

Internationalization of Higher Education: *An Evolving Landscape, Locally and Globally*

IAU 5th Global Survey

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Introduction

Internationalization of higher education (henceforth referred to simply as internationalization) is an important phenomenon of great interest, not only for the global higher education community, but also further afield. It is an intentional process undertaken by higher education institutions (HEIs) but its implications go beyond the domain of higher education and affect society at large.

Internationalization is one of the four strategic priorities of the International Association of Universities (IAU) and it is IAU's goal is to promote an inclusive, fair and ethical internationalization. IAU focuses on academic rationales, the equitable and collaborative nature of the process and incites actors to ensure there are minimal adverse effects of international interactions when these take place in highly unequal and diverse contexts among HEIs with different resources, needs and interests. IAU promotes internationalization of higher education as a means to improve the quality of teaching and learning, research and service to society for all students and staff.

In order for IAU to reach the above goal, knowing how the process of internationalization is evolving is paramount, and, to this end, research on the latest trends in internationalization around the world is essential.

As the leading global association of higher education institutions and organizations from around the world, IAU is ideally placed to conduct this type of research, thus providing insights into the current state of internationalization of higher education around the world.

Since 2003, IAU has conducted regular Global Surveys on Internationalization of Higher Education, and we are pleased to release the 5th IAU Global Survey five years after the last edition, a sufficient period of time in which to monitor changes and capture new emerging trends.

The aim of the IAU Global Surveys is to have a holistic description of internationalization around the world at a given moment in time.

The Global Survey reports have become an invaluable resource for anyone working on or interested in internationalization of higher education. They can be used by researchers, as relevant data that could stimulate more research in the field of internationalization of higher education, by HEIs to benchmark themselves in the development of their internationalization processes at global and regional level and by policy makers to seeking inspiration for policies affecting internationalization and, more generally, higher education.

The report of the 5th IAU Global Survey presents an analysis of data collected from HEIs around the world via an online questionnaire, open between 1 March and 31 October 2018, and which collected data for the academic year beginning in 2016.

The report is divided in seven parts, each one covering a specific aspect of internationalization. The seven parts are:

- A. Survey sample and profile of the responding institutions;
- B. Internationalization as an institutional priority;
- C. Internationalization policy and activities;
- D. Internationalization of research;
- E. Human resources and staff development;
- F. Student mobility;
- G. Internationalization of the curriculum/Internationalization at home

Here below are reported the highlights of the main findings for each section.

A. Survey sample and profiles of the responding institutions

The 5th IAU Global Survey collected replies from 907 HEIs from 126 countries.

The number of replies allows for a statistically significant analysis at global level and a regional analysis, bearing in mind that the statistical significance in some regions (i.e. North America and the Middle East) is low.

The number of replies is lower than for the 4th IAU Global Survey, but there was a more proportionally representative distribution of replies among the different regions of the world when we look at the total number of institutions per region. While responses from Europe made up almost half of those received during the 4th IAU Global Survey, in the 5th IAU Global Survey the distribution is more evenly spread among the different regions. If we compare the overall distribution of HEIs in the different regions of the world, there is an overrepresentation of Latin America and the Caribbean and an underrepresentation of North America and Asia & Pacific.

The 5th IAU Global Survey is a trilingual survey in English, French and Spanish, and while the majority of HEIs replied to the survey in English, the percentage of HEIs that replied in French and Spanish are significant, with an increase compared to the 4th IAU Global Survey. This in turn seems to have increased the number of replies from Latin America and the Caribbean and francophone African countries.

The survey was distributed among HEIs and only one reply representing the institutional perspective on internationalization was requested; where there were more than one reply from a HEI, only one reply was retained.

The profile of a typical institution replying to the survey is one of a relatively small public institution, focused on both teaching and research and offering all three degrees types (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate); while this profile is similar to the one from the 4th Global Survey, we saw a noticeable increase in the percentage of replies from public institutions, and an equally noticeable decline in the percentage of replies from private not for-profit institutions.

B. Internationalization as an institutional priority

– *Importance of internationalization*

An overwhelming majority of institutions (more than 90%) have internationalization mentioned in their mission/strategic plan — a clear sign of how internationalization has become widespread at HEIs around the world. At regional level, however, North America is the only exception, with almost one third of HEIs not mentioning internationalization in their mission/strategic plan.

The majority of HEIs attach a high level of importance to internationalization, an increase over the last three years. However, this increase has happened mainly in HEIs where the level was already high, whereas it has not happened at HEIs where the level was low. This might lead to growing inequality between HEIs.

In terms of funding for internationalization, the general institutional budget remains the main source, followed by external public funding.

– *Benefits of internationalization*

“Enhanced international cooperation and capacity building” is the most important expected benefit of internationalization at global level, and in all regions except North America — a first in the history of the IAU Global Surveys. At the same time, “Improved quality of teaching and learning” remains a very important benefit of internationalization globally and in all regions of the world, except for North America. The most important benefit reported by North American respondents is “Increased international awareness of/deeper engagement with global issues by students”.

– *Risks of internationalization*

When compared to previous surveys, the results show, over time, a stable situation of the perceived institutional risks at the global level, with “International opportunities accessible only to students with financial resources” as the main institutional risk, followed by “Difficulty to assess/recognize quality of courses/programmes offered by foreign institutions” and “Excessive competition with other higher education institutions”. However, at regional level there is a more diverse and dynamic situation.

The analysis of the risks shows that “Commodification and commercialization of education programmes” is still considered as the main societal risk at global level, with “Brain drain” becoming very important in all regions except North America, where “Anti-globalization sentiments” is considered as the main societal risk.

— *Drivers of internationalization*

Institutional leadership and the international office are identified as the main internal drivers for internationalization.

Three different actors share first place in terms of main external drivers for internationalization: “Business and industry demand”, “Demand from foreign higher education institutions”, and “Government policy”. At regional level, results show a surprising decrease in time of the importance of EU policy as an external driver and an increase in attention to the demands of the business world in Europe. They also suggest an internationalization that is focused on recruitment of fee-paying international students in North America.

— *Obstacles to internationalization*

“Insufficient financial resources” is clearly the main internal obstacle to internationalization followed by “Administrative / bureaucratic difficulties” and “Lack of knowledge of foreign languages”. The results are quite homogeneous among different regions, with “Lack of knowledge of foreign languages” being quite important, especially in Latin America & the Caribbean. Funding is also the main external obstacle to internationalization, followed by “Language barrier” and “Difficulties of recognition and equivalences of qualifications, study programmes and course credits”. The situation is the same in all regions but North America, where visa restrictions and “Anti-immigration and increasingly nationalist policies” play a stronger role.

C. Internationalization Policy and Activities

– *Strategy/policy for internationalization*

There is an ongoing movement towards a strategic approach to internationalization in the majority of HEIs in the world.

Many HEIs report that internationalization forms an explicit part of their overall institutional strategy, with the majority of them, across all regions, having a strategy for internationalization; the percentage of HEIs indicating a complete absence of policy/strategy is low in all regions, and especially so in Europe and in Asia & Pacific.

The policy/strategy is institution-wide in almost all HEIs that participated in the 5th IAU Global Survey, with the presence of an office or a team in charge of overseeing the implementation of the policy/strategy and the inclusion of an international dimension in other institutional policies/strategies/plans also widespread at HEIs. Regional differences are clear for the presence of a monitoring framework and of explicit targets and benchmarks, and also for the presence of a specific budget for internationalization. The presence of a monitoring and evaluation framework and of explicit targets and benchmarks goes from around 80% (the highest) in Asia & Pacific and the Middle East to around 60–65% (the lowest) in the Americas, with the presence of a specific budget for internationalization varying from more than 80% in Asia & Pacific to only half in North America.

The evolution in the results of the Global Surveys shows clear growth in the presence of a policy/strategy at HEIs and of the percentage of HEIs having a dedicated office or team to implement the policy/strategy. On the other hand, the percentage of HEIs having a dedicated budget for internationalization grew over the first three editions, then saw a drop. The growth in the percentage of HEIs having a monitoring framework and explicit targets and benchmarks seems to have taken place between 2005 and 2009, while in the last eight years it has remained stable.

— *Values/principles for internationalization*

While different values/principles underlie the internationalization policies/strategies of HEIs around the world, “Academic purposes as central in the internationalization efforts” and “Academic freedom and institutional autonomy” seem to be of particular importance.

— *Internationalization activities*

In terms of activities, student mobility as a whole, be it incoming or outgoing, credit or degree mobility, is the top priority in all regions, followed by strategic partnerships and international research collaboration.

Assessment of internationalization activities is common practice at HEIs, but only one third of the respondents report having a comprehensive approach, including both an internal and an external assessment. The internal assessment process is the most common.

— *Geographic priorities for internationalization*

Slightly more than half of HEIs have geographic priorities for internationalization. A clear regionalization trend is emerging in all regions but North America. Europe and, to a lesser extent, North America are considered priority regions by all other regions, while Asia & Pacific is the top priority region for North American HEIs and the second most important region for European HEIs. Africa and the Middle East were identified as priority regions only by their own institutions who replied to the Survey.

— *Funding for internationalization*

At the majority of HEIs, funding has either increased or remained stable for all activities over the last three years, with the percentage of HEIs reporting a decrease in funding being very low for all activities. The activities which are identified as priorities are also showing an increase in funding. This is a sign that strategic internationalization is becoming common at HEIs: HEIs identify priority activities and allocate resources consequently.

— *Transnational education (TNE)*

Fewer than half of HEIs are involved in Transnational Education (TNE) with substantial differences between the regions, with TNE being especially rare in Latin America & the Caribbean. Joint universities and articulation programmes are the most common forms of TNE at all degree levels.

– *Distance, online and/or e-learning courses/degree programmes*

Distance, online and/or e-learning courses/degree programmes are common at HEIs in North America but not in other regions of the world and they are more common at Bachelor and Master level than at Doctorate level.

– *Joint and dual/double and multiple degree programmes*

There are substantial regional differences in the percentage of HEIs offering either joint or dual/double and multiple degree programmes, with the highest percentage in North America and the lowest in Latin America & the Caribbean. The percentage of HEIs offering dual/double and multiple degree programmes is higher than the one of HEIs offering joint degree programmes at all degree levels.

D. Internationalization of research

– *Organization of internationalization of research*

There are substantial differences in the approach to internationalization of research depending on the teaching/research focus of HEIs. At HEIs where research is important, international research is an integral part of their institutional internationalization activities, with only few exceptions. On the contrary, only at half of predominantly teaching focused institutions is international research an integral part of their institutional internationalization activities.

More than half of the predominately research-focused HEIs are highly involved in international research, either through an institutional approach to internationalization of research or by defining national research projects. On the other hand, almost three quarters of teaching-focused HEIs have no or very little involvement in international research and if it exists, it is mainly an initiative of individual researchers. HEIs focused both on teaching and research lie between these two extremes.

At regional level, Europe is the region with the highest percentage of HEIs having an institutional approach to internationalization of research, with a third of them indicating this in the survey. On the other hand, around half of HEIs in Latin America & the Caribbean and in the Middle East have no

or very little involvement in international research and if it exists, it is mainly at the initiative of individual researchers.

— Sources of funding for international research

The three main sources of funding for international research are: grants from international organizations and agencies, grants from national agencies, and the institution's own resources.

The teaching/ research focus of HEIs seems to impact mainly on the capacity to obtain grants from national or international agencies, with predominately research-focused HEIs in a more favorable position than predominately teaching-focused HEIs.

There are substantial differences between different world regions in terms of the main source of funding for international research, varying from grants from international organizations and agencies in Africa, to grants from national agencies in the Americas to the institution's own funds in the Middle East.

— Responsibility for internationalization of research

At predominantly research-focused HEIs the responsibility for internationalization of research lies mainly with the institutional leadership, while at predominantly teaching-focused HEIs it tends to be more varied and in some cases there is no designated person responsible for internationalization of research. Across the regions, the responsibility for internationalization of research lies at different levels, varying from the academic leadership in Africa, Asia & Pacific and Europe to administrative structures such as the office for research and the international office in the Americas.

E. Human resources and staff development

– *International academic staff members*

International academic staff members constitute a tiny minority of overall staff members. At 20% of HEIs there are no international academic staff members at all and at 34% the percentage of international academic staff is less than 5%. Latin America & the Caribbean is the region with the smallest percentage of international academic staff while Asia & Pacific and North America have the highest.

– *International experience for staff development*

International experience is valued at the majority of HEIs, but it is considered more an added value than a fundamental requirement, and there is still a substantial group of HEIs (30%) where international experience is not perceived as something important for hiring and promoting academic staff. International experience seems to be highly valued in the Middle East but very little so in North America. In other regions, it seems to be valued more in Asia & Pacific and Europe than in Africa and Latin America & the Caribbean.

F. Student mobility

– *Degree-seeking international student mobility*

While the majority of respondents to the 5th IAU Global Survey have international students enrolled for a full degree at all degree levels, especially at Bachelor level, the percentage of international students remain low. Overall, however, there is a higher percentage of international students enrolled at Master and Doctoral programmes.

In line with the results for internal and external obstacles and risks, funding is identified by HEIs as the main challenge for the recruitment of international students. Increased competition among HEIs, language barriers and problems of recognition are all identified as important challenges.

At regional level, “Increased competition among institutions” is identified as the main challenge in Europe and North America, while in the Middle East the most important challenge is “Concerns with security”. HEIs in the Middle East also identified this as an important obstacle to internationalization as a whole. Security concerns are a challenge to recruiting international students also in Africa and Latin America & the Caribbean. However, compared to the Middle East, in these two regions, they do not appear to be one of the main obstacles to internationalization as a whole.

— *Incoming and outgoing credit mobility*

The majority of respondents to the 5th IAU Global Survey have incoming international students for credit mobility at all degree levels they offer.

The percentage of HEIs having international students for credit mobility is higher at Bachelor level than at Master or Doctorate levels, but the distribution of percentages of international students at the three degree level is almost the same.

The majority of respondents to the 5th IAU Global Survey send their students abroad, mainly at Bachelor level.

The percentage of outgoing students is low at all degree levels (most commonly less than 5%), and it is slightly higher at Bachelor level than at Master and Doctorate levels.

— *Actions to support refugees*

The most common actions undertaken by HEIs in order to help refugees are “Working with NGOs and civil society groups to facilitate integration of refugees” and “Adopting a strategy specifically intended to help refugees (students and scholars)”.

Substantial regional variations exist in terms of actions for refugees. In Latin America & the Caribbean, Africa and Asia & Pacific few HEIs have actions for refugees in place, while in Europe, North America and the Middle East they are more common.

G. Internationalization of the curriculum / Internationalization at home

– *Ways to internationalize the curriculum*

“Activities that develop international perspectives of students” is clearly the most important way to internationalize curriculum for the respondents to the 5th IAU Global Survey. “Professional development for faculty to enhance their ability to integrate international/intercultural dimensions into teaching” is the second most important overall and the most important for African respondents.

– *Responsibility for internationalization of the curriculum*

Responsibility for internationalization of the curriculum most commonly lies at the institutional level, and this is particularly true in Africa, while in North America it seems that responsibility for internationalization of the curriculum lies at different levels in different HEIs.

– *Importance of Internationalization of the curriculum / internationalization at home*

Internationalization of the curriculum/internationalization at home is clearly identified by respondents as an important area of internationalization. In most regions, there are only a few HEIs that do not consider internationalization of the curriculum/internationalization at home important. North America is the only exception as one third of HEIs in the region consider internationalization of the curriculum/internationalization at home not important.

– *Learning outcomes*

Institution-wide learning outcomes related to international/global competencies of graduates are present only at a minority of HEIs with Asia & Pacific and the Middle East being the regions having the highest percentages.

– *Extra-curricular activities for internationalization at home*

“Events that provide inter-cultural/international experiences on campus or in the local community” is the most common extra-curricular activity as part of internationalization followed by “Buddy or mentor schemes to link

international students with home students” and “Intercultural skills-building workshops for staff and students” with no substantial regional differences.

The international office is mostly responsible for extracurricular activities for internationalization at home in all regions except Africa, where it is the institutional leadership that takes on this role.

Conclusion

The 5th IAU Global Survey provides invaluable information which allows us to take stock of internationalization around the world and also provides insights on the differences in trends in the different regions of the world.

The picture that emerges from the 5th IAU Global Survey is one of internationalization of higher education that is widespread among HEIs and which enjoys considerable importance. However, the level of importance given to internationalization by HEIs is not the same. HEIs which consider internationalization as highly important also reported an increase in the level of importance over time. On the other hand, HEIs which consider internationalization of low importance do not report an increase of the level of importance over time. This creates a risk of growing inequality and this is reflected in the perception of such risks both at institutional and at societal level. HEIs are concerned with internationalization becoming accessible only to individuals with the financial means and benefiting certain countries at the expense of others. International cooperation and capacity building could be an effective tool to counterbalance the effects of excessive competition but financing of internationalization, knowledge of a foreign language and administrative hurdles, such as recognition of foreign diplomas and periods of studies abroad, are important obstacles to overcome.

A strategic approach to internationalization is becoming more common, but such an approach is not yet in place in all HEIs. Rather, it is more the presence of policy or a strategy for internationalization that is becoming the norm. However, this is not enough if adequate structures and activities are not put in place and funded appropriately. On funding, the results are sending contradictory messages, on one hand, funding for internationalization activities is increasing overtime, on the other hand HEIs report the lack of funds as the major obstacle and the allocation of specific budgets for internationalization does not seem to have increased over time.

A more holistic approach to internationalization seems to be emerging with internationalization of research (at HEIs conducting research) and internationalization of the curriculum/at home being considered as important areas of internationalization. However, student mobility remains the most

important internationalization activity and, as confirmed by the results, this benefits fewer than 5% of students. International staff are a minority and while HEIs seem to value international experience, they still consider it as a plus more than a requirement.

At regional level, there are variations in the findings, with North America being the region more often divergent from others in many areas. The internationalization picture that emerges in North America is one where HEIs are focused on student mobility and especially recruitment of international students.

Political and economic changes taking place in the world are reflected in the perception of internationalization at HEIs, with North America being the region reflecting them the most, both in terms of being affected by and responding to these changes.

HEIs in North America are the most advanced in implementing relatively new areas of internationalization, such as TNE, on-line and distance learning, and joint degrees.

The results of the 5th IAU Global Survey no doubt invite more questions than they provide answers, but this is probably the nature and the scope of such a survey, constituting a solid base in order to stimulate more research on the phenomenon of internationalization of higher education and its consequences.

The results of the 5th IAU Global Survey are not only a starting point for more research, but they provide evidence for the development of policies and actions both at institutional and national levels.

The 5th IAU Global Survey provides food for thought on this fascinating process called internationalization of higher education and its consequences, not only for the global higher education community, but also for society of today and the future.