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The Rise of the Global South and the Repositioning of German Actors in Ethiopian Higher Education

Abstract

The higher education (HE) sector in Ethiopia has witnessed an epochal transformation against the backdrop of the so-called global knowledge age. Expansion and internationalization unfold simultaneously and are deeply intertwined. This article analyzes how an economically and politically stronger global South changes the HE landscape in Ethiopia. We focus on cooperation programs of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and GIZ (German Corporation for International Cooperation) and show how these are adjusted to the new global political conditions. Cooperation with traditional partners from the global North remains important but is increasingly combined and complemented with actors from the global South.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Ethiopia, South Korea, global South*

Zusammenfassung

Vor dem Hintergrund der sogenannten globalen Wissensgesellschaft vollzieht der äthiopische Hochschulsektor seit der Jahrtausendwende einen tiefgreifenden Wandel. Expansion und Internationalisierung sind dabei eng miteinander verbunden. Dieser Artikel analysiert, wie sich der Hochschulsektor in Äthiopien durch einen wirtschaftlich und politisch erstarkten globalen Süden verändert. Im Fokus stehen dabei Kooperationsprogramme des DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) und der GIZ (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit). Kooperationen mit traditionellen Partnern aus dem globalen Norden bleiben für Äthiopiens Universitäten wichtig. Sie werden jedoch zunehmend mit Akteuren aus dem globalen Süden kombiniert und ergänzt.

Schlüsselwörter: *Hochschulen, Äthiopien, Südkorea, globaler Süden*

Simultaneous expansion and internationalisation in Africa

The close of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have witnessed an epochal transformation of higher education (Harris, 2013, p. xxi) and an unprecedented expansion

in scale and scope of border-crossing activities in higher education worldwide (Ennew & Greenaway, 2012, p. 1). The number of students enrolled in HE institutions on a global scale increased from 97 million in 2000 to 153 million in 2007 and is estimated to reach 262 million by 2025 (UNESCO, 2009, p. 1). In sub-Saharan Africa the number of students enrolled in HE increased from 2.5 million in 2000 to 5.2 million in 2010 (Africa-America Institute, 2015, p. 10). Increasing the enrolment ratio further is a vital part of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the vision of an “African Renaissance” (AUC, 2015, p. 17). Tanzania, Uganda, Senegal and Ethiopia recorded the biggest increase in student enrolment, with the latter moving from 79.000 students in 1991 to 600.000 students in 2012 (Teferra, 2014, p. 10). In quantitative terms, the university as an institution has thus gained considerable importance on a global scale and in Africa in particular.

The massive expansion of HE in Africa unfolds amidst and as a part of the current round of globalization(s) and the reshuffling of the global political order(s). As the global South becomes stronger economically and politically, it is increasingly more involved in shaping the HE landscape in Africa (Teferra, 2014). Actors from the global North are learning to deal with the new powers and adjust their modes of engagement.

We would like to contribute to the discussion about the global South in HE by focusing on two German actors in Ethiopia: the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD) and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ). The rise of the global South becomes apparent in our article as we describe an aid program in which the DAAD had to replace seconded German professors by South Korean professors after the project was running the risk of failure. The aid project needed non-Westerners to proceed successfully. We then go on to show the growing role of actors from the global South in funding scholarships and point out some of the underlying motives of the Ethiopian government to favor these partnerships.

We are aware that the usage of the terms “global South” and “global North” is controversial but use them to operationalize our work in which we want to underline the growing significance of countries that do not belong to the traditional Western realm. We use the term “global South” also

in reference to South Korea, member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since 1996 and part of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee since 2009. Given the non-traditional character of its cooperation with other actors from the global South and the widespread usage of the term by academics we consider it appropriate to apply the term here (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 567; Lee, 2012, p. 18 f.; Abdenur & da Fonseca, 2013, p. 1478).

The results are an outcome of research conducted in Ethiopia in two phases by two researchers between 2011 and 2018. We briefly describe how we accessed empirical material but neglect further methodological discussions due to limited space. We interviewed representatives from the DAAD and the GIZ as well as the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST). Further, we interviewed representatives of the Higher Education Strategy Centre (HESC), the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) and members of the external and international relations offices at Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa Science and Technology University, Hawassa University and Mekelle University. Additionally, we interviewed Ethiopian as well as foreign university teachers and talked to Ethiopian researchers in the field of HE, some of them being involved in the government's recent Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap project (MoE & HESC, 2018). While interviews in the first phase were open-ended to assess the topic in a broader context, interviews in the second phase were semi-structured and led to the refined results.

The global South in higher education

There is an emerging body of literature that frames border transcending activities in HE as soft power as it was introduced by Joseph Nye (2004) in the early 2000s (Nye, 2005). Some of the most prominent debates about HE as a tool to expand international influence evolve around the Chinese Confucius Institutes (Yang, 2010). In the West, Confucius Institutes have been suspected to operate with a hidden agenda beyond their official statements, which has caused official investigations in the US (US Senate, 2019; GAO, 2019) and led to the closing of institutes in Sweden, Australia, the USA and Canada.¹

The emergence and development of the Confucius Institutes have influenced the debates of the global South in HE. There are those seeing the Confucius Institutes clearly as a form of soft-power while others discuss them as South-South cooperation (Kragelund & Hampway, 2016). The latter is seen as a symmetric relation which is considered the opposite of imperialist or coercive practices of (neo-)colonialization (Wan & Sirat, 2018, p. 81). Through South-South cooperation the spirit of Bandung is said to be kept alive by prioritizing exchange of experience and knowledge over wealth transfer (Carey & Li, 2016, p. 3).

Jane Knight (2015), widely acknowledged scholar in the field of anglophone HE, questions the "power paradigm" (p. 2) in both approaches and argues that it is not suitable in the field of HE as it further promotes the imbalance of knowledge and power. Academic cooperation, she argues, does not know any winners and losers, and should be seen as a bridge linking international HE and international relations and might best be theorized under the term "knowledge diplomacy" (Knight, 2018, p. 3).

The debate about the role of the global South in HE is ongoing, and it remains to be seen what the impact for Africa is going to be. Teferra (2014, p. 16) states that possibilities for the continent are now better than ever although neither the dominance of Western concepts nor the efforts of South-South cooperation are new in African HE. The dynamics, however, are different, he reckons, since the global South has become more assertive and economically stronger while the global North is facing economic decline (ibid.). We showcase these dynamics using the example of HE in Ethiopia.

DAAD and GIZ: Key actors in Ethiopia's higher education

From its inception in the 1950s onwards, HE remained a marginal phenomenon under Haile Selassie as well as through-out the socialist regime, albeit with shifting foreign influences (Saint 2004; Dagne, 2004). Change began once the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) ended the Marxist era in Ethiopia in 1991 (Zewde, 2002, p. 264 f.). In 1994 a new constitution was adopted creating the basis for elections, which made Meles Zenawi Prime Minister. Higher education, under the new government, was "embraced as critical national need" (Saint, 2004, p. 85).

In 2005 the MoE initiated the University Capacity Building Program (UCBP), an enormous project that lasted eleven years and changed the landscape of Ethiopian HE profoundly. The GIZ was contracted as "internally appointed agent" of the MoE (GIZ Worldwide, 2019, n. p.) to manage the design and construction of 13 new universities throughout the country. The Ethiopian government financed and led the project and the GIZ was an important partner in helping to expand the HE sector (ibid.). The UCBP was part of a larger effort by the Ethiopian government to massively increase the access to HE. Simultaneously to the construction of entirely new institutions, numerous colleges as well as branches of the few previously existing universities were upgraded and private providers were allowed in the country (Akalu, 2014, p. 401f.).

After finishing its huge infrastructural project, the GIZ continued its work with training and advising decision makers on institutional and national level. The framework for its activities was set by the Sustainable Training and Education Program (STEP), which replaced the Engineering Education Capacity Building Program (EECBP) in 2015² (GIZ, 2016). The importance that the MoE ascribed to its cooperation with the GIZ was underlined by the location of the agency's office, which was situated inside the ministry, next door to the office of the state minister for HE.³ On the same floor, the GIZ also employed a central coordinator for international cooperation initiatives, while an "embedded expert" advised reform and assessment processes at the HERQA.⁴

The GIZ contributed to central efforts of the ministry regarding the development of the HE sector. It had an important role in the foundation of the Ethiopian Institute for Higher Education (EIHE), an institution designed to train high-ranking university officials in matters of leadership and management.⁵ The first workshop that the EIHE gave after its opening in 2018 dealt with internationalization, showing the significance that Ethiopian actors attribute to border-crossing activities in this field (EIHE Policy Briefing, 2018).⁶ The

development of this institution is accompanied not only by the GIZ, but also by the Center for Higher Education (CHE) in Gütersloh, Germany and the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) at the University of Twente, Netherlands.⁷ With the support of these Western European agencies (GIZ, CHE, CHEPS) the EIHE will eventually take over responsibilities in the field of leadership training that previously lay, at least to some extent, in the hands of the DAAD.

In the context of its program *Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies (DIES)* the DAAD offers training courses for high-ranking staff from African universities on management and leadership, on writing grant proposals and on the management of internationalization.⁸ For each of these courses the DAAD partners with universities in Germany or other Western European countries. These institutions then undertake the actual implementation of the training courses (ibid.). More importantly, however, the DAAD facilitates university partnerships as well as student and staff mobility. In this function the DAAD was also involved in the EECBP and the STEP programs, recruiting German university leaders to take leading roles and promote capacity building in Ethiopian HE institutions.⁹ The DAAD recruited for example five German professors to establish and develop the Adama Science and Technology University, which was supposed to be emulated after the German model of a *Technische Universität*. The German professors took the role of the president and the deans, all equipped with five-year contracts. However, none of them stayed for more than two years. The country director of the DAAD stated that there were several reasons why this type of cooperation ended prematurely. The most important one, he reckoned, was that the Ethiopian university staff did not want to be supervised by Germans. The strategy of employing people from the global North to show how to do things in the global South did not work in this particular case.¹⁰

South Korea as temporary role model

The German president of Adama Science and Technology University was replaced by a South Korean professor endorsed by the Ethiopian MoE. His recruitment provided access to an academic and professional network that the ministry seemed eager to tap into in order to increase the number of Korean professors at Ethiopian universities. Hence, in the following years South Koreans quite regularly staffed posts tendered by the DAAD. The Ethiopian MoE had initiated this process and the DAAD eventually accepted it as a solution to its implementation and recruitment problems.¹¹

In 2012 for example Young Kyun Kim was appointed scientific director at the Addis Ababa Institute of Technology (AAiT) which made him the first Korean professor to lead an institute at Addis Ababa University. His colleagues Byeong Soo Lim, Munhong Yim and Ho Yeol Kwon who worked at the same institute were also funded by the DAAD.¹² For the posts that could not be filled with professors from South Korea, professors from the USA, Turkey and Pakistan were hired.¹³ The DAAD had thus revised its strategy and hired not only German professors, but professors from South Korea and other countries, overall mostly from the global South. In the case of the Adama Science and Technology University professors from South Korea enjoyed special recognition and were more wel-

come than their German counterparts. From the perspective of the Ethiopian university staff, the cooperation with South Korean professors seems to have been on a more equal footing.¹⁴

The Ethiopian MoE's initial push to increase the number of South Korean professors in its HEIs, however, might also be explained with the South Korean development model, which resonated with the Ethiopian government at the time. After Meles Zenawi's visit to South Korea and the meeting with the Korean President Lee Myung-bak in 2011, the country in East Asia started to become a role model for the Ethiopian government.¹⁵ The economic model in South Korea is sometimes described as Chaebol-capitalism (referring to the large industrial conglomerates) for being rigidly hierarchical, bureaucratic and directed by the state, but also as highly effective for scale and scope economies (Tudor, 2012, 70).¹⁶ The focus on science and technology in economy and HE was also appealing since the Ethiopian government had installed a ratio of 70 per cent of technology at universities (MoE, 2010, p. 11; MoE, 2015, p. 105; NPC, 2016, p. 58). Cooperation between the countries intensified, which was also expressed in HE. Addis Ababa University signed three Memorandums of Understanding with Korean Universities and the Korea Foundation between 2011 and 2014¹⁷ and an increasing number of Ethiopian PhD students started to attend South Korean HE institutions.¹⁸

Throughout much of the 2010s there was a special interest in the South Korean model of HE in Ethiopia which had substantial impact on the work of the DAAD in the country. Currently, it seems as if this might have been a mere episode in the reshuffling of global political order(s) and HE. South Korean professors contributed significantly to the development of HE by holding leading positions at science and technology institutions, but they are step-by-step replaced by Ethiopians.¹⁹

The Ethiopian Education Development Road Map (MoE & HESC, 2018, p. 4) now names Vietnam and Malaysia as role models for HE. One rationale for the re-orientation could be that those two countries currently appear to be somewhat closer to the socioeconomic realities in Ethiopia, but just as well seem to have an interest in emulating South Korea's development in the HE sector (UNESCO, 2014, 40 ff.).²⁰ Moreover, both countries' HE sectors share a number of characteristics with their Ethiopian counterpart, like the focus on science and technology and a massively increased number of university students over a short period of time (ibid., p. 16, p. 19, p. 32).

Rationales for scholarship agreements

Rapid and extensive expansion of access to HE brings along several issues. Primarily, the focus on so called massification entails problems concerning the quality of teaching and research. Exemplarily, only 58 per cent of university teachers in Ethiopia hold a master's degree and only 15 per cent hold a PhD as of 2015 (MoE, 2015, p. 24). The government plans to increase this number to 70 per cent of university teachers holding a master's degree and 30 per cent holding a PhD (ibid.; see also GIZ, 2016, p. 1).

One possibility to achieve this goal and in the meantime mitigate the effects of the lack in qualified teaching staff is the training of university teachers abroad. In consultation with the

Ethiopian MoE the DAAD increased the number of scholarships for one of its so-called sandwich PhD-programs from eight to 40 per year in 2018.²¹ This *Ethio-German Home Grown PhD Scholarship Program* targets the staff of the two science and technology universities and the Ethiopian institutes of technology.²² This development is concurrent with the general upward tendency in DAAD funding for Ethiopians. In 2013 the DAAD sponsored 417 Ethiopians through its numerous programs, while in 2017 this number had grown to 768 (DAAD, 2018; DAAD, 2014). This scholarship program, however, comes nowhere near satisfying the demand for staff training at Ethiopian universities. Therefore, the Ethiopian government also forges partnerships elsewhere. During the same time that the DAAD decided to expand its program, the Ethiopian MoST finalized negotiations on scholarship programs with universities in China, India, Turkey, Malaysia, Japan and other countries, overall predominantly in the global South. Parts of the negotiations were concerned with allowances on student fees and accommodation as well as other incentives offered by the foreign institutions. This initiative plans to send 4.500 PhD students annually to universities in the above-mentioned countries.²³ While approximately 500 scholarships were already awarded the program was put on hold in late 2018 due to a restructuring of ministries.²⁴

However, the sheer number of scholarships provided and planned clearly shows two things. First, it elucidates Ethiopia's enormous demand for training university staff through cooperation with partners abroad. Second, it becomes clear that this demand cannot be fulfilled solely by working with traditional partners from the global North. Cooperation with partners from the global South has begun to play a significant role in this regard. The decision to send scholarship holders primarily to countries in East and South Asia and not to Western Europe or North America is influenced by budgetary concerns and the fear of brain drain. First, education is more cost-effective than elsewhere. As an official of the MoST put it: "I can have ten students trained [in Asia] for the same cost as one student being trained in the US or Canada". The second reason is the Ethiopian government's fear that it could inadvertently sponsor brain drain. Designers of the scholarship program were afraid that people sent to countries in the global North may not come back after their stay abroad and believed this to be less likely for people being sent to Asian countries.²⁶

The same pragmatism applies in the selection of the cooperation partners. Instead of a coherent internationalization strategy, the MoST admittedly followed a "take-it-as-it-comes" approach.²⁷ Therefore, the fact that Chinese universities are common partners is rather to be attributed to Chinese HE institutions reaching out to their Ethiopian counterparts. Stakeholders on the ministerial as well as on the institutional level described Chinese universities as very cooperative. They invite Ethiopian academics to visit HE institutions in China regularly and offer financial incentives for scholarship programs.²⁸

Conclusions

The HE sector in Ethiopia has seen profound changes throughout the last twenty years. Rapid expansion enabled a wider share of society to study. This process continues to require

considerable resources, which cannot be provided by the Ethiopian government alone. Actors from outside Ethiopia therefore play a significant role within the country.

In light of the changing global order(s), actors from the global South are becoming more important. Its heyday as role model may be over already, but South Korea's importance manifested not only in policies emulated by the Ethiopian government, but also in close connections between the countries' HE sectors. This shift had profound effects on the work of German agencies in Ethiopia. University teachers as well as the MoE preferred professors from South Korea to guide the way towards successful university management. This has led to a shift in employing not only German professors in the DAAD funded project, but professors from other countries, and especially from the global South. This marks a significant change in the logic of promoting national interests abroad.

Given the continued need for qualifying PhD students abroad the DAAD increased its number of scholarships and focused on the support of technical education, a twofold adjustment in quantity and disciplinary orientation. These efforts are being outnumbered by scholarships from the global South. The DAAD as major scholarship provider sees itself superseded by agreements signed between the MoST and universities for example from China and India.

The DAAD and the GIZ remain important actors in Ethiopian HE but have begun to adapt to the new global political conditions. This is merely a snippet of the complex HE landscape and its border crossing dimensions in Ethiopia. There are more stories like this, each of which contributes to understanding the dynamic changes within HE in the global South.

Notes

- 1 Reuters. (2018, February 25). Florida University latest to cut Ties with China's Confucius Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-education/florida-university-latest-to-cut-ties-with-chinas-confucius-institute-idUSKB1L012Z>
- 2 Evelien Blom, GIZ STEP program manager, interviewed February 2018.
- 3 Ibid; Zewdu Kassa STEP component manager, interviewed February 2018.
- 4 HERQA Ethiopia. (2018, December 18). Retrieved from <http://www.neaegovet.com/herqa-ethiopia/lbid>; Kassahun Kebede, HERQA Quality Audit & Enhancement Directorate Director, interviewed March 2018.
- 5 Abebaw Yirga, Managing Director of EIHE, interviewed March 2018, Evelien Blom (see footnote FN 2); see also: AAU. (2019, January 22) Ethiopian Institute for Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://www.aau.edu.et/blog/ethiopian-institute-for-higher-education/>
- 6 Abebaw Yirga (see FN 5).
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 DAAD. (2019, January 17). DIES Training Courses. Retrieved from <https://www.daad.de/der-daad/unsere-aufgaben/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/foerderprogramme/hochschulen/infos/en/44514-dies-training-courses/>
- 9 Gerald Heusing, DAAD Country Director, Ethiopia, interviewed February and December 2018.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Byeong Soo Lim, AAIT, Dean of School of Multidisciplinary Engineering and Director of the Office of Research and Technology Transfer, interviewed March 2018.
- 13 DAAD. (2019, January 22). Liaison Office Addis Ababa. Retrieved from <http://www.daad-ethiopia.org/en/27212/index.html>
- 14 Gerald Heusing (see FN 9); Byeong Soo Lim (see FN 12); Dereje Woldegebreal, AAIT, Director for Academic Affairs, interviewed in December 2018.

- 15 Gerald Heusing (see FN 9); Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2019, March 1). Ambassador's Greetings. Retrieved from http://overseas.mofa.go.kr/et-en/wpge/m_10258/contents.do
- 16 For an account of the Ethiopian developmental state and its effects on the higher education sector see Woldegiyorgis, 2018.
- 17 Information through email exchange with Office of External Relationships, Partnerships and Communication (AAU) in 2014.
- 18 Byeong Soo Lim (see FN 12).
- 19 Dereje Woldegebreal (see FN 14).
- 20 This assumption was corroborated in private conversations with Ethiopian researchers in the field of higher education. Some of them were actively involved in the production of the 2018 roadmap.
- 21 Gerald Heusing (see FN 9).
- 22 (see FN 13).
- 23 Simenew Keskes, MoST Director General for Academic and Research Affairs, interviewed March 2018; Balew Demissie, Addis Ababa Science and Technology University, Director of Public and International Relations Directorate, interviewed December 2018.
- 24 Tesfaye Negewo, Senior Officer at the Higher Education Strategy Centre, interviewed December 2018; Gerald Heusing (see FN 9); Balew Demissie (see FN 23).
- 25 Simenew Keskes (see FN 23).
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid; Balew Demissie (see FN 23).

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