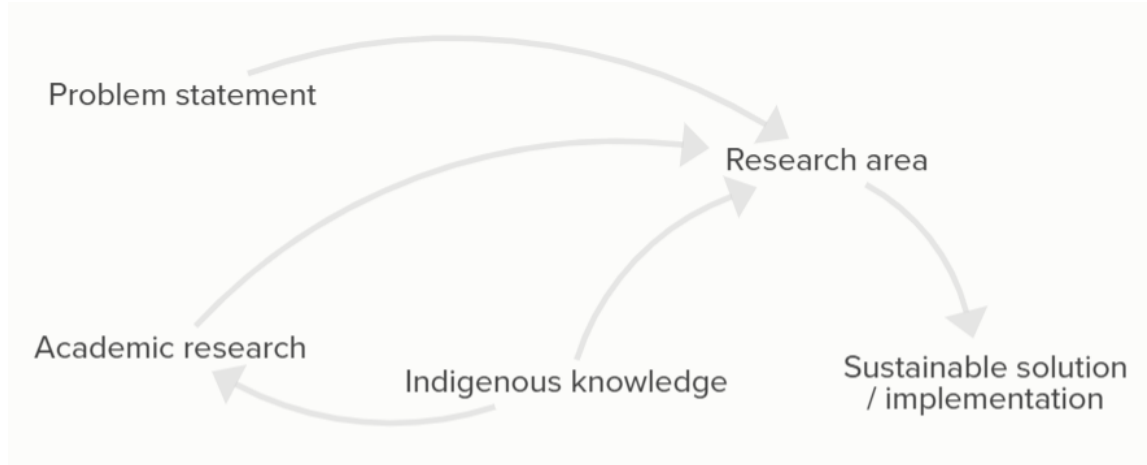
Figure 2: A simplified orienting framework for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge to create sustainable solutions

An introduction to UWC & UCT

The first few interviews have been held informally during a visit to the UWC, with a professor giving us a tour of the campus and showing us the most important places & values of the university. The tour was clouded by post-Apartheid references and locations existing because of troubles. One of the more intriguing parts was the fact that just outside of the university grounds, a tall but empty building stands (Figure 3). The professor told us the building had been used to spy on students during Apartheid, as it was located just outside the old entrance gate. This entrance gate had been used as a gathering place for protests as well, still existing with the slogan *Hek toe!* [Run to the fence!] (Figure 3) written on the sides, a slogan used by students to gather people at the gate to protest. They would shout this over campus to create a cluster of students at the gate to protest.

Figure 3: *Hek Toe!* At the old entrance of UWC with the "spy" building in the background

An important factor within the university, according to the professor guiding us, is the focus on the local over the global, community-based learning to value the community and make sure the output students create helps the local community over private organisations. Though, in a short conversation with students of the university, they expressed that this might be a great slogan for the outside world but that this was hardly noticeable during their coursework and education. However, the emphasis also lies on the fact that the UWC has been notorious for not adhering to the rules and regulations set by the Apartheid government (Wolpe, 1995). Reading between the lines and following the research by Wolpe (1995), this meant that the University was open to all students rather than only black people. This, while the UWC falls in the category of "historically black universities".

In contrast to this, the current situation is quite different according to the three students I interviewed during my visit. They expressed *"About 50% is black, 30% coloured which leaves room for about 20% whites* [in Western Cape University]." This is connected to the "*Black empowerment"* movement currently happening in South African (higher) education. The movement focuses on giving black people opportunities in research, even going as far as bringing in rules and pillars to have a certain number of non-whites within institutions. This resulted in a quota for ethnicities within universities, such as UWC, as expressed by students. Politically speaking this comes from the "Black economic Empowerment" policies focusing on bringing more Black people in management and ownership positions within South African business (Ponte, Roberts & van Sittert, 2007).

Additionally, the UWC also highlights its history through the slogan hanging around the university. Next to one of the main entrances, a banner hangs telling all people entering the main building of the university that *"from hope to action through knowledge"* (Figure 4). Highlighting the focus on taking (local) action through the knowledge gained by studying, as had been said by the professor guiding us through the university.

Figure 4: From hope to action through knowledge

In addition, looking at UCT, they try to actively include more underprivileged students. For example, by providing the financials for them to be able to study at the university and get their degrees (University of Cape Town, n.d.). Currently, UCT is also implementing an action guide on transformation to follow the rapidly changing and diversifying democratic society. They look at issues such as staff diversity, student equity and access, the curriculum, leadership and governance, and attitudes and behaviour while striving to redress past injustices, promote equal opportunity for all, reflect the demographics of South Africa, safeguard human rights, uphold the inherent dignity of all, and meet the development needs of South Africa's emerging democracy (University of Cape Town, n.d.). However, others feel like the university, rather than being a pillar for inclusivity, is a piece of Europe in Cape Town.

In a column written by a visual studies scholar at UCT the history of the university is proclaimed as conflicted from within, a historically white educational institution built on land given to the university by Cecil John Rhodes, formally unable to admit non-white students and staff. UCT later on, during apartheid, actively argued against apartheid segregation. Therefore getting nicknamed *"Little Moscow on the hill"* (O'Connell, 2014), a terminology [previously] used to refer to UCT due to their sustained opposition to apartheid (University of Cape Town, n.d.). However, this seems at odds with the situation as the community within UCT had only admitted a handful of non-white students and staff, creating somewhat of an alienated identity as if UCT was not in Africa at all (O'Connell, 2014).

The jobs for the educated

An important factor for university students to decide whether it is beneficial to study is their opportunity for jobs after graduation. The literature (Albertus, 2019) tells the same story as students in the fact that there is little to know about the correlation between graduation and jobs, both in statistics and according to students studying in South Africa. One of the interviewees expressed *"If given the opportunity I would go overseas to study. I feel as if the opportunities would be much better in terms of career and job opportunities.",* this notion highlights the ambition and capabilities of students which might stand parallel to what the university as an institution can offer. Consequently, as expressed by other interviewees, the level of education is high and the pressure to perform well is more severe than in other universities, for example, in the Netherlands, which has multiple "top 100" universities of the world (Top Universities, 2023).

However, this can somehow not be translated into the value given to diplomas of the universities in Cape Town, as these do not have the same weight as their counterparts in the Global North. This then also begs the question for the not privileged students of whether it even is beneficial to study at a university in Cape Town, as the fees are incredibly high and often job opportunities are still low. Thus, the costs of studying are high in comparison to the benefits, if the students are not part of the privileged few in Cape Town who can easily fund studying. In addition, studying is a time-consuming practice and in purely economic terms the benefits must outweigh the costs to incentivize students to go to university and get their degrees. When one of

the bottlenecks is the inability to find proper jobs, the benefits of studying lowers significantly because the monetary aspects also play into finding a job and making money in the future lives of students.

No electricity available

Additionally, the load shedding in South Africa gives an extra layer of problems for students, as this amounts to a lot of people losing electricity within their days. These three themes came back in all interviews and were expressed as important in terms of affecting their levels of education. South Africa is currently facing major energy outages due to the not maintained power plants owned by energy supplier Eskom (du Venage, 2020). The result of this is shortages in electricity within the country, which is solved by "*load shedding*". Load shedding is partly cutting off different parts of cities and other parts of the country on purpose to deal with the energy shortages. This results in households and neighbourhoods losing all access to electricity for a couple of hours every day, depending on how severe the shortages are.

Load shedding, as students have told me, affects them in their student life as they will lose access to the internet sometimes multiple times a day as well as not having the ability to charge electric devices which can also hinder studying during the day and night. This affects schemes of life as well as results in school, as people have to work around the load-shedding schedules to be able to finish school work. Additionally, this also increases inequalities as the privileged people can afford to get a backup generator which allows them to stay elasticized always.

Eurocentric islands on the foot of the mountain

Coming back to the origins of UCT, the imperialist land owner Cecil John Rhodes (University of Cape Town, n.d.) bequeathed this land to build a university at the foot of table mountain; an eurocentric institution which can be interpreted as a little island at the foot of table mountain, overlooking the city from above. When visiting this university I met a scholar who gave a speech about coming from nothing to study at UCT. Born in the Eastern Cape, a predominantly underdeveloped area of Cape Town and the Cape flats, she then moved to Cape Town for secondary education. To then move to the city for university.

Initially, when moving to the Western Cape area she lived in Khayelitsha (Xhosa for "new hope"), a community township with predominantly low-income inhabitants and many informal settlements. There are few developed communities within Khayelitsha so she studied in a public[1] school, with little to no facilities. In her speech, she expressed that no internet was

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[1] This concept, exacerbated in the African context, is the distinction between public & private educational institutions. In the South African context, these are redefined as public and independent institutions (ISASA, 2019). In this situation, the public schools are controlled by the state and independent schools are privately governed. The difference between this distinction and the widely used public versus private distinction is based upon the fact that public schools on private property are included as a sub-category in public schools rather than private. In South Africa, everyone has the right to open independent educational institutions as long as they do not discriminate, are registered by the state, and must retain standards as high as public institutions (ISASA, 2019). However, due to the absence of state funding in many private schools, the admission fees are tremendously high, which excludes many students from entering private or independent institutions (JBCN International School, n.d.). Consequently, in Cape Town, the costs of public universities (both UCT and UWC are public (*Public Universities in South Africa | Universities South Africa*, n.d.)) are already high, with around €1319,- in tuition fees (*Study in Cape Town – Free-Apply.com*, n.d.). Thus, the prices of universities create a threshold for people in South Africa to be able to pursue studies.

available in school and that the first time she used a computer was when she started studying at UCT. Additionally, this was also her first experience with the English language, as UCT is a predominantly English university, and there is little to no room for the local languages (such as Xhosa and Zulu) within the institution.

This is where the eurocentric nature of the institution starts to become visible, in comparison to the Netherlands, where there are ample courses and even whole programmes taught in Dutch. So it can be seen that the systems and institutions of UCT itself are also based on and inspired by the European frameworks of what a university should entail. For example, *"So anything and everything we had to do, we had to do it in, in English and it was actually my first time learning in that way because when I was in Khayelitsha in all our subjects our teachers were code-switching between Isi, Xhosa and English."*

Thus, all assignments are to be submitted in English within UCT, which creates problems for people who start to learn English only at University as the teachers do not speak the local languages in many cases creating extra difficulties in learning English when there is no common language between teachers and students. *"So that was my experience with [starting university], I had to do everything in English. I had to learn how to use computers. I would say the majority of the students in or at UCT come from privileged backgrounds [so already being used to using computers and having been taught English]"*.

Then there is also the decolonisation debate within universities in Cape Town focusing on languages, and students being able to write assignments in their mother tongue. Because, if you look at history and colonisation, one of the things that happened was English taking over the colonised countries as a main language and diminishing the usage of local languages in official ways, such as education. The debate then focuses on making students, at for example UCT, able to do their assignments in their language to increase their inclusion in the educational system and make sure they also get an equal opportunity for education. This is also the main argument students make when actively protesting against capitalism within the institution UCT.

This again is a reason to call out the institution for Eurocentrism, as the focus is on the Westernised capitalist system within the institution and organisation running UCT. In addition, this capitalist running of the university also promotes the exclusion of different communities because they cannot financially afford to study due to the high expenses *"which again highlights what I meant by the eurocentric nature of the university"*. Then, only already privileged students can study and fit into the system of education that is UCT, excluding many local communities while international students can study within UCT. This again excludes indigenous knowledge systems within UCT, while students agree that this is needed for the local universities to be able to host and promote the local communities more and strive away from eurocentric principles which promote non-local knowledge and Westernised education.

While my research was not focused much on finding sustainable solutions for the mentioned problems, a simple solution for language barriers would be to either focus more on teaching English (which is rather eurocentric still) or focus on finding professors and linguists to assess academic work in the local languages to improve the inclusion of people not growing up

or able to learn English in professional settings. The same is possible for digital knowledge, offering more options to get acquainted with computers can help to include people who are now inable to study because they are not digital natives. The issue of capitalism is much more complex an not answerable in the scope of this research, which is also one of the most visible limitations of this research. However, the orienting framework and narrative review can offer a basis toward a future research focused on how to deal with the capitalistic nature of universities in Africa. To eventually create the African university, not a eurocentric university located in Africa.

Educational chaos

Numerous other factors play a role in education in South Africa, when talking to a Dutch Master's student studying in Cape Town we discussed the organisational characteristics of universities within Cape Town. We compared the UWC with UCT and found that there is already a difference between these two universities which puts them both on two ends of the spectrum within African universities. The UWC is, as mentioned before, located in the middle of the Cape flats, the historically poorer neighbourhoods essentially dampened in their progress due to the Apartheid regime. The guide showing us around there also discussed that the university strives to give back to the local community, in great contrast to the UCT.

This university owns a big portion of land on which residences and university buildings have been built. However, the land had all been colonised by Jan van Riebeeck, the founding father of the segregation of Black and White people within South Africa (News24, 2012), which highlights the colonial past of the university, as the piece of land the university was built on had been designated as a university by Cecil John Rhodes (University of Cape Town, n.d.). This is also highlighted by the placement of the university, as the main buildings are built higher than the city on the foot of Table Mountain overlooking the Southern Suburbs, one of the richer areas of Cape Town. This university is also much more focused on Western and Eurocentric ideals and follows a capitalistic worldview on managing the university.

The Eurocentric and colonial past of UCT has also amounted to the ascension of the "Rhodes must fall" movement which resulted in removing the Cecil John Rhodes statue from the entrance of the university to symbolise the start of decolonising the curriculum and the university itself. The spark of the movement was the "poo protest" where a student, Chumani Maxwele, threw a bucket of poo over the statue of Rhodes while shouting: "*Where are our heroes and ancestors?*" (Fairbanks, 2020). A social movement to combat institutional racism and other institutional injustices within UCT, and other South African universities were born. The main story here again finds its roots in the Apartheid and the us-and-them narrative still very much prevalent in Cape Town and other places in Africa.

Consequently, this poses many dilemmas and difficulties as the university on an organisational level still follows mainly Western principles which amount to many protests and delays in the academic calendar. An example of this mentioned in the interview was the fact that there is so much chaos within the university regarding payments and students not being able to

cover fees being unable to sign in again for their courses. This leads to the first few weeks of the academic year being filled with protests and the courses are often delayed.

Another recurring problem with universities in Cape Town is that the admission fees are extremely expensive, higher than the Dutch standards even. Expensiveness is the main wall blocking local communities from entering universities, as the government does not provide loans or money to students eager to enter a university. In addition, the only option for many is to try to get a scholarship, via sports for example. As sports teams connected to universities are also a vital part of university life in South Africa, comparable to the stereotypical American ideals of sports and cheerleaders.

Although this outlook on universities in Cape Town is rather negative, the level of education is incredibly high. A lot is expected from students, sometimes even more than in Dutch universities. Therefore, one might question whether the measurements for "top 100" (Top Universities, 2023) universities are relevant for universities not fitting into the Eurocentric framework of what universities should entail and then getting scores that do not necessarily correlate with the perceived experiences of students within the institutions.

A comparison of facilities

The next photos depict the different facilities in both the Cape Town universities (UWC & UCT) in comparison to the faculty campus Fryslan from the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. On the left of figures 5, 6, 7, & 8 the situation in UCT or UWC is depicted while the right side shows Campus Fryslan in Leeuwarden. The faculty in Friesland is much smaller compared to the Cape Town universities, but the comparison shows that there is not much difference between the universities here and there. The only big difference is the availability of digital screens in Campus Fryslan. This makes it easier to give presentations.

However, as mentioned above load shedding also plays a role in the usage of these screens. Other than that, the facilities are perceived to be good on both campuses, and there are ample of different options to stay the day within either university. All have access to enough power outlets to work with bigger groups of students, and cafeterias are available (even working without electricity in UWC and UCT). Therefore, a swift comparison between UWC and Campus Fryslan shows that there is only little difference between the facilities of both universities. Only external factors play a major role in the experience of studying in UWC or Campus Fryslan.

Thus, facility wise there is no difference between the Global North and South in this comparison. However, a more extensive study is needed to find out whether this is also true in other universities in the Global North and South to find out whether this affects the well-being and quality of the university. Consequently, the focus of this particular study is not on the facilities but rather on individual experiences of students.
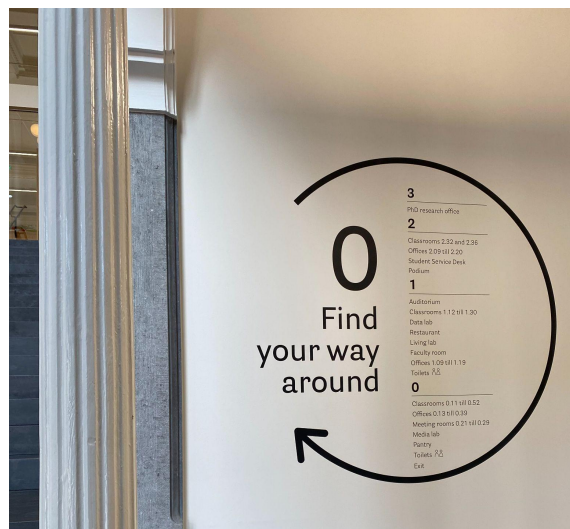
Figure 5: *The Cafeteria at UWC and Campus Fryslan*

Figure 6: *The "find your way" signs in UWC and Campus Fryslan*

Figure 7: *Main building at UCT and Campus Fryslan*

Figure 8: *Lecture Hall at UWC and Campus Fryslan*

Conclusion

To summarise, this paper started with an artwork depicting the interruption of locality within Africa. This sets the scene for this research, which focused on identifying gaps in context due to a lack of inclusion of local spheres within academic research. This gap is elaborated on in a literature review focusing on sustainable development and arguing for the importance of indigenous knowledge within academia. Additionally, the case study and context of South Africa, especially Cape Town, is introduced. This is followed by the story of the people, an overview of the stories people who live within the context of the case study have expressed in interviews. They focused on local problems and contexts, such as the lack of job opportunities and the load shedding currently happening in South Africa. This, to show how indigenous knowledge can be included within research. Laslty, an orienting framework is created which shows how indigenous can be included in other research as well.

Additionally, the literature has shown that the SDGs are skewed toward eurocentric ideals and sustainable development in that framework is then focused on merely these Global North countries, leaving the rest behind. The slogan for the SDGs "*Leave no one behind*" (United Nations, n.d.), is then also not followed. Tackling this problem at grassroots levels starts by taking a bottom-up approach following the SDGs and the "*theory of change*" (Taplin, Clark, Collins & Colby, 2013) model to find how we can include local and indigenous knowledge within the education system to sustainably develop within the local contexts. The narrative within this paper gives a detailed overview of the existing literature arguing for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems within sustainable development.

This paper adds to the existing literature by pinpointing different factors that are vital for this context within the local communities, bringing a start to the inclusion of communities within the scholarly narrative of sustainable development and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems within the framework of sustainable development and the SDGs. This has been done by including South African students, Dutch students, and students from different Global North and

South countries within the discourse of sustainably developing education within the Global South, focusing on the Cape Town universities. They highlighted a few major and minor problems that they encountered in their daily business, which then can be solved within this context by looking at the needs of people rather than what the Global North ideal thinks is needed.

In regard to future research and implications for this paper, this is the first step of anthropological inclusion within the notion of sustainable development. The experiences and cultural traditions and knowledge of people within the context are vital to finding out if the research grasps the full story, rather than merely fitting into man-made frameworks which might not be a reflection of the actual situation prevalent in said context. This research focused on the case study of university life within Cape Town and can not yet be generalised as the standard on a greater scale, but rather be the basis of future research on the inclusion of indigenous knowledge to create more efficient and fitting innovations within the framework of sustainable developments and the SDGs. The conclusion for this case study is the issue in regard to universities being focused and built upon eurocentric ideologies.

To be able to change that I have asked students what their main problems are: the lack of jobs due to university education not fitting the local context, not enough energy available in the country, capitalist university management & language barriers. Some of these problems can be solved by focusing more on the local context and including local and indigenous knowledge systems, what can education add to the local context - and how can indigenous knowledge be interwoven with the curriculum - to be able to smoothen the transition from studying to working. In addition, emphasising and adding more opportunities for different languages makes for a more inclusive nature of education which can help in including more people to be able to study. The energy & capitalist problems are much more broad and difficult to solve. The research done for this paper cannot fit the scope to be able to find a tailored solution for these problems.

A possible future research should then focus on the research question: *"how can we reduce capitalist management and high entrance fees to universities to be able to make them more inclusive for more socio-economic groups and communities"*. For now, the main-take away is that a university, in order to strive away from eurocentrism, should be focused on connecting the curriculum to the local context to connect the university more to the job market in the area. This should be done by including indigenous knowledge (cultural practices and traditions) and connecting them with the curriculum, while also creating the opportunity for the local communities to be included in the university; by weakening language barriers & monetary problems. Then, a real African and flourishing university can be created.

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Appendix

Interview guide

{Intro:
- Name/study/Nationality}

Main:
- How do you perceive your education?
    - What do you think of university life?
        - Living alone / with parents
    - Do you enjoy studying?
        - Good facilities
    - Do you feel you are educated well?
        - Do you think you will be able to get a job in your field of interest?
        - What do you think about your university?
    - What do you think about studying abroad?
        - Within Africa / outside Africa
- What do you know about the concept of Global South and Global North?
    - What is it?
        - Is there a difference between them
            - If yes what?
            - If no: Why not
        - Do you perceive said (absence of) difference?
    - Do you think this influences education?
        - If yes how?
            - Do you think it influences your chances of a job?
            - Is this something you think about in general?
                - Did it affect your choice of studying?
        - Should things change?
            - Do you think Global North imposes ideas on other places of the world?