

Power Dynamics of International Knowledge Generation: 2023 UFS Colloquium

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The University of the Free State (UFS) Office for International Affairs recently hosted the 2023 [Internationalisation of Higher Education Colloquium](#), aiming to catalyse a rethinking process surrounding the power dynamics inherent in knowledge production within the international higher education space.

The internationalisation of the higher education community has not sufficiently engaged with the dynamics of knowledge production. For instance, the 2014 [Nelson Mandela Bay Global Dialogue Declaration on the Future of Internationalisation of Higher Education](#) augmented innovative thinking around programmes, curricula, and mobility, without emphasising knowledge production.

Addressing Concerns and Emerging Discourses

Scholars, including Hagenmeier (2021) and Jacobs, Kruger and Madiope (2022), have raised concerns about the inequalities and complexities impacting knowledge production. Inequalities and complexities impact knowledge production, and various discourses are emerging in different geopolitical spaces (Jacobs & Mitchel, 2021).

The colloquium proposed themes and subthemes as foundational building blocks to foster epistemic diversity. Discussions encompassed the dynamics of the internationalisation discourse, spaces influencing these discussions, methodologies for knowledge production, fostering epistemic diversity, decolonising knowledge generation, linguistic diversity in research, axiological considerations, providing pluriform perspectives in the curriculum, synergies between curriculum and research, and the scholarship of internationalisation.

Exploring Themes in Depth

Under the theme of "International Publishing," discussions delved into the dynamics, consequences, rules, accessibility, costs, and indexing processes of publishing. The "Collaborating" theme explored diversification of international partnerships, co-authorship, rethinking power dynamics in collaborations—particularly with the Global North—and the influence of funding models on knowledge production. The "21st Century" theme delved into emerging ethical research considerations, and ethical internationalisation in the contemporary era.

A Catalyst for Rethinking

The 2023 Internationalisation Colloquium, conducted in a hybrid format, served as a catalyst for initiating a rethinking process regarding the power dynamics of international knowledge creation. Scholars and internationalisation professionals from UFS and global partners engaged in short presentations that stimulated discussions.

Prof Vasu Reddy welcomed attendees, stressing the importance of having strategic conversations around internationalisation, based on scientific data sets. [Prof Matt Wittenstein's](#) keynote presentation challenged conventional thinking with "(Re)Positioning Higher Education Knowledge Production from a Third Space Perspective in Turbulent Times." Dr Munya Mushonga provided critical thoughts on ontological and epistemological diversity and challenged the attendees to consider: "What is the relationship between knowledge and identity?", while Prof Pearl Sithole offered insights into what ethical internationalisation means, highlighting what she called "the subtleties of knowledge sourcing", something that is not documented sufficiently.

Presentations and discussions covered a range of topics, including language and power, decolonial methodologies, perceived differentials in credit value across institutions and countries, and strategies to enhance discourse on internationalisation. The gathering emerged as a valuable forum for scholars and professionals to exchange ideas and collectively contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the power dynamics of international knowledge generation.