Internationalization in higher education: global trends and recommendations for its future

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Abstract

Internationalization as a concept and strategic agenda is a relatively new, broad, and varied phenomenon in tertiary education. During the past half-century, internationalization has evolved from a marginal activity to a key aspect of the reform agenda. This analysis addresses the following points: What are the historical developments of internationalization? What do we mean by internationalization? What are the key factors in international tertiary education that impact, and are impacted by, this phenomenon? What initiatives and policies are developed to enhance the internationalization of tertiary education? What are the key data, trends, and challenges that are crucial for the future of internationalization, abroad and at home, in a critical time of transformation as a result of nationalist-populist developments, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. Introduction

Internationalization as a concept and strategic agenda is a relatively new, broad, and varied phenomenon in tertiary education, driven by a dynamic combination of political, economic, sociocultural, and academic rationales and stakeholders. Its impact on regions, countries, and institutions varies according to their particular contexts.

During the past half-century, internationalization in tertiary education has evolved from being a marginal activity to becoming a key aspect of the reform agenda. In the last decade of the last century, the increasing globalization and regionalization of economies and societies, combined with the requirements of the knowledge economy and the end of the Cold War, created a context that enabled a more strategic approach to internationa lization in higher education.

This was the case, first and foremost, in Europe, with the programs of the European Union (E.U.) and the Bologna Process, but gradually elsewhere as well. The European Com mission, international organizations such as OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank, national governments, as well as higher education organizations such as the International Associ ation of Universities (IAU) and the European Universities Association (EUA), gradually placed internationalization at the top of the reform agenda. Internationalization came

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to be seen as a key change agent in tertiary education, in high-income countries but also among middle- and low-income societies.

Mobility, also known as 'internationalization abroad', is the most referred to activity in internationalization and takes in itself a great variety of forms. Curriculum and global pro fessional and citizenship development, also referred to as 'internationalization at home', is the other key component of internationalization. It receives increased attention, but still less than mobility.

Internationalization has evolved, and during that process, past priorities have been replaced, or surpassed in importance, by others. Economic rationales have become more dominant and thus a greater focus on mobility, but given the extreme challenges faced by global society – summarized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations – internationalization has also recently been called upon to help con tribute to meeting these societal challenges and goals, particularly through more attention to internationalization at home.

This analysis addresses the following points: What are the historical developments of internationalization? What do we mean by internationalization? What are the key factors in international tertiary education that impact, and are

impacted by, this phenom enon? What institutional, national, regional, and global initiatives and policies are devel oped to enhance the internationalization of tertiary education? What are the key data, trends, and challenges that are crucial for the future of internationalization in tertiary edu cation, abroad and at home, in a critical time of transformation as a result of nationalist populist developments, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the broader economic and structural realities of the twenty-first century?

2. Internationalization in historical perspective

One can argue that tertiary education, by its nature, has always been international. Kerr (1994) states that universities are essentially international, but at the same time acknowledges that 'they have been living, increasingly, in a world of nation states that have designs on them' (6). This tension between universal nature and embedded ness in the national and local contexts is a dominant feature of tertiary education. References to the global nature of universities ignore the fact that universities mostly originated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with clearly national orientations.

2.1. Medieval roots

Many publications on the internationalization of higher education refer back to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period, when, in addition to religious pilgrims, university stu dents and professors traveling the roads of Europe were a familiar sight (De Ridder Symoens 1992). While limited and scattered in comparison to the European Higher Edu cation Area we know today, we may still speak of a medieval 'European space' defined by a common religion, a shared language (Latin), and a common set of academic practices. The resemblance may only be superficial, but there are similarities with regard to the pro motion of mobility and the broadening of experience, common qualification structures, and the gradual emergence of English as a widely used academic language today.

2.2 National models

Most universities originated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with a distinct national orientation and function. In many cases, there was a process of de-Europeanization. Universities became institutions that served the professional needs and ideological demands of the new nation states in Europe. Mobility was rarely encouraged and was even prohibited.

In this national period of higher education, international projects were not completely absent. Three international aspects can be identified: the export of higher education systems; the dissemination of research; and the individual mobility of students and scholars.

2.3. The impact of two world wars

Political events in the first half of the twentieth century led to a focus on promoting peace and mutual understanding through international cooperation and exchange.

The 1919 creation of the Institute of International Education (IIE) in the United States (US), of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) in Germany in 1925, and of the British Council in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1934 are illustrations of this development. In the aftermath of World War I, international cooperation and exchange were strongly supported by rationales such as peace and mutual understanding, with the US taking a leading role, mainly as a result of the increased immigration of scholars from Europe. This trend continued with the Fulbright Program of 1946.

In addition to peace and mutual understanding, rationales of national security and foreign policy increasingly took over. This trend is observed in the case of the Soviet Union. The Cold War became the principal rationale to foster an international dimension of higher education. What started as incidental and individual activities evolved into orga nized international education programs, driven more by national governments than by universities. Most activities took place in the context of bilateral Cultural and Academic agreements and Development Cooperation.

2.4 Internationalization in Europe

While the two superpowers became active in international education for reasons of national security and foreign policy, the rest of Europe played at first only a marginal role in this sphere.

The European Community was strengthened as an economic and political power between 1950 and 1970, but it was not until the second half of the 1980s that programs for education and research emerged. The flagship ERASMUS program grew out of smaller initiatives that had been introduced in Germany and Sweden in the 1970s and a European pilot program in the early 1980s (De Wit 2002). In the 1990s, ERASMUS and similar pro grams were regrouped under the umbrella program SOCRATES, which has more recently evolved into ERASMUS+, an even broader program embracing education, sports, and youth initiatives. Program activities have always been based on cooperation through student and staff exchanges, joint curriculum development, and joint research projects, and the enthusiastic institutional response to these programs set a clear path for the Euro pean approach to internationalization.

ERASMUS has had a greater impact on the internationalization and reform of higher edu cation than the mere exchange of students and teachers. It piloted the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and initiated access to E.U. membership for countries in Central and Eastern Europe and other aspiring candidates. It paved the way for the Bologna Process and the realization of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (De Wit et al. 2015).

2.5 A global phenomenon

Among European countries, the UK has remained an exception. In 1980, the Thatcher gov ernment introduced full-cost fees for international students, which meant that the main focus of British universities (with respect to internationalization) became international student recruitment for income generation. Other

English-speaking countries, in particular Australia, followed, and the United States of America has remained the leading role in absolute numbers hosting international students.

Universities may consider themselves essentially international institutions, but they act within national regulatory frameworks. The shift, in English-speaking countries, toward a more commercial model is a clear example, while continental Europe kept a cooperative model of international education for the past quarter century. More recently, Canada, countries in continental Europe, and elsewhere have also moved toward a market approach to international student recruitment. At the same time, there is a move away from internationalization as a Western concept:

> 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 prac tice as more countries and types of institution around the world engage in the process. Inter nationalization should no longer be considered in terms of a westernized, largely Anglo Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking paradigm (Jones and de Wit 2014, 28).

In the Global South, according to Thondhlana et al. (2021), internationalization of higher education continues to gather momentum as evidenced by the increased awareness of the need not only to use a strategic approach to it but also to be guided by the use of contextual lenses, in particular decolonialization. In addition, they conclude, the trend towards enhancing regionalization and South-South cooperation, shows a shift from the 'copying and pasting' of the western paradigm and the strong propensity to 'vertical inter nationalization' described by Jones and de Wit (2014).

Internationalization must be considered in the broader context of the changing role and position of tertiary education in the world. A common misconception is to consider internationalization as a goal in itself instead of as a means to an end: enhancing the quality of education, research, and service to society. What are the key factors in inter national higher education that have enhanced the importance of internationalization pol icies and practices?

3. The impact of global trends in tertiary education on internationalization and mobility policies

Tertiary education has experienced a dramatic expansion in the past half-century. Massifi cation has changed the reality of postsecondary education everywhere. At the same time,

the global knowledge economy has turned higher education and research into a key player in the economic realm. The international dimension of universities is more impor tant than ever. Other aspects that influence internationalization are autonomy and aca demic freedom, reputation/rankings/excellence programs, and the changing economic and political climate.

3.1 Massification

During the past seven decades, the higher education landscape has changed

dramatically. Once the privilege of an elite, gross enrollment ratios (GER) in postsecondary education have soared to more than 50 percent in many countries – reaching 90 percent in a few. There are more than 260 million students globally in more than 20,000 universities, focus ing on every possible specialization. Massification is a key phenomenon in much of the world. Emerging economies, including China, India, and in Latin America (with GERs of 35–40 percent, 20–25 percent and 40–50 percent, respectively), are expanding their enroll ment rates toward 50 percent or more, as is common in high-income countries. Even in countries in Africa, still at the 'elite' phase with a GER of less than 15 percent, the demand for higher education is rapidly expanding as a result of improved primary and sec ondary education and an emerging middle-class. On the other hand, in countries that have already moved far beyond a 50 percent GER ('universal enrollment'), such as in Canada, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and the US, continental Europe, and Australia, for demo graphic and other reasons, the supply of tertiary places is starting to exceed demand, in particular in STEM fields (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley 2010).

3.2 The global knowledge economy

The global knowledge economy – the increasingly technology and science-based globalized set of economic relations that requires high levels of knowledge, skills, and sophisticated international relations – is the other development impacting tertiary education and interna tionalization this past half-century. Research-intensive universities play a particularly impor tant part in the global knowledge economy. Not only do they educate top talent but, in most countries, they are also the main producers of basic research. Research universities are among the more internationally linked institutions. They have strong links with similar insti tutions around the globe, host international faculty and students, and in increasing numbers function in the global language of science and scholarship – English. Excellence initiatives to develop world-class universities are being implemented in countries all over the world, including in China, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and South Korea. Competition for funding, talents, and access to top academic journals and to top positions in global rankings have become driving forces for internationalization and mobility. Increasing the numbers of international students and scholars and of coauthored international publications are driving rationales for national and institutional internationalization schemes.

3.3 Autonomy and Academic Freedom

The development of the university as we know it has a strong basis in the idea of auton omy, which is an essential condition for quality higher education, teaching, and research.

Lack of academic freedom will not only hinder quality, but also international cooperation and exchanges. The Magna Charta Observatory (www.magna-charta.org) is the guardian of the principles defined in the Magna Charta Universitatum, signed in Bologna in 1988 by 388 European universities and currently has over almost 900 signatures from univer sities from 89 countries around

the world. That document stresses the importance of aca demic freedom, institutional autonomy and self-management, and broadly the 'public good' values of universities.

3.4 Reputation, rankings, and excellence

More than ever, national, regional, and global university rankings are driving the agendas of institutional leaders and national governments. As mentioned above, many govern ments, in particular in the global North but increasingly also in the South, have created excellence programs and investment schemes to become more competitive globally, develop world-class universities, and move higher in the rankings. On the one hand, there is a call for increased access and equity, while at the same time, governments and institutions of higher education are striving to reach excellence in research and teaching and learning.

Excellence initiatives have brought about a differentiation within national systems, by separating an elite sector of world-class level universities from other, more nationally and regionally oriented, research universities. Rankings – national, regional, global, insti tutional, by discipline, and across an increasing number of other dimensions – have come to play a central role in the construction of excellence schemes. According to Mar ginson (2017), 'global ranking has remade global higher education as a relational environ ment' (Marginson 2017, 6–7). First, through competition, referring to higher education as a competitive market of universities and countries. Second, through hierarchy, as a core element of the system of valuation. And third, through performance, leading to 'an often frenetic culture of continuous improvement in each institution' (7).

There is a clear relationship between excellence initiatives, rankings, and internationa lization, reflecting the competitive nature of elite research universities scrambling for inter national students and scholars, and measured through quantitative indicators: numbers of international students, numbers of international staff, and numbers of international co authors of publications. Governments and institutions are driven to invest more in global research, to use English as the language of research and teaching, and to focus on international recruitment strategies.

3.5 The changing economic and political climate

The traditional emphasis in internationalization has been on exchanges and cooperation, to contribute to a better understanding of different cultures and their languages. Never theless, since the mid-1990s, a gradual but increasingly visible shift has been taking place toward more competition. Van der Wende (2001) calls this a shift in paradigm from cooperation to competition. Jones and de Wit (2014) speak of the globalization of internationalization, requiring tertiary education actors in mid- and low-income countries to make the choice between a more competitive direction of internationalization or a more socially responsible approach.

But a counter-reaction is emerging. The rise of nationalist–populist movements, bans on immigration, attacks on academic freedom, antiglobalist protests and, in Europe, anti-integration trends (Brexit), might all have negative implications for

internationaliza tion. It is too early to tell what the exact and direct consequences of these developments will be, but most likely they will change and/or accelerate patterns of mobility, autonomy and academic freedom, privatization and commercialization, as well as other key dimen sions of global tertiary education.

Similarly, through the interconnection of our societies and economies, natural disasters and health hazards increasingly have a global scope, impacting higher education and internationalization endeavors. The COVID-19 epidemic is a clear illustration, with signifi cant disruptions of academic life, moving teaching, at least temporarily, to a main distance format, and questioning of many of the traditional practices of higher education.

The refugee crisis is another such phenomenon. Over the past few years, much atten tion has been paid to the challenges faced by higher-income countries receiving refugees, as in the case of Syrian refugees in Germany. Yet the vast majority of refugees are hosted in lower-middle income countries. Ergin, de Wit, and Leask (2019) refer in that respect to 'forced internationalization of higher education'. According to UNCHR, only 3 percent of eligible refugees have equitable access to higher education (UNCHR 2019). Attention to access, support, and retention of refugees in higher education in middle- and lower middle income host countries is crucial.

4. Internationalization, an Evolving concept

The developments described above have all impacted the direction taken by internationa lization and mobility in tertiary education. The main focus is still on mobility, a result of unmet demand for higher education (degree mobility), mainly from lower-middle and middle income societies to the higher-income countries; the growth of short-term credit mobility of students, in particular in Europe as a result of the Erasmus program; an increase in short-term faculty mobility, primarily for research; and a gradual growth in franchise operations, branch campuses, and other forms of transnational education.

Here are summary characteristics of internationalization these past 30 years:

– Greater focus on internationalization abroad than on internationalization at home.
– More ad hoc, fragmented, and marginal than strategic, comprehensive, and central in the policies of universities and governments.
– Benefiting a small, elite subset of students, faculty, and institutions rather than aiming for global and intercultural outcomes for all.
– Directed by a constantly shifting range of political, economic, sociocultural, and edu cational rationales, with an increasing focus on economic motivations. – Increasingly driven by national, regional, and global rankings.
– Poor alignment between the international dimensions of the three core functions of higher education: education, research, and service to society.
– Primarily a strategic choice and focus of institutions of higher education, but increasingly also a priority of national governments (for reasons of soft power, reputation and/or revenue) and of regions (E.U., Bologna signatories, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), etc.)

– Increasing commercialization and involvement of for-profit companies in all

aspects of the international higher education agenda.

Although still present in the rhetoric of international education, traditional values such as cooperation, peace and mutual understanding, human capital development, and soli darity, have been moved to the sidelines as universities strive for competition, revenue, and reputation/branding.

While mobility remains the dominant component of internationalization policies world wide, increasing attention is being paid to the internationalization of the curriculum at home, the second of the two components of internationalization (Knight 2008). There is also a stronger call for 'comprehensive internationalization', (Hudzik 2011) which addresses all aspects of education in an integrated way, including quality assurance mech anisms, institutional policies related to student learning outcomes, and national and dis cipline-specific accreditation.

A reaction to the market-oriented approach of internationalization took place at the turn of the century. The movement for 'Internationalization at Home' within the European Union started in 1999, requesting that more attention be given to the 90 percent of stu dents who did not get to participate in the EU's flagship program Erasmus or other exchanges (De Wit et al. 2015). In Australia and the UK, similar movements brought atten tion to internationalizing the curriculum and teaching and learning, reacting against the increased focus on recruiting income-generating international students. And in the US, there was more attention on internationalizing the campus and developing more compre hensive approaches to internationalization as alternatives to undergraduate study abroad programs on the one hand (still marginal at many universities) and international student recruitment on the other.

These reactions were – and still are – important manifestations of concern about the competitive, elitist, and market-oriented direction taken by internationalization, and a call for more attention to the qualitative dimension of internationalization, including global citizenship development; employability; improvement of the quality of research, education, and service to society; and, when assessing results, a move from output to outcome and impact. Although economic rationales and rankings still drive the agenda, there is now more emphasis on political, academic, social, and cultural motivations for internationalizing. Examples include efforts to integrate an international dimension into quality assurance mechanisms, institutional policies related to student learning outcomes, and the work of national and discipline-specific accreditation agencies.

A 2015 study for the European Parliament on the state of internationalization in higher education reflects this new line of thinking. It promoted a new agenda for the future, with the following definition for internationalization:

> 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 contri bution to society. (De Wit et al. 2015, 29)

This definition gives a normative direction to the process by emphasizing that such a process does not happen automatically, but needs to be intentional; that it is not a goal in itself, but must contribute to quality improvement; that it should not be an advantage

reserved for a small elite of mobile students and scholars, but benefit all; and finally, that it should also benefit society.

Overall, institutions are still the main agents that drive internationalization. What are the main trends in institutional strategies?

5. Institutional strategies

According to the 5th Global Survey of Internationalization of Higher Education by the International Association of Universities (IAU), based on data from 2018, more than 90 percent of institutions mention internationalization in their mission/strategic plan, with the exception of North America, where only one-third do so (Marinoni 2019). 'Enhanced international cooperation and capacity building', and 'improved quality of teaching and learning', are mentioned as the most important benefits. 'International opportunities accessible only to students with financial resources', followed by 'difficulty to assess/recog nize the quality of courses/programs offered by foreign institutions', as well as 'excessive competition with other higher education institutions', are mentioned as the highest risks. The main obstacles mentioned include 'insufficient financial resources', 'administrative/ bureaucratic difficulties', and 'lack of foreign languages' (Marinoni 2019). Further, the survey states that two-thirds of university leaders around the world consider internationa lization to be an important agenda issue, although Marinoni and de Wit (2019) observe that there is an increasing divide between institutions that consider internationalization as highly important, and those that do not; they observe that

> The reasons for such a divide between HEIs … is worth a reflection and deserves to be studied more in depth, especially if one considers internationalization to be an essential part of all HEIs' mission and a sign of quality. (n.p.)

At the same time, one can observe a strong development of internationalization in sectors of tertiary education other than higher education, such as vocational education and train ing (VET) in Australia and community colleges in the US

Institutions developing internationalization strategies face significant challenges and pressures: revenue generation; competition for talents; branding and reputation; a need to focus on international research and publications; on recruiting international students and scholars; and on using English as a language for research and instruction. Pressures that come from outside, such as national funding policies. These challenges and pressures conflict with a more inclusive, less elitist approach, catering to the needs of local students and staff and creating opportunities for these groups. In other words, there is a tension between a short-term, neoliberal approach to internationalization, focusing primarily on mobility and research, and a long-term, comprehensive approach, focusing on global learning for all.

How do institutional policies relate to national policies and plans in their country?

6. National policies

For a long time, international academic activities were primarily the domain of national governments as part of their foreign policy, now mostly referred to as 'soft

'public diplomacy' or as Knight (2020) prefers 'knowledge diplomacy' Cultural and scien tific agreements between nations included references to the exchange of scholars and stu dents and the provision of scholarships, typically in small numbers. Capacity building programs intended for mid- and low-income countries included scholarships, faculty mobility to assist tertiary education, and support in terms of infrastructure. Institutions par ticipated in these activities but did not initiate them proactively. The scope and impact of these measures varied by country.

This changed after the end of the Cold War, when economic rationales became more dominant and institutions started taking a more proactive role. Over the past decade, however, international higher education has been increasingly recognized by govern ments as an important factor in national economic development, trade, and reputation. Considering the magnitude of current global student and staff mobility, the increased presence of branch campuses and international providers, and the booming competition for international talent, tertiary education institutions and national governments are both mobilizing to leverage and steer internationalization. National strategies and plans rep resent the most tangible and direct attempts by governments to play an active and deci sive role, but there are substantial differences in their approaches, rationales, and priorities.

A worldwide census of national policies carried out by Crăciun (2018) reveals that only 11 percent of countries worldwide have an official strategy for internationalization, most of them adopted in the past decade. These strategies have been developed predominantly by high-income countries – 75 percent by members of the OECD, and two-thirds by Euro pean countries, with programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 furthering the regional harmonization of higher education systems in that region (Ilieva et al. 2017).

This is not to say that other countries have not taken measures to promote internatio nalization. In fact, many have taken both direct measures (e.g. reevaluating visa policies to give preferential treatment to international students and scholars; establishing bilateral or multilateral agreements through memoranda of understanding; and promoting transna tional education through free-trade deals) and indirect measures (e.g. supporting interna tionalization in political discourses and giving universities autonomy to pursue internationalization activities).

However, it would be a misconception to assume that national plans and policies have common rationales and approaches to internationalization. Differences exist between and among higher-income, lower-income, and middle-income countries with respect to pol icies and practices. Also, there are differences in explicit and implicit policies and practices: some countries have well-documented plans, while others have no plans but well-defined activities (De Wit et al. 2019).

National policies cover a wide range and diversity of activities:

– Several countries focus on internationalization as an export commodity. – Some focus on study abroad and scholarship schemes for their own students, while others focus on incoming international students, and again others do both. – Some stimulate internationalization with the aim of having a leading role in the global tertiary education arena.
– Some attempt to develop a more comprehensive approach to support the

internationa lization of their own higher education system, including both mobility and internatio nalization at home.

– Increasingly one sees an emphasis on strengthening regional scope. – Several countries have specific programs to promote bilateral relations with international partners in tertiary education for their institutions. Soft power is an important element in these plans.
– There are initiatives to sustain human capital development in emerging countries. – Foreign language education promoted in some contexts.
– International and intercultural competency also are underscored in a limited
    number of settings.
– In several cases, there is an attempt to align the internationalization of K–12 and tertiary education and/or with that of other sectors of postsecondary education. – Transnational education initiatives may be supported by national policies. – A few countries explicitly address the issue of the access of refugees to tertiary education.
– And finally, several countries have set up support mechanisms to help their
    institutions internationalize.

These examples only cover a small proportion of actions by ministries of education and foreign affairs, as well as agencies such as the British Council and the DAAD. In several cases, initiatives are taken at the regional level (E.U., ASEAN) or in cooperation with inter national organizations such as OECD, UNESCO, or the World Bank. They tend to be in general minor projects and rather fragmented. Only a few countries (Germany is a positive example) and regions (the E.U. is a clear example) have a more comprehensive approach and practice with regard to internationalization. China and South East Asia (ASEAN) are other examples of national and regional policies with a more strategic approach.

7. Internationalization abroad

7.1 Student mobility

The massification of tertiary education and the increasing importance of higher education and research for the global knowledge economy have resulted in a growing focus on inter nationalization. There are now close to five million students studying abroad (OECD 2019), twice the number 10 years ago, and predictions are a further increase to at least 8 million in the next decade, although that optimistic estimate does not take into account the poss ible implications of Covid-19. Competition for international students is intensifying and has become a more global and competitive industry. The classic divide between sending countries (mainly middle and low-income countries) and receiving countries (mainly developed, English-speaking countries, plus France and Germany) is shifting, and the current political climate may accelerate that process in the coming years.

The mobility of students is not as uniform as might be thought at first sight. There are several forms:

– degree mobility: students pursuing a full degree, or degrees, abroad (bachelor,
    master, Ph.D.).

– credit mobility: students abroad for a short period – up to one academic year, and trans ferring credits back to their home degree.

– certificate mobility: shorter stays abroad to improve certain skills, mostly language com petency, without going for a degree or for credits.

Data collected by UNESCO and OECD as well as by national and regional entities does not always distinguish between these three categories. Regional factors also play a role. Most of degree mobility still takes place from lower- and middle-income countries to higher income countries, although recently some middle-income countries have become host countries. Credit mobility happens mostly between higher-income countries, and is par ticularly strong in the US (study abroad programs) and in Europe (Erasmus+). The length of credit mobility varies from six weeks to one year in the US, and from two months to one year in Europe. Certificate mobility is a global phenomenon and varies in length; numbers are high but there is no clear data. Another complicating factor is how to account for dual and joint degree students and for students in branch campuses, franchise and articulation programs, and online programs.

In general terms, these are the major trends in student mobility. Over the past 50 years, the number of internationally mobile students has doubled every other decade. UNESCO has identified three waves of growth: a 30 percent growth between 1975 and 1980; a 34 percent growth between 1989 and 1994; and a 41 percent growth between 1999 and 2004 (UNESCO 2006, 34). In the period since, that growth has remained steady. In absolute numbers, the growth from 1963 to 1973 was from 290,615–593,320. In the period between 1975 and 2005, numbers doubled each decade, to 2.5 million in 2005. In 2018, numbers had doubled again to over 5 million. The increase in the numbers of mobile stu dents is in line with the overall increase in numbers of students worldwide.

The main receiving countries have changed less than the main sending countries. In absolute numbers, the US has represented the leading host country over the period 1965–2020, with 100,000 international students in 1965 and up to 1 million in 2018. France, Germany, and the UK come next, in slightly shifting order, while as of 2000 Austra lia has come close to the leading four (OECD 2019).

The top sending countries have seen more fluctuation. While, in 1965, numbers were small and mobility was still largely North–North, in the following 20 years, the dominant flow became South–North, with China becoming the lead sending country in 1985, fol lowed by a large variety of countries (with South Korea becoming second in 1995 and India in 2005). Since then, China, India, and South Korea have remained lead sending countries, though in 2020 we are witnessing a strong increase for the first two and a strong decline for South Korea.

One has to keep in mind, though, that absolute numbers do not give a completely repre sentative picture, as one has to relate these numbers to the total number of students in both sending and receiving countries. The percentage of international students as part of the total number of students is for instance much higher in the UK and Australia (approximately 20 percent) than in the US (approximately 4 percent). And although the absolute number of international students in the US has increased, that country's global market share dropped from 23 percent in 2005–17 percent in 2010 (Choudaha and de Wit 2014).

The relatively stable mobility from top sending to top receiving countries over the last 20 years has recently been undergoing changes. Top sending countries like China, South Korea, and Malaysia are also becoming more important receiving countries, with others, like India and Russia, following in their footsteps. China is already close to its target of receiving

500,000 international students and has entered the list of top five receiving countries, while remaining number one in sending students abroad. Canada is also close to the top thanks to its open immigration policy, lower costs, and a more welcoming environment than in neigh boring US. The attractiveness of countries like China, Malaysia, and India comes from low costs, increasing quality of education, active promotion, and welcoming environments. Neighboring countries with a demand for tertiary education, as well as Africa, are the main target countries for recruitment, as the global North is less accessible and welcoming (For a detailed overview of international student mobility, see OECD 2019).

The growth in international student mobility will continue at a rapid pace. But the land scape is becoming more competitive and more global. At the same time, the international student industry, driven by revenue generation and soft power, is increasingly risky, especially given the strong dependence on a small number of sending countries. Political tensions and policies (Brexit for instance), natural disasters, and health crises (like the cor onavirus pandemic) can have a significant impact on national and local economies, as well as on institutions.

An important shift in rationales for student mobility among national/ local governments and institutions, is the gradual move away from considering it exclusively as a source of revenue, toward focusing on the human capital aspect. This reflects in an effort to increase the stay rate of international students. Although there is a trend toward restricting low skilled immigration, governments tend to stimulate skilled immigration in response to aging populations and in order to build up skills for the knowledge economy. Measures include poststudy 'job-search' schemes that allow international students to stay in the country after graduation for the purposes of job seeking; streamlining procedures for obtaining student visa and highly skilled work permits; amended naturalization and per manent residency laws that take into account the number of years of residence as an inter national student; easing up work restrictions during study abroad and poststudy periods; new visa categories specifically designed to attract and retain international students; and privileges for international graduates when accessing certain visa schemes (Sykes 2012, 9). Canada and the UK are clear examples of such policies.

7.2 Academic staff mobility

There is, globally, a keen competition for academic staff. The presence of international faculty at higher education institutions and systems around the world is an important dimension of higher education in the global knowledge economy. Yet the scope and nature of international mobility of faculty is a rather understudied phenomenon. There is a lack of consensus with respect to what defines an 'international' academic, and the institutions recruiting them have different profiles: on the one side of the spectrum, elite research universities headhunt the most sought-after academics; on the other side, institutions or systems facing local

shortages of faculty recruit regionally and internation ally to meet their basic operational needs (Yudkevich, Altbach, and Rumbley 2016).

7.3 Program mobility

We now shift our focus away from the mobility of students and faculty to that programs and institutions, also called Transnational Education (TNE) or Cross-Border Delivery of

Education. Program mobility takes different forms, the best known being international branch campuses (IBCs), and includes education cities and knowledge hubs, franchise operations, articulation and twinning programs, and joint and dual degree programs. Except for IBCs, program mobility is difficult to quantify. Upon successful completion of a study program at an IBC, students are usually awarded a degree from the foreign mother institution. IBCs are distinct from 'franchised' academic programs, where a univer sity, usually in a high-income country, allows a university elsewhere to offer its degree or qualification.

In 2017, according to C-Bert (Cross-Border Education Research Team 2020) there were 263 IBCs in 77 countries, more than twice the number of two decades earlier. China has overtaken the United Arab Emirates and become the number one host country of IBCs. The US, Australia, and the UK are the largest 'home' countries sponsoring IBCs, with Russia and France as additional key players. Perhaps 225,000 students study at IBCs world wide – compared to more than 5 million globally mobile students and 200 million students worldwide.

The motivations for establishing and maintaining IBCs are complex and vary for home and host. For hosts – and these may be governments, private enterprises, academic insti tutions, or perhaps others – branch campuses can bring the prestige of a foreign partner university, provide student access where there is a shortage of places, keep students at home who might otherwise go overseas for study, bring new ideas about curriculum, governance, teaching, or other innovations, and, especially in the case of private enter prises, earn money. Home universities also have a range of goals. In some cases, they see their branches as a means of recruiting students to the home campus and building their brand. Many are focused on earning income. Some countries see their IBCs as part of 'soft power' initiatives – although few provide significant funding to assist them. In some cases, for example branch campuses of Indian universities in Dubai and the Carib bean, branches are intended to serve expatriate communities. Xiamen University's branch campus in Malaysia, funded mainly by the local Chinese community to serve Malaysian Chinese students, is another model (Altbach and de Wit 2020).

As mentioned, little is known about the other forms of program mobility. A greater understanding of these activities and their academic, economic, and ethical aspects is important. Internationalization at Home.

There is growing demand for, and recognition of, 'internationalization at home', includ ing internationalization of the curriculum, teaching and learning, and learning outcomes, as well as global citizenship development. Only a very small percentage of scholars and students have the opportunity, or even the desire, to go abroad for a full degree or even short term, ranging from 1–5 percent in most countries in the world, 10 percent in the US, to 20–30 percent in countries like Germany and the

Netherlands. To equip all stu dents for the global knowledge society we live in, tertiary education needs to internatio nalize at home.

7.4 Online mobility

The use of technology is impacting internationalization and mobility in a variety of ways. Like 'internationalization', 'digitalization' is a generic term, covering a broad variety of activities, models, and approaches. Online distance education is one common form, an

extension and digitalization of open university models. Distance education can have an international component in that it provides access to such programs without the costs of physical mobility. There is no reliable data about the participation of international stu dents in distance education programs, but the impression is that it is surprisingly limited. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are another form, in which courses are offered online, free of charge, and open for everyone, but without credit. Over the past decade, the number of MOOCS has increased as well as the number of international users and pro viders, but the retention rate is in general low. Although potentially international in their market, outreach, and participation, distance education programs and MOOCS are in general not considered as a part of internationalization. Other forms, such as blended and hybrid teaching and learning, in which students can take part of their course load with international partners, are becoming more important as part of internationalization. Terms such as 'virtual mobility' or 'virtual exchanges' are used, but increasingly more common is the concept of 'collaborative online international learning' (COIL), developed by the State University of New York system, now quite broadly used around the world. COIL (www.coil.suny.edu) is an interactive model of teaching and learning, in which joint courses taught online by teachers from partner institutions, with active involvement of their students. COIL allows institutions to develop international and intercultural learn ing outcomes for their students without the limitations of physical mobility and related costs, and therefore is a relatively inexpensive, less elitist, and cost-effective form of mobi lity. It brings mobility home and is now recognized by institutions, national governments, and regional entities, for instance the European Commission, as a valuable alternative to traditional models of mobility.

8. Internationalization at home

At the turn of the century, there emerged a need for higher education institutions to respond to a compelling call for globally competent citizens and professionals. This imperative requires paying attention to the considerable group of nonmobile students and faculty. The concepts of 'internationalization at home' (IaH) and 'internationalization of the curriculum' (IoC) have come to the fore. The first one is defined as:

> Internationalization at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments. (Beelen and Jones 2015, 76)

And the second one as:

> Internationalization of the curriculum is the process of incorporating international, intercul tural and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning out comes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study. (Leask 2015, 9)

Increasingly, these two concepts are considered to be similar in content and focus. Over the past decade, the relationship between internationalization at home and inter nationalization abroad, and the need to create a more central, integrated, and systemic approach to internationalization in order to eliminate fragmentation and marginalization, has spurred an interest in 'comprehensive internationalization', defined as follows:

> A commitment and action to infuse international, global and comparative content and per spective throughout the teaching, research and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It not only impacts all of campus life, but the institution's external frameworks of reference, part nerships and relationships. (Hudzik 2011, 6)

Although less dominant in national policies and strategies than internationalization abroad, internationalization at home has become a key strategic component of policies and practices.

9. Internationalization of research

The internationalization of graduate education and research, including international co authorship and other international research benchmarks, is receiving far less attention than the internationalization of education, other than through the rankings. Research, however, is a more complex enterprise and involves more international collaboration and competition than ever. Top academic talent is a scarce commodity and processes around patents, knowledge transfer, and intellectual property rights require more support than in the past. Long-term planning for research infrastructure, increased research capacity, the development of new research platforms, and a better coordination between research units all require a more strategic focus on capacity development and international research policies and systems. The growth in international research funding, patents, publications, and citations requires strengthening research teams of a global nature. Bibliometric analysis yields evidence of increasing scientific collaboration with the international community. Talented doctoral students and scholars are the inter national human capital on which research and development and innovation build. The dominance of English as the lingua franca in research is pervasive (Montgomery 2013). All of this – together with increased attention to international rankings and the role these give to research – explains why, in recent years, there is a greater focus on develop ing national and institutional strategies for the internationalization of research (Wolde giyorgis, Proctor, and de Wit 2018).

A growing area of concern is the issue of export controls: protection against the illegal export of knowledge and expertise. More than in the past, national governments pay attention to economic and political factors, risk management, and ethical concerns of international transactions and exchanges undertaken at and by universities. Addressing potential export control risks may be in conflict with

international scientific collaborations, particularly within crucial areas such as health, security, energy, climate, and the environ ment. Export control considerations may increasingly impact on the mobility of students, scholars, and programs.

Finally, research protection regulations are established at the national and regional levels to provide ethical oversight of research involving human subjects. Protocols may not be harmonized, creating additional barriers for international research collaborations.

Taking into account these concerns, internationalization of research has proven to be essential, as illustrated in the current COVID-19 pandemic, and some first indications suggest that research collaboration has not stopped but increased, even between the United States of America and China, although with less involvement of scholars from developing countries (Baker 2020, august 3).

10. Challenges and opportunities for the future

Internationalization in higher education is entering a new phase. A shift from internatio nalization abroad with its strong focus on a small elite of mobile students, faculty, admin istrators, and programs toward internationalization at home for all members of the academic community has become more urgent than ever. Making internationalization more carbon-neutral (De Wit and Altbach 2020), increasing the contribution of internatio nalization to society (Brandenburg et al. 2020) and linking the global to the local, are imperative.

Curbing short-term mobility of less than eight weeks, making it an obligation for pro grams like Erasmus+ to be carbon-neutral, limiting administrative travel, supporting more actively virtual exchanges and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), and addressing the needs of immigrant and refugee populations, are some of the key tasks of internationalization in the next decade.

Internationalization is a process in constant evolution, which changes in response to local, national, regional, and global environments. Current global trends appear to be more radical than in the past and require stronger attention and international cooperation than ever; nationalist-populist movements, the need for climate change, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are particularly vital.

We recommend the following actions to prepare internationalization for the next phase, recommendations that build on positions taken by organizations such as the Nelson Mandela Bay Global dialogue Declaration on the future of internationalization higher education (IEASA 2014):

– Stimulate global learning for all, by paying more attention to the internationalization of the curriculum, COIL, internationalizing teacher education, and foreign language education.
– Integrate internationalization initiatives with efforts to reach the Sustainable Develop ment Goals (SDGs).
– Develop a more Inclusive and social internationalization that addresses ethical concerns, instead of being exclusively focused on revenue, soft power, and excellence.
– Stimulate foreign language, intercultural competence and global citizenship education. – Integrate global, regional, national, and local dimensions.

– Integrated internationalization into the curriculum, make use of new technological opportunities, and stimulate carbon-neutral forms of mobility.

– Diversify the international student body to achieve a more international classroom environment and avoid economic risks.

– Stimulate and facilitate the participation of disadvantaged groups in mobility, such as indigenous and other ethnic groups, refugees, and immigrants.

– Strengthen the relationship between internationalization of K–12 and tertiary education. – Strive for a more comprehensive approach, integrating the different dimensions of internationalization.

– Reduce the over commercialization of internationalization and better regulate and control for-profit companies and institutions that have come to prominence.

The current crises in the world and in higher education (COVID-19, racism, climate change, recession and geopolitical tensions) will on the one hand make it more difficult to prioritize these recommendations, but can also be seen as opportunities or even necessities for the future of higher education and its internationalization.

Disclosure statement

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