

Second Interregional Dialogue on

Education and Development in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa

Shared solutions for common challenges in the context of the African Year of
Education 2024 - July 23-25, 2024 – Addis Abeba, Ethiopia

Report

Authors

Marina Larrea (OBREAL)

Emmanuel Chigozie Okonkwo (African Union Comission)



The 2nd Interregional Dialogue Education and Development in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. Shared solutions for common challenges in the context of the African Year of Education 2024 was held in the African Union's headquarter from 23rd to 25th of July 2024. It was co-organized by the African Union, the Brazilian Ministry of Education, CAPES, and OBREAL. It was supported by the Association of African Universities, the Latin American and the Caribbean Higher Education Space and the Argentinean Embassy for Ethiopia and the African Union. The International Development Research Center from Canada was an associated partner contributing with concrete research experiences from Latin America and Africa.

The objectives of this interregional dialogues inaugurated in Argentina last year are:

- To transform and revitalize education, particularly higher education, as a vehicle for regional integration and sustainable development,
- To foster inter-institutional collaboration for the creation of common knowledge to generate joint solutions for shared problems,
- To promote intercultural dialogue, plurality and academic traditions and identities based on a relationship of solidarity.

The meeting gathered more than 200 representatives from 53 countries from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and the Americas (North, Central, and South).

Participants represented Embassies, Ministries and national authorities, national, regional and continental associations of universities, higher education institutions' leadership, researchers and civil society organisations.

Report- Day 1

Tuesday, July 23

Official opening and welcome

Speakers:

- H.E. Prof. Mohammed **BELHOCINE**, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Commission (AUC)
- H.E. Yesenia **OLAYA**, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Republic of Colombia
- Denise **CARVALHO**, President CAPES, Federative Republic of Brazil
- Nicolas **PATRICI**, Director for Development and Strategy, OBREAL

Moderator: Sophia Ndemutla **ASHIPALA**, Head of Education, AUC

The second edition of the Interregional Dialogues in Education and Development kicked off with an official opening where the authorities of the co-organizing institutions established the political framework that shapes and contains the interregional dialogue and cooperation between Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Setting the tone of the meeting by expressing the current challenges and the main strategies that translate into policy at the continental level, the national level and at the institutional level, the African Union, the governments of Brazil and Colombia and OBREAL presented current trends and demonstrated that there are enormous and significant intersections that allow higher education systems and institutions to work together to tackle pressing challenges in mutually beneficial South-South cooperations

Political dialogue – Roundtable: “African, Latin American and Caribbean priorities on education and development”

Introductory Remarks:

- H.E. Yesenia **OLAYA** Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Republic of Colombia
- Denise **CARVALHO**, President CAPES, Federative Republic of Brazil
- Saidou **MADOUGOU**, Director ESTI, African Union Commission

Commentators:

African and LAC Ministries of Higher Education Representatives:

- Natalia **MARTÍNEZ SÁNCHEZ**, Director, Ministry of Higher Education, Cuba
- Carlos **QUENESSE MATARUCA**, Executive Director for External Evaluation, CNAQ, Mozambique
- El Moctar **HENDE**, Secretary General of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Founder Association of Educational Studies and Research, Mauritania
- Pergentino Esandi **ONDO**, Director of Higher Education, Equatorial Guinea

Embassies representing Northern countries:

- Sinikka **ANTILA**, Ambassador of Finland to Ethiopia and the African Union
- Ben Marc **DIENDÉRE**, Ambassador of Canada to the African Union
- Laurent **BOCHEREAU**, European Union Delegation to African Union

Moderator: Marina **LARREA**, OBREAL

The political dialogue roundtable showcased legal frameworks that enable interregional dialogue and cooperation, current thematic priorities and examples of implementation tools.

- Institutional and legal frameworks:
 - Summit of the Future
 - Transforming Education Summit
 - Buenos Aires Plan for Action for South-South Cooperation
 - G20 Education Working Group action plan
 - AU-CELAC Summit declaration
 - Agenda 2063 Vision for Africa
 - Continental Educational Strategy for Africa
 - African Year of Education roadmap 2024
 - Declaration of the Regional Conference of Higher Education for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Current thematic priorities:
 - Teacher training and teacher professional development
 - Green and digital transitions
 - Climate change
 - Development of skills (skilling, upskilling and reskilling)
 - Development of research and innovation to address developmental challenges
- Implementation tools
 - Brazilian programs PEC-G and PEC-PG, that allow for African and Latin American students to benefit from undergraduate and graduate scholarships in Brazil.
 - Cuban program of scholarships for African students
 - Several calls to fund projects and initiatives
 - Youth Mobility Flagship Program of the European Commission

■ Roundtable “Promoting interregional collaboration between higher education systems – regional priorities”

Speakers:

- Olusola **OYEWOLE**, Secretary General Association of African Universities (AAU)
- Elizabeth **BERNAL**, ASCUN - Latin America and the Caribbean Higher Education Space (ENLACES)
- Stephen **SIMUKANGA**, Executive Director. Southern African Universities Association (SARUA)
- Luis Armando **GONZÁLEZ PLACENCIA**, Executive Secretary General, National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) – Mexico
- Gaspard **BANYAMKIMBONA**, Secretary General, Inter University Council for Eastern Africa (IUCEA)
- Souleymane **KONATÉ**, Secretary General, Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES)

Chair: Nicolas **MAILLARD**, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Six regional associations have shared their best practices for promoting interregional collaboration, focusing on two core priorities defined in Buenos Aires: sustainable development and the digitalization of higher education. All associations offer regional mobility programs, with some extending these programs between Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Several associations are also engaged in a series of webinars or virtual exchanges. Accreditation and recognition of study programs at both regional and interregional levels are key priorities for many of these associations.

The Latin American associations ANUIES, ASCUN, and ENLACES have emphasized the importance of education as a fundamental right in our societies. They advocate for advances in the digitalization of higher education and the universal access to high-quality Internet. Associations such as CAMES and SARUA have substantial experience with digital solutions for universities. Finally, the importance of promoting knowledge and academic diplomacy in our countries has been reiterated.

■ Roundtable “Funding priorities and opportunities”

Speakers:

- Rui **OPPERMANN**, Director of International Cooperation CAPES – Brazil
- Stefan **BIENEFELD**, Head of Division Transnational Education and Cooperation Programs, DAAD – Germany
- Huba **BOSHOFF**, Director NUFFIC South Africa
- Jan **KENNIS**, VLIR-UOS, Belgium
- Iina **SOIRI**, Education and Science Counsellor and Team Finland Knowledge Network expert in Southern Africa, Embassy of Finland in Pretoria
- Katie **BRYANT**, Program Officer, International Development Research Center (IDRC) – Canada

Chair: Elizabeth **COLUCCI**, OBREAL

The discussion focused on funding trends, priorities, risks, and changes due to political dynamics and geopolitical factors. Panelists had mixed views on South-South cooperation: DAAD noted it occurs organically but isn't always prioritized, while VLIR-UOS and CAPES emphasized sustainable development and academic cooperation. Funding models discussed included scholarships, partnerships, and structural programs, with an emphasis on integrating these models for maximum impact. The importance of 'mutual benefit' in funding design was highlighted, and recommendations were made for long-term programs, regional collaboration, and promoting flexibility and open communication among institutions and funders. The panelists also stressed the need to articulate the benefits of North-South capacity building and knowledge exchange.

In terms of final Recommendations from the panel:

- Funders need to invest in long term programmes with partner higher education institutions, including also ministries and agencies responsible for the implementation of HE strategies. Systemic change is messy but is the only path forward for long-term change in the knowledge economy.
- Regional and interregional collaboration should focus on developing concrete solutions for change on transversal topics such as diversity, impact and higher education management. Societal change happens when data shows it's needed, but change is hard. Implementing change requires both HEIs as well as funders to become more flexible, reduce bureaucracy, communicate more openly and truly work together in a common spirit, such as for example within Team Europe.
- As a last and poignant note, CAPES made a plea equity in relationships, and for lobbying for academic and scientific investment and institutional autonomy in its neighboring country Argentina.

Roundtable “Internationalization of higher education: opportunities for cooperation”

Speakers:

- James Otieno **JOWI**, Founding Executive Director, African Network for Internationalization of Education (ANIE)
- José Celso **FREIRE**, President, FAUBAI, Brazil
- Andrés **SABELLA**, President, International Affairs Commission – National Inter-University Council, Argentina
- Abdoulaye **SALIFOU**, Chief of Education, UNESCO Liaison Office to the AU

Chair: Apiyo **OKWIRI**, OBREAL

The roundtable on “Internationalization of higher education: opportunities for cooperation” brought together panellist from African and African Associations and organizations. All with different membership base but with the mandate of promoting, facilitating and implementing internationalization strategies. ANIE focuses on building expertise and network of internationalization practitioners in Africa, FAUBAI bringing together Universities in Brazil, the National Inter-University Council of Argentina implementing its internalization work plan for

the Argentina public universities and UNESCO working on all levels of education and promoting the Global and Regional Conventions on Recognition.

After showcasing their priorities, challenges and major South-South and South-South-Noth initiatives (among which we can highlight the FAUBAI FARA scholarship program and especially the Argentinean universities - Pan African University cooperation through short courses taught to PAU students by Argentinean teachers and reserachers), the common consensus is that there is need to enhance the emergence of research networks, quality reforms and try to mitigate the risks of internationalization. Additionally, it is important to continuously dialogue to identify common problems and. challenges and leverage the associations' innovation systems to act jointly on areas of interest. Most importantly there is need to take immediate actions on agreed outcomes of interregional dialogue platforms, as the Argentinean higher education system showed.

Roundtable “Youth, Women and Skills for Employability and Development”

Speakers:

- Loretta **IKOME**, Country Head, Commonwealth Businesswomen for Africa - Cameroon
- Rose **OMARI**, Science and Technology Policy Institute, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR-STEPRI), Ghana
- Mariana **SANTA CRUZ**, Professor, Bolivian Catholic University of San Pablo
- Tonya **BLOWERS**, Programme Coordinator, The Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD)
- Keagetswe Alex **KGOTLAETSILE**, Education Lead – Women Gender and Youth Directorate, AUC

Chair: Emmanuel Chigozie **OKONKWO**, AUC

The round table on “Youth, women and skills for Employability and Development” focused on strategies to enhance skills development and employment opportunities for youth and women, emphasizing successful factors, future skill needs, and mechanisms for meaningful participation in interregional cooperation between Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The session looks at presentations addressing global youth unemployment rates, highlighting the persistent challenges in the Global South, particularly for young women who face significant labor market inequalities. It underscores the critical role of education and training in securing decent jobs and highlights the African Union’s strategic initiatives, such as Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), in addressing these issues. The panel includes distinguished experts discussing solutions and initiatives for a more inclusive and prosperous future. The session concludes with a call to action to ensure no young person or woman is left behind in the efforts towards skills development and employment.

Cocktail - offered by the Republic of Argentina

The first day finished at night with a cocktail offered by the Argentinean Embassy in Addis Abeba for all the participants where M. Jean Koulidiati, the Rector of the Pan African University, offered a speech that addressed the significant impact of the short courses organised by the Argentinean higher education institutions together with and for the Pan African University.

Report- Day 2

Wednesday, July 24

Plenary session

Speakers:

- Prof. Jean **KOULIDIATI**, Rector, Pan African University (PAU)
- Prof. Paulo **SPELLER**, Rector, Afro-American University of Central Africa

Intervention of Prof. Jean Koulidiati

Prof. Koulidiati discussed the transformative power of higher education in promoting regional integration. He emphasized that higher education drives economic growth, social cohesion, and cultural exchange. He highlighted the Pan African University's role in fostering knowledge exchange and regional development, noting that higher education institutions act as hubs of innovation and research. He also stressed higher education's role in promoting social cohesion and inclusion by providing opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue education and improve their socioeconomic status.

Intervention of Prof. Paulo Speller

Paulo Speller provided insights into how his university contributes to regional integration. He highlighted initiatives that bridge educational gaps and promote cultural exchange in Latin American countries, citing specific examples.

The commissioners reflected on the presentations, emphasizing the utilitarian value of higher education in developing countries, using Algeria as an example. His Excellency also highlighted the importance of studying African history, culture, and languages to preserve and promote the unique heritage of our continents.

Breakout Thematic Sessions

Session 1: Innovating Innovation: Engaging Institutions for Sustainable Development

Chair: Elizabeth Colucci (OBREAL)

The session explored the concept of engaged universities and their connection to innovation. It discussed participatory approaches for engaged universities in different institutional contexts and missions. The discussion included examples from Morocco's national innovation strategy and the importance of local partnerships with industry and society. The need for universities to bridge the gap between theory and practice in innovation was highlighted, along with the importance of translating research results into local languages for broader impact. Science diplomacy, entrepreneurship, and a proposal for a bi-regional Africa-Latin America program for university innovation and engagement were also discussed.

Session 2: Education and Work: The Role of TVET

Chair: Marina Larrea (OBREAL)

The TVET session focused on its critical role in driving the Agenda 2063 skills revolution across Africa. Key initiatives discussed included national policies transforming job seekers into job creators, the review of the TVET strategy to align with emerging trends, and various continental programs enhancing the quality of skills systems. Challenges such as insufficient investment, fragmented governance, and a mismatch between supply and demand were addressed. The session underscored the importance of global partnerships and South-South cooperation. Three main takeaways were highlighted: prioritizing TVET for the 3rd Interregional Dialogue, the potential for South-South cooperation, and the need for interregional dialogue involving governments and researchers to inform TVET policy decisions.

Session 3: Food Security and Health

Chair: Huba Boshoff (NUFFIC South Africa)

This session emphasized the critical role of interregional cooperation in addressing food security and health challenges. Participants highlighted the importance of information sharing, leveraging shared strategies, and climate resilience techniques. Universities' role in research and innovation was underscored, along with the need for accountability in using funds, involvement of the private sector and NGOs, and investment in modern technology. The session also discussed challenges like language barriers and the importance of integrating food security and health issues. There was a call for increased interregional research collaboration and scholarships for African students.

Session 4: Digitalization for Inclusion

Chair: Jan Kennis (VLIR-UOS, Belgium)

This session made several recommendations for digital inclusion. It emphasized the need to include everyone, including those resistant to digital approaches and people with disabilities. Empowering young people, interdisciplinarity, leadership, and support staff in digital transformation were highlighted as essential. The session stressed the importance of local digital solutions for local problems, user-friendly digital tools, and the right to internet access. It also called for (inter)regional monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and share success and failure stories transparently.

Session 5: Energy, Climate change, and Sustainable Development

This session emphasized that higher education and research are important to develop solutions to the challenges ahead with regards to Energy and Climate CHANGE

In order to do this Higher Education and Research needs to:

1. Be inclusive of indigenous knowledge and promote gender equity
2. Collaboration with industry and society
3. Develop local, simple, cost effective and adaptive technologies that are owned by the people
4. In the conversation on climate change- we must also pay attention to