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## Internationalization with Adjectives<sup>1</sup>

Daniela Crăciun

The rise of internationalization in the last couple of decades as a force of reforming and revamping higher education around the world has presented researchers with the challenge of dealing with a great diversity of approaches to internationalization. Although internationalization practices from diverse localities—think of China, India, Brazil, Estonia or Kazakhstan—share common priorities and rationales, they differ profoundly from each other and from internationalized higher education systems in the Anglo-Saxon world.

In response to this challenge, scholars have tried to underscore the historical development and ever-changing nature of internationalization by increasing the analytic differentiation of the concept. In other words, scholars moved away from understanding the diverse manifestations of internationalization as different in degree (i.e., more or less internationalization), towards understanding them as different in kind (i.e., different types of internationalization). This has resulted in a proliferation of alternative conceptual labels such as *internationalization at home*, *internationalization abroad*, *re-internationalization*, *post-internationalization*, *globalized internationalization*, *comprehensive internationalization*, and *intelligent internationalization* (Crăciun, 2018b). Borrowing from studies on democratization (Collier & Levitsky, 1997), this chapter refers to this surprising number of labels as *internationalization with adjectives*.

Similar to democratization studies, in order to avoid conceptual confusion, attempts to standardize the usage of the term of *internationalization* have occurred in parallel to this proliferation of labels. While important procedural aspects of internationalization have been standardized through integrated definitions, the diverse forms of the concept manifested

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<sup>1</sup> Crăciun, D. (2019). Internationalization with Adjectives. In H. de Wit & K. Godwing (Eds.), *Intelligent Internationalization: The Shape of Things to Come*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

through *internationalization with adjectives* have maintained their popularity. Their analytical purchase must, however, be increased through assessments of their underlying structures and meanings. Operationalizing the concepts and showing promising avenues of research is part of conceptual development. The aim of the chapter is to show how this can be done by looking at one such subtype: *intelligent internationalization*.

The concept of intelligent internationalization coined by Laura Rumbley (2015)—where the perspectives of higher education practitioners, leader, scholars, and policymakers are leveraged to forward internationalization in a globalized world—makes an important point about the need for thinking about the process in a way that integrates the voices and insights of experts and elites in a coordinated and sustained manner. This conceptualization of internationalization provides a clear impetus towards evidence-based policy making. What is less clear is what constitutes the common meeting ground that brings together these different perspectives. In other words, how do we know intelligent internationalization when we see it? This is no small question as without operationalizing the concept, researching it is difficult, if not impossible.

This chapter argues that a promising avenue for research is strategic documents that promote internationalization at various levels (regional, national, institutional) because they provide a general framework for understanding how higher education systems and institutions engage with internationalization. Without a strategic document to guide decisions, institutions and organizations “run in too many different directions, accomplish little, squander profits, and suffer enormous confusion and discord” (Latham, 2017, p. 2). Internationalization strategy documents answer the questions of who, what, where, when, and how the process is pursued. Providing answers to these questions would be in line with the elements that Laura Rumbley has identified as markers for making progress towards intelligent internationalization, namely: information, communication, facilitation, incentives, results, and time.

To be more precise, strategic internationalization documents can be analyzed to see whether different kinds of actors are involved in developing internationalization (*who*), whether the strategy mentions specific targets to be accomplished and whether it is aligned with other policies and strategies promoted by governments and institutions (*what*), whether the strategy mentions specific geographical foci (*where*), whether the strategy mentions a specific timeline to achieve the intended goals (*when*), and whether funding is allocated for the measures it proposes (*how*). A content analysis exercise on such strategies can easily reveal whether institutions or governments are indeed practicing *intelligent* internationalization.

For instance, a world-wide census of national internationalization plans revealed that only 22 countries have explicit strategies to forward the process (Crăciun, 2018a). Nevertheless, as shown in Figure 1 below, a text analysis of these existing policy documents reveals that the countries that have an internationalization strategy, exhibit aspects of intelligent internationalization practices. Specifically, all the countries mention actors other than the government involved in the development of internationalization, and most of them make reference to specific targets to be achieved in a designated timespan, how internationalization aligns with other policies (e.g., migration, trade, foreign relations, labor market, etc.), and a specific geographical focus. Less defined are the incentive and funding mechanisms of these strategies: only 1 in 2 countries discuss these strategic aspects.



*Figure 1.* Proportion of national higher education internationalization strategies discussing strategic aspects (Source: Crăciun, 2019).

This brief analysis shows that strategic documents for the internationalization of higher education provide a fertile ground for analyzing the concept of intelligent internationalization. However, a more in-depth analysis teasing out all the above-mentioned aspects (e.g., actors, specific targets, specific geographical focus, etc.) is needed. Coupled with evaluations of policy success and failure, such analyses could give us a better grasp of the viability of intelligent internationalization for understanding and explaining current developments in the field.

To conclude, the main contention of this discussion has been that in parallel to internationalization development patterns, we can observe a proliferation of terminology that tries to distinguish between different manifestations of the process. *Internationalization with adjectives* refers precisely this mushrooming conceptual field in which attributes have been added to the process in order to better specify it. The concept of intelligent internationalization proposed by Laura Rumbley (2015) is but one example. Giving more attention to concept operationalization and finding fruitful avenues for research would

increase the analytical purchase of intelligent internationalization. To this end, higher education internationalization strategies represent a viable starting point for mapping out the constellation of actors involved in promoting the process and thus observing whether there is an actual commitment to an intelligent internationalization agenda.

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