

CHAPTER THREE

International Mapping of National Tertiary Education Internationalization Strategies and Plans (NTEISPs)¹

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Over the past thirty years, internationalization in higher education has become a key point of strategy for international entities such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, and the European Commission, as well as for national governments, and for institutions of higher education and their associations. Some of its main trends in those thirty years have been:

- More focused on internationalization abroad than on internationalization at home.
- More ad hoc, fragmented and marginal than strategic, comprehensive, and central in policies.
- More in the interest of a small, elite subset of students and faculty than focused on global and intercultural outcomes for all.
- Directed by a constantly shifting range of political, economic, social/cultural, and educational rationales, with increasing focus on economic motivations.
- Increasingly driven by national, regional, and global rankings.
- Little alignment between the international dimensions of the three core functions of higher education: education, research, and service to society.
- Primarily a strategic choice and focus of institutions of higher education, and less a priority of national governments.

¹This chapter is a summarized version of de Wit, Rumbley, Crăciun, Mihut, and Woldegiyorgis (2019).

- Less important in emerging and developing economies, and more of a particular strategic concern among developed economies.

In the past decade, however, one can observe a reaction to these trends. While mobility is still the most dominant factor in internationalization policies worldwide, there is increasing attention being paid to internationalization of the curriculum at home. There is also a stronger call for comprehensive internationalization, which addresses all aspects of education in an integrated way. Although economic rationales and rankings still drive the agenda of internationalization, there is more emphasis now being placed on other motivations for internationalization. For example, attention is being paid to integrating international dimensions into tertiary education quality assurance mechanisms, institutional policies related to student learning outcomes, and the work of national and discipline-specific accreditation agencies. This is reflected in the updated definition of internationalization (which purposefully built on a definition for the phenomenon articulated by Jane Knight, 2004) that was put forward in a study for the European Parliament: “The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society” (de Wit, Hunter, Egron-Polak, and Howard, 2015: 29). And internationalization, as described by Jones and de Wit (2014), has become more globalized, and both regional, national, and institutional initiatives are developed in the emerging and developing world: “In the current global-knowledge society, the concept of internationalization of higher education has itself become globalized, demanding further consideration of its impact on policy and practice as more countries and types of institution around the world engage in the process. Internationalization should no longer be considered in terms of a westernized, largely Anglo-Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking paradigm” (Jones and de Wit, 2014: 28).

LITERATURE REVIEW OF NATIONAL TERTIARY EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

More attention has recently been paid to internationalization in the agendas of national governments such as Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. Over the past five years, several studies by the British Council (2016; 2017), the British Council and DAAD (2014), Helms et al. (2015), the European Parliament (de Wit et al., 2015), Crăciun (2018a), and Perna et al. (2014) have looked into NTEISPs, and have generated a series of analyses, overviews, rankings, and recommendations on them. So far, no comprehensive analysis and typology has been provided, and less attention has been given to low- and middle-income countries with respect to NTEISPs. In recent years, internationalization has shaped education at all levels across the world at an accelerated pace. In light of increased student and staff mobility, the increased presence of branch campuses and international providers, and increased competition for international talent, tertiary education institutions and national governments are mobilizing to both leverage and steer internationalization. National tertiary education internationalization strategies and plans represent the most tangible and direct attempts by governments to play an active and decisive role in relation internationalization, but there are substantive differences in their approaches, rationales, and priorities.

Meanwhile, new definitions and understandings of internationalization have given way to a new research agenda. Since the definition of higher education internationalization has been reworked to include the specification that internationalization is a planned activity, and not something that “just happens” to higher education systems or institutions, there has been a trend towards examining national involvement in steering the process (Crăciun, 2018c). A survey of NTEISPs provides important lessons about the system-level arrangements meant to advance internationalization and go beyond seeing the process as a by-product of globalization. These lessons become crucial in a policy-making environment striving to learn from best practices and develop evidence-based policies (Crăciun, 2018c).

A worldwide census of explicit NTEISPs carried out by Crăciun (2018a) reveals that only 11 percent of countries have an official strategy for internationalization, most having been adopted in the last decade. Such strategies have been developed predominantly by developed countries—three in four NTEISPs come from members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). European countries have taken the lead in promoting strategic thinking about internationalization at the national level—two in three NTEISPs come from this world region (Crăciun, 2018a), and programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 have led to further regional harmonization of higher education systems (British Council, 2017).

This is not to say that other countries have not taken measures to promote internationalization. In fact, to support internationalization processes, many countries have taken both direct measures (e.g., re-evaluating their visa policies to give preferential treatment to international students and scholars, establishing bi-lateral or multi-lateral agreements through memoranda of understanding, and promoting transnational education through free-trade deals) and indirect measures (e.g., supporting internationalization in political discourses and giving universities autonomy to pursue internationalization activities). Nevertheless, explicit NTEISPs ensure consistency between direct and indirect policy measures and provide a clear signalling of government commitment to internationalization. In other words, NTEISPs move higher education internationalization “from the periphery to centre stage” (Crăciun, 2018b: 8). More in-depth, large-scale research on the focus—in terms of rationales and priorities—of NTEISPs is needed to get a better understanding of what is actually done to promote internationalization and the effectiveness of the measures taken (Crăciun, 2018c).

As evidenced by a systematic literature review of rigorous research from the last twenty-five years on transnational cooperation in higher education, there are significant economic and non-economic benefits for societies, institutions, and individuals arising from internationalization (Crăciun and Orosz, 2018). Benefits for which there is solid evidence include more and better research publications and patents, better foreign language proficiency and employment prospects for internationally mobile students, positive attitudes towards open borders and democracy, strengthened research and teaching capacity, and increased attractiveness of collaborating universities to foreign academics (Crăciun and Orosz, 2018). However, it is unclear how effective explicit NTEISPs are in bringing about these benefits. Because many of these national strategies have come about recently, little research has been carried out to gauge their results. Nevertheless, research on policy texts of NTEISPs has consistently singled out international student mobility as a priority for a majority of governments (British Council, 2017; Crăciun, 2018c; Perna et al., 2014) and data show that almost half of international students worldwide in 2013 were hosted by countries that have explicit NTEISPs (Crăciun, 2018a).

Literature, as well as surveys, makes clear that the main focus in internationalization strategies and plans is still at the institutional level. Indeed, institutions operate in many cases without a national plan in place. Where national plans do exist, institutions may operate in conflict or in alignment with the national agenda. An NTEISP can serve as a catalyst or a drag on internationalization processes but is mostly seen as a highly positive element for the advancement of internationalization. Specifically, NTEISPs set internationalization priorities, allocate important resources to meet internationalization goals, and can ensure continuity of efforts between successive governments (Crăciun, 2018b). They align internationalization with other key national priorities, such as economic growth and national security. They incentivize institutions and individuals to assist in meeting national strategic goals through internationalization. In short, national internationalization strategies and plans offer not only a good overview of the manifestations of internationalization, but also shape key action. However, it would be a misconception to assume that NTEISPs have common rationales and approaches to internationalization. Differences exist between and among high-income, low-income, and middle-income countries with respect to their policies and practices. Also, there are differences in explicit and implicit policies and practices, with some countries having well documented plans and others have no plans but well-defined activities. In addition, different stakeholders can be identified in the operationalization of NTEISPs. A typology of NTEISPs can improve transparency between and within higher education systems (Crăciun, 2015), promote synergies through coordination, and ultimately increase the impact of these efforts (Helms et al., 2015). Developing a typology of NTEISPs requires identifying rationales, stakeholders, and organizational, programmatic, and geographic priorities. The case studies in this report provide input for the development of such a typology, with emphasis on low- and middle-income countries which have become active actors in the field of higher education internationalization in recent years (European Parliament, de Wit et al., 2015).

Overall, the literature points to several key indicators that can be used to guide more systematic thinking about national internationalization policies:

- *Involvement*: Government involvement can be direct (i.e., through explicit policy documents to advance internationalization and by earmarking funds to be invested in pursuing this objective) or indirect (i.e., by supporting internationalization at a discursive level and allowing universities to pursue internationalization, but at their own expense).
- *Stakeholders*: Stakeholders may come from a wide ecosystem of actors related to tertiary education, including ministries (such as education or foreign affairs), other national agencies, the private sector, international organizations, regional bodies and institutions, etc.
- *History*: While there is a long tradition of indirect government support for internationalization, more direct and strategic actions, policies and plans have only appeared more recently (Crăciun, 2018a).
- *Geographic focus*: In general, there is an evolving regionalization of internationalization in which European policies are taken as a best practice example (de Wit et al., 2015). Moreover, when looking at a global picture, national internationalization strategies are prevalent in Europe, but not so much in other world regions (Crăciun, 2018a).

- *Tactical focus*: Some strategies are rather generic and others that have specific focal points or action lines that frame the scope of activity or interest (for instance inbound or outbound mobility).
- *Effectiveness*: In terms of effectiveness of national policies, little is known. This can be explained by the fact that the most policies are quite recent so there are few, if any, studies assessing the effectiveness of such instruments. Thus, the evidence is usually anecdotal or reliant on quantitative measures related to internationalization abroad (i.e. international student mobility).

LOW- AND MID-INCOME COUNTRY STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

Recent publications have given more attention to emerging voices and perspectives (de Wit, Gacel-Ávila, Jones, and Jooste, 2017) and next generation insights (Proctor and Rumbley, 2018). As Fanta Aw, in her foreword to de Wit et al. (2017) states, “It is important for internationalization efforts to remain contextualized and rooted in culture, place, time and manner” (Aw, 2017: xxii). That is why it is important to study the way not only institutions, but also national governments, in low- and middle-income countries are responding to the need for internationalization. A mapping exercise of ten of these countries reveals the following (Table 3.1).

Some key findings from the mapping exercise can be identified as follow:

- There is a divide between countries with explicit and implicit NTEISPs but, with the exception of Ethiopia and UAE, all countries have some form of explicit policy on internationalization in higher education, while in all countries one can also find implicit references to internationalization in their education and/or foreign relations policies.
- There is a divide between countries with policies directly focused on internationalization and those in which it is one element of a broader policy and plan, but surprisingly seven out of the twelve countries have a specific stand-alone policy for internationalization, and five out of these seven even have a strong policy orientation. All countries have embedded internationalization in their overall national education and/or foreign relations policies, although in many cases in rather generic terms with little action. An exception is Colombia, where the ministry of education directly, and through the national accreditation agency, sets targets and indicators.
- National governments are leading actors for internationalization in all countries, and in four cases (Brazil, Ecuador, India, and Malaysia) national governments are quite strong actors. South Africa offers an example of a national policy that is defined by the national government but with institutions of higher education explicitly named as the key actors.
- Overall, one can describe the process for operationalizing NTEISPs as rather top-down.
- In some countries there is a lack of clear national plans, and institutions are left to provide direction (as in Ethiopia and Egypt); in others, it is primarily the Ministry of Education, or other ministries, or a combination of ministries, that are

TABLE 3.1 Mapping national internationalization strategies

Policy characteristics	Case countries											
	Brazil	Colombia	Ecuador	Egypt	Estonia	Ethiopia	India	Kazakhstan	Malaysia	Singapore	South Africa**	United Arab Emirates
Approaches to policy articulation												
• Implicit focus on internationalization	xx	xx		x	xx	x	xx	x	xx	xx	xx	x
• Explicit focus on internationalization												
Approaches to policy formulation												
• Stand-alone policy for internationalization	xx	x			xx		xx	xx	xx	x	xx	
• Internationalization policy embedded in a broader policy	x	xx	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	xx	x
Key actors												
• National governments/ministries	xx	x	xx	x	x	x	xx	x	xx	x	x	x
• Non- or quasi-governmental actors		x		x	x	x	xx				x	
• Higher education institutions	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	xx	x
• Foreign governments				x		x					x	
• International organizations				x							x	
Geographic priorities												
• Explicit geographic focal points	x			x		x	x		x	x	x	

*Note: An “xx” designation denotes that this specific policy characteristic is especially “strong” or evident in the particular NTEISP or national context.

** Note: South Africa’s internationalization policy is currently under review.

Policy characteristics

Case countries

	Brazil	Colombia	Ecuador	Egypt	Estonia	Ethiopia	India	Kazakhstan	Malaysia	Singapore	South Africa*	United Arab Emirates
Priority action lines												
• Incoming student mobility	X	X	X	X	X	X	XX	X	XX	X	XX	X
• Outgoing student mobility	XX	X	X	X	X	X		X	XX	X	X	X
• Incoming academic staff/faculty mobility		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
• Outgoing academic staff/faculty mobility		X		X		X		X	X		X	
• Visa and immigration processes				X					X		X	
• International student/faculty services									X		X	
• Program and/or institutional mobility (includes cross-border and transnational education, educational hubs, international branch campuses, joint and dual degrees, online delivery)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	XX	XX	X	X
• Research and publications collaboration		X		X		X		X	X		X	X
• Joint doctoral supervision				X	X	X					X	
• Partnerships, networks, and consortia		X		X		X		X	X		X	X
• Internationalization of the curriculum (includes approaches to teaching and learning)		X		X		X					X	
• Internationalization at home		X				X		X			X	X
• Requiring or encouraging teaching in non-local languages				X		X		X	X			X
• Requiring or encouraging foreign language study or proficiency					X			X				
• Leveraging diaspora and/or internationally educated returnees				X		X		X		X	X	
• Facilitating employment for international students and international graduates					X							
• Enhancing quality and/or aspiring to international quality standards		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
• Aiming to develop world-class universities							X	X	X	X	X	X

involved. These actions may also be characterized by a combination of initiatives of national and institutional stakeholders (as in Colombia, for instance).

- Most countries provide explicit geographical focus points and, in most cases, these are high-income countries in the developed world, i.e., South–North oriented. But a South–South trend can also be observed, from low-income to middle-income countries—for instance in the cases of India, Malaysia, and South Africa, and a focus on neighboring countries in Africa.
- There is a divide between countries focusing on incoming mobility (India, for instance), on outgoing mobility (Brazil, for instance), and two-way mobility. Most strategies focus on student mobility, and to a lesser extent on scholar mobility and transnational education (TNE) programs. Estonia is the only country with a more comprehensive approach, supported by European programs.
- Research and publications collaboration; partnerships, networks and consortia; and enhancing quality and aspiring to international quality standards, are quite common in national policies.
- Internationalization at home and of the curriculum, as well as national and foreign language policy, are rather marginal focal points in national policies.
- There is very little evidence that NTEISPs are designed with the goal of advancing social justice, inclusion, and equity objectives. Leveraging internationalization to meet the needs of historically marginalized and/or underrepresented populations does not appear to be a priority in any of the cases examined for this study.

What can we conclude from these findings? We can observe that low- and middle-income countries are becoming more active in defining national policies for internationalization, and on South–South cooperation, breaking in this way the “westernized, largely Anglo-Saxon, and predominantly English-speaking paradigm,” as mentioned by Jones and de Wit (2012). But serious caution has to be expressed about this trend. There is much copying of the Western paradigm in the strong focus on mobility, on reputation and branding, and on South–North relations. There is also little continuity in their national policies, due to political and economic factors, for instance in Brazil.

The NTEISPs of low- and middle-income countries appear to sustain through their scholarship schemes and terms, their geographic focus and partnerships in research and education, and the dominance of high-income countries. More attention to regional cooperation, as is emerging for instance among ASEAN countries, more South–South networking and partnerships, and a stronger focus on internationalization of the curriculum at home are needed to break the high-income paradigm in internationalization, and to develop policies and actions that build on the local, national, and regional context and culture of each country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the report on National Tertiary Education Internationalization Strategies and Plans (NTEISPs), the following recommendations are given:

- NTEISPs should not be developed and implemented in isolation from broader strategies for tertiary education and socio-economic development; rather, their

rationales should be driven by, and firmly embedded in, the socio-economic and tertiary education context of the country.

- NTEISPs, ideally, should not be single-issue focused (such as recruitment of international students, outbound mobility of students, or increasing performance in rankings); rather, they should have a broader comprehensive approach, with integrated action lines that address aspects of both internationalization abroad and internationalization at home, as well as the interaction between these two dimensions.
- NTEISPs should take into account the international dimensions of all three core functions of tertiary education—research, education, and service to society—and consider how each of these dimensions can contribute to the strengthening of the other two.
- NTEISPs should address not only the potential benefits of internationalization, but also potential obstacles and risks associated with this process, and incorporate actions aimed at minimizing obstacles and mitigating risks.
- NTEISPs should clearly address the matter of how to strengthen the professional, academic, and “soft” skills of students. Attention should be paid to enhancing both intercultural and international competences to support students’ employability and citizenship development.
- NTEISPs should pay careful attention to national policies related to language and culture associated with tertiary education. These are important concerns in a globalized knowledge society and economy, where English is the dominant language of communication in research, but also increasingly in education.
- NTEISPs should attend thoughtfully to matters of social justice and equity. For example, when framing geographic priorities, national policies and plans should not only focus on South–North relations and partnerships but should also strengthen South–South collaboration. The needs of historically marginalized and underrepresented domestic populations should also be carefully considered in the design and implementation of NTEISPs.
- NTEISPs should look at the regional context of their internationalization policies, as regional policies for harmonization of tertiary structures and related support mechanisms offer important ways to enhance the quality of tertiary education in the national context (the European Higher Education Area and ASEAN provide important examples here).
- NTEISPs need to be based, both in their creation and implementation, on the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders: a range of national ministries, tertiary education institutions and their associations, student and staff organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.

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SECTION I

Asia Pacific

