

EDITORIAL

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EDITORIAL

PRESENTATION AND FRAMING

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In recent decades, the internationalization of higher education has emerged as a central theme in global academic discourse. As universities and academic institutions around the world increasingly operate beyond national borders, the need to examine the implications, practices, and outcomes of internationalization has become both urgent and complex. Internationalization, in the context of higher education, refers not only to the mobility of students, faculty, and academic programs, but also to the integration of international dimensions into curricula, research agendas, institutional strategies, and campus cultures. It encompasses policies and practices designed to enhance global engagement, foster intercultural understanding, and prepare graduates to operate in increasingly interconnected societies. However, internationalization is not a neutral or universally beneficial process. It reflects broader dynamics of globalization, power relations, economic inequalities, and cultural negotiations that shape how it is experienced and implemented across different contexts. Effective leadership in this context must not only enable global engagement but also prioritize equity, diversity, and ethical responsiveness to global challenges.

While internationalization remains a cornerstone of higher education reform, it is increasingly entangled with broader structural challenges that institutions worldwide must address. What was once predominantly framed by national systems and local priorities is now significantly influenced by international pressures and transnational governance frameworks. The rise of global university rankings, cross-border knowledge economies, international accreditation mechanisms, and digitally mediated academic mobility has profoundly reshaped both the strategic aspirations and organizational configurations of universities.

Contemporary higher education operates within a dynamic and often volatile global landscape shaped by intersecting technological, social, political, and demographic transformations. In this climate of accelerated change, Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation are exerting growing influence over pedagogical practices, administrative processes, and knowledge production. These developments require not only technological



adaptation but also conceptual rethinking. Within this framework, the concept of quantum leadership has emerged—a non-linear, holistic, and adaptive approach aligned with the complex realities confronting internationally engaged universities.

The expanding international responsibilities of universities—particularly in domains such as climate change, migration, peace-building, and global citizenship—necessitate a reexamination of the core missions of higher education. Universities are increasingly expected to serve as agents of social transformation, embedding internationalization within broader goals of equity, sustainability, and human development. While these responsibilities entail complex challenges, they also present compelling opportunities for fostering intercultural dialogue, enhancing global competencies, and driving societal innovation on a global scale. Through inclusive governance structures that are participatory, reflective, and ethically grounded, higher education institutions can respond to global imperatives while modeling values-based leadership in times of uncertainty.

This thematic dossier, titled *Internationalization of Higher Education: Experiences and Challenges*, brings together a series of eleven scholarly articles that explore the multifaceted nature of internationalization in higher education, offering critical insights into its driving forces, lived realities, and the pressing challenges it entails. It features contributions that interrogate both the opportunities and tensions inherent in the internationalization process. Rather than conceptualizing internationalization as a fixed policy model, this issue examines it as a fluid, context-sensitive process intersecting with digital transformation, demographic transitions, geopolitical volatility, and institutional complexity.

By integrating theoretical, empirical, and practice-oriented perspectives, this issue advances a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of internationalization in a post-pandemic, AI-mediated, and globally uncertain era. Beyond identifying disruptions and contradictions, the contributions underscore the resilience, creativity, and adaptability of higher education institutions. Examples include the proliferation of globally integrated hybrid programs, enhanced international research collaborations, and the widespread adoption of learner-centered digital pedagogies. These developments illustrate the transformative potential of internationalization to stimulate institutional innovation, nurture global citizenship, and build inclusive academic communities.

The articles compiled in this dossier approach the theme from a variety of disciplinary, methodological, and geographical perspectives. Indeed, the authors come from diverse academic fields — ranging from Education Sciences to International Relations, and from Law to Public Administration — and are affiliated with various higher education institutions across different countries, including Bulgaria, Brazil, Spain, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Portugal, Türkiye, and Uganda. Together, they aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of how internationalization unfolds in practice, what it means for students, educators, and institutions, and how it can be navigated responsibly and ethically.

In bringing together these varied contributions, this dossier does not seek to provide definitive answers but to open space for critical dialogue. It underscores the importance of viewing internationalization not as an abstract ideal or a one-size-fits-all strategy, but as a contested and evolving process that must be examined in context. As institutions



continue to grapple with shifting geopolitical realities, technological change, and reconfigurations of academic life, the questions raised in this dossier are more relevant than ever.

As co-editors of this thematic dossier, we are deeply grateful to all 18 authors who generously agreed to share their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives through the eleven articles that follow. Gratitude is also extended to the scientific reviewers, whose recommendations contributed to further enhancing the quality of the articles, as well as to the entire editorial team of the esteemed scientific journal Janus.net, which is responsible for publishing this thematic dossier. To all, our heartfelt thanks for the honor and privilege of your collaboration in this truly collective and transnational endeavor.

This issue invites scholars, administrators, and policymakers to engage critically and constructively with the values, structures, and strategies shaping the future of higher education. The focus extends beyond navigating uncertainty to envisioning and building sustainable, equitable, and forward-thinking models of global academic engagement. We invite readers to engage with the articles that follow with an open and critical mindset, and to reflect on how internationalization can be reimagined in ways that enrich higher education while advancing global responsibility, equity, and mutual learning.