



**Towards a Policy on Internationalisation of Higher Education for South Africa:
Global, National and Institutional Imperatives**

Preamble

There is a disconnection between internationalisation and the national Higher Education (HE) policies in South Africa. As an organisation representing the interests of those engaged in the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa, IEASA calls on the relevant Government structures, statutory bodies and other national stakeholders to endorse and support a process that will allow for the adoption of a National Policy on Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa.

The processes of globalisation (taking into account the knowledge society, ICT, economy, international trade, etc.) and global restructuring pose challenges to the need for internationalisation in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

South Africa's past exclusion from the intellectual interaction and mobility patterns characteristic of internationalisation, pose challenges to international repositioning. In particular the HE sector in South Africa needs to address its location within SADC, Africa and the global context.

South Africa must commit itself to a dual process regarding internationalisation, namely, to expose our citizens to the new ideas of other countries, and to become partners of global transformation that forms the basis of possibilities of the new millennium initiatives by increasing opportunities for both staff and students of HEIs.

The process of internationalisation at HEIs facilitates a further strengthening of the foreign policy initiatives, economic competitiveness, mutual and intercultural understanding and cooperation between nations, and the overall intellectual capital of our country.

A number of different institutional, national, sectoral and global stakeholders participate in the process of and debates on internationalisation, making it imperative for institutions to respond to these challenges within a national policy framework that would promote, support and enhance internationalisation and international programmes at HEIs.

There is lack of harmonisation and clarity of different policies, rules, regulations, practices and procedures between Government Departments and the HE sector as it applies to internationalisation.

Therefore, there is need for a comprehensive national policy with respect to internationalisation of higher education that will integrate policy objectives and strategies in all HEI sectors to meet them. It must provide for national programmes, administrative structures and resources to implement the strategies. This will contribute to enhancing

our global positioning, coherence among different national stakeholders and strengthening our institutional initiatives around internationalisation of higher education.

IEASA proposes the following Points of Departure for a National Policy:

A policy should be based on the following strategic points of departure:

- Recognition of the value of international education for intercultural exchange and building competence as global citizens.
- The international dimension of HE in the global context must be reflected in the national policy, indicating a broad vision and mission for the internationalisation of tertiary education.
- The political, economic, cultural and social transformational needs of the country should be meaningfully linked to internationalisation of tertiary education.
- Internationalisation of tertiary education should be an integral part of Governments foreign policy that impact on internationalisation. The implications of international agreements (e.g. GATS), bi-national commissions, and bi-lateral collaboration should be fully spelled out.
- The internationalisation process, which has taken shape at South African HEIs and operating in individual, departmental, faculty-driven and broader campus projects, must be located within the broader vision and mission of the country.
- Promotion of international research through the integration of international and intercultural elements into our core business that would address national needs and strengthen institutional curricular and outreach programmes.
- Quality Care and Assurance of our academic and support services programmes should be attended to in the HEQC framework.
- A regional cooperation strategy based on economic, political, social and educational imperatives of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training must be adopted.
- Development, promotion and maintenance of an Africa-relevant focus by facilitating and encouraging greater cooperation between HEIs in the African continent in the context of NEPAD.
- Facilitate the recruitment of international students through a nationally integrated, coordinated and focused approach to international marketing of South African HE.

- Recognise the potential for income generation of recruitment of international students to strengthen institutional initiatives.
- Determining the current and future size and value of education and training exports to the South African economy.
- The role of government and private sector funding to support and facilitate internationalisation.

IEASA as Critical National Role Player

IEASA's alliances with relevant national bodies need to be established at strategic partnership levels. Areas of significance at this level include:

- Promotion and enhancement of the value of internationalisation to the tertiary education sector.
- Initiating discussions around adding the international relations dimension to the curriculum.
- Addressing the issues relevant to across-border delivery of higher education.
- Quality Care and Assurance of our academic and support services programmes.
- Monitoring an Ethical Code of Practice in Internationalisation support services.
- Advocacy on behalf on international students and support for international collaboration.
- Commissioning studies on importance of internationalisation that would keep internationalisation on the agenda of key players in the higher education sector.
- Professionalising the links with key sectors of HE to establish strategic networks.
- Propose strategies to formalise the involvement in SADC, the African Union and NEPAD.
- A consolidated and integrated approach to marketing South African Higher Education internationally.
- Establish communication programmes and networks on internationalisation.

The role of IEASA as critical national role player at this level needs to be formally recognised and agreed to in policy documents, regulations and practice. The necessary resource allocation to make this possible needs to be agreed to as well.