

Getting internationalization back on track

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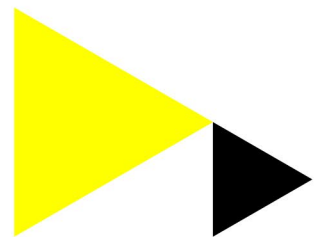
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of “internationalization”¹ pushes us to consider the term beyond the institutional level, noting that internationalization has become a national as well as institutional process, connected to the very purpose, functions and delivery of higher education. We fully agree and want to go a step further.

More specifically, we want to pose the following questions: What would it mean to conceive internationalization as a global, as well as an institutional, process? What might happen if institutions understood their actions as functioning within an emerging global system of higher education? How might this change institutional strategies and goals? Might it be time to re-conceive “comprehensive internationalization” as requiring a more internationalized form of internationalization, one that positions global engagement, collaboration, goals, and responsibilities at its core?

We believe these are questions worth considering. Those who lead international efforts on U.S. campuses find themselves all too often mired in narrow conversations about institutional gain, measured simply through one-sided counts of students, dollars, and rankings. These are important issues to be certain, but there are other issues that institutions should be considering. Prime among these others might be the extent to which the teaching, research and service functions of an institution have been enhanced through transformative collaboration with international partners. This kind of institutional gain reflects a belief that the true value of internationalization is its ability to transform student learning, knowledge generation, and community engagement by synergizing different

perspectives.

This in turn leads to a view of internationalization aimed not only

at transforming individual institutions, but also at building global networks of learning and reflection. In this view, internationalization is as much a process of outward connection as inward infusion, with its goals shaped by the emerging global system of higher education in ways that share resources, increase knowledge, expand access, and turn our collective wisdom toward pressing concerns.

Carrying this line of thought one step further, such an expanded view of internationalization also calls for attention to the impact of institutional actions beyond the institution. Eva Egron-Polak and the IAU have led the way in recognizing the downside of internationalization as presently conceived, from brain drain to a widening gulf between elite institutions and others. An internationalized kind of internationalization asks colleges and universities to consider whether or not their actions are shaping the kind of global educational system that will advance and transform higher education as a whole.

Ultimately, an internationalized internationalization would be a matter of institutions engaging as global citizens through partnership and authentic dialogue, measuring success in terms of mutual benefit and global action. From this global perspective, internationalization becomes a process of increasing synergies among scholars, deepening student and institutional engagement in the world, and creating ever larger networks of discovery, transforming the very nature of higher education itself.

Internationalization is as much a process of outward connection as inward infusion.

1. “... the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels” (Knight, 2008, p. 21).



GETTING INTERNATIONALIZATION BACK ON TRACK

by **Uwe Brandenburg**, project manager and partner at the Centre for Higher Education Development Consult, Germany (uwe.brandenburg@che-consult.de) and **Hans de Wit**, professor of internationalization, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands, and director of the Centre for Higher Education Internationalization at the Università Cattolica Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy (j.w.m.de.wit@hva.nl)



Everybody talks about “internationalization” and we see it everywhere on the agenda. The global competition for talents, the emergence

of international branch campuses, the debate on use of agents for recruitment of students, the internationalization of the curriculum, all this is widely debated on all levels and around the world. We see not only European, Northern

American and Pacific universities embrace the international agenda, but also emerging economies in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East have become pro-active in stimulating the internationalization of their education. The boundaries between resource and target countries of internationalization have started to become blurred. The positive conclusion one could draw from this picture is that internationalization is on the rise in higher education. But there are also concerns.

In our essay with the deliberately provocative title “The End of Internationalization,” (*International Higher Education*, CIHE Boston College, number 62, winter 2011), we stated that there appears to be a trend to move from substance to form, and that whose popularity might lead to a devaluation of the notion of what internationalization means and implies. Looking at recently published articles, one could get the impression that internationalization has an identity or mid-life crisis, as Jane Knight wonders in IMHE Info (OECD/IMHE, August 2011).

If we proclaim the end of internationalization, why revive a corpse?

What in our view certainly does NOT help the discussion is to focus on re-labeling.

A recent phenomenon in the debate on the future of internationalization of higher education appears to be the inclination to put new broad labels on the term, such as mainstreaming, comprehensive, holistic, integrated and deep internationalization. The most common current label appears to be ‘*Comprehensive Internationalization*’, in particular thanks to the paper with that title of past NAFSA-president John Hudzik and with the subtitle ‘*From Concept to Action*’ (www.nafsa.org/cizn). We have little against action plans to enhance the notion of internationalization, but if one compares Hudzik’s ‘definition’ of comprehensive internationalization with the generally accepted definition by Jane Knight on internationalization of higher education: “*the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education*” which finds its foundation already in the early 1990s, one cannot see much difference. And that applies to other labels as well. One cannot conclude otherwise than that these labels are tautologies, using different words to say the same thing even if the repetition does not provide more clarity. (See also Hans de Wit, Issue 0194, 23 October 2011, www.universityworldnews.com)

We want to raise some considerations on what might and might not help us getting things back on track. To do so the main question is of course: why should we have to put it back on track? If we proclaim the end

of internationalization, why revive a corpse? It is the process and its different approaches which need, in our view, reorientation. This implies that the end is also the beginning of a new internationalization.

We advocate a re-orientation towards outcomes and impacts and away from a purely input and output approach. Instead of bragging about the number of students going abroad and hosting of international fee paying students, the number of courses in English and the abstract claim of making students global citizens, we want to focus on learning outcomes. How can we make sure that students receive the right learning outcomes that make them ready for a world that is more and more intercultural and internationally connected? What does that mean for faculty development? What are the implications for the assessment of students? How can instruments such as study abroad, international classrooms, teaching in another language, recruitment of international students and cross-border delivery, contribute to that process? In other words: how can we make sure that all students and not only the small elite of already internationally oriented students and faculty receive the basic intercultural and international skills and knowledge they need in current society? Is it possible to look at new ways of internationalization such as virtual exchange? Can we learn from experiences with internationalizing secondary education and build on them? Or are we sticking to the classic concepts of cross-border mobility? In recent years we have seen good practices of new approaches to internationalization; we should embrace them and incorporate them.

Without denying the importance and good work of international offices, internationalization has to move out of these offices and become part of curriculum development, quality assurance, faculty development. In our perception the issue is not the commonly claimed divides between competition and cooperation, between at home and abroad, or between the institution and the student that have to drive the process. Instead, it should be the focus on outcomes and thus on the question why and how internationalization can contribute to the improvement of quality of education.



RE-ENVISIONING INTERNATIONALIZATION: INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FOR WHAT?

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It is estimated that 1.7 billion people in the world live in absolute poverty.

Close to 40 percent of the world’s population lives without access to improved sanitation, with the vast majority in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. And when it comes to education, only 10 percent of the world has access to a