Internationalisation of Higher Education in South African Universities within the YEBO project, challenges, successes and responses to 4th IR

4IR (4th industrial revolution) has become a topical phenomenon not only in practice but has become even more relevant in the higher education sector. South Africa in general and University of Pretoria in particular provides an exciting setting to evaluate the impact of 4th industrial revolution on post graduate studies. The aim of the presentation is to reflect on supervision of postgraduate students and the impact of 4IR thereon within the University of Pretoria, South African context. The challenges, successes and responses to 4th industrial revolution from a supervisor, PhD student and a senior lecturer’s perspective are examined. In this era of globalisation, no student, undergraduate or postgraduate, a teaching or a research-intensive lecturer, a post-graduate supervisor or the university itself can live in an island. It is therefore necessary to interact, connect and collaborate with other scholars and institutions elsewhere in the world for the student, lecturer or even the university itself to succeed and remain competitive nowadays.

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University of Pretoria has signed a number of collaborations with both local and international institutions of higher learning. The aim for these co-operations is to promote internationalisation of higher education and promote international competitiveness. Students in particular including stuff members are the most beneficiaries of these kind of agreements, with various qualifications offered by the University of Pretoria, such Engineering, Mathematics, Biochemistry (e.g malaria research unit one of the leading unit in Africa at UP) and others. Therefore, these kinds of arrangement would require the signing of memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two institutions involved in the program. For example, to promote knowledge exchange, student supervision normally would be shared between the parties that are involved. This include visiting of the principal investigators with their students for example to introduce them to the other party or collaborate institution, visa-versa. However, there are challenges and success of course on these kind of activities. Securing funding for students particularly from other countries is always an issue, because without funding students cannot focus on the work at hand. In addition, the issuing of the study visas, some countries take longer to issue those for students, thus contributing to the delay of the student’s research. More so, if the students have finally made it to the other country partner or institution, there is always an issue of local language. It always takes time to adjust to a new environment, including the culture and food. So all these could delay the progress of the student to fulfil the aims and objectives