

Exploring the Circulation and the Internationalization of Scientific Disciplines: A comparative Study of Universities in India, South Africa and Germany

Iris Clemens, Dhruv Raina, and Emnet Woldegiorgis

State of the art in the relevant subject area

The study of the global relationality of institutions of higher education has become an important theme of study. With the increasing interconnectedness and globalization of higher education practices, understanding how knowledge and disciplinary structures emerge and move globally among universities has become a crucial area of inquiry (see Fehrenbach, & Huisman, 2024; Woldegiorgis, 2018). Such emergence, interconnectedness and transnational flow of knowledge is framed within the notion of internationalization of higher education. At its core, internationalization of higher education involves the movement of people, ideas, structures, and systems across national and cultural boundaries, shaping knowledge and disciplinary frameworks and structures (Knight, 2012; De Wit, 2011). In this context, an important question often posed is how do knowledge and enabling institutional practices circulate globally among higher education systems? Within the context of higher education, knowledge is structured and organized through disciplines and the schools of thought within them. Disciplines are distinct fields of study characterized by their own theories, methodologies, and areas of inquiry. However, disciplines are not static entities; they are subject to transformations and adaptations in response to a multitude of socio-economic and technological influences. These factors are often propelled by the transnational flow of knowledge, the mobility of ideas, the evolution of intellectual trends, and the continuous development of intricate systems and structures. Thus, the question is, in what ways does the transnational flow of knowledge shape disciplinary frameworks and structures? And how does internationalization influence the transnational flow of knowledge and manifest in teaching, learning, and research practices?

Despite numerous conceptions and contestations regarding the meaning and definition of knowledge, from the Greek philosophers to present-day experts in knowledge management, efforts to define knowledge have persisted without yielding a clear, universally accepted definition (Bolisani, et. al., 2018; Westernen, 2008). In the context of the Workshop, we define knowledge as systematically organized information that is exchanged and formally established within specific disciplines and academic departments, faculties, and schools. In our discussion, we draw upon insights from recent research on 'global knowledge circulation,' as outlined by Vollmer (2023) and Raina (2020, 2022) and Günergün and Raina (2011); as well as broader concepts related to the transmission of knowledge (Lambooy, 2004; Pickering & Keightley, 2013; Clemens 2021).

Within the scope of the internationalization of higher education the focus of the workshop will be on the following themes:

I. The main object of research are the *disciplines* and their *transformation* over time, as knowledge in universities is organised in disciplines and schools of thought within them. The intention is to take up specific disciplines or interdisciplinary fields as cases to investigate the different pathways to their institutionalization and changes in curricula over time. Questions are e.g.:

- What becomes the protocol of instruction and teaching and how is this imparted?
- Within teaching contexts how is the vocation and profile of the researcher (research publications, conferences, outreach) embedded within the faculty or school of the university?
- What conceptual frames and citation practices do researchers within a specific discipline or school adopt in the course of their research?
- In what international research networks and geographies of knowledge is the research situated?

II. Knowledge as defined here *circulates* through *concepts and ideas* (higher aggregated meanings (Luhmann 1998), stories (White 2008), networks of meaning (White 2008, Clemens 2021, 2021a). The focus of this sub-theme would be:

- On the examination of concepts and their morphing in different cultural/institutional contexts. Which concepts, theories etc. are prominent and how do researchers in different cultural and national contexts interpret them?
- Which context specific application can one find?

III. *Internationalisation* are forces that influence curricular changes and research profiles of researcher.

- Studying global dynamics by relating local manifestations and transformations (e.g. schools of thought; interdisciplinary fields, mobilities of students and faculty) with important international processes.

2 Objectives and work programme

Generally, this is an exploratory workshop designed to gather general insights aimed at understanding how the structures, ideas, and knowledge systems of disciplines travel across various higher education spaces. The research will have the following core objectives

1. To Understand the Relationality of Institutions of Higher Education: The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively investigate and understand the international interconnectedness of institutions of higher education. This includes the examination of how knowledge and disciplinary structures emerge, transform, and circulate internationally among universities. This will be a comparative study of universities in India, South Africa, and Germany.

2. To Examine the Transnational Flow of Knowledge: One of the central objectives is to analyse how knowledge flows across borders and influences the development of disciplines within the context of higher education. We aim to understand the mobility of ideas, intellectual trends, and the impact of intricate systems and structures on knowledge transfer.

3. To Investigate the Impact of Internationalization on Teaching, Learning, and Research Practices: We intend to explore how internationalization influences teaching methodologies, learning environments, and research practices within higher education institutions. This includes an examination of research networks, geographies of knowledge, and the integration of researchers' profiles within faculties.

Thus, the workshop will be organised under the following three themes:

Theme I: Transformation of Disciplines over Time –focuses on the evolution of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields within higher education institutions. In this theme, we will try to explore and discuss the research questions: what protocols govern instruction and teaching within specific disciplines, and how are these protocols imparted? How do researchers' vocations and profiles, including research publications, conferences, and outreach, become embedded within the faculty or school of the university? This also includes identifying the international research networks and geographies of knowledge where research within specific disciplines or schools is situated.

Theme II: Circulation of Knowledge through Concepts and Ideas

Focuses on examining the circulation of knowledge through concepts, theories, and ideas across different cultural and institutional contexts. This theme identifies the prominent concepts and theories within different cultural and national contexts and explores how researchers interpret them. It also investigates context-specific applications of concepts and theories within various academic settings.

Theme III: Influence of Internationalization on Curricular Changes and Research Profiles

Focuses on the impact of internationalization and globalization on curricular changes and the research profiles of faculty members and researchers within higher education institutions. It explores global dynamics by relating local manifestations, such as schools of thought and interdisciplinary fields, to important international processes. It investigates the mobility of students and faculty members and its influence on curricular changes and research directions.

By addressing these objectives and following the outlined work programme, this workshop aims to contribute to a complex understanding of the global relationality of higher education institutions, the role of internationalization in knowledge circulation, and the impact of these dynamics on disciplines, concepts, and research practices within universities.

Objectives

The workshop aims to foster a critical discussion and comparative reflection on how the transnational flow of knowledge and internationalization impact disciplinary practices at institutional levels. Drawing upon case studies from diverse regions such as Africa, India, and Europe (Germany), this workshop will offer empirical insights that shed light on the aforementioned issues.

The workshop will establish a foundation for future research collaboration among scholars from Africa, India, and Germany, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the transnational flow of knowledge and internationalization in higher education through diverse case studies. As a result, the workshop endeavors to create a sustainable platform for ongoing engagement.

The workshop is conceptually framed within two interrelated notions that underpin the internationalization of higher education: (i) the circulation and emergence of knowledge, and (ii) the role of disciplines in organizing knowledge within higher education.

(i) Circulation and emergence of knowledge

The workshop seeks to develop approaches through concrete studies based on the relational emergence of knowledge in local contexts without ignoring international or global dynamics. Amongst a range of models including the center-periphery model, we would like to draw upon the work of Peter Galison and the work of several historians and philosophers of science as well as postcolonial theorists (Galison, 1998; Raina, 2016), that envisage arrows of influence traveling both forward and backward and in many directions. Knowledge and structures travels not only from a centre to peripheral spaces, but we assume a continuous flow and circulation of knowledge with ongoing transformations of knowledge in all local settings. Knowledge can be seen as transacted in trading zones, however broadly defined, from antiquity onwards, with an increased pace of mobility and trade in the volume of knowledge in the last decades due to new media and globalisation in general.

(ii) Universities and Disciplines

The archive is very important for the study of the historical university but is of course limited for the study of the contemporary university. But even as far as the historical university is concerned, there would be the need to go beyond the official archive and constitute our studies as broadly as possible. This leads to a related question as to what other kinds of preserved historical or archival material are relevant for a study designed to answer the questions raised above? How does one embark on an *archaeology of contemporary disciplines*?

We will gather studies of universities from the African continent, India and Germany in a comparative way. Preconditions are that they have a school or department of sociology, history, and economics, and that they are founded latest in the 1970s. The universities should be universities of teaching and research. The studies could be phased to three chronological moments: till the 1970s, developments around 2000, and the recent situation (2022 until today). In the 1970s, as a consequence of university reform following the student revolts in Paris in 1968 and other parts of the world, many new universities established

attempted to revise their disciplinary frameworks and curricula, thereby preparing for the new realities societies had begun to encounter. Around 2000, with the wide spread dissemination and acceptance of the internet and a rapid intensification of the economic globalization etc., we assume an acceleration of dynamics around processes of internationalization at universities. For example, in Europe, the so-called Bologna reforms were implemented from 1999 to generate a unified Europe higher education sector, harmonize degrees globally, and increase student mobility. We also assume that around this time, the term and concept of globalization received more attention while that of internationalization diminished. In 2022, after Covid 19 crisis, the problematic of climate change and economic stagnation or recession, universities face other challenges concerning their global embeddedness. One aspect here is certainly competition, even though it has been there before of course.