Innovation ecosystems in the Global South

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GUS Fellowship Project(s)
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Introduction

The focus of my fellowship is on two key strands of research and academic leadership: one strand is learning and teaching innovation in which we have received 2 innovation funds from the Arden University (my university of base). One specific sub project is on an evaluation of the **flipped classroom and flipped learning and teaching** proposition in Arden University with the case of programmes within the School of Leadership and Management as the initial locus of inquiry. This offers an opportunity to have an up-to-date appreciation of the role of this approach in Active learning and how current developments such as generative artificial intelligence (AI) could either enhance or constrain a flipped a approach to learning and teaching. The other teaching innovation fund project is a **learning and development** enquiry in relation to our newly launched **Arden Enterprise Incubator (AEI).** We are undertaking a learning needs analysis focusing on the enhancement of capacity to deliver and sustain the initiative. The project team here are exclusively from the School of Leadership and Management, Arden University UK.

The second and main project strand is the development of a suit of case studies of **innovation ecosystems in the Global South,** code named the ***Ubuntu Space for Innovation (USfI)*** with specific focus on countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Our aim is firstly to explore feasibilities and challenges of setting them up based on specific fundamental principles of innovation. Secondly, we intend to examine how these cases could be rolled out into a network of innovation ecosystems with areas of intersection, interdependence, and synergy within the continent. A proposed progressive Case-by-case context(s), for now, will include Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and South Africa.

Projects	Roles	Institutional Affiliation
Innovation ecosystems in Global South *Ubuntu Space for Innovation (USfI)*	Principal Investigator Dr Terfot A Ngwana, GUS Fellow	Arden University (AU), UK
	Associates Dr Paulos Teckle Hedru, GUS Fellow	University Canada West (UCW)
	Professor Alison Watson, HoS.	Arden University (AU), UK
Key Words	Innovation ecosystem(s), collaborative research, human capital development	
Flipped Class Evaluation	Principal Investigator Dr Terfot A Ngwana, GUS Fellow	Arden University (AU), UK
	Associates Dr Emmanuel Murasiranwa	Arden University (AU), UK
	Dr Feng Jiao	Arden University (AU), UK

Key Words	Flipped classroom, flipped learning and teaching, Active learning

Summary

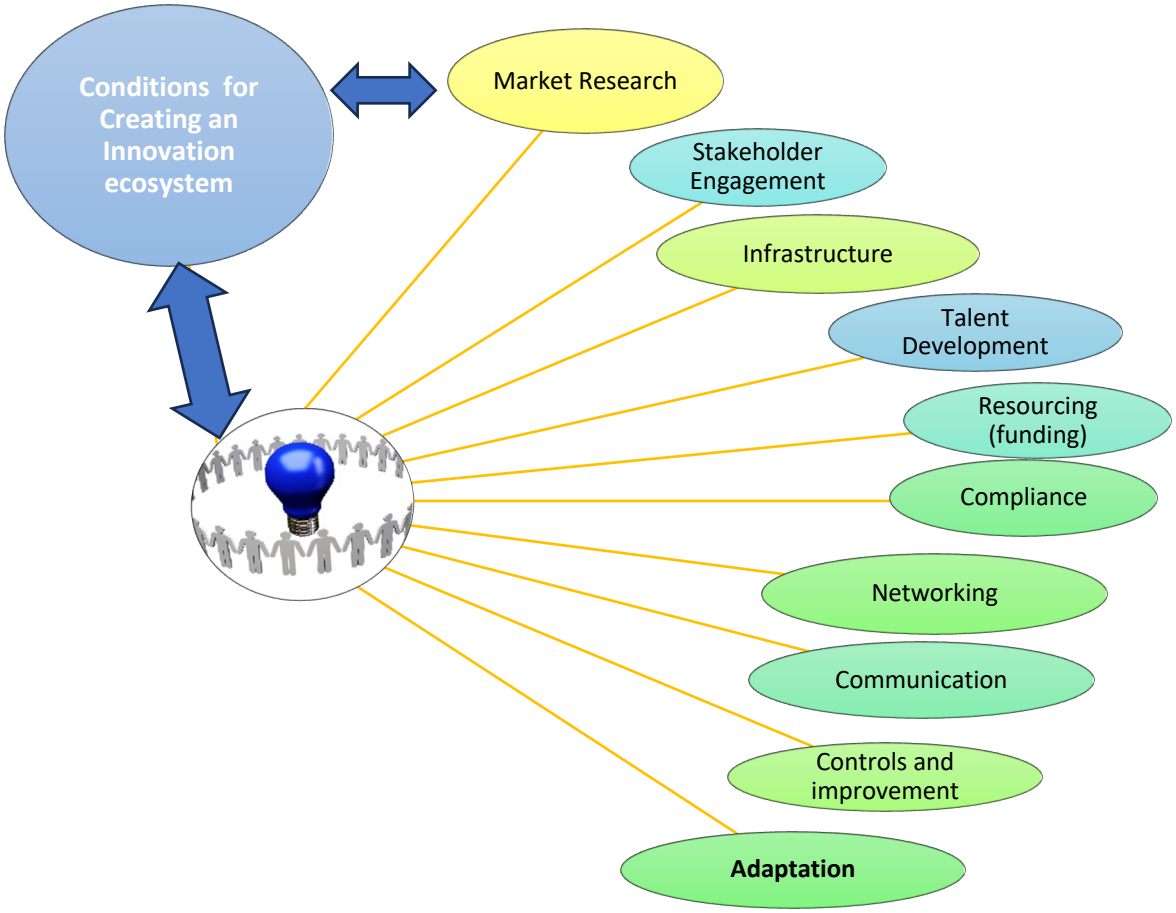
Innovation Ecosystem in the Global South

The main aim of the project is to explore the development of an innovation ecosystem within selected countries in the Global South. We also examine how effective human capacity within such cases can eventually enable it to roll out into a network of innovation ecosystems within a country or a region starting with Sub-Saharan Africa using the concept and philosophy of co-creation referred to as (UBUNTU) as a guiding framework.

The main **operational objectives and focus** are:

- Identifying the industries and sectors of relative advantage or greatest potential in the geographical area;
- Identifying and analysing the interests of critical stakeholders;
- Examine challenges inherent in such a development and ways of navigating them;
- Developing enterprise entrepreneurial/entrepreneurial training need analysis for the ecosystem or hub; and
- Developing a set of collaborative training programmes that address the identified needs and challenges.

One of the main consensual arguments in international development is that stalled innovation positively correlates with human capacity and economic development. Numerous studies by the Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) depicts global **zones of strength and weaknesses**, notably in its Trade in Value Added (TiVA) database as an example of innovation (Korinek, 2020). This implies that mastering a robust protocol for developing an effective innovation ecosystem would make significant impact on economic and human development. Therefore, this project will essentially address almost all the 17 categories of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The specific constraining factors identified in studies have been incorporated in the thrust of our enquiry in the form of conditions of creating the innovation ecosystem, as indicated below.



The **thrust of enquiry** within the project will explore and **highlight key challenges** involved within the Global South (as a geopolitical, economic, and cultural space) and how to mitigate them. The applied part of the project will **set out a set of protocols** that can be replicated in multiple sites within the Global South in general and particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Challenges of winning according to commentators such as: Bamber *et al* (2014); Nordas (2008); Ngwana & Fashola (2024); International Monetary Fund (2012) include:

(1) **productive capacity** (including human capital, standards and certifications, and national systems of innovation);
(2) **infrastructure and services** (transportation, energy, water, and ICT);
(3) **business environment** (macroeconomic stability, ease of opening a business, and access to finance);
(4) **trade and investment policy** (market access, import tariffs, export-import procedures, border transit times and industry-specific policies); and
(5) **industry institutionalization** (industry maturity and public-private coordination)

These would eventually become indicators for success or parameters for evaluation in both short-, medium-, and long-term progress in innovation in the locality and region.

Productive Capacity

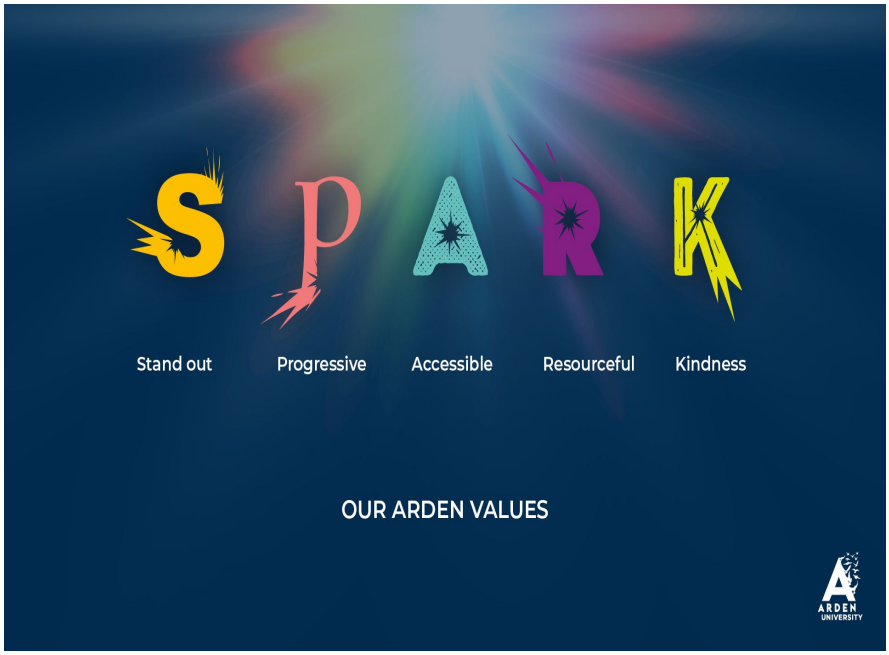
The current scope of this fellowship project would be limited to point 1 above (**productive capacity**) for at least the first 36 months rather than all 5 points identified by current research. This means the digital, knowledge, network and financial capacity of the Global University Systems (GUS), Arden University (AU) and any other network of GUS/AU partners will be instrumental in building this capacity. This would primarily focus on the goal number 4 (quality education) of the SDGs.

This means this fellowship opportunity will enable me to set up an interdisciplinary and collaborative research undertaking with colleagues within and outside the GUS institutions to deliver on the enquiry and applied aspects of the project. A possible training and certification will be delivered, in concert with the local collaborators or stakeholders as part of the applied aspects of the project.

Though not a primary focus, and given the context of African Union's agenda 2063, opportunities for mutual financially and beneficial projects could be derived from the outcome of the exploratory enquiry for all stakeholders involved. Furthermore, the context of the continental free trade area (CFTA) with its potential for intra-continental trade would facilitate a broader connection of the innovation ecosystems and accelerator hubs (case studies) within the continent.

Operationalising the human capacity building.

We will set out to adapt the Arden University's value system in the training and implementation part of the human capacity building. This is based on five interrelated and relevant concepts, code named in the following phrases: Standing out; Progressive; prioritising Access; being intention and strategic in its Resourcefulness; being Kind in the process of doing business (SPARK).



In practice and within the context of this project, this will be:

- **Standing out** by adopting a unique in strategy which brings a blended/digital learning capacity in a triangular business model involving a local higher education institution (HEIs), a local enterprise or organisation and the AU or another GUS institution.
- **Being Progressive** approach to the delivery of higher education in all its dimensions. Taking the university and its digital and technological delivery capability to you before you come to it.
- **Creating Access** to higher learning in all core functions of 'the University' for example capacity to deliver to non-traditional learners; research capacity and global networking.
- **Being Resourceful** through self-reliance (at the forefront of developments in digital technology for learning and Artificial Intelligence.
- Being **kind** in disposition (adopting a transparent win/win approach with countries in SSA.

Internal contacts

The Deputy Head of School (DHoS), the Head of School Head of School (HoS) and co-investigator have consented and aware of the project. We are also seeking support from Pro Vice-Chancellor International Affairs to seek institutional support Vice Chancellor at university level as we proceed with our project plan, firstly as individual scholars and academic leaders within the University.

Resource implications

The wider project is set out to cover basic or fundamental inquiry which is exploratory and attempts to have a deeper, empirical, and up-to-date understanding of the state of the art in innovation in the region. This aspect would consider time release from institution(s) of base, travel, and subsistent costs as and when required. An understanding of the details is subject to practicalities as provided by the institution of base (Arden University) in my case. Subsequent or applied phases of the project, for example setting up the innovation accelerator hubs and L&D services would require funding for micro projects and experimentation.

Preliminary Work Plan

Activities/milestones	Timeframe
Developing a Project team and reaching out to potential collaborators	April – May 2024
Developing a Feasibility of Access to data, compliance with international norms, institutional clearance(s), visa and travel formalities	May- July 2024
Multi-level analysis *Stakeholders, Learning needs, community, and industry.*	July and ongoing 2024
Worksops, and seminars on the development of training framework and content(s)	September and ongoing 2024 (6th month interim report)
Applied Project Plan for human capacity building in innovation ecosystem (subject to all business level protocols and agreements)	September 2024 to March 2025 (12th Month Interim report)

Implementation *Case study Report of an innovation ecosystem/accelerator in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).*	March 2025 and ongoing to March 2026 (Culminating in the 36th Month Report)
Development of Sub-project implementation (eg. Development of Global Value Chain applied enquiry and networks)	2026- and ongoing.

Specific work packages will be developed in the next two months which will align to specific deliverables leading up to the milestones stated in the table above.

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