

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND EUROPE

A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis

Hans de Wit

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To my parents

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Series Foreword

Greenwood Studies in Higher Education publishes current research and analysis on higher and postsecondary education. Higher education in the twenty-first century is a multifaceted phenomenon, combining a variety of institutions and systems, an increasing diversity of students, and a range of purposes and functions. The challenges of expansion, technology, accountability, and research, among others, require careful analysis. This series combines research-based monographs, analysis, and reference books related to all aspects of higher education. It is concerned with policy and practice in a global perspective. Greenwood Studies in Higher Education is dedicated to illuminating the reality of higher and postsecondary education in contemporary society.

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Philip G. Altbach

Acknowledgments

This study provides a critical *tour d'horizon* of the internationalization of higher education. It is based on my twenty years of experience with, and study of, the internationalization of higher education as an institutional director and vice president for international affairs, a national and international administrator in a great variety of organizations, and as consultant, researcher, and editor. My previous publications on the subject are reflected in its content, along with the results of a careful study of the existing literature and the knowledge I have gained through my active involvement in developing and assessing strategies for internationalization in the Dutch, European, and international contexts. Although I am solely responsible for the analysis presented and the opinions expressed, I am deeply indebted to the many organizations and colleagues, both administrators and researchers, with whom I have debated and interacted on the internationalization of higher education over the past two decades.

First and foremost I am indebted to the Universiteit van Amsterdam. The people with whom I have worked have always stimulated me to combine my work for the university with an active involvement in the international arena of higher education. The late JanKarel Gevers, president, and Ruud Bleijerveld, the secretary general of the university, in particular demonstrated their support and interest in my work, generously providing me with time and space for my

involvement in the foundation of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), my activities in other organizations, my role as editor of the *Journal of Studies in International Education*, and my research.

I wish to thank my many friends and colleagues in international education for their inspiration over the years. Without excluding others, the International Management of Higher Education (IMHE) program of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Association for International Education (EAIE), and the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) have played important roles in the realization of my work. It is impossible to name all those individuals who have in one way or another contributed to the completion of this work, but I extend to them all my grateful thanks. I also would like to thank my friends and colleagues at Boston College, in particular Seymour and Paula Leventman and Marian St. Onge, who helped me lay the foundation for this study during my visiting lectureship in 1995.

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In particular, I am grateful to my dear friend and colleague Jane Knight of the University of Toronto (previously of Ryerson Polytechnic University) for the inspiring walks and talks on the internationalization of higher education, which we have had over the past five years. Our cooperation on projects, publications, seminars, and workshops in different parts of the world, and the time this has provided us for long discussions, has been an inspiring force in my work on this publication.

For the past twenty years I have divided my love for, and life in, international education with that for Ingrid, Jacob, and Katja. Ironically, the eight months that I was a visiting lecturer at Boston College in 1995—the start of my workplan—and the eight months dedicated in the year 2000 primarily to the writing of this publication were a small but pleasant compensation for the previous nineteen years of sharing me with the world of travel and work.

I dedicate this publication to my parents. I am glad that I am able to give something back to them for their continuous love and attention.

Introduction

Internationalization has become an important issue in the development of higher education. Sven Groennings (1987b) describes it as “one of the most powerful substantive developments in the history of American higher education” (p. 2). It is perceived “as one of the laws of motion propelling institutions of higher learning” (Kerr 1990, 5); as “one of the important features of contemporary universities” (Smith, Teichler, and van der Wende 1994, 1); as “a pressure no one who teaches can be unaware of” (Halliday 1999, 99); as “a major theme for the next decade” (Davies 1997, 83); and as “one of the most important trends of the last decade” (Teichler 1999, 6), if not of the past half century (Altbach 2000c, 2).

At the same time, the internationalization of higher education is still a phenomenon with a lot of question marks regarding its historical dimension; its meaning, concept, and strategic aspects; its relationship to developments in society and higher education in general, in particular the movement to globalization and regionalization; and regarding its status as an area of study and analysis.

The questions addressed in this book are the following:

- What has been the historical development of the internationalization of higher education, in particular in the United States of America and Europe, and how are the differences in development between these two regions to be explained?

- What are the rationales behind this internationalization of higher education, its meaning and approaches, and the different strategies and organizational models?
- How can we interpret some of its key manifestations at the turn of the century?

One of the fundamental problems we face when dealing with the internationalization of higher education is the diversity of related terms. Sometimes they are used to describe a concrete element within the broad field of internationalization, but terms are also used as *pars pro toto* and as a synonym for the overall term “internationalization.” Each term has a different accent and reflects a different approach, and is used by different authors in different ways. For a better understanding of the internationalization of higher education it is important to place that term in perspective to approaches and other terms used and to provide a working definition of its meaning, and this is the purpose of one of the chapters. These issues are mentioned here to warn the reader of this complexity. In this study three terms will mainly be used: “international dimension,” “international education,” and “internationalization of higher education,” each referring to a specific phase of development.

Peter Scott (1998) observes and at the same time questions that “in a rhetorical sense, internationalism has always been part of the life-world of the university” (p. 123). In this book it will be argued that the international dimension of higher education, prior to the twentieth century, was more incidental than organized. It will also be argued that this international dimension as an organized activity, referred to in general by the term “international education,” is a product of the twentieth century, at first mainly in the United States for reasons of foreign policy and national security. The third argument is that, around the end of the Cold War, this international dimension evolved into a strategic process, referred to as the “internationalization of higher education,” and became increasingly linked to the globalization and regionalization of our societies and the impact of this on higher education. In addition, it will be argued that with the further development of globalization the international dimension will evolve into an integrated element of higher education and move away from its present position as an isolated set of activities, strategies, or processes. This is manifested in a shift in emphasis from more traditional forms of international education to strategies that are more directly related to the core functions of the university, and in a shift in emphasis from political to economic rationales. Implications of these shifts are the increasing importance of quality assessment of internationalization strategies, the emergence of English as the common language in higher education, the increasing relevance of international networks and strategic alliances, and the gradual acceptance of the internationalization of higher education as an area of research.

Little research has been done on the historical roots of the present wave of internationalization of higher education. It is nonetheless important to relate the generally acknowledged focus on the internationalization of higher

education in today's world to the original roots of the university, and to place the present developments in historical perspective. Only in this way is it possible to identify the specific character of the internationalization of higher education as currently encountered.

In Part I, the historical development of the international dimension of higher education is analyzed. This historical dimension is mentioned in many documents and studies on internationalization, but if one takes a more careful look the references, with some exceptions, are rather limited. Most studies refer in general terms to the supposed international dimension of universities in medieval times, and before that in the Arab era. In Chapter 1, therefore, a historical context for the development of the internationalization of higher education is given, mainly using examples from Europe, but with reference to other parts of the world.¹ In Chapters 2 and 3 this historical development is elaborated further, with a detailed analysis of the European and American cases. In Chapter 4, a comparison is made between the development of the internationalization of higher education in the United States and Europe.

A historical analysis of the internationalization of higher education makes clear that at certain moments different answers have been given to the why (rationales), what (meanings and approaches), and how (strategies and organization models) of this phenomenon. In Part II a conceptual framework for the internationalization of higher education is presented as an update and extension of previous work (de Wit 1995b; Knight and de Wit 1997). Chapter 5 deals with the why, the rationales for internationalization, and relates these rationales to the different stakeholders in higher education. In Chapter 6, an overview is given of the debate on the meaning and definition of "international education" and "internationalization of higher education" (the what), a working definition is presented for it, and different approaches to internationalization are summarized. In Chapter 7, the focus is on institutional strategies for the internationalization of higher education, followed by an overview of organizational models.

The historical and conceptual analysis as presented in the first two parts of this book are the basis for the study of developments in the internationalization of higher education today. In Part III, five key issues that are relevant to the study of internationalization of higher education at the turn of the century are discussed. It is not the intention to present these as the only issues of importance, but as relevant examples to illustrate the impact of internationalization on higher education.²

In Chapter 8 the development of internationalization of higher education is placed in the context of globalization and regionalization in our societies. In Chapter 9 the link between quality assurance and internationalization is analyzed. In Chapter 10 special attention is paid to an issue that illustrates the growing link between the internationalization of higher education and globalization: the emergence of English as the new common language for higher education. In Chapter 11 a second illustration of this link is discussed: the development of regional and global academic networks and alliances.

In Chapter 12 the internationalization of higher education as an area of research is analyzed, following the argument of Ulrich Teichler (1996b) that “we might consider internationalization of higher education as the next theme, which gives rise to a new focus of both higher education policy and higher education research” (p. 435).

In the last chapter, Chapter 13, a summary and conclusions are provided. Although recently the number of studies on the internationalization of higher education has been growing, few provide a historical and comparative analysis of this phenomenon. In de Wit (1995b) and Knight and de Wit (1997) an attempt to present such a study has been made, stimulated by the program on Institutional Management of Higher Education (IMHE) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Other studies have followed on national or regional policies for internationalization, but an overall analysis is still lacking.³

While making ample reference to the internationalization of research, this study focuses on that other core function of higher education, teaching. This is true for most studies on the internationalization of higher education. The notion of higher education as being “international” by nature refers primarily to the research function. Although in recent years several studies have been published on universities and the knowledge economy, these studies refer more to research and globalization than to teaching and internationalization.⁴

This book presents a critical *tour d’horizon* of the internationalization of higher education: in its historical dimension, by comparing the United States of America and Europe, and as a conceptual framework. This analysis is based on the author’s twenty years of experience with and study of the internationalization of higher education as an institutional director and vice president for international affairs, a national and international administrator in a great variety of organizations, and a consultant, researcher, and editor. The study is also based on previous publications by the author, an ample study of the literature, and active involvement in developing and assessing strategies for internationalization in the Dutch, European, and international contexts. This book can be considered the first full-scale analysis of the literature on, debates on, and experience with the internationalization of higher education.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Altbach (1998), Kerr (1994b), Neave (1997), and Scott (1998).
2. For instance, the internationalization of the curriculum as analyzed by van der Wende (1996), Mestenhauser and Ellingboe (1998b), and others is another important issue not touched upon in detail in this study.
3. On national policies, see, for instance, on Australia, Back, Davis, and Olsen (1996); and on Canada, Knight (2000); on regional policies, see, on Europe, Kälvermark and van der Wende (1997).
4. See, for instance, Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1997) and Slaughter and Leslie (1997).

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