Critical Reflections on strategies for internationalization of Higher Education

HANS DE WIT, DIRECTOR CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION (CIHE)

Key themes

What have been and are the main trends, rationales and drivers for internationalization over the past decades?

The different perceptions and meanings of internationalization in and of higher education, and what are key shifting paradigms?

What might be the future directions of internationalization in response to current drastically changing global contexts.

Misconception about Internationalisation

We consider internationalisation too much as a goal in itself instead of as a means to an end.

Internationalisation is not more and less than a way to enhance the quality of education and research and their service to society.

Key Global Trends in International Higher Education that impact and are impacted by internationalisation

Massification

Global Knowledge Economy

Reputation/Rankings/Excellence   Differentiation and Privatization

Recent trends:

- Changing Global Economic, Social and Political Climate

- Concerns of Autonomy, Academic Freedom and National Security

- Digitalization and AI

- Ethics and values in higher education and science

Internationalisation in Higher Education

Not one single model that fits all

As a strategic concept a relatively young phenomenon

Institutional, local, national and regional context are essential in defining the why, what, how and outcomes of internationalisation

Internationalisation is driven by a broad range of rationales (political, economic, social-cultural, and academic) and stakeholders

Contexts and Rationales change over time, so it is a process and requires intentional actions

Internationalisation can be fragmented, ad hoc, marginal or central and comprehensive.

Two components but one concept: Global Learning for All

Internationalization Abroad	Internationalization at Home
Student Degree Mobility	Campus internationalization
Student Credit Mobility	Internationalization of the Curriculum
Student short term Mobility	Teaching and Learning
Staff Mobility	Joint Programs
Program mobility	Intercultural and international competences and learning outcomes

Internationalization challenges

Internationalization at Home (curriculum, competencies, learning outcomes for all students) encounters more recognition, but lacks strategic approach

North-South Partnerships still strongly unequal

Internationalization still mostly marginal, fragmented and ad hoc and not as integrated in the overall mission of higher education

Still mainly institutional, isolated from the local, national, regional and global context

Looking Back to Internationalisation

Education abroad in all its forms is more driving the agenda than internationalisation at home

Increasing focus on international rankings are the rules, and favor some over others.

The divide between the North and the South and between those universities classified as top world-class universities and the "Others" persists.

Internationalisation has become more synonym to competition and marketization than to its traditional values (cooperation, exchange and service to society).

Inequality and exclusiveness increased nationally and internationally, in part due to elitist approaches to internationalisation.

A counter reaction: from competition back to cooperation?

As a counter reaction to the exclusive focus on mobility, movements like *'Internationalisation at Home'* (Beelen and Jones, 2015), *'Internationalisation of the Curriculum'* (Leask, 2015) and *'Comprehensive Internationalisation'* (Hudzik, 2015) have emerged around the turn of the century, trying to shift the focus on internationalization for all students, not exclusively the small percentage of mobile ones.

Also the rather exclusive focus on only one of the three missions of universities, education, has been challenged with an appeal to more specific attention to *internationalisation of research* (Woldegiyorgis et al, 2018) and *internationalisation of higher education for society* (Jones et al, 2021).

Critique of *internationalisation as a western paradigm* and call for its *decolonisation* has become more to the forefront.

A changing paradigm?

Appeals for change resonate in words.

But in practice the focus continues to be on internationalisation abroad, mobility.

De Wit and Rumbley (2017) speak of *rhetoric* more than concrete action, and Leask, Jones and de Wit (2018) of *a struggle to move beyond good intentions and isolated examples of good practice*.

We have to move from rhetoric to action!

"*Equality, diversity and inclusion, social justice, decolonization, global power relations and geopolitics, human rights, anti-racism, gender identity and equality, ethics, multiculturalism, and sustainability are just some of the related elements which all have a role to play in broadening our understanding of internationalization*" (Jones, 2022: iv).

A multifaceted and evolving concept

Two dimensions, *multifaceted* and *evolving*, are key characteristics of the internationalisation of higher education;

And one can add, also of several of its components:

Study abroad, international students, internationalisation at home, transnational or cross-border education, digitalization, the use of terms like 'global citizenship', and so on.

Internationalisation is not one model that fits all, its diversity is institutional, local, national and regional defined, and has changed and evolved over time in response to changing contexts and challenges.

Multifacetedness and sloppiness also in its different dimensions and subthemes, including TNE

- *international student mobility* does not distinguish between different types of student mobility, while there is a fundamental difference between degree seeking, credit seeking, and certificate seeking international students, both in their rationales, their experiences and their outcomes

- In the area of *cross-border delivery of education and transnational education/TNE (branch campuses, franchises, articulation programs, joint and dual degrees)* , there is not only no common agreement on their meanings, but also not on what they entail

- The same is true with the use of *virtual exchange/COIL* and their distinction from *virtual mobility/distance education/online education/MOOCs*

- One can question the difference between *'internationalization at home'* and *'internationalization of the curriculum'*

- Frequently used terms like *'global citizen'* and *'global engagement'* more identify with a notion of sympathetic perception of what it might entail than that there is a clear common meaning and understanding

- -The use of intercultural, international and global is used also in a mixed and sloppy way

The need for change in approach is present in labels that have emerged over recent years, such as

'Comprehensive internationalization' (Hudzik, 2011),

'Intelligent internationalization' (Rumbley, 2015),

'*Ethical internationalization*' (Andreotti, 2016)

'*Conscientious internationalization*' (Wolhuter, 2008, Ledger and Kawalilak, 2020)

'Responsible internationalization' (Stallivieri, 2019, Swedish policy) and

'Humanistic internationalization' (Streitwieser, 2019).

Other definitions have a more focused approach: *'learner-centered'* (Coelen, 2016),

'forced' (related to refugees, Ergin et al, 2019), and

'coerced' (Teferra, 2019).

Another term more frequently used these days as alternative to internationalization is *'global engagement'*, focusing more on the aspect of cooperation, networking and partnership.

Defining Internationalization of Higher Education

Reflects increased awareness that

- IoHE must become more inclusive and less elitist

- Mobility must become an integral part of the internationalized curriculum that ensures internationalisation for all

Re-emphasises that

- Internationalization is not a goal in itself, but a means to enhance quality

- Should not focus solely on economic rationales

Updated definition

(de Wit et al, 2015, European Parliament Study)

The **intentional** process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, **in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society**

Key Global Trends in Internationalisation over the past decades

Growing importance of internationalization at all levels

Trend towards increased privatization

Competitive pressures of globalization, global rankings

Evident **shift from (only) co-operation to (more) competition**

Numbers rising everywhere, with challenge of quantity versus quality

Geopolitical developments impact its course

Nationalism and knowledge security are key new phenomena

Globalization of Internationalization

"In the current global-knowledge society, the concept of **internationalization of higher education has itself become globalized**, demanding further consideration of its impact on policy and practice as more countries and types of institution around the world engage in the process.

Internationalization should no longer be considered in terms of a westernized, largely Anglo-Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking paradigm."

(De Wit and Jones, 2014)

These are the key questions for internationalization in higher education in these challenging times

"As we look backwards and forwards, it is thus important to ask one question. What are the core principles and values underpinning internationalization of higher education that 10 or 20 years from now will make us look back and be proud of the track record and contribution that international higher education has made to the more interdependent world we live in, the next generation of citizens, and the bottom billion people living in poverty on our planet?" (Knight and de Wit, 2018)

In other words (De Wit and Leask, 2019, p. 1)

"Aligning the practice of internationalization with human values and the common global good requires that we first challenge some of our long-held views about what it is to 'be international' as a university, a teacher, a student, a human being. This requires pushing the boundaries of our own and others' thinking, focusing on people and ensuring that they develop and demonstrate the institution's espoused human values."

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION
BOSTON COLLEGE

Some key recommendations

Make the **third mission of HE, service to society**, a more central concern of internationalisation and Europeanisation, focusing on inclusivity, social responsibility and solidarity, rather than exclusionary practice

- Place **greater emphasis on interculturalisation** within internationalised curricula, engaging diverse local communities as well as developing global mindsets

-**Strengthen the link between internationalisation and fundamental academic values**: academic freedom, institutional autonomy, academic integrity, responsibility for and of higher education

- **Respond to the climate crisis**, reducing the focus on study abroad by incorporating virtual exchange and collaborative online international learning as an integral part of the internationalisation process

- Maintain support for both **top-down and bottom-up initiatives** in international policies and actions

- Create a balance between the need for ongoing collaboration and recognition of **security concerns**.

Thank you

DEWITJ@BC.EDU