

## **Internationalisation of higher education: A Papua New Guinea perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Internationalisation of higher education is a recent phenomenon in PNG which is gaining significance at policy and institutional levels in promoting national competitiveness and stimulating economic growth and development. The Office of Higher Education is currently reengineering the higher education sector to drive the government strategic policy agenda by setting internationalisation of higher education as one of its major strategic goal areas in harnessing opportunities brought by the globalised knowledge economy. While appreciating and managing globalisation forces, internationalisation of higher education forms an important strategic response at policy and institutional levels.

**Key words:** internationalisation, higher education, globalisation, global knowledge economy, National Higher Education Plan (NHEP)

### **Introduction**

This essay concerns internationalisation of higher education (HE) in Papua New Guinea (PNG) focusing on a strategic approach recently undertaken by the Office of Higher Education (OHE) to drive the government policy agenda in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Internationalisation of higher education is a new concept that has not been given primacy in PNG at government or institutional levels. At government level, the focus has been on political, economic and security foreign policy aspects. At institutional level, the focus has been on national relevance and workforce needs. Increasingly becoming part of a global market economy, it is timely for PNG to harness opportunities to optimise developments in higher education internationally.

The aim of this essay is to demonstrate the significance of internationalisation for higher education. It explores factors that influence policy outcomes and institutional agendas. Internationalisation of higher education is an emerging agenda in government policy and institutional reform which needs to be understood by academics and policy practitioners. This essay provides a platform to inform policy and institutional reform.

### **Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education**

Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education has many interpretations. Internationalisation of higher education refers to migration of ideas, technology and people across borders through cyber space learning or physical movement for the purpose of one's knowledge gain or

for economic interest. Marginson (2007) defines internationalisation as academic relations across borders; recruiting staff and students across borders, delivering programs and publishing research across international borders.

Globalisation of higher education has many connotations (Eggins, 2003; Enders, 2004) reflecting forces affecting the sector. Internationalisation of higher education concerns university strategic responses (Marginson, 2007). Naido (2006) distinguishes between globalisation and internationalisation, and asserts that globalisation is an external process with forces impacting on university operations while internationalisation is an internal, on-going process whereby the universities respond to globalisation forces. This distinction is consistent with the most widely referred to and internationally accepted definitions of internationalisation of higher education (De Wit, 1998; Knight, 2003). De Wit (1998:1) describes the notion of internationalisation as “the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution”.

Knight expanded the definition to include 21<sup>st</sup> century issues and challenges. According to Knight (2003: 1), “Internationalisation, at national, sector and institutional levels, is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”. Basically, internationalisation implies movement of institutions, programs, academics, researchers and students across territorial boundaries. In the process it reduces distance, time and space and allows more flexibility.

The transfer of ideas, people and technology in itself constructs a cyber-economic world of activities that generates wealth in a more competitive fashion, hence conceptualising a global knowledge economy (*k*-economy) as it is referred to in modern times. Ideas in this context matter most in driving socio-economic development in the global *k*-economy, and increases states' competitiveness in their thirst for economic prosperity.

### **Drivers of internationalisation of higher education**

As globalization interconnects the world, internationalization of higher education also increases dramatically in different forms. The neoliberal policies of capitalism compel institutions and governments to rethink approaches to internationalize higher education in a global market economy where change resulting from innovation in science and technology is inevitable (Warwick, 2010). States are now pressured by the global forces to design smart policies to compete at international level in strengthening economic competitiveness. Institutions and states are no longer operating in isolation. The impact of globalization means deepening market integration where trafficking of innovative ideas are commoditized and traded across boundaries. Hence, one would argue that relationship between higher education and globalization is intimate. The OECD Report (2009:13) summarizes globalization and higher education as follows:

Higher Education drives and is driven by globalization. Higher education trains highly skilled workers and contributes to the research base and capacity for innovation that determine competitiveness in the knowledge-based global economy. It facilitates international collaboration and cross-cultural exchange. Cross-border flows of ideas, students, faculty and financing, coupled with developments in information and communication technology, are changing the environment where higher education institutions function. Cooperation and competition are intensifying simultaneously under the growing influence of market forces and the emergence of new players.

Following are key factors that drive internationalisation. Firstly, the burgeoning academic and social need for institutions to have international experience and a global perspective is influencing the teaching of curricula (De Wit, 1998). Adding a global perspective to new approaches in the way universities conduct their business not only adds value to wealth creation but also increases their reputation in the *k*-economy.

Secondly, governments exert pressure for higher education institutions to respond to economic policies for national growth and development (Koutsantoni, 2006a). Developing economies are often confronted with the strategic challenge of improving socio-economic growth hence rely heavily on human capital development. This means realigning and restructuring higher education to be consistent with a government's strategic intent by internationalising higher education as one of the approaches to increasing national economic competitiveness. For instance, a state may consider driving the economic growth policy agenda through research collaboration with advanced universities in developed countries.

A competitive external environment demands establishment of offshore campuses (student mobility) and developing and maintaining research reputation. This is another important factor that drives internationalisation of higher education (Stier, 2002; Eggins, 2003). Developed countries focus on commercialising their supreme higher education product to overseas countries with a strategic intent to attract the best brains and research for advancement.

The need to respond to globalization and a rapidly changing environment is great. The world is flat given the high speed of interconnectivity through innovations in transportation and information technology and truly demonstrates the reality of harnessing the increasingly availability of global opportunities (Friedman, 2005).

There is a growing interest of the young generation in international higher education influenced by information and communication technology (Stier, 2002; Hazelkorn, 2009). With the increasing availability of online overseas higher education, interest in local opportunities has slowly diminished as students seek to study abroad with prestigious universities. Conversely, some students from developed countries migrate to developing countries as interest

in cultural studies emerge, for instance, European students migrating to China to study Mandarin.

Higher education institutions attempt to attract the best minds and research (Caruana & Spurling, 2007, Poole, 2001; Van de Wende, 2001; Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007). Universities, as enterprises in modern form, exist to invent and contribute to new ideas for the purpose of development, hence maintaining their status quo through quality research and teaching. Attracting the best minds and research is one of their strategic approaches, without which they perish, for instance, getting bright minds from other countries through international scholarship programs. The United States is very smart in this soft power strategy in maintaining its political, economic and strategic supremacy through prestigious scholarships such as Fulbright (Warwick, 2012).

Anglophone economic interest is evident in offering top education to other countries (Koutsantoni, 2006b, Tossavainen, 2009; Walker, 2009). European countries are the biggest market players in commercialising off-shore programs in developing countries. For instance, establishing branch campuses in countries where market prospect is high. The Malaysia Branch of the Nottingham University is an example.

Finally, economic motives drive internationalization of higher education as reflected in the General Trade Tariff (GATT) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Jiang, 2008; Knight, 2002). Recently, higher education has been integrated into the WTO as trade in services and therefore, higher education is seen as a commodity which can be traded across boundaries under the regulations of the WTO.

### **Implications of internationalisation of higher education**

While globalisation has truly provided immense opportunities and benefits to higher education, challenges and negative effects of it are also important to note. One would find that most of the literature on internationalisation of higher education focuses on encouraging cross-border student and program exchange and embracing global perspectives (Carroll & Ryan, 2005; Shiel & McKenzie, 2008). Others, however, see it as causing tension in development of internationalisation strategies, especially on student, program or institutional mobility components (Childress 2010; Turner & Robson, 2007).

Globalisation can be a negative force as well, as a threat in the global market economy where the current liberal order of a western dominated economy structurally favours powerful capitalist states more than developing countries (Holton, 1998). The same can be said for higher education. Promotion of liberalisation or marketization of higher education continues to promote asymmetric structural relations between capitalist and developing countries. Elite countries will continue to dominate the *k*-economy.

Following are some assertions of negative effects on globalisation of higher education adopted from Neubauer (2011):

- Demographic dynamics in part created by and in part articulated through globalization affect the ability of countries to meet higher education access and capacity challenges.
- Shifting patterns of production and consumption make the role of higher education in responding to employment alignment issues uncertain—what kinds of workers does a society need?
- Interdependence dynamics overwhelm national policy capabilities, in finance, migration, government revenue and education.
- Perturbations of the global system produce unintended consequences such as climate change, pollution, etc.—which in turn affect curricular responsibilities.
- Neoliberalism promotion of a free market and autonomy has resulted in expansion of private higher education providers often in situations of weak regulation thus affecting quality.
- Globalization's stimulus for and embodiment of knowledge dynamics have created information singularity thereby eroding traditional sources of knowledge and standards, with consequences for teaching methodology and student responsibility.
- Income inequalities affect resources for education. When combined with the ideology of neoliberalism and private sector realization, they exhaust commitments to education as a public good, and make education a commodity available only to those with means.
- Instability and change within economic production systems produce instability within job systems, thereby aggravating the misalignment between higher education and job markets.
- Notions of global competitiveness produce dynamics such as rankings, which are inherently reductionist.
- The communication and cultural construction mechanisms of media and mass consumption, so much a part of contemporary globalization coupled with other dynamics such as English primacy, erode higher education's traditional role of cultural preservation.

If these issues are not strategically addressed by governments they will have drastic effects on global higher education.

### **Strategic issues and challenges in Papua New Guinea higher education**

In development literature, policy makers and academics generally agree that developing countries face similar issues and challenges, however, along different development pathways. Issues of stagnant economic growth, poor governance, high illiteracy rate, poor health condition, low levels of access to higher education, to name a few, are a concern for most governments.

Some of the newly industrialised countries have made high investments in higher education to drive economic modernisation such as those in Asia, Latin America and South America (Office of Higher Education, 2013). For instance, Singapore, Indonesia and Brazil have rapidly excelled in economic development processes within a short period of time.

In PNG, human capital development, in terms of government's investment or expenditure in higher education, has been given little prominence by previous governments, consequently affecting the current state of higher education sector. By comparison, the drive for universal basic education has been given much attention. The impact of this has significantly affected higher education in a symbiotic logic. Higher education, instead of focusing on higher level knowledge formation and development, is caught in a dilemma of addressing problems at the lower and secondary levels of education hence fuelling the issue of a quality controversy. For instance, poor quality assurance at elementary or primary level has generally affected Grade 12 outputs and university inputs where many students have difficulty in mastering English and mathematics as a consequence (Government of PNG, 2000).

The issues and challenges faced by PNG's higher education sector are influenced by the following political, economic and social factors:

- inadequate political will and support from government
- frequent changes in bureaucracy and government thus affecting policy focus and consistency
- poor governance and management by universities and institutions of higher education
- dilapidated or deteriorating state of infrastructure and learning resources
- weak quality assurance systems
- human capital flight or migration (brain drain)
- inadequate skilled manpower.

Issues and challenges faced by the higher education sector in PNG are common in other developing countries. Numerous government policy papers, such as the Higher Education White Paper, National Higher Education Plan II and III (NHEP), Vision 2050, and the Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030 (DSP), acknowledge the challenges and propose strategic interventions. Although, some attention has been given by the past governments, the focus is generally on scholarship with less emphasis on institutional development. Basic education arguably becomes the central nerve of the government. Some of the problems currently faced by our higher education sector are legacy issues (NHEP II, 2000).

Moreover, frequent political changes, prior to legislation of the Organic Law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates have structurally affected policy and legislative regimes at political and bureaucratic levels. Over the years, we have had experiences of numerous votes of no-confidence and elections of new governments influencing changes in bureaucracy thus affecting good policies being set in motion (Department of National Planning and Monitoring 2010; Orovu, 2005; Government of Papua New Guinea, 2009). In essence, a political-bureaucratic marriage affects consistency in effective policy implementation.

Good governance is another strategic issue and challenge, which the government of PNG and international aid donors such as the Australian Agency for International Aid (AusAID) and European Union (EU) have attempted to combat over the years. Inadequate funds are allocated to state institutions and prudent financial management is necessary to deliver quality education as per their mandates. Managing inadequate funds to produce economies of scale efficiently in a sustainable way is a major challenge. It would be more logical to argue that the deteriorating state of universities and colleges are an outcome of inadequate political will and support, frequent political instability, unstable policy regimes and poor good governance (Garnaut & Namaliu, 2010).

In the context of internationalisation of higher education in PNG context, little attention has been given to cross-border education at government policy level and by institutions. At policy level, PNG's foreign policy is primarily focused on political, economic, diplomatic and security concerns with less attention to higher education cooperation. At sector level, the NHEPs do not provide direction for international higher education activities. Although there are international cooperation activities at government level and institutional arrangement level, these are seen as subsidiary priorities.

### **Strategic intervention**

#### ***Significance of higher education in 21<sup>st</sup> century***

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, higher education will play an important role in transformation and transition of socio-economic development. Higher education is being transformed from paper to paper-less learning, thanks to improvements in technology. In an increasingly knowledge-based economy (*k*-economy) new methodologies from innovation in science and technology have diversified the landscape of teaching and learning where access is now available to diverse clients in a bid to bridge the digital-divide gap.

Human capital development with relevant and quality education is the backbone of improving living standards through wealth creation. Wealth creation is manufactured from ideas. The logic is simple, ideas when economised will create wealth for economic development.

Several developing countries, especially in Asia, South America and Africa have made rapid progressive shifts in development thinking and practice towards attaining modernisation and industrialisation. Brazil, South Africa, India and South East and East Asian economies under the emerging tag, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China), have modelled new higher education paradigms into their development calculus (OHE, 2013). What seems interesting is the state-centric approach in human capital development, where the state is playing an important role in economic transformation through massive investment to massify and diversify higher education.

PNG is an emerging dynamic economy in the Western Pacific driven by mineral and petroleum industries which are currently in the process of propelling rapid economic transformation. By economic definition, PNG is characterised as *an emerging transitional economy* where higher education will be an important developmental tool in economising the sector. This occurs through the development of appropriate and specialised manpower under the broader framework of international division of labour aimed at producing economies of scale (Hualupmomi, 2012).

The focus of the NHEP III is scientifically and technologically driven to attain a middle income economy by 2030. The strategic developing thinking is centred on industrialisation and modernisation where innovation and entrepreneurship will assume primacy. Hence, it would be rational to position PNG within the trend of development in 21<sup>st</sup> century. The aim therefore is to produce human capital with advanced knowledge and skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century to drive PNG's development thinking (OHE, 2013).

### ***Strategic direction in higher education***

The higher education direction in NHEP III is quite similar to the NHEP I. However it gives more emphasis to science and technology following the route of sustained economy through industrialisation and modernisation. It is assumed that, should PNG manoeuvre through this route, it would have advanced from an agriculture based economy to an industrialized and modern state by 2050.

The NHEP III realignment is logically consistent with the overarching policy framework within the paradigm of Vision 2050 political directions and O'Neil-Dion government's five year plan. The operative terminology within the environment is attaining a middle income economy which must be achieved by harmonising the implementation of operational plans. The NHEP III is mindful of guiding policies and plans including Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The rationale behind the development of NHEP III is congruent with development thinking of attaining a middle income economy through the process of rapid industrialisation and modernisation. It is assumed that developing higher education to be oriented towards industrialisation and modernisation will achieve PNG's development aspirations.

### ***Internationalization of higher education implementation strategy***

Internationalisation of higher education is a recent phenomenon. International relations, in particular, international political economy in 21<sup>st</sup> century, has significantly expanded in scope influenced by globalisation, where ideas have now become a commodity in the global market economy. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) under the WTO has now defined training and education as trade in services in its index. What it means is that ideas can now be traded across territorial boundaries to spur economic growth in global market economies.



Countries have now begun to venture into maximising innovation in science and technology, thanks to a revolution in ICT and transportation, to economise increasing opportunities of economic globalisation. Higher education in this respect is no exception. Internationalisation of higher education is increasingly becoming one of the important sources of soft power in State's foreign policy to pursue national interests.

State (National government), sub-state (provincial governments), international organisations and universities around the world have also increased collaboration and cooperation in accessing and improving quality education through massive investment and trade. This new trend in internationalisation of higher education suggests that the 'k-economy' will shape modernisation. Hence, this requires the role of smart international relations approaches to maximise higher education opportunities available in the global market.

For PNG to tap into these global opportunities, our foreign policy and international higher education policy should be shaped along this transformative trajectory. The NHEP III is consistent with PNG's foreign policy defined in *Vision 2050* with a strategic intent of exploring and exploiting new opportunities presented by economic globalisation to drive a human capital development agenda.

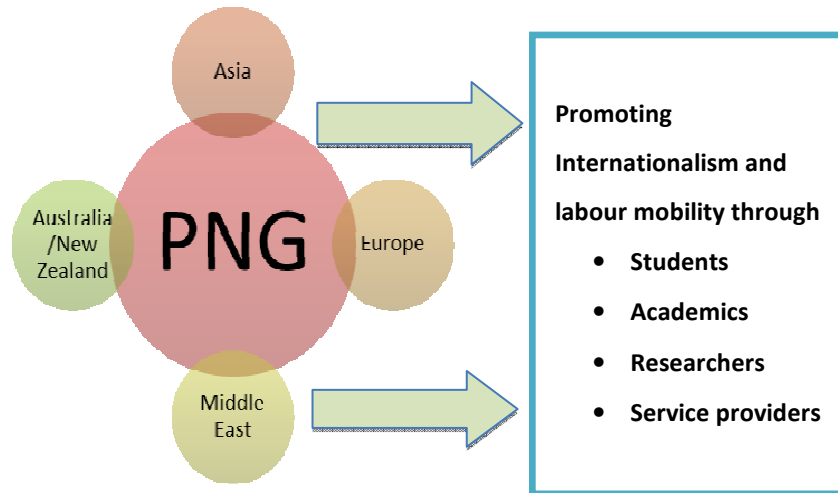
Internationalisation and global labour mobility is a driving strategy on which OHE will work towards providing quality higher education to achieve *Vision 2050*. A number of countries have shown interest while at the same time international organisations such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), AusAID, European Union, United Nation and others are increasingly shifting their focus to higher education. The future prospect seems bright with an increase in partnerships and collaboration. OHE aims to effectively manage these international collaborations for PNG's common good.

### ***Strategic areas of cooperation***

The PNG Government's *Vision 2050* provides political and strategic foresight for the nation to transit into a middle income economy by 2030. *Vision 2050*'s pillars for human capital development, international relations and security, and wealth creation become OHE's key pillars for implementation of the NHEP III. The *Strategic Goal Area 8: Internationalisation and Global Labour Mobility* enshrined in NHEP III is the principal driver of internationalisation of higher education in PNG. The strategic focus of internationalisation of HE is directed towards four key areas: student mobility, academic mobility, researcher mobility and service providers mobility (see Figure 1).

As much as possible, while maintaining the existing bilateral and multilateral arrangements through its international relations unit, OHE intends to construct new partnerships, beyond our traditional partners such as Australia and New Zealand, to Asia, the Middle East and Europe while at the same time rejuvenating the old partnerships wherein opportunities can be maximised.

**Figure 1: PNG’s strategic route towards internationalization of higher education**



Source: OHE (2013) Implementation strategy of international relations

PNG is currently experiencing an economic boom and increasingly gaining prominence in the global market economy. OHE would like to seize this opportunity as strategic leverage to attract and persuade more key players in higher education. In the first five years, OHE would like to focus on research and development through student, academic and researcher mobility in the regional and global market economies. Service providers of training and education would be invited to offer programs in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) whilst incrementally shifting into universities through establishment of international branch campuses. Adding international flavour by allowing a few top universities to set up their campuses in PNG will significantly change the landscape of doing business in higher education.

While academic mobility is important, promotion of culture is also an important dimension to better understand others in the global community. PNG’s international image is tarnished by negative reports in the global media. Cultural and language exchange programs are an important step in promoting understanding and changing this negative perceptions of PNG.

Coordination of foreign aid in a transparent approach is important in securing and attracting more partners. PNG faces a conundrum of governance issues in managing foreign aid. OHE intends to change this common perception and culture by ensuring that foreign aid for higher education is effectively coordinated and reported to our partners and government.

Finally, PNG is part of an international community and must be seen as an active participant in fulfilling its international commitment or obligations. OHE intends to participate in regional and international organisations such as APEC

and the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) to strengthen PNG's commitment through higher education.

In summary, OHE intends to economise human capital presented by global market opportunities to create wealth in a secure society through internationalisation of higher education.

### **Prospects and challenges**

The prospects of higher education in PNG appear bright given the following key factors which are assumed to play an important role in driving growth and development.

First, the 2018 APEC meeting will be held in PNG. This will be a big bonus for internationalisation of higher education in the context of the APEC policy agenda of people-to-people connectivity through labour mobility or cross-border education mobility in member economies. This event will modernise PNG's higher education sector in preparation towards 2018 while at the same time increase economic connectivity, increase national competitiveness and economic growth under the broader framework of economic integration.

Second, 2018 Pacific Games in PNG will also increase people-to-people connectivity through sports as universities and colleges in the region meet and discuss the agenda of training Pacific athletes. This event will also modernise universities' or colleges' physical facilities in preparation for the games.

The external or international academic audits of PNG universities will profoundly increase opportunities for improvement in the nation's higher education system. OHE anticipates more international collaboration in the form of assistance to modernise the PNG higher education sector. The current government policy agenda on prioritising higher education has approved the establishment of a Department of Higher Education Research Science and Technology and a Research Science and Technology Council to give more effect to improving the higher education sector.

### **Conclusion**

Internationalisation of higher education is a recent phenomenon in PNG which has attracted government attention in complementing other sectoral plans to drive overarching government strategic policy directions. The NHEP III has recognised the significance of internationalisation of higher education as one of the important strategic goals in promoting cross-border education and national competitiveness to stimulate economic growth and development.

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