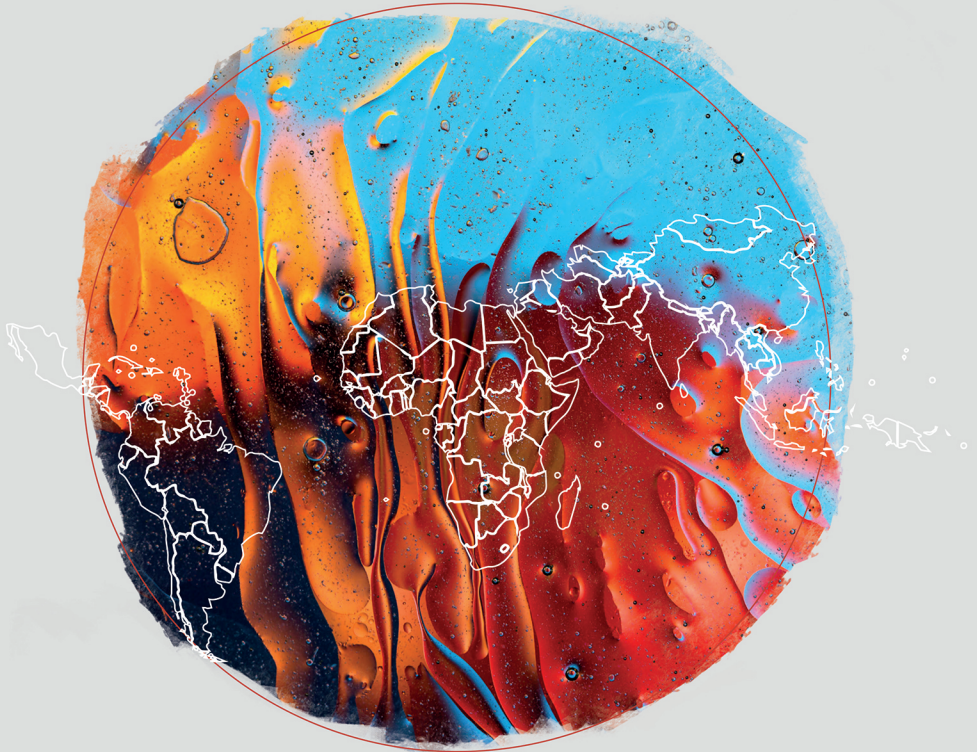


DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON CREATING A FAIRER SOCIETY



CRITICAL  
REFLECTIONS ON THE  
INTERNATIONALISATION  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

*Edited by*

EMNET TADESSE WOLDEGIORGIS AND CHERYL QIUMEI YU

# **Critical Reflections on the Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Global South**

# DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON CREATING A FAIRER SOCIETY

A fair society is one that is just, inclusive and embracing of all without any barriers to participation based on sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, ethnicity, age, class, ability or any other social difference. One where there is access to healthcare and education, technology, justice, strong institutions, peace and security, social protection, decent work and housing. But how can research truly contribute to creating global equity and diversity without showcasing diverse voices that are underrepresented in academia or paying specific attention to the Global South?

Including books addressing key challenges and issues within the social sciences which are essential to creating a fairer society for all with specific reference to the Global South, *Diverse Perspectives on Creating a Fairer Society* amplifies underrepresented voices showcasing Black, Asian and minority ethnic voices, authorship from the Global South and academics who work to amplify diverse voices.

With the primary aim of showcasing authorship and voices from beyond the Global North, the series welcomes submissions from established and junior authors on cutting-edge and high-level research on key topics that feature in global news and public debate, specifically from and about the Global South in national and international contexts. Harnessing research across a range of diversities of people and place to generate previously unheard insights, the series offers a truly global perspective on the current societal debates of the 21st century bringing contemporary debate in the social sciences from diverse voices to light.

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EDITED BY

**EMNET TADESSE WOLDEGIORGIS**

*University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

and

**CHERYL QIUMEI YU**

*University for the Creative Arts, UK*



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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAPES	Coordenação De Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior [Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel]
CsF	Ciência Sem Fronteiras [Science without Borders]
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DRI	Diretoria de Relações Internacionais [Office of International Affairs]
FAUBAI	Forum of Advisory Councils for Brazilian Higher Education Institutions
HEI	higher education institution
HBI	historically black institution
HUST	Huazhong University of Science and Technology
HWI	historically white institutions/universities
ICEF	International Consultants for Education and Fairs
ICT	information and communication technology
IHE	internationalisation of higher education
IA	internationalisation abroad
IaD	internationalisation at a distance
IaH	internationalisation at home
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	intellectual property
IsF	Idiomas Sem Fronteiras [Languages without Borders]
KTP	knowledge transfer partnership
LGBTQI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and intersex
MENA	Middle East/North Africa
MUIC	Mahidol University International College
NAFSA	NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NLMM	neoliberal market model
NPM	new public management
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NYU	New York University
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SSC	South–South cooperation

*x List of Acronyms and Abbreviations*

STEM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
TNE	transnational education
TSUIC	Taksin University International College
UFES	Federal University of Espirito Santo
UFMG	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UoA	University of Alpha
WCU	world-class university
WTO	World Trade Organization

## About the Authors

**Prof Maria Julieta Abba** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Humanities and Researcher in the Post-Graduate Program of Education of Unisinos University in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, where she also coordinates the Center for International Studies in Education. Professor Abba is the Co-founder of the Latin American Network of Researchers and Managers in Internationalization of Higher Education and Co-coordinator of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Chair in Education for Global Citizenship and Socio-Environmental Justice.

**Prof Roger W. Anderson** is currently an Assistant Professor of International Languages & Cultures at Central State University. This is Ohio's only public historically black university. Roger teaches French, Arabic and globally themed courses. He earned a PhD in Foreign/Second Language Education from Ohio State University, Master's degrees in African Studies and French from Ohio University and in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language from Middlebury College. His research focuses on second language acquisition, *la Francophonie*, Arabic language education, and intercultural/global education. Roger believes that a global education must include international language study and intercultural competence. He also reviews academic journals and competitive awards (namely, Boren Awards for linguistic and cultural knowledge for aspiring US federal government employees and Critical Language Scholarships aimed at building US international engagement). He is an active member of the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence, the Ohio Foreign Language Association and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Off-campus, he enjoys learning new world languages, hiking and welcoming newcomers to Ohio.

**Ronald Barnett** is Emeritus Professor of Higher Education at University College London Faculty of Education and Society, where he was a Pro-Director and Dean. He has spent a lifetime in advancing the philosophy of higher education as a field of study and is the inaugural President of the *Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society*. He was awarded the inaugural prize by the European Association for Educational Research for his 'outstanding contribution to Higher Education Research, Policy and Practice' and has received both an earned higher doctorate and an honorary doctorate. His 35+ books have been translated into many languages and he has given 150 keynote talks in over 40 countries. He has been cited in the academic literature around 30,000 times.

**Prof James Burford** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education Studies at the University of Warwick where he leads the Master of Arts in Global Education and International Development. Following career experiences in youth work and community development in New Zealand, James undertook his Doctoral studies at the University of Auckland where in 2017 his thesis was awarded the Sutton-Smith Doctoral Award. James' role at Warwick follows academic postings at the Faculty of Learning Sciences and Education at Thammasat University in Thailand and the Graduate Research School at La Trobe University in Australia. James has also had visiting research roles at the Centre of Contemplative Education at Mahidol University (2013–2014) and the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University (2017–2019). As a critical university studies scholar, James has an interest in postgraduate education and the academic profession. He has a particular focus on gender and sexuality, academic mobilities, academic conferences, academic writing and communication, and queer theorisations of higher education. James has an interest in methodological innovation, including visual methods. His recent work includes a co-edited book *Re-Imagining Doctoral Writing* (University Press of Colorado) and a forthcoming co-authored book *Making Sense of Academic Conferences: Presenting, Participating, and Organising* (Routledge). James' previous projects have included examinations of diversity education interventions in New Zealand secondary schools, academic migration to Thailand, and various projects on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and intersex (LGBTQI) exclusion in Thailand. His current projects focus on doctoral education, including a Research England-funded study investigating gatekeeping in doctoral admissions at the pre-application stage. James also has an ongoing international study examining the experiences of doctoral learners studying via distance pathways. James is an Associate Editor of Higher Education Research and Development and serves on the International Doctoral Education Research Network committee. Since 2017, James has co-edited the academic blog *Conference Inference* and he tweets at '@jjaburford'.

**Dr. Erich Dietrich** is a Professor of Higher Education and International Education at New York University (NYU). His research focuses on affirmative action in a comparative international context, comparative ideologies of race, and assessing learning outcomes of study abroad. He is Co-director of the Study Away and Global Education Research Project at NYU. From 2009 to 2019, Dietrich was Assistant Vice President of NYU Global Programs and Associate Dean of Global Affairs at NYU Steinhardt. He holds a PhD from NYU, an MA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a BA magna cum laude from Carleton College. Dietrich is the author of 'Ambition with Resistance: Affirmative Action in Brazil's Public Universities', in *Race, Politics and Education in Brazil* (edited by Rosana Heringer and Ollie Johnson and published by Palgrave in 2015).

**Prof Ato Essuman** is a Professor of Education and Development at the Methodist University in Ghana. Having served for a period as the Permanent Secretary of

the Ministry of Education in Ghana, he has a particular interest in education as this applies to policy, reform, financing, and management and practice. He is currently the Dean of the School of Research and Graduate Studies at the Methodist University. He has held key positions in both the private and the public sectors spanning more than four decades; in this time, he has worked with corporate bodies such as Nestlé, PriceWaterhouseCoopers and TechnoServe Incorporated, as well as bilateral and multilateral institutions. Prof Essuman has produced work of impressive quality, as is evident in the range and quality of his publications in academic journals, edited books, and other book publications. His scholarly accomplishments have led to invitations as keynote speaker (both locally and internationally) and reviewer of reputable international journals. He is currently the Chairman of the West African Examinations Council.

**Dr Matthew Robert Ferguson** is an Assistant Professor of Education and teaches in the Humanities and Language Division at Mahidol University International College (MUIC) in Bangkok, Thailand. Originally from British Columbia, Canada, Matthew has worked in Thai higher education for 20 years. He spent several years teaching English as a Foreign Language in the north of Thailand before settling at MUIC in 2010, where he teaches in the Intercultural Studies and Language Program. In the tradition of the scholar practitioner, he interrogates the interplay between classroom practice and wider movements occurring around the university. In particular, Matthew's focus is the unique shape that internationalisation takes in Thai higher education, and how actors like himself reconcile their place in it. To this end, he has spent more than a decade working with narrative inquiry, as both a phenomenon and a method, for understanding how stakeholders make sense of the rapid change that globalisation is bringing to Thailand, and how they see their role in the development of the country. With a profound love for the sensuous, he spends time paddling the quieter and historical canals near his Bangkok home, immersed in riparian life from his kayak, a respite from the surface streets. These moments make up part of the composition of lived experiences, working to interpret the present, in between then and later. These are the sensibilities he applies to his work as a researcher, writer, and classroom teacher.

**Dr Kyria Rebeca Finardi** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Languages, Culture and Education and a Researcher in the Post-Graduate Program of Education of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES) in Vitoria, Brazil. She also serves there as a member of the Internationalization Board, having created and coordinated the Language Division of the International Office of UFES between 2012 and 2020. Dr Finardi was the President of the Brazilian Association of Applied Linguistics for 2018–2019 and is the Co-founder and Co-coordinator of the Ibero-America Association of Applied Linguistics. She is currently the Vice President of the International Association of Applied Linguistics where she will take office as president for the 2024–2027 term. She has an extensive list of publications (+200), and more than 1,600 citations.

**Dr Savo Heleta** is a Researcher and Educator with more than 10 years of experience in higher education, academic research, curriculum development, teaching, research supervision and internationalisation in South Africa. His research focuses on decolonisation of knowledge, higher education internationalisation, international research collaboration, climate justice, and social justice advocacy and activism. As a survivor of the Bosnian war, he is the author of *Not My Turn to Die: Memoirs of a Broken Childhood in Bosnia*, published by AMACOM Books in 2008. Savo works as a Researcher and Internationalisation Specialist at the Durban University of Technology in South Africa.

**Dr Emmanuel Intsiful** has 10 years of teaching experience in the higher education sector in various countries. In 2019, he was selected to participate in the Young Scholars' Conference during the 42nd Comparative International Education Society Conference in San Francisco, United States. Emmanuel holds a third degree in Educational Leadership and Policy. Emmanuel works across various linguistic and geographic contexts at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences on a wide range of educational issues. Specifically, Emmanuel's research interests are in the critical sociology of higher education, higher education policy, critical pedagogy, Foucauldian studies, post-colonialism, poststructuralism, educational leadership, management, and governance. Emmanuel has gained experience in teaching in Ghana, China, and Australia, and is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Ali Mazuri Centre for Higher Education Studies at the University of Johannesburg.

**Dr Fernanda Leal** is the Director of International Relations at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil. She holds a PhD in Administration from the Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina, Brazil, and was a Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Higher Education, Boston College, United States (2018–2020). She is the author of several articles and book chapters on the internationalisation of higher education from a critical/decolonial perspective. She is also the leader of the thematic area 'university, society and state in contemporaneity' of the Division of Organizational Studies of the National Association of Research in Administration.

**Dr César Augusto Ferrari Martínez** holds a PhD in Education from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He has been studying the relationship between space and knowledge and has been focused on embodied geopolitics and scales. His work analyses the political significance of discourses, policies, and practices of international education in Latin American contexts. This work was funded by the Chilean Commission for Scientific and Technological Research under Grant 21160217.

**Dr Kanyesigye Rullonga Monicah** has more than 20 years of work experience in higher education administration and management which she obtained while serving in the education sector in Uganda. She holds a background in Social Sciences, a master's degree in human resource management in Education, and a PhD in Public Administration and Management with a specialisation in Governance and

Institutional Leadership. Her research interests cover higher education management and administration internationalisation of higher education and human resource management for education. She excels in stakeholder engagement, grants administration and accountability, employee development, risk management, and organisational development. Currently, she is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education, University of Johannesburg, where her research focus is in higher education management.

**Dr Panchalingam Suntharalingam** is the Associate Professor for Distance and Transnational Education for the College of Architecture and Design at Birmingham City University. He is also the Course Director for the Master of Arts in Design and Visualisation at Birmingham City University. He teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate courses in design and visualisation, engineering product design, interior architecture and design in the UK, India, Hong Kong, and China. Aside from the aforementioned areas of expertise and interest, Dr Suntharalingam's focus areas include interdisciplinary and scientific knowledge, knowledge transfer partnership (KTP) programmes, software programming, medical product design, interior products, applied research, rapid prototyping, and computer-aided design. His latest book chapter, published in India at age 75, *Thoughts and Reflections* (April 2023) explores the growth of India's private higher education provision since independence in 1947. The chapter explores why transnational education is an important collaborative requirement for Indian universities. Dr Suntharalingam holds a patent for a medical product with over 50,000 sales in the United States and over 8,000 in the United Kingdom and has numerous international papers on medical products. He is well known for opening computer-generated imagery title sequences featured on BBC and ITV Network programmes such as *Top Gear*. His wealth of experience with the manufacturing industry includes 19 KTPs with blue chip companies such as AGA Rangemaster, and he has gained 4 outstanding Innovate UK awards for achievement in innovation. In 2020, one of his KTPs was shortlisted for the Best of the Best KTPs in the United Kingdom. He is also an External Examiner at various national and international universities at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD levels.

**Anthony L. Wagner V** is a Doctoral Student in the International Education Program at NYU. His research interests focus on the public purposes of higher education and the internationalisation of higher education in Brazil. He is the Associate Director of Transform Mid-Atlantic, an association of colleges and universities in Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Delaware that advances equitable campus-community engagement. Wagner was a Fulbright grantee from 2018 to 2019 at the Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei in Minas Gerais, Brazil. He completed his Master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and a BA summa cum laude at Gettysburg College.

**Prof Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis** is an Associate Professor and the Director of the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies, University of Johannesburg. He holds a PhD from the University of Bayreuth, Germany, where he also worked



as a Researcher between 2015 and 2019. Emnet obtained a joint Master's Degree in Higher Education Studies from Oslo University (Norway), Tampere University (Finland), and Aveiro University (Portugal). He is an NRF-rated researcher with multiple peer-reviewed academic publications focusing on higher education in Africa. He obtained certification in the Netherlands with two advanced-level research training qualifications in higher education (from the Centre for Institutional Cooperation Vrije Universiteit [Amsterdam] and the Maastricht School of Management training on Leadership and Management, respectively). Before his PhD, he worked as Head of the Quality Assurance Office, Department Head and team leader at Mekelle University, Ethiopia. He has been researching higher education in Africa for the past 10 years and during this time he has published several peer-reviewed academic works on theories of regionalisation, internationalisation, academic mobility, the economics of higher education, partnership models, decolonisation debates, and harmonisation strategies in higher education.

**Dr Cheryl Qiumei Yu** has over 16 years of work experience in international higher education, encompassing student global recruitment and mobility, transnational education, and teaching and learning of international students. Currently, she works as Director of International Jimmy Choo Academy. Her PhD research focused on the *Inequality in Chinese Higher Education and Its Relation to Students' Internal Mobility: A Case Study of Internal Movement of Art and Design University Students*. Her research interest focuses on the comparative study of higher education between China and the United Kingdom, the internationalisation of higher education, teaching pedagogies, and critical theories. She has supervised PhD students in a wide range of subjects, including international education, fibre arts, art management and decolonial feminism, with a focus on the context of China. As an art director, she has also curated several international art exhibitions in the United Kingdom and China.

# Foreword: Ecosystems of Internationalisation

*Ronald Barnett*

What does it mean for higher education to be international? What is it to venture into a process of internationalisation? And what does it mean to form critical reflections on these matters? A beauty of this volume – so well edited and orchestrated by Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis and Cheryl Qiumei Yu – is that it does precisely what it says, and implies, on the tin. Here, we receive both new insights into what it is to be international and some highly nuanced critical reflections on the state of play in the current debate on the matter. Moreover, we are taken further, for the volume also offers us an array of suggestions as to how practices might be taken forward, not least with its admirable case studies from around the world. Given that this volume so adroitly accomplishes all of that, all I can helpfully do here in a Foreword, I think, is to chance my arm and share – to draw on the book's title – some speculative *Critical Reflections on the Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Global South* of my own.

The idea of internationalisation is intriguing itself. What is it to be *international*? Split in this way, the concept becomes open and – to use a popular term – emergent. It suggests not only two-way traffic between nations but some kind of equivalence; some kind of symmetry in contributions to a complex set of relationships (plural). But that 'inter' also hints at inter-actions and dynamism. The parties in the relationship enjoy a level of agency and exercise it. Moreover, when used in the context of a massive global system such as higher education, those interactions multiply with responses and counter-responses happening continuously. Internationalisation becomes a theatre of effervescent actions, encounters, and counter-actions. Country x takes in students from country y, only to be followed by a new situation in which country z provides a new offer (abolishes its visa requirement and/or lowers its fees) and so gains some (if not all) of those students and more.

This is a setting, therefore, of some turbulence. Internationalisation has become an arena of global competitiveness. Moreover, the competitiveness is not just institutional (between institutions of higher education) but is now geo-political. International students are the not just bearers of potential for export markets but carry geo-political clout. Moreover, as this volume so powerfully identifies, the platforms on which internationalisation takes place are far from

level: indeed, the relationships between institutions are often *asymmetrical*, with university x exercising more epistemological and status leverage than university y (with which university x is forging some kind of interconnection). And this asymmetry is evident in many forms – epistemic power, geo-political power, language, cultural capital, and financial resources.

There is, accordingly, a raft of different kinds of relationships that fall under the banner of internationalisation. I have in mind not only the activities that carry the flags of ‘research’ or ‘students’ but of the micro-activities that are subsumed by those broad categories. The *pedagogical relationship* that involves international students, for example, connotes very many pertinent actions and interactions, sentiments and values, and presuppositions and orientations, as to how the pedagogical relationship is construed and practised by both teachers and students; and these dimensions reach deeply. For instance, just how are the bureaucratic online forms for student registration being understood by the different parties? What seems straightforward to those in the host institution may seem daunting, peculiar, arcane or even threatening to a youngish international student on the other side of the world and in a distant culture.

But in speaking of a raft of different relationships between institutions, I have even more in mind. Institutions may be adjudged to have *intentional* and *non-intentional* orientations in a cross-institutional international relationship. Institution x (in one country) may work with institution y (in another country) in setting up a joint programme of study, or may send out its emissaries to institution y in a bid to woo potential students. University x may also have determined, as part of a new research strategy, to encourage its staff to organise joint projects with university y. (The extent to which these activities are genuinely joint, as indicated, is a further matter.) The point is that such ventures are examples of *intentional* forms of internationalisation.

However, (at least in the aggregate) institutions – say in the Global North – may and do exercise *non-intentional* interconnections with institutions in the Global South. And, viewed in the round, those interconnections may be judged to exhibit power differentials. World rankings are not mere descriptors of states of affairs but exert much influence, and in situations of considerable inequities. Some may even say that there is a new form of colonialism present here; call it *epistemic colonisation*. Be that as it may, in a world of knowledge capitalism – which includes varieties of cross-institutional competition – institutions stand in relation to each other with all manner of *degrees of intentionality*.

In these brief reflections, we have many hares running, indicative of multiple interests, forces, patterns, and power-plays at work. These vectors are variously epistemic, educational, national, political, cultural, and identity-forming in character. Also, they are to be found right across most (if not all) of the activities and practices of universities (including student admissions, the contents of study programmes, the pedagogical relationship, the languages of instruction and communication, style of papers in journals, funding of cross-national research projects, and construction of cross-national projects).

In shedding light on all these movements and patterns, we might be tempted to call up the idea (especially from Félix Guattari) of ‘lines of flight’. Present here, it

might be suggested, are multiple lines of flight, going in a myriad of directions. A single institution may be involved in projects and positions of internationalisation that even cut across each other. On the one hand, staff may be encouraged to seek to understand something of the cultural backgrounds and pre-conceptualisations of teaching and learning held by their international students. On the other hand, those same staff – in, say, reviewing papers for academic journals – may be unwittingly down-valuing texts from those students' very home nations that reflect alternative conceptions of bonafide academic work.

Ultimately, however, the 'lines of flight' gambit is inadequate, for the forces at work are not travelling in definite directions, but are much more haphazard. In the settings that may be construed as spaces of internationalisation, a more powerful metaphor is that of ecosystem. What we are witnessing is much more a set of mega-ecosystems moving in and out of each other, like giant clouds. These ecosystems include those of knowledge, learning, economy, the polity, individuals and their identity, culture and societal systems. These ecosystems flow into each other and internationalisation flows across them all and they in it.

Seeing internationalisation in this way (as flows within and across even larger flows) suggests both that internationalisation is subject to huge forces that come at it out-of-the-blue (the clouds keep shifting) and yet has some possibilities of its own – at least marginally – to shape matters. Options may keep arising for those (individuals, institutions, and nations) concerned with internationalisation. And this is where this volume scores so well, in conducting its conversations so widely, for it opens windows to new possibilities in widening diversity and in lessening inequalities – and even at global levels.

I have just named seven great ecosystems in which internationalisation is implicated – knowledge, learning, the economy, the national and global polity, individuals (each as a complex ecosystem), social institutions, and culture. These are surely the ecosystems most commonly in play in the relevant debates. However, identifying ecosystems at work in this way prompts the issue as to whether there is any other major ecosystem that might come into the reckoning concerning internationalisation. Is it not time, for instance, that Nature – as an ecosystem – made an entrance into the plot?

In its use of fossil fuels and wider environmental impacts, internationalisation is obviously affecting Nature. But there are surely wider and more diffuse layerings at work, evident in the very absence of Nature in the internationalisation debate. There is a darkness here, with students and staff of many universities being drawn widely from countries across the world, including (but also beyond) the Global South. Deep within the cultures of the students and staff are disparate ideas of the relationships of human beings to Nature. These ideas could be brought out, both to enhance the culture of universities and to help in the flourishing of pedagogies and curricula.

It is a huge strength of this volume that its very breadth and innovative insights subtly intimate that the internationalisation debates can and should go on being widened still further. Internationalisation as a phenomenon in the world possesses an open character, always extending its elements and their cross-currents.

*xx Foreword: Ecosystems of Internationalisation*

In the process, our concepts and frameworks – and critiques – concerned with internationalisation are always susceptible to being extended with new insights and frameworks. No greater accolade can be accorded this volume, therefore, than to say of it that it is a propaedeutic to yet further study and the creation of additional frameworks through which we might understand internationalisation and glimpse ways of developing practices anew.

Ronald Barnett  
London, November 2023

# Preface

In an era characterised by the continuous expansion of global knowledge exchange and research networks, the internationalisation of higher education emerges as a pivotal subject of investigation and scholarly inquiry. This book embarks on a journey to critically examine the internationalisation of higher education, adopting a perspective rooted in the social sciences. It endeavours to disrupt the prevailing Eurocentric paradigm of internationalisation and interrogates a myriad of thought-provoking inquiries. Deconstructing the underlying motivations driving internationalisation processes and the forces behind them is crucial. Driven by the relentless march of global capitalism, the intrusion of market forces has resulted in the commercialisation and liberalisation of knowledge. In this paradigm, students are often cast as customers, and profit frequently takes precedence over the core purpose of education. Can internationalisation effectively accommodate local imperatives alongside global neoliberal influences? Balancing local and global interests in internationalisation processes is a complex task because – while adhering to international benchmarks for global competitiveness – preserving the local significance of institutions presents a significant challenge. These are the issues the book is committed to discussing and addressing.

Our perspective of internationalisation extends beyond the mere mobility of students or the implementation of joint programmes or research; it encompasses diverse but equal positioning of knowledge, teaching and learning, language, culture and values. Partnerships in higher education, in particular, serve not only as instruments for institutionalisation but also as vital means of introducing new voices and perspectives to the discourse within universities. This book is driven by a curiosity to address and dissect the models and approaches that underlie meaningful international higher education partnerships. The book argues for a cooperative approach that embraces diversity and acknowledges the unique contributions of each higher education system. By questioning the notion of competition, it highlights how rivalry perpetuates hegemony and reinforces the unjust playing field of globalisation. In contrast, a cooperative approach creates a pooled space where institutions can collaborate, exchange innovations and share knowledge without imposing power hierarchies. This cooperative framework fosters a more inclusive and equitable internationalisation process, one that recognises and values the diverse perspectives and strengths of all participants.

Using case studies from diverse countries, this book thoroughly examines the intricacies of internationalisation from the perspective of the Global South. Comparisons are drawn with the practices and assumptions prevalent in the

Global North. The volume questions whether the commonly held conception of internationalisation is universally applicable. It discusses the implications of the brain drain and the political economy of tuition fees on student mobility from the Global South to the Global North. It challenges the prevailing discourse that portrays internationalisation solely as a process guided by neoliberal notions of competition and educational imperialism. This discourse has too often led to the Global South being marginalised. In some cases, international (Global South) students are used in Global North universities to compensate for the financial challenges caused by reduced government funds and capped tuition fees for domestic students. Furthermore, the book embarks on a reflective exploration of the debate surrounding rankings, prestige and the notion of ‘authentic’ quality as a marketing tool for international degrees, often leaving local institutions feeling undervalued and inferior. Thus, this book critically examines internationalisation using theories that emphasise power dynamics and social inequalities within higher education systems. It views internationalisation as a contested space where various agents with differing interests perpetuate global inequalities, particularly between the Global North and Global South.

Our aim is to provide fresh perspectives on the trends, challenges and prospects for the internationalisation of higher education in the Global South. It aims to generate critical reflection in internationalisation practices and to create confidence in the local knowledge and education in the Global South. Through a series of logically sequenced chapters, we dip into the critical aspects of this complex phenomenon. We challenge prevailing assumptions, practices, philosophies and ideologies and propose an alternative trajectory for the internationalisation of higher education in the Global South. Moreover, this book underscores the significance of sustainability and decolonisation in internationalisation efforts. It calls for a shift away from exploitative practices and towards a more sustainable and just approach that dismantles colonial legacies and power imbalances. Ultimately, it urges a shift towards pluriversity, interculturality, sustainability and global social justice in the future of international relations in higher education.

This book is not an exhaustive, but it aspires to contribute to the ongoing discourse on internationalisation by offering a critical analysis of its implications for society. By examining internationalisation through the lens of power dynamics and social inequalities, we aim to foster a more equitable and inclusive approach to this vital aspect of higher education in the Global South.