Article

National Policy for Internationalisation in Higher Education: The Case of Mozambique

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Abstract

The impetus of this study is to explore the internationalisation of higher education policy in Mozambique at a national level. Internationalisation has been one of the major themes of discussion across countries but except for South Africa, it is rarely researched in sub-Saharan Africa from the perspective of the policy of higher education at a national level. This study is qualitative and applies the policy analysis method. Data derive from higher education policy documents and semi-structured interviews with policy-makers. Two research questions are asked. First, how do policy-makers understand and strategise the internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique? Second, what are the rationales and challenges for undertaking internationalisation of higher education? The findings reveal that internationalisation is understood as mobility of students and staff, establishment of agreements and cooperation and integration of higher education in the Southern African Development Community and worldwide. The findings further reveal that the rationales for undertaking internationalisation of higher education policy encompass quality, academic training, competitiveness, prestige, and knowledge production. An ideological mismatch

in the strategies of the internationalisation between policy-makers and policy documents was noted, identifying opportunities for a more creative approach.

Keywords: higher education, internationalisation, policy, Mozambique

Introduction

Internationalisation has been globally regarded as a phenomenon influencing higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach et al., 2019). Attesting to this claim, internationalisation is on the agenda of many higher education institutions (HEIs) (Hellstén, 2017; Sanders, 2019; Wihlborg & Robson, 2018) and governments (Lane, 2015) becoming an important policy issue for universities and governments in developed and developing countries (Beerkens, 2004). International dimensions of higher education have been present for centuries, for instance, in the sense of attracting students and staff from many countries through academic cooperation among HEIs and the mobility of scholars and knowledge around the world (Altbach & De Wit, 2015; Knight, 2014a). Therefore, internationalisation is by no means a new phenomenon (Knight, 2014b). Scholars state that internationalisation of higher education emerged in the 1990s in the global North and connected with the discourses and practices of globalisation (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Stromquist, 2007). Expansion, massification, privatisation and globalisation have contributed to internationalisation policies transforming national higher education systems (Dobbins & Kwiek, 2017). Different governments establish national policies that regard internationalisation as a means for growth and income generation in higher education (Teichler, 2004, 2009).

This paper aims to explore internationalisation of higher education policy in Mozambique at national level, as one of the sub-Saharan African countries. We analyse internationalisation at the national level because following Knight (2004), the central authority has an important influence on the international dimension of higher education through policy and regulatory framework. The case of Mozambique is particularly interesting for twofold reasons. First, historically the government of Mozambique has been embarking on the internationalisation of higher education since the date of independence in 1975 (Mário et al., 2003). Second, the country has expanded higher education more rapidly than many sub-Saharan African countries since midst 1990s (Zavale, 2017) and the premier HEIs are labelled as international institutions of the classic model performing inward and outward mobility, international partnerships and external collaborations with various entities (Ndaipa et al., 2022).

It is evident from the literature that the internationalisation of higher education is commonly associated with success in terms of research funding, international staff and student recruitment, and co-authorship with international research partners (Wihlborg & Robson, 2018). It is also seen as a way to improve the quality of teaching, learning and research, enhance the experiences and understanding of staff and students and address societal issues to improve cross-cultural understanding and inclusion (Robson &

Wihlborg, 2019). Despite the positive impact, internationalisation of higher education presents considerable challenges. For the global South like Africa, higher education is a vital tool for socio-economic development, and internationalisation is viewed as one of the strategies to improve the higher education system. Despite various attempts to enhance the benefits of internationalisation, African higher education has continued to be peripheral, with relationships remaining asymmetrical and unequal (Alemu, 2014).

The Internationalisation of higher education policy is grounded in local realities involving a mixture of history, culture, political institutions, and traditions (Sanders, 2019). That is why one should be careful in concluding on similarities in policies. Policy initiatives involve different empirical phenomena related to specific national contexts (Meek et al., 1991). A national government may actively facilitate particular strategies of internationalisation (Teichler, 2004) which might differ from others since the rationales for embarking on internationalisation vary strikingly by country and region (Teferra, 2008; Teichler, 2017).

Although internationalisation of higher education has garnered attention and emerged as a major theme of discussion and action in many countries and regions (Lane, 2015; Sanders, 2019), the research and literature are dominated by Western but specifically Europe, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (De Wit et al., 2015; Jones & De Wit, 2012; Robson & Wihlborg, 2019). However, if South Africa is excluded, Zavale and Schneijderberg (2020) have noted that despite emerging research in higher education particularly in Western, Eastern and Southern Africa, higher education research in various countries across the continent is generally weak or non-existent. In particular, studies on internationalisation in the African continent, are far from being at par with what has taken place elsewhere (Tamrat & Teferra, 2018). The existing studies, however, have focused on different perspectives and unities of analyses. For instance, just to mention a few, Ndaipa et al. (2022) explored internationalisation practices of local HEIs, whilst McGrath et al. (2021) focused on internationalisation of higher education and its engagement with national priorities in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Tamrat and Teferra (2018) identified the dominant manifestations of internationalisation in Ethiopian's HEIs, while Kragelund and Hampwage (2015) studied the influence of the Confucius Institute at the University of Zambia as a new direction towards internationalisation. Finally, Kufaine (2016) studied the internationalisation of higher education from the leadership perspective building on the case of the local university in Malawi.

It is of utmost importance to highlight that policy is defined as 'the generic term provided to encompass the myriad techniques at the disposal of governments to implement their public policy objectives' (Howlett, 1991, p. 2). In higher education systems, specifically, governments apply a set of different policy instruments to pursue their goals and continuously design and redesign them until being adopted (Capano, 2018; Capano et al., 2020). Campbell explains that policy change can result from bricolage which is the adaptability of the local elements to create new policy; diffusion defined as a transfer of policies from one

place to another among nations; and translation which involves the combination of new externally given elements received through diffusion with old locally given ones inherited from the past (Campbell, 2004). Hence, such policy change might affect the internationalisation element specifically its rationales, strategies and challenges.

The significance of this study is consistent with the ideas of Jones and De Wit (2012), as well as Proctor and Rumbley (2018) who have been suggesting to learn from a non-Western national context, known to be under-researched, to more fully understand how internationalisation can benefit different stakeholders and nations. The relevance of this study is twofold. First, it contributes to the ongoing debate about the internationalisation of higher education policy by getting a general spectrum of the phenomenon from a sub-Saharan African country, in a non-speaking English context, Mozambique. Second, it empirically provides an ideological description of the subject-matter by the policy-makers over policy texts.

The paper is structured as follows: The next section focuses on the historical background of internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique. Then a method section is described. Subsequently, the findings and discussion are presented. The final section comprises the conclusion and policy recommendation as well as the future research avenue.

Historical background of internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique

The internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique is directly linked to the history of higher education in the country. It has been reported that higher education in Mozambique comprises three phases, namely the colonial period, the socialist period, and the multi-party democracy and free-market period. The colonial period is characterised by the establishment of the first HEI in 1962 by the Portuguese colonisers, named General University Studies of Mozambique (EGUM), primarily created to educate the sons and daughters of Portuguese colonists. It was noted for its colonial and racist ideology as by the date of independence in 1975, there were only 40 black Mozambicans enrolled, representing only 2% of the students (Langa, 2014; Mário et al., 2003). Portugal had ruled the country for over five centuries (Mkuti, 2011). However, little is known about the internationalisation process in this period due to the scarcity of literature.

The socialist period starts with the independence of Mozambique in 1975 when the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo), the ruling party, adopted the Marxist-Leninist form of government. The first HEI was renamed Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) (Mário et al., 2003). Soon after independence, Portugal established a General Cooperation Agreement between 1975 and 1978 with five Portuguese colonies in Africa (Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe) named Portuguese-

speaking African countries abbreviated in Portuguese as PALOP. The main purpose was to strengthen the bonds of friendship and solidarity through a common cooperation policy framework on various fronts. For example, economic, financial, technical, scientific and cultural. The General Cooperation Agreement between the governments of Portugal and Mozambique was signed in 1975. It encompasses among other actions, the mobility of teachers and researchers between the two countries, the granting of scholarships and the possibility of access to professional internships. A few years later, the cooperation agreement was well elaborated in higher education involving teaching, scientific research, students and staff training, exchange of teachers, scientists and researchers. Mozambique being a PALOP member, enrolled 7.015 students across the Portuguese higher education system between 1999 and 2009 (Carvalho, 1994; Mourato, 2011). Beside Portugal, and due to its socialist orientation, Mozambique also approached internationalisation of higher education by enrolling students in Western Europe, mostly in East Germany, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Sweden between 1975 and 1986 (Mário et al., 2003). With Sweden specifically, the cooperation between the two countries is dated from 1978 and the cooperation focuses on institutional and research capacity building mainly at Eduardo Mondlane University through the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (UEM, 2018, 2019). Two more HEIs were established in this period. First, Higher Pedagogical Institute (ISP) in 1985, as a teacher training college, and given full university status in 1995 as Pedagogic University (UP). Second, Higher Institute for International Relations (ISRI) in 1986 conceived to train future diplomats (Langa, 2017).

In the multi-party democracy and free-market period, Mozambique shifted from socialist ideology to democracy from 1990 onwards and started building new relationships with Europe and the United States of America (Mário et al., 2003). The internationalisation of higher education was extended to the commonwealth countries when Mozambique joined the organisation in 1995 as the first country without traditional historic links with Britain or other Commonwealth countries. This enabled student, institutional, and programme mobility in higher education. For instance, from 1996 to 2008, about 5.100 Mozambican students were hosted by Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom (Collinge, 1996; Varghese, 2011). Mozambique also benefited from the waves of internationalisation within Africa, through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Education and Training, signed in 1997 by 12 countries (Mozambique, Malawi, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa). It acknowledges that education and training can equip member states adequately for the future. To this end, mobility of students and staff was facilitated within the region for purposes of study, research, teaching and any other pursuits relating to higher education. Hence, the Protocol created room for regional internationalisation of higher education enabling different HEIs to cooperate and collaborate in various endeavours. This grand regional aspiration was also shared by the African Union (Kamwendo, 2009; SADC, 1997). The internationalisation of Mozambican higher education has expanded currently to various countries worldwide due to smart cooperation with different

higher education sectors. This includes Brazil, Spain, Italy, China, Cuba, Belgium, Venezuela, Algeria, India (Carvalho, 1994; UEM, 2019) and others. The market-driven policies led internally to an expansion of HEIs in the country characterised by the dispersion of public and private institutions. In a nutshell, the historical overview of the internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique is predominantly characterised by the mobility of students across Africa and worldwide for academic purposes.

The current context of the higher education system comprises 53 higher education institutions of which 22 are public and 31 are private (Zavale, 2021) and the internationalisation process is being performed through inward and outward mobility of students and staff, joint research between local and international scholars, international collaborations with different governments, academic institutions and funding agencies (Ndaipa et al., 2022; Kruse et al., 2017; Zavale & Schneijderberg, 2020).

Method

This study aims to explore internationalisation of higher education policy in Mozambique at national level. Hence, it applies the method of policy analysis. We embarked on policy analysis because Dunn (2018) claims that this method provides policy-relevant knowledge about key questions related to the policy problems, outcomes and performance. Thereby, for this study, two questions are asked: (1) How do policy-makers understand and strategise the internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique? (2) What are the rationales and challenges for undertaking internationalisation of higher education? Data derive from document analysis and interviews. Answers to these questions yield important policy-relevant knowledge because they describe if data sources align or not with each other, that is, if the policy-makers perceptions match or mismatch with policy texts on internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique. Thereby, six higher education policy documents, namely strategic plan, law, decrees and declaration (see Table 1) were analysed. We selected these documents because they are the ones that are currently updated and provide the regulatory framework for the higher education system of the country in general and internationalisation policy in particular. As noted by Bowen (2009), the rationale for document analysis lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation, as a method of qualitative research.

Table 1. Description of the document analysis

Description	Full title	Page numbers
Decree	Decree no 63/2007 – National higher education accreditation and quality assurance system.	13
Law	Law no 27/2009 of higher education	17
Decree	Decree no 30/2010 – Regulation of the national qualifications framework for higher education	13
Decree	Decree no 32/2010 – National academic credit accumulation and transfer system	14
Strategic plan	Strategic plan of higher education: 2012-2020	133
Declaration	CNAQ internationalisation policy declaration - 2016	2

To complement the document analysis, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with four senior policy-makers from the Ministry of Science and Technology and Higher Education (MCTES). In addition to triangulating the data from the document analysis, the additional value of making interviews is that they generate useful information about lived experience and its meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) and they enable posing research questions. The participants were selected purposefully to best help the researchers understand the problem and the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All interviews were conducted in Portuguese and transcribed verbatim. Based on the experience and background knowledge of the participants, the interviews covered the following topics: (1) The definition of internationalisation in the context of Mozambican higher education. (2) The reasons for undertaking internationalisation of higher education. (3) The strategies currently applied to further internationalisation. (4) The role models or best practices that serve the inspiration to Mozambique. (5) The stakeholders besides the government are involved in pursuing internationalisation of higher education. (6) The benefits of internationalisation at the national level. (7) The main risks of internationalisation in Mozambique. (8) The main barriers of internationalisation that are aware of. (9) The main drivers of internationalisation in the higher education field.

The reason for combining the methods was to seek convergence and corroboration of data, providing 'a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility' (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). By mapping out six major policy documents spread over a decade, the phenomenon of internationalisation is seen in a wider and holistic way rather than focusing on an isolated aspect of internationalisation of higher education policy or any specific policy shift. In the analysis phase following Creswell and Creswell (2018), data were coded

generating themes for a research study appearing as major results. In the following, the themes are illustrated by quotations from the interviews translated into English and using pseudonyms to identify the respondents.

Limitations

The views expressed by the four participants are limited to the government's perspective on the current development of internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique. We involved them because first, the individual know-how of different policy-makers serves to enrich and interpret data, to some extent going beyond what is presented in the policy documents. Second, to identify an ideological pattern of the policy-makers over policy documents.

Findings and discussion

The study results are summarised mainly in three categories: Rationales, strategies and challenges (see Table 2). However, before the identification of these categories, we asked policy-makers the extent to which they understand internationalisation from the perspective of the policy of Mozambican higher education:

> Internationalisation involves training students abroad and exchanging staff experience to be competitive locally and regionally boosted by the Mozambican government and implemented by different higher education institutions – Marcos.

> […] when we talk about internationalisation we place it under the cooperation framework of our higher education […] with foreign ones, motivated by their extensive experience, reputation, prestige and build a network to benefit our different academic institutions nationwide – Sitole.

> In my view, internationalisation is a process designed at the national level to create the integration of Mozambican higher education […] in the international setting. Let's say it is a platform that has been found so that higher education institutions in Mozambique are not far from what are the requirements of institutions at the level of this nature at the SADC and international arena […] – Xavier.

The quotes above indicate that policy-makers understand internationalisation as mobility of students and staff, international agreements and cooperation and integration of higher education regionally and globally. Indeed, there are various interpretations of internationalisation in the field of higher education. These variations were previously noted by other scholars who also studied the same phenomenon in different sub-Saharan African contexts (see Gyamera, 2015, 2018; Mutinda & Liu, 2020). However, the understanding of this phenomenon should go beyond mobility and international collaborations.

Table 2. Characteristics of internationalisation of higher education policy in Mozambique

Rationales	Strategies	Challenges
Primarily academic, involving students and staff in specific areas of national interest.	Increasing, facilitating and attracting the mobility of students and staff.	English language comes as the main roadblock as the country has Portuguese as the official language.
For the country exposure to benefit students and staff with academic knowledge and international skills.	Establishment of joint research programmes and curricula with regional and international HEIs.	
More economic, to increase income generation.	Establishment of regional and international HEIs in the country.	Lack of financial resources.
Increase research production and innovation.	Establishment of centres of excellence.	
Politically driven by building prestige and competitiveness.	Participation in the rankings.	
Regional and international visibility.	Strategic alliances by building a network with SADC HEIs and others internationally.	Fear of brain drain
Improve the quality of local HEIs.	Encompass peer review system and international accreditation agencies.	
Diversification of knowledge production in English for national development.	Promote applied research programmes at national HEIs.	Fear of loss of the national culture.

Source: Strategic plan of higher education (2012-2020) and interviews.

Rationales for internationalisation

Concerning the rationales, four themes emerged in the study comprising *academic training and knowledge production*; *quality assurance; international prestige; competitiveness* and *income generation*. The interviews, as well as the documentary review, indicated that the dominant rationale for internationalisation was academic which involves students and staff. It was pointed out that the main aim of the internationalisation policy is training competitive students relevant to the country and the SADC region. However, the measurement consists of not only sending students abroad but also receiving international students to the national higher education sector. To accomplish this endeavour, the

government created the National Accumulation System and Transfer of Academic Credits (SNATCA), to enable the mobility of the students between higher education programmes/courses or attendance at relevant disciplines or modules from other programmes/courses or faculties, within the same higher education institutions nationally, regionally, and globally (Decreto no 32/2010).

Furthermore, quality assurance comes as another driving force for internationalisation. For instance, it was said by Luisa, one of the respondents, that 'to improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, teachers must teach at other universities worldwide as well as the Mozambican universities must receive visiting professors from international universities. Doing this, there will be assured the quality of the graduates in particular and higher education in general. At the national level, the government created the National Higher Education Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance System (SINAQES) in 2007. The aim was to harmonise national with regional and international standards to ensure the improvement of the quality and relevance in Mozambican higher education through the agency named National Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (CNAQ) across the higher education field (Decreto no 63/2007). The internationalisation policy of this government agency encompasses the following: 'External evaluation and accreditation of higher education courses, programmes and institutions as a quality assurance mechanism in response to the demands and development needs of the country and following the higher education quality standards in the region and the world' (CNAQ, 2016, p.2).

International prestige, competitiveness and income generation were other noticeable themes on rationales for internationalisation. It is believed that one of the main rationales behind internationalisation of the Mozambican higher education is also linked to the need of increasing the prestige of the sector, compete with international higher education systems and finally from inward mobility of international students, improve to mobilise financial resources to local HEIs, as stated by interviewee Marcos: 'Mozambique aligns its policy on internationalisation of higher education for twofold reasons: raising the prestige of the sector that will lead to being competitive in the region and worldwide, and improve the economic income of our universities through the payment of university fees by international students. In addition, the National Framework Regulation of Higher Education Qualifications (QUANQES) states as one of the policy goals facilitate the harmonisation with higher education systems in the region for greater mobility, employability and competitiveness (Decreto no 30/2010).

Strategies for internationalisation

Based on PEES (2012) and CNAQ (2016), the government of Mozambique implements key strategies for internationalisation by promoting and facilitating regional integration and multilateral and international cooperation in the field of higher education, facilitating exchange programmes and granting tax incentives and other financial incentives to HEIs. For instance, nationally, internationalisation is applied by:

- Promoting the learning of foreign languages, particularly English, as a means of scientific communication;
- Setting an internationalisation policy for higher education in Mozambique that promotes quality and relevance;
- Improving visibility and access to national higher education institutions through Information and Communication Technologies;
- Developing partnership agreements with internationally prestigious higher education institutions;
- Involving the participation of international experts in the external evaluation of postgraduate programmes.

The interviewees generally supported the strategies but two of them presented concerns by critically stressing the absence of the internationalisation policy framework at a national level which brings some implications. As noted by Sitole, one of the interview participants: 'Currently, there is a strategic plan which presents broad and vague ideas. We have to stop importing discourses from Europe because they don't match our reality. We are Africans and we must prioritise our rationales and strategies based on the national and local problems […] for the benefit of the nation'. Moreover, Luisa added 'due to the absence of a specific tool for internationalisation of higher education, we end up accepting all partnerships proposed by foreign institutions or governments. We have to change our approach'.

The findings from the written policies seem to suggest that strategically the country embarks on internationalisation in line with international entities most of which are understood as a Western approach. Conversely, the policy-makers emerge with a changing perspective of ideas that prioritise home interests. Hence, this mismatch might be influenced by the inexistence of a detailed policy framework for the internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique as reported by interview respondents. It seems that in the SADC region, South Africa comes across as one of the countries holding such a policy (see DHET, 2019). As noted by Knight (2004) and Teichler (2009) embracing internationalisation is important because it improves academic quality, leads to richer cultural life and personality development, introduces technological innovation, leads to economic growth, improves societal well-being and facilitates strategic alliances. However, the absence of a clear instrument at the national level may hamper development.

Finally, as the last strategy, Marcos has come across with internationalisation of the curriculum, mentioning that it has to address the local and national needs but internationally valid:

> The curricular question [...] is part of it […] a curriculum that can offer quality, from the point of view of value and validity. It must have value for solving local issues in this case national, but it must be a curriculum that has validity at the international level, which is recognised internationally. This will also facilitate this sequence of international policies and internationalisation […] to facilitate the question of staff mobility, student mobility […] and therefore […] to recognise the credits of a discipline, of a course, so that the student can have the mobility to other institutions of higher education worldwide – Marcos.

From this perspective, internationalisation goes beyond mobility and other features described above and

this is where 'internationalisation at home' comes into play strengthening local students with international knowledge as not everyone can study abroad (Hudzik, 2015; Leask, 2015). Thereby, internationalisation should focus on the curriculum and learning outcomes for societal well-being, according to the interviewed policy-makers.

Challenges for internationalisation

The strategic plan of higher education points out that one of the biggest challenges when embarking on internationalisation is the language. Mozambique is officially a Portuguese speaking country while in the global context, internationalisation is dominated by the English language. Another challenge is that internationalisation might result in 'brain drain, loss of national culture in favour of an international one […]' (PEES, 2012, p.76). One of the respondents also stressed financial issues as another challenge for internationalisation. 'The phenomenon of internationalisation itself implies money because it is expensive […] we need to formulate policies that can handle the shortage of our budget. Currently, the fulfilment of the main plans of students, staff mobility and scientific production through research networks relies on external funds […]' (Sitole). From the policy documents, the findings suggest that the country needs to embrace a new language, which is English, to cope with the internationalisation demands. Concerning brain drain, Bloom et al. (2007) and Teferra (2007) have noted that while brain drain has been a key concern in African countries, the phenomenon could be addressed by establishing effective and efficient national policy instruments. For instance, paying higher earnings to well-educated people, involving them in socio-economic development, and developing good institutions both in education and in the workplace. Finally, from what has been said by our interviewee Sitole, it should be analysed as a call for a changing approach on policies so that internally the country finds local solutions for internationalisation and become less dependent on international funds.

Conclusion and policy recommendation

This study aimed to explore internationalisation of higher education policy in Mozambique at a national level, addressing two research questions: (i) how do policy-makers understand and strategise about the internationalisation of higher education in Mozambique? and (ii) what are the rationales and challenges for undertaking internationalisation of higher education?

The first point to take into account is that the findings show a considerable variation in the way in which internationalisation is understood in a higher education setting by different policy-makers. Knight (2013) points out that this global trend is understood in different ways in different countries. However, in Mozambique internationalisation is understood as the mobility of students and staff, the establishment of agreements and cooperation, and the integration of higher education in the SADC region and worldwide.

The second point for consideration involves the rationales for undertaking internationalisation. The findings reveal a mixture of them characterised by the following elements: Academic training, knowledge production, quality assurance, prestige, income generation and competitiveness. These rationales are similar across the literature (see De Wit et al., 2015; Knight, 2004; Kreber, 2009; Yesufu, 2018) and the findings reveal that the accomplishment of these rationales is assured by different policy instruments such as law and decrees of higher education created by the government. These rationales are traced to meet both internal and external demands.

Taking a closer look at the internationalisation strategies seen in the interviews and policy documents the findings reveal a mixture of approaches. There are responses to external pressure in the sense of aiming to take part in the external networks regionally and globally. Among other strategies, the policies stress, for instance, promoting and facilitating regional integration as well as multilateral and international cooperation in the field of higher education and the teaching and learning of the English language. The challenges for internationalisation at a national level were noted and they include brain drain, fear of losing the local culture, financial limitations and the need to master the English language.

Applying the concept of Campbell (2004), more translation is required in the internationalisation of higher education policy in Mozambique as the findings show an imbalance, that is, there is an overemphasis on mobility and cooperation (which can be traced back from the history of the internationalisation of higher education) and underemphasis on the policy. Moreover, there is an ideological mismatch in the strategies of internationalisation between policy-makers and policy documents. Policy texts follow Western ideas, whilst policy-makers are critical of such an approach and suggest a specific internationalisation policy framework of higher education that reflects the Mozambican reality and priority. To this end, more local investment is required in the higher education sector for threefold reasons. First, to have a country more proactive than reactive in building partnerships regionally and globally. Second, to boost knowledge production and most importantly pay close attention to the internationalisation at home for societal well-being. Third, to make the country less dependent on external funds.

This study matters not only to Mozambique but elsewhere mainly to sub-Saharan African countries as the findings have implications for balancing policy texts with policy-makers ideas, thus improving the internationalisation of higher education policy. Therefore, we recommend the following: Albeit integrated into general higher education policies, there is a need for African countries to have a specific internationalisation policy framework of higher education that articulates clearly not only the strategies but also the rationales for internationalisation, based on the national interests to enhance capacity building in teaching and research, attract international students and scholars and equip local students with international knowledge to cope with market demands locally, nationally and globally.

While the focus of this study was the policy at the national or macro level, future research studies could include an analysis of the internationalisation phenomenon at the meso level involving Mozambican higher education institutions. Specifically focusing on academics and managers about how they understand internationalisation and its rationales, how they operationalise it and what challenges they experience.

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