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Navigating Coloniality Beyond the Classroom: A Reflection Based on a North–South Entrepreneurial Education Collaborations

Fátima Delgado Medina, Ángela M. Díaz-Márquez, and Jana Schmutzler

Introduction

As globalization advances, the internationalization of higher education—defined as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2011, p. 11)—has been steadily increasing in recent years. This trend aims to develop intercultural competencies, which are "crucial for changing prejudiced attitudes, preparing students to live in a global world, and empowering them professionally" (Pinto, 2018, p. 1). Typical initiatives include enhanced student and faculty mobility, partnerships and projects with

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foreign institutions, and incorporating global or intercultural dimensions into curricula. One mechanism that is gaining momentum is short-term study abroad programs conducted outside the student's home country (Iskhakova & Bradly, 2022). However, their effectiveness in fostering understanding and competencies in multiculturalism is contested (Fairchild et al., 2006).

When these short-term study programs involve North–South collaborations or occur in contexts of poverty (Wu & Martin, 2018), critically evaluating the learning outcomes becomes even more essential. North–South relationships often entail inherent power imbalances, potentially perpetuating colonial narratives despite efforts to foster equitable learning partnerships (Martin & Griffiths, 2011). Furthermore, few universities in the Global North initiate short-term study abroad programs centered on students from those countries (Plews, 2019; Plews & Jackson, 2017). In many cases, initiatives and control remain predominantly in the Global North when collaborating with the Global South (Altbach & Knight, 2007). These factors hinder knowledge exchange and co-creation efforts aimed at dismantling colonial structures. As a result, the call for a decolonial approach toward study abroad programs has been increasingly raised during the recent past (e.g. Craig, 2022). Such an approach entails—at a minimal level—both the vigilant awareness of knowledge being constructed and situated in specific sociocultural contexts and that this knowledge may be both experienced and imagined in ways incomprehensible by the dominant Western epistemology (Craig, 2022). Additionally, in recent years, decolonial educational frameworks have evolved in recent years toward more critical approaches that not only challenge Eurocentric paradigms in higher education but also propose active methodologies for co-creating knowledge (Heleta & Chasi, 2024; Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Mukherjee, 2024; Reyes et al., 2021). This study aligns with these recent developments by applying decolonial education principles in the context of a short-term study abroad program focused on international entrepreneurship, an area where such approaches remain underexplored.

In this chapter, we—a female researcher of Ecuadorian origin working at a Dutch university, a female researcher of Dominican Republic origin working for a university in Ecuador while living in Switzerland, and a female researcher of German origin who worked at a Dutch university for one

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semester after living and working in the Global South for nearly 20 years—critically reflect on a collaborative teaching project within the International Entrepreneurship and Development (IED) minor program at Delft University of Technology. This minor focuses on tackling complex socio-economic issues in developing and emerging economies, emphasizing cultural awareness, ethical practices, and sustainability in entrepreneurship education. It promotes the use of participatory action research (PAR) to underscore the value of collaborative and inclusive research approaches, drawing on principles of community engagement and shared knowledge creation (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2020). Building on Freire's transformative pedagogy (Freire & Shor, 2014), the program adopts a decolonial approach emphasizing critical reflection, reflexivity, and mutual learning. Our reflexive approximation for this research grounded in decolonial pedagogies and participatory action research principles not only allows for an in-depth analysis of North–South collaboration experiences but also critically examines how media and academic narratives can reinforce or challenge colonial structures.

The specific project, one of many undertaken by enrolled students in recent years, was a collaboration between TU Delft and a South American university. It focused on peer-to-peer learning involving one student group from each university for the co-creation of a board game designed to promote climate awareness among adolescents in the urban periphery of the South American country. It was embedded in a collaboration designed to challenge traditional knowledge hierarchies, fostering an environment where students from both universities could learn from each other as equals. Despite the project's intent and the educators' best efforts to create an equitable and reciprocal learning environment, post-project communication, particularly in the Global North, inadvertently reinforced colonial power imbalances that seem to have persisted in subtle ways (Edwards & Shahjahan, 2021). External stakeholders' media coverage beyond the classroom echoed colonial narratives, casting the European students as the primary drivers of the project, and positioning their Latin American counterparts as secondary actors or subalterns (Mendoza, 2018). This perpetuated the "white savior" narrative and diminished the contributions of their Latin American counterparts.

Recent scholarship on decolonial pedagogy (Okech, 2020; Stein et al., 2020; Zembylas, 2018) has shown how higher education institutions often perpetuate colonial structures of power and knowledge, particularly in North–South collaborations. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) underscores that higher education is deeply implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism,

and these memories persist among colonized peoples. Dominant educational practices often extract knowledge without adding meaningful value to local communities. However, decolonial pedagogies founded on peer-to-peer learning, cultural appreciation, proper acknowledgment of local expertise, accountability, and relational responsibility can enhance North–South educational collaborations (Hill, 2023; Kalyanpur, 2020; Rodney, 2016; Stein et al., 2020). As Zaga et al. (2024) suggest, "transdisciplinary adventures" help us traverse disciplinary boundaries, bringing us into uncharted spaces that expand the horizons of knowledge production.

As such, this case, where we built upon a personal reflection, examines the challenges of navigating coloniality in entrepreneurial education, focusing especially on how such projects are communicated beyond academic spaces. By analyzing how, despite explicit efforts to integrate a decolonial pedagogy into the curriculum and observing the learning paths of participating students, a clear colonial discourse from stakeholders outside the classroom poses significant challenges for students, we critically interrogate common pedagogical and entrepreneurial paradigms that risk another form of resource extraction. We thus suggest extending a decolonial curriculum beyond academic settings (Bandyopadhyay, 2019; Garcia & Baack, 2023) and underscore the importance of reflexivity not only during the project but also in how these collaborations are represented in public discourse (Germain & Jacquemin, 2017), incorporating media representations into decolonial pedagogies. Based on this reflection, we propose ideas on how to address these challenges that arise outside the controlled environment of the classroom.

Decolonizing International Entrepreneurship in Higher Education

Entrepreneurial intentions and competencies (Grivokostopoulou et al., 2019), and consequently entrepreneurial activity (Cheng et al., 2009), can be promoted through education and training. As a result, entrepreneurial education is increasingly regarded as a solution to stagnating or declining economic growth in both developed and developing countries (Matlay, 2008). Additionally, entrepreneurial education develops twenty-first-century skills and competencies that extend beyond entrepreneurship, preparing today's students for future employment and personal growth (Jang, 2016). Consequently, it is not surprising that entrepreneurial education is increasingly integrated into STEM education (Deveci & Seikkula-Leino, 2023),

albeit through different models (Yu et al., 2024). One prominent example is the addition of an entrepreneurial learning component to the STEM curriculum.

Entrepreneurial education is fostered through various approaches and methods. Often, these have roots in Western ideologies that emphasize individualism, innovation, and market competitiveness (Fonrouge, 2022). Such frameworks are frequently incompatible with the realities of entrepreneurship in the Global South, where collective approaches, social embeddedness, and sustainability are prioritized (Pérez-Sánchez et al., 2020). The conflicts arising from this incompatibility become arguably more evident in international collaboration between Global North and South contexts.

The internationalization of higher education, that is, "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2011, p. 11) has emerged as a necessary step to prepare students for a globalized world. The development of intercultural competencies to prepare today's students by "changing prejudiced attitudes, preparing students to live in a global world, and empowering them professionally" (Pinto, 2018, p. 1) has become a cornerstone of many higher education programs. Study abroad programs that place the student outside the geographical boundaries of its country of study (Iskhakova & Bradly, 2022) increasingly emerge (Lokkesmoe et al., 2016), particularly in business and entrepreneurial education (Wu & Martin, 2018) in order to foster intecultural awareness and competencies. Empirical research has shown positive outcomes for students participating in those programs such as intercultural awareness (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017) but also students' academic development (McKeown et al., 2020), and future employability (Wiers-Jenssen & Støren, 2021).

Those positive outcomes, however, are unequally distributed both students but also local communities and organizations involved are impacted in a deeply unequal way (e.g. Ficarra, 2019, 2023). Not only are those inequalities particularly pronounced when study abroad programs involve Global North–South collaborations as they may exacerbate and widen power disparities (Tiessen et al., 2018). The above-mentioned incompatibility of Western roots of entrepreneurship education with Global South realities may put into question the potential positive outcomes of such programs. As a result, the necessity to view international collaboration in a non-neutral (e.g. Leal & Moraes, 2018) and colonizing (e.g. Stein, 2018) way has been called for in the literature, especially in management education.

Heleta and Chasi (2024) critique the Eurocentric epistemic dominance in South African academia, arguing that the portrayal of Global North

knowledge as "universal" perpetuates hegemony and marginalizes diverse perspectives. They advocate for a curriculum that embraces epistemic plurality, fostering a more inclusive educational environment. Similarly, Reyes et al. (2021) explore the challenges academics face in navigating globalized curriculum landscapes within neoliberal contexts. Their study underscores the need for reflexive pedagogical approaches that acknowledge and integrate diverse cultural perspectives, thereby contributing to the decolonization of business education. They call for a comprehensive deconstruction of asymmetrical power relationships within academic spaces to facilitate meaningful curriculum transformation. These structures are especially pronounced in international collaborations, where the Global North often assumes the role of knowledge producer, relegating the Global South to passive roles of knowledge receiver (Jack et al., 2011). These perspectives, thus, collectively highlight the necessity of reimagining management curricula to dismantle entrenched colonial frameworks and promote a more equitable and inclusive educational paradigm. Shifting toward a decolonizing approach to address these issues necessitates integrating local knowledge systems, for example embracing alternative business models, and acknowledging the agency of historically marginalized communities in co-creating their futures. Or as put in the words by Adkins and Messerly's (2019):

> To decolonize education abroad programming, then, is to eliminate approaches that are one-sided, ethnocentric, touristic, uncritical, oversimplifying of cultural complexity, and operating within the "savior complex" (particularly in community- based learning programs). Instead, approaches are respectful, reciprocal, critically self-reflexive, involve building long-term relationships, and seek to understand and interact holistically with local institutions and cultures and individual hosts–in all their profound complexities. (p. 75)

However, colonial legacies persist in higher education institutions through both overt and subtle power imbalances that go beyond the curriculum. Decolonizing entrepreneurial education necessitates more than curriculum revision; it requires disrupting the colonial structures that permeate international academic collaborations and fostering a genuine co-creation model that respects local knowledge systems and recognizes the value of reciprocity (Fonrouge, 2022). If combining it with the advertancy of Moghli and Kadiwal (2021), who caution against superficial attempts at decolonization that fail to address underlying power dynamics, it becomes clear that decolonizing teaching needs to go beyond the curriculum.

Against this background, we rely on recent research that has increasingly underscored the role of media in perpetuating colonial narratives (Hurst,

2015; Khan et al., 2021; Masaka, 2021; Moosavi, 2020). Media coverage—be it university-affiliated outlets, local press, or global platforms—often frames Global North participants as central innovators or "white saviors", while overshadowing the contributions of local communities (Christian et al., 2020; Dutta, 2015; Li et al., 2021; Roxanne, 2020; Shome & Hegde, 2002).

Thus, ethical communication emerges as a critical component of decolonizing education, ensuring that local agents receive due recognition and avoiding homogenizing portrayals disregarding cultural complexity (Stein et al., 2020). Additionally, AI-driven narratives can amplify these inequities if algorithms are not critically examined (Anderson, 2023; Noble, 2018; Owusu-Ansah, 2023). For instance, ChatGPT has been shown to replicate colonial hierarchies by dismissing certain Global South dialects as "non-standard" (Kynard, 2022, 2023), thereby reinforcing centuries-old linguistic and epistemic biases. Incorporating an understanding of these technologies into entrepreneurial curricula can help students, faculty, and local collaborators guard against the digital echoes of coloniality.

The Case Study: A North–South Collaboration Within the International Entrepreneurship and Development Minor Program

Methodological Approach

In this case study, we employed a qualitative methodological approach, integrating participant observation and reflexive practices to analyze the dynamics of North–South educational collaboration. Two of the authors were directly involved in the project: one served as the supervising professor for students in the Netherlands, while the other managed the local context in Ecuador. This dual involvement facilitated an in-depth understanding of the intercultural interactions and educational processes inherent in the collaboration. Participant observation, a cornerstone of ethnographic research, allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of a particular topic or situation through the meanings ascribed to it by the individuals who live and experience it (Berger, 2015).

Prior to composing this article, we engaged in multiple layers of reflection, involving the third author as a neutral voice, to enhance the depth and validity of our analysis. Initially, we conducted a workshop on decolonization in academia with colleagues from TU Delft, which provided diverse perspectives and critical insights into decolonial practices within educational

settings. Subsequently, a series of reflective sessions were held between the local teaching team in Ecuador and the TU Delft educators involved in the project. These sessions aimed to critically assess our roles, biases, and the power dynamics present in the collaboration. By integrating participant observation with structured reflexive practices, defined as a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique their own biases and assumptions, is essential in qualitative research to ensure the credibility and authenticity of the findings (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2002), we aimed to produce a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the educational collaboration, acknowledging our positionalities and striving for a decolonial approach in both methodology and practice.

Description of the Case

TU Delft is a Dutch university distinguished by its high level of multiculturalism and internationalization. The minor program International Entrepreneurship & Development (IED), open for all Bachelor students of the university, was developed with the objective of providing students with the knowledge, skills and abilities to address complex socio-economic challenges in developing and emerging economies through entrepreneurship. This learning prepares students for the challenges of the Global South and also for those faced in sectors excluded within the Global North while expanding their worldview through being permeated by other knowledge-laden contexts and other forms of entrepreneurship.

The IED minor is a comprehensive full-time six-month program structured into two distinct phases: the academic preparation during one quarter, where students take three interrelated credit courses focusing on the various theories and competencies necessary to embark on their study abroad module comprised of Entrepreneurial Thinking, Preparations for Intercultural Research Project and Beyond Development: Pluriverse for Sustainability and Impact. Particularly in the third course, students from TU Delft are immersed in the concepts of privilege, coloniality, access power, and transformative pedagogy. Drawing on the seminal works of Freire and Shor (2014), this educational approach emphasizes the critical navigation of power dynamics to foster authentic and equitable learning partnerships. Such a pedagogy is essential for recognizing and addressing inherent power imbalances, ensuring students know how their positionality and background might influence their engagement with local stakeholders (Jack et al., 2011).

The ethical responsibility of engaging in reciprocal and respectful partnerships is a central tenet of the minor, preparing students to understand the complexities of working in cross-cultural contexts and to appreciate the nuances of global collaboration (Indigenous Knowledge Institute, 2020). During the second phase, the Intercultural Integration Project (15 ECTS), students travel abroad—to the Global South—to implement their project plans developed in the prior quarter. They work in multidisciplinary teams, collaborating with local communities and organizations to develop and execute solutions to real-world challenges. This approach allows students to move beyond theoretical concepts, engaging in entrepreneurial education that embraces a decolonial perspective, thereby empowering them to tackle complex problems and drive positive transformation in their communities and beyond (Aly et al., 2021; Aurellia & Nuringsih, 2023).

The particular project of this reflective piece is focused on one particular student project that involved a collaboration between TU Delft and a South American university. Based on peer-to-peer learning, a board game was designed through co-creation to promote climate awareness among adolescents in the urban periphery primary school of the South American country. The collaboration was meticulously documented in a YouTube video and a LinkedIn page. The videos showcased the development process of the board game and highlighted the significant contributions from students of both universities. This visual documentation reflected the project's commitment to equality and mutual learning. This video was developed by the students at the end of the project, before the return of the TU Delft students to the Netherlands. Due to its impact, the project caught the attention of Dutch local media -Delta- and students were subsequently interviewed by them.

Delta defines itself as an independent journalistic platform of TU Delft whose purpose is to offer news, general information, investigative and opinion journalism on various topics such as education, science, student life and events on campus. It has an editorial team made up of professional journalists who are linked to the magazine on a freelance basis. Its publications are aimed at a wide university and non-university audience, as it is published in Dutch and English on its website, as well as on social media. As you can read on its website, "Delta's independence is laid down in an editorial statute and is monitored by the editorial board. Delta is a member of the Circle of Chief Editors of Higher Education Media".

The interview of Delta "The university in Quito really liked our educational game project" with the student team from TU Delft was published in February 2023. The opening question of the interview "How do you teach kids in Ecuador about climate change? Three bachelor's students created a

game that is both fun and educational" is part of the header. A photo of the three TU Delft students is then placed next to an original copy of the game, and the interview is then developed according to the following structure:

1. Indication that the information is in English only.
2. A brief paragraph that tries to describe the TU Delft minor program in which the project is framed, the full names of the TU Delft students, the country where the project was developed, the local entity with which they collaborated and the final deliverable (the board game on climate change).
3. The next parts of the interview were three answers written in inverted commas indicating that they were the literal expressions of the three students.
4. Another text header indicating: "With this game we wanted to stimulate kids to take climate actions". Again the three students' answers in inverted commas indicating that they are literal answers.
5. This is followed by an invitation for readers to write to "Humans of TU Delft", where it is unclear whether it is the name of a section or a subsection of "Campus".
6. Then there is the signature of the journalist, who puts her name and signature as a freelance writer.
7. Finally there is the logo of the magazine and the invitation to write to the magazine's general mail if you have questions or comments about the article in question.

For the interview, the journalist contacted students directly. The course lecturers involved in the development of this particular project only became aware of the interview when one of the students involved tagged them in comments on social media. The TU Delft lecturer immediately spoke to the lecturer at the Ecuadorian University to discuss the case and seek a meeting with Delta magazine. There was an exchange of emails in which neither the journalist nor the magazine took responsibility for the content of the publication. Up to this moment, the publication remains on Delta´s website, as well as on the social networks, being part of the digital footprint of the three students who were the only ones in the whole project whose names were placed in the article.

The Interview that Triggered Challenges to the Decolonizing Pedagogy

The framing in the interview—conducted, as mentioned above, without the involvement or guidance of the supervising lecturers—positioned TU Delft students as the primary actors and innovators, inadvertently reinforcing colonial power dynamics and overshadowing the contributions of their Latin American counterparts (Egido & De Costa, 2022), diminishing their role and agency. Discrepancies promptly arose, as this communication subtly reinforced colonial assumptions and clashed with the project's goals. Those media reports by "outsiders", a stakeholder who had not been part of the educational program, triggered the writing of our reflective piece. Subsequently, will describe our reflection and learnings that arose from this interview.

The first interview question posed by the Delta interviewer positioned the students in an epistemological position that was wholly incongruous with the working ecosystem that had been constructed before, during, and following the project (see Image 1).

There are many elements to observe in the interview, which is publicly available. However, for the sake of this case, and in order to appreciate how the students' epistemic position changed, we extracted four dimensions.

1. The questions and communication extracted students from TU Delft from their own national and educational context. It was not pointed out that they are from TU Delft, from a specific program, and with a specific lecturer. Incidentally, communication implicitly attributed students the ability to speak Spanish, which is the local language (none of the students mastered even the basic level of Spanish).

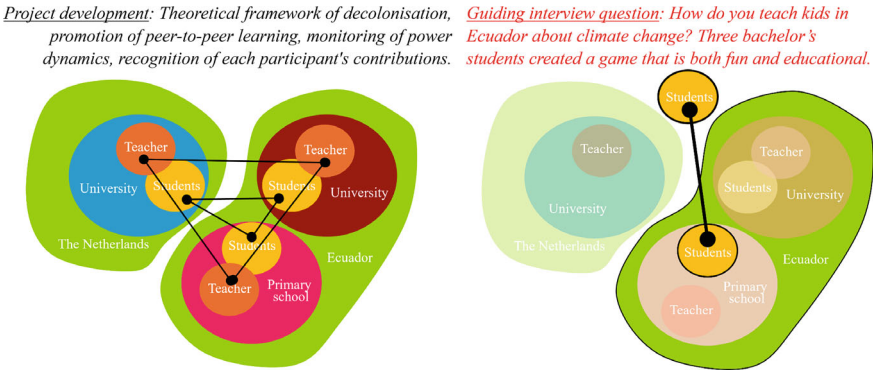


Image 4.1 Some interview questions. (*Source* own elaboration)

2. The questions and communication removed TU Delft students from their status as undergraduate students, positioning them as experienced students capable of educating children in other parts of the world despite the fact that they do not have a teaching background.
3. The questions and communication extracted students from TU Delft from their peers—Ecuadorian university students—with whom they co-constructed the project's activities and deliverables. Even though the graphic design—as the most visible element of the game—was produced entirely by the Ecuadorian students, this contribution is not made visible at all.
4. The questions and communication extracted students from TU Delft from the project ecosystem, completely ignoring that the initiative had previously been conceived by the lecturers involved and that they were developing a game within the game reserved for students.

Despite all this, the students tried to return to their epistemic position, although the "damage" had already been done. The students were not adequately prepared to recognize or challenge this framing, highlighting a significant gap in their preparation; a gap that we were not aware existed before this incident occurred. This situation underscores the need for greater reflexivity, critical media literacy, and ongoing support in such collaborations to ensure that all participants can effectively navigate and counteract colonial discourses beyond the controlled and safe environment of the classroom.

This framing by Delta contrasted sharply with the project's original intent of fostering mutual learning and shared responsibility, underscoring the complex challenges inherent in decolonizing entrepreneurial education. There was a complex mix of pride and frustration for the supervising lecturer of the European students involved in this project. On the other hand, for the lecturer supervising the Latin American students, frustration dominated as "it is unfair to show in this way a practice that was designed to highlight horizontal and balanced work between students from the North and the South". The students demonstrated genuine engagement, reflexivity, and collaboration throughout the project. They embraced the decolonial pedagogical approaches introduced in the curriculum and showed a commendable willingness to learn from their Latin American counterparts. However, the post-project communication, especially in European media outlets, undermined these efforts by reinforcing the "white savior" narrative. This media framing overshadowed the collaborative and decolonial efforts at the heart of the project, starkly reminding us of how deeply entrenched colonial narratives remain in our societies and how challenging they are to dismantle, even

within well-meaning institutions committed to decolonial principles (Images 4.2 and 4.3 about TU Delta's post on Instagram and readers' reactions on this social media platform).

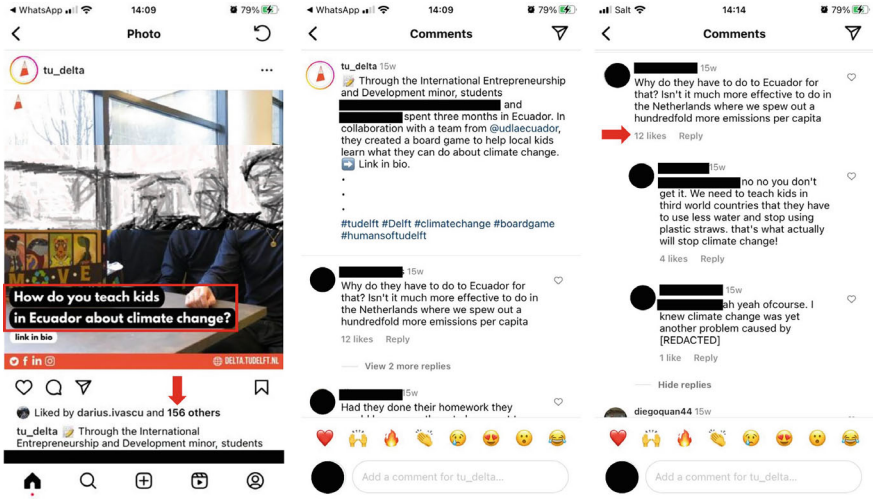


Image 4.2 A sequence of reactions generated by the project's communication on social media (*Source* Instagram)

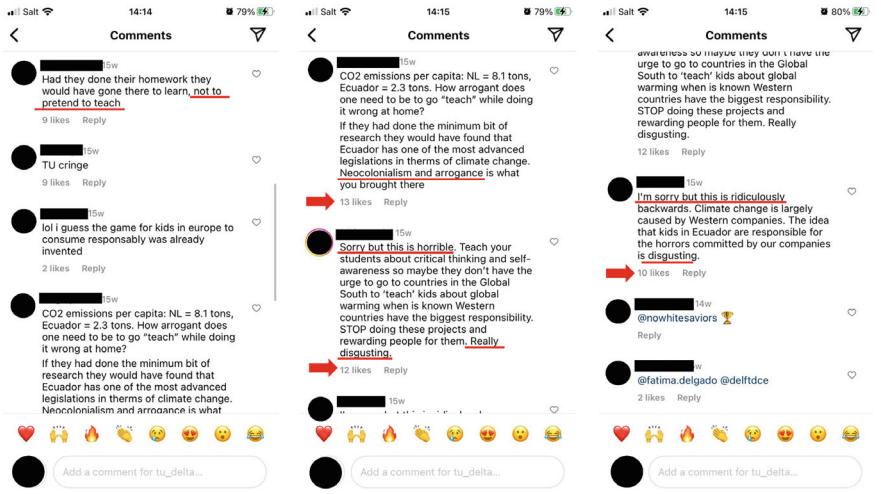


Image 4.3 A sequence of reactions generated by the project's communication on social media (*Source* Instagram)

Reflection: Navigating the Complexities of Decolonial Education

The case study vividly illustrates the challenges in decolonizing entrepreneurial education, particularly when such projects extend beyond the classroom and enter the public sphere. This suggests that even well-intentioned and seemingly successful collaborations based on decolonized principles can unintentionally reinforce colonial narratives such as the "white savior" (Bandyopadhyay, 2019). The project's dissemination through platforms such as Delta TU Delft, Instagram, LinkedIn, and a detailed YouTube video exemplifies the complexities of aligning public communication of such collaborations with decolonial intentions; while "one-way" communication without the interaction of outsider show a seeming success in that a decolonial approach is clearly visible in the generated media artifacts, in the case where an outsider initiated communication those principles where lost by an initial "white savior" tone of voice (inadvertently) imposed upon participating students. It highlights how easily the original goals of mutual respect and equitable partnership can be overshadowed by traditional narratives that prioritize certain voices over others (Germain & Jacquemin, 2017), thereby undermining the project's foundational principles.

The project clearly brought to light a significant gap: while students were well-prepared for the fieldwork and the interpersonal dynamics of cross-cultural collaboration, they lacked (to varying degrees) the skills to challenge or reframe colonial narratives that emerged in post-project media coverage. Some engaged in communicative reflexivity, seeking external validation and recognition from Northern institutions, perhaps unconsciously aligning with dominant narratives. Others demonstrated meta-reflexivity, critically questioning the broader structural forces shaping their work and the project's impact. This variation raises an important pedagogical question: Should we teach decoloniality alongside other critical abilities like critical thinking and reflexivity? The answer is undoubtedly affirmative. This gap in reflexivity training points to the need for a broader educational focus on critical media engagement and reflexivity (Fonrouge, 2022; Pérez-Sánchez et al., 2020), where media engagement and ethical communication is incorporated in the curricula to promote accurate and equitable representation, resisting diminishing frames of collaborators from the Global South, and understanding the socio-political implications of their work (Bon et al., 2022; Goodwill et al., 2021), enabling students to navigate both the internal dynamics of their projects and the external forces that shape how their work is received and interpreted (Deveci & Seikkula-Leino, 2023).

It thus supports the call that decolonizing entrepreneurial education needs to go beyond changing curricula; it requires a holistic approach going beyond technical skills including communication strategies, media engagement, and critical self-awareness that prepares students to critically engage with external representations and challenge colonial narratives in media and public discourse (Edwards & Shahjahan, 2021; Deveci & Seikkula-Leino, 2023; Quijano, 2000, 2007; Jack et al., 2011). This involves equipping students with media literacy, understanding the types of powers implied in every phase of the project, such as science communication. These skills are crucial, as external factors like media representation can undermine decolonial efforts in the curricula and beyond the classroom (Germain & Jacquemin, 2017). Such approach aligns with the participatory action research (PAR) principles of participatory action research (PAR) promoted within the IED minor program, emphasizing collaborative and inclusive research methods that value community engagement and shared knowledge creation (Chilisa, 2019; Smith, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2020).

Our reflection aligns with critical realist perspectives on entrepreneurship, particularly as explored by Wimalasena et al. (2021) in their analysis of entrepreneurship as a complex and reflexive process shaped by both structural and agential factors: the students' reflexivity was significantly influenced by their epistemic positionality as European students working in a Latin American context (Edwards & Shahjahan, 2021), with external influences significantly shaping part of the narrative in ways that reinforced traditional power hierarchies and stereotypes, such as the "white savior" trope (Bandyopadhyay, 2019). "Epistemic stereotypes" describe oversimplified beliefs about who can produce valid knowledge, commonly positioning the Global North as inherently more "expert".

As European students engaged in a Latin American context, they were often positioned—both by external observers and unintentionally by themselves—as knowledge holders and primary agents of change, despite deliberate efforts to foster equitable collaboration. This dynamic is a legacy of colonial knowledge systems, where the Global North is traditionally seen as the source of expertise and authority, while the Global South is framed as lacking or deficient (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Quijano, 2007). Addressing these epistemic stereotypes is crucial for decolonial entrepreneurial education, where students must recognize how their positionality impacts both their work and how it is perceived by others. Thus, by clarifying concepts such as epistemic stereotypes or "Coloniality" referring to power and control structures that persist long after formal colonial rule ends (Quijano, 2000),

educators can help students internalize why seemingly benign collaborations or media portrayals can perpetuate deep-seated inequalities.

Against this background, it is important to point out that when the entrepreneurial archetype in academia and media is consistently tied to global or elite high-tech models, local knowledge systems and traditional artisanship are rendered invisible (Dana, 2015; Fukuda-Parr & Muchhala, 2019; Kuada, 2015; Marques et al., 2019; Tok & D'Alessandro, 2019). In Western academia, such endeavors in the Global South are often labeled as "necessity" or "frugal", reinforcing stereotypes of primitiveness and underdevelopment (Dinar, 2020; Dutta, 2016; Gamage & Wickramasinghe, 2012; Vuong et al., 2020; Williams & Nadin, 2013). Moreover, decades of research fixate on glamorous, high-growth start-ups, neglecting everyday entrepreneurship (Kuckertz et al., 2023; Welter et al., 2017). This tendency feeds neo-colonial narratives, especially on social media, where foreign students may receive credit for innovations co-created with local communities (Hurst, 2015; Khan et al., 2021; Masaka, 2021; Moosavi, 2020; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021).

Journalists and educators alike must acknowledge the role of local creative teams and avoid framing Europe or the Global North as the default center of entrepreneurial education (Alsmadi et al., 2021; Christian et al., 2020; Dutta, 2015; Li et al., 2020; Roxanne, 2020; Shome & Hegde, 2002). Additionally, AI-driven platforms can amplify bias if not critically examined. ChatGPT, for instance, may dismiss Global South dialects as "non-standard", further cementing linguistic hierarchies (Anderson, 2023; Kynard, 2022, 2023; Noble, 2018; Owusu-Ansah, 2023; Selfe & Selfe, 1994). Educators must stay vigilant about how AI shapes public perceptions, potentially reproducing neo-colonial narratives (Alexander, 2023; Vee, 2023).

A critical factor in this perpetuation is the role of digital identity and the influence of AI-driven platforms in reproducing narratives within entrepreneurial education and project communication. In the digital age, student identities and project perceptions are mediated by digital platforms that rely on algorithms replicating dominant socio-political structures. As Bon et al. (2022) point out, these systems often amplify colonial narratives without recognizing the nuances of decolonial or reflexive intentions. This underscores the importance of educating students to critically engage with their digital identities and to understand how AI-driven platforms can shape public perceptions of their work.

The reflection calls for a reimagining of entrepreneurial education—one that is critically aware of historical and ongoing injustices and actively works

to dismantle them. By integrating decoloniality into every aspect of education, from curriculum design to external communication, educators can cultivate a new generation of entrepreneurs who are not only innovative but also ethically and socially conscious (Edwards & Shahjahan, 2021). This aligns with the broader aims of internationalization in higher education, which seeks to develop intercultural competencies and prepare students to live and work in a globalized world (Knight, 2011; Pinto, 2018).

Recommendations for Integrating Decoloniality into Entrepreneurial Education. Practical Implications

The challenges highlighted in the case study remind(ed) us of work that remains. We thus lay out some recommendations on how educational institutions can adapt so that entrepreneurial education programs can play a pivotal role in dismantling lingering colonial structures and fostering an environment where all participants have an equal voice in shaping our shared future.

Integrating Ethical Reflexivity and Critical Thinking with Critical Thinking Beyond the Classroom

Teaching decoloniality alongside critical thinking and flexibility will provide students with the comprehensive skill set necessary to navigate socio-political and digital complexities of international collaborations. Teaching needs to go beyond introducing students to the concept; it involves embedding decolonial principles into all aspects of education. This includes challenging Western-centric models of entrepreneurship, incorporating local knowledge systems, and valuing alternative business models that prioritize sustainability, collective well-being, and social embeddedness (Díaz-Márquez, 2019; Edwards & Shahjahan, 2021; Fonrouge, 2022; Pérez-Sánchez et al., 2020).

By coupling decoloniality with critical thinking, students develop the ability to question and dismantle colonial structures in education and societal narratives, ensuring they are critically conscious and ethically responsible (Combrink et al., 2022; Srivastava, 2023; Stein et al., 2020). It enables them to question dominant paradigms, recognize implicit biases, and propose innovative solutions that are culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate. Moreover, integrating decoloniality with critical thinking addresses the variations in reflexivity—the capacity to adapt one's thinking and approach in response to new information and changing circumstances—observed

among students in the case study. Some students exhibited communicative reflexivity, seeking validation from their home institutions, while others engaged in meta-reflexivity, questioning the broader structural forces at play (Wimalasena et al., 2021).

Yet, those competencies must be extended beyond the immediate scope of the classroom to encompass how one's work is perceived, communicated, and represented in the public domain. The case study highlights that despite students' awareness of colonial dynamics during the project, they were unprepared to address the colonial narratives that emerged in post-project media coverage outside the safe environment of the classroom. As previously discussed, epistemic stereotypes rooted in colonial histories position the Global North as knowledge producers and the Global South as knowledge receivers (Jack et al., 2011; Quijano, 2007). Incorporating ethical reflexivity enables students to assess how their (digital) identities, positionalities, and inherent privileges shape external representations of their work, and ultimately to recognize and counter epistemic stereotypes in media coverage.

Such level of reflexivity requires a deep understanding of one's positionality within global power structures and how this influences both the interpretation and impact of their work. Yet, it also involves critically examining the ethical implications of one's actions and the unintended consequences that may arise from well-intentioned projects. It encourages students to consider questions such as: How might our actions inadvertently reinforce existing power imbalances? Are we unintentionally marginalizing our collaborators by how we communicate our work? By engaging with these questions, students can contribute to creating more equitable and respectful international collaborations (Díaz-Marquez, 2019).

This comprehensive educational approach prepares students to engage effectively in international collaborations, fostering genuine partnerships based on mutual respect and shared learning. It aligns with the broader goals of internationalizing higher education in a way that is equitable and just, as discussed in earlier sections (Knight, 2011; Pinto, 2018).

Media Literacy and Reflexive Communication

Entrepreneurial education programs must prioritize the inclusion of training on media literacy, reflexive communication, and AI-driven narrative and develop strategies to counter such narratives. Workshops can demonstrate how to align media interactions with decolonial values, ensure equitable recognition, and confront harmful stereotypes (Bon et al., 2022; Goodwill et al., 2021). As AI technologies evolve, so does their potential to replicate

structural biases (Noble, 2018; Owusu-Ansah, 2023). Embedding AI ethics within the curriculum encourages students to question how algorithmic systems reproduce imperialist assumptions and to advocate for reorienting such technologies toward linguistic and cultural inclusivity (Alexander, 2023; Kynard, 2022, 2023; Vee, 2023).

For instance, institutions could implement short training modules such as:

- Module 1: Decolonial Reflexivity
- (Identifying power imbalances, historical colonial legacies in research, and personal positionality)
- Module 2: Media Literacy & Ethical Communication
- (Recognizing colonial tropes in journalism, using inclusive language, and ensuring equitable representation of local partners)
- Module 3: AI, Digital Identity, and Linguistic Bias
- (Understanding how generative AI platforms can replicate "white language supremacy" and learning strategies to mitigate algorithmic discrimination)

These modules would not only augment students' critical thinking skills but also prepare them to address media inquiries or public-facing communication in a way that remains faithful to decolonial principles (Bon et al., 2022; Goodwill et al., 2021; Kynard, 2022, 2023), teaching them to resist framing as a type of power—goal power—(Goodwill et al., 2021) that diminishes collaborators from the Global South (Bandyopadhyay, 2019). Understanding how media reinforces or challenges power structures equips them to advocate for equitable practices in their professions (Bon et al., 2022). By being media literate, students can become advocates for decolonial representation, actively working to dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote narratives that reflect the truly collaborative nature of their projects. Additionally, practical policies could mandate that all co-created outputs (reports, articles, interviews) explicitly credit local stakeholders and student collaborators from the Global South. Such policies would ensure that local languages and cultural expressions are recognized as academically valid (Noble, 2018; Owusu-Ansah, 2023). This approach aligns with the broader goal of disrupting colonial structures in international collaborations (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Díaz-Márquez, 2019; Quijano, 2007).

In the digital age, where AI algorithms and digital platforms play a significant role in shaping public perceptions, understanding the mechanics of media representation becomes crucial. AI-driven platforms often replicate and amplify existing socio-political biases (Bon et al., 2022), inadvertently reinforcing dominant narratives that marginalize or overshadow contributions

from the Global South. By incorporating media literacy into the curriculum, students can learn to navigate these digital complexities, critically analyze media content, and engage proactively with media outlets to ensure equitable representation of all collaborators. Such an approach empowers students to take control of their narratives, ensuring that the collaborative and equitable essence of their projects is accurately conveyed to the public.

Reflections from the decolonization workshop at TU Delft and discussions with Ecuadorian educators revealed key insights into the perception of North–South collaborations. A recurring theme was the assumption that learning occurs unidirectionally from the Global North to the Global South. This was evident in reactions to the Delta article, which framed TU Delft students as the primary knowledge agents, downplaying the peer-to-peer exchange. Ecuadorian educators emphasized the need to challenge these narratives by engaging students in discussions on where and from whom they believe they can learn. A proposed questions in this debate aimed to uncover biases about the perceived value of knowledge from different regions. Initial discussions suggested that students' views were shaped by socio-economic stereotypes, highlighting the need for deeper reflexive engagement. e.g.

> Which skills or knowledge areas—Technology / Medical Sciences / Social Sciences / Pure Sciences / Other / None (please specify)—would you like to learn in different world regions? E.g. from: Africa or Latin America.
>
> In which of these regions would you prefer to spend a year studying? E.g. Africa / Asia / Latin America / Australia / Europe / United States.
>
> If you could study abroad, which country or city would you choose?
>
> In which of these regions would you prefer to work for a year? E.g. Africa / Asia / Latin America / Australia / Europe / United States
> If you could work abroad, which country or city would you choose?

Additionally, both teams stressed the importance of embedding critical media literacy into the curriculum. Ecuadorian educators pointed out that external representations often fail to acknowledge local contributions, reinforcing power imbalances. Addressing these requires pedagogical strategies that foster epistemic humility and encourage students to critically examine global knowledge hierarchies. By integrating these reflections, this study acknowledges Latin American perspectives and proposes concrete actions to foster more equitable educational partnerships.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The exploration of internationalizing higher education (Knight, 2011; Pinto, 2018) has highlighted the importance of developing intercultural competencies and ethical practices. Discussions on decolonizing international entrepreneurship education underscored integrating local knowledge systems and alternative business models (Fonrouge, 2022; Pérez-Sánchez et al., 2020). Yet, this case highlights how external narratives can bring to light the persistent difficulties in conveying educational initiatives in ways that avoid perpetuating harmful colonial patterns, particularly within public discourse and media representations (Quijano, 2000, 2007). Integrating media literacy, ethical reflexivity, and teaching decoloniality alongside critical thinking and extending the scope beyond the classroom are essential steps toward decolonizing entrepreneurial education. These interconnected recommendations address the multifaceted challenges identified in the case study and previous discussions. By acknowledging these limitations and implementing these recommendations, institutions can enhance decolonial entrepreneurial education (Christodoulou & Iordanou, 2021). Educational institutions bear significant responsibility in facilitating these changes.

Madianou (2025) points out how "colonial relations of inequality" become reworked through data extraction, technological experimentation, and justifications under "emergencies". Each act can deepen the "coloniality of power" (Quijano, 2000), reproducing discrimination and social orders historically shaped by colonial legacies. Countering these patterns demands critical examinations of how universities, students, private companies, and nonprofits engage with vulnerable populations—ensuring that interventions do not recreate exploitative colonial scenarios.

Institutions in the Global North must critically examine practices that may perpetuate colonial dynamics within curricula and external communications. Institutions can model decolonial principles by fostering partnerships based on mutual respect and shared authority. By fostering media literacy and ethical reflexivity, institutions enable students to become advocates for equitable representation and agents of change. This empowerment aligns with Freire's concept of transformative pedagogy, where education challenges oppressive structures (Freire & Shor, 2014). These recommendations also support the development of entrepreneurs who are technically proficient, critically conscious, and ethically responsible, aligning to create a just global educational landscape where knowledge exchange transcends traditional power hierarchies.

The journey toward decolonizing entrepreneurial education is complex and requires concerted efforts from students, educators, institutions, and societal stakeholders to challenge entrenched narratives and power structures. Institutions must support faculty and students in developing skills to effectively navigate and influence media representations. Critically assessing and revising practices is crucial for meaningful change. Developing joint communication strategies ensures narratives are co-constructed and all voices are equally represented, mitigating misrepresentations. Educators require ongoing professional development in media literacy, ethical reflexivity, and critical pedagogy to effectively facilitate decolonial education (Edwards & Shahjahan, 2021). Engaging community stakeholders from the Global South enriches learning and ensures outcomes are contextually relevant, aligning with participatory action research principles.

While the project advanced decolonial practices, a fundamental limitation was the need for explicit training in media engagement and digital literacy. Students were not adequately equipped to handle external communications, leading to media portrayals reinforcing colonial narratives (Edwards & Shahjahan, 2021). Future projects should incorporate comprehensive media literacy training, focusing on how AI, digital platforms, and public media shape narratives in North–South collaborations (Bon et al., 2022). Exploring the intersection of digital identity, AI-driven narratives, and epistemic stereotypes can provide insights into structural challenges in global collaborations.

The insights from this exploration serve as a call to action for all involved in entrepreneurial education. By acknowledging challenges and actively addressing them, we can move closer to realizing the full potential of decolonial education—advancing economic and technological development while promoting social justice and global understanding. At the same time, our recommendations pave the way for future research which can develop and evaluate tools for teaching media literacy in decolonial contexts and investigate the efficacy of these approaches in diverse settings.

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