

# Department of Higher Education and Training

## Challenges and ambition for South Africa in terms of internationalisation

### Yebo Conference

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*Policy Framework for  
Internationalisation of  
Higher Education in SA*

*An Overview*



## Background to Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in SA

The goals of internationalisation of higher education are generic across countries, but have different levels of emphases and impact depending on various factors such as priorities and values emphasised by each country. It has been observed that ‘approaches are not mutually exclusive as countries may follow several of them simultaneously, nor fixed as they may change over time. There is no right or wrong approach since strategies need to be considered within the framework of country-specific priorities and constraints’ (see Santiago, et al. 2008). The *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in SA* illustrates this point perfectly. The OECD (2004) has identified four main rationales that underpin country approaches, and these are:

- The mutual understanding approach – traditional values of academic exchange.
- The revenue-generating approach – enrolment of large numbers of international students.
- The skilled migration approach – recruitment of highly skilled immigrants.
- The capacity-building approach – mainly emphasises study-abroad programmes.

## **The Policy Framework approach to Internationalisation of Higher Education in SA**

- Priority relating to teaching, learning, research, and community engagement should be focused on the priorities of SA, SADC, Africa, BRICS, the global south and emerging economies, and the world beyond.
- Academic freedom to establish partnerships with foreign partners of own choice is acknowledged and respected.
- Compliance with national legislation and policies.
- Compliance with quality assurance regime.
- Ethical conduct that adheres to the Constitution of SA.
- Mutual benefit to partnering parties.
- Complementarity within partnerships.
- Value creation by partners.
- Quality of the initiatives, activities and content of programmes.

## Goals of the Policy Framework

The high-level strategic aspiration of internationalisation of higher education will find expression through the following goals:

- To enhance the reputation, quality and relevance of HE in South Africa, and to strengthen the country's higher education institutions;
- To enhance international research collaboration in order to contribute to an increase in knowledge production, intellectual property and innovation– in South Africa, in the SADC region, in the rest of the African continent and in the world [in that order];
- To contribute towards building global commons of academia where scholarship is not defined or barred by national boundaries;
- To better equip South Africans with knowledge, skills and attitudes, including intercultural skills required to contribute to its socio-economic development and well-being;
- To attract talented and highly qualified individuals to the South African HE institutions in order to enhance the country's human capital;

## Goals of the Policy Framework

- To open up South African higher education to novice and experienced researchers alike as well as to academics and support staff, for their personal and professional development and knowledge gain;
- To provide the country's higher education institutions with opportunities for sustained developmental benefits in all aspects of academia; internationalisation activities should aim to self-sustain financially but deliver significant nonmonetary benefits, where appropriate, to higher education institutions; and
- To develop strategic alliances aimed at enhanced bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation in higher education.

**Therefore**, the Policy Framework is premised on a combination of:

- The mutual understanding approach, which prioritises traditional values of academic exchange.
- The skilled migration approach, which derives value in the migration of highly skilled immigrants.
- The capacity-building approach, which believes in exchange of knowledge and learning from others (study-abroad programmes).

# Challenges



# Challenges

As with the goals, challenges of internationalisation of higher education are generic across countries too, but some may be more pronounced in some regions and countries than others.

Common challenges include:

- Optimisation of mobility flows.
- Quality – internationalisation challenges national regulatory frameworks
- Academic mobility – ‘considered to be ‘the most important variable in comprehensive internationalization’.
- Programme mobility.
- Potential mismatches in curriculum development and alignment.
- Lack of funding.
- Lack of enthusiasm or ‘institutional lethargy’ towards matters relating to internationalisation.
- Reinforcement and reproduction of unequal divisions in the political economy of global education (see Zaleza).



## Challenges

- Although this is pretty much obvious, I would like to cite the G20 Report of 2020, for it sums up the challenge which we are currently experiencing, that “the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on student mobility, with immigration, quarantine requirements and global travel restrictions limiting the movement of students, faculty and researchers around the world. For international students, the disruption has resulted in a shift to online education due to the temporary campus closures in G20 countries impacted by the crisis”.
- Of course, all the other components of internationalisation are negatively affected by the restricted international movement due to the pandemic and these include:
  - Academic mobility – ‘considered to be ‘the most important variable in comprehensive internationalization’.
  - Research collaboration – ‘the need to prioritize academic research and collaboration that fulfil humanitarian purposes has certainly been brought to light by the challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic’.
  - Programme mobility.

opportunities the policy  
framework provides for  
SA universities



# Opportunities

- [www.internationalscholarships.dhet.gov.za](http://www.internationalscholarships.dhet.gov.za)
- Also look out for the 'Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework' which uses the vehicle called the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP).
- Apart from scholarship opportunities (within government to government agreements), the programmes driven by the DHET are mainly underpinned by the collaborative approach, where SA institutions participate as a collaborative team in international (themed) partnerships.

## Implementation Strategy & Plan

- Paragraph 4.2.7. of the Policy Framework states that “government and the DHET must clearly articulate national strategy to enhance higher education internationalisation and give guidance to the higher education system for fulfilment of the Policy Framework”.
- The strategy shall articulate the philosophy and strategic approach, locally and internationally in tandem with the international strategy of our country.
- The strategy must articulate the transformation imperatives of the country and how the phenomenon should assist to address them in the sector
- The *Policy Framework* requires that all HE institutions have internationalisation policies, which must be aligned to the *Policy Framework*.

## Implementation Strategy & Plan (...cont)

- The national strategy shall seek to improve national policy coordination, among the affected government departments (e.g. DIRCO & DHA) and among the HE entities such as SAQA, CHE, etc.;
- The national strategy shall seek to create an environment where HE institutions participate and thrive in internationalisation activities;
- It must promote platforms for sharing of best practices.
- The *Policy Framework* requires that the ‘national strategy and institutional policies must address brain drain and seek to offset its negative consequences’.
- The national strategy must seek to articulate and promote strategies for sustainable internationalisation.
- The plan must facilitate implementation and set a developmental, monitoring strategy and reporting tools.

# References



## References

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THANK YOU

