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## International Student Recruitment: South African Rationales

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### Abstract

In this paper, we focus on the rationales for the recruitment of international students to universities in South Africa. Through the use of in-depth interviews with international officers at a cross-section of South African universities, we argue that there are competing and complementary rationales for the recruitment of international students. Some South African universities follow international trends in terms of international student recruitment while others adopt a different approach. The analysis locates the rationales of international student recruitment as part of an internationalisation process within the context of globalisation.

### Résumé

Dans cet article, nous nous focalisons sur les raisons derrière le recrutement des étudiants internationaux dans les universités de l'Afrique du Sud. Basé sur des interviews approfondies que nous avons menées avec les agents internationaux mandatés par les universités en Afrique du Sud, nous soutenons qu'il existe des raisons d'ordre compétitif et complémentaire qui expliquent le recrutement d'étudiants internationaux. Certaines universités sud africaines suivent la tendance de tels recrutement alors que d'autres adoptent une approche différente. Cette analyse identifie les raison du recrutement des étudiants internationaux dans le cadre du processus d'internationalisation dans le contexte de la globalisation.

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### **Globalisation, internationalisation and higher education**

A useful distinction is made between globalisation and internationalisation (Altbach and Knight 2007:290). They define globalisation as

‘the economic, political and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement. Global capital... [has] heavily invested in knowledge industries worldwide, including higher education and advanced training. This investment reflects the emergence of the ‘knowledge society’, the rise of the service sector and the dependence of many societies on knowledge products and highly educated personnel for economic growth’ (ibid).

For Altbach and Knight (2007:290) ‘internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions...to cope with the global academic environment’. Knight (2006:44) also suggests internationalisation is ‘...the process of integrating an international, inter-cultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education’. Moreover, Altbach and Knight (2007:291) suggest ‘globalization may be unalterable, but internationalization includes many choices’. The distinction in definitions is helpful; however, their account lacks an analysis of the ideological element of globalisation and internationalisation. Scott (2006:23) in his analysis of the dynamics of internationalisation contrasts a neoliberal market orientation optimised by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) including higher education with the more cooperative policies of the Bologna process. It is useful to distinguish between the internationalisation rationales and practices and indeed the motivations of university representatives in South Africa towards the recruitment of international students.

Our analysis focuses on how the rationales of universities in South Africa can be located within a range of discourses. The intentions of recruiting international students whether within Africa to South Africa or from around the world to Europe, the United States or Australia amongst others can be in terms of traditional notions of the Republic of Letters and Science or enhancing the status of the university that competes on a global stage.

In assessing the rationales adopted towards international student recruitment in universities in South Africa, one feature that is significant is the reality and rhetoric of market competition for students at national, regional and global levels. This market and its competitiveness influences the practice and interacts with the motivation and indeed the recruitment of students within the global higher education system. Marginson (2006) compares the recruitment of international students in Australia and the United States and provides a useful analy-

sis of how the higher education market functions on a global scale but with the omission of discussion of student movements from and within Africa in particular. The drive to recruit international students to enhance the academic prestige of elite institutions and provide income for a range of institutions certainly in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom and possibly in South Africa occurs (Slaughter & Leslie 1997; Stromquist 2007). This dynamic may conflict with policies of equality of opportunity to improve the opportunities of disadvantaged home students.

Brown and Lauder (2006), provide an analysis of the graduate market and the importance of the positional market in higher education. Marginson (2006) considers the elite institutions and research universities who are consistently ranked highly in world tables. They are able to maintain their positions through providing a positional good of high academic and economic importance for themselves, students and staff. As the leading institutions have a world presence, they attract bright students and high achieving academic staff from around the world as they have the best post-graduate students and academic staff and they are able to maintain their dominance of the international research culture. There is a virtuous circle for those within it but it is not easy to break into for less powerful or privileged students or universities in terms of economic or cultural capital. Some universities compete in a more limited way in the international higher education market by establishing niches of high academic status but relatively low fees as in the Australian case or as universities marketing their educational products for high fees in particular markets as in the case of the United Kingdom.

International student recruitment rationales provide not only a context but are also part of a broader process of internationalisation. There are alternative strategies of internationalisation, some of which may have less damaging effects on donor countries' economic development. These different aspects include study abroad programmes, providing access to higher education where local institutions cannot meet demand through international student mobility and the establishment of branch campuses and cooperative arrangements with local higher education institutions and distant learning provision (Altbach & Knight 2007:290).

### **Higher education and post-apartheid South Africa**

Higher education in post-apartheid South Africa was (and still is) confronted by two broad challenges. On the one hand, years of institutional racism, under-resourced universities and the need for transformation pose significant internal challenges to the state and universities. On the other hand, in an era of globalisation, South African universities are increasingly inserted into a com-

petitive and market-driven environment that has posed broader constraints and challenges. Kishun (2007:456) poses the question whether ‘internationalisation [is] central to South African universities?’ Against the backdrop of the two challenges already identified drawing on Moja (2006), Kishun (2007:457) notes that a ‘double-edged dilemma’ faces African universities. African universities are chronically under-resourced and these institutions and nation-states are additionally burdened by globalisation. In the South African context in particular, Kishun (2007) notes that the additional urgency of redressing past inequalities and the ‘Africanization’ of higher education institutions need to occur.

Subotzky (2003:164) identifies ‘two distinct and opposing discourses’ operational in the South African context that are ‘transformative-redistributive’ and ‘global market-driven’ and delineates how the latter has become dominant within governmental discourse, tracing this back to negotiations between the African National Congress and white political and corporate interests amongst others in the early 1990s. The transformative-redistributive discourse emphasised equity and redress as well as economic and social development both within South Africa and in Africa more generally. The market-driven discourse was articulated within the more general ‘globalisation discourse’ developing in the 1990s in the wake not only of technological financial and economic imperatives but also of the demise of the USSR and socialist planned economies in Eastern Europe. The post-apartheid government in South Africa was faced with a two-fold challenge each informed by the opposing discourse: to meet the needs of the majority Black poor by providing social services, redistributing wealth and opening opportunities including access to education and higher education and at the same time ‘situate[d] the nation competitively in the knowledge-intensive network society and market-driven globalized economy’ (Subotzky 2003:165). The implications for the scope and function of higher education institutions including policy on international students remain problematic and contested.

Subotzky (2003:165) argues that even the ‘redistributive agenda [was] shaped by the transformative discourse...stands in direct ideological tension with the prevailing market-oriented framework of deregulation, fiscal constraint and minimalist government shaped by the dominant... “global” discourse’. He points out that ‘the new South African government developed a policy framework for higher education restructuring, embodied in the largely symbolic 1997 White Paper on higher education transformation’ (ibid). But in practice many ‘new developments’ including international student recruitment ‘were not necessarily transformative’ and were ‘shaped by market orientated individual interests...pursued in an increasingly competitive environment’ (Subotzky 2003:166). ‘Indeed the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education (DoE 2001)

acknowledge an “implementation vacuum” which occurred between the White Paper and the National Plan’ (ibid). Subotzky (2003:166) points out that

‘concomitant to macro economic policy trends ... [there was a] ‘discernable shift occur[ing] in higher education discourse – from an initial symbolic commitment to addressing equity and redistributive concerns to increasing emphasis on the global discourse on the market and efficiency’.

According to Subotzky (2003:166) one of the problems of substantive implementation of progressive policy is rooted in firstly ‘persistent *structural* impediments’, for example race, class and gender inequalities. Secondly, ‘the complexity of higher educational institutional change’ which does not follow rationalist assumptions. Thirdly, ‘*conjunctural* factors’, for example the particular time and the current political situation as well as the power of personalities whether Vice-Chancellors or Ministers of Education or senior civil servants and fourthly, the already mentioned ‘discursive shifts’ in the discourse framing the activities. In this case the move to a global market-driven competitive neo-liberal discourse. This market-driven discourse is further illustrated with the use of world rankings for universities.

In the *Times Higher Education Supplement World University Rankings* of 2007 and 2008, one African institution, the University of Cape Town, is found in the top 200 institutions. In 2006, *The Times Higher* noted ‘it seems harder than ever for countries such as Brazil or South Africa to assemble the resources needed to sustain a research university’ (*The Times Higher* October 6, 2006:13). Of the top 200 universities in 2008 only six are from the developing world; two are in India, one each in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa (*The Times Higher* October 9, 2008:3). Shanghai Jian Tong University’s ‘Academic Ranking of World Universities – 2007’ lists the University of Cape Town between positions 203-304; the University of the Witwatersrand between 305 and 402; the universities of Cairo, KwaZulu-Natal and Pretoria between 403 and 510 (Academic Ranking of World Universities – 2007). (For further discussion on world rankings see Altbach, 2006 and Marginson & van der Wende 2007).

### ***South Africa and international students***

After the 1994 elections, South Africa became a destination for international students. Defining international students has been a problem in itself (see Council for Higher Education, 2004:215). In South Africa in 1995, 14,000 international students were enrolled at South African universities. In 2000 this number had increased to 31,039 and in 2005, 50,109 (Higher Education Management Information Service [HEMIS], Department of Education, 2000–2006). In 2006 international students in South Africa comprised 7 per cent of the total students

population. Of this figure, 69 per cent were from the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The remaining students originate primarily from the rest of Africa, Europe and Asia. In addition, students from North America, Australia and South America are enrolled at South African institutions. In terms of students from SADC, over 60 per cent originate from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Table 1 illustrates the number of students by regions enrolled at South African institutions between 2000 and 2006. Sehoole (2006) suggest the reasons for this are as follows: close geographic borders; political instability in Zimbabwe and the lack of capacity in Botswana and Namibia amongst others. International students from SADC are primarily enrolled in undergraduate programmes. Only 19 per cent of SADC students are enrolled in post-graduate programmes, while non-SADC students at the post-graduate level is over 30 per cent (*ibid*). Table 2 illustrates the number of students by regions enrolled at a cross section of South African universities in 2006.

The SADC Protocol on Education and Training (1999) makes provision for the recognition and transfer of educational qualifications between member states (see Kamper 2002). In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa is the leading provider of higher education (Mthembu, Coughlan and Murray, 2005). The Protocol stipulates that 10 per cent of places in higher education should be reserved for SADC students. In South Africa, SADC students pay home fees and universities earn subsidies from the government (see Table 1). Thus in financial terms SADC students are seen as the same as home students. In 2003, the then South African Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal (2003:6) maintained that subsidizing SADC students was 'a major financial contribution on the part of South Africa as a developing country but we make it gladly in the light of our unstinting commitment to internationalism'. However, African students from outside of South Africa's borders are not a homogenous group that is treated equally by South African institutions. Indeed, Sichone (2006:39) suggests 'negative consequences of internationalization...tend to lie outside the education sector [where] the policies and practices of nationalistic Home Affairs bureaucracies and security officials, coupled with xenophobia...tend to oppose the free movement and settlement of people'. In addition, Sichone suggests 'foreign students experience the same kind of hostility as refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants' (*ibid*) (see Ramphela 1999). Therefore international students and in particular those from Africa are in a contradictory position as on the one hand they are welcomed and encouraged to study in South Africa by universities and government institutions while on the other hand they face the possibility of xenophobia.

**Table 1:** Students by nationality enrolled at South African institutions\*

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
South Africa	544,021	598,514	627,661	666,367	691,910	683,473	687,647
SADC (excluding South Africa)	21,272	25,379	31,699	36,207	36,302	35,074	35,917
Other Africa	4,239	4,836	6,316	6,664	6,874	7,196	8,569
Asian countries	1,492	1,500	1,585	2,031	2,496	2,520	2,371
Australia and Oceania	143	109	124	117	128	118	119
European countries	3,067	3,094	3,222	3,442	3,610	3,585	3,537
North America	675	765	1,019	1,340	1,435	1,462	1,510
South America	151	167	206	178	167	154	136
No information	13,837	3,464	2,490	1,447	1,567	1,491	1,574
Total	588,897	637,828	674,322	717,793	744,489	735,073	741,380

**Source:** (HEMIS Department of Education, 2000-2006)

**Note:** \*These figures are for university and technikon students from 2000–2004 and for universities (traditional and comprehensive) for 2005-2006.

In the South African case it could be true that structural constraints in terms of historic and contemporary unequal social relations around race, class and gender as well as the limited resources available are important obstacles to the development of a progressive redistributive or developmental agenda. At the national level the attempts by government to implement wide ranging changes have led to a variety of directives and initiatives aimed at higher education in general and indeed at particular universities.

### **Methodology**

When categorizing South African institutions, historical legacies are important. Historical typologies include: Historically Black Institutions (HBIs); Historically White Institutions (HWIs) and Historically English or Afrikaans language institutions (Mabizela 2005:8). In the current reformed landscape, South African higher education institutions are categorized as: traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology. We have focused on representatives from traditional and comprehensive universities (see Table 2). In addition, we refer to the university as previously HBI or HWI including whether it was or is an English or Afrikaans language institution. A range of unstructured interviews were conducted by one of the authors in July and August 2006. All interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. Our research question was to elicit the rationales for international student recruitment articulated by representatives of international student offices in a range of seven South African universities.

### **Analysis**

Knight and De Witt (1999) suggest four rationales that drive internationalisation: socio-cultural, political, academic and economic. Knight (2006:48), maintains these 'generic categories remain a useful way to analyze rationales' whether at the level of national policy, the higher education sector or individual universities. The recruitment of international students is part of the process of internationalisation of institutions and in earlier work we identified three major strands or traditions present in the recruitment of international students (see Bolsmann and Miller 2008). The first was an enlightenment 'Republic of Letters or of Science' tradition of universities recruiting international students. This we can label 'Academic Internationalism'. The second was a discourse which involves a civilizing, controlling, and training and development discourse originating in colonial empires which we can call 'Developmental'. Thirdly, there was an economic discourse which uses the language of costs and benefits, an 'Economic Competition' discourse. The first and oldest is the idea(l) of the international 'Republic of Letters or of Science', where universities are places of learning, research and scholarship which attract

**Table 2:** Students by nationality enrolled at a sample of South African universities in 2006 (traditional and comprehensive)

	<b>Cape Town</b>	<b>Fort Hare</b>	<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>Western Cape</b>	<b>Witwatersrand</b>
South Africa	16,446	7,425	34,866	209,479	13,522	21,809
SADC (excluding South Africa)	2,451	1,012	1,459	13,384	593	1,276
Other Africa	541	80	629	2,556	218	549
Asian countries	282	2	146	449	114	172
Australia and Oceania	18	0	4	45	0	10
European countries	740	3	204	1,244	40	205
North America	648	3	259	254	10	143
South America	14	1	12	50	0	18
No information	84	0	3	78	341	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,224</b>	<b>8,526</b>	<b>37,582</b>	<b>227,539</b>	<b>14,838</b>	<b>24,198</b>

**Source:** (HEMIS Department of Education, 2000-2006)

students, scholars and teachers irrespective of their national origin. Fenwick (1987:128) refers to an 'international exchange' that 'implies reciprocity of benefit, an overall net gain to the individuals concerned and the quality of future international understanding'.

The second, 'Developmental' tradition has involved the provision of education and training for dependencies abroad. This has had elements of a religious missionary or more general civilizing mission. Historically, in the case of the United Kingdom, it was focused on the colonies and dominions. After 1945, this provision became increasingly conceptualized as help for underdeveloped countries and the Commonwealth in particular. It includes the establishment of colleges and universities under the auspices of British universities. As far as overseas students are concerned, there have been a variety of courses provided in the United Kingdom, some of them directly vocational for the ex-colonies' administrators but others more general in areas such as law, medicine, the military and, more recently, business. Fenwick (1987:128) refers to this type of relationship as 'the modernization model of Third World development'. Altbach (2004:4) refers to a 'new neocolonialism' that first originated during the Cold War. However, this has changed where

[w]e are now in a new era of power and influence. Politics and ideology have taken a subordinate role to profits and market-driven policies. Now, multinational corporations, media conglomerates, and even a few leading universities can be seen as the new neocolonists – seeking to dominate not for ideological or political reasons but rather for commercial gain (Altbach 2004:6).

Moreover, Altbach (2004:6) suggests a 'loss of intellectual and cultural autonomy by those who are less powerful' occurs. In an era of neoliberal globalization this can be seen as neo-colonial.

In the United Kingdom, the British Council maintains the post-colonial linkages with former colonies and territories (Room 2000). The global cultural hegemony of the United States functions in a similar manner in attracting overseas students. Room (2000:111) argues that a form of 'academic entrepreneurialism' has emerged where 'the market for overseas students is politically constructed and maintained'. This is 'underpinned by traditional linguistic and cultural links' (ibid). Thus we have a continuation of former imperial and political connections that have evolved into financially beneficial markets and sources of income for Western universities, particularly in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. There is a comparable argument in a key note address, the former South African Minister of Education Kadar Asmal warned:

‘...the development of a new form of colonialism with South African institutions increasingly targeting the African market. [T]he development of distance education programmes by contact institutions has been driven primarily by financial gain and issues of quality and relevance have been put on the back-burner’ (quoted in Kotecha 2006:105).

Across the world there has been a shift from a neo-colonial traditions to rationales which operate in terms of a globalised market; the dominant ideology here is neoliberalism operating at the level of both the state and the university. ‘Academic Internationalism’ becomes ‘Economic Competition’ and at the level of the university recruiting overseas students is seen as an economic resource for the university. There is increasing competition between institutions and countries in economic terms to provide the education and training which returns income. This is not only in terms of attracting foreign students to the home country, but also in terms of the provision of distance education or the establishment of programmes and indeed whole institutions, colleges or universities abroad. These are economic ventures to generate income, enhance brand awareness and provide a feeder institution which will facilitate postgraduate students continuing their education in the ‘home’ university.

The economic contribution of overseas students goes beyond the immediate fee income. In some areas of postgraduate work employing PhD students as researchers, the marginal costs may be higher than the immediate fee that the students bring in, but they nevertheless make a net economic contribution through their participation in research which itself is income generating. Excellent overseas researchers make significant contributions to university research programmes – both blue sky and applied research programmes. These feed and develop the economic capacity and competitiveness of both corporate and national economies. This, then, is one link between the economic rationale at the level of the university and policy and practice at the level of the state and corporation (Guo 2005; Miller 2006). This dynamic operates at the level of the state, economy and elite research institutions in the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and South Africa at universities like MIT, Imperial College, London, Sydney and possibly Cape Town and the Witwatersrand.

#### ***Academic internationalism: Status, community and diversification***

We can identify through our interviews a range of responses. A respondent from a traditional university, HWI and English language medium maintained ‘it is not just a regional university, not just a national university it’s an international university’. A representative of traditional university, HWI and English language medium acknowledged that ‘engaging academically, not only African institu-

tions but European and North American educational institutions in collaborative ventures' was crucial. A respondent from a traditional university, HWI and Afrikaans language medium suggested 'we wish to internationalise our student population primarily at the post-graduate level, and that is our strategy and market ourselves and advertise ourselves as a post-graduate university'. The respondent suggested 'it was getting [the institutions] name out there in the masses and masses of universities that are recruiting there [China]'. A representative from a comprehensive university, HWI and previously Afrikaans language medium articulated the goal of the institution as follows 'our current vision [is] to be an internationally recognized university...[and] the university of the 21st century cannot work in isolation whether as an institution or individually as faculty members'. We can identify universities who see themselves as international role players along with those who envisage the goal of becoming institutions with international reputations and standing.

An alternative rationale emerges for some South African institutions termed 'internationalisation at home' (see Kotecha 2006). According to a respondent from a comprehensive university, HWI previously Afrikaans language medium this is articulated as follows:

'to cater for a broad majority of our students who are not going to get the opportunity for international mobility by travelling abroad or...get what happens out there in the global world today...through your curriculum...you have to make sure that how you prepare your students will prepare them not just for the local and national citizenship and their role...but also within the global context'.

A respondent from a traditional university, HWI and Afrikaans language medium suggested 'to foster internationalisation amongst South African students'. A respondent from a traditional university, HBI and English language medium suggested 'international students bring vibrancy to the classroom simply because of coming from a different culture'. A representative of a traditional university, HWI and English medium language suggested 'we need that interaction in the classroom...the curriculum is the heart of internationalisation because the rest of it is that you can travel and get some experience'.

### ***Development: neo-colonialism, education and training***

One of the traditions we identified in England is the provision for international students for the training and education of nationals in less developed countries. In the case of some European countries including the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France, this focussed on colonies or ex-colonies. Within South Africa we can identify a range of developmental rationales. A representative from

a comprehensive university, HWI English medium maintained 'in Africa there is a lot of focus on reconstruction and development and there is a mass of students who need higher education...in line of the vision of [the institution] to be the African university'. In addition, 'the main focus is really going into Africa to get the students [who] have no access to higher education...there is so much development that is needed in Africa...we want to make sure that, if the rest of Africa is developed' [more should be undertaken]. The developmental rationale is underpinned by the following logic

'all comes from the whole African Renaissance thing, South Africa getting closer to its brothers and sister in Africa. We are saying we are a university in Africa and...the basis of everything that we do, even internationally, we look at the principles of NEPAD, the African Union, the Millennium Development Goals, we want to contribute towards that so those form the basis to be an African university in service of humanity.'

The developmental logic is illustrated by the University of South Africa (UNISA) with the establishment of a centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to provide post-graduate qualifications for Ethiopian and Sudanese civil servants. According to UNISA 'the Centre will eventually be the hub for all of UNISA's programmes in the Horn of Africa and in the Eastern Africa regions. The establishment of this Learning Centre in Ethiopia is part of the University's vision of becoming Africa's premier education provider that serves the continent by responding to the needs of the communities' (UNISA 2007). In relation to the Ethiopian centre, a university representative argued that

'it is actually developmental...when you look at it long-term it is an area of growth for the university...also in terms of generating revenue later on...it will change from the growth strategy [to] income generating strategy...even though we started by looking at development and access, later, it will change as they develop and progress and move on to something else. It is a big investment because other countries that want to get involved in Africa - many people want to go to Ethiopia, it is a huge market, so they would have to go and come through us.'

At a traditional university, HWI and previously Afrikaans language medium, a large group of Gabonese students are enrolled in teacher training programmes. The university representative suggested 'it's a curious situation I think that traditionally the Francophone countries would have sent their graduates to France but it's become apparent that is very difficult to afford and they looked for African solutions to their problems'.

The South African Government promotes the country as a study destination. South African embassies and high commissions in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kenya recruit international students to South Africa. The representative of a traditional university, HWI and Afrikaans language medium argued that 'because South Africa is a good choice, a viable option for Kenyans...the fees are so much cheaper to come to South Africa'. African diplomatic missions in South Africa have encouraged their nationals to study in the country. A representative of a comprehensive university, HWI previously Afrikaans language medium suggested 'the Gabonese embassy locally encourages students from Gabon to come here because they want to prepare them for participation in the local situation in Gabon'. The Department of Finance of the Government of Botswana approached a university business school based in Johannesburg to offer courses for its officials. However, the complexity of the aid/developmental goal is apparent when a representative of a traditional university, HWU and English medium language suggested

'we don't want to undermine the University of Botswana so we would say you should do these prerequisite courses at your university and when you come you can do these courses here...we don't want to encourage their own governments not to be using their own institutions'.

### ***Global competition: Fees and university and national economies***

Within South Africa, universities charge a differential fee structure which exists across the university sector. The individual university has the authority to determine whether the fees charged for international student (non-SADC) are the same as those of local students or significantly higher (see Johnstone 2004). In addition, the university can determine whether the payment is in South African Rands or US Dollars. Those universities that charge US Dollars such as the universities of Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal and the Witwatersrand are susceptible to fluctuating exchange rates that can be detrimental or beneficial to university coffers. Moreover, at certain universities differential registration fees exist for SADC and non-SADC students.

In the South African context, the financial contributions international students make is increasingly apparent. A representative from a traditional university, HWI and Afrikaans language medium suggested 'we market ourselves as a good quality education that is affordable in comparison with Europe and the US...as a South African experience'. However, the respondent conceded 'the finances that we receive for international students, they are a significant factor but it is not the overriding factor'. A representative from a traditional university, HWI and English language medium suggested 'the finance does help, it does

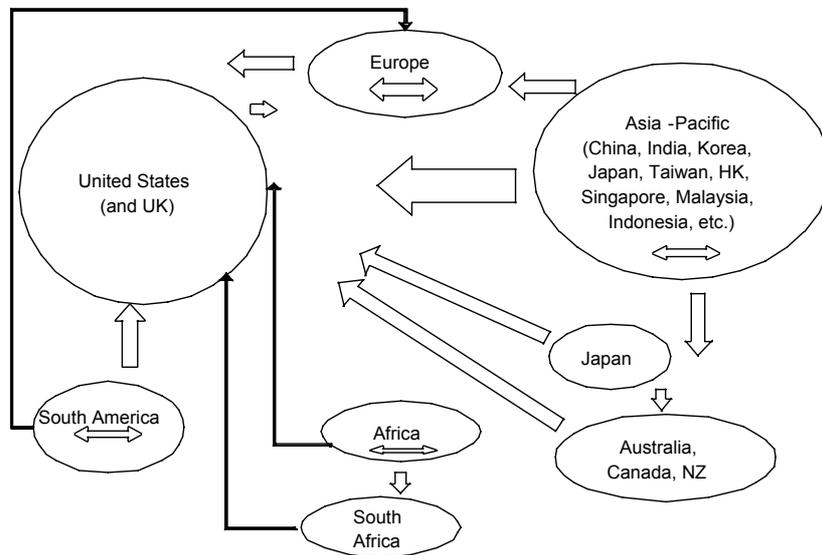
help and it would make a difference if we didn't have international fee paying students, it would make a huge financial difference'.

An increasingly popular fee-generating strategy in South Africa is to host short and semester courses, referred to as 'island programmes', on university campuses for foreign universities. International staff and students then teach on South African campuses using local university resources and facilities. A representative from a traditional university, HWI and English medium suggested 'we can make a lot of money out of semesters that have enrolled [international] students'. The downside of this fee-generating strategy is that it is also referred to as 'academic tourism' (see Scott 2006:20). The representative suggested:

'we would allow you use of classrooms, libraries whatever and you would come and do your thing and off you go so we are not involved beyond just helping you...you just come and you go you don't necessarily impact anyone. [Local] staff and students are not involved'.

An additional factor is that certain courses in the humanities in particular are 'subsidised' by international students who make up the overwhelming majority of the enrolled students with very few South Africans. The fees that are gener-

**Figure 1.** Global student flows



**Source:** Adapted from Marginson (2006:902)

ated from the international students keep certain departments operating. Despite the economic benefits and perceived problems in recruiting international students an additional benefit can be identified. South Africa has high levels of skilled emigration to Australia, the United Kingdom and US. In turn, the recruitment of international students to South Africa and in particular those from other African countries, represents an opportunity of recruiting skilled migrants to South Africa. South Africa is therefore seen as a regional 'magnet' for international students from the African continent in particular (see Crush, Pendleton and Tevera 2007). Connell's (2007:24) discussion of South African academics and globalisation is useful in this regard and it is worth considering the following:

'A free-market regime may not be able to hold its intellectual talent. Middle class incomes in South Africa do not compare with salaries available in the metropole. Consequently there is talk of a brain drain. Given the country's history, the option of emigration is particularly available to White intellectuals. White flight is thus a sharp issue for the reproduction of the intellectual workforce in South Africa. Ironically, one of the solutions available is to tap the influx of students from poorer parts of Africa, who now come in considerable numbers to South African universities, sponsored by their own governments or other scholarships. South Africa's solution may be to displace the problem further down the global scale of wealth and poverty.'

### Conclusion

There is a range of reasons for recruiting international students to South Africa. Using the dominant rationales we identified in our research on international student recruitment to England we can see certain parallels and differences in our analysis of South Africa. When we consider the South African context, in 2003 Kadar Asmal argued that

'education is not merely a value-free instrument for the transfer of skills across national and regional boundaries, as some might like us believe. On the contrary, education must embrace the intellectual, cultural, political and social development of individuals, institutions and nations. The 'public good' agenda should not be held hostage to the vagaries of the market...in the context of starkly uneven development of higher education on our continent, I am also acutely aware to ensure that South African higher education institutions that wish to be active in the rest of Africa does with integrity and without harming local systems...we believe

that the internationalisation of higher education is better-addressed using conventions and agreements outside of a trade policy' (Asmal 2003:4).

In analysing the complexities present within South African universities in the recruitment of international students we engaged with rationales which connect, complement, qualify and sometimes contradict each other. Statements from our respondents include the view that international students could make a substantial contribution to academic excellence, but also that they provided revenue. The argument about the role of international students often moved from them being an indicator of international status and excellence, to them as contributors to diversity on courses and campus. This is seen as positive in its own right, but also improved the educational experience of both home and overseas students and the economic value of their qualification.

In the South African context, the overriding rationale to recruit international students is not financial. Rather a developmental agenda is adopted that benefits both South African and international students and their countries of origin. This is not without contradictions as differential fee structures exist at certain universities for international students. In addition, those institutions that charge international students US Dollar fees also see themselves as international universities that compete on the global market for international students.

This developmental agenda is however contradictory. Students are recruited from African states to enrol in South African universities with the expectation that graduates will return to their home countries. However, graduates are tempted to remain in the country and take up employment in the local labour market which invariably will have better job prospects than most other neighbouring states (Crush et al, 2006). Therefore what is seen as developmental can be considered 'sub-imperial' or neo-colonial in which donor states actually lose out on the benefits of its students who study in South Africa (see Bond, 2006). The initial beneficiaries are South African universities and once students graduate and find employment in the country, the economy. At the same time South African and Namibian graduates seek to find employment and migrate to Europe, North America and Australia.

In assessing the rationales and strategies adopted towards international student recruitment in universities in South Africa, one feature that is significant is the reality and rhetoric of market competition for students at national, regional and global levels. This market and its competitiveness influence the practice and interacts with the motivation and indeed the recruitment and movements of students within the global higher education system.

When we compare the rationales and rhetoric around international student recruitment to England and South Africa there are important parallels. In South Africa there is a smaller proportion of high fee paying students from outside

Africa as compared to England and non-EU students. In addition, a greater involvement effectively in aid, because of a high proportion of SADC and African students at undergraduate level paying low home South African fees that are subsidized by the South African Government. At the level of state and university rhetoric or discourse, a greater commitment to aid and development through the provision of university education occurs. However, despite these differences and with the addition of 'Academic Tourism' as being a greater salience and concern in South Africa, there are two major features which apply to both England and South Africa in the world context of universities, states, economies and international student mobility. The first in terms of students studying abroad in terms of their immediate and long-term employment possibilities and the second in terms of possibilities of migration.

The migration of skilled graduates and postgraduates into the more developed economies whether it be the US, the United Kingdom, Australia or South Africa is important for economies, universities and in terms of motivations of students. International graduate employment is linked to domination in the global economic market of a relatively small number of research universities who are also at the top of national hierarchies whether the Ivy League institutions in the United States, Oxbridge in the United Kingdom, Melbourne and Sydney in Australia and the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand in South Africa (see Figure 1). The operation of university markets strengthens the position of the already privileged whether universities, departments or students, and does little to advance internationalist and developmental goals.

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