

## **Tantangan Mengkomunikasikan Informasi Beasiswa: Studi Kasus di negara berkembang Suriname**

*Challenge in Communicating Scholarship Information: A Case Study in Developing Country, Suriname*

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### ***Abstract***

*Communication is not just about the process of transmitting information, but also requires a well-crafted strategy. Communication strategies are built on a foundation of clear objectives, thoughtful planning, and an understanding of how different communication channels can be used to achieve specific goals. Not having any communication strategy could lead to many issues. This research is done in Suriname because of its education challenges, specifically in communicating scholarship information to the public. A qualitative case study is conducted using in-depth interviews, qualitative data analysis approach and 11 purposive informants to investigate how scholarship information is communicated at the Bureau Education Information and Study Facilities (BOS) in Suriname. This study applied the theory of the Montreal School Approach to Communicative Constitution of Organizations that will explain how organizations are formed and represented through ongoing interactions based on five phases of translations. The study found that BOS is responsible for disseminating information about international scholarships and is reliable in the process but lacks extensive communication policies. However, students in Suriname face challenges due to poor*

*communication of scholarship information. Based on the findings, this study includes suggestions such as the need for creating engaging content to communicate scholarship information and utilizing other communication channels to reach a wider audience.*

***Keywords: Scholarship, Information, Communication process, Communication strategy, Montreal School Approach***

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### **Abstraksi**

Komunikasi bukan hanya berbicara tentang proses penyampaian informasi, tetapi juga bagaimana strategi komunikasi tersusun dengan baik. Strategi komunikasi idealnya dibangun di atas fondasi tujuan yang jelas, perencanaan yang matang, dan pemahaman tentang saluran komunikasi tepat sehingga bisa mencapai tujuan tertentu. Tidak adanya strategi komunikasi dapat menimbulkan banyak masalah. Penelitian ini menggunakan konteks negara berkembang Suriname yang saat ini memiliki tantangan dalam dunia pendidikan, khususnya dalam mengkomunikasikan informasi beasiswa kepada publiknya. Wawancara mendalam terhadap 11 informan yang dipilih secara purposif dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana informasi tentang beasiswa dikomunikasikan Biro Informasi Pendidikan dan Fasilitas Belajar (BOS) di Suriname. Teori Montreal School Approach to Communicative Constitution of Organizations diterapkan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana komunikasi dilakukan oleh organisasi dalam lima langkah strategi. Studi ini menemukan bahwa BOS bertanggung jawab untuk menyebarkan informasi mengenai beasiswa internasional dan dapat diandalkan dalam prosesnya. Namun demikian, proses ini belum bisa terlaksana dengan maksimal. Mahasiswa Suriname menghadapi tantangan berupa buruknya komunikasi informasi beasiswa karena tidak semua fase strategi komunikasi terlaksana dengan baik. Berdasarkan data, studi ini juga menyarankan perlunya ada konten yang komprehensif dengan memanfaatkan saluran komunikasi yang mudah diakses dan mampu menjangkau audiens yang lebih luas.

**Kata Kunci: Beasiswa, Informasi, Proses Komunikasi, Strategi Komunikasi, Pendekatan Sekolah Montreal**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Education is a basic human right and a global public good with the power to transform individual lives, communities, and the planet for the better over generations (UNESCO, 2022). Each year, there are more than 1.7 million private scholarships and fellowships awarded worldwide, with a total value of more than \$7.4 billion (Kantrowitz, 2019). Suriname faces challenges in promoting international scholarships, leading to few student applications. In 2020, there were four scholarships granted and one in 2021 (N. Swagemakers, email, November 15, 2022; Institute of International Education, 2022). The Open Doors Data Report of registered scholars in the U.S. mentions that in the academic year 2019-2020, there were three Surinamese students with scholarships, and in 2020-2021 there were two students (Institute of International Education, 2022). Discussions in Suriname's parliament highlighted the need to improve the education system (DNA Public Meeting, May 2022). The government's Multi-year Development Plan 2022-2026 emphasizes educational enhancements at all levels, including the accreditation of academic programs (MINOWC, 2022). However, investment in higher education is lacking, with fewer than 30 master's programs available in Suriname and increasing tuition fees. Financial assistance for international studies is limited, creating a strong desire for scholarships among students (MINOWC, 2021).

The Bureau Education Information and Study Facilities (BOS) in Suriname is responsible for communicating information about international scholarships. They lack an extensive and well-crafted communication strategy for disseminating this information. This deficiency can lead to issues such as students missing out on scholarship opportunities and hinder the development of human

capital in Suriname. It is crucial for scholarship information to effectively reach students, enabling them to pursue their desired programs without barriers and contribute to the country's academic growth in the future. Communication is not just about the process of transmitting information, but also requires a well-crafted strategy.

This research aims to understand the communication process employed by the BOS to disseminate information about scholarships, and the challenges that students encounter when seeking and applying for international scholarships. Therefore, the following research questions are formulated to guide this research:

1. How does the Bureau Education Information and Study Facilities communicate international scholarships to students?
2. What are the challenges that students encounter in the process of finding international scholarship information?

## **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

This qualitative descriptive research adopts the post-positivist paradigm and incorporates the intrinsic case study method aiming to understand and explain a single case's reality and identify causal explanations for regular patterns in phenomena (Strunk & Mwavita, 2022). The focus is to comprehensively describe the current circumstances of an existing phenomenon (Sultan et al., 2022).

### *Research sampling*

This study utilizes non-probability purposive sampling, where sample members are selected based on the researcher's knowledge and judgment to best address the research questions and objectives (Dhivyadeepa, 2016). The informants are all from the

capital city Paramaribo and were selected based on experience and expertise, their availability, easy accessibility, and willingness.

#### *Types of sources*

The main data sources for this research are the Head of Bureau Education Information and Study Facilities, because they play a crucial role in communicating scholarship information, and fourth-year bachelor students from the Public Administration program at Anton de Kom University Suriname. Additionally, secondary data sources such as journals, news articles and books are utilized to support the study.

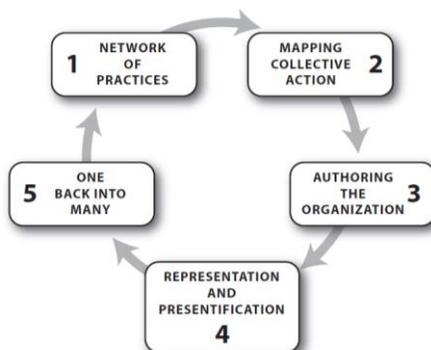
#### *Theory*

This study uses the Montreal School Approach to Communicative Constitution of Organizations, which explores how organizations are formed and represented through ongoing interactions. It defines communication as a circular articulation of interaction and discourse, considering text, conversation, materiality, and multiple agents. The approach involves five phases of translations.

The first phase views the organization as a network of practices and conversations, emphasizing the importance of co-orientation for a shared understanding among individuals. The second phase involves mapping collective action through distanciation, balancing specialization and shared ownership. The third phase focuses on authoring objectives through textualization, formalizing practices into policies and establishing the organization's identity. The fourth phase involves representation and presentation, using texts to shape the organization's perception internally and externally. Finally, the fifth phase entails translating the one back into the many, where individual members derive

direction and authority from collective texts (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

*Picture 1: Model of Five Translations*



#### *Strategies within the theory*

Within the Montreal School Approach of Communicative Constitution Organizations, there are several communication strategies as identified by Miller and Barbour (2018) and Cooren et al. (2011). For instance, co-creation involves engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes and seeking their feedback to collaboratively shape vision and mission statements. Narrative, on the other hand, is a powerful tool used by leaders to share stories that embody an organization's values and beliefs, fostering a shared sense of purpose and identity among stakeholders and employees. Lastly, textuality involves the use of language and other communication forms to establish and maintain organizational structures, culture, and identity.

#### *Research significance*

This research holds theoretical significance as it is expected to enhance the field of science, specifically in organizational communication. It is anticipated to serve as a point of reference for future research related to responsible organizations communicating scholarship opportunities. In terms of practical significance, this research aims to provide contributions and

recommendations to the Bureau of Education Information and Study Facilities. Lastly, this research is expected to hold social significance as it can serve as a reference for other organizations that engage in communicating scholarship information to the community.

### *Research assumptions*

Drawing from the theory, several assumptions are made. The theory assumes that context plays a significant role in communication, considering factors like organizational culture, power dynamics, and social contexts. It also emphasizes that communication is integral to organizational processes and shapes shared social reality. Organizations are seen as dynamic processes shaped by ongoing communication, and communication influences organizational identity and culture.

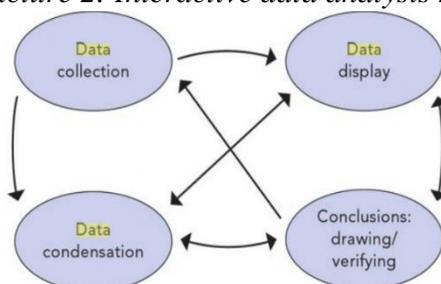
### *Data collection*

Within this case study a variety of data collection techniques are used, including interviews, literature reviews and qualitative surveys. Furthermore, semi-structural in-depth interviews are used, as they consist of open-ended questions that are predetermined, but also create space for new questions and open-ended responses. In addition, the collection of data is supported by document analysis.

### *Data analysis techniques*

The analysis of the data is done by the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013):

*Picture 2: Interactive data analysis model*



Data condensation involves simplifying and transforming empirical data through coding, making it more manageable. Data display organizes information, allowing for research conclusions to be drawn by examining presented data. Qualitative data is presented in narrative text, collecting, and deducing relevant information. The conclusions section utilizes coded data to address the research problem. Coding leads to new ideas for the data display matrix, which undergoes further data reduction. Preliminary conclusions can be drawn during the matrix filling process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). In addition to the interactive model, we used Yin's point of view (2018), which states that a researcher can manually analyze and code the data inductively (Yin, 2018).

#### *Goodness Criteria*

This study employed triangulation, using interviews, surveys, and document analysis to validate research findings (Yin, 2018). Triangulation involved multiple methods, sources, and researchers to enhance data credibility and reliability. The consistency and coherence of data were assessed from various sources, including BOS and student responses to improve the trustworthiness, dependability, and validity of research findings.

#### *Literature review*

This research reviewed ten relevant studies on scholarships. One study by Seibert & Harper (2020) explored Boyer's model of scholarship and its connection to community engagement. Another study by Campbell, Lavalley, and Kelly-Weber (2021) examined the employment perspectives of Ford Foundation scholarship recipients from Ghana and Nigeria in promoting social change and justice.

Feldman & Wallace (2021) examined the experiences of scholarship students in elite South African secondary schools, while Wanga et al. (2019) proposed a decision tree evaluation

system for college scholarships. Cosentino et al. (2019) explored the impact of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Bernala & Penney (2019) studied the effects of Colombia's Ser Pilo Paga program on student test scores. Herber (2018) focused on the communication of general scholarship information with an emphasis on equality. Other studies investigated scholarly communication, Digital Scholarship Centers, and the impact of targeted scholarship programs, such as Bidikmisi in Indonesia (Mulyaningsih et al., 2022).

The literature review did not find scholarship studies investigating the process and strategies of communicating scholarship information to the public using the Montreal School Approach CCO. Existing studies have explored the impact of scholarships on employability, economic growth, and their benefits for low-income families. They have also evaluated different scholarship programs' effectiveness in improving student outcomes and identified best practices for candidate selection. However, the specific focus on communication strategies was not found in the reviewed studies.

### **III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **A. Research results**

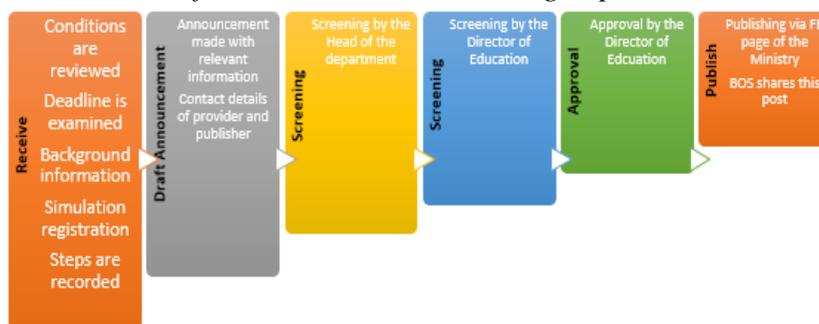
The results of this research are two-part and display the internal and external situation of communication and its effect, based on the model used within this research - Montreal School Approach to Communicative Constitution of Organizations.

*Network of practices: The organization's role*

BOS exclusively deals with scholarships that are offered by friendly nations, regional and international organizations. About the nations, Suriname has a good relationship with countries such as the U.S.A., Netherlands, and Indonesia. The regional and friendly organizations vary from the Organization of American

States (OAS) and within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The scholarships are shared with Suriname through a Diplomatic Note, via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business, and International Cooperation Suriname (BIBIS). A diplomatic note is a formal note between governments that speaks for and under the direction of the government presenting it. Based on the above information, a visual representation and description of the process from receiving this diplomatic note with the scholarship information, to communicating this to the public is designed below:

*Picture 3: Process of BOS from receiving scholarship information to communicating to public*



*Mapping Collective Action: Screening and decision-making*

There is no standard model or template in which to work, but the announcement is drawn up with the letterhead of the Ministry of Education. “*There is no standard model in which to work. The only thing is that the announcement is drawn up with the letterhead of the ministry,*” the head of BOS states. She further adds that “*before publishing the announcement, we pay attention to the following points: information about the study program offered, including all relevant links to websites or portals, the requirements for applying for the scholarship, steps for the (online) registration, the timeline and deadline, contact details of BOS and those of the scholarship provider.*”

BOS focusses on key details of the study program, such as field of study, duration, language, and degree level. Requirements set by the scholarship provider, including academic credentials, nationality, age, personal statements, reference letters, passport, English proficiency, and GPA, are also considered. Guidelines for registration, submission process, status checking, and the importance of the deadline are emphasized. Contact details for the Bureau of Education Information and Study Facilities (BOS) and the scholarship provider, including website, registration platform, phone numbers, email addresses, and office locations, are also checked.

*Picture 4: Scholarship announcement*

	1 <sup>STE</sup> FASE	2 <sup>DE</sup> FASE	3 <sup>DE</sup> FASE	4 <sup>DE</sup> FASE
Sluitingsdatum inschrijving	17 maart 2023	12 mei 2023	14 juli 2023	13 oktober 2023
Bekendmaking resultaat via: <a href="http://www.oea.org/becas">http://www.oea.org/becas</a>	22 maart 2023	18 mei 2023	19 juli 2023	19 oktober 2023
Aanvang colleges	28 maart 2023	25 mei 2023	25 juli 2023	24 oktober 2023

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Voor nadere informatie omtrent de aanvraag van de beurzen kan men een elektronisch bericht verzenden naar: [scholarships@oas.org](mailto:scholarships@oas.org) of naar het Bureau Onderwijsinformatie en Studiefaciliteiten - BOS: [bosbeurzen@yahoo.com](mailto:bosbeurzen@yahoo.com)

### *Authoring the Organization: Communication policies*

Results show that there are no official written guidelines regarding scholarships. The actions that are committed by the employees are part of the daily work. In terms of communication channels, social media is used to publish scholarship announcements, especially via Facebook. Depending on the frequency of receiving the scholarships, announcements are being published. On average, one (1) post per week, or sometimes after

two (2) weeks. Lastly, the department has no communication plan or even a social media plan.

*Picture 5: BOS Facebook page*



*Representation and presentation: Ways of communication to public*

When drafting and publishing the scholarship announcements, the letterhead of the ministry of education is always used. BOS states that this is important to strengthen the image of the organization, whether the purpose is to communicate an internal or external matter. This also indicates that it is an official or publication. It has links to the website or registration portal of the scholarship provider. The announcements are then saved in photo format (JPEG), to be able to publish it via Facebook. The language that it used for these announcements is Dutch (Native language). An example of the announcement that is published is presented below.

Picture 6: Corporate identity and JPEG format



**BEKENDMAKING**

De Directeur van het Ministerie van Onderwijs, Wetenschap en Cultuur maakt bekend, dat de Organisatie van Amerikaanse Staten – OAS, in samenwerking met Soluciones Integrales de Formación y Gestión (STRUCTURALIA) **online master beurzen** (Engels, Spaans en Portugees) op het gebied van **Engineering, Energy en Infrastructure** ter beschikking stelt aan Surinaamse staatsburgers:

Geïnteresseerde kandidaten kunnen voor het overzicht en de inhoud van de aangeboden studieprogramma's, de selectie criteria, de richtlijnen voor de online inschrijving, de beursvoordelen en de kosten, de website bezoeken op:  
[http://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/PAEC/2023/2023\\_English\\_scholarships\\_STR\\_OEA.pdf](http://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/PAEC/2023/2023_English_scholarships_STR_OEA.pdf)

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*One back into many: Feedback and common challenges*

An important thing to note is feedback that BOS receives from the public. The most common feedback is that the announcements are communicated way too late. This results in the fact that students don't have enough time to gather all relevant documents, such as a translated diploma and transcripts, copy of passport and photo, proof of English proficiency and sometimes reference letters. The feedback is processed where possible or necessary regarding matters within the area of work. For matters that concern policy, the feedback is forwarded and discussed with the head of the department and other relevant partners such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

*Picture 7: Late publishing comments on Facebook*



Translated from Dutch to English, the comments are respectively:

*“How could you post a message where the deadline has already passed; Little late if you could register until Feb 10<sup>th</sup>; 20 hours ago an announcement is posted that ended 2 days ago.”*

#### *Impact on students*

Despite BOS communicating international scholarship opportunities, many students didn't pursue them due to unclear information, non-clickable links, and limited options in preferred countries and languages. Students prefer direct and firsthand information on funding, benefits, and program details. They are active on social media but prefer channels like Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and email newsletters. BOS's use of photo format on Facebook with non-clickable links is ineffective. Students want clear and timely communication in Dutch as the main language, with English as support. They also suggest earlier scholarship information and a clearer application process for better preparation.

Picture 8: Very late publishing



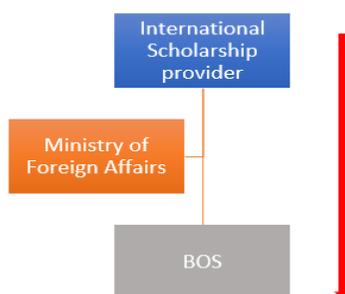
## B. Analysis of the results

Based on the findings, the analysis of the results of BOS and the students are merged.

*Reality of communicating scholarship information based on the theory*

Students are aware of that BOS is responsible for scholarship communication but unaware of their role. BOS communicates scholarships exclusively from friendly nations and organizations, relying on information received through a Diplomatic Note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There is an undocumented process followed by BOS employees based on their daily routine, which appears ineffective for screening relevant scholarship information.

Picture 9: The role of BOS in the scholarship process



### *Screening based on check points*

The study revealed that the Head of BOS and the Director of Education are the main reviewers before scholarship information is communicated, without following a documented checklist. They focus on key points like study program details, links, requirements, registration guidelines, deadlines, and contact information. However, BOS is not effectively communicating crucial information such as scholarship requirements, registration guidelines, and coverage details. Students consider these areas as the most important information that should be provided.

### *Policies to guide communication*

The study found that BOS primarily uses Facebook to share scholarship information, limiting its reach. Students prefer email newsletters for comprehensive and easily retrievable information. BOS lacks consistent communication, likely due to their focus on specific scholarship sources and academic years. Upon analysis, this seems to be linked to the department's role in communicating scholarships exclusively from friendly nations, regional and international organizations, and the academic year of the study programs. The absence of guiding documents like a communication plan hinders coordination and leads to confusion. Developing diverse communication channels and implementing guidelines can improve BOS's effectiveness in disseminating scholarship information.

### *Ways of communicating scholarship information*

Language barriers impact students' understanding of scholarship information, as BOS primarily communicates in Dutch while directing students to non-clickable links in another language. This difficulty in accessing relevant information may explain why students prefer email newsletters, which provide clickable links and comprehensive content. Sharing information in photo format

on Facebook limits searchability and hampers comprehension. Using email newsletters improves accessibility and allows for archiving and retrieval of information, ensuring students receive the necessary details for scholarships.

#### *Most common feedback on challenges*

Our analysis also showed that students miss a lot of scholarship opportunities due to late communication of scholarship information by BOS. This puts them under time pressure to gather all relevant documents, such as a translated diploma and transcripts, copy of passport and photo, proof of English proficiency and sometimes reference letters. The role of BOS in the scholarship process may be the biggest cause of this, as they depend on what and when they receive scholarship information from the scholarship provider (via the ministry of Foreign Affairs).

#### *Research discussion*

This research contributes to the field of organizational communication and serves as a reference for future studies on scholarship information communication. It highlights the relationship between the Bureau for Education, Information and Study Facilities (BOS) and the delayed publication of scholarship information. Previous research has focused on various aspects of scholarships but overlooked the organizational and communication context. Our study offers valuable insights into scholarship communication, especially in Suriname. The public's perception of BOS's role differs from reality, as BOS is dependent on scholarship providers and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the number and timing of scholarships. This research sheds light on the challenges faced by BOS in optimizing scholarship communication.

This study acknowledges that changes in BOS's role may enhance optimal scholarship publication, but it is limited by

hierarchical policies. Future research could explore the relationship between the scholarship provider and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the ministerial and diplomatic level. The study challenges the Montreal School Approach CCO theory by highlighting the impact of communication practices in translations. It emphasizes the need for clearer and more extensive scholarship communication by BOS, along with documentation such as guidelines and communication plans. The research has practical implications for improving communication and benefits students by informing and inspiring them to apply for scholarships, contributing to human capital development in Suriname.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Studying at the master's level in Suriname is difficult due to the economic crisis, limited program availability, and high tuition fees. Applying for international scholarships is beneficial for students. The Bureau for Education, Information and Study Facilities (BOS) is the primary authority for scholarship information, but their communication process has limitations. BOS relies on receiving information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and there is no communication or social media plan to guide them in effectively and strategically communicating scholarship information. The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges in communicating and finding scholarship information.

Students seeking scholarships abroad value the cost-effectiveness, quality, cultural enrichment, and diverse options offered. They rely on BOS for scholarship information but face challenges like insufficient clarity, non-clickable links, language barriers, outdated information, and limited communication channels. Consequently, they miss out on relevant opportunities. In summary, the actions of BOS and the students' challenges align with different phases of the Montreal School Approach to

Communicative Constitution of Organizations: mapping collective action (translation 2), authoring the organization (translation 3) and representation and presentation (translation 4).

### *Limitations*

This study's findings are limited to the 10 university students involved and cannot be generalized due to the small sample size. The results may not be applicable to other regions as the study was conducted in a specific geographic area. Important factors such as socio-economic aspects were not explored. Further research using qualitative and/or quantitative approaches in different areas is recommended. Additionally, more investigation into the power dynamics and communication process at a ministerial and diplomatic level is needed to understand the role of BOS in effectively disseminating scholarship information.

### *Recommendations*

To improve the communication of scholarship information, BOS should utilize different channels such as digital newsletters and the Ministry of Education's scholarship website in addition to Facebook. Training employees on these channels is recommended. Organizing conferences, seminars, and workshops can also help engage the public. Visual aids, infographics, and videos should be used to simplify complex concepts. Developing a communication plan will provide clarity on strategies and messaging, while setting department goals and Key Performance Indicators will allow for measuring performance. These actions will enhance BOS's effectiveness in communicating scholarship information, inspire more students to apply for scholarships, and contribute to Suriname's academic development.

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