

# New UNESCO Chair at Gulu University in Uganda

Based on [an article](#) of the Dutch UNESCO Committee

Prof. dr. Jacques Zeelen of the University of Groningen in the Netherlands was recently appointed as the UNESCO Chair holder *Lifelong Learning, Youth and Work* at Gulu University in Uganda. This new UNESCO Chair will contribute to the capacity building and professionalisation of academic staff at universities as well as professionals working in the area of Business and Technical Vocational Education and Training (BTVET).



George Openjuru (l), Deputy Vice-Chancellor Gulu University & Jacques Zeelen (r), UNESCO-chair holder *Lifelong Learning, Youth and Work*, Gulu University.

Jacques Zeelen: “The immense social and material problems of young people in developing countries motivated me to start with this new task together with my Ugandan colleagues. Millions of young people get marginalised and more and more vulnerable to extreme poverty, exploitation, crime and different forms of personal and political abuse. In the northern part of Uganda, many of these issues come together. A substantial improved BTVET and new opportunities for (self) employment are crucial to enable young people to build themselves a future for a dignified life in a more human society.”

General objectives of the chair are:

1. To strengthen capacity of academic staff at Gulu university, the partner universities (Makerere, Uganda Martyrs University and Kyambogo), and the professionals in the BTVET and NGO sector (AVSI, Restless Development, M.C.E. and UGAADEN) to conduct quality teaching, research and community university engagement in the field of Lifelong Learning and to promote BTVET for rural and urban youth.
2. To establish sustainable partnerships between higher education, the BTVET sector, government departments, NGO's, businesses and communities to contribute to new policy initiatives and innovative programmes to the benefit of the youth.
3. To contribute to the strengthening of academic lifelong learning and adult education networks in East Africa.

Already, existing networks form the starting point for the fulfilment of these objectives. The YEW (Youth, Education and Work) research network engages actively in developing and evaluating policy initiatives, educational programmes and work opportunities. The network consists of researchers from Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, India, United States, Colombia as well as the Netherlands. Many PhDs and Master studies as well as policy proposals have already been produced in the framework of this network. The new Chair will be connected with the existing GSG (Globalisation Studies Groningen) Chair of Zeelen as well as with the research group Lifelong Learning at the University of Groningen.

Building on earlier policies and practices, the UNESCO Chair will support the recently formulated *Sustainable Development Goals*, through stimulating relevant educational programmes, capacity building

and joint research. The specific focus of the UNESCO Chair activities will be on finding creative ways for the inclusion of young people in education, training and work. The Chair with all the collaborating partners would like to connect public and private stakeholders to jointly develop innovative programmes and contributions to policies. These initiatives correspond with the renewed prominence of *lifelong learning* at the international policy agenda. The United Nations formulated in September 2015 as number 4 goal of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities*.

Jacques Zeelen is a social scientist with a long experience in Adult Education and Social Intervention. From 1997 he was professor of Adult Education at the University of Limpopo in South Africa. After resuming his duties at the department of Pedagogy (section Lifelong Learning) at the University of Groningen in September 2004, he combined research in the Netherlands with research in Sub-Saharan countries. Together with colleagues from different African countries, he initiated the international research and development network *Youth, Education and Work* (YEW). In April 2014 he was appointed full professor on 'Lifelong Learning and Social Intervention in the context of Globalisation' at Globalisation Studies Groningen, an inter-faculty institute positioned in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Groningen (see website [here](#)).