

Internationalization of Tertiary Education within South Africa: University of Fort Hare

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ABSTRACT Education has become internationalized through policies and practices. Using experiences of the contributor as an international student, one in the United States of America and other in South Africa, the study examined the impact of cross-border education through addressing its contribution to the national developmental needs. Thus, the University of Fort Hare case study research design explored the successes and challenges faced by international students when institutions fail to deliver what they promised. The study used the competence building theoretical framework which perceives internationalization as a means of building a promising economy and promotes contextual influences on professional academic development. Stratified sampling procedure comprising 150 respondents from the targeted 3000 international students of the institution was used. The researcher conducted focus group interviews and document analysis. The methodology of the study was centred on the interpretivist philosophy as practised in qualitative research methodology. The qualitative data collected was subjected to document analysis which entailed classifying the data and extracting themes. The results of the study confirmed that international students bring foreign currency into the country, as well as a hybrid of learning culture through cross pollination of ideas. International staff members bring relevant managerial skills and teaching expertise to the university.

INTRODUCTION

Africa - indeed the world - has become a global village where knowledge and skills are exchanged across borders, and South Africa is no exception (Meda and Monnapula-Mapesela 2016). According to Leask (2012), universities in the twenty first century have a salient role to play towards preparing students and lecturers for the potential to exist within an intercultural milieu. Against this background, the study strove towards investigating the responses from the University of Fort Hare, as a public education institution, to an influx of international students and lecturers in this period characterised by the rapid restructuring and transformation of the higher education system. The necessity of advancing international competence for Africa's higher education academics is becoming more apparent as the international community becomes more interdependent and connected (Magwa et al. 2015).

In this study the author discusses some aspects that deserve to be included on the perspective of internationalization of higher education at tertiary level. The development of educational excellence, reinforcement of studies, inviting fresh scholars, student success, engen-

dering revenue plus progressively safeguarding esteem as well as status in South African universities ignited many debates on internationalization pertaining to tertiary instruction (Knight 2004). The internationalisation of tertiary instruction has now been elevated around most programs on countrywide administration and global organizations of tertiary instruction (Magwa et al. 2015). The study involved a theoretical investigation of the benefits of cross-border education and challenges faced by international students, focusing on the case-in-point concerning the institution of Fort Hare premised on the discourse related to internationalization.

The University of Fort Hare (UFH) is the oldest formerly Black university in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. It is under Amatole District Municipality which comprises Nkonkobe and Buffalo City local municipalities. This university consists of three campuses: Alice, Bisho and East London. The majority of the university grounds are situated around the town of Alice, which is approximately one hundred and twenty kilometres from the city of East London. The enrolment of student population developed from 8,755 during 2004 up to above 12,500 in 2015. Students are distributed across five Faculties: Science and Agriculture, Law,

Management and Commerce, Social Science and Humanities and the Faculty of Education. There are many tactical components, establishments plus centres linked across faculties, and these build the capacity of this university. These include the Community Service Department; Trans-disciplinary Centre; Life Knowledge Action; Grounding Programme and the Teaching and Learning Centre. The student population and members of staff in these centres were estimated to be around 3000 for the academic year 2015.

This university is well known for its contribution towards the production of leaders within Africa. It is also known for its extensive contribution towards the liberation struggle against the apartheid government before South Africa became a democratic country. The University of Fort Hare has a long-standing history of accommodating both local and international students, especially from Africa, and in recent times there has also been a steady flow from Europe and Asia, particularly from China. Many universities nowadays accommodate graduates with international expertise worth exploiting (Yemini et al. 2014).

Literature Review

The dawn of gathering right of entry technologies, globalization, and changing relationships between universities plus state-transformation means that higher education has become progressively international, with many international students enrolling and competing with locals. Internationally, tertiary instruction has been in a state of change for some years now. According to Knight (2004), internationalization is the procedure which involves incorporating global, intercultural and universal measurement on some rationale, purpose or delivery for tertiary instruction. The author borrows this definition for the purpose of this study. The powers following internationalization of tertiary instruction incorporated the desire towards promoting mutual understanding between nations, relocation of experienced work-force within a universal financial system, affinity by universities towards generating supplementary capital, as well as some increasing developmental requirements for an exceptionally well-informed labour force. This inquiry is conceptualized by theories based on internationalization and knowledge network

paradigms, with specific reference to aid and innovation (Smit et al. 2013).

In every university, there is a call for comprehensible targets plus some tactic connecting different actions. Students from surrounding countries and developed countries enroll at tertiary institutions in the country. In addition, synergy created by internationalization of higher education is restricted to a trivial number of actions (Green and Olson 2003). Such thinking requires university guiding principles to be congruent to the institutional strategic objectives. For internationalization to be efficient, joint exchange occurs in three stages in universities: lecturers and students; institutional teamwork, plus guiding principles and programme(s) of study (Zezeza 2005). There is an agreement between the governments of Zimbabwe and South Africa for students to study at the University of Fort Hare, plus eleven other universities in South Africa.

According to Naude (2004), internationalization of higher education has been made stronger through globalization, and complemented and reinforced by ethnic groups as well as sovereign states. Further, internationalization of higher education comprises the physical mobility of students and staff members allowing the universal understanding of interrelated frontiers. Internationalization is a gradual procedure beyond student and staff mobility and accreditation by an international body (Meda and Monnapula-Mapesela 2016). Globalization has increasingly resulted in greater internationalization of higher education environments (Maringe and Sing 2014). Internationalization is also considered through the lens of problematizing the role of research university in South Africa and asserting the need for capacity building as a precursor to realizing such a research university while managing the ever accelerating, complex dynamics of internationalized dimensions of higher education (Smit et al. 2013).

According to Knight (2004), internationalization is described as a practice concerning amalgamating some global measurement on some reasons, rationale or delivery for tertiary instruction on nationwide, sectoral or university levels. De Wit (2011) indicates that internationalization concerning tertiary instruction simply happened subsequent to some contemporary era when countrywide institutions of higher education came into existence through dialectical

associations in the midst of globalization. Internationalization concerning tertiary instruction possibly started gaining momentum around the second half of the twentieth century (Knight 2008a). Insights concerning internationalization of tertiary education differs between countries and even areas. Internationalization of tertiary education was essentially a procedure of applying exchange actions within the instruction process, plus studies concerning a variety of types amongst institutions within diverse states. Internationalization represents a process of social plus cultural transformation. However, recent internationalization concerning tertiary instruction within the institution of Fort Hare mainly comprises a number of attributes. It consists of human capital exchange, mostly of students, lecturers, non-academic staff members and researchers. It also involves project actions such as organization of global conventions plus combined studies, mostly for outlining investigation results plus educational exchange.

According to Ellis (2005) and Secretariat (2003), institutions forged contacts across backgrounds to increase information and also to encounter diverse everyday jobs within the public so that they became nationwide and even globally aggressive. The funding for tertiary instruction is generated from state resources (Teferra and Altbach 2003). However, just like other universities in South Africa, the University of Fort Hare is receiving insufficient financial support towards educational, organizational and societal actions. Such challenges are pivotal towards internationalization. Internationalization concerning tertiary instruction at the institution of Fort Hare has described some intercultural and global magnitude of instruction and scholarships relevant to student success. These include educational endings that sustain worldwide intercultural appreciation plus investigation prospects in a foreign country. A good example is the exchange programmes of students from European countries, Asian countries and the agreement between the two governments of Zimbabwe and South Africa in favour of students coming to study at the University of Fort Hare, plus eleven other universities in South Africa, under the Zimbabwean Presidential Scholarship.

Internationalization of higher education emphasises conveying information about other countries, particularly people further than the frontier of the state, and tolerating associations

among countries. It is perceived that internationalization of tertiary instruction is a predictable and important counter-measure and action particularly against fiscal globalization. The framework concerning internationalization of tertiary instruction refers to activities happening trans-nationally. These include international programme delivery, using a variety of modes and arrangements, as well as the international mobility of self-sponsored students or those on bursaries such as NRF, the Zimbabwean Presidential Scholarship and the Malawian Government Scholarship. There is a need to review the model and ensure that future financing of higher education takes place through a mixture of private and public attention (World Bank 2000).

A number of guiding principles are most important, as further outlined in the investigations of internationalization of tertiary instruction (Bhandari et al. 2011). Debates on globalization of higher education developed around imperatives of financial growth, competitiveness, demographic trends but also around global understanding, and also around a conviction that globalization could facilitate excellence of tertiary instruction in the process of adjusting and strengthening the principles towards worldwide recognition (Knight 2008a). The significance and centrality that some globalization of tertiary instruction procedure had suggested for universities flashed out amplified debates on impact. Scholars were interested in examining internationalization more critically through questioning its affirmative effects and helpful attributes towards organizational developmental courses of action. According to Knight (2008b), a number of scholars question whether globalization has gone astray or is having a midlife crisis. However, others question whether internationalization has reached its closing stages; also Brandenburg and De Wit (2011) identify some traditions which require additional systematic study.

The successes and challenges of international students at the University of Fort Hare are now the top priority. Many students are enrolled at this university each year where internationalization has become the responsibility of the relevant academics and administrators, functioning by means of boards that span the university, connecting large statistics of faculty affiliates, organizational lecturers and students. This development is caused by some craving towards

promoting shared understanding, the relocation concerning an experienced workforce within the globalized financial system, the capacity of the institution towards generating supplementary revenues and the ability to build extra well-informed labour force. The impact of internationalization of tertiary instruction has grown in a different way within the country. The movement of students at tertiary level used to be demand-driven and policy-driven. The importance of proper management of higher education, as a tool of government policy, has been increasingly realised since university instruction is a chief principle within the country's endeavour towards developing an experienced labour force for contesting within an international financial system. According to Sawyer (2002), the massification of tertiary instruction has exacerbated some already complicated circumstances.

The vexing question that continues within most discussions is some responsibility concerning internationalization in tertiary instruction. Exceptionally restricted financial plans after some years caused significant challenges for purchasing fresh tools as well as repairing and maintaining the existing utensils; this ended in deprived studying and way of life of students (Schoneboom 1992). It is important to note that internationalization has not been prioritized, mainly since it paled into insignificance against some crucial requirements on transformation and bringing more fairness into the area. A transformation programme has been the major dynamic strength behind the course of action in South African tertiary instruction.

However, South Africa has always been a magnet for foreign students because of its historical universities which are highly resourced. South African universities have policies drawn from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol accommodating the enrolment of international students. According to the universal declaration of human rights, citizens have the legal right to access instruction equally on the basis of merit. The principle of equal access to and equity in international higher education was initially declared by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the World Conference on Higher Education convened during 1998 (Hudzik 2011). Internationalization of higher education has internationally been analysed as valuable for a variety of motives which include:

escalating communication plus high opinion amid citizens of diverse traditions; advancing the reasons of education plus erudition; facilitating global relations as well as enhancing management in a universal society. Furthermore, internationalization is strongly related to the fact that nation states which have sovereign but mutually dependent tertiary instruction institutions have a reasonable degree of control over those who can provide higher learning and over what counts for tertiary education (Egron-Polak and Hudson 2010). It has basically to do with the fact that global exchange students, lecturers and worldwide teamwork in the construction of knowledge are central to the principles of the contemporary institutions of higher education.

The principle of internationalization of higher education (HE) creates diversity of different forms among students. One major aspect of the internationalization of HE comprises preparing students towards functioning in the intercultural contexts (Knight 2008b). It is further argued that one of the main functions of internationalization regarding tertiary instruction is enabling students to understand, appreciate and articulate the realities of inter-dependence among nations, and also preparing them to function within some global and inter-cultural background.

Objectives of the Study

The study intended achieving the following objectives:

- ♦ To examine the impact of cross-border education through addressing its contribution to the developmental needs of education in the country
- ♦ To investigate the benefits of cross-border education and challenges faced by international students in South Africa
- ♦ To make recommendations from the results of the paper

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research technique enabling respondents to provide reliable data concerning a particular experience (Creswell 2012). Using qualitative research methodology enabled students and academics to freely express their views about internationalization as it relates to their different contexts (Meda and Monnapula-Mapesela 2016). The paradigmatic

situation of this research was interpretive, and this was preferred because of its compatibility with qualitative methodology. Qualitative research has an interpretive perspective which focuses on uncovering participants' views (Lapan et al. 2012). The researcher used stratified sampling procedure comprising 150 respondents from the targeted 3000 foreign students plus lecturers from the institution. Data were sourced from a stratified sample of the target group highlighted above.

The University of Fort Hare case study research design was used in this study. The investigation employed some built-in case studies, based on interviews, document analysis and observations as data collection procedures. This technique was useful for an in-depth study of academics and students in their natural setting to understand their conceptualizations of internationalization (Punch 2009). The study was understood in depth through this approach and in its natural settings, recognizing its complexity and its context.

The study comprised an in-depth analysis within the setting of the South African context capturing the voices of research participants. The trustworthiness and the validity of the study was ensured through following up with the respondents plus checking the way the data was transcribed. Further, the research ethics were observed through notifying the respondents about the rationale of the investigation. The respondents were made conversant with the fact that involvement was entirely voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any point. The researchers used pseudonyms to enhance the respondents' privacy, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Services and Benefits to International Students

This study perceives the University of Fort Hare as an institute equipped with innovative and uniquely South African ideas that are relevant to other societal environments and the world. The institution is characterized by a welcoming environment for international students even though the university follows the national funding policies and guidelines which focus more on South African students and less on foreign students. This tends to portray the univer-

sity as discriminating in terms of provision of services and benefits to international students.

Context of Internationalization of Higher Education

The University of Fort Hare is an internationalized university which comprises broadening configuration and fusion of knowledge. It also produces graduates with a wider scope for networking as well as competing for jobs in the market. The attributes of this internationalized university also include standardized learning facilities, internationally recognized credibility, inter-university exchange programmes, standardized accommodation and catering facilities, diversity of nationalities and diversity in cultures. This is an international university which is also characterized by a supportive multicultural environment and exchange programmes, thereby promoting the development of various languages and cultures. Thus, the context of internationalization of higher education consists of students from diverse regions, nations and cultural backgrounds, a curriculum with an international outlook and lecturers from different countries and backgrounds to promote multilingualism.

International Students in Leadership Positions

The focus group responses indicated that an international university must have an active International Affairs Office, structuring courses to capture international/global issues, the availability of funding and sponsorships or scholarships. Further, it must have an International Foundation Programme to assess prospective students before registration in countries that send many students or have international student recruiting agents (who help with information on expenses, application procedures and advice on permits). Thus, the inclusion of international students in leadership positions and representation on bodies such as the Student Representative Council (SRC) is imperative.

Enrolment Policy of International Students

During this study, the respondents were given room to comment on the enrolment policy of the institution in relation to the enrolment of international students. Some respondents confirmed that they were unaware of the enrolment

policy of this university, yet it is written in the University of Fort Hare General Prospectus. However, many students were not concerned about reading it and displayed ignorance about the enrolment policy of this institution. Generally, the enrolment policy of this university accommodates both local students and international students through outlining the enrolment requirements. Nevertheless, the results of this study indicated that the current enrolment procedure and methods were slow and laborious for the prospective students. The international students should have qualifications equivalent to those offered by South African institutions, evaluated by South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). They must also have a valid study permit, medical aid and registration fees which are needed upfront.

The clause concerning enrolment policy for international students is important at an institution of higher learning since it gives specific admission requirements to prospective international students in order for the university to reach out to those students and be in a position to enrol them. Furthermore, this enrolment policy provides guidelines for procedures for admission such as registration online, through the post or in person. It was interesting to observe that 60% of the respondents were not familiar with the enrolment policy and thus assumed that the university reserved a quota for international students which it must not exceed. There is a quota reserved for international students even though the percentages are not well communicated. The University of Fort Hare, like other South African universities, observes the SADC protocol of 1997. The University of Fort Hare's application form indicates that applicants must have evidence of their ability to finance their studies, a valid passport and a study permit.

The statutory requirements of South African universities also demand international students to have radiological examination certificates and medical cover. The university enrolment policy classifies International students into three categories: SADC; Rest of Africa; and Non-African students. These three categories fall into different fees and tuition structures. All international students from non-SADC countries must pay a foreign levy fee of US\$ 900. SADC students are treated the same as South African students, therefore, they are governed by the same rules as local students as far as fees and tuition

are concerned. However, these rules differ for the other two groups of students mentioned above. All three groups of students are governed by the same rules for applying and being enrolled into the university. This included the grading of students' marks according to the Swedish scale. Furthermore, the university requires a clearance of exemption for the Matric examinations through the nationally appointed authority, Higher Education South Africa HESA. The University also requires international students to sit for a competence examination, the National Benchmark Test (NBT), which is used for assessing students' analytic and quantitative as well as qualitative skills. This also evaluates communication in English since the university uses English as the standard language for lectures and examination.

International Students Adapting to a Foreign Environment

Most international students are new to the South African environment and may take time to master the local languages for social interaction within the campus and life outside the campus. Therefore, the issue of a language barrier affects international students since most of the local university community prefer using their mother tongue to English. This was also a common challenge to the postgraduate students during the process of data collection from the field. In fact, there was a need to include inter-cultural dimensions in the university discourse. The study established that the wide variety of cultural diversity among students and staff created a multi-cultural university environment at the institution. It was important to consider diversity of nationalities and their cultures, as well as domestic ethnic diversity. In the lecture rooms, academics were faced with students of different nationalities. Therefore, members of staff were equipped towards operating effectively in a multi-cultural university environment of this magnitude. There was a challenge towards promoting some inter-cultural dimensions of internationalization. Internationalization of higher education, due to more diversity, calls for the need to foster inter-cultural growth at university as well as at an individual level.

Based on experience, inter-cultural student groups posed certain pedagogical challenges, calling for more effort and commitment on the

part of the lecturers. For example, students turned to the lecturers for help not only with academic, but also personal problems, thus entangling lecturers' roles with mentor and counsellor roles. At times, lecturers were not aware that they were operating in an inter-cultural environment. At other times, lecturers were aware of the inter-cultural environment in their social class, but did not have the skills to deal with the groups effectively.

During this study, it was confirmed that there were some delays in the production of admission letters, and delays in allocation of rooms at the residences which took more than a month. Roughly 80 percent of the focus group respondents argued that the University of Fort Hare was characterised by a rigorous admission process demanding SAQA evaluation of certificates and HESA certificates. This is unique to the foreign students. However, twenty percent indicated that their Departments were silent on the inclusion of the SAQA evaluation certificate. It was quite encouraging to note that some of the international students did not face challenges of SAQA evaluation because they had already applied and received the certificates in their countries of origin. The study unveiled that most of the applications got lost or misdirected during the application process. Some of the applications for the Department of Development Studies which falls under the Faculty of Management and Commerce were mistakenly directed from Admissions to the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities.

Positive Way of Accommodating International Students

Furthermore, eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they faced challenges related to residence shortage as they spent about two weeks without proper accommodation. Some of the challenges were related to funding for the studies, especially for the self-sponsored students. By virtue of being foreigners, international students got rooms despite the fact that some of them arrived two weeks after the registration date. Some respondents indicated that international students were seen as intruders by the local ones. A number of students experienced residence challenges and ended up sharing accommodation with friends, which is contrary to the university policy. They also faced challeng-

es of language barrier, since most of them are not able to speak the local language fluently. International students viewed these as challenges; the institution needed to address these because these students regarded the University of Fort Hare as a home away from home.

The language barrier issue was also observed during the registration process, since most instructions were given in the local language. This imposed a communication barrier which led to data inconsistency and loss of integrity where direct data captured from prospective students was involved. Some of the challenges tended to be generic and applied to all students, local and international alike. As much as there was need for authentication of student documents, the system responded to the applications in accordance with their stated time frames.

Other Challenges of International Students

Some respondents confirmed that applicants were ignorant of the estimated cost of living and studying during study period because information about tuition fees was insufficient. Some of the problems connected to the background of internationalization of tertiary instruction at the University of Fort Hare include the following: poor funding, as internationalization was not fully embraced; lack of inclusivity in decision-making towards enrolment, registration and recruitment of international students; poor office accommodation and inadequate space to offer efficient services to international students, ranging between ten percent to fifteen percent of the total student population.

Challenges of Understaffing

Furthermore, the challenges of understaffing were also a contributing factor, since there were only four permanent staff members to assist approximately 3000 international students in the three campuses, and the ratio of staff to students was 1: 750. There was also lack of accommodation for students on exchange programmes and international visitors since there was no house allocated to International Affairs office. There was no permanent transportation and mechanism in place to receive international students and visitors to the country for their first visit. Hiring transport was expensive, and

the budget allocated to the International Affairs office was inadequate for catering for international students.

Challenges of Accommodation for International Students

However, another challenge was related to the on-line application systems since they were not yet fully developed to be accessible all over the world. Subsequently, admission application and online registration was slow or restrictive. Further, the transport system is a bit of culture shock, with buses travelling only late in the evening and arriving at the destination very early in the morning into a new environment. The alternative transport by air was expensive and distance from the airport to Alice campus was estimated to be 140km. The enrolment of students in academic programs did not tally with the availability of accommodation, and this became a struggle in a rural situation like Alice campus. There was no assistance offered to students by the Student Affairs Department, both local and international, towards getting accommodation within the surrounding areas. Some other causes of concern were cultural differences, especially in the areas of open bathrooms, no noise restrictions in the residences, no lock-up times/open access and co-habiting in small rooms.

The study established that cross-border education contributed significantly towards the developmental needs of this institution of higher learning. The academic and intellectual cross-pollination of ideas through cross-border education produces high-breed products, which is a great investment to this great university and to the country. Nevertheless, the study confirmed that international students faced a number of administrative challenges during the process of enrolling at universities in South Africa. The challenges included the enrolment policy and the Home Affairs process for obtaining study permits. It was perceived that there was an information gap concerning the welfare of international students between the Department of Home Affairs and the University of Fort Hare International Affairs office. The Home Affairs department perceived international students as having no proper documentation and as illegal immigrants breaking immigration laws, without paying attention to the root cause of the problems.

The Benefits of Internationalization

During the focus group interview, respondents argued that more credibility was given to an university enrolling a reasonable number of international students. Therefore, the University of Fort Hare also benefited from getting an international ranking or profile as it accesses a hybrid class of students including international students with the capacity to graduate in the stipulated time frame. The researcher observed that it was difficult to come across disabled international students, since the majority of the sponsors and parents prefer to send only able-bodied students outside their countries of origin. In addition to this, the benefits of recruiting international students were many, including accessing a hybrid of new academic skills. Internationalization benefits the University of Fort Hare through boosting research throughput, due to collaborative efforts in both human and resource aspects. It encourages a conducive global work environment through the integration of students in different job environments after graduating. Thus, international students become globally skilled due to exchange of academic skills plus social culture.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study confirmed the importance of the framework of internationalization concerning tertiary instruction through exchanging knowledge. Therefore, the study employed strategies through shifting perceptions and generally raising the internationalization agenda through further researches beyond this study. The study confirmed the need for international education for both staff and students if the mission and vision of the university is to be achieved. However, much is currently being done in the case of students through formal programmes like Grounding Programme or Transdisciplinary Studies and the Teaching and Learning Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that HESA, which comprises 23 public universities in South Africa, influences policy on internationalization. International students should be treated like any other students so that they can give as much

feedback as possible. Transparency is the principle to be adhered to at the University of Fort Hare. Gender-sensitivity should be considered in the numbers of students recruited at universities. Feedback should be given to all students, regardless of distance or locality, so that all students are given equal opportunities to register and responses be given in time for the students to make decisions.

International students should be given priority when it comes to residences because they are indeed far away from home, hence they should be rendered hospitality more than local students who are in their home land. International students are encouraged to apply for the SAQA evaluation certificate whilst they are still in their countries of origin. Thus, an internationalized university such as Fort Hare must have a curriculum that is international in nature, a mixture of local and international workforce, plus a culture of tolerance.

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