

A Multiphase Mixed Methods Approach to the Internationalization of Higher Education in South Africa: Outline of a Discursive Research Framework

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Higher education internationalization (HEI) has become an important priority for global decision makers and education providers. Persuaded by globalization, HEI is a political strategy and economic prospect for countries, governments, and universities to position themselves in global markets. The purpose of this paper is to provide a methodological pathway to develop a dynamic, reformed South African HEI framework based on the transformative drive (i.e., adjustment of change, learning, shared knowledge, internationalization, globalization and institutionalized memory) of HEI in China. The interpretivist paradigm constitutes the basic research approach. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected, analyzed, and integrated using a multiphase mixed methods approach. This approach consists of three phases including content analysis (Phase I), in-depth interviews (Phase II), and surveys (Phase III), which answers the focal research question. The significance of this research includes creating a better understanding of South African higher education (HE) policy issues from a transformational perspective, contributing to theory on how internationalization affects HE's position in economic and social development and broadening knowledge and understanding of the unique circumstances and challenges of HEI in developing countries, particularly in countries seeking to position themselves in the globalized knowledge economy.

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Introduction

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), higher education (HE) is experiencing reforms and improvements in light of distinct local and global challenges. Similarly, reviews and adoption of higher education policies (HEP) in numerous countries show incorporation of international competition and globalization influences (Altbach, 2004; Kearns & Doyle, 1991; Lee, 2014; Marginson, 2006; Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). From the above, six transformative forces have been identified—adjustments to change, learning, shared knowledge, internationalization, globalization, and institutionalized memory—that intertwine to influence countries' HEP and systems and their relative success.

Since 1994, the South Africa government gave precedence to three objectives in HE, namely redressing past injustice, human resource development essential for economic and social development, and improving democratic practices (Barnes, 2006; Norris, 2001). After 25 years, South Africa's HE is alluded to as being in crisis (Kraak, 2004; Marire, 2017) and struggling—due to transformation challenges including equity, unemployment, and poverty and stagnate economic conditions—towards a HE system that is nationally responsive and globally competitive. South Africa requires a HE system that leads social change by being receptive to the diverse and numerous socio-economic needs, staying relevant on the world stage, and being aligned with distinct changes and rapid transformation of HE globally (Green & Hayward, 1997; Hagstrom & Steen, 1995). Affected by global economic, political, intellectual, technological, and religious developments, the new knowledge society demands a re-assessment of the HE system (Du Preez, Simmonds, & Verhoef, 2016). Although some inequalities have been addressed, the South African HE system did not succeed in delivering the required skills needed for economic and social transformation (Paadi, 2014), and little evidence exists to indicate that HE has extended democratic values and practices in all spheres of HE (Steyn, 2000).

This research is situated within the second South African HE system requirement namely, to stay relevant in the global arena aligned with distinct changes and rapid transformation of HE globally. This research intends to propose a dynamic and reformative South African HE internationalization framework based upon:

- i. China's HE internationalization aspirations and reforms within a historical context;
- ii. South Africa's HE internationalization aspirations and reforms within a historical context;
- iii. China's HE internationalization experience and response to the transformative force (i.e., adjustment to change, learning, shared knowledge, internationalization, globalization, and institutionalized memory) influence; and
- iv. The identification of distinct and shared HE internationalization aspirations, conditions, and challenges that exist in China and South Africa respectively.

The selection of China as reference research setting is based upon the rationale that:

- i. China is the world's largest HE provider (Yu, Stith, Liu, & Chen, 2012; Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014);
- ii. The HE of China is cast to adjust to modern-day challenges (Altbach, 2009; Choy & Li, 2017; Luo & Qin, 2012);
- iii. The historic evolution of China's HE system is well documented and understood (Li & Xing, 2010; Morgan & Wu, 2011; Zhu & Lou, 2011);
- iv. Throughout this evolutionary process China has given great priority to HE and has promulgated various laws

and policies to govern HE (Kang, 2004; Li, 2004);

v. China accentuates the global reputation of universities to develop the country (Reddy, Xie, & Tang, 2016; Rui, 2015); and

vi. The opening up of China to the global world presents severe challenges to China's HE system (Chen, 2004; Pei, 2017; Yaisawarng & Ng, 2014; Zhang, Zhao, & Lei, 2012).

The next section delineates the context and explanation of higher education internationalization, reforms in the People's Republic of China and South Africa, as well as an overview of the comparative higher education internationalization landscape. Section 3 frames the research aims and questions, whereas Section 4 explicates the methodology and research design. Finally, the article draws conclusions in Section 5.

Literature Review

Internationalization of Higher Education

The establishment of an effective and enduring HE system is an imperative prerequisite for the advancement of HE to ensure the positioning of intellectual capacity to improve national strength and competitiveness of any country. The underlying principle of internationalization of HE is to create prominent social and cultural networks (Lewkowicz, Young, Budrytė & Boykin, 2018), improve economic development (Altbach, 2005), share knowledge (Bhatti, Larimo, & Carrasco, 2016), and contribute to an inclusive, caring, affluent, and multinational world (Rensburg, Motala, & David, 2015). Nevertheless, notwithstanding the significance of internationalization in HE, current researches on the topic are primarily done by occasional researching practitioners and applied higher education researchers that focus their research on practical, rather than methodological issues (Teichler, 1996, p. 212).

Since the 1980s, although internationalization of HE has been in high regard on institutional, regional, national, and international agendas, the concept of internationalization is elusive and a portmanteau term (Callan, 2000; Knight, 1999; Maringe & Foskett, 2010; Robson, 2015; Yang, 2002; Zolfaghari, Sabran, & Zolfaghari, 2009). Due to evolving political, economic, socio-cultural, global, national, local, institutional, and academic demands, internationalization of HE is treated differently by countries, higher education institutions (HEIs), and their programme offerings (Mavhungu, 2004; Teichler, 2004).

While nearly all national governments and HEIs globally are keen to promote internationalization, internal and external forces influence the direction and extent of internationalization endeavors (Cuthbert, 2002). Internationalization of HE encompass a variety of forms and characteristics and attaining a typical definition of internationalization has not proven easy (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). The most widely acknowledged definitions of internationalization of HE were developed by Altbach (2006), De Wit (2002), Elkin, Devjee, and Farnsworth (2005), Elkin, Fransworth, and Templer (2008), Knight (1999; 2003; 2008; 2015), Knight and De Wit (1997), Knight and the International Association of Universities (2006), and Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry (1997). The most cited definitions vis-à-vis internationalization of HE conclude that: "Internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution" (Knight & De Wit, 1997, p. 8); and "Internationalization involves the incorporation of global, international, intercultural dimensions into goals, objectives, content and delivery of higher education" (Knight, 2015, p. 2). The latter definition was amended numerous times, but in essence has stayed largely unchanged.

For the purpose of this research, internationalization of HE is deciphered as the dynamic engagement in the

development of policies, plans, programmes, strategies, and approaches at various management levels to propel internationality in HE.

Higher Education Internationalization Reform in the People's Republic of China

At present, the concept of internationalization in HE particularly in developing countries, has been derived from the globalization of education. It is predicted that the globalization of HE will assume an essential role in China's socialist market economy as well as national development (Hu, 2012; Mok, 2005; Ngok & Kwong, 2003; Xu, 2005). Influenced by the global knowledge economy and China's aspiration to become more globally competitive, HE in China encounters both domestic and international challenges.

Throughout history, China has attached great importance to education and created multiple laws to develop education. During the past 70 years incredible advances have been made in HE, which demonstrates the essential and objective demand of HE for the People's Republic of China (PRC). The current importance of HE is reflected by the "Outline of the National Program for Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development 2010-2020", which stipulates the new path of HE in the 21st century. This outline accentuates the global reputation of Chinese universities and disciplines with Chinese characteristics to develop the country and to become the largest and arguably the most promising global education power (*17th Communist Party of China National Congress*, 2010; Li, 2016).

As a traditional but also fast evolving society, China implemented the Reform and Opening Policy in the 1970s after which HEI became a real prospect. With progression to a socialist market economy, HE was confronted by reform difficulties. To meet the HE demands and to solve reform challenges, China embraced new education policies that were influenced by international and global forces. These inherent reforms are reflected in the following policies. After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978, government is resolute to receive foreign students and send students to overseas countries to study. In December 1983, Deng Xiaoping as part of the development strategy requested China's education to focus on the world, which made internationalization of HE a cognizant target. Internationalization of HE was driven by the four modernizations of industry, agriculture, defense, and science and technology, which guided economic reform (Mohrman, 2006; Neubauer & Zhang, 2015; Yang, 2014). Under the Reform and Opening Policy, internationalization of HE focused on studying outside the country, including an international dimension into university education and establishing transnational programmes with foreign university partners. These approaches have substantially altered the HE landscape in China.

Following years of coherent efforts, China's HE has expanded rapidly marked with radical changes to develop vital capacity and specialization in the construction of China's modernization (Pei, 2017; Zhou, 2016). In nearly five decades, four distinct stages within China's internationalization of HE were observed and contain the following:

- i. Recommencement of restricted collaboration with other countries by 1985 and expanding its affiliations globally;
- ii. Improved decentralization of HE after 1985 with provincial governments and HEIs gaining additional autonomy in internationalization pursuits;
- iii. Establishment of a progressive HE internationalization programme since the 1990s; and
- iv. Realignment of one-directional import of foreign knowledge to an amended balance between introducing the world to China and presenting China to the world as from the 2000s.

China's view of HE internationalization remained for the most part unchanged since the late 19th century, and was primarily founded on acquiring Western knowledge and technology to resume China's global influence, rather

than being a passive beneficiary subjective to other major world powers. Even though local priorities and measures have been transformed in accordance with the trends of the global political economy, China has positioned herself within this realm.

However, in the 2000s, careful consideration was given to China's HE internationalization whereby knowledge was globally exported and universities contributed to global education (Yang, 2010). It is projected that by 2025 students from Asia will constitute 70% of global education, an expansion of 27% since 2000, with China and India as key growth drivers that will produce more than half of global HE graduates (Böhmer, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002, p. 3).

The objective to improve the global influence and standing of China's HE is distinctly demonstrated by China's education policies (Wang, 2014), particularly the *2003-2007 Action Plan for Revitalization of Education* (Ministry of Education, 2004), the *National Outline for Mid- and Long-Term Education Planning and Development* (State Council, 2010), and the *Development of World-Class Universities and First-Class Disciplines* (China Daily, 2017).

Higher Education Internationalization Reform in South Africa

In contrast, before 1994, there had been calls for transformation of South Africa's HE, but only with the inauguration of the first democratic government in 1994, an open and non-discriminating HE system was adopted (Kahn, 2007). The newly elected government was confronted by an education system that was divided, of unequal quality and challenged to provide a suitable skilled workforce. A critical government objective during this phase was the transformation of education.

South Africa gave precedence to three far-reaching social objectives, including restoring past injustice, creating skills for an industrialized economy, and improving democratic practices. Two strategic policies directed this objective, including the *Education White Paper 3* (South Africa, Department of Education, 1997) and the *National Plan for Education* (South Africa, Department of Education, 2001). Whereas the concluding framed the means for realizing the White Paper and its objectives, these two strategic policies express the importance of HE in the South African context. However, the White Paper declares that HE must reflect the changes that are taking place in our society and HE is regarded as part of the broader process of South Africa's political, social, and economic transition, which includes political democratization, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity (South Africa, Department of Education, 1997, pp. 2, 29). It furthermore underlined transformation of HE to the extent of sociological relations, structural transformation, efficiency, mergers of HEI, framing of one national HE system, and institutional compliance to review inequality relating to accessibility, race, and gender, and demographics of staff and students (Du Preez, Simmonds, & Verhoef, 2016). From an internationalization perspective, it reflects an isolationism and inward-looking nationalism approach and a broader international view is largely ignored that may provide valuable insights to the improvement of local policies and practices of HE internationalization.

According to the *National Develop Plan: Vision for 2030*, it predicts that South Africa will be an active role-player not only in Africa, but subsequently also in global HE, and that HEIs will attract more international students and scholars (National Planning Commission, 2011). On the contrary, HE internationalization in South Africa lags behind these ideals, and although the *Education White Paper 3 of 1997* and the *National Plan for Education of 2001* regard internationalization of HE as a focal point of the interconnected world, limited integrations of the concept of internationalization exist in HEP (Malaza, 2011). In addition, Kishun (2007) contends that internationalization is an essential part of HE transformation in South Africa, but still has not been totally

incorporated in the HE landscape (Cross, Mhlanga, & Ojo, 2011). During the 2000s an outward-looking perspective starts to emerge, but without active action towards the internationalization of HE. In order to shift from an inward- to outward-looking perspective, a directional plan for the successful expansion of HE internationalization is required. Although greater awareness of HE internationalization exists, a directional plan that will propel HE internationalization from optional to imperative, from periphery to center stage, is largely inexistent.

In South Africa, there are numerous reasons for internationalization of HE, with the core focus on exchange of staff and students, joint qualifications, research collaboration, online distance education, streamlining qualification systems, and expanding curriculums to be inclusive of global and intercultural dimensions (Rensburg, Motale, & David, 2015). Notwithstanding this rhetoric focus, low levels of internationalization in contrast with global countries remain and necessitate a dynamic approach inclusive of multi-nation political initiatives (Kishun, 2007). A directional change to South Africa's internationalization approach is needed, shifting the regionalized focus toward a more outward-looking, globalized focus, which may inspire innovative approaches toward an internationalization framework suitable for South Africa's own specific context.

However, the current South African HE landscape is predominantly regarded as an elite, low participation and high attrition system, offering average quality education (Rensburg, Motale, & David, 2015). Nearly 25 years later, South Africa's HE is disregarded by the public and frequently alluded to as being in crisis. There is also a broad perception that education reform did not accomplish the proposed outcomes envisioned after 1994 and can be prescribed to multifaceted reasons (Wedekind, 2013). The preceding can be grounded on South Africa's approach to develop a complex HE system without considering their ability to deliver quality education, as well as the multifaceted nature of adjusting the pre-1994 education systems. Moreover, the creation of a new HE system was emphasized, often acquired from various international milieus, which contributed to the existing challenges (Jansen, 2004). Another contributing factor is that by endeavoring to pave a new HE route, there was a focused attempt to enforce new models, which were not aligned with the HEI's narratives. This shaped an ideal environment for the formation of bureaucracies where own rationales were created and contributed to the current challenges in the HE environment (Wedekind, 2013).

Comparative Higher Education Internationalization Landscape

Higher education has developed as a focal tool for social development in both China and South Africa. Although China and South Africa operate in diverse environments, there are also similarities between the two HE environments. As specified by Dimmock (2002), similarity from an outside perspective may hide internal differences of approaches and practice. Different societies may have similar approaches, yet the meanings and interpretations each attaches to the core ideas and concepts vary dramatically (Dimmock, 2002, p. 32). Nonetheless, China's 21st century HE principles were shaped amid the 1990s and correspondingly, South African HEP became a noteworthy factor in social development in the mid-1990s. Although China and South Africa have essentially different outlines of political, social, and economic associations, a country's cultural legacy and its political, economic, and social milieu frame the HE environment (Wang, 2005).

Proviso South Africa can learn from China's experiences and approaches in the field of HEP, and it may be useful for the advancement of internationalization within the broader South African HE landscape. Further, HEP in China and South Africa are currently receiving significant consideration, yet limited research nor profound scientific thought exists. This research may provide policy makers with some well-argued information on how China utilizes HE internationalization as a transformative force to confront challenges within the knowledge-based

economy and globalization.

Research Aim and Questions

The aim of this paper is to provide the outline of a research methodology for the study of a dynamic and reformative South African HE internationalization framework based on the transformative force (i.e., adjustment of change, learning, shared knowledge, internationalization, globalization, and institutionalized memory) of the internationalization of HE in the People's Republic of China. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the overarching question: How can a South African higher education reformative internationalization framework be developed based on Chinese experiences?

Within the limits of the research aim, the accompanying three sub-questions are formulated and will guide the data collection and data analysis process:

- i. What are the internationalization factors in the various reform phases of China's higher education?
- ii. How appropriate are the internationalization factors of China to higher education transformation in South Africa?
- iii. How can China's higher education internationalization framework be contextualized for South Africa?

Research Methods and Design

The research is located within the interpretivist paradigm and imbedded in the epistemological belief that social reality is constructed by the people who participate in it ... and is constructed differently by different individuals (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, pp. 18-19). The interpretivist paradigm was selected to understand a complex education phenomenon, namely to propose a dynamic and reformative HE internationalization framework for South Africa based on the experiences of China.

Mixed methods research is progressively used by more scholars (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2003; Dunning, Williams, Abonyi, & Crooks, 2008; Flick, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2013; Teddlie & Tashakkari, 2009). The term mix methods can be distinguished as the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5). Hesse-Biber (2010) mirrored the latter definition by indicating that mix methods is the combination of methods involving the collection, analysis, and integration of quantitative and qualitative data in a single or multiphase study. The essential premise of mix methods for this research is that it will allow for a more complete and synergistic usage of data than separate quantitative and qualitative methodology. In line with the findings of Gelo, Braakmann, and Benetka (2008), further strengths of this methodology include the recognition of various perspectives and paradigms, inclusion of more difficult questions than can be answered by only a quantitative or qualitative study, the need to simplify, contextualize, clarify, and comprehend the research problem under investigation, and combining data collection and analysis to breach limitations in utilizing one method exclusively.

The research will follow a three-phase approach, combining a multiphase mixed methods design (Figure 1). The preceding design includes numerous phases that come together to answer the focal research question and will be addressed through content analysis (Phase I), in-depth interviews (Phase II), and surveys (Phase III). The three-phase approaches are discussed in the following sub sections.

Research Approach of Phase I Using Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis, as a conventional qualitative research analysis (Berelson, 1954), will be used to determine the

internationalization factors in the various reform phases of China's HE. Content analysis utilizes word recurrence counts to construct inferences about significant topics, issues, or themes; therefore the application of content analysis is constrained to qualitative studies, where an item recurring frequently is not inevitably significant (Jiang & Carpenter, 2014). In addition, content analysis examines and classifies topics, issues, or themes contained in text, transcript, narrative, or discussion. The analysis may focus on the manifest (obvious) or latent (underlying) content of the discourse (Ghetti & Keith, 2016). The approach of Phase I is historic-genetic with the intention to investigate the HE internationalization factors of China in a problem-centered way.

The theoretical sampling technique is selected for Phase I. Theoretical sampling is defined as the process of collecting data for comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 9). This implies that when the preliminary data collection and analysis begins to create explanations, expansion of the sample may be recommended (theoretical sampling) and additionally lead to the gathering of subsequent data. Hence, data will be collected until theoretical saturation is reached and no new information in the data associated with the codes, themes, or theory is observed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this purpose, the grounded theory concept of theoretical saturation as the marker of an adequate sample size will be utilized (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Sampling in content analysis follows a similar process as in survey research, but as opposed to sampling people from a population, texts are sampled from a corpora, whereas corpora represents a population of text. In Phase I, the corpora alludes to all the policy documents of China's HE. The sampling unit is the corpus, the six selected HE policies (HEP) that will be analyzed. These HEP, selected for their influence on internationalization, will be examined from a policy content perspective and organized according to subject classification. During the qualitative analysis, consideration will be given to the exploratory and descriptive nature of the policies on the internationalization of HE.

The six national policies include:

- i. Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCP CC) *Decision on Educational System Reform* (CCP CC, 1985);
 - ii. *Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China* (CCP CC and State Council, 1993);
 - iii. *Action Plan for Revitalization of Education in the 21st Century* (MOE and State Council, 1999);
 - iv. *2003-2007 Action Plan for Revitalization of Education* (MOE, 2004);
 - v. *The National Outline for Mid- and Long-Term Education Planning and Development* (State Council, 2010);
- and

vi. *Implementation Measures to Coordinate Development of World-Class Universities and First-Class Disciplines Construction as Part of the Thirteen Five Year Plan on Education* (People's Daily, 2017).

These six national policies on HE incorporate both independent national internationalization policies, as well as general HE policies that refer to internationalization.

If further information is required documentation related to internationalization of HE including essential laws, strategic plans, annual reports, published and unpublished reports, memoranda and other education documents by the State Council and the Ministry of Education (MOE) of the PRC may be additionally consulted during Phase I. This may be regarded as important for it may provide discourses and conclusions of arguments that may enrich social meanings and consequently shape and mirror the current social reality of internationalization of HE.

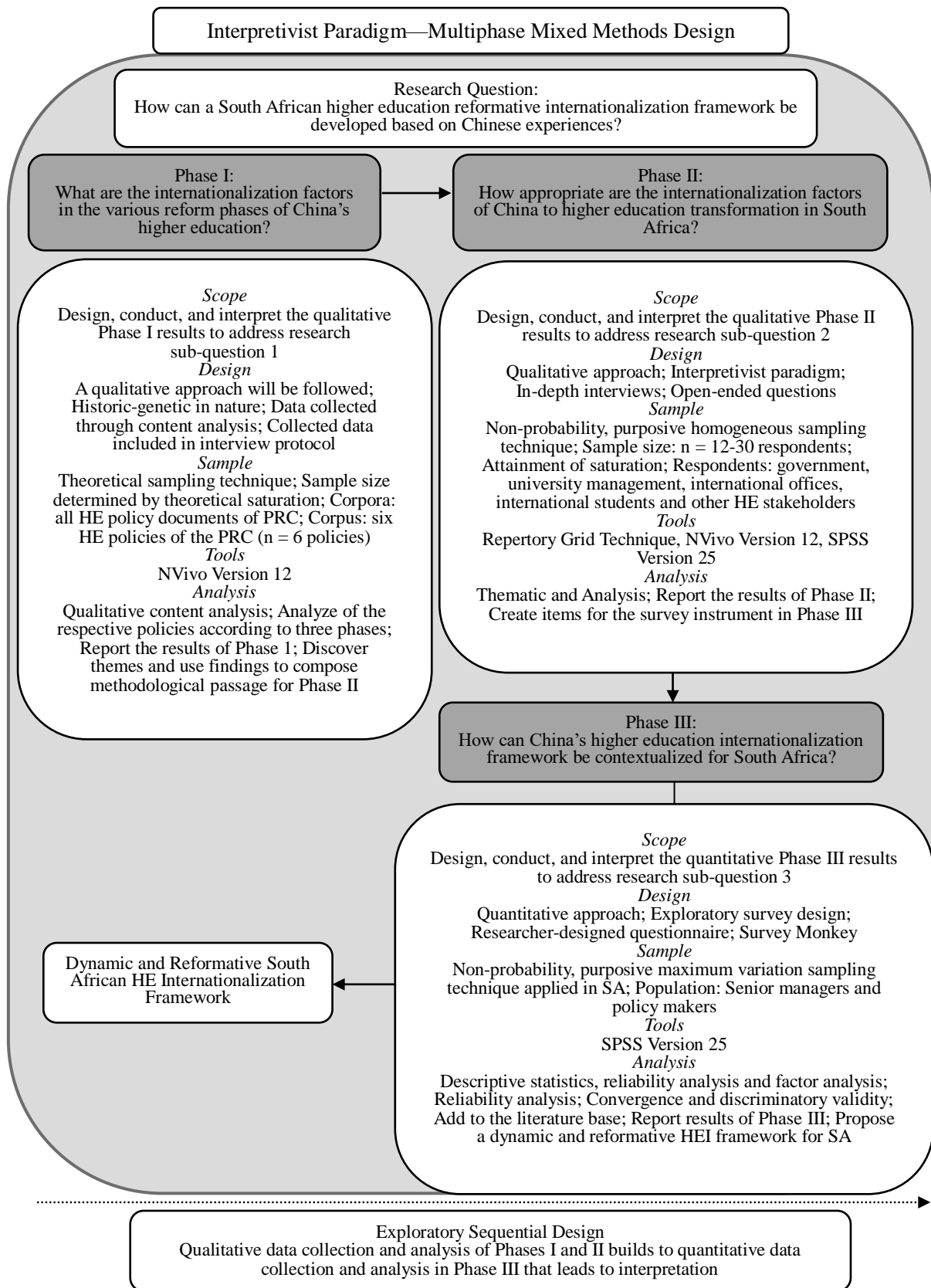


Figure 1. Research design.

These policies have been selected for analysis for various reasons. Firstly, these policies are all guideline policies, which affected the discourse and development of education in China. Moreover, they are exhaustive policies vis-à-vis all aspects of education governance. The depiction of internationalization in these policies demonstrates the degree to which the government perceives and is receptive to internationalization, which implies the significance of internationalization for the Chinese government. Lastly, they are milestone policies defining the directions of education development within various timeframes. An examination of these policies issued during the 1980s to 2018 can thus demonstrate the evolving nature of internationalization over nearly four decades.

Additionally, the proposed investigation will be undertaken at the national policy level. The preceding decision was made for a variety of reasons. Regardless, as numerous studies have indicated, governments still assume a focal role in guiding HE (Beerkens, 2004). Consistent with Enders (2004, p. 361), HEP reflect and emphasize the specific traditions and conditions of individual countries. Similarly, countries with comparable socio-economic and political conditions have different HE internationalization policies (Callan, 2000; Graf, 2009; Luijten-Lub, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2005). Furthermore, conducting the research on national policy level, political commitment is expressed towards HE internationalization.

The policy documents will be analyzed using the qualitative content analysis technique (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2002). Three sequential stages will be utilized in the analysis of the data. The initial stage of Phase I will only use the first stage of the grounded theory methodology for data analysis, instead of a full grounded theory approach. The initial stage of Phase I will only use the first stage of the grounded theory methodology for data analysis, instead of a full grounded theory approach. A full grounded theory approach comprises of a series of precise procedures and techniques to assist the researcher to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24) to discover theory from the collected data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To achieve the preceding, a core category at a high level of abstraction is pursued by using a progressive coding procedure of the collected data (Punch, 1998, p. 205). The coding procedure of grounded theory comprises of three stages, with only the first stage to be utilized in this research. Open-coding, based on the first stage of grounded theory, will be used to search for conceptual articulations and substitutes of internationalization for instance international, world, and global in every policy to shape similar concepts into categories or sub-categories with conceptual names allocated to them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In the second stage of data coding of grounded theory, known as axial coding, relationships between the categories are determined and how these categories relate to one another (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The last stage of grounded theory is selective coding and endeavors to find a principal category that signifies a focal theme in the data and from which a theory can be created (Punch, 1998). Based on the nature of the present research, only the first coding stage of the grounded theory will be used to determine the internationalization factors in the various reform phases of China's higher education, as opposed to creating a new theory. Accordingly, neither axial nor selective coding will be applied in the analysis of Phase I, whereas theme and pattern recognition will be the foci of Phase I. This does not imply that the present investigation is a grounded theory study, but will rather utilize the first stage of the grounded theory methodology to code and analyze the data using qualitative methods.

In the second stage of Phase I, comparison and differences of the recurrence of the articulations will be undertaken and categorized in relation to the characteristics of internationalization. During the last stage of Phase I, the contexts in which the articulations are used will be analyzed to determine the objectives of HE internationalization and the methods for achieving these objectives. Thus, the core categories are central to the

internationalization of HE phenomenon.

NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Version 12) will be used as qualitative analysis software to administer the research data. Applying this tool will enrich the analysis phase by arranging the different codes and categories quicker, and discovering relationships and connections more effectively.

Research Approach of Phase II Using Qualitative In-Depth Interviews

Higher education institutions are professional bureaucracies with various localities of authority and numerous decision-making powers. The objective of Phase II is to determine the appropriateness of the internationalization factors of China to HE transformation in South Africa. Distinct experiences and insights are imperative in the development of reality, or probably, multiple realities, and the qualitative method of in-depth interviews is an applicable method for gathering data for Phase II (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2001; Denzin, 2001; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In-depth qualitative interviewing alludes to the repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 88). This research phase will follow a qualitative approach framed within the interpretivist paradigm (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011; Ngulube, 2016).

In-depth interviews are appropriate as it permits open-ended exploration of topics and elicits responses that are couched in the unique words of the respondents (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 290). In-depth interviews will therefore allow for credible, rich data collection, and provide structure to direct discussion and flexibility to the respondent to provide further information. To ensure the preceding, selected respondents should have knowledge of and experiences in the HE environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Data for Phase II will be collected primarily through in-depth interviews. The interview questions will be designed as open-ended question to provoke information from the perspective of the respondents (Creswell, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Purposive homogeneous sampling will be adopted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and will focus on one subgroup where all sample members are similar, such as from a particular occupation or level in an organization (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). The goal is to sample respondents that are relevant to the research question. As the aim of this phase of the research is to determine the appropriateness of the internationalization factors of China to HE transformation in South Africa, only government, university management, international offices, international students, and other relevant HE stakeholders can provide the exact answers to the research question and therefore the purposive homogeneous sampling technique will be adopted.

The sample size estimation will not be statistically calculated as sampling will be based on extensive and rich data rather than representativeness. Various scholars have investigated the sample size appropriate for qualitative interviews (Galvin, 2015; Mason, 2010; Safman & Sobal, 2004; Sobal, 2001). The guiding principle in determining the sample size will be the attainment of saturation. Saturation is regarded as the point when no new meaningful information is provided, regardless of whether more respondents are interviewed (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The sample size estimation is grounded on the justification of Galvin (2015), which indicated that saturation is largely achieved after 12 to 30 interviews.

The interview respondents will be representative of government, university management, international offices, international students, and other stakeholders in the HE environment. It is envisaged that the interviews will last between 45 to 60 minutes. An interview schedule will be employed (Berg, 2001) and interviews will be recorded to afford a complete verbal record, transcribed, and analyzed by extracting critical items from the professional opinion

of the interviewees (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 320). If necessary, interviewees may be provided by pseudonyms to protect their identities.

The following methodology will be followed to address the research question of Phase II. The data of Phase II will be gathered as indicated previously by means of in-depth interviews utilizing the Repertory Grid Interview Technique (RGT). Thematic Analysis (TA), built on the theoretical six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2006), will be used to find constructs and construct relationships. The six-phase approach of TA includes familiarization of data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Following the preceding data consolidation process, to analyze the indicators of internationalization, cluster analysis will be applied.

NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Version 12) and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25) will be used for data analysis.

Research Approach of Phase III Using Quantitative Exploratory Survey Design

A quantitative research method will be employed for Phase III and an exploratory survey research design was selected to contextualize China's HE internationalization framework for South Africa. The exploratory survey will be cautiously planned and organized in design with the goal that the collected data can be statistically inferred on a population and will include the administration of a researcher-designed questionnaire, based on the results of Phase II. Questionnaires are appropriate due to its broad application in economic and management research, guarantee confidentiality, provide information in a brief timeframe, and acquire data about opinions, perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes of a specific group in the HE internationalization milieu.

Phase III will use a non-probability, purposive, maximum variation sampling strategy to identify and select respondents. By means of maximum variation sampling, the researchers intentionally identify respondents who will include opposing elements to the sample and have an extensive range of characteristics, behaviors, experiences, attributes, and situations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). It is additionally suitable to manage sample bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The objective in using maximum variation sampling is to create a reasonable small sample, mirror the diversity of individuals that may become part of the sample, represent a broad range of perspectives including average to more extreme perspectives, and gain greater insight into the current research phenomenon by viewing it from every angle. A sample will be selected from a specific population of senior managers and policy makers in the South African HE industry. The questionnaire will be designed using the Internet-based survey creator Survey Monkey to ease distribution of questionnaires as well as its capability to guarantee confidentiality.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25) will be used to analyze the survey data to address the research question of Phase III. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis, and construct analysis will be performed. Firstly, descriptive statistics will provide basic explanations and will include measurement of frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations. Secondly, to confirm scale reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) will be used to measure the reliability or internal consistency of the questionnaire (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006) and will be set at the minimum required alpha coefficient of 0.70 or above (Bann, Terrell, McCormack, & Berkman, 2003; Nunnally, 1978). As stated by Bann et al. (2003, p. 114) the reliability of internal consistency measures the degree to which items on a scale are related to each other and therefore appear to be measuring the same construct, followed by factor analysis using the principal components extraction method and Varimax rotation. Lastly, to confirm the presence of construct validity, this

research adopted the approach to assess convergent and discriminant validity simultaneously (Ame, 2005; Cook & Beckman, 2006). The purpose of construct validity is to logically analyze and test predicted relationships with other variables that should theoretically be related (convergent validity) or vary independently (discriminant validity). Convergent validity will be assessed by factor loading, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), whereas discriminant validity will be assessed by chi-square difference test and the average variance extracted analysis (Zait & Berteau, 2011).

Field Journal

A research journal will be kept to record subjective observations, spontaneous discussions, reflections, and body language amid interactions with interview and survey respondents. In addition, methodological judgements, feelings, and opinions will be recorded in the field journal amid data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 327). The field journal will be beneficial in drawing conclusions that cannot solely be obtained through the interviews and questionnaires. Furthermore, the research journal may provide insight into the perceptions of the respondents, which they were not able to articulate verbally during the interview phase. The recordings in the field journal can also include depictions of the who, what, where, and how of the research situation (Mosia, 2011).

Conclusion

No country has all the solutions for the challenges posed by the 21st century, particularly in the HE environment. National conditions including economic, social, political, and education realities are too complex to transfer from one country to another. However, views from different countries can propose methods that may prompt potential solutions to existing problems. Internationalization of HE is also frequently observed as a goal in itself, not as a continuous well-defined policy process, including diverse rationales and mediating factors within different levels of governance: national, local, and institutional. Given the present importance of HE internationalization, the findings of this research may have theoretical and practical implications for a variety of HE entities, including the South African HE environment.

An interpretation of the functioning of HE internationalization policies can enable countries to observe themselves considering other countries' performances. Through international comparisons, countries may perceive qualities and shortcomings in their own HE frameworks and may evaluate variations in HE practices that are unique or reflect differences observed in other countries. Governments are carefully considering international comparative policy analysis because it may improve social and economic conditions, and enable governments to organize resources to meet increased HE demands. Furthermore, South Africa and China are also members of the emerging national economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) consortium and share some comparable positions and perspectives towards numerous international issues. Therefore, this research may provide a decision-making base and reference for HE internationalization for both China as well as South Africa. Hence, this exploration is valuable from a global as well as comparative perspective.

In addition to strengthen the existing body of knowledge on HE internationalization, particularly in the domain of practical and specific insights of internationalization, the outcomes of this research may also be of significant relevance to HE practitioners. Especially to HE practitioners involved in leading change to advise practice, aid those implementing internationalization activities, offering direction on the elements that advance or limit implementation and reaching internationalization objectives.

Additionally, to universities, the results of this research may improve their internationalization strategies in

realizing the expectations of government to expand beyond national interests to become globally competitive, maintain international reputations, and provide relevant education that will contribute to an increased diverse global society.

Literature on HE internationalization demonstrates the prominence of scholarly results measuring international activities, however little emphasis has been placed on theoretical frameworks guiding the internationalization process within the HE environment. Although research on HE internationalization has gained prominence, limited contextual research of the phenomenon of HE internationalization in the South African context exists. Hence, the innovative nature of this research exists in the emphasis on developing a dynamic and reformative framework for internationalization of HE for decision-makers in South Africa. This research may also develop a better understanding of comparatively position countries, such as China, with similar attributes, circumstances, and challenges of HE reform.

This research will additionally contribute to the field of multiphase mixed methods studies by indicating the value of using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in investigating internationalization of HE. It furthermore may encourage future researchers to use multiple methodologies in their research.

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