Comparative and International Education
Éducation comparée et internationale

Strategic International Partnerships: Global North and Global South Discourses
Partenariats internationaux stratégiques : discours sur la Limite Nord/Sud

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Lumb, P. (2023). Strategic International Partnerships: Global North and Global South Discourses. *Comparative and International Education / Éducation comparée et internationale*, *51*(2), 110–126. https://doi.org/10.5206/cie-eci.v51i2.15155
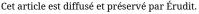
Résumé de l'article

Cet article explore la manière dont les partenariats internationaux sont conceptualisés entre les principales universités anglophones, européennes et africaines. Les stratégies d'internationalisation sont examinées dans une optique décoloniale afin de situer les résultats dans un contexte mondial inextricablement lié aux conséquences du colonialisme et de la colonisation actuelle qui continuent à perpétuer les inégalités mondiales, y compris la dévaluation des connaissances indigènes et locales. Les résultats suggèrent que les institutions du Nord global considèrent toujours l'Afrique, et le Sud global en général, comme déficitaire et ayant besoin d'aide, de connaissances et d'orientation. Les stratégies du Nord global utilisent des termes tels que « tutorat », « développement » et « réduction de la pauvreté » pour décrire leurs partenariats dans le Sud global alors que les établissements africains, pour leur part, soulignent leur volonté d'être producteurs de connaissances et de contribuer à l'excellence de la recherche au niveau mondial. En outre, les établissements de toutes les régions définissent les partenariats internationaux stratégiques comme ceux qui renforcent leur réputation ou leur image dans une course au statut et aux classements mondiaux; toutefois, les stratégies ne décrivent pas comment ils comptent aborder ces partenariats dans le contexte mondial très inégal de la Limite Nord/Sud. Enfin, le Sud global continue d'être considéré comme une source d'étudiants internationaux et, à ce titre, les partenariats établis en Afrique et dans le Sud global par les institutions anglophones et européennes se concentrent sur le recrutement d'étudiants comme l'une des raisons ou l'un des avantages des partenariats. Au vu de ces résultats, les stratégies internationales pour les partenariats de la Limite Nord-Sud continuent de reproduire les hiérarchies coloniales du pouvoir, empêchant ainsi des approches aux partenariats plus équitables.

March 2023

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Abstract

This paper explores how international partnerships are conceptualized between core Anglophone, European, and African universities. Internationalization strategies are examined from a decolonial lens to situate the findings within a global context that is entangled in the consequences of colonialism and ongoing coloniality that continue to perpetuate global inequities, including devaluing of Indigenous and local knowledge. Findings suggest that institutions in the Global North still view Africa, and the Global South in general, from a deficit lens and in need of aid, knowledge, and direction. Strategies from the Global North use terms like "mentoring," "development" and "poverty reduction" when describing their partnerships in the Global South. In contrast, institutions from Africa highlight their desire to be knowledge producers and contribute to research excellence on a global level. Furthermore, institutions in all regions frame strategic international partnerships as those that will boost their reputation or image as they engage in a race for status and global rankings; however, strategies do not describe how they will approach such partnerships in a very uneven global playing field between the Global North and Global South. Finally, the Global South continues to be viewed as a source of international students and as such, partnerships pursued in Africa and the Global South by core Anglo and European institutions focus on recruitment of students as one of the rationales or benefits of partnerships. Given these findings, international strategies for Global North-South partnerships continue to reproduce colonial hierarchies of power, preventing more equitable approaches to partnerships.

Résumé

Cet article explore la manière dont les partenariats internationaux sont conceptualisés entre les principales universités anglophones, européennes et africaines. Les stratégies d'internationalisation sont examinées dans une optique décoloniale afin de situer les résultats dans un contexte mondial inextricablement lié aux conséquences du colonialisme et de la colonisation actuelle qui continuent à perpétuer les inégalités mondiales, y compris la dévaluation des connaissances indigènes et locales. Les résultats suggèrent que les institutions du Nord global considèrent toujours l'Afrique, et le Sud global en général, comme déficitaire et ayant besoin d'aide, de connaissances et d'orientation. Les stratégies du Nord global utilisent des termes tels que « tutorat », « développement » et « réduction de la pauvreté » pour décrire leurs partenariats dans le Sud global alors que les établissements africains, pour leur part, soulignent leur volonté d'être producteurs de connaissances et de contribuer à l'excellence de la recherche au niveau mondial. En outre, les établissements de toutes les régions définissent les partenariats internationaux stratégiques comme ceux qui renforcent leur réputation ou leur image dans une course au statut et aux classements mondiaux; toutefois, les stratégies ne décrivent pas comment ils comptent aborder ces partenariats dans le contexte mondial très inégal de la Limite Nord/Sud. Enfin, le Sud global continue d'être considéré comme une source d'étudiants internationaux et, à ce titre, les partenariats établis en Afrique et dans le Sud global par les institutions anglophones et européennes se concentrent sur le recrutement d'étudiants comme l'une des raisons ou l'un des avantages des partenariats. Au vu de ces résultats, les stratégies internationales pour les partenariats de la Limite Nord-Sud continuent de reproduire les hiérarchies coloniales du pouvoir, empêchant ainsi des approches aux partenariats plus équitables.

Keywords: internationalization, decolonization, international partnerships, higher education, Global North, Global South

Mots clés : internationalisation, décolonisation, partenariats internationaux, enseignement supérieur, Nord global, Sud global, Limite Nord/Sud

Introduction and Background

Internationalization of higher education as a strategic and intentional process in higher education has accelerated around the world (de Witt & Merkx, 2012; Teichler, 1999). Forming international partnerships and global networks of collaboration are highlighted as top priorities in international strategic documents in this research. The global landscape is uneven in terms of power and resources, and thus, I examine how universities conceptualize international partnerships by using a decolonial lens with critical content analysis to pay particular attention to how the discourses challenge or reify power structures between the Global North and South. I recognize the complexity of thinking about and de/constructing the Global North and South dichotomies. For this study, the Global South refers generally to nations in the southern hemisphere with low economic indicators and the Global North refers generally to nations in the northern hemisphere with high economic indicators such as GNP (Trefzer et al., 2014; Universities Canada, 2018). This binary does not consider disparities within each nation; however, as a "conceptual framework," it allows for researchers to explore global interconnected flows of power and inequity (Trefzer et al., 2014, p. 4). There is a long history of North-South interactions in higher education that have focused primarily on aid, development, and capacity building, and such partnerships have been subjected to anti-colonial and critical analysis (Larkin, 2015; Menashy, 2018; Barrett et al., 2014). More recently however, Global North-South partnerships have taken on more diverse forms of research collaborations that do not focus solely on aid (Pineda et al., 2020; Carbonnier & Kontinen, 2015).

This study contributes to the literature on how such partnerships are conceptualized institutionally and thereby, how such partnerships are directed for operationalization. By examining institutional documents, this study provides unique insight into how institutions and institutional actors are understanding, negotiating, and directing international partnerships, especially given increasing calls to decolonize higher education by various stakeholders (UNESCO, 2021).

Literature on Global North-South partnerships in higher and comparative education generally focuses on regional and capacity development in health and science (Färnman et al., 2016; Mougeot, 2017). Approaches to examining such collaborations include descriptive studies of benefits and outcomes as well as critical research that examines funding, decision-making, and challenges (Holmarsdottir et al., 2013; Färnman et al., 2016; Mougeot, 2017). Partnerships for student experiences including Global North-South collaborations for student mobility programs is another area in which scholarship focuses on the benefits of internationalizing the student experience as well as critiques on how such programs impact international partners or students in uneven ways (Jotia et al., 2020; Smaller & O'Sullivan, 2018; O'Sullivan & Smaller, 2019). The literature also indicates a dissatisfaction with how higher education institutions have responded or have been unable to respond effectively to the ongoing calls to decolonize higher education and more recently, internationalization, despite the existing critiques of Global North-South interactions in higher education (Mbembe, 2016; Patel, 2015; Stein, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

Internationalization strategies and policies are high-level documents endorsed by institutions that reflect institutional commitments to the goals and scope of their internationalization plans (Buckner et al., 2021; Childress, 2009b; Olson, 2012). Internationalization plans provide important insight into how institutions define, conceptualize, and value various internationalization activities such as partnerships. Much of the literature and the strategic documents do not provide clear definitions or criteria for a partnership and instead, partnerships are broadly discussed as collaborative teaching, joint programs, exchanges, staff

development, and research. This is despite calls for strategic international partnership activities to be embedded as normalized functions of the university that would necessitate defining criteria to form and sustain partnerships, including identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses, supportive mechanisms, resources including staff time, and alignment with institutional goals (Olson, 2012; Taylor, 2016).

In terms of rationales and values that guide partnerships, internationalization strategies identify partnerships as key priorities for research that is framed as finding solutions to global problems and internationalizing student learning (Olson, 2012). Some scholars, however, critique this rationale and reveal that actual motivations and rationales are based on generating profit and competing for high paying international students, despite the language of problem-solving and collaboration being used to describe partnerships (Courtois & Veiga, 2020; Croom, 2012). Critiques of assumed values of equity, equality, and mutual respect and collaboration within the framing of international partnerships also become apparent when these partnerships are examined for uneven power dynamics including costs, division of labour, and resources (Canto & Hannah, 2001; Duque et al., 2005; Menashy, 2018; Mwangi, 2017; Uzhegova & Baik, 2020). The skewed power dynamics are especially apparent in Global North-South partnerships based on aid, capacity building, development, and meeting UNESCO's call for higher education to contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (Mwangi, 2017; Menashy, 2018). Such partnerships continue to lack substantive collaboration with partners in the Global South when defining or conceptualizing the project; thus, the project and the outcomes continue to favour partners in the Global North (Mwangi, 2017). Furthermore, power is enacted in insidious ways to create asymmetrical partnerships that can reproduce structures, actor, and stakeholder interests in hierarchical and colonial patterns within partnerships (Menashy, 2018; Obambaa & Mwema, 2009). Scholarship on internationalization from among African universities focuses on the challenges and opportunities internationalization offers their local institutions with calls to refocus internationalization so that it meets local needs and the desire to Africanize the curriculum (Thondhlana et al., 2020; Jowi, 2012; Majee & Ress, 2020). Related to much of the literature on power, scholars continue to point out the inequity in many of the partnerships and the need to create more sustainable relationships in which the strengths of African scholarship are evident (Jowi, 2020).

This study responds to the ongoing calls for decolonization and equitable partnerships between the Global North and South by examining the premise of such partnerships as defined and strategized in institutional documents. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by offering a comparative and decolonial lens on strategic international partnerships that centres perspectives from Europe, core Anglo nations, and Africa, and how their discourses on partnerships shift between the Global North and Global South. To move towards decolonial practices, there needs to be deeper understanding of institutional documents from a decolonial lens as such documents inform and reveal the vision, discourses, and institutional values that impact partnership formation. It is imperative that decolonial approaches are embedded in strategic visioning and planning because of the impact on approaches institutional actors may take to meet the goals and visions in institutional documents.

Theoretical Perspectives
I draw on decolonial perspectives and frameworks to expose some of the colonial power dynamics as they appear in strategic documents when conceptualizing international partnerships. There is no one approach to decolonial theories and methodologies as the field is complex and draws from

various critical theories that allow for the analysis of coloniality on national, global, and institutional levels when it comes to internationalization of higher education. (Majee & Ress, 2020; Mignolo, 2021; Stein, 2016, 2021). Literature specific to decolonial theory and Global North-South partnerships focuses on various aspects of how colonization continues through curriculum, language, epistemology, and generation of partnership agendas that privilege Western ways of knowing and Western definitions of development (Barrett et al., 2014; Siltaoja et al., 2019; Thondhlana et al., 2020; Uzhegova & Baik, 2020). Decolonial thought also offers an extension to some of the critical theory like dependency and world systems theory that have been applied to international and comparative studies (Grosfoguel, 2006). For this study, I look at decoloniality as an analytical lens that proposes the following: (a) the modern world, including institutions of education, still function within structures rooted in colonialism that continue to exist even after colonial empires were politically dismantled; (b) structures of coloniality include various intersections of economic, political military, racial/ethnic, gender, sexual, spiritual, linguistic, and epistemic hierarchies that privilege dominant groups or nations (Grosfoguel, 2006; Mignolo, 2007, 2021; Quijano, 2007). For example, economic hierarchies create dependent peripheral economies and exploitative core economies that control access to resources for the periphery (Arnove, 1980).

Applying this lens to internationalization documents reveals extractive relationships in recruitment of students from the Global South. Another decolonial concept used in this study is Santos's analogy of abyssal lines that argues that Western knowledge is within epistemological boundaries of what is considered true, scientific, and valid, and any knowledge beyond this "line," such as Indigenous knowledge, is considered irrelevant, untrue, or in the abyss (Santos, 2007, 2014). It is an area of perpetual darkness, much like the oceanic abyssal plains; however, it can be mined for resources/knowledge that are appropriated by others, namely the Western world (Santos, 2007, 2014). For example, Global North-South partnerships can be mapped onto epistemological boundaries where knowledge from the Global South exists beyond the "abyssal lines" while knowledge from the Global North is centred and valued in research (Larkin, 2015 Santos, 2014). Similarly, by applying this analysis to internationalization strategies, the boundaries of abyssal lines become apparent as parts of the Global South are not seen as producers of knowledge and scholarship; however, they are still used as resources for the Global North. Applying decolonial critiques to strategic internationalization documents provides an understanding of how international partnerships may be conceptualized and operationalized to reify logics of coloniality.

Data and Methods

The data for this study comes from a larger team-based research project for which we collected a database of postsecondary internationalization documents from various countries where they were available in English and accessible from university websites from 2020 onwards. All these documents explicitly focus on internationalization either as strategic documents, white papers, or policy papers. Our team employed an iterative coding process (Charmaz, 2006) that was informed by a literature review and analysis of the documents, all of which revealed key thematic areas of internationalization strategies including international activities and priorities, rationales for internationalization, explicit values for internationalization, and geographic focus that included regions as well as codes for "Indigenous communities" and "global south." A codebook with definitions, examples, and guides on when to use each code was created and researchers were trained to use the codebook to ensure reliability of the coding process and results. Using the established codebook, I specifically added and coded documents sourced from the Global South.

From this database, I selected 30 documents, 10 from each region of Africa, core Anglo nations, and Europe to maintain a balance of how each region is represented (see Appendix 1). I recognize that there is much diversity within each region or group of nations, including colonial and settler histories, that impact institutional relationships; however, this study offers an overview of strategic discourse from each region and how the distinct patterns of inequity between Global North and Global South are replicated. Furthermore, dividing up regions can be a highly subjective exercise especially within the conceptualization of Global North and South, much of which is rooted in colonial constructions of nation states and regional demarcations (Trefzer et al., 2014). I chose to divide the Global North between Anglo nations and non-Anglo Europe to look for any differences in the strategies given that core Anglo nations (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada) uniquely dominate as destinations for international students in the Global North. Limitations include a lack of availability of such documents from African institutions while more documents were readily available to the public from Canada and the United Kingdom. My sample for Europe was also limited by what was available in English as well as what had been collected in terms of public availability. Research and publications in academia are largely dominated by the English language, another colonial structure that I recognize I am participating in and thereby limiting findings by focusing on English documents in this study (Altbach, 2007). Moreover, the data include private, public, and universities of different rankings that were not accounted for in this analysis; a future study on how discourses may change between the types of universities may be worthwhile.

To understand the different ways partnerships are discussed, I used Dedoose to examine what the code "developing partnership" co-occurred with most frequently. I also looked for co-occurrences with specific geographic mentions including names of nations and terms like "Global North," "Global South," "developing regions," "developed," and "emerging economies." Once I identified the occurrences, I employed critical content analysis to closely read the text and to examine how those discussions are framed in relation to specific geographic mentions and how, if at all, the discourse varies between core Anglo nations, European, and African institutions. Critical content analysis as qualitative methodology can be applied to variety of texts, and it aligns with various critical theoretical frameworks like decolonial theories, which allows for a deeper interpretation of institutional documents (Mayring, 2014; Utt & Short, 2018). Institutional documents like internationalization strategies are increasingly common artefacts of study as they perform various functions such as providing institutional legitimacy, being indicators of performance and commitments, and providing a direction to operationalize commitments to internationalization (Ahmed, 2007; Taylor 2004, Childress 2009b). These documents also take on qualities of social and discursive artefacts that can be used for insight into how institutions operate socially (Bowen, 2009).

Findings
The top three code co-occurrences with "developing partnerships" in terms of priorities and rationales were partnership for research, partnership for status, and partnerships for recruitment.

Partnerships for Research: Excellence Versus Development
Institutions from all regions stressed the relationship between excellent research and international partnerships. These two codes for key priorities had the highest code co-occurrence for all regions. Numerous discussions connected research and partnerships as a desirable activity. For example, Artevelde University College (Belgium) emphasized partnerships and research by stating that "To

do research in an international partnership is the most direct and intensive form of research internationalisation" (p. 10). Additionally, University of Johannesburg (UJ) (South Africa) stated in a list of international partnership priorities: "UJ's goal to be an internationally competitive research institution, achieved among others through formal research collaboration with international partners" (p. 10). Some strategies also linked international partnerships and research to producing joint publications, thereby increasing citations and recognition of the institutions involved on a global scale. For example, from the University of Exeter (United Kingdom), "Research excellence is intrinsically linked to international collaborations, where the most highly cited work is international (papers with authors from more than one country achieve 50% more citations)" (p. 1). These quotes clearly demonstrate the perceptions institutions have on the connection between international partnerships and generating excellent scholarship that is globally recognized and/or published.

A different pattern of research partnerships emerged once a geographical lens was applied to the analysis of the code co-occurrences of international partnerships and research. More specifically, institutions from Europe and core Anglo nations focused on partnerships with each other for research excellence, but the discussions centred on research partnerships to support development or aid in poverty reduction when discussing institutions in Africa and other emerging or developing nations. While some strategies listed specific regions for research excellence, other used terms like "leading institutions," and it is important to note that institutions in the Global North dominate international rankings. For example, the contrast between research for excellence versus research for development is found in Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) strategy where it stated that they would build "Partnerships with leading international universities that share MIT's commitment to the values of intellectual excellence and rigor, discovery, tolerance, and open-mindedness." (p. 39). In contrast, when discussing partnerships in India and Brazil, MIT's strategy focused on development and poverty reduction, "Other internationally oriented activity is supported by the Tata Center, which funds faculty and students to carry out collaborative research on the development challenges in India and elsewhere" (p. 19), and again, "In Brazil, too, there are important opportunities for collaborative research and education. More broadly, the U.S. has an enormous stake in the prosperity, security, and political development of Latin America" (p. 32).

MIT's rationale for partnerships in Brazil was tied to American interests and conception of development. Similarly, University of Zurich (Switzerland) focused on "University-wide membership in a global network of excellent universities" where "strategic partnerships with selected universities are established" for research and teaching (p. 3). The language then switched to capacity building when focusing on the Global South, "UZH encourages learning and the acquisition of specialized knowledge in developing and emerging countries by supporting research collaborations and activities in the area of capacity building" (p. 4). The goals of developing the Global South were explicitly stated with language such as development challenges, capacity building, and prosperity; however, universities from the Global North did not discuss how they would work with their partners or how they would consider Indigenous knowledges.

African institutions expressed a desire to produce research and knowledge and be viewed as innovative, which contrasts with the expectations for development and aid as outlined in strategies from core Anglo nations and Europe. For example, Wits University (South Africa) stated that they would engage in partnerships that "engender the recognition of Wits as a leading research and knowledge centre in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the world" (p. 9) as well as "Produce scholarly work that is highly cited at an international level" (p. 9). Furthermore, they listed local and

Indigenous knowledge that has the potential to be recognized as scholarly on a global level: "Produce research and other scholarly work that has international acclaim, including those covering local issues and challenges like Indigenous, social and scientific knowledge and technologies" (p. 9). Stellenbosch University (SU) also stated as part of their internationalization goals that they would "Identify and fund large collaborative trans-disciplinary, cross-faculty research initiatives with excellent potential to uniquely position SU as globally leading in a particular research area" (p. 10). Additionally, the University of Ghana (UG) discussed research partnerships and their role as knowledge producers by stating that

> UG should continually engage in an institution-wide consultation process to analyse and set priority areas as way of strengthening its research agenda. Such an approach should ensure relevance of the research, help strengthen the global image of the university, and ensure that UG better participates in productive research partnerships. (p. 17–18)

Strategies from African universities clearly outlined the goals of African institutions to be viewed as valid knowledge producers on a global scale that go beyond being recipients of aid-based research or capacity building projects.

Partnerships for Status

Partnering to increase status, image or reputation was another distinct code co-occurrence in strategies from all regions, and all had similar discourses. There were distinct discussions on status being a rationale behind international partnerships, and some of these discussions intersected with partnering for research excellence. Some strategic plans were very direct about partnering up like the one from the University of Vienna in which they stated: "Establishing an exclusive set of high-profile partners in the form of Strategic Partnerships to ensure continuous successful performance as a research university in the context of global competition" (p. 3). Here the context of institutions competing on a global level was acknowledged clearly, and a clear link was made between how partnerships with high-ranking universities can support the profile and ranking of an institution. University of Cape Coast (Ghana) also connected enhancing reputation to partnerships by stating that they would "Develop activities and partnerships in transnational education that enhances the reputation of the University" (p. 14). Furthermore, the University of Nairobi clearly linked competition, status, and international partnerships by stating that "For international collaborations, the proposal should demonstrate contribution to meeting the aims and objectives of the University as well as placing it in a competitive edge by improving the University's image" (p. 9). They also connected global collaborative relationships to status, stating that "Our vision is to be a world class University; the University of Nairobi therefore has affiliations and networks with institutions globally" (p. 5). Similarly, The University of Aberdeen focused on leveraging its networks to raise its international profile: "Raising our international profile is also of significant importance, and we aim to improve this by joining a high-profile global university network and by building networks" (p. 1). Finally, City University actually named Times Higher Education (THE) ranking in their strategic measures for international partnerships: "International collaboration: 30% increase in international research and education collaborations with institutions in the top 300 of the THE World Rankings by 2021" (p. 8). Such discussions and passages were similar in all regions and fairly explicit in how increasing status can be a motivation for international partnerships.

Some strategies from the African region pointed out obstacles to internationalization that directly impact measures for rankings and thereby status. For example, political instability and a recent outbreak of the Ebola virus were cited by the University of Nairobi as challenges to internationalization in their strategic document (p. 16). There is a need for additional studies to

examine how actors navigate these realities and enable positive partnerships involving institutions of various rankings.

Partnerships as a Tool for Recruitment of International Students
Recruitment of international students was a goal iterated by many of the strategies from various institutions; however, the code co-occurrence of partnerships and recruitment was a relatively unique finding in documents from the Global North. From the Global South, the University of Cape Coast in Ghana discussed using international partnerships as a tool for student recruitment by stating, "Contact the international partners to arrange for student recruitment" (p. 12) and "Use international partnership to strengthen education, research, student mobility and recruitment" (p. 14). These statements of using partnerships fell under their various strategies for international student recruitment, but specific source countries for recruitment-based partnerships were not listed. In contrast, core Anglo and European institutions discussed the desire to recruit international students from specific places as a rationale for partnering with institutions in the Global South. The partnerships for recruitment included joint programming, formal partnerships in recruitment fairs, and partnering on student mobility programs to attract students. The University of Melbourne (Australia), for example, discussed recruitment specifically from Asia through partnerships, "the future of student recruitment depends upon establishing quality partnerships with leading universities and government agencies, particularly in the growing Asian economies" (p. 3). Similarly, the University of Aberdeen stated in reference to China that

> During the next five years we will negotiate ten per year [articulation agreements], with new partners, and perhaps equally importantly develop and enhance clusters of agreements with the same partner. Enhancing key partnerships is essential in building a successful recruitment strategy. (p. 3)

The University of Ottawa (Canada) also connected building partnerships and global networks to an enhanced recruitment strategy in the Global South:

> There are important source countries (Vietnam, Mexico, UAE, etc.) the University is not covering and which could increase the cultural diversity of its students, while reducing its exposure to a handful of countries that currently dominate its enrolment numbers. This can easily be done through the development of recruitment partnerships, including partnerships, firms or agents such as IDP and partnerships with sponsoring agencies. (p. 4)

The University of Ottawa identified the Global South as a source of international students to broaden diversity on their campus and to decrease any political and financial risk of relying on a supply of international students from only a few sources.

While Europe has historically focused on student mobility and recruitment within the European Union, there was discussion on expanding the use of partnerships and networks to focus on recruitment in the Global South. For example, the University of Oldenburg (Germany) focused on using international networks and relationships to recruit specifically from India and Korea. Similarly, the University of Amsterdam ([UvA] Netherlands) discussed expanding recruitment from African countries, "The utilisation of existing networks in Africa and on other continents will also offer a useful point of reference for positioning the UvA as an attractive study destination" (p. 20). The messaging from these documents is clear, that the Global South provides a resource of potential international students for the benefits of institutions in the Global North. University of Melbourne, for example, connected recruitment of students via partnerships to "growing economies." Growing economies also means a growing population of students who desire higher

education and can afford the fees to travel and study in Australia and benefit their institution financially (CICan, 2019).

Discussion

Examining colonial roots to bring an end to harmful structures is important for internationalization and international partnerships in higher education. Much of the decolonial literature argues that internationalization operates in deliberate ways to maintain global power hierarchies (Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012; Majee & Ress, 2020; Stein, 2016; Thondhlana et al., 2020). Larkin (2015) argues that international research partnerships will continue to play a key role in the recolonization of epistemology as they are typically constructed around Western hegemonic discourses of development. Strategic discourses analyzed in this study continue to reify epistemological dominance of the Western world when it comes to knowledge production in research partnership by differentiating between who they partner with for research excellence verses research for development or capacity building. Excellent research and knowledge production is dominated by Western epistemology, and rather than challenging abyssal lines of knowledge and enriching scholarship, the process of collaboration can become more about those outside of the abyssal lines of knowledge operating within the boundaries of "valid" knowledge, a dilemma that scholars from the Global South contend with regularly (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Gómez, 2019). It is important to consider how institutional partners in the Global South are impacted by this discourse on research partnerships. How we understand international research partnerships can shift to more equitable forms when we think about decolonizing knowledge production and embrace ecologies or mosaics of knowledge that are rooted in local and Indigenous ways of knowing (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Gómez, 2019; Obambaa & Mwema, 2009; Sumida Huaman et al., 2019). Thondhlana et al. (2020) and Jowi (2020) argue that African scholars are aware of their disadvantage in research and publishing in elite journals as Africa continues to be forced to the periphery of knowledge production. To increase African scholarship and its legitimacy, there is a drive to partner with international partners to legitimize their research and to publish in international journals (Thondhlana et al., 2020). In fact, internationalization and collaboration for research is seen as a way to increase research and knowledge production from Africa, a region from which there is relatively low productivity and publications (Jowi & Mbwette, 2017; Obambaa & Mwema, 2009). There are a growing number of studies indicating that co-publications from Global North-South collaborations are on the rise (Guzmán-Valenzuela & Gómez, 2019; Pineda et al., 2020) that may also indicate an eventual erasure of the North-South divide (Carbonnier & Kontinen, 2015); however, this increase does not necessarily translate into more symmetrical collaborations and there is a need to examine how such partnerships operate to get a truer sense of Global North-South collaborations (Carbonnier & Kontinen, 2015; Guzmán-Valenzuela & Gómez, 2019; Leibowitz et al., 2017; Obambaa & Mwema, 2009). Finally, it is not enough for African institutions to be included as equal partners in research; the very premise of what is counted as valid research and scholarship needs to be explored to truly decolonize research partnerships (Mignolo, 2021; Stein, 2021). Missing from the strategies were discussions on how research partnerships will function to ensure that partnerships are more symmetrical in terms of agenda setting, labour, and impact of outcomes to ensure diverse opportunities for knowledge production (Obambaa & Mwema, 2009; Leibowitz et al., 2017).

Explicit discussions of the notions of progress, development, and excellence, and whether they differ at all from capitalist and modern concepts in relation to partnerships for development and aid were missing from the strategies as was the discussion on how partners from the Global

North would centre more local needs in the Global South. This is troubling because actual decolonial change requires a shift in the underlying colonial logics of progress and development (Mignolo, 2021). Critiques exist on the pitfalls of viewing the Global South from a lens of deficit, but more studies are needed on the nuances of particular partnerships such as how stakeholders are engaged and power dynamics are negotiated (Canto & Hannah, 2001; Mwangi, 2017; Leibowitz et al., 2017). Furthermore, how development is taken up in South-South partnerships is also an area of study. For example, African institutions recognize that local and regional development challenges must be addressed in partnership with each other. African institutions look to neighbouring countries to cultivate partnerships to provide greater access to African students and strengthen regional progress. To further this discussion, it is important to examine *how* institutions engage in partnerships that focus on capacity building, aid, and development.

The acceptance and use of global rankings such as QS and THE has created a culture of competition among institutions globally, which is evident in strategic discourses on partnering up for increasing institutional profiles and status (Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012; Guzmán-Valenzuela & Gómez, 2019; Siltaoja et al., 2019; Stensaker et al., 2019; Taylor, 2016). International rankings are dominated by institutions in the Global North as top performers, and the literature is indicative of institutions in the Global North preferring each other for strategic partnerships (Buckner & Stein, 2020). Furthermore, concepts of elitism and terms like "high profile" and "top universities/rankings" are rooted in modern and colonial notions of Western superiority in knowledge production (Siltaoga et al., 2019) that reify abyssal boundaries of who has the authority to produce valid knowledge (Santos, 2014). The ranking of sources of knowledge and the defining of who is capable of excellence replicate neocolonial patterns of interaction between higher education institutions globally (Grosfuguel, 2006; Siltaoga et al., 2019). Similarly, Amsler and Bolsmann (2012, p. 283) question the terms like "world class," and they argue that rankings create a "transnational capitalist class" that is more about exclusion than it is about actual knowledge creation/progression or excellence. Following these arguments, there is a real danger that partnerships between institutions are based on rationales that operate on exclusion of those not within the fold of institutional elitism as well as on a desire to maintain power hierarchies. There is a fear that this race for recognition is more about building institutional power than it is about actual knowledge creation, social change, and human development, thereby contradicting the notion that international partnerships can work towards solving global problems (Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012; Siltaoja et al., 2019; Wei & Johnstone, 2020). Finally, the global playing field for international rankings is uneven and the competition is stacked against African institutions and other institutions in the Global South. This uneven landscape is further exacerbated by geopolitics and unfair distribution of resources, leaving the Global South without the resources to invest in their institutions, unlike in the Global North (Uzhegova & Baik, 2020). Resources that may be already scarce need to be put towards immediate local concerns such as food insecurity, political instability, war, health care, all of which create barriers for internationalization (Thondhlana et al., 2020; Uzhegova & Baik, 2020).

How partnerships function when European and core Anglo nations focus on the Global South is also notable. For example, the specific focus of partnerships for recruitment of students from the Global South is consistent with the literature on the ongoing commodification of paying international students from the Global South and the use of them as resources for the economy (Stein & Andreotti, 2016; Akdag & Swanson, 2018). International students from the Global South contribute to funding institutions in Europe and core Anglo nations by paying significant international fees. This dynamic is reflective of the historical relationships that value particular

parts of the world and their populations only in relation to how they benefit the Western world (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Diversifying campuses and student populations is given particular attention and value in the North American context while less attention is paid to how students from racially diverse backgrounds will be supported on campus (Buckner et al., 2021). The Global South, as part of the theorized abyss, is ignored for "valid" knowledge production, but it can still be used as a resource for the benefit of the Global North (Santos, 2007; Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Of course, this approach to the Global South has a deep history of colonialism as European powers "explored" the world for their own economic benefits and built their archives of knowledge by reschooling colonized populations to establish the superiority of the West (Santos 2014; Fanon, 1952; Gandhi, 2019). Partnerships for recruitment need to be more deeply analyzed for this extractive approach to the Global South. It is not clear from the strategic discourses what benefits Global South institutions will gain from these partnerships. There is also a need for a closer examination of how partnerships are defined and whether benefits are equally divided as the word "partnership" would denote (Mwangi 2017; Obambaa & Mwema, 2009).

Conclusion and Implications
Findings from this study demonstrate that despite increased institutional narratives on mutual partnerships, equity, and decolonization (Essam el Rafaei, 2020), strategic discourse has not shifted to allow for decolonial directions of Global North-South partnerships in higher education. In fact, there are obvious hierarchical and exploitive patterns in how Global North-South partnerships are conceptualized.

International partnerships to support research was a common rationale in all regions; however, the language of research excellence versus research for development changed as the focus shifted between institutions in the Global North, a source of excellence, and the Global South, a place in need of development. The discourse on status, reputation, global competition, and using international partnerships to increase institutional rankings was similar in all regions. Decolonial critiques of ranking institutions focus on several issues including the marketization of higher education, reinforcing the Global North as producers of knowledge and ignoring more pluralistic forms of knowledge generation. Finally, the Global South was also seen as a source of international student recruitment to the Global North. International partnerships as a tool for recruiting international students, in particular from the Global South, was largely discussed in the strategies from the Global North; thus, reinforcing colonial ideas of the Global South serving the Global North as a resource. Overall, the discourses in these documents continue to mirror and reinforce power hierarchies between the Global North and Global South.

For future studies, there is a need to explore how faculty and other institutional actors navigate these hierarchies and power structures to construct decolonial partnerships. It is evident from strategic discourses that partnerships can mean many things in relation to types of activities and rationales, including those that are contrary to values, like equality, respect, and mutuality, that are commonly imagined in relation to the concept of partnership (Obambaa & Mwema, 2009). Internationalization strategy documents do not always neatly translate into action because the process of creating documents and operationalization is complex and varies within institutional contexts that include diverse interests of various stakeholders (Childress 2009a, Croom, 2012). Creating international partnerships also involves decision-making along vertical structures within institutions including faculty, central administration, and program levels; therefore, context-specific studies on how strategies translate into practice are needed (Canto & Hannah, 2001; Olson, 2012). Additionally, more microlevel studies of institutions and how institutional actors

understand international partnerships within the contexts of colonial and settler histories would be an important addition to the literature on decolonizing internationalization (Canto & Hannah, 2001). These various structures of decision-making and the broadness of partnership activity create levels of complexity that cannot be read and understood only from strategic documents. Strategic documents, however, can shape the institutional discourse on what is accepted as strategic international partnerships and thus, how partnerships can be enacted. This powerful role of strategic documents makes it important to understand how international partnerships are conceptualized and discussed from a decolonial lens to truly move towards decolonizing higher education and processes of partnerships in internationalization.

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Appendix 1

University	Strategy	Country	Categorization
Aarhus University	Internationalization Strategy 2014–2020	Denmark	Non-Anglo – Global North
Artevelde University	Framework Document internationalisation at Artevelde University College, 2016	Belgium	Non-Anglo – Global North
Freie Universität Berlin	Internationalization Strategy for FUB, 2017–2020	Germany	Non-Anglo – Global North
Linnaeus University	Policy for Internationalisation 2015–2020	Sweden	Non-Anglo – Global North
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Spain	The UPC Internationalisation Plan 2017–2021	Spain	Non-Anglo – Global North
University of Amsterdam	Global University Strategic Framework for Internationalisation, 2017	Netherlands	Non-Anglo – Global North
University of Erfurt	Internationalization Strategy of the University of Erfurt, 2017 (approx.)	Germany	Non-Anglo – Global North
University of Oldenburg	International Campus: Oldenburg Internationalisation Strategy, 2014	Germany	Non-Anglo – Global North
University of Vienna	University of Vienna Internationalisation Strategy, 2016	Austria	Non-Anglo – Global North
University of Zurich	University of Zurich Internationalization Strategy, 2014–2020	Switzerland	Non-Anglo – Global North
Cardiff University	The Way Forward 2018–2023	United Kingdom	Anglo – Global North
City University of London	Internationalisation Strategy 2026	United Kingdom	Anglo – Global North
MacEwan University	MacEwan University's Strategic Internationalization Plan, 2016	Canada	Anglo – Global North
Michigan Institute of Technology	A Global Strategy for MIT, 2017	United States of America	Anglo – Global North
University of Aberdeen	Internationalisation Strategy, 2014	United Kingdom	Anglo – Global North
University of Exeter	Growing Global: A Global Strategy for Exeter, 2018–2022	United Kingdom	Anglo – Global North
University of Melbourne	International Strategy 2017–2020	Australia	Anglo – Global North

University of Ottawa	University of Ottawa's Internationalization Strategy, 2017	Canada	Anglo – Global North
University of Tasmania	International Strategy 2016–2020	Australia	Anglo – Global North
McMaster University	The McMaster Model for Global Engagement, 2017	Canada	Anglo – Global North
Maseno University	Faculty and Student Exchange Policy, 2018	Kenya	Global South
North-West University	Internationalisation Policy, 2013	South Africa	Global South
Rhodes University	RU Internationalisation Policy, 2005	South Africa	Global South
Stellenbosch University	SU Internationalisation Strategy 2019–2024	South Africa	Global South
University of Cape Coast	University of Cape Coast Internationalisation Strategic Plan 2015–2020	Ghana	Global South
University of Cape Town	University of Cape Town Policy on Internationalisation (no date)	South Africa	Global South
University of Ghana	Strategies for the Internationalisation of University of Ghana, 2015	Ghana	Global South
University of Johannesburg	Strategy to Enhance the International Profile of the University of Johannesburg, 2010 (approx.)	South Africa	Global South
University of Nairobi	Policy on International Programmes and Links and Internationalization, 2013–2018 (approx.)	Kenya	Global South
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg	Internationalisation Policy (no date)	South Africa	Global South