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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: IS IT AN EVOLVING CONCEPT?

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ABSTRACT

No longer is internationalization an outlier in the higher education environment rather it is an emerging aspect as evidenced by university strategic plans, policy pronouncements, international declarations, and scholarly studies. Not only has internationalization impacted higher education, but it has also changed itself tremendously. However, it is debatable whether internationalization has seeped into higher education completely or is it just an evolving concept. This paper scrutinizes the international dimension of higher education and the mobility practices around the globe. It discusses the origin of internationalization and examines several recent changes and their repercussions during the last two decades. There are a few critiques of internationalization, nevertheless, the drift towards internationalization is dominant due to the current pandemic situation and is proving to be the probable future of higher education. It also probes a few trends in tertiary education and lastly, summarizing the key process of internationalization over the last thirty years.

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INTRODUCTION

The effect of gender, class, race, culture, economic conditions has been a topic of concern, hoping to understand the identity and questions raised thereof. It is accentuated that the world is undergoing an identity crisis in academia, due to globalization and cultural interrelatedness. In the contemporary global era, questions arise regarding identity formation and its indicators. Strategic plans, national policy statements, international declarations and academic articles all indicate the emphasis on internationalization in the world of higher education. Internationalization has transformed higher education as well as altered itself. But the question arises whether it is for the better or worse (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Attempts have been made to differentiate between the globalization and internationalization of education since they seem to be interrelated as well as different (Dixon, 2007). Internationalization as a term has been used to denote several concepts related to global, intercultural, or international dimensions, thereafter, leading to the question of whether internationalization is having an Identity crisis. This discussion does not regard definition or alternate names as crucial to emanate the answer, rather it focuses on the values that support it. Internationalization could be a process based on collaboration, cooperation, support, reciprocation, economic development, facilitation. The values seem to be undermined by economic and political influences making academic and socio-cultural aspects of internationalization weaker. Internationalization should be such that it encompasses different countries, cultures, ethnicities and education systems; it must be used in a broad range of contexts and for

comparative purposes across countries and regions of the world. (Knight, 2014). The suffix "isation" represents a process; it implies that internationalization is a changing process. It does not standardize it by denoting significance, consequences, activities, and its foundation as it varies from organization to organization as well as across regions. Internationalization has been defined as 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (primarily teaching/learning, research, service) or delivery of higher education. It is not dictatorial focusing on the educational aims, outcomes, and purposes; nonetheless, the processes of cooperation, common advantages, and exchange is not clarified rather only assumed since it could be presumed to be dictatorial (Knight, 2004). This pertains to not only the local organizations but also the global organizations; at every level of academia including higher education. The internationalization needs to be supported by the International Association of Universities (IAU), an international ad hoc expert group on rethinking internationalization (IAU, 2012) and adapted to academic values (Knight, 2011). Higher education is an interdisciplinary field for research (Brennan and Teichler, 2008; Kehm and Musselin, 2013; Tight, 2012). The researchers of higher education are quite scattered and varied as is the varied range of research designs, methods, techniques, theories. Not only are many designs, methods, and theoretical frameworks introduced from other disciplines but also developed within themselves. (Tight 2012, 2013, 2014). The most discussed and researched aspects of higher education are internationalization and globalization (Kehm and Teichler, 2007), it is substantiated as they were a part of discussed topics in several books (e.g. Ennew and Greenaway, 2012; King, Marginson, and Naidoo 2011; Maringe and Foskett, 2010; Scott, 1998a; Stromquist

and Monkman, 2000) and special issues of journals (e.g. Magyar and Robinson-Pant, 2011; Maringe and Woodfield, 2013; Sellar and Gale, 2011; de Wit 2011).

Origin: The three ideas regarding internationalization and globalization in higher education are discussed here. First, globalization is widely built up in the social science literature (e.g. Albrow, 1996; Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1999). Second, although the two words of globalization and internationalization are different, they are used interchangeably. Third, the widespread of higher education from America to Europe, the Asia Pacific region, and across the globe in the last 20 years, has drawn particular attention in policy and research terms. Since there are linkages made between globalization and internationalization. How might we distinguish between them? Teichler (2004) has distinguished between them in the following way: *Internationalization is best defined as the sum of significant changes in the framework and inner life of higher education in response to an increasing frequency of frontier activities amidst the continuity of national systems, despite the presence of some indicators of "denationalization. "Increasing knowledge transmission, physical mobility, cooperation, and international education and research are all phenomena that are commonly associated with internationalization. In recent years, the term "globalization" has replaced the term "internationalization" in public discourse on higher education, resulting in a shift in meaning.* (2004, 22–23). When there is the flow of students across regions and continents, there is the flow of knowledge and according to Teichler (2004), its meaning also has altered with time. There are influence tendencies, trends, practices of the international migrants on the local and vice versa. Gacel-Ávila (2005) reflects on the globalization process to be independent of the influences of other nations as well as connecting factors. The forces are beyond the control of the nations in globalization whereas in internationalization there is a mutual relation between nations.

Internationalization varies from globalization in that it pertains to the relationship between nation-states that promotes recognition of and respect for their differences and traditions. Globalization, on the other hand, tends to disregard distinctions and borders, weakening the foundations of the same nation-states and ultimately homogenization. Internationalization can be seen as a counterbalance to globalization, permitting resistance to denationalizing and homogenizing the impacts of globalization (Gacel-Ávila, 2005, pg-124). Many different representations are there regarding internationalization, for example, Haigh (2014, pg-6) sought to explain internationalization as evolving in the levels given below:

(1) *international student recruitment; (2) international student teaching; (3) international enterprise university growth through competitive recruitment of international staff and students; (4) compliance with international accreditation agencies' standards; (5) 'internationalization at home,' which means internationalization of the curriculum for local learners; (6) education for global citizenship; (7) connected e-learning; and (8) education for the planet* Bedenlier, Kondakci, and Zawacki-Richter (2018) have put together different areas of study by closely studying the Journal of Studies in International Education, and have identified major developmental areas: institutionalization and management of internationalization (2002–2006), consequences of internationalization: student needs and support structures (2007–2011), and currently, moving from the institutional to the transnational context of internationalization (2012–2016). Although there are time gaps in between, there has been research that can be viewed as analogous in the field.

A critical study carried out by Mwangi et al. (2018), found the western focus in the majority of the publications. Given the varied contexts, areas, regions, and practices, internationalization cannot be narrowed down into a single definition and couldn't be generalized or applied in all education systems. He also noted that most of the articles didn't define the very concept and if some articles did define internationalization, its major focus was on describing it as a changing process. A few articles described it as having positive and negative results in higher education institutions. According to

Engwall (2016), there are four means of internationalization namely, the introduction of thoughts, outsourcing, insourcing, foreign direct investments. Both Haigh and Engwall have categorized the elements which seem to be rational, like transfer of students from one place to the other, academia, values, thoughts, notions, practices. To some extent, both globalization and internationalization remain disputed concepts where each researcher tends to have their notions or rationale about its meaning.

Mobility policies and Internationalisation: Is it affected by the universal trends in tertiary education: We have seen an upward trend in tertiary education in the past century. Higher education has been a fosterer of greater economic gains as it brought the migrating students that are a part of the knowledge economy as well. Universities have changed their facets and work. Internationalization is influenced by freedom in academic practices and research, programs, elective subjects, and ever-fluctuating political structure and economic conditions.

Massification: Higher education has altered drastically in the past three decades. It was considered to be accessible to only the economically stable and fortunate ones, nowadays considered to be a clichéd opinion. The gross enrolment ratio has rocketed to more than 50% in most of the countries providing a suitable post-secondary and university education, even reaching a 90% in a few of them. According to studies by de Wit and Altbach (2020), there are more than 260 million students globally in more than 20,000 universities offering specializations in varied subjects. Matching strides with the high-income countries, China, India, and Latin America have grown their GER (Gross enrolment ratio from 35-40%, 20-25%, and 40-50% respectively to more than 50%, proving massification to be a major occurrence. Due to the quick expansion of demand for higher education as well as the better and enhanced primary and secondary education in Africa, the GER is slowly having an upward trend. In the STEM areas of education, the demand is less than the supply in tertiary places. This trend is seen in countries such as Canada, South Korea, the U.K, and the U.S, Australia, and continental Europe due to some demographic causes (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley 2010).

Wealth of knowledge: Educational hubs such as higher education institutes play a vital part in the accumulation of knowledge which is an economy. In the contemporary time with the increasingly rapid changes in science and technology calling for advanced levels of knowledge- influences internationalization and tertiary education as well. Higher education hubs that focus on research have ties or connections with similar institutions, having their knowledge economy function efficiently, speaking the global language of science, learning, and indorsing student grants to achieve excellence. Internationalization and mobility get impetus by escalating competition for knowledge, economic aid, flair and aptitude, procurement, and access to high-ranking academic journals. Collaboration of academicians for quality research is steering validation of internationalization. Initiatives in policies to create global universities have been taken in countries such as France, Germany, Japan, Russia, South Korea, China, and most recently by India by implementing the National Policy of Education, 2020. Not only do these hubs, educate but also create knowledge and give impetus to research.

Academic liberty and autonomy: Lack of academic liberty will impede research, education, teaching-learning process, and ultimately the quality as well the international exchange and mobility practices. The base of development of higher educational institutes is academic freedom, teaching autonomy, eminent, and quality research.

Reputation, rankings, and excellence: National, regional, and worldwide university rankings are now more than ever driving institutional leaders' and governments' priorities. As previously stated, several governments, primarily in the global North but also in the South, have built excellence plans and investment schemes to become more globally competitive, construct global universities, and climb the rankings. On the one hand, there is a desire for more access and

equity, while on the other hand, governments and higher education institutions strive for excellence in research, teaching, and learning. Excellent efforts have created a distinction within national systems by isolating an elite sector of world-class institutions from other research universities that are more nationally and regionally focused. Rankings – national, regional, global, institutional, discipline-specific, and across a growing number of additional dimensions – have become increasingly important in the development of excellence schemes. The competitive nature of elite research universities scrambling for international students and scholars is reflected in a clear relationship between excellence initiatives, rankings, and internationalization, which is measured through quantitative indicators such as the number of international students, international staff, and international coauthors of publications. Governments and universities are being pushed to invest more in global research, employ English as a research and teaching language, and concentrate on international recruitment methods.

Changes in international policies and immigration laws: The emergence of nationalist–populist movements, immigration bans, attacks on academic freedom, anti-globalist rallies, and anti-integration trends in Europe could all have negative consequences for internationalization. It is too early to predict the precise and direct effects of these trends, but they will almost certainly alter and/or accelerate patterns of mobility, autonomy and academic freedom, privatization and commercialization, and other critical characteristics of tertiary education around the world. Natural disasters and health concerns, however, are becoming increasingly global in scope as our society and economies become more interconnected, posing a threat to higher education and internationalization efforts. The COVID-19 outbreak is a perfect example, causing major disruptions in academic life, forcing many traditional higher education methods to be questioned, and switching teaching to a distance education style, at least temporarily.

Emerging mobility practices: A greater focus on internationalization has resulted from the massification of tertiary education and the increasing importance of higher education and research for the global knowledge economy. According to the OECD, there are now about five million students studying abroad, nearly double the amount ten years ago, with expectations of further growth to at least eight million in the next decade, however that optimistic estimate ignores the potential ramifications of Covid-19. International student competition is becoming more intense, and the sector has gotten more global and competitive. The traditional gap between sending (mostly middle and low-income nations) and receiving (mostly industrialized, English-speaking countries, plus France and Germany) countries are blurring, and the current political atmosphere may hasten this trend in the coming years. Students' mobility is not as homogeneous as it appears at first glance. The mobility can be for obtaining a certificate, degree, skills, or credit which are all different types of mobility depending on the need. International student mobility will continue to expand at a high rate. However, the environment is getting more competitive and worldwide. At the same time, the international student sector, which relies heavily on a limited number of exporting countries for cash and soft power, is becoming increasingly dangerous. Political tensions and policies, natural disasters, and health crises (such as the coronavirus epidemic) can all have a big impact on national and local economies and institutions. The gradual change away from treating student mobility just as a source of revenue, toward emphasizing the human capital aspect, is a significant shift in rationales for student mobility among national/local governments and institutions. This is part of an initiative to improve the number of international students who stay.

Program mobility: Education cities and knowledge hubs, franchise operations, articulation and twinning programs, and joint and dual degree programs are all examples of program mobility. Program mobility is difficult to measure, except for International Branch Campuses (IBC). Students are frequently awarded a degree by the overseas mother school upon satisfactory completion of a study program at an IBC. The reasons for starting and maintaining IBCs are

complex, and they differ depending on the home and host. Branch campuses can bring the prestige of a foreign partner university to hosts – which could be governments, private enterprises, academic institutions, or others – provide student access where there is a shortage of places, keep students at home who would otherwise go abroad for study, bring new ideas about curriculum, governance, teaching, or other innovations, and earn money, especially in the case of private enterprises. The purposes of home universities are likewise diverse. They may see their branches to recruit students to their home campus. The usage of technology has a range of effects on internationalization and mobility. 'Digitalization,' like 'internationalization,' is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of activities, concepts, and approaches. One common type is online distance education, which is a digitization and extension of open university models. In that it allows access to such programs without the costs of physical transportation, distance education can have an international component.

Concerns and critique: Globalization and internationalization in higher education have been interpreted, addressed, and researched in a variety of ways, as evidenced by the discussion thus far: for example, in terms of system policy, teaching and learning, course design, the student experience, institutional management, and academic work. They've also raised a lot of questions and received a lot of criticism. Some of these critiques accepted globalization and internationalization in general but claimed that the responses to these trends were inadequate. There have been concerns concerning the quality of provision, notably in transnational or cross-border higher education (e.g., Arunasalam, 2016), where claims that provision was of comparable quality to that provided by the home institution have been questioned. Others have questioned whether universities have achieved what they claim in their internationalization efforts (e.g., Ayoubi and Massoud, 2007), or the ethics of internationalization and its impact on sustainability (Pashby and Oliveira Andreotti, 2016). On the subject of sustainability, Healey (2008) differs from Pashby and Oliveira Andreotti, claiming that the policies and tactics that have led to the increased internationalization of higher education are paradoxical and unsustainable. A less vehement critique of globalization and internationalization in higher education acknowledges that the situation in practice is far more complicated than commonly assumed. Marginson and Rhoades (2002) emphasize the interconnections and interdependencies between global, national, and local influences. We should not underestimate or overlook the continued importance of national and local influences and practices, as Marginson and Rhoades point out, while we pay more attention to global or worldwide forces and changes in higher education. Burnett and Huisman (2010) emphasize the role of corporate culture in influencing institutional responses.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Is internationalization an evolving concept? The aforementioned trends have all had an impact on the direction of internationalization and mobility in tertiary education. The main focus remains on mobility, which is a result of unmet demand for higher education (degree mobility), primarily from lower-middle and middle-income societies to higher-income countries; the growth of short-term credit mobility of students, an increase in short-term faculty mobility, primarily for research; and gradual growth in franchise operations, branch campuses, and other forms of transnational education. First, it is apparent that globalization and internationalization's ideas, concepts, and frameworks have been, and continue to be, extremely popular for thinking about and researching higher education, as well as informing higher education policy and practice. While it is unlikely that this popularity was truly global – after all, there are nations and institutions where these forces have little influence. It's crucial to note, however, that these trends or forces are not new; what's new is their specific form and strength. Universities have always drawn and strived to attract students from all around the world who are interested in studying (e.g. De Ridder-Symoens, 1992). Furthermore, it is obvious that, while the global and worldwide levels are significant for considering trends and advances in higher education, the national and

local levels are still critical (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002). Considerably more than other frameworks applied to the study of higher education, globalization and internationalization bring attention to the distinction between pragmatic and idealistic interpretations of the goal of higher education. The pragmatists – or neoliberals, as some call them – are currently in power, with their concerns for attracting as many international students as possible, attracting highly qualified staff from other countries, and projecting the power and influence of specific higher education institutions or systems globally. While being generally and honestly critical, idealists must mostly devote themselves to improving the student experience and curriculum as best they can while remaining open to international influences. If the world's leading universities – and those aspiring to it – as well as most governments and international organizations, are all supporting and contributing to the forces of globalization, there appears to be little any one – individual, organization, or government – can do to reverse these trends, even if it were desired. The best we can hope for is to mitigate some of the unintended and negative outcomes. Finally, while globalization and internationalization have had and continue to have a significant impact on higher education policy and research, this impact is part of a long-standing history that relies significantly on the cooperation of the governments and institutions involved. Surprisingly, both researchers and policymakers are still primarily concerned with national issues.

Here are some of the key features of internationalization over the last 30 years:

- Internationalization overseas receives more attention than internationalization at home.
- Universities and governments' programs are more ad hoc, fragmented, and marginal than strategic, comprehensive, and central.
- Instead of aiming for global and multicultural outcomes for everyone, a limited, elite subset of students, staff, and institutions benefit.
- With a rising focus on economic reasons, it is guided by a continually evolving range of political, economic, sociocultural, and educational rationales.
- National, regional, and global rankings are becoming increasingly important.
- There is a lack of alignment between the worldwide elements of higher education's three fundamental functions: education, research, and societal service.
- Involvement of for-profit firms in all sectors of the international higher education agenda is becoming increasingly commercialized.
- Traditional values such as cooperation, peace and mutual understanding, human capital development, and solidarity have been pushed to the fringes as colleges compete for revenue, prestige, and branding.

These expressions about internationalization's competitive, elitist, and market-oriented direction, call for more attention to the qualitative dimension of internationalization, such as global citizenship development, employability, improving the quality of research, education, and service to society, and a shift from output to outcome and impact when evaluating results. Rationales and rankings still drive the agenda. Internationalization is increasingly more focused on political, academic, social, and cultural motivations. Efforts to incorporate an international component into quality assurance methods, institutional policies relating to student learning outcomes, and the work of national and discipline-specific accreditation authorities are just a few examples. This definition gives the process a normative direction by emphasizing that it must be intentional, that it is not a goal in and end itself, but must contribute to quality improvement, that it should not be a benefit reserved for a small elite of mobile students and scholars, but should benefit everyone, and also benefit society. Overall, institutions continue to be the primary drivers of internationalization. Finally, while internationalization has had and continues to have a significant impact on higher education policy and

research, this impact is part of a long-standing history that relies significantly on the cooperation of the governments and institutions involved. Surprisingly, both researchers and policymakers are still primarily concerned with national issues.

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