

Chapter 17

Internationalisation of Higher Education: Mission and Concerns

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ABSTRACT

The internationalisation of higher education integrates international, intercultural, and global dimensions into post-secondary education's purpose, functions, and delivery. This trend has gained prominence due to globalisation, technological advances, and interconnected economies. Institutions pursue internationalisation for enhanced academic quality, global competence, cross-cultural understanding, improved institutional reputation, economic benefits, and advanced research and innovation. Challenges accompany these missions, including maintaining quality assurance, managing cultural differences, overcoming language barriers, financial constraints, ensuring equity and access, and navigating ethical considerations. Internationalisation requires strategic partnerships, comprehensive support services, globalised curricula, diversity initiatives, rigorous quality standards, and ethical integrity. UK and other institutions reveal best practices in building international networks, offering extensive support services, integrating global perspectives, and promoting inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

From the turn of the 21st century, internationalisation of higher education has grown in significance and is vital in determining the direction of education, economies, and societies (Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007). By integrating global perspectives into teaching, research, and institutional strategies, internationalisation helps prepare students for the interconnected challenges of the modern workforce. It fosters cross-cultural understanding, equips students with the skills needed for global careers, and enhances the international competitiveness of educational institutions.

Internationalisation also promotes collaboration between institutions across borders, enabling sharing of knowledge, resources, and innovations. This collaboration enriches academic research and can lead to breakthroughs in addressing global issues such as climate change, public health, and technological

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advancements. Additionally, it encourages diversity within academic communities, enriching the educational experience by exposing students and staff to different cultures, ideas, and approaches.

Internationalisation is not without its challenges, including concerns about unequal access to opportunities, the commodification of education, and the potential loss of local cultural identities. Despite these issues, internationalisation remains crucial for fostering academic excellence, advancing research, and creating a globally engaged and informed citizenry capable of addressing complex global problems. It is the foundation of modern higher education, shaping its evolution in the 21st century as argued by Lee and Stensaker (2021).

A critical introduction to the key themes surrounding the globalisation of higher education is important as it outlines the fundamental goals, or “missions,” driving internationalisation efforts, such as fostering global research collaborations, enhancing cultural exchange, improving institutional competitiveness, and addressing the growing demand for global skills. These objectives reflect the increasing interconnectedness of the academic world and the need for higher education institutions to prepare students for a globalised workforce and society.

Issues such as the commodification of education (Bamberger & Morris, 2023), the potential for exacerbating global inequalities, and the risks of diluting local educational values are central to the discussion. It is important to explore how internationalisation, while offering opportunities for growth and innovation, can also present ethical, economic, and cultural challenges (Guimarães et al., 2019) for institutions worldwide. By examining both the aspirations and challenges of internationalising higher education, this chapter invites readers to engage with the complexities of this process critically. It serves as a foundation for the book’s broader exploration of internationalisation strategies, practices, and impacts, offering a balanced perspective that prepares the audience for deeper analysis in the following chapters.

This chapter is intended as both an introduction and a critical reflection on the primary motivations driving the internationalisation agenda, as well as the challenges and concerns that arise in its implementation. Given the book’s thematic focus, this chapter is aimed at a diverse audience that includes policymakers, educators, scholars, institutional leaders, and other stakeholders involved in higher education. The chapter sets the tone for the book by providing readers with an understanding of the foundational concepts related to internationalisation, as well as a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted objectives that institutions pursue in their efforts to internationalise. These objectives may range from enhancing the global competitiveness of academic institutions to fostering cross-cultural exchange, promoting research collaboration, and addressing the increasing demand for global skills in a connected world. The mission of internationalisation often goes beyond simply attracting foreign students or setting up overseas campuses. It encompasses a broader vision of integrating global perspectives into curriculum design, pedagogy, and institutional governance.

The presence of significant concerns that accompany these missions are explored in this chapter. While the mission of internationalisation can promote academic growth and cross-cultural understanding, it is fraught with challenges such as the commodification of education, the exacerbation of inequalities, and the risk of diluting local educational values and priorities. By bringing these issues to the forefront, the chapter invites readers to engage critically with the internationalisation process, examining both its potential benefits and drawbacks. For example, the influx of international students may provide financial relief to institutions struggling with funding constraints, but it can also create an over-reliance on this income source, leaving institutions vulnerable to shifts in global mobility patterns. The asymmetry of resources between institutions in developed and developing countries can exacerbate differences in

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