

Conceptualising the Internationalisation of Higher Education and the Academic Profession in Centers and Peripheries: A Comparative Analysis of Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Africa

Historically, the essence of the internationalisation of higher education was the academic mobility of students and teachers to enhance their quality of knowledge, teaching, learning, and research through academic collaboration between or among different academic cultures, institutions, and nation states. Internationalisation of higher education, driven by both educational philosophy and commercial imperatives, has attained great significance in higher education since the 1990s. However, due to its evolving dynamism (emergence of new and diversified rationales, actors, etc.) the search for a comprehensive definition of the concept of internationalisation of higher education has continued to be an on-going endeavor. The impact of local/national traditions and priorities of rationales or motives, internationalisation of higher education means different thing to different people. Subsequently, this has resulted in a great diversity of interpretations attributed to the concept and meaning of internationalisation of higher education. It is changing. The meaning, concept, rationales, strategic mechanisms, role to development, impact on the academic tribe and so on are evolving dimensions of internationalisation of higher education. Moreover, the rhetoric and reality about internationalisation are inconsistent. The prevailing conceptual understanding and the definition attached to it do not clearly and comprehensively explain what internationalisation of higher education is in reality worldwide. The definitions attached to internationalisation of higher education in some ways do not explain the real activities, the diverse rationales, and impacts, and therefore it is not clear. In addition, such issues as ethics, disproportionate benefits and inequalities have triggered wide spread debates on the process of the internationalisation of higher education in centers (big universities, systems, suppliers of policies, knowledge etc.) and peripheries (small higher education institutions, imitators, consumers of knowledge, policies etc.). Furthermore, the study of internationalisation of higher education has been attached to some of its major features such as student mobility and cross-border higher education. The study of internationalisation of higher education in its own right is lacking. Besides, the study of internationalisation has given little attention to the principal actor and driving force – the academic profession - of the internationalisation of higher education.

This study considers internationalisation of higher education as a subject in its own right to analyze and conceptualize it, to assess the disproportionate benefits, and to scrutinize its interaction with the academic profession from a center-periphery perspective. The study focuses on Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Africa. Methodologically, the research applies a qualitative approach and phenomenological and idiographic strategies to collect and analyze both primary and secondary sources and data. Considering all the limitations (particularly the imbalance in the literature) in regional comparative studies, the purpose of this study is to discern the trend (from both macro-and-micro-level of approach) in the conceptualization of internationalisation of higher education and the academic profession in Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Africa.