Inclusive Internationalization: An Initiative of the International Association of Universities

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Rationale and Goals

Internationalization has become the hallmark of quality in higher education. It is now central on the agendas of policy makers and institutional leaders. This mainstreaming has also brought about a wave of changes and new initiatives. Institutions and nations are placing more emphasis on internationalization and developing new strategies to initiate, support or enhance internationalization activities. In addition, researchers are investigating and analyzing global or regional trends and institutional responses and approaches; and new attention is being focused on measuring the outcomes and impact of internationalization. Finally, the global discussion of the internationalization of higher education has intensified in recent years, attracting new participants and leading to the exploration of a host of new issues.

These are all very positive and encouraging signs that internationalization has become more integrated into higher education's conception of quality, attractiveness and relevance and more central in teaching, research, and service. As it is no longer necessary to convince higher education stakeholders that internationalization can make a positive contribution to the quality and relevance of higher education, it is an appropriate moment to examine internationalization in a more critical light and to see if it lives up to its promise. As internationalization has matured beyond the being viewed as an unmitigated good and an end in itself, it is important to continuously analyze and question its short- and long-term impacts, undertake a more critical assessment of the directions it can take or changes that it may bring about and to do so from multiple perspectives of highly diverse and differentiated higher education sectors and institutions around the world.

This is especially true because as the range of activities carried out in the name of internationalization continues to multiply, it becomes more important to ensure that the impact of the various internationalization activities and strategies is positive for all concerned. To address these issues, the International Association of Universities (IAU) adopted and published a policy statement in 2012 entitled *Affirming Academic Values in Internationalization of Higher Education: A Call for Action.* http://www.iau-aiu.net/sites/all/files/Affirming_Academic_Values_in_Internationalization_of_Higher_Education.pdf.

This statement was developed by an international ad hoc group of experts identified and convened by the IAU. It had as its genesis the critical examination and questioning of some aspects of the internationalization process by scholars and researchers of this field. (See for example Knight, 2011; de Wit and Brandenburg, 2011; Brandenburg and de Wit, 2011).

The statement also stemmed from IAU's ongoing analysis of global and regional trends beginning in 2003 when the Association launched its first in a series of global surveys on internationalization of higher education. Subsequent surveys were conducted in 2005, 2010 and most recently in 2014. The results of these surveys have consistently raised warning flags that not all institutions or regions of the world have been benefiting equally from internationalization, and that it was not viewed equally positively by all.

The results of the IAU surveys pointed to the need to remain vigilant about internationalization processes underway, particularly in relation to issues such as: sharing the benefits of internationalization; respect for cultural diversity; equity of access to international opportunities (for students, institutions, nations); the brain drain; and the serious risk of commercialization of higher education as a result of the perceived strong financial interests at play in internationalization.

Inclusive Internationalization

The term 'inclusive internationalization' used by IAU and in this paper denotes a bundle of concepts that the Association wishes to promote in and through internationalization— concepts such as equity, cultural diversity, social responsiveness, and mutual benefits in internationalization. Some of the questions that should be considered under the umbrella of inclusive internationalization are:

- Which students are taking up international opportunities and which are not? Why?
- Which institutions are taking part in international projects and partnerships and which are not? What measures can be taken to broaden insitutional participation in international programs and activities?
- Which disciplines are taking active measures to infuse their curriculum with international and global perspectives and content? In which disciplines are researchers most frequently engaging in international collaboration?
- Which regions of the world are most/least considered by institutions in other regions as a focal point for internationalization strategies?
- To what extent are the benefits of internationalization unequal and how can this inequality be addressed?

IAU's Approach: Data, Discussion, Dissemination

Data: As noted above, IAU began by gathering data on the nature and magnitude of the issues related to the concept of inclusive internationalization. The findings of the *4th Global Survey* (Egron-Polak and Hudson, 2014) suggests that internationalization has both benefits and risks, and that these may be perceived differently in different regions. Consider the following findings:

- There are regional differences in the perceived benefits of internationalization: in Africa, the most important perceived benefit is strengthened research and knowledge production capacity, while in Europe and the Middle East it is the

improved quality of teaching and learning and in Asia and Pacific. In North America it is increased awareness of students (p.58). These differences have important implications for the development of partnerships. When the partners seek different benefits, the cooperating institutions or researchers must craft the collaboration carefully so that each partner can both achieve its own goals and help the other partner achieve theirs.

- There is wide agreement that the most important risk of internationalization to institutions is that international opportunities will be accessible only to students with financial resources. Respondents in all regions except Europe noted this as the most important risk. Although there is consensus on the nature of the problem, the scarcity of resources to address it, especially in developing countries, suggests that making opportunities accessible to a broader spectrum of students is a problem requiring attention, creativity, and additional resources (p. 62).
- The perceived risks of internationalization also vary by region. Asia & Pacific, Europe and North America see the commodification/commercialization of education as the most important societal risk of internationalization, while Africa and the Middle East see the unequal sharing of benefits of internationalization as the most significant risk. It is not surprising that these two regions, with fewer resources and perhaps less capacity to develop their own strategies perceive that they have less say in the development of internationalization on a global scale or less power to achieve their desired outcomes of internationalization in specific programs and partnerships (p. 65).
- The findings show that Africa and the Middle East fail to be identified by respondents in any other region as being among their top three geographic priorities, which again makes the call for a more inclusive internationalization relevant.

These findings suggest that the playing field is not perceived as equal for students or for institutions and that the inequality among institutions is more obvious to respondents in the regions with fewer resources and less capacity. Only when the relevant actors recognize the differences in goals for internationalization and the perceived benefits and risks, can they take action to move towards more inclusive internationalization.

Discussion: Research findings by themselves do not catalyze change. IAU, as a worldwide forum for discussion among its Members and beyond – including non-member institutions, policy-makers, and researchers – gathers data as a foundation for informed discussion and action. Thus, at the 2014 Going Global meeting IAU organized, in cooperation with the British Council, a workshop of approximately 25 persons from different countries and regions. The workshop was designed to push the discussion from the general idea of inclusive internationalization to a more operational set of questions that policy-makers and institutional leaders alike must address:

- How can institutions balance the desire to select partners based on prestige and the importance of collaborating with all types of HEIs in all parts of the world?
- What can be done to ensure that the internationalization strategy and activities bring benefits to all stakeholders within an institution, and to all partners in the endeavour?
- How can institutions infuse internationalization considerations into all aspects of institutional life and include all institutional stakeholders in decision-making about strategy and activities?
- What needs to be done to ensure that internationalization improves the quality of teaching, learning and research , while also helping to enhance international prestige and profile and increase revenue?
- In a world of dimished funding for higher education, how can institutions ensure that the internationalization strategy and activities are sufficiently resourced rather than primarily expecting that they bring revenue?
- What policies and programs are need to ensure that as broad a spectrum of students as possible has access to international opportunities, including study abroad?
- How can institutions ensure that all institutional stakeholders have the skills and motivation to participate in the institutional internationalization efforts?
- How can institutions ensure that faculty, researchers and students (local and international) in all disciplines are engaged in the process of internationalization of the curriculum?
- How can the global academic community benefit from using a common language without jeopardizing multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism?

The workshop was launched by a presentation by Prof. Nigel Harris, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, who offered his university and the region as a case study on internationalization, focusing on how to advance internationalization so that it is beneficial for all participants and conducted in an equitable manner. Using the specificity of this regional university, he pointed out that contrary to what might be expected, geographic proximity is no guarantee of the connectivity of internationalization. Prof. Harris pointed out that the universities within the Caribbean have few connections with each other, due to language differences, difference in mission, competition for students, scarce resources for travel or collaboration, and strong ties to the former colonial powers. Thus the issues raised in considering inclusive internationalization had a strong echo here as well.

Following this presentation, participants shared their perceptions of benefits, challenges, opportunities and risks of internationalization with a particular emphasis on inclusiveness and equity; though it was clear that their deliberations would need to be action-oriented and ready to be presented as recommendations later in the conference.

The discussion focused on identifying and debating strategies for putting inclusive internationalization into practice in specific dimensions of internationalization, starting with the **development of partnerships**. Participants queried whether the current trajectory of internationalization was exacerbating inequality among institutions, noting that some institutions were being left out. In the selection of partners, prestige considerations may have unfortunate consequences in terms of inclusiveness, but this reality cannot be denied or ignored. Perceptions matter and institutions must seek ways to address them head-on. In considering partnerships, institutions also need to seek ways to balance issues of self-interest (such as associating with more prestigious partners, or the benefits of a partnership to the institution) with the larger social good, such as contributions to solving global problems or advancing the interests of the partner institution.

Participants suggested a number of strategies that could be implemented to address these issues in a positive way:

- **Consider global engagement as integral to accountability.** In today's environment, institutions are acutely aware of the need to be accountable to their varied stakeholders, including students, parents, the public, and regulatory bodies. If global engagement is to be an integral part of an institution's mission and central to the definition of quality, it follows logically that institutions should be accountable for this aspect of their work.
- **Recognize and articulate the benefits of having diverse partners.** The advantage of having different types of partners is that they bring different perspectives and benefits. Engaging with different types of institutions, with different strengths, in different parts of the world provides opportunities for an institution to broaden the horizons of its faculty and staff and to add value to different aspects of the university.
- **Be realistic in seeking partners and in assessing the match.** Although there is a pull to use partnerships to enhance institutional prestige by association, institutions should be realistic about what their peer group is and which institutions are likely to be good matches. A good match is an institution that will work towards mutual benefit and has both something to gain as well as to offer.
- **Define benefits broadly and potentially in different ways for each partner.** Because institutions have different missions, strengths, and goals, it is likely that they will have different objectives for a partnership. Recognizing this should enable both partners to articulate their needs and expectations and create a space for each to craft an agreement that will allow each to achieve its goals. If the goals are simply too different or cannot be envisioned as complementary, it is likely that a fruitful basis for the partnership is lacking.
- **Be proactive in overcoming negative perceptions and/or overcoming the disadvantages of being unknown**. Most institutions do not have an international

reputation, but this should not be an insuperable obstacle to engaging in internationalization. In seeking partners, institutions need to explain themselves, present their strengths without exaggerating, and make the case why they would be good partners. In a world of competition and marketing, such institutional marketing is well within the realm of good practice.

E**nsuring shared benefits of internationalization** was the next topic addressed. Participants agreed that the transactional nature of partnerships is real, but that does not mean that there must inevitably be winners and losers. They reiterated the concern that the current trajectory of internationalization may indeed exacerbate inequality not only among institutions, but also among individuals and countries. The suggested strategies to minimize these impacts included:

- **Establish institutional *bona fides* at home.** A solid institutional reputation begins at home. To attract partners, international students and faculty, or to participate in joint projects and degrees, institutions must ensure their own quality and thus establish their *bona fides* in the national context. When their points of excellence are clear to their national colleagues, it will be easier to make them visible internationally.
- **Be clear about what you have to offer in a collaboration.** A successful collaboration offers some benefit to each partner. Prospective partners will want to know what the other institution has to offer, so it is important that each institution be clear about its strengths and what it can bring to the partnership.
- **Be clear about what you seek from the collaboration and respect the other's agenda.** International collaboration is not an end in itself. Institutions are often fuzzy about what they would like to gain from the partnership. Without having clear goals, an institution is likely to be dissatisfied with the partnership or the relationship can end up being one-sided in terms of benefits. Both partners should be clear about what they want from the partnership and seek to accommodate the goals of the other.
- **Funders' "rules of the game" should help build equal partnerships.** Too often, funding agencies advantage the richer and stronger partners by making the funds available to them, making them accountable for the funds and/or structuring the funding so that the applicants from the richer countries scramble at the last minute to include a partner from a developing nation. These practices deprive the partners from the developing nations of an equal voice in the partnership. Practices of external funders should ensure that all institutions are at the table in designing the collaboration and articulating their desired outcomes. A signature of the application by all parties is not sufficient.

Finally, the group considered ways of **promoting ownership and involvement in internationalization by the stakeholders**. Internationalization cannot be owned by a few, or simply be the province of the international office. Because institutions differ in their cultures, starting points for internationalization, and their national context, they will undoubtedly require different approaches to stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, participants noted, internationalization is a cultural change, taking place over the long term, and requiring sustained attention and leadership. Stakeholder ownership and engagement are also shaped by external factors, such as government policies, accreditors, and funders. In spite of these differences, without stakeholder engagement, internationalization will not be sustainable. Essential to widespread ownership and involvement in the process is support from senior leadership, in word and in deed. Without engagement from top leadership as well as the deans, individual efforts by faculty and staff will be difficult if not impossible to sustain. In light of these considerations, the group articulated the following strategies:

- **Integrate internationalization into the institutional strategic plan and develop specific strategies for implementation.** If internationalization is to be widely owned and implemented, it should be integral to the institution's overall strategic plan or policy, supporting institutional goals for teaching, research, and outreach. At the same time, there needs to be specific strategies, milestones, outcomes, and measures that are part of the institution's overall monitoring plan.
- **Monitor and assess outcomes and impact.** Too often, internationalization is seen in terms of inputs—how many students go abroad, how many international faculty there are, etc. But institutions also need to answer the "what happened" question (outcomes), the "so what" question (impact). What difference does this make for student learning? What impact has international cooperation had on teaching and research? Institutions need to frame both qualitative and quantitative measures for outcomes and impacts.
- **Provide rewards and incentives.** It is unrealistic to expect that people will change their behaviors without rewards or incentives. (Punishments may produce some behavioral change, but not attitudinal change). Thus, institutions need to consider rewarding international activity in promotions, raises, and recognition and providing incentives through professional development.
- **Engage the campus in a broad dialogue; explore the meaning of internationalization for different groups.** A natural question around a new initiative or approach is "what does this mean for me." Faculty members need an opportunity to think about the implications of internationalization for their teaching, discipline, and research; staff for their particular role at the institution. Different disciplines and faculties will have different approaches. Individuals will be more or less interested and enthusiastic depending on their backgrounds, discipline, and experiences. Only by providing opportunities for various groups to understand

internationalization in their own terms can institutions fully engage people in new ways of thinking.

- **Create opportunities for faculty engagement and faculty development.** Dialogue must be accompanied by real opportunities for faculty to engage in international activities such as the development and implementation of joint degrees, collaborative courses, development cooperation, and joint research. Many institutions offer workshops on internationalizing the curriculum, providing some shared methodological approaches but tailoring them to the specific discipline.
- **Recognize disciplinary differences.** Faculties and departments internationalize at different rates. For example, disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, deal directly with issues of culture; others such as geography or international relations are intrinsically international. For others, it is a greater stretch to see that courses can integrate international perspectives (such as teaching a national history course, mathematics or chemistry). It is natural to have disciplines that are enthusiastic and early adopters and others that need to develop their distinctive approach.
- **Commit to equitable access for international opportunities for students.** Although most students will obtain their international dispositions, skills, and knowledge on the home campus, mobility is still the gold standard for international learning. Institutions should pay special attention to obstacles to student mobility such as student attitudes, financial needs, and institutional barriers such as policies about granting credit for study abroad.

Dissemination

The IAU makes ample use of its global membership in order to organize discussion and collaboration when developing its policies and statements. It also uses its wide network of Members and partners to disseminate information and its positions once they are developed. The statement *Affirming Academic Values in Internationalization of Higher Education: A Call for Action* is now part of the IAU *Speaks Out* volume, which includes all policy statements adopted over time by the Association. It has been given wide circulation around the world to higher education institutions, to associations and networks of universities and has been the focus of several discussions at conferences in Europe, North America and elsewhere. The *Call for Action* was also noticed and quoted by the European Commission during the preparation of the 2013 policy entitled *European Higher Education in the World* and later quoted by the EU Parliament in its call for proposals for a research study on internationalization, a research project in which IAU is active and which is due to be completed in the Spring of 2015.

The August 2014 Global Dialogue held in South Africa, organized by the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) and hosted by Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, brought about some 40 representatives of various associations and organizations engaged in internationalization of higher education who endorsed the IAU

Call for Action. The meeting participants pressed for each of the participating organizations to take up the challenge of promoting and ensuring that internationalization leads to lasting and equitable academic benefits; to narrowing the gaps among institutions in the developed, emerging and developing countries; and to promoting socially responsible higher education and research that address global challenges while serving society locally.

Conclusion: Impact and Implications

As a worldwide membership organization of higher education institutions and organizations, IAU's strength is in raising important issues and catalyzing discussion. It has been raising issues such as mutual benefit in partnerships, which institutions have opportunities to be global players and which do not, whether student mobility opportunities are widely accessible to all students and many others for several years, based on its research and drawing on concrete experiences and concerns of the Association's members and partners. The extent to which such issues are being raised in various conferences, debates and publications by individuals and organizations is an important positive sign. A perusal of *University World News*—which provides a good barometer of topical interests and current conversations in global higher education—provides an array of articles dealing with the themes of inclusive internationalization, for example Hockenos (2014), Margison (2014), DeWit and Jooste (2014), Tadaki (2013). Certainly they have been on the Going Global agenda for the past two conferences and have attracted attention each time.

How and when ideas such as a concern with creating a more inclusive internationalization processes get adopted, adapted, and eventually implemented by institutions is difficult to measure. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many institutions are now reviewing their partnerships, looking at their quality rather than how many drawers the MOUs fill. Others are making equitable access to study abroad a priority. The commercial aspect of higher education is likely to intensify in the foreseeable future, so that keeping issues of fairness and inclusiveness in the forefront will take on even greater urgency. Future IAU research may also need to focus on how to measure the extent to which institutions are translating words into action.

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