# Improving international and transnational education exchange between Australia and Africa

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AUSTRALIA AFRICA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Government's global strategy in international and transnational education is not being met as it pertains to Africa. The Australia Africa Chamber of Commerce (AACC) has identified education as an area in which it can provide resources and partnership to the Australian Government, the private sector and the higher education industry to more vigorously address this lack of attention.

The value of international and transnational education to the Australian economy is enormous, from the spending of students on Australian goods and services, to the sizeable generation of trade networks in partnership with the African diaspora, to increased cultural competence and social expansion of Australian businesses.

However, Australia's claim to *global* leadership in international education is not being exerted in Africa. In fact, at present Australia's efforts seem rather small and regionally-specific to the Indo-Pacific. Australia can do better. Australia should utilise its wealth of expertise and historic excellence in the field of education to cast its net more widely and expand its offerings on the African continent.

This starts by expanding the eligibility and diversity of the Australia Awards and other development scholarships on the continent, which have had proven results for Australia both economically and geopolitically. This must be followed through by Australian diplomats in Africa with a more personal and targeted alumni engagement effort, which is currently absent, to ensure Australia-educated alumni are finding employment and fulfilling Australia's development mission.

Australia's transnational education efforts with Africa can also be significantly ramped up by the Australian EdTech industry, which can capitalise on an incredibly youthful population eager to lend skills to the forecasted economic boom in Africa as a result of the enactment of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Coupled with considered collaboration in creating relevant local curricula and extensive professional development of teachers in Africa to facilitate their offerings, Australian EdTech companies and investors can innovate in an industry that will create sustainable growth.

# INTRODUCTION

Australia's potential to fulfil its global leadership in international and transnational education is significantly hindered by its lack of attention to the African continent. Organisations like the Australia Africa Chamber of Commerce (AACC) and the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) have connections and objectives in place to establish more robust links between the two continents in the education sphere.

This report seeks to add insight and analysis into the dimensions of international education exchange and transnational education investment, and will identify areas in which the Australian Government, the private sector and educational institutions and companies can act to improve Australia's offerings and benefits.

There are two markets to consider: 1) bringing more African students to Australia, and 2) placing Australian innovation in Africa in a collaborative way that improves education and development outcomes, benefitting Australian and African businesses and economies alike.

Though it will not be explicitly examined in this report, there is a third market to consider in engaging with African Australians seeking education providers to re-skill and up-skill. This has the potential to be a significant gateway for Australian companies to connect to the African continent. The Blue Nile African Australian Business Masterclass Program at the University of Melbourne's Social Equity Institute is an example of one such program with which the AACC has a notable partnership.

In its first section, this report will assess Australia's national interests in these markets, both at home and abroad, and it will also evaluate to what degree Australia's international education strategy is living up to its objective in 'global leadership'. The second section of this report will investigate the first market of African students learning in Australia, namely an assessment of the Australia Awards and development scholarships more generally, and the need for greater engagement with African alumni of Australian education programmes. The final section will delve into prospects for Australian export of education directly to the African continent, particularly in the education technology—'EdTech'—sphere.

This report acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic puts considerable restraint on the swift enactment of its recommendations, particularly in the context of bringing more students to Australia. However, it is important to establish a foundation from which Australia's education strategy can grow as the world eventually sees the other side of the pandemic. Investment in EdTech will be particularly pertinent in the meantime.

At the Third International Conference of the Australia Africa Association, then-Zimbabwean Ambassador to Australia Jacqueline Zwambila remarked that the positive outlook of Africa as a thriving collection of nations bolstered by education has been significantly hindered by its underinvestment.[1] This report will illuminate areas in which this can be improved by Australia's leadership.

# SECTION 1
## The current state of affairs

*Australia's national interests*

The value of international education to the Australian economy is no secret. A 2015 Deloitte study commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training noted that in 2014-2015, international education—including the consumption of goods and services by students and their visitors—contributed $17.1 billion to Australia's economy.[2] In 2019, that number more than doubled to $37.6 billion.[3] This economic generation is not limited to urban areas. The same Deloitte study found in that year that $888 million flowed to regional Victoria alone in expenditure by international students on agricultural and other regionally supported goods.[4] This is certainly a case for the importance of bringing international students to Australia more broadly, but there is a distinction in the Australia-Africa context.

The exchange of peoples between destinations generates trade. Diaspora communities can open untapped trade and investment opportunities that can enable Australia to diversify its trade links.[5] Think of the concept of 'nostalgic trade'—the preference of emigrants for goods of their home country.[6] It does not take long for an Australian abroad to scour their options for importing Vegemite when it is not available in their local supermarket. The same applies to the African diaspora here in Australia. Findings by the World Bank in its book *Diaspora for development in Africa* concluded a 'positive relationship between the level of bilateral merchandise trade between

[1] Melissa Conley Tyler, 'Africa, Australia and International Education', Australia Institute of International Affairs, accessed 23 March 2021, https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/africa-australia-and-international-education/.

[2] Deloitte Access Economics, *The value of international education to Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2015), 2, https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-papers/Documents/ValueInternationalEd.pdf.

[3] Alex Chevrolle, 'What did international students ever do for Australia?', The PIE News, published 28 August 2020, https://thepienews.com/the-view-from/what-did-international-students-ever-do-for-australia/.

[4] Deloitte Access Economics, *The value of international education to Australia*, 2.

[5] Mukhisa Kituyi, 'Highlight: Economic Development in Africa Report 2018', United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, accessed 22 May 2020, https://unctad.org/webflyer/economic-development-africa-report-2018.

[6] Sonia Plaza and Dilip Ratha, 'Harnessing diaspora resources for Africa', in *Diaspora for development in Africa*, eds. Sonia Plaza and Dilip Ratha (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2011).

OECD countries and all African trading partners… and the size of migrant populations living within these OECD countries'.[7]

This suggests that an increase in students from the African continent would significantly bolster trade between the two sides. Africa's highly youthful population coupled with its recent enactment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its digital transformation in the midst of COVID-19 add context and a sense of urgency for Australia to capitalise on the significant economic growth forecasted for the African continent. The diversification and promotion of trade beyond the extractive and resources sector is also in line with recommendations from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Advisory Group for Australia-Africa Relations (AAGAR) and the Australian Senate's 2018 Report *Australia's trade and investment relationships with the countries of Africa*.[8] Increasing the demand, access and flow of African students to an education in Australia will reap significant economic benefit for both continents.

There are also benefits to Australia abroad in generating greater educational exchange between the two continents. In its *National Strategy for International Education 2025*, the Australian Government says about international education:

> 'It offers opportunities to build enhanced bilateral and multilateral relationships, which increase cultural awareness and social engagement. In addition, diplomacy is advanced through Australian educated alumni who develop lasting connections at personal, organisational and government levels. All of this is fostering better relationships with our regional neighbours and the rest of the world.'[9]

This is certainly encouraging language, but it is one-sided when it comes to Australia and Africa. In surveying the Group of Eight universities in Australia, only the University of Melbourne has more than one exchange partner on the African continent. Neither the Australian National University nor Monash University have one. The University of Western Australia has one on the French island of Réunion. The others are all exclusive to South Africa. Credit is certainly due, however, to the University of Western Australia in that it is home to the UWA Africa Research & Engagement Centre, Australia's premiere hub for the pursuit of innovation in the development of Australia-Africa relations.

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[7] Ibid, 8.

[8] Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, *A strategy for Australia's engagement with Africa* (Canberra: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016), https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/a-strategy-for-australias-engagement-with-africa.pdf.; Australian Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, *Australia's trade and investment relationships with the countries of Africa* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2018), https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/TradeinvestmentAfrica/Report.

[9] Department of Education and Training, *National Strategy for International Education 2025* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2016), 7, https://nsie.dese.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/national_strategy_for_international_education_2025.pdf.

Australian students are missing the opportunity to explore Africa academically and bring the 'cultural awareness and social engagement' mentioned in the government's strategy back to Australia. This is untapped potential for Australian businesses who could benefit from more culturally literate employees.[10] Australian universities are also missing out on a greater diversity of exchange partners beyond the focus on South Africa. The AAUN, while a consortium to connect researchers and establish joint research projects, has member universities throughout sub-Saharan Africa. These are universities that have been vetted to an extremely high standard, that stand next to Australian universities on their own merits.[11] This is an already-existing relationship that Australian universities should explore to enhance the opportunities for Australian students to better participate in a global exchange of knowledge.

The word 'global' highlights another mismatch between opportunity and current strategy in international education in Australia.

### Australia as a global leader in education

In the *National Strategy for International Education 2025*, the Australian Government identifies Pillar Three of its strategy: 'competing globally'—that Australia will promote excellence and embrace opportunities to grow international education.[12] And yet Africa is mentioned only once in the entire document. Research by the University of New England highlights a diplomatically favourable view of Australia over former colonial powers France and the UK, and even the *National Strategy* lists the two as competitors.[13] Certainly Australia and Africa are geopolitically distant, but in calling itself a 'global' leader in education, should more effort on the continent not be expected? Again, the strategy is supposed to be 'global', not 'regional'.

A study by the State University of New York discovered the use of the world 'global' or some other iteration of global sentiment in 62% of the mission statements of Australian universities.[14] Are these missions really being lived up to with how much the Australian higher education sector and the government are engaging with Africa?

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[10] Deloitte Access Economics, *The value of international education to Australia*, 2.
[11] John Hearn, interviewed by Nigel Huckle, Melbourne and Sydney, 24 March 2021.
[12] Department of Education and Training, *National Strategy for International Education 2025.*
[13] Rose C Amazan et al., 'From extraction to knowledge reproduction: The impact of Australia's development awards on Uganda and Mozambique', *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (2016): 45-65, https://openjournals.library.usyd.edu.au/index.php/IEJ/article/view/10443.; Department of Education and Training, *National Strategy for International Education 2025.*
[14] Christine A Farrugia and Jason E Lane, 'Legitimacy in Cross- Border Higher Education: Identifying Stakeholders of International Branch Campuses', *Journal of Studies in International Education* 17, no. 4 (2012): 414-432, doi: 10.1177/1028315312464379.

Australian higher education institutions should push to leverage the power of recruiting agents on the African continent. As recently as March of this year, education consultant firm KOALA, located in Nairobi, hosted a Study in Australia Virtual Expo with representatives from nineteen different Australian education institutions. These are agencies with significant influence in improving the brands of Australian providers on the African continent, and in recommending resources for prospective students to enable their studies. Australian education institutions should expand their engagement with these agencies. The AACC can assist in facilitating these connections and arrangements.

In a submission to DFAT, Australian Co-Chair of the AAUN Professor John Hearn suggests engagement with Africa and LATAM from Australia at 10%, but he also lists 'education and economic development' to be a particular strength of Australia's.[15] Combine the two suggestions, and Australia could seek to boost its engagement in education to Africa significantly. Regionally, China and Singapore are becoming immensely overcrowded in the education sphere, with many Asian countries pushing to expand its domestic tertiary education.[16] This is an opportunity for Australia to maintain its 'global' view and pivot to Africa.

In that same vein, China, among others, is recognised as a competitor, both on the continent and as a destination for international students.[17] There is a noted decline in interest in Australian universities among prospective African students who consider places like China and Brazil to be much easier to access.[18] This does not bode well for Australia's objective to be an international leader in education. The Australian Senate report notes:

> 'Australia cannot compete with aid donors such as China on a quantum
> basis. The committee agrees that our engagement needs to be in areas
> where we can leverage unique Australian capabilities.'[19]

In what area is Australia more uniquely capable than education? Australia could be an education superpower. Its *National Strategy* certainly describes it as one. With more focused attention on Africa, Australia could live up to its deeply invested capabilities in the education sphere.

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[15] John Hearn, submission to DFAT, *Australia's New International Development Policy*, 2020.
[16] Gwilym Croucher et al., *Australia's higher education delivery offshore and online – trends, barriers and opportunities* (Melbourne: Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education, 2021), https://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/research-projects/higher-education/trends,-barriers-and-opportunities-of-australias-higher-education-delivery-offshore.
[17] Department of Education and Training, *National Strategy for International Education 2025*.
[18] Seye Abimbola et al., 'Australian higher education scholarships as tools for international development and diplomacy in Africa', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 2: 105-120, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2015.1119230.
[19] Australian Senate, *Australia's trade and investment relationships with the countries of Africa,* 85.

# SECTION 2

## Bringing African students to Australia

*Expanding the Australia Awards*

On a continent that needs more diplomatic focus from Australia, further expansion of Australia's development scholarships, particularly the Australia Awards, are a worthy consideration. In 2016, development scholarships made up approximately 6% of Australia's worldwide aid budget.[20] On the African continent in particular, these scholarships are targeted to students engaging in the 'priority fields of study' of agriculture, extractives and public policy.[21] And they do work.

A joint research project between the University of Sydney and the University of New England followed the story of an Australia Awards alumnus who returned from their study in Australia to develop an HIV mitigation plan targeted at the Millennium Development Goals, creating a strategy to minimise sexually transmitted infections in Mozambique for the first time in fifteen years.[22] This is a clear demonstration of the flow on effects that come from exporting a service that Australia does well: education. Scholarship aid is also perceived as superior because it specifically assists individuals and is not subject to corruption by government officials.[23] Not only is this beneficial in shielding development scholarships from the public and political criticism that often befalls foreign aid, but it also illustrates the effect that foreign aid can have on development at the grassroots level.

There are also some macro-level benefits to be observed in scholarship aid. After all, development scholarships are 'soft power'.[24] There is a positive correlation between higher education and civic engagement; students who study overseas influence their families at home to register to vote and participate in democracy.[25] Empirical evidence from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also supports arguments that overseas study encourages home countries to invest more in education and skill development.[26] Essentially, increasing the flow of African students to Australia could greater meet the governance and reform assistance outlined in Australia's aid strategy in Africa.[27]

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[20] Abimbola et al., 'Australian higher education scholarships'.
[21] Australia Awards, 'Experience the possibilities with an Australia Awards Scholarship', 2019, http://www.australiaawardsafrica.org/aaawebfiles/Final%202019%20material/Australia%20Awards%20Scholarships%20intake%202021.pdf.
[22] Abimbola et al., 'Australian higher education scholarships'.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Amazan et al., 'From extraction to knowledge reproduction'.
[25] Abimbola et al., 'Australian higher education scholarships'.; The Economist, 'Migration is helping Africa in many ways', published 28 March 2020, https://www.economist.com/special-report/2020/03/26/migration-is-helping-africa-in-many-ways.
[26] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Economic Development in Africa Report 2018: Migration for Structural Transformation* (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 2018), https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldcafrica2018_en.pdf.
[27] Abimbola et al., 'Australian higher education scholarships'.

With that in mind, Australia's development scholarship program could be significantly enhanced. Consider the *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*'s strategy to target 'developing economies with large and youthful populations' to 'support reform and inclusive growth'.[28] The eligibility restriction of the Australia Awards to eleven countries out of the fifty-four on the continent does not seem to meet the mark of inclusivity.

From 1970 to 2013, tertiary education enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa grew from 400,000 to 7.3 million, that final year featuring tertiary enrolment growth at 4.3%, far outpacing the global rate of 2.8%.[29] It is clear that African tertiary students are eager for opportunity that is neither being afforded nor capitalised upon by Australia's restrictive eligibility regime. Ethiopia, Zambia and Uganda, for example, are countries in which the AAUN has membership and high confidence in the quality of academia, but their bachelor's graduates are not eligible for Australian master's scholarships through the Australia Awards. This needs serious reconsideration.

More specific targeting of scholarship aid could better help Australia meet its development goals as well. AusAID's 2012-13 annual report highlights the Australian aid program's primary goal as poverty reduction,[30] but the general critique of Australia's scholarship aid is that it does not target the poor.[31] This is certainly a systemic issue, and one that requires creating greater access to primary and secondary education first, but Australia's diplomatic corps on the continent could consider a more hands-on operation to assist interested Australia Awards applicants from more varied socioeconomic backgrounds and academic disciplines with their application materials.

The inaugural 2015 Australian Education Exhibition in West Africa saw unprecedented interest in study in Australia.[32] Australia must keep its finger on the pulse, and take advantage of this novelty.[33] When experts like Professor Hearn and organisations like the AACC, the AGAAR and the AAUN recommend the expansion of the Australia Awards, they are not asking simply for money to be thrown at the problem. They are urging a measured and concerted effort to open access to more students from the continent in a way that more deeply and efficiently engages with Australia's development goals, benefitting Australia and Africa economically, culturally and diplomatically.

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[28] Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2017), 28, https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/minisite/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper/fpwhitepaper/pdf/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf.

[29] Robert O Harris, 'Transnational Education in Sub Sahara Africa: Strategic Partnership', *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* 20, no. 2: 111-121, https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/transnational-education-sub-sahara-africa/docview/2435720792/se-2?accountid=12372.

[30] Amazan et al., 'From extraction to knowledge reproduction'.

[31] Abimbola et al., 'Australian higher education scholarships'.

[32] Australian Senate *Australia's trade and investment relationships with the countries of Africa.*

[33] Ibid.

It is worth adding that DFAT could engage with individual African countries to encourage them to develop government scholarships of their own for overseas study in Australia. Such an arrangement was recently negotiated for nine Nigerian students at Flinders University, by which the Nigerian government provided scholarship for tuition, and the Australian Government and the university provided some coverage for living expenses.[34] This sort of bilateral education engagement is ideal in creating partnership with mutual benefits that respects African governments' agency.

## Australia's alumni engagement in Africa

Australia's development goals could be far better met with more robust engagement with Australia-educated alumni across Africa. At the time of its report in 2018, the Australian Senate noted that there were about 6000 Australia Awards alumni across Africa, but not one Global Alumni Ambassador from the African continent nor any events listed in Africa or for African alumni.[35] The same is true at the time of this writing. This is reflected more generally in sentiments by African alumni that the Australian Government is 'really focused on the application process and not so much in the re-integration process.'[36] Essentially, there seems to be an absence of follow through by the government to these alumni, leaving the development mission unfinished.

Australia must bolster its efforts to connect a network across Africa, between governments, alumni, current students and prospective students.[37] This is critical in placing these alumni in jobs so that they have a chance to make a genuine effort in pursuing economic prosperity and governmental reform. The Australia China Alumni Association (ACAA) is an example of an organisation that robustly connects its Australia-educated Chinese alumni to career development opportunities, mentorship programs and targeted job listings. At the moment, African alumni are relegated to one tab on the Australia Awards Africa webpage. The Australian Government could be doing far more to encourage the development of a similar organisation to the ACAA that serves the African continent more comprehensively. The *National Strategy for International Education 2025* highlights, as previously quoted, that 'diplomacy is advanced through Australian educated alumni who develop lasting connections at personal, organisational and government levels'.[38] But it is clear that this needs more targeted effort in the African context.

Alumni engagement is also critical for both gender equality and international security. Education plays a critical role for women in accessing the financial means necessary to engage in entrepreneurship in Africa, but the difference between access and execution is in the size of their

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[34] Ivy Wang, personal communication, 11 May 2021.
[35] Australian Senate *Australia's trade and investment relationships with the countries of Africa.*
[36] Amazan et al., 'From extraction to knowledge reproduction'.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Department of Education and Training, *National Strategy for International Education 2025,* 7.

networks.[39] Governments need to spearhead the development of these networks, and Australia can start by supporting Australia-educated women so that they can inspire other business-oriented women in their home countries. Finally, there is an argument that increased education helps to stem violence, but in fact a more educated population that is unable to access adequate job opportunities can be more susceptible to radicalisation.[40] Australia's export of its international education offerings can better meet its development goals by ensuring that African alumni are placed in employment after their studies. That starts with more active alumni engagement and support.

There is in place the *Australia Global Alumni Engagement Strategy 2016–2020*, but it is clear that this strategy is not being pursued as vigorously in Africa. This is a job for Australia's diplomatic corps that could harness the power of networks like the AACC, the AAUN and the private sector. The Australian Government could be profiling businesses where African alumni have been placed for work integrated learning during their studies. The private sector could highlight its success stories hosting African students. These small vignettes of the good work done by African students in Australia create a profile for them when they become alumni, powering up their networks and those of Australian businesses, creating a fuller picture of what Australia is seeking to achieve in development on the African continent.

# SECTION 3

## Sending Australian innovation to the African continent

This report has thus far discussed the provision of education *onshore* in Australia, which generally exists under the term 'international education'. Australia also must pursue its potential and abundant opportunity in providing an Australian education *offshore*. This provision is often described as 'transnational education' or 'TNE'.

As this report highlights areas in which the private sector can be of use in improving this intercontinental exchange in education, it is important to note the strength in investing in education. Education is resilient to global economic impact; people still spent on education during the Global

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[39] United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *Women's Entrepreneurship Report: Education and Finance for Successful Entrepreneurship in Africa* (Addis Ababa: United Nations, 2019), https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/keymessageanddocuments/Eng_DRAFT_WER2019_ECA.PDF.

[40] Orlandrew E Danzell, Yao-Yuan Yeh and Melia Pfannenstiel, 'Does Education Mitigate Terrorism? Examining the Effects of Educated Youth Cohorts on Domestic Terror in Africa', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 8 (2020): 1731-1752, doi: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1506336.

Financial Crisis, as people historically turn to education to re-skill and upskill when jobs are scarce.[41] This is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 recovery. Investors should feel confident investing in education, not only because it is valuable, but because there is an element of philanthropy in providing quality education which is often protected and bolstered by the state.[42] TNE in particular is constantly in progress, giving business the opportunity to innovate, and its demand will continue to grow.[43] It is a worthy and secure investment.

### Education Technology from Australia — 'EdTech'

In 2020, the Australian Trade and Investment Commission—Austrade—announced the development and launch of the Australian EdTech Directory, highlighting that Australian EdTech employs over 13,000 people, bringing in a revenue of A$2.2 billion, 37% of which is from export.[44] The Australian EdTech industry had been booming for a few years, having doubled in size and revenue from 2017-2019.[45] COVID-19, of course, has accelerated this growth significantly.

The African continent, however, is being vastly underestimated in how much it could benefit from the provision of online TNE. Research by the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education notes significantly low scores in Africa among Australian institutions surveyed about their previous success in those markets, and confidence in their prospects over the next two years.[46] A factsheet by the South Australian Government leaves sub-Saharan Africa out entirely in describing Australia's EdTech export capacity.[47] This lack of attention is certainly based on preconceived notions about Africa's readiness to accept EdTech.

Helping Africa expand access could more greatly meet the demand for Australian EdTech. The sub-Saharan African mobile market is growing faster than any other region, and is predicted to continue to grow in the coming years. [48] The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated Africa's digital transformation as African entrepreneurs have adapted to e-commerce. The same can be pursued

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[41] Hyejin Kim, 'The Business of International Education', in *How Global Capital is Remaking International Education: The Emergence of Transnational Education Corporations*, ed. Hyejin Kim (New York: Springer, 2019), 67-86.
[42] Ibid.
[43] William Lawton and Vangelis Tsiligiris, 'The Future of TNE', in *Exporting Transnational Education: Institutional Practice, Policy and National Goals,* eds. William Lawton and Vangelis Tsiligiris (New York: Springer, 2018), 217-226.
[44] Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 'Austrade and EduGrowth launch the Australian EdTech Directory', Australian Government, published 11 November 2020, https://www.austrade.gov.au/australian/education/news/austrade-update/austrade-and-edugrowth-launch-the-australian-edtech-directory.
[45] Claire Field, 'The rise and rise of edtech higher education providers', University World News, published 6 March 2021, https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210301080611814.
[46] Croucher et al., *Australia's higher education delivery offshore and online.*
[47] Department for Trade, Tourism and Investment International Education, *EdTech in Australia* (Adelaide: Government of South Australia, 2018).
[48] Rogers Kaliisa and Michelle Picard, 'Mobile learning policy and practice in Africa: Towards inclusive and equitable access to higher education', *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 35, no. 6 (2019): 1-14, https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.5562.

for EdTech in Africa with the assistance of Australian EdTech providers who can develop the infrastructure that will provide electricity and internet bandwidth necessary for online learning.

No one is asking Australian companies to build a country's entire electricity grid. In fact, African countries are quite capable of doing that themselves, with Côte d'Ivoire having achieved 94% electrification last year.[49] Instead, Australian EdTech companies can build their brand by providing facilities in host countries for students to gather, bridging the access gap for marginalised learners by providing multi-modal delivery.[50]

Curriculum cooperation and training for teachers facilitating the curriculum will be important to multi-modal delivery. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) in which there are limited tangible qualifications and minimal personalised feedback are often criticised as a North American- and European-centric top-down education export that are inappropriate for the African context.[51] They are also experiencing low completion and retention rates due to COVID.[52]

EdTech companies can instead utilise Australia's diplomatic advantage to consult the communities that they intend to serve to tailor better educational outcomes. From analysis by the South Australian Government, 'EdTech presents an opportunity for the equalisation of education standards and access to education for a greater part of the population.'[53] So by consulting the community to combine technological access with relevant and engaging instructional content, Australian EdTech companies can provide learner-centred *and* society results-oriented education services.[54] It may also be a worthy idea for EdTech companies to trial their services and curricula on African students in Australia. These community consultation efforts will bring legitimacy to the Australian brand by identifying it with local stakeholders, helping to attract more resources to sustain the venture.[55]

Training for teachers in the host country must be a high priority for EdTech providers seeking to operate in Africa. According to UNICEF, two-thirds of teachers feel they do not have the skills to facilitate remote learning, with many higher education teaching staff in particular ill-equipped to

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[49] The World Bank, 'The secret to Côte d'Ivoire's electric success', published 23 July 2020, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/07/23/the-secret-to-cote-divoires-electric-success.

[50] Andaleeb Alam and Priyamvada Tiwari, *Putting the 'learning 'back in remote learning: Policies to uphold effective continuity of learning through COVID-19* (New York: UNICEF, 2020), https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/sites/unicef.org.globalinsight/files/2020-06/UNICEF-Global-Insight-remote-learning-issue-brief-2020.pdf.

[51] Kaliisa and Picard, 'Mobile learning policy and practice in Africa'.

[52] Alam and Tiwari, *Putting the 'learning 'back in remote learning.*

[53] Department for Trade, Tourism and Investment International Education, *EdTech in Australia,* 5.

[54] Alam and Tiwari, *Putting the 'learning 'back in remote learning.;* Catherine U Osuji and Johnson C Amadi, 'Global Education Marketing: Using Distance Learning to Export Knowledge Implications on Globalization', *Journal of Education & Entrepreneurship* 7, no. 1 (2020): 14-25.

[55] Farrugia and Lane, 'Legitimacy in Cross- Border Higher Education'.

facilitate offshore-developed curricula.[56] By emphasising pedagogy over simple digital skills, Australian EdTech companies can capitalise on collaboratively created curricula to deliver a product of value that will significantly enhance educational outcomes and bolster Australian brands in the market.

It is true that costs can be prohibitive to deploying a large-scale EdTech operation targeted across Africa. In the higher education sphere, attracting and retaining qualified teachers is difficult, and maintaining quality standards can be a challenge if the provider chooses to partner with a host country institution.[57] There is also the obvious inequality in that poorer students may be unable to afford offerings from Australian EdTech companies. However, Australian EdTech companies, with some partnership from Australian diplomats on the continent, must be willing to play the long game. Online learning is more cost-advantageous to smaller countries with smaller tertiary education systems,[58] so by pursuing robust government-to-government partnerships laid out in the *National Strategy for International Education 2025,* host government funding can bring more students to utilise Australian EdTech services. This is a win for governments across Africa, as greater access to online learning capabilities will make their own education systems more resilient and more prepared.[59] It also means sustainable revenue for Australian EdTech companies on the continent.

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[56] Alam and Tiwari, *Putting the 'learning 'back in remote learning.*; Yaw Owusu-Agyeman and Gertrude Amoakohene, 'Transnational education delivery in Ghana: examining the benefits, challenges and future prospects', *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 4, no. 2 (2020): 135-163, doi: 10.1080/23322969.2020.1774408.
[57] Owusu-Agyeman and Amoakohene, 'Transnational education delivery in Ghana'.
[58] Harris, 'Transnational Education in Sub Sahara Africa'.
[59] Turgut Karakose, 'The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on higher education: Opportunities and implications for policy and practice', *Educational Process: International Journal* 10, no. 1 (2021): 7-12, doi: 10.22521/edupij.2021.101.1.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment should more actively engage with the African continent to fulfil its strategy to be a *global* leader in education, not just a regional one.
2. The Australian Government should expand the Australia Awards in Africa, not just financially, but in eligibility and diversity in students' countries of origin and academic disciplines.
3. The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should more robustly engage its diplomatic corps on the African continent to target and cultivate a more diverse pool of Australia Awards applicants.
4. Austrade and DFAT should name an Australia Global Alumni Ambassador from the African continent, and engage the Australian diplomatic corps on the continent to provide support and resources for Australian-educated alumni in Africa.
5. Australian businesses should highlight and promote African students whom they have hosted to lend to the expansion of their networks and demonstrate the value of international education in Australia.
6. The private sector and investors should partner with Austrade's Australian EdTech Directory to expand pursuits and investment of Australian EdTech in Africa.
7. Australian EdTech companies and investors in Africa should work responsibly with governments in Africa to collaborate on curricula that are relevant and useful to the African context, and to ensure adequate professional development of the teachers facilitating the delivery of EdTech services.
8. Australian universities should engage with partner African universities to expand exchange opportunities for Australian students, utilising existing networks like the AAUN.
9. Australian businesses and government entities should lean on established networks like the AACC and the AAUN, who can guide them to expand their capabilities on the continent.

# CONCLUSION

This report has sought to explore methods and justification to improve international and transnational education and exchange between Australia and Africa.

The benefits for Australia's businesses and diplomatic standing are immense. The Australian private sector gains at home through significant spending by international students in the country. Of course, with international borders likely to remain closed for some time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this income will suffer. But on the other hand, businesses gain significantly in cultural competence and diversity which enables them to discover more international trading links, particularly important for the African continent which is shortly forecasted to experience an economic boom.

Australian companies also gain significantly in a widened recruitment pool of skilled workers for their ventures on the continent, particularly in the resources and mining technology sectors. But the biggest opportunity exists for Australian EdTech providers to provide education services to a continent of 1.3 billion people, three-quarters of which are youth under thirty-five.[60]

This report has delved into discussion about how Australia can better meet its global leadership potential in education, the expansion of the Australia Awards in Africa, how to improve engagement with Australian-educated alumni across the African continent, and the market potential for Australian education technology— 'EdTech'—in Africa.

It has not tackled other worthy areas of discussion like intercontinental teacher exchanges, which could prove a useful people-to-people venture in boosting teaching skills on the African continent, nor has it delved into the wide literature available on student exchange partnerships like 'twinning' and dual degree programs. It has also not explored the potential for the establishment of an international university branch campus on the continent, since the failure of Monash South Africa demonstrated the unsustainable costs in such an operation.[61] These are certainly viable areas of further research.

Improving education exchange to Africa is a win for Australia economically and for its growth as a middle power. It will take active partnership between the Australian Government, governments across the African continent, Australia's diplomats and the private sector. But it is not a start from scratch. These stakeholders can rely on trusted networks already established by groups like the AACC and the AAUN. A skilled Africa is good for Australia, and both are good for the rapidly

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[60] Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, 'Youth Empowerment', United Nations, accessed 30 April 2021, https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/youth.shtml.
[61] Croucher et al., *Australia's higher education delivery offshore and online.*

changing international system. Australia must exert its full potential for global leadership in education.

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