

## Internationalisation of Higher Education in Southern Africa with South Africa as a Major Exporter

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This study investigates the extent to which South Africa has strategically marketed its educational services and positioned itself as the educational hub of Southern Africa. The analysis reveals that South African universities' export of higher education services has been modeled in line with three of the four modes of supply identified in World Trade Organisation's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The country has utilized three modes of supply; cross-border supply, consumption abroad, and commercial presence, and as a result it has become the educational hub of Southern Africa. South Africa is competent in most education attraction factors hence the reason why it is the educational hub for Southern Africa. South Africa universities offers internationally recognised academic qualifications, is highly rated in terms of local availability of research and training institutions, quality of scientific research institutions, quality of overall infrastructure and institutions. The study further provides some policy suggestions as to how best South Africa and SADC countries can improve their respective higher education laws, regulations and strategies in order to attract more foreign students into their respective universities. Some of the possible regulations to enhance enrolment of regional citizens in the universities of member states includes allowing students on study permit to also work in the country of study whilst studying without having to get a separate work permit, harmonising recognition of educational qualifications across the region thus making it easier for potential students from one regional country to apply and be accepted at a university in another country, and introduction (or increasing) of flexibility in studies for instance, through block release where students come for a limited period for face-to-face tuition.

*Keywords:* Internationalisation, World Trade Organisation, Higher education

### INTRODUCTION

The increased propensity for higher education, the need for internationally recognised qualifications and demand for highly skilled labor in both developed and developing countries as well as the inclination by several countries towards promotion of foreign collaborations to improve the quality of domestic higher education are among the factors which have propelled rapid demand for foreign higher education services. As a result of this increased demand, international trade in higher education services has grown rapidly in recent years and the supply of these services have taken a variety of forms. The most common form of this trade is the movement of students to study in foreign universities, which has been supplemented by the delivery of foreign higher education programs and institutions to transition and developing countries (AU, 2007; Bashir, 2007). Regional initiatives have also been taken to promote integration in education. In 1997, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)<sup>1</sup> member states agreed to promote

regional cooperation and integration in the education sector and in that regard formulated the SADC Protocol on Education and Training<sup>2</sup>.

At a national level and especially in developing countries, higher education systems are increasingly impacted by the internationalisation of higher education<sup>3</sup>, a term which has been considered by Knight (2006, p. 19) as referring "to the movement of people, programs, providers, knowledge, ideas, projects and services across national boundaries". Thus, in line with this definition, the term internationalisation of higher education will be considered in this study to imply consumption of higher education services of one

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Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> The Protocol is part of the SADC Treaty. Articles 7 and 8 of this Protocol explicitly refer to the sector of higher education and training, as well as research and development

<sup>3</sup> There is however a proliferation of expressions which are often used interchangeably to this term and the commonly used terms include, but not limited to: cross-border, transnational education, offshore education or borderless education.

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<sup>1</sup> The current 15 Member States are: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar,

country by the nationals of another (for which the later make payment). As per the University of KwaZulu-Natal 2009 website<sup>4</sup> an international student is defined as a student who is not a national or permanent resident of the Republic of South Africa and who consequently requires a permit to enroll at a South African university. Consumption of such education services by the citizens of the importer country can take one (or a combination) of the following three forms, in line with World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) lexicon: cross border supply, consumption abroad and commercial services.

The most important issue here is to trace how South Africa is faring in internationalising its education as well as how it may continue to evolve as the major exporter of higher education in the Southern African region. African universities are currently operating in difficult circumstances. They are faced with various problems in terms of social, economic and political problems in the continent, all in the context of globalisation. According to Teferra and Altbach (2004), the road to future success of African universities will not be an easy one. Internationalisation is considered as cooperation-based interaction across national borders aimed at achieving more or less common goals heading for mutual benefits. It is mainly based on trust and confidence. Physical mobility, exchange of ideas and collaborative projects characterise this process. Internationalisation of higher education has the nation state as a frame of reference and action (Hahn, 2003). In the race of attracting international students to the universities in a nation, countries and/or universities will be put under both internal and external pressure and hence forced to adopt different attractive strategies. What has become the most pressing demand on the jungle of programmes is quality assurance, degrees, modes of delivery and increased number of higher education providers (UNESCO, 2003).

In this study, we explicitly use the term "trade in higher education" to refer to the purchase of higher education services from a foreign country using domestic resources.

### 1.1 Regional Initiative: SADC Protocol on Higher Education and Training

Although initiatives of regional integration in education at a continental level were taken in 2007 through the signing of the African Union Harmonisation Policy for Higher Education, the SADC region had already initiated its cooperation in education 10 years earlier. The SADC Protocol on Education and Training (hereafter the 'Protocol') was signed in 1997 with the key objective of providing a framework for regional co-operation in addressing education needs<sup>5</sup>.

The SADC Protocol signed in 1997 provides the policy framework for regional cooperation and integration of the entire education sector in the region. In an effort to promote internationalisation of higher education in the region, regional member countries and signatories to the Protocol agreed that five percent of all available study places should be reserved to admit students of SADC member countries. In 2002, more than five percent of all students enrolled in South African universities and technikons were SADC students. Some higher education institutions in Namibia and South Africa have been exceeding the five percent quota in their annual intake (Hahn, 2005).

Furthermore the Protocol committed member states to provide similar treatment for students from other SADC member countries. This similar treatment ensures that SADC students are treated like home students for purposes of fees and accommodation. Although most countries are still implementing this regulation in stages, South Africa among other countries, has progressed in implementing similar treatment. For instance, most universities in the country demarcate their tuition fees for foreign students into SADC and non-SADC with the fees for SADC being lower than for other non-SADC foreign students.

## 2 OBJECTIVES

Following from the above brief, the two-fold objectives of this study are to:

<sup>4</sup> [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

<sup>5</sup> It is similar to the European Union's Bologna Declaration which was signed two years after the signing of the SADC Protocol.

- i. Analyse the trends, underlying factors and implications of the trade in higher education services in the SADC region, with South Africa as the exporter.
- ii. Provide some further policy suggestions as to how best South Africa and SADC countries can improve their respective higher education laws, regulations and strategies in order to attract more foreign students into their respective universities.

### **3 SOUTH AFRICA'S EXPORT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES STRATEGY**

Whilst Bashir (2007) (using data up to 2004) points to the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), in comparison to all other regions of the world, hosts a negligible number of foreign students with even an absolute decline in the number of foreign students hosted in this region - South Africa is an exception. Comparisons at national level within the Southern Africa (and the SSA at large) region indicate that South Africa has become the education hub of the African wider sub-region. According to Grundling (n.d.), South African institutions of higher education are currently rated among the top 40 of the world's host countries<sup>6</sup>.

#### **3.1 South Africa's Framework of Higher Education Export**

International trade involves a transaction between a resident of a country and a non-resident. Unlike trade in goods, services can be traded in several ways. For instance, the service can be provided by the consumer moving to the exporting country (as when a student goes to study in a foreign university, financed by sources within his own country); by the provider moving to the importing country (as when a foreign higher education institution providing education or training sets up a branch campus or franchise in the importing country); or by the service being provided electronically or on-line (for instance, on-

line certificates, diplomas or degree programs). These are three of the four modes of supply identified in WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services.

Unlike trade in goods, trade in services occurs not only through the cross-border movement of the service, but through the movement of persons (consumers and individual service providers) and foreign investment. South African universities' export of higher education services has been modeled in line with the four modes of supply identified in WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services. These modes are: (i) cross-border supply, (ii) consumption abroad, (iii) commercial presence, and (iv) presence of natural persons.

Table 1 provides higher education examples for each of these four modes of supply. Of particular relevance to this study will be the first three modes of supply for higher education. The fourth mode, movement of individual service providers, which maybe exemplified by the temporary movement of individual faculty members to another country to deliver a specific course or module for payment (that is, not as part of an academic exchange), will not be defined to imply internationalisation of higher education in this study.

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that, although the country has achieved this praiseworthy standing, Grundling (undated) argues that "currently internationalisation of higher education in South Africa happens more by incident rather than through thoroughly planned and organised approaches".

Table 1

Modes of Supply of Services under GATS<sup>7</sup>

<b>GATS mode of supply</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples for trade in higher education</b>	<b>Examples of SA Universities exporting education services under this Mode</b>
<b>Mode 1 – Cross border supply</b>	Delivery of education services from South Africa to importing country SADC country	Distance education, tele-education, education testing services and education via internet.	University of South Africa (UNISA), Stellenbosch University, Rhodes University, University of Cape Town
<b>Mode 2 – Consumption abroad</b>	Movement of students from importing SADC countries to South Africa to obtain education services	SADC students studying in South African universities in the South Africa	University of Cape Town (UCT); University of Pretoria (UP); Witwatersrand University; Stellenbosch University, University of South Africa University of Western Cape, North West University, University of KwaZulu Natal UNISA
<b>Mode 3 – Commercial presence</b>	Establishment of local unit of institution from South Africa in importing SADC countries.	South Africa's course offerings through branch campuses or subsidiaries of institutions, franchising, twinning/articulated arrangements, etc	
<b>Mode 4 – Presence of natural persons</b>	Temporary movement of teachers, lecturers, and education personnel from South Africa to SADC country to provide education services	Teacher exchange programs	UNISA

**Source:** Author compilation

<sup>7</sup> Under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) administered by WTO, commitments have been made and requests and offers have also been made in the current round of negotiations by various exporting and importing countries. These commitments, requests and offers point to issues and concerns surrounding trade in higher education services. Further, liberalisation of trade in higher education is also being pursued in the context of bilateral and regional trade agreements (WTO, 2006), and is being carried out under the four aforementioned and tabulated modes.

From table 1 above, it can be noted that South Africa has been making an effort to make use of the aforementioned modes in exporting its educational services. This is evidenced by most of its universities playing significant roles in employing the first three modes of supply for international education. In general these modes of supply of services have been constrained by some challenges like visa requirements and some specific requirements for a study permit which requires things like medical and radiological report, proof of medical insurance cover recognised in South Africa and other various requirements<sup>8</sup>. South African government and universities have been trying to use the three modes with various incentives put in place.

### 3.2 Trends in Foreign Student Enrolments

In examining mobility trends, Project Atlas' definition of an international student is "one who undertakes all or part of his/her higher education experience in a country other than the home country" (Project Atlas, 2004). The number of international students at South Africa's 23 public universities grew from 12,557 in 1994 to nearly 54,000 in 2006 as shown in Table 2. A noticeable trend is that the increase in the number of international students has continued to accelerate rising from the 1994 figure of 12,557 to 45,377 in 2000, and further increasing to 53,686 in 2006. In 2002, international students represented seven percent of the total enrolments (Department of Education, 2009). In 2003, there were 51,426 foreign students in higher education in South Africa out of which 36,207, representing 70 percent of total enrolled students were from SADC countries and 6,664 or 13 percent were from the rest of the African continent. In 2006, two-thirds of foreign students were from SADC countries, 16 percent were from the rest of Africa and 14 percent were from the rest of the world.

## 4 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 4.1 Conceptual Framework and Rationale for Internationalisation

Student demand for higher education is increasingly being shaped by the knowledge and skill requirements of global firms. Employers require technical and professional employees to have sound and up-to-date technical knowledge, an ability to apply it in new situations and to learn on the job, foreign language skills, information technology skills and knowledge of modern business practices. To the extent that the curricula and teaching methods of domestic higher education institutions do not impart these knowledge and skills, graduates of these institutions will be at a disadvantage in the skilled labor market, compared to graduates of foreign partnership programs and foreign universities which offer qualifications that are recognised in the job market. This drives the private demand for foreign higher education credentials and for institutions with a "brand name". Thus it is the thrust of this study to note the way South African universities have branded themselves in order to attract international students. It is also from this theoretical postulation that this study intends to find out what policies have been implemented by the South African government, as well as universities in providing up-to-date technical knowledge and the knowledge of modern business practices in their quest to increase enrollment of international students.

Theoretically, it has been noted that some students go to learn in foreign universities in order to enhance their chances of being employed in the higher education providers' country (Bashir, 2007). This was cited as being very important as it also affected the choice of the country where

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<sup>8</sup> For more details see Study South Africa; Immigration Act Guidelines

Table 2

## Enrolment of International Students in South African Universities

Region	1994		1997		2000		2003		2006	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Southern Africa	6,209	49.4	7,822	51.6	21,318	47.0	36,207	70.4	35,880	66.8
Rest of Africa	1,521	12.1	2,079	13.7	4,263	9.4	6,664	13.0	8,609	16.0
Rest of the world	4,827	38.4	5,268	34.7	5,568	12.3	7,108	13.8	7,637	14.2
No info	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14,228	31.4	1,447	2.8	1,560	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,557</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15,169</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>45,377</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>51,426</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>53,686</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Department of Education, South Africa

students would want to go for their tertiary academic studies. It therefore becomes ideal for this study to determine the forces that pull the demand for South African higher education. It was also noted that policies of exporting nations and the marketing activities of their higher education institutions have played a crucial role in determining student movement to overseas locations. Also, policies of importing nations have played a critical role in encouraging foreign collaborations with domestic higher education institutions (Qiang, 2003).

According to the OECD observer, there are four different, but mutually exclusive approaches to internationalisation of education (OECD, 2004). Three of the approaches have a strong economic drive and these are skilled migration, revenue generation and capacity building. The fourth, with a longer history hinges on mutual understanding. Allowing and encouraging mobility of domestic and foreign students, as well as staff through scholarships and academic exchange programmes, the mutual understanding approach encompasses political, cultural, academic and development aid goals. It also supports academic partnerships between educational institutions.

The skilled migration approach gives strong emphasis to the recruitment of selected international students and aims to attract talented students to work in the host country's knowledge economy, or render its higher education and research sectors more competitive. The approach looks more into the branding of the educational institution abroad and improving its image globally.

The revenue-generating approach shares the rationales for both the mutual understanding and the skilled migration approaches. However, higher education services are offered at a full fee basis,

without public subsidies. The perceived revenue generated emanates from foreign students having to pay more than local students.

The capacity building approach encourages cross-border higher education as a quick way to build an emerging country's capacity. Twinning arrangements and partnerships with local providers are encouraged to facilitate knowledge transfers between foreign and local institutions.

Internationalisation of higher education is also perceived to be due to interest in international security, maintenance of economic competitiveness and fostering of human understanding across nations (Aigner *et.al* 1992). Economic competitiveness, environmental interdependence, increasing ethnic and religious diversity of local communities, the reality that most citizens' work for foreign-owned firms, as well as the influence of international trade on small business are some of the reasons cited by Scott (1992) as imperatives for global education. Having identified it as the self development in a changing world, Warner (1992) also provide the rationale for internationalisation as that it makes the student, institution and government more competitive in the global market place. Davies (1992) identified internationalisation as the rise in academic entrepreneurialism and genuine philosophical commitment to cross-cultural perspectives in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge.

Political, economic, educational and cultural rationales for internationalisation were cited by Knight and De Wit (1995). The political rationale was said to be concerned with issues related to the country's position and role as a nation in the world. The economic rationale hinges on the long term effects where internationalisation is seen as a contribution to the skilled human resources needed

for international competitiveness. The academic rationale was linked to the achievement of international academic standards for research and teaching, while socio-cultural rationale concentrates more on the role and place of the country's own culture and language and on the importance of understanding international culture and languages.

The International Association of Universities (2005) came up with the rankings of why nations want to internationalise their education services, and the results are presented in table 3 below:

Table 3

Rationale for Internationalisation		
Rationale		Ranking (%)
Increased national economic competitiveness		28
Development of strategic alliances (political, cultural trade)		20
Building Human resource capacity		15
Promote international solidarity and cooperation		14
Further cultural awareness and understanding		9
Strengthen the educational export industry		7
Contribute to regional priorities in integration		7

**Source:** International Association of Universities, 2005 IAU Global Survey Report

These results indicate that there are various reasons why countries internationalise. Also the importance attached to internationalisation differs from across nations.

## 4.2 Empirical Review

MacGregor (2007) argues that the South African government subsidises SADC students at the same levels as local students thereby encouraging regional student mobility through a SADC agreement that earns students the right to pay fees which are either the same or close to those paid by local students across the region. As such, South African universities cannot charge regional students (the majority of international

students) foreign-level tuition fees. Some universities also charge home-level fees to those from the rest of Africa and all postgraduates pay home fees. The country sees hosting students from the rest of Africa as a way of contributing to the continent's human resource development and of helping stem a crippling brain drain.

Study South Africa<sup>9</sup> considers the dominance of South Africa as the hub for higher education not only in Southern Africa, but also in the continent emanating from a number of factors. Firstly, the country is close geographically to many sub-Saharan African countries. Secondly, the country's universities use English as the primary language of instruction. Thirdly, the country's institutions of higher learning charges lower fees than developed nations and South Africa also has a lower cost of living. Lastly, South Africa boasts a large higher education sector that is accessible and offers internationally recognised qualifications.

According to Rouhani (2007), the road to internationalisation has not been an even one. Some universities had a comparative advantage in their positioning for attracting international students. This was said to be evidenced by fees charged for international students varying greatly. After analysing the trends in internationalisation in selected South African universities, Rouhani (2007) found that there is a need for South African universities to work together in implementing policies for internationalisation if they were to fully enjoy the benefits of having an international dimension in their tertiary education curricula. Thus, it is one of the aims of this study to determine what the universities, as well as the South African government ought to do in order to attract more foreign students and hence reap the benefits of internationalisation.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The study will employ document review and statistical figures as the main vehicle to achieve its objectives. It consists of internet research as well as policy papers and other official documents. Specifically, the study will review and analyse relevant South African educational documents and foreign student enrolment statistical figures including:

<sup>9</sup> Available online: <http://www.studysa>

- i. Documents regarding the country's strategy in promoting its universities and institutions of higher learning, within southern Africa and the world at large;
- ii. Trends in statistical figures in enrolment of foreign students from the other 13 SADC member states;
- iii. Regional protocols (especially the latest versions) on movement of natural persons;
- iv. Other publicly available documents (literature) which deal with exportation of higher education services by South Africa's institutes of higher learning

## 6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 6.1 Trends in trade in higher education

#### 6.1.1 SADC countries and Number of Higher Education Institution

Although each SADC member country has its own higher education systems, only South Africa's system will be reviewed and detailed. This mainly emanates from the fact that the country is the main hub of education in the region and is the African country with the most highly international rated universities as shown in Table 5. At SADC country level, the numbers of higher education institutions currently existing in each member state vary from one source to another. For instance, the Guide on Higher Education in Africa indicates that in 2001 there were 63 universities, 65 technikons, polytechnics, colleges or higher education institutes as well as around 25 teacher colleges and other specialised colleges, which formed the highly fragmented and differentiated sector within the SADC region (AAU & IAU 2002). On the other hand, Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), 2009 showed that SADC has 68 public universities, 119 publicly funded polytechnics or colleges and 178 private universities or colleges as of 2009. Important here however is to show which country has the highest number of publicly funded universities which might be central for the internationalisation of higher education as they

will indicate the general direction of government policy<sup>10</sup>.

Table 4

SADC countries and number of public universities in 2009

Country	Number of public universities
Angola	1
Botswana	2
Democratic Republic of Congo	5
Lesotho	1
Madagascar	6
Malawi	2
Mauritius	2
Mozambique	4
Namibia	1
Seychelles	X
South Africa	23
Swaziland	1
Tanzania	8
Zambia	3
Zimbabwe	9

Source: SARUA (2009)

In general it can be revealed that South Africa has the highest number of public universities. This has resulted in the country emerging as a major exporter of higher education in the region. Currently, of all the SADC foreign students enrolled in SADC countries' universities, South Africa accounts for about 70 percent of this enrollment in the region (SARUA, 2009). The same is true when we consider all the higher education institutions (both public and private institution) in the region. However, there are other factors that are critical for the major exporter of higher education, and these include the study stage offered, quality, research profiles, as well as outputs. South African quality assurance system is very elaborate, as evidenced by several universities and polytechnics in the region as well as Ministries and non-governmental associations which are/were seeking South African assistance in building up their own quality assurance

<sup>10</sup> Also analysis is restricted to public universities rather than private universities given that the former universities are generally affordable to majority people than the latter ones.



institutions and mechanisms (Hahn, 2005). Also, other higher education systems such as those in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe, are coming from being affected by civil wars and state fragilities. South Africa is undoubtedly seen as the most attractive higher education system in every aspect.

Simple analysis will show that South Africa is the major regional exporter of tertiary education. Zimbabwe, DRC and Madagascar are suffering from recent conflicts hence their provision of higher education has been compromised.

Also from the Internetlab ranking of 30 Top African Universities, South Africa dominates on the top 10 list. Only one University from Egypt is in the top 10, at number 8- America University of Cairo. This ranking is based on several webometric indicators such as the size, visibility, popularity and number of rich files. The table below provides the ranking.

Table 5

## Highly rated universities

University	Country	African Ranking	World Ranking
University of Cape Town	South Africa	1	398
University of Stellenbosch	South Africa	2	566
University of South Africa	South Africa	3	718

Table 6

## Top five receiving countries

Sending Country	Receiving Country				
	France	USA	South Africa	United Kingdom	Germany
	1	2	3	4	5
Botswana		488	7 012	700	
Egypt	849	1822		799	1 192
Ethiopia		1060		263	466
Ghana		3288		2798	744
Kenya		7381		3083	
Mauritius	1893		1732	1646	
Mozambique		93	815	71	
Nigeria		6140		5942	630
Senegal	8329	805			256
South Africa		1971		1408	196
Tanzania		1471	283	1053	115
Uganda		696		885	121
Other Countries	97856	12273	26444	6841	18450

Pretoria University of Witwatersrand	Africa	4	720
Rhodes University of South Africa	South Africa	5	738
University of South Africa	South Africa	6	1 449
University of Western Cape	South Africa	7	1 553
America University of Cairo	Egypt	8	1 826
North West University of South Africa	South Africa	9	1 857
University of KwaZulu Natal	South Africa	10	2 214

Source: Internetlab Ranking of the top 30 African Universities in 2009

### 6.1.2 Sub Saharan Africa Student mobility

Comparing with other countries, South Africa is the second country after United States as the main destination for students from Anglophone Sub Saharan African countries including Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya. This shows the importance of South Africa in playing a greater role in attracting international students in Sub Saharan Africa as a whole. The table below shows the top 5 countries receiving students from Sub Saharan Africa:

**Total**                    **108,927**                    **37,488**                    **36,286**                    **25,489**                    **22,270**  
**Source:** UNESCO-UIS/OECD (2005)

The table above indicates that South Africa stands as one of the top five receiving countries for international students and also that in Sub-Saharan Africa; it stands as the most receiving country. This indicates that South Africa should act as the major exporter of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa and in particular, in the SADC region.

Taking the foreign students in the whole world in general, without looking at Sub Saharan Africa alone, South Africa has been rated as one of the top 10 destinations for foreign students wanting to pursue university education away from their homes. It has been placed on number 8 out of the

153 countries (Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2009). About 60,600 of the 2.8 million international students are enrolled in one of the country's 23 universities. (Sunday Times, 11 August, 2009). The Global Education Digest Study, (2009), ranked United States as the most popular destination and South Africa has been placed on number eight. The table below shows that South Africa has prepared itself to be the leading player in exporting higher education to other countries in the region and in the world at large.

Table 7

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Top 10 countries with highest foreign student enrolment

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<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
1	US	595,900
2	UK	351,500
3	France	246,600
4	Australia	211,500
5	Germany	206,900
6	Japan	125,900
7	Canada	68,500
8	South Africa	60,600
9	Russia	60,300
10	Italy	57,300

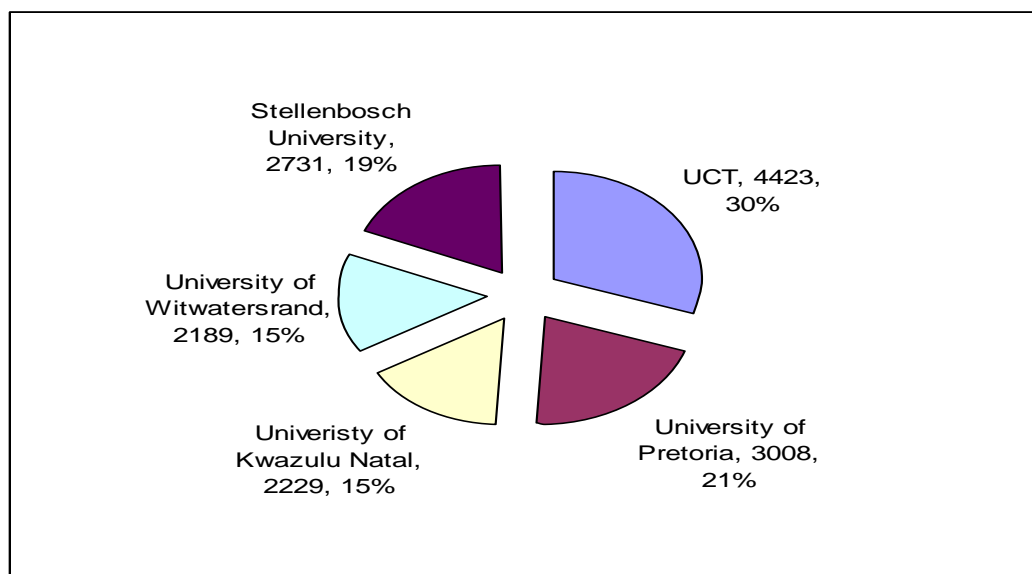
Source: Global Education Digest 2009

Moreso, from the 2008 London Times Academic Ranking, University of Cape Town (UCT) was ranked 179<sup>th</sup> in the world and had enrolled about 4 423 foreign students in 2009. This shows a marked improvement from the 2007 ranking of number

200. In South Africa alone, UCT grabbed the lion's share of foreign students in 2009. Top five South Africa universities are as indicated below.

*Figure 1*

SA Universities with highest number of foreign students in 2009



Source: Author compilation

### 6.1.3 Student enrolments from SADC region in South Africa

Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of students from the SADC region studying in South African Universities. The changes in student enrolments from different countries in the SADC region have been tabulated in table 8 below for 2002 and 2006:

Table 8

International students at public universities, by country 2002 and 2006

Country	2002	2006
Angola	679	1,041
Botswana	6,037	5,878
Democratic Republic of Congo	296	887
Lesotho	3,383	3,702
Malawi	357	608
Mauritius	1,627	1,425
Mozambique	581	929
Namibia	5,389	7,059
Seychelles	4	10
Swaziland	1,621	2,705
Tanzania	206	522
Zambia	2,445	1,463
Zimbabwe	9,099	9,651
<b>SADC total</b>	<b>31,724</b>	<b>35,880</b>
Rest of Africa	6317	8,609
Rest of the world total	6156	7,637
No information		1,560
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>44197</b>	<b>53,686</b>

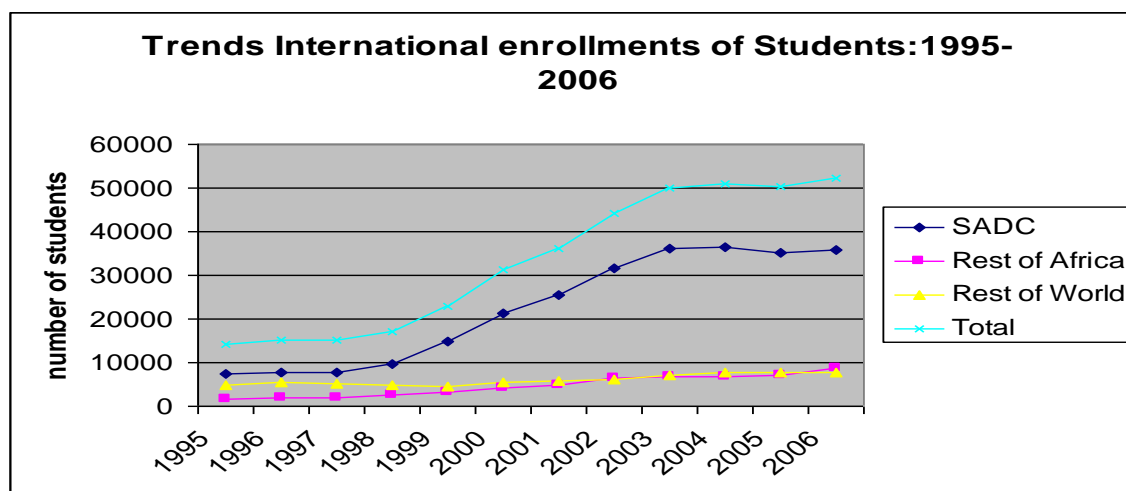
Source: Department of Education South Africa

From the above table, it can be seen that there has been an increase in the number of students from the SADC region studying in South Africa. Despite there being an increase in students from the SADC region, a closer look shows that there were some countries which reduced the number of students to South Africa while others increased the number of students going to South Africa. The countries with major increases in the number of students going to South Africa were Namibia, with an increase of 1670 students, followed by Swaziland with an increase of 1084 students and thirdly, the DRC with an increase of 591 students. However, on the downside was Zambia with the greatest decline of 982, followed by Mauritius, dropping by 202 and thirdly Botswana dropping by 159 from 6037 in 2002 to 5878 in 2006. However, on aggregate, there has been an increase in the number of students studying in South Africa coming from the SADC region, from the rest of Africa and from the world at large. This is

evidenced by the increase in SADC students from 31724 in 2002 to 35880 in 2006. The students from the rest of Africa followed second with an increase of 2292 from 6317 in 2002 to 8609 in 2006, and lastly those from the rest of the world increased by 1481 students, from 6156 in 2002 to 7637 in 2006. This finding is also coined by the line graph presentation of the trends in enrolments for international students (see *Figure 2*).

*Figure 2*

Trends in International enrolments of Students in South Africa



Source: Department of Education, South Africa

From figure 2 above, it can be noted that there has been an increase in the number of international students studying in South Africa. It can also be noted that the bulk of the international students are from the SADC region. The number of international students from the rest of the world is fluctuating below the ten thousand student mark, with no major changes in flows of students, while

those from the rest of Africa seem to be on the increase, although it is still very low. Students from the SADC region make the modal class for international students in South Africa. There has been a rapid increase in students from the SADC region in the period between 1997 and 2003, and as of 2006, the number of international students

from the SADC region being recruited in South African universities is leveling out.

Statistics from the Department of Education for 2005 show that over a third of international students are enrolled on distance education courses through the University of South Africa (UNISA), a proportion in line with other destination countries, for instance in Europe. The University of Cape Town had the highest number of foreign students at a 'contact' institution, and there were also high numbers attending large institutions such as the Universities of North-West, KwaZulu-Natal and Pretoria, and Tshwane University of Technology. In 2005, Rhodes University had the highest proportion of international students, with one in four (26.5%) of students from outside South Africa, followed by the University of Cape Town (22.4%). More than one in 10 students were foreign at the Universities of Fort Hare and Western Cape, while international students comprised more than 8% of students at the Universities of the Witwatersrand, Nelson

Mandela Metropolitan and KwaZulu-Natal (<http://www.studysa.co.za>).

### Top 10 Sending Countries –to South Africa

Overall, statistical figures at national level for SADC countries supplying most students to South African universities indicates Zimbabwe as the major 'source' country, sending 18 percent of all international students, followed by Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Zimbabwe's share of SADC students studying in South African Universities in 2006 was 18 percent, while Namibia followed with a share of 13.2 percent, with DRC's share being the least, less than 1.7 percent, as shown in Table 7. (Atlas of International Students' Mobility, 2009)

This also shows the origin of international students to South Africa. This portrays the strength of South Africa to act as a major exporter in the SADC region as the 10 are actually from SADC region.

Table 9

Top 10 Sending Countries

Country	Percentage of sending countries to South Africa		
	2002	2005	2006
Zimbabwe	19.5	18.5	18.0
Namibia	11.5	11.8	13.2
Botswana	12.9	13.3	10.9
Lesotho	7.3	7.2	6.8
Swaziland	3.5	4.7	5.1
Zambia	5.2	2.5	2.7
Mauritius	3.5	3.1	2.7
Angola	1.5	1.9	1.9
Mozambique	1.2	1.8	1.7
Malawi	0.8	-	-
DRC	-	1.2	1.7

Source: Atlas of International Students' Mobility

## 6.2 Factors contributing to South Africa's higher education exports

From the study, it was found that there are various factors that are promoting internationalisation of

education in the SADC region. These have been summarised in table 10 below, in order of their perceived strengths from study findings.

Table 10

## Factors leading to Internationalisation

Common Factors	South African Government Action	South Africa University Specific Response
Attractiveness of studying abroad	Funding for studies through scholarships	<b>University of Cape Town-</b> African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Scholarship for PhD Economics, and also administers US Federal loans. <b>Fort Hare University-</b> SADC Presidential Scholarships <b>Witwatersrand University-</b> African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Scholarship for PhD Economics,
Mobility of students	Affordable and Easy to access student visa permits	Universities assist students in applications for the Student Visa and also provide all the relevant documentation for the applications.
Severely limited access to domestic institutions	Expanded and increased the numbers of tertiary academic institutions with the capacity to enroll international students	<b>Rhodes University-</b> Extended the percentage of international students from the 5% on the SADC Protocol to at most 25%.
Better Quality of higher education and research	Assisted in setting up the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Board. Staff and research incentives	<b>University of Cape Town-</b> thrives on excellence as the benchmark for all internationalisation. <b>Rhodes University-</b> Follows International best practice, at the same time ensuring relevance of teaching methods and courses to the African context. <b>Cape Peninsula University-</b> Its IT Center is the largest of its kind in Africa
Attractiveness of South Africa	Liberalisation of skilled migration policies Home Affairs issued a directive permitting work permit holders to take up part-time studies concurrently in 2008.	<b>Most international Universities</b> provide employment opportunities for post-graduate students as teaching assistants, with room for permanent employment on completion of studies.
Socio-Economic Issues	Allowing foreign students to be engaged in the formal sector employment in their institutions of learning to improve their livelihoods	Temporary attachments and research work for students especially those doing their post-graduate studies
Adding an “International Dimension” to higher education experience	Adopted the SADC protocol on Education and Training as a policy	<b>Rhodes University-</b> encourages Bi- and Multi-lateral agreements with institutions outside South Africa. It also facilitates international links and provides staff with the opportunity to visit foreign countries and work with international colleagues. <b>KwaZulu Natal and University of Cape Town-</b> they have policies on international students.
Fees cost structures	Adopted the SADC Protocol on higher education and training which aim at treating SADC students like home students for fees and accommodation	Most universities charge SADC foreign students fees that are lower than non-SADC foreign students eg <b>KwaZulu Natal and UCT</b>
To have international links and contacts	Establishing Embassies	<b>Setting up the USHEPiA</b> (Universities Science, Humanities, Law and Engineering Partnerships in

Africa) bringing together eight universities in East, Central and Southern Africa

**Rhodes University**- Strives to make the international student component as diverse as possible.

**University of Cape Town**- Takes in the need for flexibility and international

Internationally recognised academic qualifications

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Board.

Degrees from most universities, especially those rated in Table 5 are international recognised

**Source:** Author compilation

### 1. Funding for studies through scholarships

Most South Africa Universities and other donors provide scholarships and financial assistances especially beginning at MSc levels. For instance, AERC provides scholarships for PhD in Economics students at Wits, and Cape Town; while most students from Msc to PhD are given bursaries which cover tuition fees by SA government through their respective universities.

### 2. International recognised academic qualifications

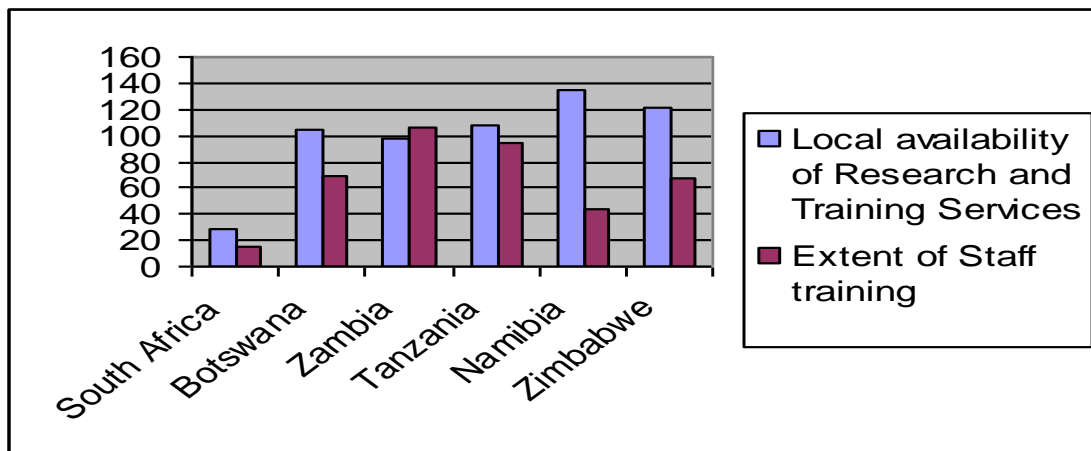
Employer demand for skilled labor that can be used in a variety of geographic locations or that can work with multinational teams, which arises from the increasing integration of product and factor markets, is a powerful factor behind growing student demand for internationally recognised qualifications. Such qualifications enable students to access the global market for highly skilled labor with much higher returns on their investment. The policies of importing and exporting countries also play a significant role in encouraging different modes of trade (Bashir, 2007). This has led to many students from the SADC region opting to go and learn in South Africa, in multi-cultural environments where they get experience and practice to work in the

multinational teams, satisfying the employer demands.

### 3. Competent lecturers and higher research institutions capabilities

South Africa universities are able to attract competent lecturers from around the world. Because of the salaries, research funds provided by government and a relatively developed metropolitan environment, most SA universities are fully equipped with lecturers from around the world as well as South Africa/Africa lecturers who have trained in top-notch universities (including Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, MIT etc). Thus, most potential students are attracted to SA universities than other SADC/African universities. In terms of research institutions South Africa takes the lead position in the region according to the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), 2008. It ranked 134 countries. Figure 3 below shows the position of South Africa in selected Higher Education and Training components. It shows how competitive is South Africa is in these two issues. In terms of local availability of research institutions and training services and extent of staff training is ranked number 29 and 15 as compared to other countries which are lowly ranked. The higher the rank number the lesser the attractiveness of that country in that category.

Figure 3  
Higher Education and Training

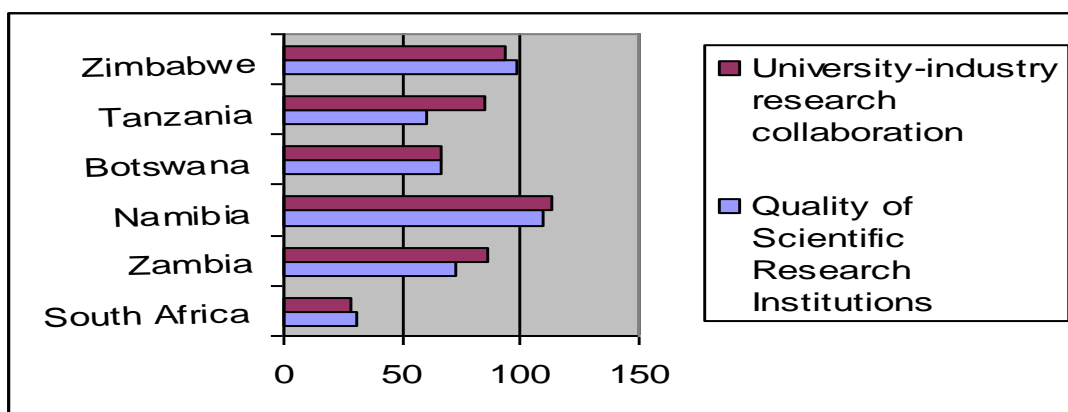


Source: World Economic Forum, 2009

In terms of innovation it is highly ranked in the region. It is competent in both the quality of scientific research institutions and University-

industry collaboration. The graph below depicts this. Its ranking for the two from the 134 countries is 31 and 28 respectively.

Figure 4  
Research Institutions



Source: World Economic Forum, 2009

Student demand for higher education is increasingly shaped by the knowledge and skill requirements of global firms. South Africa education is highly rated in terms of University – industry research collaboration. Increasingly, these employers require their technical and professional employees to have sound and up-to-date technical knowledge, an ability to apply it in new situations and to learn on the job, foreign language skills, Information Technology (IT) skills and knowledge of modern business practices. To the extent that the curricula and teaching methods of domestic

higher education institutions do not impart these knowledge and skills, graduates of these institutions will be at a disadvantage in the skilled labor market, compared to graduates of foreign partnership programs and foreign universities which offer qualifications that are recognised in the job market. To that end, South Africa has tried to be competitive in all these areas in the SADC region.



Given the above, according to SARUA (2009)<sup>11</sup>, South Africa is the most prolific and productive producer of scientific output in the region, dominating scientific production by producing an average of 80% of all output from 1990 to 2007. It was four times more productive than the regional average, as it has produced 119 scientific papers per million of population compared to the average of 29 papers per million of population in SADC. Tanzania is currently the second most prolific, having pushed Zimbabwe to third position in the past seven years.

#### 4. Student assistantships

Most South African universities, especially at post grade levels (MSc and up) provides financial assistance by making those students tutors and assistant lectures, thus providing some financial help to students, beside some practical experiences. Hence most SADC students are attracted to SA universities than other regional universities.

#### 5. Infrastructure

South Africa is also competent in infrastructure. However it competes with Namibia and Botswana. In the world economic rankings, South Africa is generally well ranked. This also complements that South Africa can be a hub of higher education in the region education. The table below shows South Africa position in terms of infrastructure competitiveness.

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<sup>11</sup> Available online: <http://www.sarua.org>

Table 11

	Quality of overall Infrastructure	of roads	Quality of transport infrastructure	of air	Quality of electricity supply
South Africa	46	40	25		101
Zambia	118	107	99		112
Namibia	26	23	50		57
Botswana	43	44	97		73
Tanzania	112	109	111		122
Zimbabwe	79	76	55		129

Source: World Economic Forum, 2009

## 6. Overall Ranking

Table 12

Top Four SADC Performers in Each Pillar of the Global Competitiveness Index

Country	Overall Rank	Institutions	Infrastructure	Macro-economy	Higher Education and Training	Innovation
Botswana	56	36	53	22	87	83
Lesotho	123	114	125	39	106	97
Madagascar	125	94	114	127	119	87
Malawi	119	51	119	129	116	94
Mauritius	57	39	43	117	67	80
Namibia	80	42	33	27	110	111
South Africa	45	46	48	63	57	37
Tanzania	113	76	118	108	132	101
Zambia	112	67	116	102	118	92
Zimbabwe	133	126	88	134	107	119

Source: World Economic Forum, 2008. Key: 1<sup>st</sup> -blue, 2<sup>nd</sup> -green, 3<sup>rd</sup> -yellow, 4<sup>th</sup> - brown

The 2008-2009 World Economic Forum consisted of 134 countries and it ranks countries according to different pillars 1 to 12. From the table above South Africa tops the ranking, but however taking Africa as a whole Tunisia tops the rankings among the African countries at 36<sup>th</sup> position followed by South Africa, (GCI, 2009) In terms of the quality of institutions which looks at respect of property rights and intellectual property protection Botswana is the first followed by Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa. Infrastructure South Africa takes the fourth position. In general South Africa occupies three first positions in the region as compared to other countries which have none first position saves for Botswana and Namibia. To reveal its sole leadership in higher education South Africa is the first followed by Mauritius. This really reflects that the quality of education

system in South Africa, research and training services and staff training is high in South Africa. South Africa also leads in southern Africa in terms of innovation. This pillar is composed of capacity for innovation, quality of scientific research institutions and University- industry research collaboration. It also enhances the point that South Africa can be a leader in higher education services provision in the whole region.

### 6.3 What South Africa should do to encourage higher education exports

This section provides some policy recommendations and strategies that South Africa should consider implementing in an effort to buttress its position as the educational hub, not only for southern Africa, but for the African continent as a whole. These strategies and

recommendations are not only limited to the information presented in this section.

The country should consider harmonisation and eventual standardisation of university entrance requirements. However, this issue is a major challenge which can easily be achievable for former SADC states where the minimum entrance requirement is an O-level after twelve years of schooling. South African minimum standards and the differentiated system of Matric Examination exemption need a re-look and should be quickly replaced.

In order to increase the inflow of students to study in tertiary academic institutions in South Africa, it is recommended that the country reduce the application requirements for students intending to study in the country. In this regard, the government can increase the offering for quota study permits which have no detrimental effects on application procedures and are easier to obtain for the students.

Following from the policy on higher education in the United States of America (USA), the South African government may encourage highly skilled migration. This may be done as a means of improving the competitiveness of the country's universities. As South Africa is more or less the bread basket of Southern Africa at the moment, boasting the best in the areas of technology, industry and commerce, the government may implement policies of giving temporary employment to international students who will have completed their tertiary academic studies in the country. As the remunerations offered in the country are already higher regionally, this will act as an incentive for international students to study in the country, due to the perceived benefits upon completion of the studies.

The government may assist universities by setting up agencies, while at the same time, the universities may come together and set up centers, in importing countries, offering prospective students with free information and counseling services, as well as assistance with submission of application and visa forms. The international academic agencies may also assist international students with pre-departure seminars, and assistance for accommodation. By so doing, students will have a general know-how of the conditions that they will face when they go to learn in South Africa, and it also creates a rapport

between the student and University. This can be done in line with how it is done by the United States Education embassies set up in various countries.

The government may provide incentives to academic institutions that have an international dimension in their mission statements. This may be done in the form of subsidies or by giving funding linked to the proportion of overseas students. However, this can be easily achieved in state owned institutions. Switzerland, for example, introduced such criteria into universities' funding formulae and this has greatly increased its foreign student intake (Bashir, 2007).

Tertiary education institutions in South Africa may also induce the influx of foreign students by sourcing and providing funding for international students through the use of scholarships. In order to attract more foreign students, the institutions may also engage in global research. By so doing, they will be advertising themselves to the global market. In joining in global research, the technikons and universities may also form strategic partnerships with other universities such that they may engage in exchange programmes, and hence improve their international recognition. The higher education institutions in South Africa must adhere to international best practices in the provision of academic services. The curriculum offering by the institutions should be world class, and their graduates should exhibit that in order to market the institutions. The institutions should also invest in the diversification of teaching and research staff.

To attract more foreign students in South African institutions, the government may allow students on study permit to also work in the country of study, without having to apply for another separate work permit. The academic institutions in South Africa may lobby for harmonisation in the recognition of educational qualifications across the region. This will have an impact of making it easier for potential students from one regional country to apply and be accepted at any university within the region, as they will have the same grading systems. By introducing, or simply increasing, the flexibility of studies, the institutions may enhance the influx of potential foreign students. They may do so by introducing block release programmes where students come for a limited period of time for

face-to-face tuition, whilst distance and on-line learning constitute a large proportion of the qualification tuition.

Universities should consider introduction (or increasing) of flexibility in how students can choose the manner in which they may want to do their studies. Possible flexibilities may include block release where students come for a limited period for face-to-face tuition whilst distance and online learning constitute a larger proportion of the qualification tuition.

#### **6.4 LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE**

Other African Universities have many things that they can learn from the South African experiences. These vary from technicalities they may adapt, to other administrative issues they may also alter. The governments may also assist the universities as the South African government is doing. The lessons are as listed below.

The international universities in other African countries may make use of advances in Information Communication Technology (ICT) to develop their own easy to access websites. This assists in advertising the universities and marketing the institutions. This may be done as is also already done by some of the South African Universities like the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa.

Opening up international centers in importing countries, as well as establishing international contacts and relations with other institutions of higher learning in the SADC region can also assist in improving the enrolment rates for international students in other African countries. In regard of opening up centers, they may just open reference offices in importing countries as was done by Monash University in Harare, Zimbabwe, where all student application procedures are done and completed at the center and the center takes responsibility to submit the applications to the main campus. The center may also be given the mandate to take care of all student visas and quota applications on behalf of the students, thus improving the relations of the institution with students and hence becoming more attractive.

Taking the example of the direction taken by South Africa, other countries may also set up their own internationally recognized academic

standards in education and establish international links where such qualifications will be accepted. South Africa came up with the SAQA which is internationally recognised. Moreover, they may also secure links with other highly recognised international institutions in the developed world.

Other universities in Africa may also source external funding for prospective international students. They may do this by following how universities such as the University of Cape Town (UCT) and University of Witwatersrand have done by having links with organisations such as the African Economic Research Consortium, to fund PhD Economics students.

Other universities in Africa may also try and improve the quality of their scientific research institutes, as well as their staff compliments, so as to attract more international students. This may be done, as in South Africa, by engaging in international research exercises, as well as recruiting foreign lecturers and researchers, to spruce-up the images of their institutions.

Other African universities may also establish synchronisation of studies to requirements in the real sectors of the economy. This may be done so that the universities do not produce unnecessary graduates in the economy. There is need therefore of improved university industry collaboration. This may be done through identification of suitable organisations that give internationally recognised training standards.

Other African governments may also assist their universities to attract foreign students by creating conducive environments. This may be done by the governments having good relations with the international community, having active embassies in various countries, which market the countries' universities, as well as by having legislations that remove deterrence of enrollment of foreign students.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The study has tried to come up with trends and underlying factors in the trade in higher education services in the SADC region, with South Africa as the major exporter. From the study, it is clear that South Africa has managed to position itself to be the major destination for international students in the SADC region and in Africa as a whole. South African Universities have also been taking policies

in trying to internationalise their educational system, hence transferring South Africa to become the educational hub of Southern Africa. Policy suggestions were also highlighted, which might be

implemented by South Africa and other SADC countries to promote the internationalisation of their education systems.

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