

EUTOPIA Certificate of Internationalisation – Reflective Portfolio

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1. My experience studying in Africa.

As a student in Mozambique during a tumultuous period of civil war, I faced numerous challenges in pursuing my education. Despite living in the southern region, the impact of the conflict was felt throughout the country, leading to widespread poverty and inadequate infrastructure, including a shortage of proper school facilities. Beginning my primary education in 1986, I encountered a learning environment characterized by scarcity, where resources such as desks and proper classrooms were lacking. Sitting on the floor and occasionally having classes outdoors under trees, sharing books, and dealing with food scarcity was the norm. These conditions presented significant obstacles to my academic progress, contributing to initial difficulties in assimilating the curriculum. Moreover, being a Portuguese speaker while most of my peers communicated in traditional languages further complicated my social integration. This formative experience shaped my resilience and determination, imparting invaluable lessons that continue to influence my academic and personal development.

The civil war between the Armed Forces of Mozambique and RENAMO, a political party and former Mozambican guerrilla movement spanning from 1977 to 1992, had a devastating impact on the southern region, precisely Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane. Growing up in Maputo, I witnessed the severe consequences of this conflict.

My family experienced great loss and relocation. Many relatives who lived in war zones, in Gaza and the Inhambane Provinces, were internally displaced for years. Sadly, several family members lost their lives while others were abducted. My father was an entrepreneur at the time and owned a few trucks for transporting cargo and passengers. He frequently faced danger due to the conflict.

These trucks were essential for our family's livelihood. After years of operating in conflict zones without major incidents, my father was eventually involved in a serious accident which resulted in numerous casualties, including severe injuries to my father. He was immediately sent to Maputo Central Hospital and spent almost three months there in the orthopaedics unit.

This event had a profound impact on our financial and social lives, considering that my father was the primary breadwinner and could no longer manage his business. In response to these challenges, my mother had to adapt and find new ways to support our family. I also took on small jobs to help make ends meet while continuing with my studies. This challenging phase of my life instilled in me resilience and the ability to endure difficult situations. These qualities have been instrumental in shaping my social, professional, and academic life, fostering a sense of tolerance.

2. Traveling on the African Continent

During my initial international travels to Southern Africa, including countries like Swaziland, my experiences were truly impactful. South Africa was the first country I had

the opportunity to visit, and the trip was dedicated to engaging in volunteer activities. Given the region's high HIV prevalence, I collaborated with Community-Based Organizations to raise awareness about condom usage and other methods of preventing sexually transmitted diseases. Communicating primarily in English, I had the chance to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds without facing any language barriers. The trips to South Africa, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe taught me invaluable lessons in empathy, teamwork, and navigating multiethnic environments to achieve common objectives. These experiences have significantly enriched my understanding of humanitarian work and intercultural communication.

3. Learning Foreign Languages

The acquisition of language learning often reflects the historical and sociocultural fabric of an individual's upbringing. Growing up in Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, I was immersed in the Portuguese language from an early age due to its status as the official language. Additionally, the influence of English was notable, owed to Mozambique's proximity to English-speaking nations, its membership in the Commonwealth, and the pervasive use of English in various spheres within the country. This exposure led to a natural progression in learning multiple languages, including French, as part of the mandatory curriculum in secondary education. The confluence of linguistic and cultural influences within the cosmopolitan environment of Maputo has not only shaped my proficiency in multiple languages but has also enriched my understanding of diverse cultural values. This inclusive environment has played a pivotal role in shaping my scholarly journey and globalized perspective.

In the city of Maputo, where I was born and raised, Xi-Ronga and Xi Changana, were the predominantly spoken mother tongues and I believe they remain so. Due to cultural and linguistic intermingling, people often mix the two languages when they speak. Although Xi Ronga and Xi Changana are the mother tongues of many residents in the city and province of Maputo, Portuguese, which is the official language of instruction, serves as the first language, or mother tongue, for a considerable number of people living in urban and hyper-urban areas, particularly in city centres.

In my case, Portuguese is my first language. When I started attending primary school, I did not understand Xi Ronga nor Xi Changana. However, due to the need to socialise with my classmates and other children in my neighbourhood, I gradually learned these languages and developed a good level of comprehension, though my oral production remained limited. Language immersion among my schoolmates and neighbourhood friends significantly impacted my life. I began to feel socially integrated and, consequently, enjoyed the protection and friendship of these social groups. This immersion allowed me to understand other social dynamics better.

I believe that learning these two mother tongues of my community was highly beneficial, as it shaped the way how I interact with my peers and friends. Understanding their behaviours and attitudes, whether positive or negative, provided me with valuable insights. As a matter of fact, acquiring linguistic and cultural knowledge related to these languages has, to some extent, strengthened my identity and personality.

4. Interest in teaching, translation, and interpretation

My interest in teaching has been a driving force throughout my career, stemming from my early experiences providing private English lessons to friends in Maputo. Following the completion of my degree in Teaching English at Eduardo Mondlane University, I have gone on to lead classes in both public and official schools, where I continue to share my passion for language and education. My dedication to linguistic pursuits has also led me to pursue advanced studies in interpretation and translation at the Pedagogical University of Maputo, culminating in professional training at the European Commission. These experiences have further propelled me into delivering interpretation and translation workshops across various countries, including Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria. As a testament to my commitment to the field, I have also taken on the role of training interpreters at the Pan-African University following my completion of the trainer training program in Brussels. I am enthusiastic about the prospect of further expanding my impact in the realms of teaching, translation, and interpretation.

I hold a Master's degree in Conference Interpreting and a postgraduate degree in Translation. My working languages are Portuguese and English, and I am currently studying French at the Franco-Mozambican Cultural Centre to further enhance my linguistic repertoire. Although I work as an interpreting and translation professional, my background is in English language teaching, having completed a degree in teaching English as a foreign language.

In recent years, I have also ventured into the training of translators and interpreters, necessitating a training course for trainers. This training course facilitated my internationalisation as a trainer. Initially, I began working with the Pedagogical University of Maputo, from which I graduated in 2018. For several years, I assisted my former foreign and national trainers during their courses, by producing speeches for master's students to practice and providing feedback on their performances. Additionally, I participated in the preparation and execution of final exams.

Moreover, I have collaborated in the Master's in Translation program and was involved in co-teaching with my former teacher. This experience, coupled with the training of trainers I received at the University of Free State, South Africa, and the European Commission, DG SCIC, Brussels, have been invaluable.

My solid interpreting and translation experience, gained through services delivery for organisations such as the Confederation of African Football, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, UNDP, HY+ University, UNIDO, and the University of San Francisco in California, among others, was instrumental in my invitation as a visiting lecturer at the Pan-African University in Cameroon. Furthermore, I served as an examiner and jury member for the final exams of the Master of Interpreting at the University of Ghana in 2023 and 2024.

In addition, I was invited by ECOWAS to design and conduct two intensive courses to train freelance interpreters in Guinea-Bissau in 2023 and in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2024, collaborating with other experienced colleagues from the commission and independent consultants. This exposure and experience although very challenging, I am honoured to

have learnt immensely from more experienced colleagues and trainees. Regardless of how well trained and experienced you may be, we can always learn from others. There is always room for growth and improvement if we remain open and humble.

5. Experience studying and living in Europe

In 2021, I had the privilege of participating in the Erasmus Plus program, which allowed me to spend six months in Lisbon, Portugal, studying at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. Although the experience of living in shared accommodation with fellow students from diverse cultural backgrounds initially posed challenges, it ultimately contributed significantly to my personal and professional growth. While adapting to a new living environment was initially daunting, I gradually acclimated to the dynamics of communal living and the diverse cultural perspectives that it entailed. Despite facing emotional and academic hurdles, I successfully completed the Erasmus Plus program and subsequently pursued a Ph.D. in Translation and Terminology at Universidade Nova de Lisboa. The journey was not without its obstacles, particularly in navigating the educational system and establishing academic autonomy at the doctoral level in Portugal. Nevertheless, with the invaluable support of my African colleagues and peers, I was able to surmount these challenges and make meaningful strides in my academic pursuits.

The international experiences have profoundly impacted my understanding and development of multicultural dynamics. My initial journey to Europe, specifically to Portugal, was facilitated by the Erasmus Plus program, which allowed me to study at ISCTE (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa). This program provided a unique opportunity to engage with students from various parts of Europe, significantly enriching my cultural understanding. Through interactions with my peers and professors, I gained insights into diverse cultures, thereby fostering a greater tolerance for differences and an ability to coexist with diverse perspectives.

Following the six-month Erasmus Plus program, I subsequently pursued a PhD in Terminology and Translation at Universidade Nova de Lisboa and Universidade de Aveiro. These institutions host a vibrant international student community, which further enhanced the learning environment. Moreover, my academic journey was complemented by participation in Eutopia Week events in Lisbon, Dresden, and Cluj.

These events were invaluable, and my role as a member of the student council allowed me to represent the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Universidade Nova de Lisboa. This engagement not only honed my communicative and intercultural skills but also expanded my professional network. One of the most significant highlights of my international experience was participating in the opening of the European academic year at the European Parliament. This event was particularly meaningful, given that it provided a unique platform to engage with the broader academic community at a prestigious venue.

6. Participation in the EUTOPIA Alliance

As a doctoral candidate specializing in Translation and Terminology, my academic journey has been marked by rigorous engagement with scholarly pursuits. I have actively

contributed to seminars, and have been privileged to participate in a series of national and international conferences. Notable events include the conference in Malaga, Spain, and the prestigious opening of the European academic year at the European Parliament in Brussels in 2023. These experiences have significantly influenced my involvement in the EUTOPIA Alliance, culminating in my participation in the EUTOPIA Week in Lisbon 2023, followed by subsequent engagements in Dresden during the same year. In 2024, I further expanded my contributions by participating in the EUTOPIA Week in Cluj, Romania. These experiences have been pivotal in shaping my academic pursuits, and I am committed to continuing my involvement within this distinguished community.

Being a member of the Student Council has allowed me to engage in important discussions and debates concerning the welfare of European students. Contributing to academic development through our interventions as members of the student council holds great significance for me, both as a student and as a budding professional. My engagement in European academic initiatives and alliance forums has been transformative, opening up new professional avenues, particularly in Africa. As a result, I have undertaken consultancy projects in Nigeria, Ghana, and Guinea-Bissau. This exposure has been invaluable in broadening my horizons and enhancing my professional capabilities.

7. Professional and cultural changes resulting from Internationalization

The process of internationalization has had a profound impact on my professional and cultural perspective. Through interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds, I have cultivated a greater sense of cultural tolerance and respect for differences. This experience has broadened my social, academic, and professional knowledge, positioning me as a global citizen capable of thriving in varied environments. The lessons learned from such exposure are invaluable, offering insights that surpass those gained within familial and educational settings. Daily engagement with individuals across different contexts has enriched my worldview and nurtured adaptability in the face of diverse challenges.