

Chapter 6

Internationalisation or Not We Move: Perspective from an Outsider

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Abstract

Internationalisation of higher education is a highly contested subject or subdiscipline within the field of higher education and there are many voices articulating varied opinions on several issues on the topic. Like most subjects in the global higher education sphere, Africa is often made an unwilling participant or a participant by omission. Such situations have led to attempts to reconfigure the meaning of internationalisation from different spheres and what should constitute internationalisation. One of these attempts at Higher Education Forum on Africa, Asia and Latin America 2019 sparked a series of engagements which would later result in several journal and newspaper articles. This chapter takes a look at some of the issues upon which these engagements were anchored in a bid to showcase the complexity of the subject and to show how difficult it is to reach, beyond reasonable doubt, a university-accepted definition or pathway for the subject. The chapter focuses on the fact that whether higher education initiatives constitute internationalisation or not, working towards responsiveness at all levels must be encouraged.

1. Introduction

The internationalisation of higher education has been a burning issue in the higher education sphere for over two decades now with every institution across the globe striving to be

international or to engage internationally one way or another. However, this drive hasn't been the easiest especially for universities in the global South who are constantly struggling with countless issues with respect to higher education. Philip Altbach, a renowned professor of higher education and former director of the Centre for International Higher Education at Boston College, defines internationalisation as "the specific policies and initiatives of countries and individual academic institutions or systems to deal with global trends" (P. Altbach, 2002, p. 6). He further articulates that example of internationalisation would include, though not be limited to, policies relating to how academic institutions collaborate with each other, the recruitment of foreign students, and the creation of overseas or branch campuses abroad. What is also noteworthy here, is the assertion by Altbach (2002, p. 6) that 'internationalisation is a major trend in higher education. It is also a worldwide phenomenon. And it is widely misunderstood'. This misconception or the debate about the misconception of internationalisation of higher education is still ongoing today and that is partly the focus of this chapter. Knight (2004, p. 11) on his part defines internationalisation as "an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education". This definition of internationalisation takes the discussion of internationalisation from a policy or operational perspective, which Altbach discussed, to purpose, function, and delivery of higher education from a global perspective. Ge (2022) argues that internationalisation places or should place emphasis on international collaboration and cooperation help higher education institutions cope with operationalities, pressures and their consequences (of the global dimension) as pertains to higher education, and it (internationalisation) should respect the individual situation of any given university and country. De Wit (2011) confirms this by adding that the extent of internationalisation in an institution can be measured by looking at indicators like the number of international students and staff in an institution, its use of English as the language of teaching and learning, international reputation, and international collaborations amongst others.

2. The business of Internationalisation

One of such collaborations is the Higher Education Forum on Africa, Asia, and Latin America (HEFAALA) championed by The International Network for Higher Education in Africa (INHEA) led by its founding director Professor Damtew Teferra. HEFAALA was launched in Durban, South Africa on the 20th of August 2016 with more than 60 delegates from 18 nations present. I was one of those delegates and this was a promising moment for cross-continental tertiary learning. INHEA has been in existence since 2003 and has led several internationalisation initiatives on the African continent. Building on the success of the first HEFAALA, INHEA championed HEFAALA II, themed ‘Internationalisation of Higher Education in the New Era of World (Dis)Order’ and this was held in July 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The second HEFAALA saw the delivery of two keynote addresses ‘Internationalisation of Higher Education: Global Realities and Perspectives’ by Prof. Hans de Wit, Director of the Centre for International Higher Education, Boston College, and ‘The Climax of Globalization: The Endurance of Internationalisation’, by Dr. Ebrima Sall, formerly the executive Secretary of CODESRIA, now Trust Africa, Dakar, Senegal (Teferra, 2020b). In his keynote address, Hans de Wit articulated an alternative definition of internationalisation propounded by (De Wit et al., 2015b). Speaking about this, Teferra (2020b, p. 160) posits that

“De Wit further elaborated the definition at the Second Higher Education Forum for Africa, Asia and Latin America (HEFAALA) Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2019 when delivering his keynote address. It was here that Teferra openly countered and subsequently engaged in vigorous debate and dialogue”.

This engagement led to the publication of seven articles in the higher education magazine called *University World News*. The articles were; *Defining internationalisation – Intention versus coercion*, *University World News* 23 August 2019 (Damtew Teferra); *We must end coercion in internationalisation*

in Africa, University World News 07 September 2019 (Hans de Wit); Internationalisation – The search for a definition continues. 21 September 2019 (Damtew Teferra); Internationalisation – No such thing as a neutral definition. 02 October 2019 (Hans de Wit); In practice, internationalisation fails to be intentional. 17 October 2019 (Abebaw Yirga Adamu); Exploring emancipatory perspectives in internationalisation. 14 November 2019 (Teklu A Bekele); Internationalisation of higher education is not neutral. 08 February 2020 (Hanne Kirstine Adriansen). These conversations raise questions about the very understanding and nature of internationalisation, as well as the misunderstanding articulated by The definition in question which sparked the debate looks at internationalisation as ‘the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society’ (De Wit et al., 2015b, p. 29). This definition which De Wit (2020) posits as imperative for a more descriptive and normative direction to the process of internationalisation, is counted by Teferra (2020b) as neither descriptive nor normative, but rather prescriptive and curative.

The definition articulated by De Wit et al. (2015b) is a formulation of the widely used definition of the term articulated by Knight (2004). This reformulated definition propounds that internationalisation cannot be a goal in itself but should be a means to enhance the quality of education delivered to all students and or a means to serving a public purpose or a means to higher education serving as a public good. However, it is critical to firstly understand the nitty-gritty of the definition and what it presupposes with regards to internationalisation. Knight (2004, pp. 5-6) argues that

“although it is encouraging to see the increased use and attention being given to internationalisation, there is a great deal of confusion about what it means. For some people, it means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers;

international linkages, partnerships, and projects; and new, international academic programmes and research initiatives. For others, it means the delivery of education to other countries through new types of arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques. To many, it means the inclusion of an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching learning process. Still others see international development projects and, alternatively, the increasing emphasis on trade in higher education as internationalisation”.

From the above, we understand that internationalisation means amongst other things academic mobility, projects, international linkages, international academic programmes and research initiatives, branch campuses or franchises, inclusion of an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the curriculum or into teaching and learning initiatives. Knight (2004) propounded on the key concepts in the definition of internationalisation like process, international, intercultural, and global dimension, integrating, purpose, function, and delivery. Process, she argues, deals with the nature of internationalisation as an ongoing project and not a product. It is evolutionary or developmental and speaks to the tri-part model to education—input, process, and output. The input, process, and output model demand that the particular priorities of a country, an institution, or a specific group of stakeholders be taken into consideration. With regards to international, intercultural, and global dimension, this speaks to the breadth of internationalisation. International consists of the workings between nations or cultures. Intercultural speaks to diversity in cultures existing within, institutions and countries. The global speaks to the scope of internationalisation is being worldwide. Integrating on its part focuses on the process of bringing in an international or intercultural dimension higher education or its processes ensure that the international dimension remains central, not marginal, and is sustainable. Purpose deals with the totality of roles and objectives or the mission and mandate of the university. Function ponders on the workings or primary

elements that necessitates higher education systems or individual institutions and lastly delivery refers to the offering of higher education programmes or courses both nationally and internationally. These key concepts are what makes the definition workable and speak to the multiple manifestations of internationalisation of higher education. Zeleza (2012) confirms this when he argues that academic positions and views on internationalisation differ widely in terms of its constituents, workings and the forces driving it, the values it creates or competencies it promotes, and the processes sustaining it.

Internationalisation therefore is a field difficult to define and even more difficult is the tasking of delineating what constitute or shouldn't constitute internationalisation. In previous decades internationalisation was theorised as consisting of the following activities, amongst others: student and staff exchange, internationalisation of the curriculum and of learning outcomes, and cross-border delivery of programmes, projects and institutions, virtual mobility, research cooperation, knowledge transfer and capacity building, mobility of and competition for students, teachers and scholars; export of academic systems and cultures, digital learning and collaborative online international learning (De Wit & Merckx, 2012; Knight, 2008; Knight & De Wit, 1997, 1999). While this list is not exhaustive, it is to a greater extent comprehensive and touches several key aspects of internationalisation. De Wit et al. (2015b) confirm this when they argue that two key dimensions of internationalisation have emerged: internationalisation abroad and internationalisation at home. Internationalisation abroad refers to all educational activities happening across the borders like mobility of projects, people, programmes, and providers amongst others. Internationalisation at home on the other hand deals with the making of educational more global and is often more curriculum-orientated and gears towards activities that develop international or global understanding and intercultural skills. Although internationalisation abroad can also involve these activities or be curriculum-related and

build a global or international understanding of intercultural skills, making a clear-cut distinction between the two is difficult or impossible. Writing about internationalisation and its workings on the African continent, Teferra (2014a) argues that the relevance of internationalisation in higher education cannot be over-emphasised, especially in this era of the knowledge economy, where research has grown in leaps and bounds on the African continent. This was made possible through the different elements of internationalisations such as student and staff mobility, regional and international networks, research initiatives, quality regimes (accreditation and ranking bodies), publication and communication (journals and databases), English as language of teaching and learning, curricular reform, and new forms of educational delivery. These amongst others therefore constitute the crux of internationalisation, whether it is internationalisation at home or abroad.

However, several voices are beginning to be raised on the westernised nature of internationalisation and the need for the globalisation of the phenomenon to make sure that all parts of the world are true key players and not just passive recipients. Speaking about this, Jones and De Wit (2014, p. 98) argue that

“in the current global knowledge society, the concept of internationalisation of higher education has itself become globalized, demanding further consideration of its impact on policy and practice as more countries and types of institution around the world engage in the process. Internationalisation should no longer be considered in terms of a westernized, largely Anglo-Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking paradigm”.

As such, a move away from the previously western-dominated culture will by and large impact on how internationalisation affects or influences higher education to be more responsive. Jones and De Wit (2014) conclude that there is a strong need to prioritise the enhancement of regionalisation and or South-South cooperation so as to move away from the ‘copy and paste’ syndrome which has seen the western paradigm, as well as the strong propensity to internationalise vertically,

implemented in most parts of the world. If a continent like Africa is to chart its own course on internationalisation, it will have to determine what would constitute internationalisation and how to go about it. For example, in the western paradigm, De Wit (2020, p. 33) argues that

“mobility is still the most dominant factor in internationalisation policies worldwide, and increased attention is being paid to internationalisation of the curriculum at home. This phenomenon emerged at the end of the 1990s as a movement in Europe to reverse the focus on a small number of mobile exchange students”.

While mobility for both students and staff are also important, the medium of instruction, curriculum internationalisation, Africa wide collaborations amongst other things are primary. De Wit (2020, p. 35) concludes that

“internationalisation in the developing world has to avoid simply mimicking the priorities of Anglo-Western forms of this phenomenon and develop distinctive forms which better reflect local needs and priorities; in other words, moving away from coercion to defining intentionally own purposes”.

If Africa is going to intentionally define its own purposes, approaches, and constructs for internationalisation, then it can't be told what constitutes or can't constitute internationalisation within its sphere by the global North. Teferra (2020b, pp. 160-161) on the other hand provides an alternative perspective when he argues that concur with this when he argues that:

“HE in Africa is an international enterprise, ...even the most parochial HE institutions exhibit their international dimension in the language of instruction; the books, journals, and other published resources they consume; the methodologies they pursue; and/or the resources they deploy... African HE is part of the larger global HE system, albeit a much smaller player. Its engagement at the international level is very limited in scope and without notable consequence. As the weakest

global HE system, it relies heavily on the discourses, paradigms and parameters set by others, rendering it vulnerable to global whims and idiosyncrasies. African HE assumes the position of the most internationalised system by being the least internationally engaged. Africa produces a fraction of the world's global knowledge—with the most generous statistics putting such contribution at 2%. The continent thus relies heavily on the knowledge produced by others. The rest of the Global South also falls into this unenviable category. In participating in the massive consumption of these products and services while staunchly, but helplessly, adhering to international academic and scholastic norms and values, universities in the Global South are often not willing parties. Neither is the process of their consumption wholly intentional”.

From this perspective, African higher education is the most internationalised in the world not as a result of contribution but as a result of borrowing from all parts of the world to fill up the gaps in its knowledge economy especially because the continent only contributes about 2 percent of global knowledge. The process of Africanisation and decolonisation has attempted to resolve this in the higher education sector by articulating that even if there is a borrowing, there is need for a contextualising of the same to ensure the local context counts. Although there are alternative perspectives on the decolonisation of higher education in Africa and the way the decolonisation movement should unfold, making the foreign local is one thing most seem to agree on.

Ge (2022) indicated that several national policies focus on internationalisation as an export commodity. While some countries prioritise study abroad and scholarship schemes for its citizens, others focus on international students coming into the country. Some countries choose to include both. On another note, some countries engage in internationalisation with the primary objective of gaining a lead role in the global higher education landscape. Some other nations attempt to create a contextual and or comprehensive approach to supporting the growth of internationalisation initiatives in the local higher education arena, including internationalisation

abroad and at home. For some nations the focus is on strengthening regional scope and corporation, while others have specific programmes or projects which they use to encourage bilateral engagements with international partners in higher education for their universities and this is primarily done through 'soft power'. In some developing or emerging countries, the focus is on human capital development, while in others the promotion of foreign language education is key. On the African continent International Education Association of South Africa (2014) amongst others develop priority key areas for the internationalisation of higher education in Africa. This declaration which was signed by or in agreement with or with representatives from nine national, six regional and nine other organisations, with national, regional, and global responsibilities, affirmed that internationalisation should stimulate global learning for all by paying close attention to the curriculum, COIL, teacher education, and foreign language education. Secondly, it sought the integration of internationalisation initiatives with all action being taken to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thirdly, it demanded the development of an inclusive and social internationalisation approach which is ethical and not primarily concerned with revenue, soft power, and excellence. The declaration also prioritises the stimulation of foreign language, intercultural competence, and global citizenship education, as well as the integration of global, regional, national, and local dimensions to internationalisation initiatives. Adding to this, the internationalisation of the curriculum, with particular attention to new technologies and their usage, as well as the stimulation of carbon-neutral forms of mobility were to be prioritised. Besides internationalising the curriculum, the internationalisation of the student body to make the classroom a more diverse one was encouraged. Also, the stimulation and facilitation of involvement of disadvantaged groups like indigenous or ethnic groups, and academic mobility for refugees was to be at the heart of internationalisation initiatives. Furthermore, the strengthening of relationships between the internationalisation of K-12 and higher education

was highly encouraged. Lastly, the fight for a more wide-ranging approach to bringing together all the dimensions of internationalisation and the reduction of over-commercialisation of internationalisation were touted as key constructs for internationalisation on the continent.

3. Internationalisation Pathway

We return to the definition of internationalisation by articulated by De Wit et al. (2015b) and rearticulated at HEFAALA 2019. As earlier articulated, the bone of contention in the new definition was the notion of intentionality and the function of internationalisation towards enhancing quality and making a meaningful contribution to society. Teferra (2020b) argued that internationalisation in the global South is far from international but is rather the most internationalised higher education system by reason of omission. Since both scholars and others have explored the reasons behind their arguments as to the intentionality or the lack thereof of internationalisation in Africa, my focus here is in what constitutes internationalisation and what does not by virtue of this new definition. From the definition of De Wit et al. (2015b), we can deduce that any attempt at internationalisation which is not intentional or which doesn't contribute to the quality of education and research and make a meaningful contribution in the society cannot be understood as internationalisation. On the other hand, Teferra (2020b) argued that internationalisation in the global South and Africa in particular is far from intentional but is the most internationalised by omission. The question of omission and intention are my focal points here. Teferra (2020b, p. 163) writing about the aspects of internationalisation argues that "key among them are mobility (student and academic), research (cooperation and partnerships), curriculum (delivery and methodology) and language (for instruction and publishing)". However, the very idea of mobility, whether student or staff, is by and large intentional. Academic mobility is an intentional process requiring careful planning and resources to ensure the same is successful. No student or staff member finds themselves in

another country by mistake. Knight and De Wit (2018, p. 3) argue that in

“the discourse and study of internationalisation, a great deal of attention has been paid to all modes of international academic mobility—people, programmes, providers, policies, and projects—but not enough has been paid to the internationalisation of graduate education and research, including international co-authorship and other international research benchmarks”.

This intentional process aligns with the definition under discussion here. However, when mobility is inbound and not outbound, the intentionality on the part of Africa comes into question as Africa becomes a participant by omission, as argued by Teferra. The question of intentionality or not with regards to mobility becomes a difficult one to answer and ceases to be neutral, as with the definition provided by Knight. However, what contributions do such mobility make towards the quality of education and research or how does it make a meaningful contribution in the society? These are questions with relative answers and with the quality of education and research being highly debatable subjects, judging whether mobility of student and staff qualify as internationalisation depends on whether they contribute or fail to contribute to the quality of education and research, or make a meaningful contribution to the society. As such mobility of student or staff, whether outward or inward, can be considered to be internationalisation or not by virtue of the definition (Matola & Fomunyam, 2021). This is supported by Egron-Polak (2021) who argued that high numbers of international students (especially if from only one or two countries or if enrolled in only one or two disciplines) does not constitute internationalisation. It can also be argued that the same is true for staff. If student and staff mobility, which are considered important aspects of internationalisation, are touted as not being internationalisation, what would constitute internationalisation then becomes a grey area which is subjective in nature.

Furthermore, research that is both based in corporations and partnerships can also be questioned as to whether they can constitute internationalisation. Knight and De Wit (2018, p. 3) argue that

“research has become more complex in recent years. It requires, and is distinguished by, more international collaboration than in the past, and it is increasingly competitive in nature. National and institutional needs to acquire academic talent are urgent and processes around issues such as the awarding of patents and knowledge transfer require more support than ever. Growth in international research funding, patents, publications, and citations requires the development of internationalised, or globalised, research teams. Bibliometric analysis yields evidence of increasing collaboration within the international scientific community”.

It is certain that research as relates to corporations and partnerships are a vital part of internationalisation. However, Teferra (2020b) argues that Africa’s knowledge contribution to the global knowledge economy can only be generously placed at 2 percent. Writing about this, he posits that ‘Africa produces a fraction of the world’s global knowledge—with the most generous statistics putting such contribution at 2%. The continent thus relies heavily on the knowledge produced by others’ (160). The debatable nature of knowledge contribution and who determines what exactly constitutes knowledge contribute is highly debatable in this case. This aligns with another argument articulated by Teferra (2017) when he questions the veracity of rankings and measurements which seek to rank or measure African contributions. He states that after the rankings, “the ‘rankers’ go about their business, some with audacity, but too often without sufficient concern for veracity, authenticity or integrity in their methodologies and, especially in the case of Africa, without sufficient data” (Teferra, 2017, p. 18). The measurements of these same rankers can’t be more valid about knowledge contribution than they are about rankings. Questioning these measurements

further, (for research is one of the criteria used in rankings) Teferra continues:

“for the last three years, the University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa has been the first in the country in academic productivity, as measured by the Department of Higher Education and Training. The Department undertakes the task of ranking using parameters that meticulously measure research and academic outputs. Yet, according to the newly released QS ranking—which allocates 60 percent of the criteria to academic reputation—the University of Kwazulu-Natal now stands below six other South African universities. This points to a glaring tension between data and dubious assessment based on reputation” (Teferra, 2017, p. 18).

If the percentage contribution of Africa in the global knowledge sphere is questionable, with research being an intentional process (although Teferra debatably argues that in some cases it is far from intentional), it follows that such partnerships and corporations will constitute internationalisation. However, when this is considered against the backdrop of research enhancing the quality of education or making a meaningful to the society to constitute internationalisation, questions arise as to how this measurement would be done; whether locally or internationally and what criteria would be used to measure the same. These questions leave the process of internationalisation in muddy waters as knowing what constitutes internationalisation is proving increasing difficult.

A further look at language of instruction also presents serious challenges when looking at them in line with the new definition of internationalisation or when pitting it against the arguments advanced against the definition. The language of instruction which is largely English across Africa cannot be said to be intentional but is a consequence of colonisation. The other languages use for instruction on the continent like French, Portuguese, and Spanish, (but not Arabic or Afrikaans) can also be said to be colonial in nature. This is supported by Teferra (2020b, p. 161) who argues that

Chapter 6

“the choice of a language as a medium of academic and scholarly communication is a key aspect of internationalisation. Virtually all countries with a colonial history maintain the language of their colonialists for their academia and scholarship. This is not by choice (and thus not intentional) but de facto a consequence of history. In some countries which set out to change this burden of history, the process has been fraught with contestation—between those in favour and those against change. The push and pull for predominance in international and ‘regional’ languages—between Arabic and French (as in Tunisia), Arabic and English (as in the Sudan), and English and French (as in Algeria, Rwanda, and Senegal)—for the “soul” ... of academic space are instructive. Thus, the internationalisation phenomenon is not only intentional, but fraught with tension and contestation—and is therefore far from intentional”.

The use of English as a medium of instruction here, or any other foreign language at that, is a byproduct of colonialism and a consequence of neo-colonialism, and according to Teferra constitutes internationalisation by omission and not participation. However, Egron-Polak (2021) argues that teaching in English in higher education institutions in non-English speaking countries cannot be considered internationalisation. From this perspective, it would be outrageous to consider the use of English as a medium of teaching and learning or any scholarly communication in an English-speaking country internationalisation. The same logic can be applied to the use of French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, or Mandarin amongst others as the language of teaching and learning in countries where the language is not native. This debate as to whether the language of instruction can be considered internationalisation is further complicated by the construct of intentionality and contribution to quality and society.

The curriculum is another dimension of internationalisation. The internationalisation of the curriculum has been touted as having the potential to contribute effectively to the quality of educational experience for both students and staff in the teaching and learning

process. This is why the same has become predominant in the internationalisation policy for most countries (Fomunyam, 2019). This is supported by Knight (2021) who argues that curriculum internationalisation in recent times focuses on the creation of new programmes with international themes, the infusion of international, cultural, global or comparative dimensions into existing courses, foreign language study, area or regional studies and joint or double degrees as ways of improving the educational experience. According to Teferra (2020b) the internationalisation of the curriculum can be understood as the orientation of content and form to be international so as to prepare students, whether domestic or foreign, to function or perform both socially and professionally in a multicultural and or international space. Zou et al. (2020) argue that internationalisation of the curriculum is often engaged in multiple, competing and even contradictory manners by different institutions thereby creating a conflagration of approaches. Many see it as a top-down strategy aimed at showcasing the university on the global scale and not necessarily the enhancement student learning. As such the internationalisation of the curriculum is seen as a continuum, though others see it as a means to an end and not an end in itself (Egron-Polak, 2021). Other perspectives on the internationalisation of the curriculum simply conceive it as the task of making the curriculum content internationally relevant, or as an instrument with which students can be provided international exposure. Better still, it can be seen as a tool to prepare students for globalisation and the fourth industrial revolution. Regardless of how curriculum internationalisation is viewed, it must be understood or construed as working towards a greater good which to Egron-Polak (2021) is an enhanced student experience but to De Wit et al. (2015b) is the enhancement of the quality of education and research and making a meaningful contribution to the society while at the same time being very intentional in its purpose. Though internationalisation of curricula cannot be debated as constituting internationalisation, the question of its intentionality can be debated when look at from the backdrop of curriculum decolonisation or recent curriculum

theories which speak to contextual relevance rather than global experience (Fomunyam, 2020a, 2020b). Further debates arise on whether the internationalisation of the curriculum contributes to the enhancement of quality and this would be particularly tricky because one would have to study which curriculum matters are embedded in the said curriculum, what responsibilities they carry, the orientation of responsiveness, or what dimensions of responsiveness they are able to achieve, amongst others (Fomunyam & Teferra, 2017).

4. Conclusion

All in all, whether the aspects describe above constitute internationalisation or not, by virtue of the arguments outlined and the viewpoints being articulated, the focus of this chapter is on the fact that as long as they contribute to an enhanced student experience, regardless of how that is measured, at least we move forwards. Internationalisation in higher education has always been and will continue to be a hot potato, with divergent and conflicting views on the subject, as well as on what purpose it should serve. The reconfiguration of the definition and the debates it generated all testify to the subjective and debatable nature of the sub-field. While most scholars agree that internationalisation of some sort in the higher education environment is valuable, there is no consensus on how that value can be measured. This is why an attempt by De Wit et al. (2015b) to bring to light certain criteria (intentionality and meaningful contribution to the society) has met with stiff resistance particularly from those in the global South as a whole, and Africa in particular, who contend that the playing field is not levelled. Their contention is that using certain criteria which would apply globally would be a fallacy because while internationalisation happens everywhere, it happens intentionally in some places but by omission in others.

With or without internationalisation, higher education institutions in Africa need to work towards building the best educational architecture to ensure that their students

get the best of educational experiences. From teaching and learning to research, or from curriculum to academic support it is clear that nothing works by itself, and no amount of internationalisation would make a difference without the institutions making a significant change in the structure and operation of the institutions, as well as their approach. The quality of education would not simply improve because of academic mobility of student and or staff, or the quality of curriculum experience would not increase because an international component has been added into it. The fundamental questions around this focus on whether the staff and students possess enough social, cultural, economic, and political capital to engage at that level, and whether the set curriculum can be contextually responsive. Furthermore, questions will arise on the ability of the staff to promote disciplinary responsiveness regardless of whether they are foreign or local.

This chapter therefore notes the following: that whether internationalisation takes place or not, all activities being engaged with to promote an enhanced educational experience for both students and staff should be encouraged and supported at all levels. Secondly, there is a need for further debate and engagement on higher education and particularly how it relates to Africa, so as to improve understanding and avoid fostering neo-colonialism and its ills on the continent. Thirdly, the subject of internationalisation needs to be understood from the backdrop of decolonisation and the merits it carries, and not on the back of sentiments and global belonging. Fourth, the constellations around internationalisation with regards to excellence and relevance need to be further theorised and understood against the need for responsiveness in African higher education, for Africa is yet to reach the stage where the scholar can stay in his or her ivory tower and forget the fact that higher education in Africa is a public good and must contribute immensely to the society. Although the desire to remain fascinated with ideas is strong, action-oriented research is needed on the continent and Africa must start setting its own research agenda if this goal (action

oriented research) is to be achieved. Finally, with or without internationalisation, we move forward as a continent, striving to ensure that all the facets of higher education work together to give all concerned the best of experiences.

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