Emerging Concept of Internationalisation in South African Higher Education

Conversations on Local and Global Exposure at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)

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Rather than paying attention to the specific approaches emerging from different contexts, current debates tend to privilege Western-universalizing concepts of internationalisation, unproblematically accepted as globally established truths. In South Africa, where the legacy of isolation and the dominance of Eurocentricism in academia have inspired considerable scepticism regarding internationalisation, the challenge is to find innovative approaches that account for its specific context. This article responds to this challenge by examining the emerging concept of internationalisation at Wits. It does so with reference to three questions: What conceptions inform the internationalisation practice at Wits? Does Wits have appropriate strategies in place to promote internationalisation? How do these match its particular circumstances?

Keywords: *internationalisation; international education; globalisation; regionalisation; international students; interinstitutional partnerships; study abroad*

There seems to be an increasing consensus in many countries about the need for the university to internationalise in the context of globalisation, especially in issues concerning programmes, research, faculty and students, and institutional environment (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004; Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998; Shinn, Welch, & Bagnall, 1999). However, there is very little agreement about what internationalisation means and what strategies are most effective for its implementation. Unfortunately, current debates on internationalisation do very little to address this problem (Knight, 2003). Rather than paying attention to the specific approaches emerging from different contexts, these seem to be concerned with legitimizing universalizing concepts and approaches to internationalisation emanating from the experiences of West European and North

American countries, which are unproblematically accepted as globally established truths. Particularly in South Africa, where the legacy of isolation and the dominance of Eurocentricism in academic practice have been reflected by a degree of scepticism regarding internationalisation, the challenge is to find creative and flexible approaches that account for the country-specific contextual imperatives. This article responds to this challenge by examining the emerging concept of internationalisation at Wits with focus on the constructs of students and staff and with reference to what goes on campus.

Drawing on survey data and interviews of staff and students on their experiences and perceptions, and their understandings of these, the article addresses three main questions: What conceptions and interpretations inform the internationalisation practice at Wits? Does Wits have appropriate strategies and adequate measures in place to promote internationalisation? How do these match its particular institutional, social, and geopolitical circumstances? The article argues that, in face of fierce and conflicting debate about what constitutes internationalisation and whether it is indeed needed, the university has not yet been able to establish with self-confidence its identity and develop, in a more systematic way, a uniquely "Wits" model of internationalisation. It appears that this is a common problem in most tertiary institutions in South Africa, though research is needed to validate this hypothesis. Under the peculiar circumstances of higher education in South Africa, the article warns against a conception of internationalisation conceived within the narrow framework of "international education," which in Sehoole's (2006, p. 1) view is "as old as the advent of colonialism," hence the increasing contestation. It conceptualizes the emerging concept of internationalisation as the foundation for a balanced and integrated university experience at the interface of global and local exposure.

Uncovering the Essence of Internationalisation Practice in Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework

Internationalisation of higher education is a complex, multidimensional, and often fragmented process (Frølich & Veiga, 2005) and a response to globalisation (Allen & Ogilvie, 2004; Huisman, 2007; Rouhani, 2007; Sehoole, 2006; Seidel, 1991; van der Wende, 2001). In our analysis, we first consider current patterns in international literature. In this regard, much of the literature on internationalisation concentrates on three major focal areas of university practice. The first focal area generally concerns cross-cultural and adaptational issues of staff and students (Altbach, 2002, 2004a, 2005; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Brown, 2008). The second focal area involves the nature and the implications of international student and staff mobility for national and institutional policies and national economies (Altbach, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2006; Knight, 2004b;

Lee & Rice, 2007; Maiworm & Teichler, 1995; Nyborg, 1996). The third focal area comprises evaluation studies, that is, the evaluation and appraisal of international programmes, including international office activities (Healey, 2008; Maiworm & Teichler, 1995; Teichler, 1999; van der Wende, 2001).

In addition, there is an area of literature which pays attention to new trends in knowledge production and distribution, with an emphasis on the position of developing countries (Anderson & Maharasoa, 2002; Knight, 2004a, 2007; Kraak, 2004; Turpin, Iredale, & Crinnion, 2002). Besides old debates on the unequal distribution of knowledge production between developed and developing countries, this literature highlights the fact that some developing countries are increasingly assuming the role of source of knowledge and manpower development for other developing countries, a function that previously was the province of developed countries. A final area of literature that merits attention deals with globalisation, regionalisation, and internationalisation, with a focus on selected national systems of higher education (Allen & Ogilvie, 2004; Chan & Dimmock, 2008; Kishun, 2007; Scott, 2000). This article adopts an integrated approach to internationalisation as systemic and institutional practice reflected in the experience of the university community and brings the four dimensions together (cross-cultural and adaptation issues, cross-border transactions, knowledge production and distribution, and the globalisation and internationalisation drivers and mediators) through the lenses of staff and student experiences and perceptions.

The article also draws on three thoughtful insights provided by Ramphele (1999). The first is that, by its nature, the university cannot be an isolated island; "university education demands the transcendence of all boundaries, be they physical, cultural, real or imaginary" (Ramphele, 1999, p. 5). For her, the university is transnational, transcontinental, and transcultural. The idea was well captured in the words of a head of school interviewed in the course of this study: "The idea of an intellectual has to be broader than a national definition, otherwise it becomes a little more than cheap parochialism." The second is that the university has an international responsibility as a generator of new knowledge for the international community. The third is that the university is simultaneously global/universal, local, and regional. As Ramphele (1999) put it, "although universities are international, they are also integrated into a given society and region, and social, political and economic system" (p. 5). It is this multidimensional and dynamic nature of the university that should characterise its activities and dictate in large measure the nature of its mission, vision, and strategies. The implication is that the university exists in the interface of the global and the local: "It is about living on planet earth rather than living in isolation," said a head of school. Analytically, the challenge is about being able to establish a balance between these two poles in the university practice—the global and the local in its provision, strategies, processes, and outcomes.

Finally, to account for the complexity of the global/local interface, the article examines the ways in which the intersections and interactions (sometimes productive,

sometimes not) among various actors in the university influence the quality of exposure of students, and ultimately their positioning as active agents of change in their context and the international world. It does so by exploring student and staff constructs with reference to three main conceptual domains, informed by Bernstein's (1990, 2000) analysis of "intellectual fields" and "pedagogical identities." The first intellectual field is the official field, referred to in this article as the *official domain*. It encompasses aspects that have some bearing on the shaping or reproduction of the dominant institutional culture (e.g., institutional vision or mission, policies, rules, and guidelines that regulate academic and social life on campus). The second intellectual field is the pedagogic field, referred to as the *pedagogic domain.* It includes discourses, strategies, inputs, and processes connected to the university's curriculum, teaching, and learning activities (i.e., academic culture and practices). This distinction is useful in that it provides a framework for mapping out the key institutional domains of practice where the interplay of mediating factors in student experience takes place, namely, the official domain, the domain of pedagogy, and, in addition, the social domain or the domain of everyday life on campus. It is the dialectic between global and local/contextual pressures in these domains and the experience they enable that define the internationalisation character of an academic institution.

With reference to these conceptual lenses, we set ourselves to interrogate the idea of internationalisation in the light of the experience of Wits. Drawing from this experience, we also highlight our own positionality in the debate.

Method

The empirical base of this article resides in five major studies of staff and students at Wits, conducted during the past 5 years (Alence, 2007; Cross & Johnson, 2003; Cross et al., 2004; Cross, Shalem, Backhouse, Adam, & Baloyi, 2007; Van Zyl, Steyn, & Orr, 2003). Of central importance was the survey on internationalisation at Wits conducted in 2004. The other surveys dealt with issues concerning campus climate, institutional culture and student performance, and covered dimensions of internationalisation. Important secondary data were obtained from two important qualitative studies on institutional culture at Wits (Cross et al., 2007; Van Zyl et al., 2003) as well as interviews with heads of schools, academic and administrative staff, and students.

The 2004 survey sought views on internationalisation in relation to staff and students, its priorities and practices, the degree to which it had been implemented and had impacted on research, curriculum practice, and social life on campus. It targeted mainly 3rd- and 4th-year undergraduate students and all postgraduate students. The sample consisted of 2,081 students out of a population of 11,555 students, 51% men and 49% women. Only 6.46% of this sample was younger than 20, with the majority being aged between 20 and 24; only 15.8% had been registered for a

year or less. The sample was intentionally skewed toward more mature students and included students from all five faculties with the largest number from humanities and the smallest from health sciences (Cross et al, 2004, pp. 10-14). Black students (53.4%) made up the majority of the sample, followed by White (29.4%) and Indian students (11.8%). International students represented 22% of the sample. The survey also covered 180 members of academic staff out of a total population of 1,956 with ages ranging from below 25 to above 60. A total of 53% were women and 47% men, whereas 69% were born in South Africa with a further 13% holding permanent residence. Reflecting the racial composition of staff at Wits, White staff represented the majority of the sample (61%), Africans (Blacks; 20%), and Indians (14%) making up rest of the sample (Cross et al, 2004, p. 46-48).

"Wits Gives You the Edge": What Does the Metaphor Have to Do With It?

Both students and staff at Wits share similar views about the demonstrated reputation that Wits enjoys. Student views are articulated through several descriptors based on the information from parents, friends, media, loyal alumni, proud staff members, and fellow students. Here are some examples: "a world-class university," "an institution with an international reputation," "a leading university in Africa," "a centre of excellence," "Wits offers a high standard of education," "an internationally recognised university," "it has a very good reputation, more than other universities in South Africa," "The qualifications of Wits are top-notch," "A centre of intellectual thought," and "I always thought it was a cool university . . . you know when kids say it's cool, it's something they want to get into . . . probably because it's in Joburg and Joburg is the thing." Students comment that Wits offers more than just a qualification; it offers both formal curriculum and opportunities to develop leadership skills and access to powerful social networks. In this regard, some students alluded to the advertisement slogan "Wits gives you the edge" (Cross et al., 2007).

It has been argued elsewhere that this reputation could be interpreted as a reflection of good institutional practice (Cross et al., 2007). It is a historical legacy that needs to be cherished and developed through context-sensitive and innovative strategies. However, in the light of the generalised scepticism expressed by heads of schools, it may already be in danger. For these, if Wits claims to be or is regarded as a "world-class university," it should be clear that its students come to the institution because of the superior curriculum it offers, the unique supervision available from staff, the cultural experience the university can offer, and because of the supportive environment created for international students. This can only be achieved if the knowledge basis, the curriculum provision, the intellectual orientation, the social environment, and the combination of teaching and learning inputs and processes provide students with a suitable combination of national and international perspectives for

gaining and exercising citizenship in an increasing globalized world (Cross, 2004, p. vi; Wits, 2005).

Emerging Perspectives on Internationalization at Wits

According to Knight (2008), *internationalization* is a term that means different things to different people and while it is encouraging to see the increased use and attention given to it, there is a great deal of confusion about what it means. From the literature, internationalisation is connected to three overlapping but analytically distinct phenomena: (a) international activities such as academic mobility of students and staff, interinstitutional partnerships, academic programs and research, including the forging of enabling co-operative agreements; (b) delivery of education programmes to other countries (also known as offshore education) through arrangements such as satellite campuses, or franchising, using a variety of face-to-face and distance learning strategies; and (c) integration of an international, intercultural, and/or global dimension into the curriculum; teaching and learning; research; and service functions (Knight, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Chan & Dimmock, 2008). It is also seen as embracing "a multitude of activities aimed at providing an educational experience within an environment that truly integrates a global perspective" (De Wit, 2002, p. 109).

Some universities in the developed world have adopted a more holistic approach with respect to activities linked to internationalisation, as opposed to focusing solely on transaction of ideas, staff, and student mobility. They link internationalisation to staff development, curriculum innovation, and organizational change (Leask, 2001; Sanderson, 2008). However, the concerns of the developed world are not necessarily the same as those of the developing world. Fundamental differences exist. These differences became obvious in the course of our interviews with staff. Against this background, it is necessary to develop an enabling conceptual framework that takes these contextual challenges seriously to assist the university in developing coherent principles to guide policy and practice. For the purpose of this research, we were guided by the following question: How can we conceptualize internationalisation in a way that takes into account our specific contextual and institutional challenges and identity? We address this important question with reference to the various constructs from staff and students.

" . . . Living on Planet Earth Rather Than Living in Isolation . . .": The Promises of Internationalisation

There is general recognition of the value of international exposure at Wits University. This recognition runs across the constructs of most of our interviewees: "The need for intellectuals to talk to each other cannot be boundary defined or national boundary defined; the idea of an intellectual has to be broader than a national

definition, otherwise it becomes a little more than cheap parochialism." Or "if the staff are exposed to what's happening in the world, it will broaden their horizons on what to research." More interesting are accounts from those who reason in favour of internationalisation. Two competing discourses can be identified among them. There are those who approach internationalisation within a discourse of possibilities and opportunities underpinned by a certain degree of optimism concerning the beneficial potential of it. They regard it as a positive process with social and material benefits (e.g., cross-cultural interaction, cross-fertilisation in academic activities, source of income, etc.). One discourse places emphasis on the assumption that internationalisation imparts international perspectives and values and enhances the development of a multicultural outlook in an individual, including desirable attributes that foster what Durkheim terms *organic solidarity* between and among different nations and racial groups (Lukes, 1973; Sporer, 2000).

Another discourse privileges concerns premised on globalisation, that is, on the assumption that the interdependence of today's economies and societies profoundly affects higher education and this in turn shapes globalisation—through teaching, research, and other services (De Wit, 2005). The general convincing rationale for this persuasion is that the modern world is fast moving into an age where society, economy, and knowledge are all part of a global environment characterized by a mix of local and global influences. University education will more and more demand the transcendence of all forms of boundaries, be they physical, cultural, real, or imaginary (Cross & Rouhani, 2004). In response to globalization, countries are placing greater priority on the international dimension of higher education. Also in today's economic environment, money matters. Emphasis is also placed on the income-generation potential of internationalisation through cross-border activities.

There are also those who reason within a discourse of constraints (economic, financial, and cultural) and as such articulate views underpinned by a degree of pessimism towards internationalisation. The pessimistic view regards the process as being neither rewarding nor detrimental as it does not necessarily yield the expected outcomes. This has been conceptualised as a "mind-set" problem by one of our interviewees:

> I think there's actually a mindset problem . . . I actually think there was a . . . mentality in the South-African universities . . . a result of apartheid and boycotts and all of that. And I think that some universities, not Wits [apologetic], but some universities say, "Well, to hell with it, we don't need that internationalisation," you know; "why on earth am I bothering with an international student when I've got a local student who can't get tuition" and that sort of thing. So there's a parochial self-interest that raises its head.

Many universities in South Africa are converts of the optimistic view, and attach material or social benefits to internationalisation, though individual faculty members and administrators hold conflicting views on the matter. Based on this view, most

universities today regard the internationalisation of services as a priority, though they address it in varied ways and from different conceptual standpoints. Some heads of schools see it as a cultural and academic enrichment strategy: "The only reason for internationalisation is cultural and academic enrichment. . . it is a pity that it has become a money making in Britain; I hope it doesn't happen here." Student and staff mobility in particular are seen as central to cultural and academic enrichment:

> So if you are going to . . . work somewhere else, you are wanting to get another dimension . . . which gives you fresh ideas on how to approach things . . . So . . . the advantage for us for postdocs and other staff members coming here is they . . . bring a different approach and other expertise that we wouldn't be able to have now, in terms of training, in terms of science.

Unfortunately, this important dimension tends to be superseded by economic concerns for those who associate the influx of foreign students with income generation as the single most important aspect of internationalisation. These students, it is argued, come from relatively wealthy families or have international foundations as their sponsors. They cover their student tuition with American dollars and find studying in South Africa one of the cheapest options in the world.

Historical Distortions and Peculiar Institutional Displacement

Given the apartheid legacy, South African universities suffer from different forms of displacement. First, through the isolation imposed by apartheid, they have been object of social and cultural displacement within the African continent. Basically, no university had significant research or academic links with institutions from the rest of the continent. As such, Wits has been historically cut off from the continent. Second, in their academic practices, historically privileged institutions (Afrikaans- and English-speaking universities) have also been displaced from the South African social and cultural space. According to Makgoba (1999), this is in contrast to world trends in which, while maintaining the universal concept of a university, higher education institutions have adapted to the values and needs of their respective environments. For him, "The university system in each country had features of originality and uniqueness" (pp. 8-9). He is concerned with the need for developing truly African universities, which reflect the specificities of each country, without isolating themselves from the international community. For us, Makgoba provides an answer to an important concern that runs through the minds of many South African academics: How can South African universities be asked to incorporate an international dimension in their business when most of it has already been "international" and had very little local? As will be illustrated, it is the question that informs the constructs of Wits academics behind the emerging concept of internationalisation. Third, another problem is the incestuous academic production and reproduction in South African universities. These have operated largely as closed systems where

graduates of the same institution replace their own professors with very little space left for recruitment of outsiders. As a head of school put it:

> . . . We tend to be intellectually incestuous. And there are obvious conditions and reasons for that . . . It has certain advantages but the disadvantages are quite large. What we do is we reproduce all forms of conceptions of the intellectual . . . The idea of being able to get into another institution to see how people are doing it elsewhere is very important for us.

This incestuous legacy tends to curtail intellectual cross-fertilisation and sound academic practice. It is certainly to blame for the rising concerns about the aging faculty at Wits.

The legacy discussed in this section has profound implications for the concept of internationalisation. Faculty constructs pointed to three important principles underpinning this concept: (a) internationalisation as "relocalisation," (b) internationalisation as "Africanisation," and (c) internationalisation as diversification of academic staff and students.

Internationalisation as relocalisation: "Think locally first so as to gain internationality." "Think locally first so as to gain internationality," this is a phrase used by a head of school to suggest that internationalisation does not mean abandoning the local. This view came predominantly from those who displayed a degree of pessimism or scepticism regarding the value of internationalisation, given the legacy of isolation from Africa but not necessarily from Western academic traditions. Interviewees suggested that universities must be local as well as international: "It is by becoming an expert in the local that a department or faculty will enjoy international esteem"; "Good local study will draw appreciation from abroad." Likewise, when teaching disciplinary knowledge there is no reason why this cannot be presented using the local context:

> Wits is largely Eurocentric, which should change. I'm not saying in a nationalistic way because there are certain ideas from the West, particularly the enlightenment ideas, relevant to all countries in the world, which we shouldn't lose. But at the same time, we shouldn't be keeping everything that happens in Europe.

As indicated here, this is not to underestimate the advantages of an outside perspective, which for some scholars not only is inevitable but also necessary. Emphasis on the local comes as a response to the alarming lack of knowledge of the South African context: "This is a country of strangers, most of my faculty have no clue of what it's like growing up in a township; they haven't been to a township." Aggravating this lack of local knowledge is the perception still reminiscent in some schools that "if we develop internationalisation that is more Africa-related . . . it would be perceived as lowering standards." A weakness is also the tendency to conceptualise

internationalisation as being about having international students. It was highlighted in several answers to one of our interview questions: What do you understand by the term internationalisation and what are your views about it? The answers provided by heads of schools typify what appears to be a widely shared concern among faculty members: "Well, internationalisation, I believe . . . should be: . . . having undergraduate students in our school . . . from the rest of the world but particularly the African continent."

This is in contrast with an account from another head of school who contended: "It is not just about that, it is also about exposing local students to international environments through exchange programmes as part of their programmes at the University of the Witwatersrand." Emerging from these constructs is a concept of internationalisation which is not only about the influx of foreign staff and students but also about providing a unique local and global experience to all staff and students: "The university must be a repository for the kind of thinking that produces leadership in solving all problems—including local ones—from a global perspective." This could entail, for example, developing programmes that improve the ability to work and develop effectively in an increasingly globalised environment and to communicate comfortably with citizens of other cultures. It goes beyond study abroad programmes or just visiting another country for a vacation, or attending a professional conference outside South Africa. It is about engaging meaningfully in the world. In this perspective, staff and students must be enabled (a) to address problems of both local and global importance, (b) to work effectively in a diverse cultural environment, (c) to produce knowledge that benefits national and international communities by drawing on local and African experience, and (d) to work together in defining Wits' comparative advantage to enhance the environment for teaching and learning. This environment must be able to nurture all participants regardless of their origin, race, class, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

Academic practice rooted in the university's comparative advantage: Internationalisation as Africanisation? An important part of internationalisation must therefore be the university's engagement with Africa, and this should constitute the basis for its comparative advantage. Highly emphasised by respondents was the direction they believe the university in Africa should encourage in shaping its unique identity around the concept of internationalisation. In this perspective, the university's engagement with Africa was object of different interpretations: (a) taking Africa as the primary object of knowledge production, (b) privileging indigenous knowledge in teaching and learning, and (c) having significant representation of African students and academic staff. Of significant importance to our study was the notion of internationalisation as "Africanisation," a very familiar though highly contested concept. What is then Africanisation?

Although Africanisation has dominated South African black politics from the days of Africanism in the 1950s and early 1960s and under the Black Consciousness

Movement in the late 1960s, only in the post-1994 period did it become a legitimate theme in higher education debates (Cross, 1999). Currently, one could distinguish three major connotations attached to the concept of Africanisation: (a) Africanisation as curriculum responsiveness, (b) Africanisation as an epistemological redirection, and (c) Africanisation as an identity recreation of the university (Jeevanantham, 1999; Makgoba, 1999; Mseleku, 2004). The notion of Africanisation as curriculum responsiveness has undergone several metamorphoses from earlier concerns with the integration of "African studies" aspects in the university curriculum to current concerns with more fundamental issues such as the Africanisation of the curriculum knowledge, conceived as being responsive to the African context and integration of indigenous knowledge into the academic curriculum (Moll, 2004, p. 15).

In line with Africanisation as an epistemological redirection, fundamental changes should start at knowledge production level by shifting from "the monochrome logic of Western epistemology" and "bring indigenous knowledge systems into the formal realm (Hoppers, 2002, p. vii)." This should impact on the transformation of knowledge-generating activities in higher education institutions(Crossman & Devisch, 2002; Hoppers, 2002, p. vii) .Yet, as clearly shown by Moll (2004), there is no single voice among African scholars about what a new epistemology would be like. Some argue for indigenization of the Western idea of rationality in African spiritual wisdoms. Others argue for a socially relevant research and teaching, which focus on the most pressing issues in Africa such as rural poverty and underdevelopment, illiteracy, and cultural domination. Seepe and Makgoba, who lean towards Africanisation as an identity recreation, call for radical overhauling of the culture of the university, including its administrative, academic, and pedagogic practices: "The African identity of the institution should be located in the treatment of African issues not as a by-product but by moving African issues in the academic, social, political and economical milieu from the periphery to the centre" (Seepe, 1999, p. 1; Seepe, 2004). This is reiterated by Jeevanantham (1999, pp. 54-76), who highlights the need for moving subjugated discourse from the periphery to the centre. Makgoba (1999) offers the following account:

> Africanisation is the *process or vehicle* for defining, interpreting, promoting and transmitting African thought, philosophy, identity and culture. It encompasses an African mindset or mind-set shift from the European to an African paradigm. Through Africanisation we *affirm* and *identify* ourselves in the world community. Africanisation involves incorporating, adapting, integrating other cultures into and through *African visions and interpretations* to provide the dynamism, evolution and adaptation that is so essential for survival and success of peoples of African origin in the global village. It is logic and a way of life for Africans. By *inclusivity,* Africanisation is non-racial (p. 177).

It follows that for an institution that claims in its mission statement to be a truly African university, "this should be reflected in its institutional culture, its curriculum and its library holdings" and practices (Mseleku, 2004, p. 2).

We explored the implications of these discourses with heads of school self-proclaimed as protagonists of internationalisation as Africanisation. For one of these, an effective internationalisation strategy needed to draw on what constitutes the university's comparative advantage—its strategic location in Johannesburg, Gauteng, and Africa. As one interviewee put it: "If Wits University is a world class university, it should be the best place to study African issues and not Oxford or Harvard; the university has to make internationalisation a selling point to survive as a leading university in Africa." This was further articulated by another head of school who was passionate about the idea of internationalisation pursued by his school with the endorsement of the Vice-Chancellor's office:

> Internationalisation means Africanisation. The University as it is thought of is an African University cut off historically from the continent. If it is a national institution, it's going to respond to what the priorities of the government and the nation are . . . it must engage with the rest of Africa. Secondly, if it is going to have the pretension . . . that it is a world-class university, it is not going to be a world-class university by trying to replicate . . . Harvard or Oxford or the orientation northward . . . The way this University will be a world-class university is if it's perceived by the rest of the world as the place to go to for expertise. On what? "Africa" . . . If it's going to be competitive in the student market . . . , it has to make internationalisation a selling point for students . . . by showing that it has incredible comparative advantage on internationalisation as meaning Africanisation.

> . . . The only reason why stress Africanisation or African focus is because that's where I think Wits has comparative advantages. That's where 80% of our graduate students and our foreign students come from. That's the neighbourhood we live in and that's where the national interest can be . . . So Wits has the position to start as an African asset. All tertiary universities in this country have to rethink their role as African assets because the continent is demanding it. . .

Uncertainty still prevails concerning Wits comparative advantage as an urban, Johannesburg-based university and the possibilities that this could open for strengthening South–South partnerships.

Internationalisation as diversification. Internationalisation also means not working in isolation. It means understanding what is happening beyond one's immediate arena. For some, internationalisation entails cross-border contact: "I guess it means increasing contact with universities outside South Africa . . . resuming research collaboration with other universities, and maybe formal agreements with universities about exchange of students, that kind of thing." For others, internationalisation means exposing students and staff to international perspectives to enable them to acquire experience and prepare them to work locally and elsewhere: "If the staff is exposed to what's happening in the world, it will broaden their horizons on what to research . . . I believe we will come up with a lot more meaningful research" and "at postgraduate level, such cross-cutting culture across the world . . . for me, was . . . an enriching experience." This could be achieved through diversification of students and staff.

Possibilities and Constraints

Wits has now an internationalisation policy endorsed in its mission statement and strategic plan. Accordingly, Wits commits itself to the following: (a) to expand academic activities with selected universities in Africa while positioning itself as a world-class institution in its activities and values, (b) to attract a diverse mix of staff and students while fostering mobility of its students and staff to other countries, and (c) to increase the enrolment of international students to 10% of registration numbers. It recognises the academic and monetary value of this strategy. Activities envisaged in its implementation include curricula review to enable students to develop international perspectives, contribution to the development of Southern African Development Community countries, improvement of services and programmes to meet the needs of a diverse student population, promotion of study abroad programmes and interinstitutional partnerships, and exchange agreements with institutions in Southern African Development Community countries, the rest of Africa, and the world at large (Wits, 1999; Wits, 2005).

However, implementing internationalisation under contradictory discourses is extremely complex. This is why staff and students need to have a nuanced understanding of how their practice fits into the broader picture of internationalisation. Interesting insights worth noting emerged from the study. First, success of internationalisation depends on the role of champions, role models, and individual personalities as much as on enabling institutional environment. It cannot be resolved only through tight policy directives: "I'm not sure whether you can write policies about these things, nor can you force people to do it. You know, that's the point about intellectual respect." Second, in addition to formal policy the university requires a louder "voice" from its management on the direction that internationalisation ought to follow in practice. University officials should speak up, initiate where it is required, and take lead in promoting or supporting examples of good practice and the value of cross-cultural interaction at all levels of university life. Third, the main barriers that prevent faculty from engaging in internationalisation activities are time, money, and the sense of unrecognised effort as well as inexperience and lack of institutional support. It seems that greater institutional role is required in this regard.

Overall and Implications
for Higher Education in South Africa

Overall, the picture of internationalisation that emerges at Wits is varied, multidimensional, and paradoxical. There is evidence of considerable effort to internationalize the university and an overall institutional strategy and a detailed business plan are in place. In substantive terms, we have the impression of considerable effort and well-targeted accomplishment in some schools and underexploited potential in

others. On the balance, we believe that staff and students, in their different understandings and interpretations, are increasingly embracing the new idea of internationalisation. However, in strategic terms, Wits has not yet clearly achieved synergy between these efforts and its core business, that is, the advancement of knowledge through research, teaching, and learning.

The article has considerable implications for the debate on internationalization of higher education in South Africa. First, it points to a paradigm shift in existing internationalization approaches. At the institutional level, the traditional emphasis on inward movement of staff and students needs to be balanced by an outward movement of staff and students to benefit from direct cross-cultural exposure and experience of the outside world. To the scattered, fragmented, and uncoordinated initiatives championed by dedicated individuals, institutions are urged to respond with integrated, broader, and institution-wide internationalization strategies as well as synergies with their missions and strategic plans. The conditions for the paradigm shift already exist in many universities. These are embedded in some innovative practices, particularly at the level of teaching, research, and interinstitutional partnerships. At the national level, the impact of the absence of a cohesive and systematic internationalisation policy framework remains unexplored and represents a challenge to all stakeholders. These are however areas in need of systematic empirical enquiry.

Central to the current debate is the new concept of internationalisation defined by (a) focus on the experience that institutions provide to all their graduates irrespective of origin, race, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, or other forms of diversity and difference; (b) a multidimensional implementation strategy, so as to synchronize cross-cultural understanding, enhance services, management, and governance structures, and improve academic and pedagogical practices; (c) integration of internationalisation activities into the curriculum, research, and campus environments (ethos and social relations); (d) promotion of cross-cultural understanding as a key strategic goal in research, teaching and learning, and campus life; (e) synergy between internationalisation practices and institutional policy; and (f) extension of international services to make them available to all university constituencies; not just international students and faculty.

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