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# Notes for Latin American Educational Integration.

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**Abstract**

Studies on internationalization in universities, internationalization of the curriculum and internationalization of research are growing exponentially in the international literature, accounting for a phenomenon of vital importance for the development of the universities themselves and of higher education. Why do universities need to internationalize? Mercantilism, rankings. What are the benefits of an internationalization that integrates?

The international dimension is present in the very name of the university, in its evolution. Traditionally, the intensity of the international dimension has been associated with the quality and prestige of universities, but the concept of internationalization is forged from a mercantilist approach to higher education. Higher education systems have registered in the last two decades a process of strong diversification -both in its organization and in its quality- with the inclusion of different and contradictory university models

**Keywords:** universities, internationalization, integration, knowledge

**Education and Integration**

Studies on internationalization in universities, internationalization of the curriculum and internationalization of research are growing exponentially in the international literature, accounting for a phenomenon of vital importance for the development of the universities themselves and of higher education. Why do universities need to internationalize? Mercantilism, rankings. What are the benefits of an internationalization that integrates?

The international dimension is present in the very name of the university, in its evolution (Sebastián, 2011). Traditionally, the intensity of the international dimension has been associated with the quality and prestige of universities, but the concept of internationalization is forged from a mercantilist approach to higher education (Sebastián, 2011).

Higher education systems have registered in the last two decades a process of strong diversification -both in its organization and in its quality- with the inclusion of different and

contradictory university models (Lamarra, 2010). With institutional diversification and disparity in relation to quality, a great heterogeneity appears in terms of university models, which are more like "deformations" of the Napoleonic model since, in many cases, certain negative aspects of the model are maintained and deepened. professionalist model by faculties (Beyond the limits New ways to reinvent higher education, 2022).

Sebastián (2011) examines the internationalization of universities as a dual process, with one dimension that is expressed towards the interior and another that is expressed towards the exterior of the universities. Both dimensions contribute to internationalization, but they have different and complementary strategies, modes of expression and impacts.

Internationalization can be conceived, on the one hand, as a process for improving the quality and relevance of university functions and, on the other, as an instrument for international projection. These are the sides of the internationalization coin, the presence of the international dimension within the institution and the presence in the international space of higher education.

The term represents a wide range of proposals and activities that has multiple dimensions and actors in higher education and does not constitute a homogeneous or unidirectional process. It also refers to two opposing visions that account for conflicting visions, on the one hand, the internationalization model focused on cooperation and traditional international solidarity, on the other, a competitive model, oriented to the search for benefits. The first perspective is characterized by the contributions of Didou Aupetit, 2007; Siufi, 2009; De Wit, 2011 as a solidary internationalization, as a possibility of improving the quality of higher education and institutional strengthening in a broad and more horizontal sense. Meanwhile, the second vision, almost hegemonic, in which supranational organizations such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are positioned, understands internationalization within the framework of the challenges of higher education in the context of economic globalization and the expansion of markets (De Wit, 2011).

### **Higher education**

Until the 1980s, higher education had been predominantly state-owned and with strong institutional and academic autonomy from the universities, starting with the University Reform Movement originated at the National University of Córdoba, Argentina, in 1918 (Lamarra, 2010).

Four macro trends have led to the transformation of higher education systems and institutions: the rapid expansion of enrollment with persistent disparities; internationalization; the growing role of advanced technologies; changes in funding approaches; and more complex liability frameworks.

The disparate expansion has characterized the HE in recent decades. Today, a worldwide participation of 235 million students is assumed, although serious disparities in HE still persist, especially in the global South. On the other hand, students from traditionally underrepresented groups also have lower completion rates and tend to be enrolled in less prestigious higher education institutions, which means fewer job market opportunities and lower outcomes.

In recent decades there has also been a growth in the Internationalization of Higher Education. International student mobility has grown at an unprecedented rate. More than 5.4 million students were studying abroad in 2017, a nearly threefold increase from just

over 2 million in 2000, according to the Beyond Boundaries New Ways Working Paper. to reinvent higher education (2022).

This number is projected to grow to 8 million by 2025. These trends have led to the development of “second generation” regional recognition conventions, as well as the 2019 World Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications relating to Higher Education, to help that recognition, mobility and inter-university cooperation become a reality for millions of people.

Technological advances, including the rapid evolution of computing power and the reach of the Internet, fueled by advances in artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and automation, have facilitated the formation of networks within and between countries, that facilitate collaboration between student groups, instructors, researchers, and learning communities. These networks can pool resources and knowledge for joint teaching and research activities. At the same time, increasing reliance on digital information and advanced communication technologies translates into quality problems, which can lead to low retention rates, and the danger of a growing digital divide, as stated manifest during the pandemic as argued in the Working Document Beyond the limits New ways to reinvent Higher Education (2022).

The transformations of financing approaches. Many higher education systems are forced to function with insufficient public investment, especially in Africa, Central Asia and Latin America. Three trends are linked: increasing reliance on performance-based allocation mechanisms; the introduction of specific tuition-free schemes and the launch of academic excellence initiatives to support the creation of world-class universities. However, in many countries, instead of higher education becoming increasingly publicly funded and therefore free to students, the prevailing trend has been to increase tuition fees and other indirect costs.

Accountability frameworks within HEIs and SE systems have grown in complexity to prioritize quality and/or facilitate flexibility in learning. Some systems are changing to emphasize learning outcomes, employability, diversity and inclusion. At the same time, the significant growth in the number of HEIs and the diversity of program offerings, including through digital means, has increased the pressure on quality assurance at the systemic and institutional level.

The scenarios through which current Higher Education is going can be described as follows:

Expansion of the Knowledge Society

Expansion in the demand for Higher Education

Different qualities and segmentation between countries and within them. Presence of Asymmetries.

- Postgraduate development
- New cross-border providers
- Knowledge Commercialization
- Common academic spaces

## **Internationalization**

This paper seeks to establish links and disagreements between the current and relevant bibliography that addresses the internationalization of universities in Argentina. and constitutes a strategic input for the development of this thesis. Studies on internationalization in universities, internationalization of the curriculum and internationalization of research are growing exponentially in the international literature, accounting for a phenomenon of vital importance for the development of the universities themselves and of higher education.

Brunstein (2009) highlights that the predominant trend is precisely in one or another element of internationalization such as global associations, recruitment of international teachers and students or initiatives of education abroad. The benefit of a systemic approach to internationalization – Brunstein points out – is that it allows us to understand how a decision, activity, custom or structure can inhibit or stimulate significant change in the general process. Take, for example, the case of a university seeking to double its education participation abroad within a

For the Virginia University scholar, there is no accepted definition of what constitutes a global university. For the purposes of this document, a global university is one in which international and multicultural experiences and perspectives are fully embedded in its teaching and learning, research and discovery, and outreach and engagement missions.

The ten steps to internationalize universities

1. Internationalize the strategic plan,
2. internationalize the academic curriculum,
3. remove barriers to study abroad,
4. require foreign language skills,
5. internationalize the hiring of teachers,
6. incorporate international contributions to the professional assessment system for teachers,
7. raise the importance of international offices in the university management system and place officials on the governing council and key committees,
8. take a holistic approach to the international student experience,
9. take advantage of the knowledge and experience of immigrants and foreigners residing in the local community,
10. and prioritize global academic collaborations

Knight (2012) highlights that internationalization has been one of the most critical factors shaping higher education in the last three decades and the bifurcation of internationalization is built on two interdependent pillars—“at home” and “abroad”. ”. The international dimension of the curriculum has progressed from a focus on area studies and foreign language to the integration of international, global, intercultural and comparative perspectives in the teaching/learning process and program content. Academic mobility has gone from student to provider and program mobility. Cross-border education has gradually moved from a development cooperation framework to a partnership model and now to a commercial competition orientation.



Source: Knight, 2010.

Here is a summary of authors who in recent years have examined the internationalization of universities in the Argentine context and that we consider relevant to address in order to account for the phenomenon with its different expressions at the local level.

In Argentina, since 2003 governments have promoted lines of action and financing to promote internationalization that have served to strengthen the international activities of universities (Astur and Larrea, 2012), incorporating a new function with dual and transversal characteristics to the universities. traditional university functions of teaching, research, management and extension (Ramírez, 2017). The study of internationalization in Argentine universities can be considered strategic, as one of the key elements for the development of higher education, the improvement of academic quality, research and production of knowledge, and the development of the international profile of students.

Ramírez (2017) intends to study the meaning and intensity of internationalization in Argentine universities and in his analysis, assumes that the institutions are at the center of a latent tension between global hegemonic trends and the internationalization actions carried out. by local actors. Ramírez (2017) maintains that the internationalization of higher education produces specific effects within universities and in this sense, presents an analysis of specific institutional cases, in the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires and in universities in the interior of the country, with the aim of in order to detect which are the engines that drive internationalization in institutions, how they transit it and in what directions.

Abba, López and Astorga (2010) address the phenomenon of the internationalization of higher education and in particular of the university. More specifically, the construction of a contextualized, multidimensional and operational definition of internationalization is proposed. Contextualized by what it considers the characteristics of the development of the Argentine university system and the reconfigurations that global trends acquire in the local space. In this sense, it is worth noting the growing presence of internationalization in the field of public policies, which is evident in Argentina, with the proposals issued by the Secretary of University Policies regarding the internationalization of universities. Secondly,

multidimensional, because it takes into account the various aspects of internationalization (economic, financial, curricular, academic, institutional, among others), considering them as actors that carry it out and the impact at the institutional and organizational level, without losing sight of the broader framework in which they operate. Finally, operational; that is, that allows establishing a series of indicators in order to build an index that allows characterizing the degrees of internationalization of Argentine universities.

Taborga; Lopez Paz; Oregioni and Abba (2013), on the other hand, present an interpretive conceptual framework of the phenomenon of internationalization from a critical perspective: that is, taking into account the positive and negative aspects of it for the development of Argentine university teaching and research, as well as the different logics and actors that intertwine in the formulation of internationalization policies and practices. The authors characterize the current context of passage from an internationalization exogenously driven by international organizations to one fostered by national governments with perspectives on strengthening their universities and the growing consolidation of ties between Latin American countries. In this framework, the selected Argentine cases are worked on, ending with a series of reflections on what is exposed in the chapter.

Botto (2018), meanwhile, examines the process of internationalization of higher education in Argentina, within the framework of the debate on the scope of structural reforms in Latin America. Through the historical reconstruction of the trajectory followed by the Argentine higher education system between 1995 and 2015, we sought to contribute to the debate on the nature of the reform and the factors that determined its origins and scope. Botto (2018) highlights that the selection of the Argentine case was made by virtue of its national peculiarities, which would make it an example of the possibilities of reform in terms of privatization, decentralization and government (de) regulation. The conclusions demystify both the explanations that speak of an exogenous determination, as well as the voluntaristic theses that speak of the ideological orientations and political calculations of the government leaders.

Artola, Morettini and Blanco (2014) carried out a study in which they classified four types of universities in Argentina, with the data available in the Secretary of University Policies for the year 2014 regarding the number of students, teachers and resources granted by the state to each. one of the public management universities in Argentina. They grouped Argentine universities into four categories (very large, large, medium and small), based on their size and participation in the distribution of national budget resources. The study they promoted covers three types or categories of universities in Argentina (an intentional sample) to recognize characteristics, developments and challenges of Internationalization in Argentina in the period 2010-2020. The proposed classification is as follows: large universities, medium-sized universities and new universities. The criteria that supported this classification are those of its size, year of birth, number of students. To do this, they reviewed the date of foundation, number of teachers in the faculty, number of graduate and enrolled students, academic offer, and budget.

Through links with universities, the experience of some professors who had experiences of links and trips abroad supported by their own academic networks has been known. The author of this text has not participated in network experiences, although he has participated in academic events abroad.

These experiences are rich and beneficial through networks and in the alternatives that internationalization processes offer to universities for the teaching sector, we understand

that if they are adequately transmitted to the university community and can encourage the interest and participation of other teachers.

Otherwise, they are only beneficial for the academic himself. I understand that university integration, internationalization as a multidimensional process, must be formulated from an institutional perspective, where the fruits of the exchange incorporate benefits of various kinds for the universities themselves. A model of complementation and integration of universities could be the most appropriate in our contexts, taking advantage of the geographical proximity of different Argentine regions with neighboring countries. In this sense, Sebastián (2011) has specified that the evolution and application of the concept of internationalization to the institutional sphere of universities requires a reinterpretation of this concept and its consideration as a dual sphere, associating it not only with the international projection of capacities teachers and researchers, but with institutional strengthening strategies.

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