

Effective Internationalisation Practice in the Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Internationalisation is initiated to drive organisations' success, including higher education institutions (HEIs). This systematic literature review aims to i), determine the prevalence of existing research and publications on internationalisation practice in the HEIs, and ii), identify new practices that are reported in the scholarly literature and offer these new thoughts on the advancement of effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs. A wide-range strategy was employed to search and identify research papers from Web of Science and Scopus. The chosen papers were between the years 1994 and 2023. Out of 425 results generated, 80 publications representing 65 selected papers were chosen and themed for discussion. Investigating internationalisation in higher education is an in-depth multidisciplinary research approach that assists in determining the effect of HEIs. The findings identified challenges such as a lack of effective policy framework, decolonisation of the curriculum, and digital transformation, which requires further studies on strategies for effective internationalisation practice in HEIs. Considering HEI's new focus on internationalisation, it is prudent to carry out more investigation to appreciate internationalisation's many nuances.

Keywords: Internationalisation, digital transformation, global citizenship, national policy framework, higher education institution.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is becoming a predictable choice for developing education in various countries. However, the internationalisation of HEIs in countries like South Africa (SA) started lately with the government's growing attention and speedy expansion in the sector (Suo, 2023). Mittelmeier *et al.* (2019) emphasise that internationalisation has become increasingly significant and dominant in Africa, Asia, and some developing countries. The growth of internationalisation in African higher education is based on policies that dominate the assurance of education practices. Ideally, those policies are essential guarantees for internationalisation development in Africa. Thus, globalisation and internationalisation are predominantly a transforming economy's most prevalent and influential features (Knight, 2007). Globalisation and internationalisation are more regarded as fundamental forces that cannot be contradicted, as they permit recognisable benefits to a substantial congregation, however, they 'threaten the thoughts of governments, policymakers, researchers, and professionals regarding education (Ukpere, 2007, p.2).

Since the introduction of economic reforms, most countries have persistently improved their level of market openings which include their education domain to the outside world (Liu, 2023). Several procedures for efficiently and effectively utilising overseas investments to endorse internationalisation practices for better economic and education development were outlined in various aspects such as investment liberalisation, promotion, protection, facilitation, and mobility to attract foreign investors in the education sector (Ukpere, 2007; Ramos, Acedo & Gonzalez, 2011). However, there is a demand for future investigation of effective internationalisation practices in the HEIs.

Description of internationalisation

Internationalisation is a word that depicts different meanings to different people and is used in a diversity of ways. There is a countless deal of misunderstanding about precisely what internationalisation means and where it fits in the research domain. Internationalisation is regarded as "a term that is used frequently to discuss the international dimension of higher education, and more broadly postsecondary education" (Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014, p.166). Knight (2004, p.9) defines internationalisation as "a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and tutors; international relations; partnerships and projects; new international academic programmes; and other research initiatives." Knight (2007, p.207) also defines internationalisation as "the delivery of education to other countries through new types of arrangements such as sub-divided campuses or franchises, and using a variety of face-to-face and distance learning techniques." Teichler (2017, p.180) also defines internationalisation as "the integration of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions into the higher education curriculum of the teaching and learning process".

The terms, transnational, global, and international dimensions have begun to feature in the characterisation of internationalisation practice. Haigh (2014) describes the three terms as; i) International which highlights the notion of association among different nations, ii) Transnational is used for cross borders and does not precisely discourse the concept of relationship, and iii) Global which refers to the range in scope and wealth and does not emphasise on the concept of nations. Internationalisation is also viewed as "international development projects and the business portion of the higher education sector" (Dekel-Dachs *et al.*, 2021, p.886). The definitions mentioned above still refer to internationalisation as a global phenomenon. However, there are several challenges to how the world is touched by internationalisation and how the expansion of the international dimension in the HEIs is creating a transformation (Knight, 1999a). Ideally, the role of education especially in HEIs as an instrument of internationalisation is a thoughtful area for investigation. The dialogue of the consequences, nature, elements, causes, and future implications of internationalisation practice in HEIs, could be diverse, but fruitful, and substantial (Holmberg & Holmström-Szugalski, 2017; Munusamy & Hashim, 2021). There is a need for further studies on the substantial efforts to uphold the focus on effective internationalisation practices in HEIs".

Importance of internationalisation

According to Knight (2007), it is not easy to explore the importance of internationalisation practice without contemplating the actualities of the surroundings in which an institution is located. However, there are several encounters concerning how the surroundings impact effective internationalisation practices and the growth of international focus on the HEI movement towards transformation (Alcácer, Cantwell & Piscitello, 2016). Several countries have tuned their policies towards the need for effective internationalisation practices by using international students for their immigration reforms and recruiting educated and highly internationally skilled professionals into their country's economy (Knight, 2008, p.17). However, there is an increasing deficiency of skilled labour and the importance of internationalisation practice in the HEIs. Dealing with these issues in various countries' contexts requires revisiting the

legislation on immigration to accommodate effective internationalisation practices in the HEIs (Santa & Haj, 2020).

Rationale for conducting a systematic literature review

Internationalisation has been on the radar for a long time, yet studies on internationalisation practice are still in the growth stage (Knight, 2015). There is however an increase in the demand for effective internationalisation practices in various sectors including higher education. Fortunately, most countries have budgeted and invested huge sums of funds towards an effective internationalisation practice yet could not measure the benefits (Marinoni *et al.*, 2019). In various studies on higher education in countries like SA, internationalisation is focused on analysing the policy framework, multicultural, and exchange programmes (Begg *et al.*, 2018). This systematic literature review is necessary to determine effective internationalisation practices in the HEIs. Udekwe *et al.*, (2021) made it known that systematic literature reviews are necessary for theming and presenting facts about certain phenomena. Bronkhorst and Nieuwenhuizen (2019) and Obadire, Mashau, and Misumi (2020) suggest more research on effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs. In this paper, evidence is offered to the effect that a systematic literature review is needed to explore the prevalence of research related to effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs. This review is therefore important to highlight the effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs. The range of the review is between the years 1994 and 2023, this was due to the relevance of information needed that were identified in the selected papers within the range.

2. METHODS

Due to internationalisation practice becoming increasingly important, a wide-ranging strategy was established and used to search and assess the literature articles and other papers at the beginning of the review, through online databases such as Cochrane Library, Embase, Scopus, Web of Science, Higher Education Reports, Countries/Regions/Continents such as SA, China, America, Canada, Asia, Europe, Africa (Udekwe, Iwu & Obadire, 2024). Academic thesis was also searched through Google Scholar, and Reference lists to identify other information that could be relevant to the review. There were no language limitations in the review process.

Publication selection and screening

The selected information was recorded in a spreadsheet. At the initial stage, the authors used a manual examination process to screen the titles and abstracts before reading through the complete texts of the selected papers. Through this process, the authors were able to evaluate the papers fit with the inclusion criteria. They also took their time to make certain that the selected papers were in line with the core of the review and carefully chosen.

Exclusion and Inclusion criteria

In choosing the documents and data for the review the authors paid attention to the following; i), whether the papers involved formal investigation on internationalisation either in higher education, or through consultation, ii), investigation in a broad perspective such as organisations, institutions, Departments of Higher Education, and government, iii), research in the range of the following themes: digital transformation, digital technology, reform policy, effectiveness of internationalisation, comprehensive and curriculum, and specifically examine data relating to internationalisation practices, and iv), descriptive and scope of internationalisation literature investigation. The selected papers in the inclusion criteria are listed in Appendix A.

Data assessment and extraction

The authors obtained information from all the selected papers through a prearranged process consisting of; topic, publication year, publisher, focus, outcomes, and keywords. In distinguishing the selected papers, the authors reviewed the topics individually, in alignment with their outcomes, and then coded the data and the outputs. In conclusion, the authors assessed all the selected papers continuously throughout the review process for accuracy and consistency purposes.

3. RESULTS

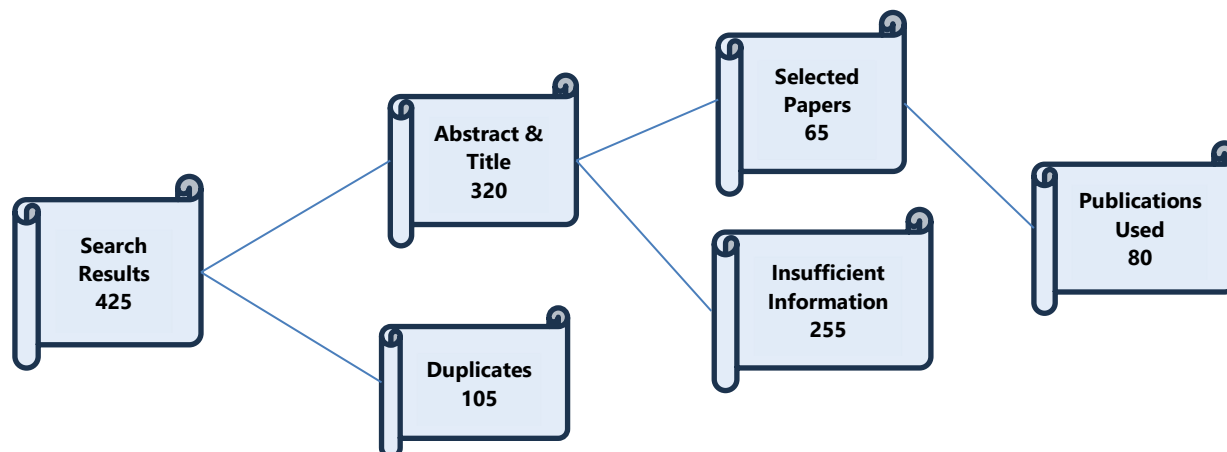


Figure 1. PRISMA diagram

In Figure 1, the PRISMA (2020) diagram shows that overall, 425 outputs were produced from the scrutiny, and 320 abstracts and titles were selected after removing 105 duplications of which, 80 publications representing 65 separate papers were selected as eligible for complete paper review and suitable for the study. There was no adequate information in the content of 255 papers towards the topic and themes under review.

Year of publication of selected papers

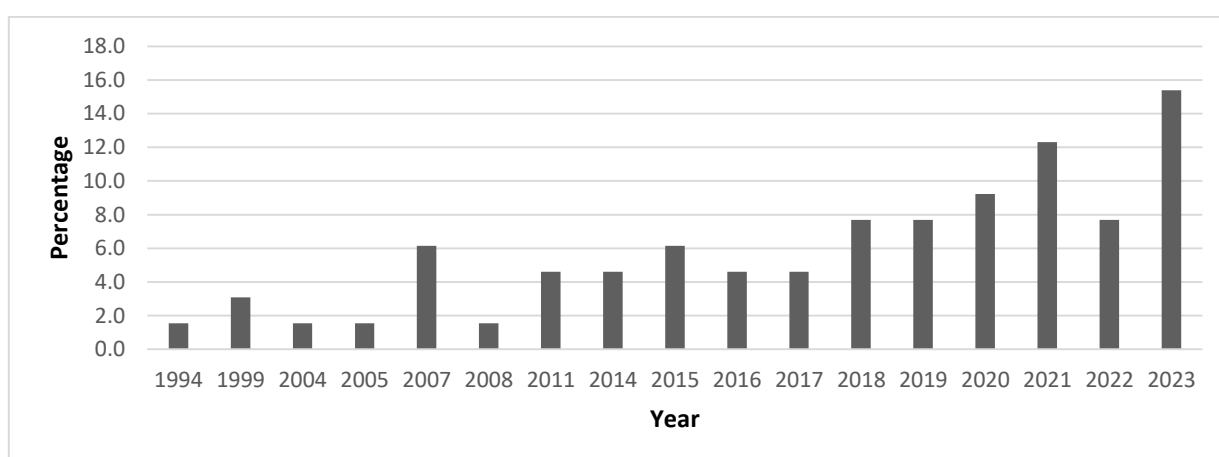


Figure 2. The year of publication of the selected papers.

Source: Derived from Appendix A

Figure 2 shows of the 65 selected papers, most were published in the year 2023 (10 or 15.4%), followed by 2021 (8 or 12.3%), then 2020 (6 or 9.2%). 2018, 2019, and 2022 (5 or 7.7%) respectively. Next are 2007 and 2015 (4 or 6.2%) respectively, then 2011, 2014, 2016, and 2017 (3 or 4.3%) respectively. The

last selected years are 1999 (2 or 3.1%) as well as 1994, 2004, 2005, and 2008 (1 or 1.5%) respectively. In summary, (39 or 60%) of the selected papers were published within the years 2018 and 2023, while (26 or 40%) were within the years 1994 and 2017.

Based on the view that internationalisation practice is a global phenomenon and multidisciplinary inquiry, most of the papers are on internationalisation (61 or 93.8%) of which, (40 or 61.5%) are internationalisation and higher education-related. The rest of the papers covered social sciences in higher education (4 or 6.2%).

Research designs and study eminence.

Figures 3, 4, and 5, show the summary of the 65 selected papers, based on the type of publication, country of publication as well as the methodology applied in those papers.

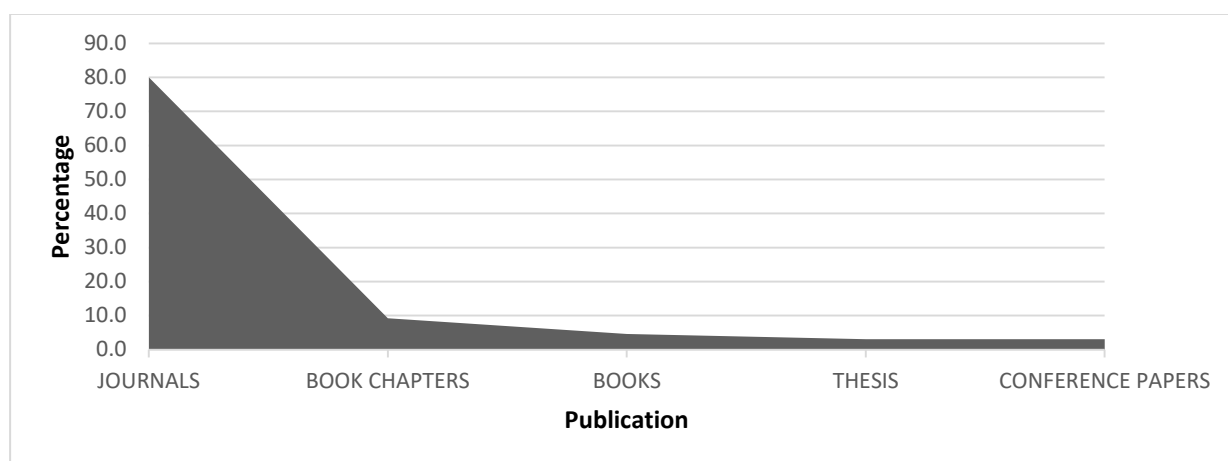


Figure 3. *The type of publication of the selected papers.*

Source: Derived from Appendix A

Figure 3 shows a summary of the type of publication of the 65 selected papers. It highlights that most of the papers are journals (52 or 80.0%), followed by book chapters (6 or 9.2%), and books (3 or 4.6%). The last is thesis and conference papers (2 or 3.1%) respectively.

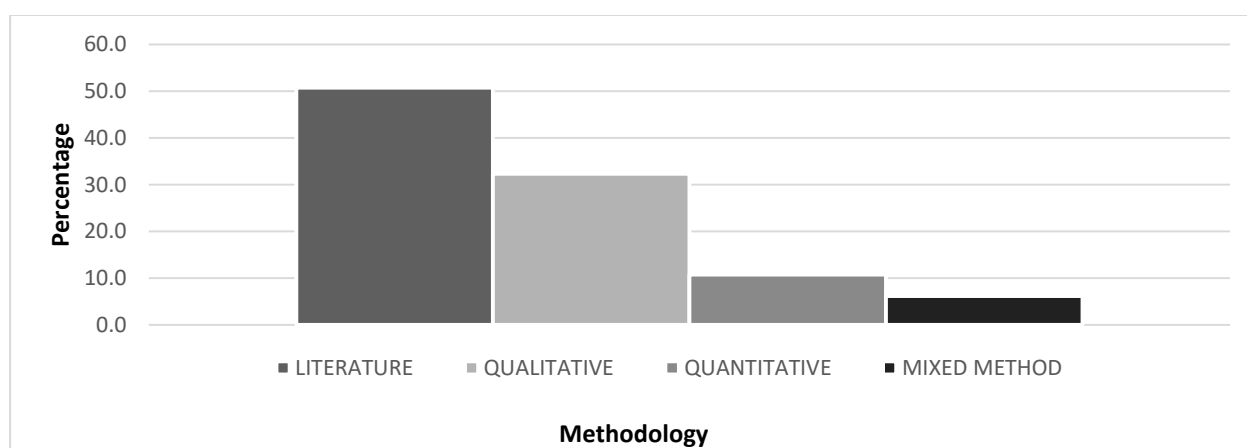


Figure 4. *The methodology used by the selected publications.*

Source: Derived from Appendix A

Figure 4 highlights the methodology applied in the 65 selected papers, it shows that literature reviews were the most selected papers (33 or 50.8%), followed by qualitative methods (21 or 32.3%). Quantitative methods are (7 or 10.8%), and the last are mixed methods (4 or 6.2%).

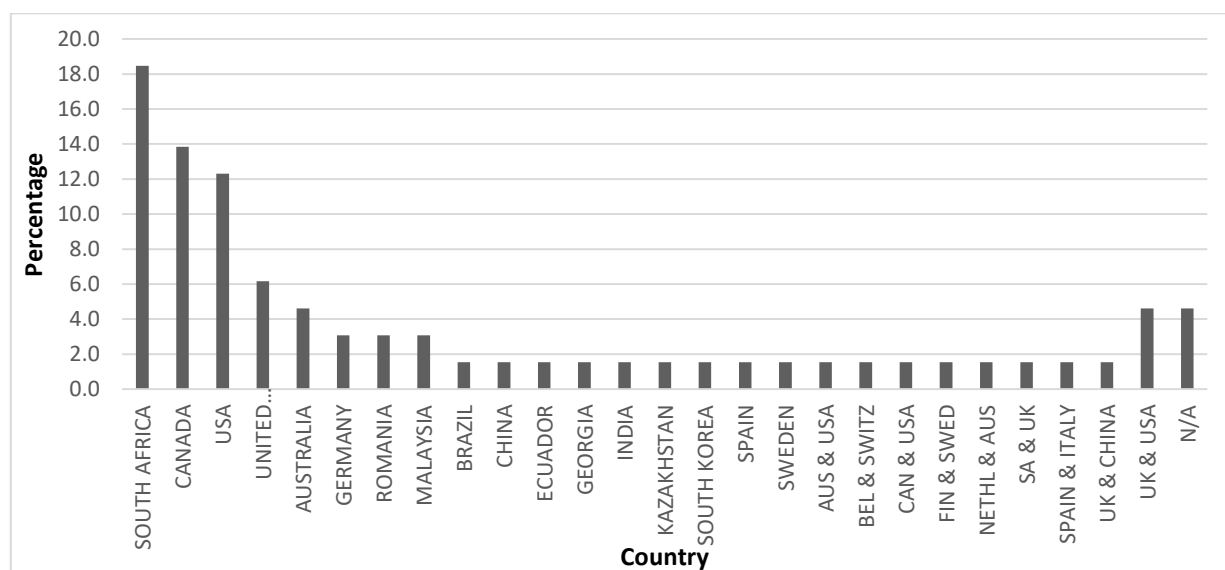


Figure 5. *The countries of the selected publications.*

Abbreviations: SA = South Africa, CAN = Canada, USA = United States of America, UK = United Kingdom, AUS = Australia, BEL = Belgium, SWITZ = Switzerland, FIN = Finland, SWED = Sweden, NETHL = Netherlands, N/A = No Idea.

Source. Derived from Appendix A.

Figure 5 shows the summary of countries of the 65 selected papers. It highlights that most countries represented in the review are from developed and developing economies. SA is the highest (12 or 18.5%), followed by Canada (9 or 13.9), then the USA (8 or 12.3%), the UK (4 or 6.2%), followed by Australia (3 or 4.6%). The rest are Germany, Romania, and Malaysia (2 or 3.1%) respectively, followed by Brazil, China, Ecuador, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Spain, and Sweden (1 or 1.5%) respectively. However, 9 of the included papers were written by authors from different countries; UK and USA (3 or 4.6%), Australia and USA, Belgium and Switzerland, Canada and USA, Finland and Sweden, Netherlands and Australia, SA and UK, Spain and Italy, and UK and China (1 or 1.5%) respectively. Also, (3 or 4.6%) other papers did not indicate their country. Table 1 below illustrates the themes as structured in the discussion.

Table1. *Summary of themes and the selected papers for discussion.*

Category of Themes	Journal Articles	Thesis	Conference Papers	Books	Book Chapters
1. Introduction, Description, and Importance	E02, E13, E17, E32, E34, E37, E41, E43, E48, E52, E56, E61, E62	E20, E63	E64	,	E35, E36, E60
2. Comprehensive	E11, E25			E22	
3. Curriculum	E03, E59		E05, E64		E35
4. Global Citizenship	E01, E17, E21, E28, E47				
5. African Concept	E10, E23, E29, E49				E09
6. Graduate Retention	E06, E50, E55				

Category of Themes	Journal Articles	Thesis	Conference Papers	Books	Book Chapters
7. Challenges	E16, E25			E12	E58
8. Digital Transformation	E14, E15, E65				
9. Digital Technology	E19, E26, E30, E57				
10. Category	E31, E48, E49				
11. Reimage	E33, E41, E54				
12. Venture Capital	E13, E38, E39, E43				
13. Policy Framework	E08, E18, E24				E51
14. Reform Policy	E44, E48, E61				
15. Demographic Policies	E40, E42, E44				E60
16. Effectiveness	E04, E27, E53				
17. Benefits	E07, E41, E46		E64	E45	

Note: "E" is a code used to classify each of the included papers in the review

Source: Derived from Appendix A.

Table 1 shows that out of the 80 publications, (19 or 23.8%) were used to discuss the introduction, description, and importance of internationalisation practice. Curriculum, global citizenship, African concept, and benefits of internationalisation were each discussed with (5 or 6.3%) of the papers respectively. Challenges, digital technology, venture capital, national policy framework as well as demographic policies on internationalisation were each discussed with (4 or 5.0%) of the papers respectively. Lastly, comprehensive, graduates' retention, digital transformation, category, reimage, reform policy as well as effectiveness of internationalisation practices were each discussed with (3 or 3.8%) of the papers respectively.

Summary of the result

The result shows that most of the selected papers are from the year 2018 to 2023 (60%), also journal articles (80%), as well as literature reviews (50.8%), on internationalisation were the most reviewed in the study. This indicates that the review was thoroughly conducted with current and relevant publications. However, most of the countries represented are from developed and developing economies which signifies internationalisation is mostly practiced and researched in those economies.

4. DISCUSSION

Comprehensive internationalisation

Hudzik (2011, p.5) describes comprehensive internationalisation as "a deeper and potentially more challenging change of people, policies, and programmes, that leads to integrative international practice which enables institutions to be fully internationalised." This description signifies that comprehensive internationalisation practice requires a rigorous change in the HEIs. Hudzik (2011) also believes that the approach by HEIs to integrate international/global fundamentals across their research, teaching, and service deliveries, is to follow their path in the rigorous change to achieve comprehensive internationalisation practice. However, the idea of an extensive variety of internationalised related activities in higher education might be suitable within the broad range of comprehensive internationalisation practice and constrained to issues such as lack of i) study overseas provisions, ii) other campus facilities, iii) internationally minded communal opportunities, iv) international student employment, v) modification of programmes offered, and vi) addition of foreign language studies (Kafouros *et al.*, 2022, p.14). Thus, comprehensive internationalisation practices have taken exceptional and transformational procedures within various HEIs and international geographic borders (de Wit &

Leask, 2015; Hudzik, 2011). Therefore, this requires further inquiry into how comprehensive internationalisation practice could impact on the transformed procedures in the HEIs.

Curriculum internationalisation

Mittelmeier *et al.* (2021, p.268) describe curriculum internationalisation as “the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum in the teaching and learning processes and support services of study programmes in the HEIs.” Thus, curriculum internationalisation in higher education has developed into a range of high research attention, with the growing interest to identify the transformative scenarios of international fundamentals in the HEIs as well as academic context used across the informal, formal, and inscrutable curriculum (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014; Beloiu *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, a need for interaction of students and staff regarding intercultural and multicultural learning prospects as an appropriate drive for a better curriculum internationalisation practice in the HEIs to be achieved (Rodas-Tobar *et al.*, 2023).

Global citizenship education

Several HEIs internationalisation guidelines across the globe claim to turn graduates into global citizens (Haigh, 2014), this is, however, complicated to evaluate due to the understanding of global citizenship education being an influence in the methods applied by various institutions. Ideally, the understanding of global citizenship is not necessarily compatible among institutions and can be challenging. Global citizenship is a term that proclaims, “We are citizens of the world” (Massaro, 2022, p.99). This impression places humans in the perception of world citizens at the front of the academic sphere. A study by Horey *et al.* (2018), on global citizenship in higher education, identified a framework of global citizenship to be implemented on internationalisation through three steps known as i), global citizenship pedagogical process (relationships, experiences, contexts), ii), global citizenship consequences (skill, perceptions), and iii), global citizenship attributes (values, actions, understanding). However, these steps are yet to be trailed for effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

Kester (2023) believes that global citizenship assesses human beings as one identity that values things like languages, views themselves differently from other people’s perceptions, and treats themselves with passion and pride. However, HEIs need to adopt global citizenship education views regarding communal values, understanding, consideration, cohesion, acceptance, and companionship, for effective internationalisation practices in place. Aktas *et al.* (2017) study on institutionalising global citizenship in HEIs, highlighted the intensification of a diversity of multi-disciplinary methods to global citizenship agendas. They further emphasise the need to conceptualise global citizenship to identify its significance to performance, equity, and social justice at both theoretical and programming levels. Therefore, a highly achievable performance could enable the concept of global citizenship as an outcome of possible learning in curriculum ethics for effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs (Massaro, 2022).

African concept of internationalisation

African concept of internationalisation practice is of great importance in measuring its relevance in the continent. Cross, Mhlanga and Ojo (2011), emphasise that Africa needs to revisit responses and outcomes to information derived from HEIs if it wants to develop a robust drive that would empower the educational sector. Thus, identifying the African concept of internationalisation practice in the context of “impacting knowledge,” and serving local needs while being an essential part of the global community is critical. Kisin (2007) highlights the need to investigate the scenarios of internationalisation practice in the HEIs in Africa against the circumstances surrounding internationalisation globally. Therefore, this inquiry will require deliberation and policies on “Africanisation and Internationalisation” in the context of student

mobility, trade in educational services, and how to ease skills shortages through effective internationalisation practice in Africa (Iwara *et al.*, 2018).

African HEIs are faced with encounters concerning internationalisation through "Africanising" the purpose, functions, and curriculum of HEIs (Kishun, 2007). Thus, an investigation into whether African HEIs are internationalised as fundamental to their mission and objective creates confusion in the higher education sectors. The fact that historical policies of the International Development Bank (IDB) and World Bank (WB) have seriously prevented African HEIs from being internationalised (Cossa, 2014), is one of the major reasons African continents are still behind the evolution of internationalisation practices in the higher education sector.

Currently, there have been several acknowledgements of the worth of HEIs in bringing economic and autonomous restructurings in some countries and a need to see institutions as the "breeding ground for needed skilled workforce in the African continent through internationalisation practice (Kishun, 2007; Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2021). Kishun (2007, p.462) believe that the new perception of restructuring through effective internationalisation practice should be expressed by; i) focusing on the knowledge that HEIs offer to all their graduates regardless of religion, origin, citizenship, ethnicity, race, difference, and diversity; ii) a multidimensional strategy implementation, to harmonise cross-cultural consideration, improve managerial services, governance structures, and enhance academic performance; iii), integrate internationalisation events into the curriculum, and the environment; iv), promote cross-cultural consideration as a vital strategic focus in teaching, learning, and campus lifestyle; v), the interaction among internationalisation practice and institutional strategy; vi), an extension of international facilities to be available at all HEIs constituencies; including international departments and faculties. Therefore, a need to reorganise internationalisation practices to be actualised in the HEIs in Africa is significant.

Graduates' retention through Internationalisation

Mok and Montgomery (2021) emphasise that what happens on both the supply and demand sides of internationalisation practice in HEIs are reforming the magnitude and track of international student graduates, and their opportunity to gain employment in the host country. Thus, effective internationalisation practice is expected to assist in reshaping the global academic and employment inequalities in the world. Bhandari (2018) highlights the need to redefine how and where the twenty-first-century future leaders and professionals will be educated because the world will have a profound impact based on their decisions in the years ahead if effective internationalisation practice is not acknowledged.

Essentially, student engagement in internationalisation practice and their involvement in institutional lifestyle is critical to any holistic determination in the process of internationalisation practice, and the enhancement of education and knowledge acquisition in HEIs. Phan, Tran and Blackmore (2019) made it known that several works of research on international education regarding international students' development highlight two main proportions: i), international students' countenance in the context of cross-border mobility and ii), international students' involvement in the creation of skills and knowledge in the host country. These identified proportions are yet to be accomplished in the retention of international graduates for effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

Challenges prompting Internationalisation

The provision of optimal support for the upskilling of international students has become an essential phenomenon in HEIs (Kafouros *et al.*, 2022, p.6). In most countries, some international students choose to pursue their career prospects, which is perhaps the reason some HEIs provide resources and career progression seminars for students in general (Fletcher, Harris & Richey Jr, 2021, p.2). One of the challenges is the non-provision of advanced support services that can be used to fascinate and keep international students and to reassure their confidence. However, affording such support services,

opportunities and structures internationally and locally will be desirable to augment the student's overall knowledge and ability for career progression through effective internationalisation practice (de Wit *et al.*, 2005, p.115).

Rickmann, Perez-Encinas and Fernandez-de-Pinedo (2020) study explored challenges concerning how work, internship mobility, and career facilitation, function at the national/international level, and found that career facilitation is fortified to familiarise with the increasing international stature of labour. Such a process would allow international students to participate in the labour market and to secure internships abroad. However, these challenges could be harmonised in the HEIs through the development of strategies and policies by internationalising their structures to support international mobility and to provide student facilitation as a focus for effective internationalisation practice (McCracken *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, this would assist in accommodating the growing number of international students and their participation in the economy through internationalisation activities.

Digital transformation on internationalisation

There is a substantial impact of digital transformation on internationalisation practice in the HEIs. A review of literature on factors prompting internationalisation and digital transformation in the HEIs, by Feliciano-Cestero *et al.* (2023), shows that digital transformation on internationalisation can impact both positively and negatively on institutions' performance at individual levels through knowledge acquisition, leadership, digital sterilization, and technology. Drori *et al.* (2023) believe that digital transformation in internationalisation practice will require a blend of innovation and digital intensity for innovative interaction between the internationalisation concept and digital change for significant transformation in place.

A study conducted by Yu, Fletcher and Buck (2022) on the management of digital transformation during re-internationalisation identified two kinds of digital transformation: strategic and operational transformation. However, most HEIs implement the operational and not the strategic transformation which is a deterrence of effective internationalisation practice. Yu *et al.* (2022) further emphasise that digital transformation has complexities concerning effective internationalisation practice as portrayed by the intricate tensions between the strategic and operational digital transformation. Therefore, a need to explore institutional re-internationalisation that could assist in differentiating how these two identified strains can be accommodated to achieve effective digital transformation through internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

Digital technology in internationalisation

Most HEI's intention is for service growth by expanding their contributions to fit the internationalisation market, digital technology could play an imperative role in the progress of institutions and also lead to their fundamental and strategic change for effective internationalisation practice (Kakutia, Buchashvili & Kokrashvili, 2023). Thus, digital technologies exhibit innovative openings for HEIs to succeed and expand in overseas markets through internationalisation practice. Hervé, Schmitt and Baldegger (2020) also highlighted the acknowledgement of research on the influence of digital technologies through internationalisation practice by identifying the need to elevate HEIs to participate fully in the overseas market and to benefit through digital transformation.

Hervé *et al.* (2020) further identified the digital transformation theoretical model of internationalisation practice, as a solution to HEIs' digital transformation mishaps. Basically, internationalisation practice has concerns about various aspects of the institutional model, though, it poses numerous model challenges, and a recent expansion of digital technology could be a significant enabler of resource-competent and effective internationalisation practice for HEIs improvement. Therefore, a need for digital technology concerning internationalisation practice in the HEIs for effective

delivery of internationalisation-related resources (Knight & Liesch, 2016). Reim *et al.* (2022) are also of the opinion in their study on the analysis of digitalisation to overcome institutional model encounters regarding effective internationalisation practice, through a case study research of several institutions practising internationalisation strategy. They realised that several institutional models are faced with encounters relating to academic service delivery, value creation, and information storage relating to effective internationalisation practice. Therefore, a need to advance in the use of effective institutional models in the digital transformation process for effective internationalisation accomplishment in the HEIs (Reim *et al.*, 2022).

Category of internationalisation

Internationalisation practice in higher education has often been categorised according to Knight (1994) as Internationalisation; at Home (I@H), Abroad (IA), and at a Distance (I@D). IA refers to the undertaking of schooling across countries' national borders, involving students and staff (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the increase in technology-reinforced activities has fashioned the prospects of effective internationalisation practice in HEIs. Interestingly, most students now study from home through advanced technology or programmes that are simultaneously located abroad which is known as I@D (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2021, p.269). These three categories of internationalisation create avenues for HEIs to navigate their teaching and learning processes for international students.

Essentially, there is a massive increase in the movement of international students to other countries. In a report by Akinyoade (2019, p.1), they highlighted that over four (4) million students from SA studied abroad in 2017. However, recently there has been a growing divergence between conventional "receiving" and "sending" nations, with an increasing number of regional centres for international students in developing countries like China and SA (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2021, p.267). Therefore, a need for a pronounced category for effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

Reimage on internationalisation.

Reimagining internationalisation is an innovative focus on HEIs, also referred to as reassessing, recreating, or rethinking internationalisation (Van't Land, Corcoran & Iancu, 2021). This further signifies a need for thorough change and modernisation of internationalisation practice in the higher education sector. Internationalisation in HEIs has been the focus of most investigations into policies and practices for over three decades, also one of the first initiatives to be conceptualised as a national solution to globalisation in education (Knight, 1999b). Although, HEIs are rapidly becoming internationalisation players, however, most organisations have continued to play their part in influencing the strategies and policies regarding effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

In a study conducted by Leask and de Gayardon (2021) in exploring a broader vision for effective internationalisation practice and the potential influence of reimagining internationalisation activities on local and international communities, they realised that studying overseas has an influence on host countries in the following: i) strengthen the international bonds, ii) promote the individuals, iii) institutional partnerships, iv) strengthen the community engagement and lastly, v) help in the development of host countries' resources, and capacities. However, there is a necessity for improvement in the reimagining of HEIs through internationalisation practices for competitiveness. Therefore, Obadire *et al.* (2020) emphasise the need for reimagining the HEIs with a long-term and sustainable strategy in place for effective internationalisation practice to be accomplished.

Venture capital on internationalisation

As the world economy is growing, the need for "Belt and Road" creativity is expanding, and internationalisation practice is becoming a critical strategic cognizance for educational growth (Kriz &

Welch, 2018; Chien *et al.*, 2021; Liu, 2023). Liu (2023) maintained that due to the setback in universal economic rescue, obstinate international situation uncertainties, and an increase in isolationism, China has consistently upheld a reasonable level of sincerity and actively engaged in international assistance to the outside world, most especially African countries. Interestingly, high-profile educational organisations in China have willingly extended their participation in foreign markets, by accelerating their expedition to penetrating the global internationalisation sphere (Maldonado-Maldonado & Bassett, 2014; Kromidha & Robson, 2021). However, organisations face several encounters due to reasons such as capability, capital, and access to other resources (Dekel-Dachs *et al.*, 2021). Amid these encounters, there is a substantial role venture capital could play in enabling the effective internationalisation practice of those high-profile organisations by signalling expertise requirements. Therefore, a need to investigate venture capital's role in the internationalisation sphere, which would assist in creating opportunities for expansion abroad, increase their competitive advantage in the international space, and reinforce their level of effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

National policy framework on Internationalisation

There is a determined drive for effective internationalisation practice towards strategic positions in several HEIs in developing countries around the world. Jooste and Hagenmeier (2022) specified that in countries such as SA, HEIs are beginning to report internationalisation practice as an explicit part of their overall institution strategy, with most of them, having a strategy for internationalisation practice in their curriculum. Motala and David (2020) emphasise that the national policy development on internationalisation practice in the HEIs is believed to have taken a slow movement towards the accomplishment in countries like SA. Thus, the official commencement of internationalisation policy development in the higher education sector in SA was initiated in 2015 and officially promulgated through the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, on the 6th of November 2020 (RSA, 1997). This provides guidelines and high-level principles for internationalisation practice in the HEIs with specific regulations for certain features of the process. The policy incorporates "all higher education requirements and knowledge creation that may have already been developed or still to be developed in the international domain" (DHET of SA, 2020, cls3.2.1), and includes public and private HEIs, as well as Technical, Vocational, Education, and Training (TVET) colleges.

Chasi (2021) also revealed that the internationalisation practice in the HEIs of SA's national policy framework was approved in the year 2020 for the DHET of SA and the framework should provide guidelines that HEIs will follow when developing internationalisation policies in their various institutions. However, Heleta (2023) made it known that the framework is a resemblance of European definitions, practices, and approaches to internationalisation. This is an indication that the DHET of SA framework did not provide substantial guidelines for the development of equitable policies and procedures that can support effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). Therefore, a need for further investigation on the adoption of the national policy framework that can assist in strategising effective internationalisation practices in the HEIs.

Reform policy on internationalisation.

Several countries are devoted to building a unified, multicultural, and multiracial country, and education reform is at the peak of achieving the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) (Begg *et al.*, 2018, p.79). Most countries, emphasise the need for reformed HEIs by the year 2025, aimed at promoting a safe, affordable, and effective delivery education system through internationalisation practice in the country (Long *et al.*, 2019; Suo, 2023). Thus, there is a need for advancement in internationalisation practice in the HEIs and the development of compact education reformed policies that will enhance the viability of education guidelines, to provide precautions for effective internationalisation practice in the

HEIs (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, a need for further studies to identify the articulation of reform policies to achieve effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

Demographic policies on internationalisation

Several countries have tweaked their plans and policies regarding international students' necessity to engage in highly skilled professions, and a need for immigration legislation change for effective internationalisation practice in the country (Gurmessa, 2019; le Grange, 2016). Concerning internationalisation practice, several countries have been behind regarding the attraction and retention of highly skilled and educated internationals (Gile, Buljac-Samardzic & Van de Klundert, 2018; Udekwe, Iwu & de la Harpe, 2023). Thus, there is an increasing deficiency of skilled individuals and the position of HEIs in dealing with the issue, is evolving as a significant issue in most countries' public debate. Lima (2023) emphasises the need for immigration legislation to be revised and tuned to suit internationalisation practices in the higher education sectors. A further need to adopt a legislation policy that can make it easier for skilled internationals to study and remain in the host country, and to allow them to have work permits in an accelerated manner (Grossman, 2004; Crush *et al.*, 2014; Long *et al.*, 2019).

Santa and Haj (2020) also highlighted in their study on demographic policies' role in the internationalisation practice of the HEIs, by analysing the implementation of legal modifications made to facilitate the engagement of internationals in the country. They emphasise the need to internationalise procedures used by institutions to communicate with international students on how to integrate with society in search of opportunities in the host country (Santa & Haj, 2020). Iwu (2019) also believes that the politicisation of nationality by the government may affect the internationalisation posture of the HEIs. This would warrant the need for new immigration legislation to identify the controversial spots amongst institutional practices and legislative decisions in the country.

Effectiveness of internationalisation

The position of the effectiveness of internationalisation practice in the HEIs through the improvement of cross-cultural competence among students is imperative. Internationalisation provides students with chances to participate in diverse cultures, learn new languages, and broaden their knowledge (Neubert, 2018). However, this procedure could assist in strengthening their intercultural, cross-cultural, communication, and language proficiencies, as vital skills for success and effectiveness in the current day's internationalisation practice. Ideally, studying abroad is one of the most effective ways to advance cross-cultural competence for effective internationalisation practice (Bedenlier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015). It creates an opportunity to learn in a diverse country, students are exposed to new cultural standards, values, and beliefs, which gives them the advantage of understanding better and appreciating other cultures through internationalisation practice. This idea assists in improving communication skills with people from different backgrounds and cultures. A study conducted by Karimova, Nurlanbekova and Ailauova (2023), on the effectiveness of internationalisation in HEIs through cross-cultural competence, revealed that developing cross-cultural competence in students will require tutors with increased cultural competence beliefs to support the effectiveness of internationalisation initiatives through their tutoring functions. Therefore, a need to investigate the conduct of educational services through appropriate channels for the effectiveness of internationalisation practice to be accomplished in the HEIs.

Benefits of internationalisation

Several HEIs in developing countries such as China and SA have realised the impact of recognising internationalisation practice as a strategic precedence, which has to be included in their global engagement and prioritised in their strategic plan (Leask & de Gayardon, 2021). Buckner *et al.* (2020) indicate that the benefits of internationalisation practices are conceptualized into two levels known as,

organisational, and institutional levels. The organisational level comprises i) employing international tutors, ii) supportive external mobility, iii) endorsing international research and publication partnerships, and iv) commissioning curricular reform. While the institutional level comprises i) revenue generation, ii) institutional rankings, iii) institutional dignity and pride, iv) research outputs, and v) teaching and learning platforms. Though, Yeravdekar and Tiwari (2014) believe that revenue generation is the most significant benefit internationalisation practice offers, however, Africa is still behind in regards to the benefit of internationalisation practice concerning revenue generation.

Marinoni (2018) also believes that the importance of internationalisation practice is to be identified in the strategic plan and mission statement of HEIs, however, the implementation of the strategic plan to apprehend the benefit of internationalisation practice is still lacking in most HEIs. A study conducted by Marinoni *et al.* (2019), identified three major benefits of internationalisation practice in the HEIs i) enhance international collaboration and capability building, ii) improve in quality of learning and teaching, and iii) increase international awareness and engagement with global issues among students. Marinoni's (2018) study identified reasons that deprive HEIs of benefiting from effective internationalisation practice as i) inadequate financial capabilities, ii) bureaucratic/administrative complications, iii) no knowledge of host countries' languages, iv) difficulty in recognising the qualifications equivalence, v) study programmes and course credits, and vi) anti-immigration and nationality policies. Therefore, HEIs need to acknowledge the importance of strategising the effective internationalisation practice in their curriculum for benefit and to compete with other HEIs in other countries.

5. CONCLUSION

Internationalisation practice in the HEIs faces numerous encounters in the effectiveness of its practice concerning sustainable higher education sector. The fact that the national policy framework of some countries is not conducive to supporting the higher education sector in achieving effective internationalisation practice, is a challenge that needs to be focused upon despite its renowned importance in the country. HEIs need to have a comprehensive internationalisation practice in their curriculum, with digital transformation that will assist in moving their internationalisation prospects to a more pronounced level. This positive movement will assist the HEIs in making decisions on the most acceptable category of internationalisation practice that is suitable to their desires and objectives. There is also a need to introduce sustainable immigration and other legislative policies and regulations to accomplish effective internationalisation practices in the HEIs. The perception that the HEIs are recognised as a substantial contributor to the economy of developing countries such as China and SA and a need to identify the benefits of effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs is significant.

Based on the findings, it was noted that most of the selected papers are systematic and descriptive literature reviews at 50.8%, which requires more studies through other methodologies to find out other opportunities available to reflect changes that will have a positive impact in the lives of people and the activities in the HEIs concerning effective internationalisation practices. The review also noted that papers relating to developed and developing nations are the most represented, which requires a review of underdeveloped economies concerning the effect of internationalisation practice in the HEIs. The review also indicated that most of the selected papers are within the years 2018 – 2023 (60%), this shows that current papers were reasonably utilised, yet there is still a deficiency regarding the effective internationalisation practices in the HEIs.

Key messages

Internationalisation practice is under-investigated in the HEIs, and the capability to contribute immensely to the information on internationalisation practice that is driven toward the HEIs is ignored.

Most investigation conducted on internationalisation is grounded on minor indications that create gaps in the literature regarding the prevailing knowledge on the adoption of internationalisation. There is a strong demand for further investigation of effective internationalisation practices in the HEIs.

Limitations of the review

This review includes scope, descriptive, and systematic literature studies that were conducted in various disciplines of case studies investigation on internationalisation practice. The review timeline identifies publications between the years 1994 and 2023: duplicate publications were eliminated. The works of the review were mostly on internationalisation and digital intensification in HEIs. These were done to characterise the overall results of the investigation and the interrelated performances. In this review, the authors were able to detect the negative and positive outcomes of the selected papers to have a concise understanding of effective internationalisation practice in the HEIs.

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