


# Chapter 2

## Reimagining Internationalization: A Global Perspective Beyond the US and UK Models

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The internationalization of higher education has long been framed through the lens of Anglo-American dominance, with the United States and the United Kingdom frequently cast as archetypes of global academic excellence. This chapter challenges the hegemony of these models, arguing that their continued exportation reinforces narrow benchmarks of success, often ill-suited to the diverse realities of institutions worldwide. Drawing on examples from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, this work explores how localized approaches to internationalization are offering alternative pathways—ones rooted in reciprocity, cultural sensitivity, and mutual capacity-building. It examines the political, historical, and economic forces that shape global academic hierarchies and invites a deeper conversation around the ethics of cross-border engagement. Ultimately, this chapter reimagines internationalization not as a race toward uniform excellence but as a mosaic of approaches, each informed by its own context, aspirations, and sense of purpose.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

For decades, the concept of internationalization in higher education has been intimately tethered to the gravitational pull of Anglo-American academic norms

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(Wu, 2021). The United States and the United Kingdom—two nations that have historically served as magnets for international students, research collaborations, and institutional benchmarking—have also served, for better or worse, as the default templates for what it means to be “global” in the realm of academia. This dominance, both cultural and structural, has profoundly shaped how universities around the world think about and enact internationalization: from the metrics they prioritize, to the languages they operate in, to the way they design their partnerships, research agendas, and student mobility schemes. But as the global higher education landscape becomes more multipolar, the once unchallenged supremacy of these models is no longer sufficient—nor sustainable. The world has changed, and with it, so too must our understanding of what it means to be “international.” Emerging powers, particularly in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, are asserting their own visions of higher education, often grounded in vastly different political histories, developmental trajectories, linguistic ecosystems, and societal needs (De Wit & Merckx, 2023). In these contexts, replicating the US or UK model is not only unfeasible; it is often undesirable. The idea that internationalization must follow a singular blueprint—one centered on English-language proficiency, Western accreditation, and outbound student flows to elite institutions—is being questioned, and rightfully so (Grant, 2021). A narrow, one-size-fits-all approach fails to account for the contextual realities of non-Western institutions: funding limitations, geopolitical constraints, cultural priorities, and regional aspirations. It also risks perpetuating a form of academic neo-colonialism, wherein knowledge continues to flow disproportionately from North to South, and where institutional prestige is still too often determined by proximity to Anglo-American norms.

This chapter emerges from a desire to complicate that narrative. Rather than dismissing the achievements of US and UK institutions, it seeks to reposition them as one possible pathway among many, rather than the gold standard to be emulated. The goal here is not to reject internationalization outright, but to expand its meaning—to move beyond the metrics of global rankings and student flows and toward a more nuanced understanding of what global engagement can and should look like. It is an invitation to reimagine internationalization as a mosaic rather than a monolith (Dervin, 2025). Drawing on examples from underrepresented regions—where innovation often happens out of necessity, and where cultural resilience has produced models of collaboration built on trust, solidarity, and mutual benefit—this chapter highlights how new forms of internationalization are emerging organically. These are forms that prioritize regional integration, culturally relevant curricula, and equitable partnerships. They challenge the hierarchical structures of the current global academic order and open space for dialogue on shared futures, not inherited frameworks. In reframing internationalization from this global perspective, we must also ask difficult questions: Who benefits from internationalization as currently prac-

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