

JEDI Now! Creating a Knowledge Platform to Achieve Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) in Higher Education Geared Towards Internationalisation

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Abstract : There is a wealth of knowledge about JEDI (Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion), but unfortunately this remains at a discrete initiative level at universities. South African universities are committed to social justice by promoting inclusive teaching, learning and research environments, diversity and equity in access and participation of students and staff regardless of age; disability; gender; sexual orientation; nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion; and socioeconomic background in all aspects of higher education at a national level. Universities strive to promote and protect equal rights and equity of access is safeguarded for international students by recognizing the foreign policies and practices. Nevertheless, many international students remain underrepresented, alienated and often without employment. Universities see internationalisation as a commercial venture, but where does JEDI fit into this plan? Given the focus on diversity in higher education institutions, one would assume that JEDI should have a broader compass rather than a narrow scope. Over the past decades, national trends have emerged in the commitment to international diversification by admitting students and recruiting staff, mainly from the African continent. Most importantly, emergence of statements of broader diversity and equity plans across the campuses, included in the strategic plans of institutions are counterproductive to the statements of the Employment Equity plans and targets when aligned to the recruitment processes. These trends are certainly significant and relevant given the increasing diverse populations in higher education. What is missing in JEDI initiatives is the lack of global perspective and situating JEDI within a larger and inclusive context to embrace institutional internationalization. It is not a separate construct but internationalization framework takes the JEDI vision from local to global. Embracing JEDI and internationalization are fundamental for future economic growth. JEDI creates diverse perspectives and builds a team of top diverse and international talent that will give a competitive edge. Increasing internationalization efforts and creating a knowledge platform will affect the innovation performance of the economy. Transforming South African policies require a comprehensive educational strategy on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI).

Keywords : equity, diversity, inclusion, internationalization, justice, higher education

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