



Understanding Internationalization of Higher Education in Indonesia: Prospects and Challenges

Teuku Zulfikar¹, Emawati², Amiruddin³, Cut Fadhilah Alfa Karim⁴

^{1, 3 & 4} Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

² Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

*Correspondence to: teuku.zulfikar@acehresearch.org

Abstract: The internationalization of higher education plays a crucial role in expanding the global reach and competitiveness of universities. In the context of institutional internationalization, university top management is expected to engage actively in strategic planning to ensure the effective implementation of internationalization programs. This study examines the strategic efforts undertaken by three universities in achieving their internationalization goals. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions involving top management representatives from the respective postgraduate schools. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with several lecturers and directors of international offices to obtain comprehensive insights into institutional practices and policies. The findings reveal that the universities employed a range of contextually distinctive yet complementary strategies to strengthen their internationalization agendas. These strategies include fostering research and publication collaborations, hosting visiting lecturers, offering double-degree programs, appointing adjunct professors, organizing international conferences, and providing research fellowships. The study highlights the importance of strategic leadership and institutional commitment in advancing higher education internationalization initiatives.

Keywords: Strategic management planning; internationalization; joint research; publication.

How To Cite: Zulfikar, T., Emawati, E., Amiruddin, A., & Alfa Karim, C. (2026). Understanding internationalization of higher education in Indonesia: Prospects and challenges. *Al-Ta'lim Journal*, 33(2). doi:<https://doi.org/10.15548/jt.v33i2.1170>

Article info: Submitted: 12nd February 2026 | Revised: 11st June 2026 | Accepted: 28th June 2026

INTRODUCTION

Internationalization process of higher education, a deliberate effort to prepare graduates for global engagement, has evolved over time. Knight (2008, 2011, 2012), nevertheless, re-conceptualizes it as an ongoing process of integrating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the purposes, functions, and delivery of higher education, a perspective further supported by Bedenlier and Zawacki-Ritcher (2018) and Almeida, et al. (2019). Zhou (2016) frames internationalization as a staged process shaped by national contexts, culminating in the development of the 21st century competencies and global connectivity. Internationalization has developed steadily in recent decades (Bedenlier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015); and it became the interest of many countries (Kreber, 2009), for example, Japan (Ota, 2018); United States of America and Canada (Buckner, 2019; Dewey & Duff, 2009). As the labor market demands graduates with professional, academic, multilingual, social, and intercultural skills and attitudes, internationalizing higher education is indeed inevitably crucial (Cary & Rockwell, 2020; Chen, et al., 2019; Qiang, 2003; Wagner, 2005).

At both institutional and national levels, internationalization requires collaborative leadership and stakeholder engagement (Paige, 2005) and should encompass on-campus as well as cross-border activities (De Wit, 2019; De Wit & Deca, 2020). Universities in

developed and developing countries are too involved in internationalization. For example, most Indonesian universities, including my institution set a bold ambition for their worldwide ranking. Altbach (2007) identifies key drivers of internationalization, including market competitiveness, knowledge and language acquisition, and curriculum enhancement, along with strategies such as branch campuses, international partnerships, student mobility programs, and English-medium instruction. At a broader level, Sharipov (2020) situates internationalization within the globalizing landscape of higher education, noting its widespread adoption worldwide. Scholars and research organisations agree that the 21st century university graduates must interact with people from diverse geographical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds to succeed in a globalised society.

However, internationalizing universities is complex due to many factors, such as resource management, teaching workloads, staff attitudes, and other related issues (Kwiek, 2020; Paige, 2005). In addition, organizational culture plays a critical role in supporting internationalization. Studies by Gaus, et al., (2019) and Kumar and Sharma (2018), for example demonstrate that cultures emphasizing continuous learning, innovation, collaboration, and information sharing significantly enhance international engagement. Such environments enable institutions to overcome resource constraints and capitalize on global opportunities, while innovation-oriented cultures foster the “*learning advantages of novelty*.” For that reason, higher education institutions may promote internationalization through integrated approaches that combine academic mobility, curriculum internationalization, competency development, and institutional processes (Ozturgut, et al., 2014).

However, effective implementation requires a clear strategic vision, strong leadership commitment, and adequate financial and human resource support (McCarthy, 2007). In the attempt to reach internationalization, some universities establish international academic programs like international seminars, joint research collaborations, double degrees, and joint publications to build an international reputation (Russel, et al., 2008; Borsetto & Saccon, 2022). Thus, more universities are implementing ways to help students understand global interconnection (Agnew, 2012; Breton & Lambert, 2003; Wagner, et al., 2019). In addition, Kwiek and Roszka (2021), for example, examine the US university internationalization practices, which is categorized in two main themes: 1) hosting international events to promote cultural awareness and diversity through training and education, and 2) adopting international aspects into their institutional architecture. Several researchers, including Wagner, et al., (2019), Borsetto and Saccon (2022), and Kwiek (2021), emphasize the importance of research collaboration and publication for internationalizing universities.

Studies on the internationalization process have been conducted across diverse settings and thematic focuses, including program implementation for internationalization (Steagall et al., 2021), the reconceptualization of internationalization (De Wit, 2019), global trends and future directions (De Wit & Altbach, 2021), theoretical frameworks of internationalization (Yao, 2021), motivations and realities of internationalization programs (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Qiang, 2003), experiences of stakeholders in the internationalization process (Jain, 2018), varying perspectives on internationalization (Kreber, 2009), the costs and benefits of internationalization (Jibeen & Khan, 2015), the relationship between internationalization and academic reputation (Sok & Bunry, 2021), and challenges in implementing internationalization processes (De Wit, 2017). Although these studies have substantially contributed to the conceptual and practical understanding

of internationalization, most were conducted within Western contexts and predominantly focused on policy, institutional strategy, or conceptual discourse.

Limited attention has been given to how internationalization is enacted within Indonesian higher education institutions, particularly across universities with different institutional characteristics and educational environments. Furthermore, previous studies have rarely compared how universities in diverse contexts interpret, negotiate, and implement internationalization practices. Addressing these gaps, this study examines how three Indonesian state universities, located in distinct geographical, institutional, and educational settings, engage in and experience the internationalization process. By comparing these universities, the study explores how contextual differences influence institutional strategies, implementation practices, and stakeholder experiences. The findings provide insights into context-specific approaches to internationalization and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of internationalization in Indonesian higher education.

METHOD

This qualitative multi-case study examines Indonesian state universities' internationalization strategies and challenges. The data was collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with key figures in those three universities. This study was done at three state universities. These universities were chosen for their academic reputation and national ranking: International Islamic Universities; Education State University; Islamic State University (all of which are referred as pseudonyms). The participants of the study were purposefully recruited from the following groups: 3 deans or directors of postgraduate school; 3 Deputy deans/directors; 3 heads of international office; and 3 lecturers, which the total of 12 participants. These participants' voices were analysed through composite narratives, since describing participants' perceptions individually will jeopardize their confidentiality (Robinson & Smith, 2010; Thompson, et al., 2025; Willis, 2019).

We conducted three Focus Group Discussions and also in-depth interviews with the deans and lecturers to address our research inquiries. The interviews focused on four questions on postgraduate schools' internationalization plans and strategies; available resource for internationalization; and challenges of internationalization process. Our data analysis follows coding techniques, suggested by Bryman, et al. (2021), consisting of Open, Axial, and Selective Coding. Multiple steps are involved in data analysis. First, all interviews must be transcribed. The transcript was then Open Coded. Axial Coding selected codes following Open Coding, and finally Selective Coding concludes data processing with a specific theory (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Lune & Berg, 2016; Glesne, 2015;). To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, this study employed several validation strategies.

Triangulation was conducted through multiple data sources and methods, including Focus Group Discussions, interviews, institutional documents, and policy-related information, allowing the researchers to compare and verify findings across participants and contexts. An audit trail was also maintained by systematically documenting research procedures, coding processes, theme development, and analytical reflections to ensure transparency and traceability of the analysis. In addition, member checking was carried out by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the researchers' understanding and to allow clarification or revision where necessary.

Researcher reflexivity was likewise continuously practiced through reflective notes and analytic memos to minimize potential bias and maintain interpretations grounded in participants' experiences. Through these procedures, the study sought to ensure methodological rigor, credibility, dependability, and analytical depth in examining postgraduate school internationalization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Our research across the three Indonesian state universities provides important insights into how the internationalization process is understood, planned, and implemented in different institutional contexts. The findings are presented according to the major themes generated through the coding process rather than being organized by individual research sites. This thematic approach allows for a comprehensive comparison of shared experiences, institutional practices, and contextual differences across the participating universities. The analysis follows the main research inquiries that guided the study. The first inquiry focuses on institutionalization plans and strategies for internationalization. Four interrelated themes emerged from the data, highlighting the universities' strategic priorities, institutional commitments, implementation approaches, and key challenges in advancing internationalization initiatives:

Institutionalized visions and missions

All three universities, International Islamic Universities, Education State University and Islamic State University explicitly state in their vision that they aim at taking the university to the global level. International Islamic Universities clearly states in its vision that the university aims at becoming an international university, and in fact, it is indicative from its name where it uses the word 'international' as its formal name of the university. This indicates that its main goal is to produce graduates who are able to participate and engage in the global world. As we shall see from the International Islamic Universities's vision: *"Creating a better world by advancing postgraduate education and outstanding research"*, and this vision is then realized through some mission statements, one of which *"Advancing Indonesian Islamic culture to contribute meaningfully to world civilization"*. International Islamic Universities's vision and mission indicate that process of education implemented in the university all aim at taking the university to the world level; and this can be realized through through various programs that allow the university to gain its international reputation.

In addition, Islamic State University aims at becoming: *"a modern, professional, and trustworthy State Islamic University grounded in Islamic values, national identity, and universal principles, contributing to the development of a pious, moderate, intelligent, and globally competitive society."* The term 'global competitiveness' indicates university goal to produce graduates who are capable at competing globally. This vision is then realized through the university missions, one of which states that *'the university strengthened academic policies and research activities that allow its students and graduates to address local, national and international expectations'*. In addition, due to this formal and institutionalized vision, the top management of the university as to engage in the strategic management planning, as to allow the vision and university missions to achieve. The top management has formally organized a team that work persistently to toward reaching World Class University Ranking.

As we analyze Education State University's vision and mission statements, the university does not explicitly use the word "international." However, interviews with the graduate school's top management, lecturers, and the director of the international office indicate that the university has undertaken persistent efforts and strategies to promote internationalization. According to the director of the graduate school, "our university has worked consistently to reach the international level through many possible ways, including inviting adjunct professors to teach in our university." In addition to recruiting international and visiting scholars, Education State University has expanded academic collaboration, encouraged lecturer participation in international conferences, and supported research partnerships with overseas institutions. These initiatives demonstrate that, although internationalization is not explicitly articulated in the university's formal statements, it has become an important part of Education State University's institutional development strategy.

Joint Publication & Research

All universities share commonalities in their internationalization process; they are found to engage, but in different degree, in joint research and publication. International Islamic Universities has been found to be excellent in this strategy due to its main mandates is to be an international Islamic University. The International Islamic Universities was initially established as an international Islamic university whose core aims is to run education, research and public service that meet international academic standard. For that very reason, faculty members at International Islamic Universities are encouraged to publish, especially co authorship with scholars from overseas universities. The obligation to publish in co-authorship with international scholars, encourage faculty members to find partnership and thus enable them to increase the number of joint publications. In addition, our Focus Group Discussion with top management of graduate school at Education State University, reveals that the graduate school regularly collaborated on research and published together.

The international program coordinator indicated that *"research collaboration is important to introduce our university, and joint publication is a plus"*. The lecturers added that: *"Publication is a place where we could introduce ourselves to the international audience; for example, in my case, having published, other researchers who share similar expertise would then invite joint publication"*. This shows that joint publication provides wider benefits; one the one hand, the university could be benefitted from this practice, on the other, it facilitates lecturers to getting known by global scholars. For example, upon co-authoring their articles, lecturers introduce their expertise toward wider audiences, and thus allow them to secure academic partnership. In addition, Education State University collaborates on projects that involve research, publication, and community service.

The top management of Education State University states that: *"We have made efforts to collaborate with many institutions overseas for research and publications. For example, last year we visited universities in South Korea, Japan and also universities in Southeast Asian countries. Our goal is to engage in co and joint research and publication"*. It is evident from the data that Education State University cultivates a strong link with a wide variety of international universities located in a number of countries, including the Netherlands, Japan, Germany, Australia, and Malaysia. In addition, as a state Islamic university, Islamic State University also encourages its faculty members to seek international co-authorship. However, the degree toward achieving this goal is slim, since

Islamic State University's faculty members are not so much encouraged to engage in joint research and publication with international scholars. Although the faculty members lack co-authorship with foreign scholars, most of them invited some scholars from other prominent Indonesian universities to engage in joint research and publication.

Guest Lecturers/adjunct professors

All three universities are in line with this strategy, in which guest lecturers from national and international educational institutions are invited to be the guest lecturers in seminar or conferences held therein. For example, International Islamic Universities regularly invite guest lecturers; and the majority of guest lecturers invited are from Middle Eastern countries and other Western States as well. International Islamic Universities has invited several of these Islamic Studies academic members as foreign guest lecturers. In the FGD, the top management of International Islamic Universities states that: *"We spend some budgets to invite guest lecturers and adjunct professor to visit our universities. These international guest lecturers are believed to let students experience wider perspective. Among guest lecturers invited are Ahmet T. Kuru, M. Al-Marakeby, Mehmet Asutay, Mohamed Raougui, Aria Nakissa, Abdullah Sahin, James Piscatori, and Greg Fealy. We invited them to take part in teaching, research and also joint publication"*.

The other two universities, Education State University and Islamic State University also consider having guest lecturers benefit them. Education State University as one of the prominent universities in Indonesia have invited many international scholars to be the guest lecturers, both short and long-term session. The top management of Education State University graduate school stated: *"For Education State University, inviting guest lecturers is significant, for that reason, Education State University invited scholars from Malaysia Abdul Rahim Ridzwan and Caroline Geetha Arokiadasan; Elisa Bortuzzo from Germany and other lecturers from Japan, South Korea, USA, Australia, and others from many different countries. We believe that international guest lecturers aimed at building international networking and at the same time giving spaces for students to learn from international academia"*. In addition, in the past two years, Islamic State University has invited over 10 short-term and long-term guest lecturers from many different countries.

This initiative is grounded in the belief that inviting guest lecturers is an effective strategy for exposing students and academic staff to international perspectives and global academic practices. During the focus group discussion, the university's top management explained: *"We have invited many short and long-term guest lecturers, such as Yunjeong Joo from South Korea; Ulvi Karagedik, Ibrahim Aslandur, and Patrick Ziegenhan from Germany; Rowan Gould, Will Nash, and John McCharty from Australia; Michael Feener, Daniel Birchok, and David Kloos from the USA, along with many other scholars from various countries."* These scholars have delivered lectures, conducted research training, facilitated collaborative research projects, and supported academic writing, thereby strengthening research capacity, expanding international networks, enhancing intercultural competence, and fostering sustainable global academic engagement throughout the university community.

Double Degrees

It is important for internationalization to provide the opportunity to earn a double degree. Our Focus Group Discussions reveal that all three universities take this initiative. For example, International Islamic Universities collaborate with several universities in UK, such as the University of Edinburg and SOAS London. To be exact, the faculty of Islamic

Studies is able to provide the double degree in the field of the Double Degree in Globalized Muslim World thanks to the support of the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the *Beasiswa Indonesia Bangkit*. This is a significant step forward in the long-term process of internationalization that the faculty of Islamic Studies at International Islamic Universities is undergoing. Likewise, Education State University considers double degree as an attempt for internationalization. For example, Education State University has run the double degree program with Tashkent State University of Economics di Uzbekistan; Tashkent State University of Economics; Hua-Shih College of Education, National Dong Hwa University Taiwan, Youngsan University, South Korea and other foreign universities.

This is in line with what the Director of Graduate School of Education State University mentioned that *“as the institution, we believe that running a double degree program would help our students learn from their international friends, lecturers and also educational system”*. Like the other two universities, Islamic State University also The Ministry of Religious Affairs sponsored the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between a Malaysian university and Islamic State University. The double degree program is entirely financed by the Indonesian Endowment Fund, as part of the *Beasiswa Indonesian Bangkit* initiative. The top management at Islamic State University states that: *“We are fortunate to have been included in the pilot project for the double degree program along with other three universities. The double degree is implemented across three departments: The curriculum offers advanced studies in Islamic Education, Islamic Economics, and Islamic Communication & Broadcasting”*.

All three universities have established double degree programs in collaboration with partner universities abroad as part of their internationalization strategies. These programs are designed to provide students with opportunities to experience different academic systems, strengthen intercultural competencies, and earn qualifications recognized by both institutions. In the cases of International Islamic Universities and Islamic State University, the implementation of these double degree programs has been fully funded by the Ministry of Religious Affairs through financial support provided by the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education. This funding has enabled greater student participation by reducing financial barriers while encouraging academic mobility and international collaboration. Consequently, the programs have contributed significantly to enhancing institutional reputation, expanding global partnerships, and strengthening the universities' international academic engagement.

International Conferences

The other and most popular internationalization program run by these three universities are international conferences. These universities believe that international conference is necessary for international networking. As a result, International Islamic Universities and Islamic State University organizes international conferences on an annual basis. For example, International Islamic Universities was successful in organizing an international conference that took place on November 7 and 8, 2023. The second activity that is comparable to this one is an international symposium on the topic of *"Islam and Religious Authority from Past to Present,"* which is organized by the faculty of Islamic Studies. For the purpose of presenting their study on the subject of religious authority in Indonesian Islam, both in the past and in the present, this conference brings together academics from a variety of nations. Education State University has run many international

conferences, one of which was the one conducted in collaboration with UPSI in Malaysia on the theme “Transforming Education in the Digital Era”.

Postgraduate school of Islamic State University runs annual international conference, known as International Conference on Islamic Civilization. The conference featured distinguished speakers from several countries, including Australia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Singapore. The conference has provided an opportunity for postgraduate students to showcase their work and gain exposure at the worldwide level through presentations and publications. Another routine academic event organized by the postgraduate school is inviting international experts to give a one-day workshop at the school. The school engages in a program that involves partnership with other institutions, such as the international center for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies. Furthermore, over the course of the last two years, the school has conducted a minimum of two workshops. The Two Workshop is a showcase organized by a postgraduate school, featuring workshops led by foreign experts and engaging international organizations.

The workshop on English Medium Instruction represents a collaborative initiative involving Universitas Indonesia, the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, and the postgraduate school of Islamic State University. The program was designed to enhance lecturers’ pedagogical competencies in delivering courses through English while promoting internationally recognized teaching practices. Another professional development workshop was organized in collaboration with the Australian Indonesian Muslim Exchange Program, providing participants with opportunities to exchange experiences and learn from international educational perspectives. In addition, a national expert from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta was invited to contribute to the workshop, enriching the discussions with expertise in higher education and internationalization. Together, these activities strengthened institutional capacity, academic collaboration, and readiness for global engagement.

Internationalization Prospects and Challenges

The internationalization of higher education has become a strategic priority for many universities worldwide. However, the ways in which institutions pursue this goal vary considerably across different contexts, depending on their resources, leadership, institutional capacity, and policy environment. While some universities are well positioned to implement comprehensive internationalization initiatives through strong financial support, global partnerships, and experienced academic staff, others continue to face significant structural and organizational constraints. The findings of this study demonstrate that internationalization is shaped by a combination of enabling factors and persistent challenges. They reveal both the prospects that facilitate institutional internationalization and the barriers that hinder its implementation, highlighting the importance of context-sensitive strategies in achieving sustainable and meaningful international engagement within higher education institutions.

Prospects: Well-financed and sufficient human resources

Our Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interviews with top management of the three universities, we see different kinds of resources available. International Islamic Universities, for example is so much privilege to receive a strong financial support from the central government. The university is indeed the central government’s pilot project to establish a prominent Islamic University in Indonesia, aiming at reaching one of the best

Islamic universities in Asia. Therefore, from its infancy, the university has enjoyed a strong financial support from the central government. The top management of International Islamic Universities states that: *“The university was initially established as the government’s initiative to develop a well-established state Islamic university in Indonesia. For that reason, the university enjoy full support, and the university is equipped with international standard facilities”*. The other participant of the FGD, the teaching staff also showed us the construction planning of the university. There are many annexed buildings established in a coming 2 to 5 years, as he mentioned:

“The university anticipates significant campus development over the next five years, with plans to construct several new buildings designed to support a wide range of academic, research, administrative, and student-centered activities. These infrastructure improvements reflect the institution’s long-term commitment to creating a learning environment that meets international standards and supports its internationalization agenda. In addition to the planned facilities, the university has already benefited from well-established academic resources, including an extensive collection of books, access to international journals, digital databases, and other essential learning materials. These resources have played a vital role in supporting teaching, research, and scholarly activities, while also enhancing students’ and lecturers’ ability to engage with global knowledge and academic networks effectively”.

Our Focus Group Discussions at International Islamic Universities suggest that from its early establishment, International Islamic Universities has been organized in such a way that meet international standard. In addition to these rich facilities, International Islamic Universities was also privilege to have been able to recruit high qualified lecturers. During the Focus Group Discussions, the top management of one of the colleges at Islamic State University informed us that *“International Islamic Universities recruited lecturers whose skills are well recognised internationally. In addition to recruiting permanent lecturers, International Islamic Universities invite adjunct professors from prominent Indonesian universities and abroad”*. Our research at Education State University also reveals interesting facts that the university has also enjoyed popularity in the past few decades. Although Education State University was not initially established as an international university, Education State University is well equipped to reach internationalization; it has sufficient financial and human resources. Education State University was established in 1954 as an educational institution training pre-service teachers. As the institution transforms, it gained new status as an autonomous state university 2014.

This status allows the university to self-managed, both financially and academically. The participants at Education State University suggested that: *“We are happy that our university status allows us to autonomously manage ourselves financially and academically, and that allows us to be more independent to design programs to internationalize our university. With the authority we enjoy, we could collaborate with international organization, such as Southeast Asian Minister of educational organization-Regional Center for Early Childhood Care Education and Parenting”*. This shows that Education State University is confident enough to run many creative programs for internationalization. In addition to these sufficient facilities, Education State University employ faculty members whose recognition reaches international levels. In addition, Islamic State University is also found to have been mandated by the rector to reach internationalization. Despite the fact that

the university has lack of financial support for this purpose, the rector has allocated some amount of funding for this purpose.

One of the Focus Group Discussions participants explained: *“Although there is no specific funding allocated for internationalization purposes, the rector encourages all faculties, including the postgraduate school, to allocate part of their budgets to support international programs.”* This statement demonstrates that institutional commitment to internationalization extends beyond dedicated financial allocations. At Islamic State University, strong leadership support has been instrumental in advancing internationalization initiatives. The rector has established a dedicated team responsible for coordinating and implementing internationalization programs across the university. Furthermore, Islamic State University benefits from a highly qualified academic workforce, many of whom have gained international exposure through formal education, research collaborations, academic exchanges, and professional training. These human resources provide a solid foundation for strengthening the university’s international engagement and global competitiveness.

Challenges: Unsupportive Environment and Not Shared Commitment

Our Focus Group Discussions reveal that internationalization efforts in these three universities are frequently constrained by an unsupportive institutional environment, more so in the case of Education State University and Islamic State University as both of them are not by designed international universities. Although national policies formally promote internationalization of universities, their implementation at the institutional level remains uneven. For example, limited financial resources, heavy reliance on government funding, and rigid bureaucratic procedures significantly restrict universities’ capacity to initiate and sustain international programs. We found that in many public universities, including the three universities we researched, complex administrative regulations governing procurement, finance, staffing, and international collaboration restrict efficient decision-making processes and reduce institutional agility. The management of postgraduate school at Education State University, for example suggested that:

“Insufficient English proficiency among academic and administrative staff, limited international exposure, and uneven digital infrastructure sometimes weaken our university’s ability to engage effectively in the internationalization process. Although many of our faculty members graduated from overseas universities, it remains difficult to encourage their active participation in internationalization initiatives.” This statement suggests that institutional internationalization depends not only on the availability of internationally educated academics but also on organizational readiness, language competence, technological capacity, and effective leadership in mobilizing human resources. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of internationalization initiatives.

A further enduring challenge lies in the absence of shared commitment among institutional stakeholders. In many Indonesian universities, internationalization is still perceived as an elite or peripheral agenda, driven largely by senior leadership or international offices rather than embraced as a collective institutional responsibility. One of the participants at Islamic State University suggested that: *“Our academic staff often prioritize teaching workloads, rather than internationalization programs; they also focus*

more on accreditation requirements, and community service obligations as these activities are considered mandatory". This suggest that faculty members are not very much concerned with engaging in internationalization program, as they are trapped in heavy teaching workload and administrative issues.

Our research reveals that the three universities work toward internationalizing their status. However, institutional policies, top management supports; financial and political support and academic cultures make the difference. The findings also support Qiang (2003)'s theory that internationalization strategies follow four approaches, including the activity approach. This method promotes curricular development, student-faculty exchanges, technical assistance, and foreign student enrolment. These three universities used these methods. For example, International Islamic Universities regularly recruits overseas students and provides adequate technical supports. The other two universities also have student-faculty exchange programs and seek international students.

Second, the competency model emphasizes knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes in educational personnel, students, and academics. Also called competency training. Self-improvement programs, or internationalization at home, are used by the three colleges we research to internationalize. Islamic State University held an English as a Medium of Instruction workshop with Sheffield and Indonesia. The Islamic State University postgraduate school instructors are invited to a two-day English Language Instruction workshop. In this workshop, they learned how to teach academic subjects in English. Other two universities provide venues for faculty and students to participate in mobility programs.

The third strategy, the ethos method, is to foster an institutional culture that supports international and intercultural activities. International Islamic Universities is well-equipped for this technique. Since its founding, International Islamic Universities is in fact an international university. This indicates the facilities, academic environment, and learning environment meet international standards. In addition, Education State University is a well-known university, yet it struggles to create global-standard learning cultures. Islamic State University has been working to set worldwide standards in its field despite a small budget. Fourth, the process method emphasizes intercultural and international aspects in classroom education, community service, research, and policy and procedure implementation. All universities being researched use this fourth technique, which uses globally acknowledged teaching methodologies. These include learner-centered instruction and other democratic education strategies. For instance, Islamic State University provides global community service. International Islamic Universities and Education State University collaborate on research and publication projects, which they co-fund and expect to receive.

In addition, international seminars, workshops, and conferences have been used all participating universities believe that these academic programs can expose colleges to a worldwide audience. Attending international academic conferences, workshops, and seminars has several benefits. One benefit is increased professionalism. For instance, Harrison (2010) claims that conferences help researchers develop their careers. Academic participation allows lecturers to demonstrate their knowledge in worldwide academic programs. Freshwater, et al. (2006) also state that collaborative publication is necessary as a part of ideas sharing. Thus, we expected that international collaboration would increase ground-breaking research. Furthermore, Borsetto and Saccon (2022) note that collaborative and double degree programs have been promoted in higher education since

the 1980s to internationalize and network European universities in the European Higher Education Area and promote transatlantic relations between Europe and the US. This method promoted European university internationalization and network building. Two degrees increase student mobility and the institution's network.

A university can boost its reputation by partnering with other top universities, since it gives students the chance to learn skills that will boost their employment after graduation. Educational institutions must devote time and money in double-degree courses. Russell, et al. (2007) concluded that double degrees provide a thorough education and improve abilities and opportunities. However, administrative issues, insufficient support, and the lack of 'learning communities' prevent full benefit realization. These challenges arise when institutions do not combine numerous degrees into their disciplines. Double degrees enable trans-disciplinary education. We propose improving the experience, performance, and persistence of multi-degree students. They will also learn trans-discipline skills like integration, boundary management, communication, and teamwork. These skills prepare students for many jobs and are essential to society.

Internationalization includes student and staff mobility in some universities. Knight and De Wit (2018) note the importance of this program and defines "student mobility" as international students who are pursuing a full degree abroad or participating in a program that allows them to study abroad for a semester, year, or more. This category includes students in collaborative degree programs including double or joint degrees, franchise, twinning, or sandwich programs. Recent years have seen more of this. Despite being heavily recommended and customary practice, student mobility may not be formalized in these combined programs. However, student mobility goes beyond curriculum and program work. For graduate students, the curriculum may involve internships, practicums, and research or fieldwork. Because learning about different cultures and languages is important, students who cannot afford to study abroad for a semester participate in short-term cultural courses, trips, and activities (Souto-Otero et al., 2013).

Our research has examined numerous issues of higher education internationalization. The fieldworks have helped us answer our questions about internationalization planning, prospects and challenges. We learned about these research questions from focus group discussions and interviews. Internationalization methods share some traits. All three universities, our primary research sites believe international seminars, workshops, and conferences; research collaborations; professor exchanges; double degrees; and student-staff mobility internationalize higher education. The research also found that organisational contexts and cultures strongly influence internationalisation success.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the three universities work toward internationalizing their status through institutional policies, management support, financial and political commitment, academic culture, and the use of digital technology. Their efforts include curriculum development, student and faculty exchanges, technical assistance, foreign lecturers, research collaboration, and participation in international academic programs. Among the institutions studied, one university demonstrates the most comprehensive implementation, while the others continue to strengthen specific areas such as student mobility and international partnerships. The study also shows that internationalization supports institutional growth by improving academic standards, expanding global

networks, increasing research collaboration, and strengthening graduate competitiveness. Effective implementation is influenced by leadership, resources, institutional commitment, and the integration of technology and innovative teaching approaches. Overall, the findings confirm that internationalization has become a strategic necessity for higher education institutions seeking greater academic quality, visibility, and global engagement.

REFERENCES

- Almeida, J., Robson, S., Morosini, M., & Baranzeli, C. (2019). Understanding internationalization at home: Perspectives from the global North and South. *European Educational Research Journal*, 18(2), 200-217.
- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of studies in international education*, 11(3-4), 290-305.
- Bedenlier, S., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2015). Internationalization of higher education and the impacts on academic faculty members. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 10(2), 185-201.
- Borsetto, E., & Saccon, C. (2022). The value-added experience of International Double Degree Programme: a survey of students' perceptions and motivations. *Department of Management, Università Ca'Foscari Venezia Working Paper*, (4).
- Bryman, A., Bell, E., & Reck, J. (2021). *Social research methods*. 1st edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Buckner, E. (2019). The internationalization of higher education: National interpretations of a global model. *Comparative Education Review*, 63(3), 315-336.
- Cary, M., & Rockwell, T. (2020). International collaboration in open access publications: How income shapes international collaboration. *Publications*, 8(1), 13.
- Chen, K., Zhang, Y., & Fu, X. (2019). International research collaboration: An emerging domain of innovation studies?. *Research Policy*, 48(1), 149-168.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2014). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. 5th edition. New York: Sage Publication.
- De Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2021). Internationalization in higher education: Global trends and recommendations for its future. *Policy reviews in higher education*, 5(1), 28-46.
- De Wit, H. (2019). Internationalization in higher education, a critical review. *SFU Educational Review*, 12(3), 9-17.
- De Wit, H., & Deca, L. (2020). Internationalization of higher education, challenges and opportunities for the next decade. *European higher education area: Challenges for a new decade*, 3-11.
- De Wit, H., & Merckx, G. (2012). The history of internationalization of higher education. *The SAGE handbook of international higher education*, 43-59.

- Dewey, P., & Duff, S. (2009). Reason before passion: Faculty views on internationalization in higher education. *Higher education*, 58, 491-504.
- Freshwater, D., Sherwood, G., & Drury, V. (2006). International research collaboration: Issues, benefits and challenges of the global network. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 11(4), 295-303.
- Gaus, N., Tang, M., & Akil, M. (2019). Organisational culture in higher education: mapping the way to understanding cultural research. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(6), 848-860.
- Glesne, C. (2015). *Becoming qualitative researchers: an introduction*. 5th edition. New York: Pearson.
- Harrison, R. (2010). Unique benefits of conference attendance as a method of professional development for LIS professionals. *The Serials Librarian*, 59(3-4), 263-270.
- Jibeen, T., & Khan, M. A. (2015). Internationalization of higher education: Potential benefits and costs. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 4(4), 196-199.
- Knight, J. (2008). The Internationalization of higher education in the 21st century: new realities and complexities. In *Higher education in Turmoil* (pp. 1-18). Brill.
- Knight, J. (2011). Five myths about internationalization. *International higher education*, (62).
- Knight, J. (2012). Student mobility and internationalization: Trends and tribulations. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 7(1), 20-33.
- Knight, J., & De Wit, H. (2018). Internationalization of higher education: Past and future. *International higher education*, (95), 2-4.
- Kreber, C. (2009). Different perspectives on internationalization in higher education. *New directions for teaching and learning*, 2009(118), 1-14.
- Kumar, N., & Sharma, D. D. (2018). The role of organisational culture in the internationalisation of new ventures. *International Marketing Review*, 35(5), 806-832.
- Kwiek, M. (2020). Internationalists and locals: international research collaboration in a resource-poor system. *Scientometrics*, 124(1), 57-105.
- . (2021). What large-scale publication and citation data tell us about international research collaboration in Europe: Changing national patterns in global contexts. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(12), 2629-2649.
- McCarthy, J. S. (2007). A roadmap for creating the global campus. The Chronicle Mestenhauser & B. A. Ellingboe (Eds.), *Reforming the higher education*.
- Ota, H. (2018). Internationalization of higher education: Global trends and Japan's challenges. *Educational Studies in Japan*, 12, 91-105.

- Özturgut, O., Cantu, M. P., Pereira, L. J., & Ramón, D. K. (2014). Effective strategies in internationalization of higher education in the United States. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 3(2)
- Paige, R. M. (2005). Internationalization of higher education: Performance assessment and indicators. *Nagoya Journal of Higher Education*, 5(8), 99-122.
- Qiang, Z. (2003). Internationalization of higher education: Towards a conceptual framework. *Policy futures in education*, 1(2), 248-270.
- Robinson, O. C., & Smith, J. A. (2010). Investigating the form and dynamics of crisis episodes in early adulthood: The application of a composite qualitative method. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 7(2), 170-191.
- Robson, S., Almeida, J., & Schartner, A. (2018). Internationalization at home: time for review and development?. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 8(1), 19-35.
- Russell, A. W., Dolnicar, S., & Ayoub, M. (2008). Double degrees: double the trouble or twice the return?. *Higher Education*, 55, 575-591.
- Sharipov, F. (2020). Internationalization of higher education: definition and description. *Mental Enlightenment Scientific-Methodological Journal*, 127-138.
- Sok, S., & Bunry, R. (2021). Internationalization of higher education in Cambodia: toward an agenda for higher education development. *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*, 23(3), 193-211.
- Souto-Otero, M., Huisman, J., Beerkens, M., De Wit, H., & Vujić, S. (2013). Barriers to international student mobility: Evidence from the Erasmus program. *Educational researcher*, 42(2), 70-77.
- Steagall, J. W., Falk, P., Gallo, A., & Porter, T. W. (2021). International double degree programs as accelerators for internationalization: Lessons from the Trans-Atlantic Business School Alliance. *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, 32(1), 7-35.
- Wagner, C. S. (2005). Six case studies of international collaboration in science. *Scientometrics*, 62, 3-26.
- Wagner, C. S., Whetsell, T. A., & Mukherjee, S. (2019). International research collaboration: Novelty, conventionality, and atypicality in knowledge recombination. *Research Policy*, 48(5), 1260-1270.
- Willis, R. (2019). The use of composite narratives to present interview findings. *Qualitative research*, 19(4), 471-480.
- Yao, B. (2021). International research collaboration: challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Diagnostic Medical Sonography*, 37(2), 107-108.
- Zhou, J. (2016). A Dynamic Systems Approach to Internationalization of Higher Education. *Journal of International Education and Leadership*, 6(1), n1.
- .