

IAU Statement on Internationalization:

Towards a Century of Cooperation: Internationalization of Higher Education

(Prepared for the UNESCO World Conference in Higher Education 1998, formally adopted by the 11th IAU General Conference as part of the IAU Policy 2000)

Preamble

It has often been taken for granted that universities are international. The universal nature of knowledge, a long tradition of international collegiality and cooperation in research, the comings and goings of faculty and students since Antiquity have all served to create this impression. Conscious that this impression only partially reflects the day to day reality of higher education institutions in the world, and noting that internationalization of higher education is today more than ever a worthy goal, the International Association of Universities wishes to reaffirm its own commitment to this effort and to urge all stakeholders to contribute to its realization.

As we approach the 21st Century, a number of major challenges face women and men around the world as they interact with one another as individuals, groups, and with nature. Globalization of trade, of production, and of communications has created a highly interconnected world. Yet the tremendous gaps between the rich and the poor continue to widen both within, and between nations. Sustainable development remains an elusive long-term goal, too often sacrificed for short-term gains.

It is imperative that higher education offer solutions to existing problems and innovate to avoid problems in the future. Whether in the economic, political, or social realms, higher education is expected to contribute to raising the overall quality of life, world wide. To fulfil its role effectively and maintain excellence, higher education must become far more internationalized; it must integrate an international and intercultural dimension into its teaching, research, and service functions.

Preparing future leaders and citizens for a highly interdependent world, requires a higher education system where internationalization promotes cultural diversity and fosters intercultural understanding, respect, and tolerance among peoples. Such internationalization of higher education contributes to building more than economically competitive and politically powerful regional blocks; it represents a commitment to international solidarity, human security and helps to build a climate of global peace.

Technological advances in communications are powerful instruments which can serve to further internationalization of higher education and to democratize access to opportunities. However, to the extent that access to new information technologies remains unevenly distributed in the world, the adverse side effects of their widespread use can threaten cultural diversity and widen the gaps in the production, dissemination, and appropriation of knowledge.

Highly educated personnel and research at the highest levels are essential to increasingly knowledge-based development everywhere. Internationalization and international cooperation can serve to improve higher education by increasing efficiency in teaching and learning as well as in research through shared efforts and joint actions.

The International Association of Universities, founded to promote international cooperation among higher education institutions, notes that despite the universality of knowledge which has always served to affirm the international nature of higher education, the level of internationalization remains low and uneven. Furthermore, international cooperation has had relatively little impact on global wealth and resource distribution even in the realm of higher education. Worse, the external braindrain and other negative consequences of poorly designed cooperative activities have at times even exacerbated the conditions in developing nations. In more recent times, commercial and financial interests have gained prominence in the internationalization process and threaten to displace the less utilitarian and equally valuable aspects of this enriching and necessary transformation of higher education.

Recommendations

In recognition of the urgency to take positive actions, the International Association of Universities recommends that:

1. higher education institutions seize the initiative in the process of internationalization rather than reacting to external globalization forces, such as the market, in determining their actions;
2. higher education leaders, with active support of all levels of the academic community, develop clear institutional internationalization policies and programmes that are seen as integral to the life of the institution and as such enjoy adequate internal and external funding;
3. this support be facilitated by the creation of a Forum on Internationalization Policy by the IAU and its Member Organisations for the exchange of ideas and experience;
4. the curriculum of the university reflect the preparation of international citizens, through facilitating language competence; and understanding of global, international, and regional issues; preparation of experts in areas needed for such fields as information technology and science, peace and conflict resolution, and sustainable development, as well as the special curricular needs of international students;
5. North-South cooperation in higher education, focusing as it does on human resource development, be recognized as a major instrument of the fight against inequality among nations, people, and groups and be given adequate support and funding by national development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and private foundations;
6. the highly successful and valuable academic mobility programmes developed within particular regions (Europe, Asia, North America) continue to serve as catalysts and models to expand such flows more widely to ever-growing numbers of individuals and institutions on the global level. Efforts should be made to promote the growth of academic mobility programmes in the other regions of the world (Africa, Middle East, Latin America) as well as expanding inter- regional programmes of inter-university cooperation;
7. institutions of higher education take pro-active measures to ensure the quality of the internationalization process by making use of existing quality review expertise developed by various organizations and that IAU make such projects known among its membership and contribute to the development of a roster of experts available to take part on peer review teams;
8. the expansion of education export development be conducted within internationally ethical codes of good practice and be accompanied by research to evaluate its educational and economic impact and to sustain quality control;
9. the expertise and experience of retired faculty members and scholars be mobilized and shared across the North-South divide in an *Academics without Borders* volunteer programme to be facilitated by IAU and UNESCO;
10. UNESCO, national governments, and educational institutions each demonstrate their commitment to international cooperation in higher education by implementing , within their respective purview, policies that remove obstacles to mobility, such as stringent visa requirements, restrictive recognition practices, and other regulations which impede the flow of students and academics; and
11. all internationalization programmes be founded on the principle of partnership among equals and promote intercultural competence and a culture of peace among global citizens