Chapter Five

Internationalisation at Home as a New Trend for University Internationalisation in Post-Covid Reality

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Purpose Through this chapter, we are presenting the concept of internationalisation at home (IAH) based on the achievements of the Erasmus+ capacity-building project MED2IAH, built around this concept that reframes the traditional perceptions of higher education (HE) internationalisation in five Partner Countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan).

Study design/methodology/approach MED2IAH project, running since January 2020, has offered partner universities a relevant active framework to engage in internationalisation initiatives and initiate cross-cultural learning opportunities. By shifting the focus from academic mo-

bility to systematic institutional initiatives for enhancing the global skills of non- or less-mobile students in local settings, IaH creates a paradigm shift and introduces an egalitarian community spirit where internationalisation is not a privilege of the few anymore but an asset the university as a whole can benefit from.

Findings The coronavirus crisis has upended higher education (HE) in many ways, impressively shifting all or a substantive part of the courses online. Moreover, it has exposed the taken-for-granted facet of mobility in universities, opening the way for better strategies to internationalise at home.

Originality/value This chapter explores the strengths and, more importantly, the limitations of the current internationalisation strategies in partner countries and suggests a holistic approach to IaH that is perceived as a combination of diverse but complementary measures for intervention in formal and informal curricula.

Introduction

The role of higher education is overarching, mainly in the new global development agenda, which aims at eradicating poverty and many other societal issues all over the world. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, which comprises 17 goals and 169 targets, places higher education as a top priority and makes it a paramount goal (goal 4, target 4.3) that would, by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university (United Nations, 2017).

The internationalisation of the higher education systems is one of the most widely asserted and studied policy trends in the last two decades (Renc-Roe & Roxå, 2014). However, universities are deluding themselves if they believe that the presence of international students on campus alone contributes to the internationalisation of higher education (Wright & Lander, 2003). The concept of internationalisation in higher education creates a process of transformation in the way we learn and impart knowledge. Currently, it can be understood as the development and implementation of policies and programmes with international and intercultural dimensions that aim to improve the quality of higher education. Through the process of internationalisation and the expansion of knowledge, networks across boundaries, higher education becomes the 'industry of the future' in the new economy, where human capital and innovative knowledge production are crucial for economic performance (Kandiko, 2010).

Back in 2020, the coronavirus crisis upended higher education and disrupted international education trends. Very recent studies have tackled these challenges and transformations. One seminal study in this area is the work of Treve (2021), who highlighted the effect of the coronavirus on the sector of higher education, mainly the shift from an in-person format to an 'online and interactive learning system.' Forced by the Coronavirus pandemic, most institutions tended to shift from an emergency-based strategy, entirely to an online system. Without being prepared for online pedagogy, many faculty members were put in a difficult situation. Treve (2021) discussed the impact of COVID-19, resulting in 'Gaps in educational attainment.' And classified it into two main categories: nations and individuals. Firstly, COVID-19 has widened the disparities regarding educational opportunities between developed and developing countries. While affluent countries may readily prepare to convert to virtual learning and mitigate the negative consequences of the epidemic, the situation is more difficult for developing countries (Treve, 2021). During the COVID-19 crisis, observers expected higher education post-mobility. This is largely due to the anticipated long-lasting impact on international student enrollment even after travel restrictions are lifted and the likelihood of more stringent border control to regulate mass immigration. However, the pandemic has accelerated the blended offer of universities throughout the world, accompanied by an increase in the connection capacity of virtual platforms; and giving access to computers to students who did not have their equipment (World Bank, 2020). Many universities started teaching their students through distance education, and much success has been reported anecdotally. It is indeed impressive that universities have been quickly shifting all or a substantive part of their courses online. In this pursuit, ICT 'digitalization' often serves as an effective tool for supporting and coordinating universities' international activities. There is no doubt that the pandemic helped to break with traditional schemes and mental maps that automatically linked the existence of internationalisation to student mobility, returning to the essence of the internationalisation of Higher Education. Internationalisation 'at home' can be understood as virtual mobility, where digital tools offer international experiences in an agile and active way from the home with foreign institutions. This concept is built around the assumption that, for various reasons, the largest part of universities' student body will always remain non-mobile and therefore deprived of access to global knowledge and skills (Robson et al., 2017).

The purpose of this article is to foreground internationalisation at home (IaH) and the underlying academic and intercultural learning benefits of an internationalised university experience. It demonstrates the experience and dissemination of the best practises as well as the challenges of the Erasmus+ MED2IaH capacity-building project, through the design of the project, tools developed within the project for institutional self-evaluation of internationalisation and strategy development, and ideas and activities implemented to promote intercultural exchange and internationalisation at home that can be adopted by various universities around the world and mainly by those in developing countries.

Genesis and Approach of the MED2IaH Project

One of the earliest agreements that greatly benefited the internationalisation of higher education in the Mediterranean is the Barcelona process, or the Euro-Mediterranean partnership of 1995, which started with the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean conference and led to the creation of the Union of the Mediterranean (Attinà, 2004). The agenda of this partnership, involving 39 countries from Europe and the Southern Mediterranean shore, included cooperation between academics and universities where cultural exchange is promoted (Council of the European Union, 2008). In this context, the MED2IaH project was developed under the Erasmus+ Capacity Building of Higher Education with EU funding, also in response to the 'Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy' (Brussels, 18 November 2015) and its Initiative 'Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)' – a multilateral partnership aiming at increasing the potential for regional integration and cohesion among Euro-Mediterranean countries. MED2IaH is addressing one of the Specific objectives of the UfM's strategic area 'Education and Research,' namely 'Strengthening the contribution of the UfM Secretariat to regional dialogue fora in the fields, including the development of regional dialogue processes on Higher Education Internationalisation and Academic Mobility and Vocational Education and Training.'

Seventeen universities from four European countries (Slovenia, France, Spain, and Italy), and 5 South Mediterranean countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon), partnered to develop and implement new internationalisation strategies in a project where internationalisation at home (IaH) is embraced as an institutional policy for internationalisation in domains of curriculum, teaching, and learning,

extra-curricular activities, as well as liaison with local cultural/ethnic groups.

MED2IaH is designed to create the modernization and internationalisation agenda of each PC HEIS through the adoption of a comprehensive University Strategy on the Internationalisation of Education, research, and services by each PC HEI. MED2IaH fits with the development strategy for higher education in each PC involved in the project, namely:

Morocco

The education system of Morocco falls broadly under the Ministry of National Education (MNE). Among the branches of the MNE, the Department of Higher Education is responsible for overseeing the growth of the higher education sector. The Department aims to improve the quality of and access to higher education through the implementation of the strategic vision of the 2015–2030 reform, drawn up by the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research, and advocates the State's continuation as the main source of funding.

Tunisia

In Tunisia, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research bears the overall responsibility for developing and implementing higher education policy. The Strategic Reform Plan of 2025 elaborated by the Ministry of Education reflects a national strategy that seeks to enhance the higher education sector through internationalisation and modernisation.

Egypt

MED2IaH fits the priority of the 'Egypt Vision 2030' Area, which stresses attention to the need to improve the quality of education in all types of education systems, ensuring equity and equality in all levels of education, promoting the spirit of heritage and national culture in education, teaching environmental education, emphasising science and technology education, and promoting research, development, extension, and utilisation of science and technology.

Jordan

The *National Education Strategic Plan* (Ministry of Education 2018) as well as other education reforms lay the groundwork to achieve long-

term development progress in the country. This way, the MED2IaH proposal will contribute to the implementation of its strategic objectives: promoting diversification of economic activities and productivity enhancement (pillar 1), and improving the quality of growth by promoting inclusiveness. The main contribution will target pillar 1 of the Strategy: point (iii) upgrade human capital and increase international employability.

Lebanon

The National Education Strategy in Lebanon is oriented towards the development of human capital, provides a quantitatively and qualitatively competent workforce to meet the needs of the Lebanese market and that can compete in the free job market, It is an education that contributes to social mobility and is characterised by the high quality of its curricula, institutions, and outcomes; it is an education that is aligned with national and international standards. The Internationalisation at the institutional level offered by the MED2IaH project contributes to the priorities of the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

MED2IaH in Relation to the South Mediterranean Context of HE

In this context, the MED2IaH project is in line with the National Priorities of the Partner countries (PC; Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon) and Regional Priorities for Region 3: South Mediterranean countries and is related to Project Category 2: Improving management and operation of Higher Education Institutions and internationalisation of Higher Education institutions. The MED2IaH project proposal addresses the process of internationalising higher education at home in partner countries (PC) (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon). The project aims to enable both national higher education bodies and higher education institutions to provide education, research, and mobility services to the public and make Partner Countries accountable and play complementary roles in the fields of education and research.

MED2IaH Reasoning

The reasoning behind the MED2IaH project is to transfer the IaH concept to PC HEIS and share with them IaH practices that have proven

successful. The IaH term is still largely absent in Mediterranean countries, where there is a need and support required to outline PC HEIS' internationalisation landscapes and to identify levels of integration of international and intercultural dimensions into PC HEIS' formal and informal curricula. MED2IaH PC HEIS showed numbers for student mobility and international student enrollment. With recent economic growth and development, PCS have evolved into international education hubs with growing numbers of international students.

The MED2IaH project was first and foremost designed to have an impact at the system level and trigger reform processes at the national level in Partner Countries. Policy-makers are receiving support for evidence-based policy development and better regulation to move towards the modernization of the framework conditions for HE in PCS. HEI managers and other stakeholders in the sector were able to feed their expertise into the reform process and articulate their needs already at the stage of policy development. By developing policies that adequately address real problems at the institutional level in each Partner Country, MED2IaH will ultimately benefit the whole HE sector. The inclusion of all stakeholders in the project activities and consortium ensures that the whole HE sector in PCS will take a step forward in the national reforms.

MED2IaH Objectives

1. To outline PC HEIS' internationalisation landscapes and identify levels of integration of international and intercultural dimensions into PC HEIS' formal and informal curricula. Taking into consideration the absence of the legal framework in the IaH at national and institutional levels in PCS, the main focus will be dedicated to the capacity building of the key actors, and policy-makers on the EU experience in the development of IaH strategies and regulations on standards for IaH implementation, in particular.

2. To improve PC HEIS' capabilities for internationalisation through staff training and by translating general awareness of the IaH concept into streamlined institutional strategies and Action Plans. The development and implementation of effective institutional internationalisation strategies will be paid second attention during the project lifetime and achieved by increasing understanding of the comprehensive IaH at the university level through workshops and training sessions at partner universities on designing

the strategies and the elaboration of indicators, guidelines, etc., As a result, the Institutional Strategies of internationalisation and Mobility (including the IaH action plan) at each university will be elaborated and adopted at each partner university.

3. To build students' intercultural knowledge and sensitivity to cultural diversity by transforming PC HEIS' International Relations Offices (IROS) into vibrant multicultural focal points. Enhancing institutional capacities for effective participation in large-scale international collaborations will change the situation by Increasing the scope and quality of international partnerships, managing international credit mobility (ICM), increasing participation in EU mobility schemes and large-scale research programmes, developing infrastructure to support campus diversity, and assisting international students.

The project is built around the concept of IaH in a holistic approach that shifts institutions' focus of attention from outbound mobility to systematic institutional efforts for improving non-mobile students' global skills in domestic environments, including virtual mobility and on-campus intercultural engagement, for the benefit of non-mobile students' global competence and employability. In the long run, students and graduates' enhanced employability will contribute to increasing higher education institutions' competitiveness too. It also creates a paradigm shift and introduces an egalitarian community spirit where internationalisation is not a privilege of the few anymore but an asset for all students.

Institutional Strategies for Internationalisation

An institutional strategy for internationalisation relies heavily on building a campus culture of support and diversity and on matching particular initiatives. To build a tailored strategy within partner universities, the MED2IaH project has developed a questionnaire assessing quantitative and qualitative indicators within each institution and allowing us to extract the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for internationalisation.

Methodology

A self-assessment questionnaire was developed by the MED2IaH consortium to investigate and collect institutional data referring to the

key aspects of IAH, with the perspective of serving as an institutional IAH self-evaluation tool. The questionnaire includes questions with multiple-choice and open responses. The questionnaire was first tested and validated among the partner universities.

Then, the questionnaire was put online. It is intended to be processed as teamwork. Each participating institution was invited to only submit one questionnaire. that this is processed as 'group work' involving members from the project staff, the international relations office, and the management team.

The questionnaire included six sessions, namely:

1. General institutional/university information,
2. Internationalisation policy/strategy,
3. Internationalisation in terms of student mobility,
4. Internationalisation in terms of academic and staff mobility,
5. Internationalisation in terms of Educational programmes,
6. Internationalisation in terms of research, projects, and events.

Some questions ask for specific figures and numbers for the specific academic year (2019/2020 in our case). If the institution does not have such detailed evidence, they are asked to write down the number that best represents their assessment of the situation. However, we suggest that HEI start monitoring the field of internationalisation and keep records in the area of operation. If some numerical data are not available and are not possible to estimate (for different reasons), they can leave the space empty.

Each section ends with the 'comments box,' where respondents are invited to write in short about problems in collecting data and explain how they applied the terminology of some questions.

In Morocco, the questionnaire was sent through the mailing list of university contacts and advertised via the channels of the National Erasmus+ Office.

Results and Discussion

The MED2IAH project proposal implements an array of innovative training and learning methods, namely virtual mobility, blended learning, validation of prior learning, peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, design thinking, and simulation. Through students' digital stories, the

project also supports learning through active self-reflection and self-evaluation Technology.

The MED2IaH project is designed to maximise the benefits of ICT, following the technological pattern of Coursera and the like, which have proved to be game changers in HE over the last decade. Webinars, storytelling through the means of audio-visuals, and online.

Virtual mobility is recommended to help local students launch their international careers and gain experience within their home university/country. The virtual mobility of local students has to be regulated in a way to offer them opportunities to enter into virtual intercultural exchanges with students of other international universities.

The virtual mobility of local students is better used as a precondition for physical mobility to international universities to facilitate their integration within the hosting universities. HEI should reinforce and encourage university intercultural extra-curricular activities and make them visible on the national level to expand the scope of internationalisation at home.

Since language is the medium through which culture is transmitted and learned, learning a new language should be further emphasised for optimal internationalisation at the home of local students. To this end, the university should provide language training sessions, debates, and events within which local students can practise the language with their peers. The questionnaire is a tool to monitor the progress/development/evolution of the institution in the investigated field – internationalisation.

A Case Study from Morocco

The survey is taken by eighteen Moroccan Universities/schools. In the academic year 2019–2020, Morocco had approximately 913.713 students undergoing their studies in higher education, with 50.33% being female students, a staff number of approximating 7000, and almost 14 000 teachers (Union for the Mediterranean, 2021).

Among the eighteen participants in the survey, 78% were Moroccan universities, while 22% were Moroccan higher education Schools. English represented 44% of the language of instruction, while French represented 56% in such universities and schools. 22% were fairly new institutions, with less than 10 years in the field of higher education, 28% were relatively new, with 10 up to 29 years in the field, and 50% were old and well established, with 100 years or more in the field. 78% of

participants were from public universities/schools, 22% were neither public nor private, and there were no fully private participants. All participants chose Morocco as their main country of operation. When it comes to the size of the participating institutions, 47% stated that they have up to 4,999 students enrolled, 6% stated having between 5,000 and 14,999 students enrolled, and 41% stated having 39,999 and more students enrolled. As for size in terms of full-time faculty, 24% claimed to have up to 49 full-time faculty members, another 24% claimed to have between 50 and 149 full-time faculty members, 6% claimed to have between 150 and 249, and 47% stated having 400 and more full-time faculty members.

When asked about their internationalisation strategies or policies in the previously mentioned survey, 53% of the participating Moroccan higher education Schools/universities responded that they indeed have documented policies and strategies for internationalisation; 33% responded that they do not have any specific documented policies or strategies for internationalisation but that it is considered in other development directions; and 13% stated that they are working on those policies and strategies. As for their top strategic priorities for internationalisation, creating an internationalised study environment at home was the top priority with 4.3 out of 5 (the question was to rank the strategic priorities on a scale of 1 to 5). Providing the staff with opportunities for international experiences was a close second as an internationalisation strategy (4 out of 5), followed by attracting international professors and academics (3.5 out of 5). Another very important strategy that was ranked 3 out of 5 by the eighteen Moroccan schools/Universities that undertook this survey is establishing cooperative relations with other foreign institutions for research. Following this strategy comes one that will allow students to benefit from the possibility of studying abroad, ranked (2.9 out of 5), and then comes one that will attract students at all levels of study with the same rank. Again, at the same rank comes a strategy to improve the school/university positioning both nationally and internationally, while developing learning and teaching partnerships with other institutions comes in at 2.8 out of 5. Finally, the last strategy/policy of interest of the eighteen Moroccan higher education Schools/Universities that participated in this survey is the internationalisation of teaching and learning, with a rank of 2.1 out of 5.

Internationalisation within Moroccan higher education institutions

is very well supported with policies, which became, with time 'a pillar of the mission and strategic planning of the Ministry and Moroccan HEIS as it is perceived as means for improving the quality of education and as an opening to be more attractive' There is a Directorate of Cooperation and Partnership within the Ministry whose responsibility is to promote, strengthen, monitor, and evaluate, 'in coordination with ministry structures and institutions, bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes in all areas relating to the responsibilities of the ministry.' The Ministry is currently aiming at the development of international cooperation strategies to strengthen 'new partnerships in the fields of higher education and scientific research, consolidating the cooperation with other entities in the region within the framework of South-South cooperation, as well as strengthening the mobility of Moroccan students and professors.'

The participants were also instructed to give insight into their targeted strategic geographic locations for the internationalisation of higher education in Morocco; meaning which countries they see themselves opening up to under the framework of internationalising higher education in the country. The Gulf countries were ranked first with 5 out of 5, and East and South Asia came in second with 4.5 out of 5. Third came the Eastern partners like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, with a ranking of 3 out of 5. North America followed with a ranking of 3 out of 5, then Africa (East, Centre, West, and Southern) with a ranking of 2.9 out of 5, the Western Balkans with a ranking of 2 out of 5, the European Union/EU countries with a ranking of 1.4 out of 5, and finally the Russian Federation, Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), Australia, New Zealand, Central, and South America with a ranking of 5. Regarding the activities/strategies considered to be the most important ones for programme internationalisation by higher education Moroccan Schools/Universities, visits by international delegations and outgoing staff came first with a ranking of 4 out of 5, the internationalisation of courses/programs second with a ranking of 3.5 out of 5, joint programs third with a ranking of 3.5 out of 5, courses with English-medium of instruction (EMI) forth with a ranking of 3.2 out of 5, international field studies and research with a ranking of 3 out of 5, quality institutional internationalisation services with the same ranking, curricula comprising international and intercultural dimensions with a ranking of 2.8 out of 5, strategic partnerships with a ranking of

1.6 out of 5 rankings, and finally, branch campuses and incoming staff with a ranking of 1 out of 5. 'The strategic axis of higher education in its regional, national, and international environment plans to increase the number of courses in English and Spanish, particularly at the level of a Master's degree, to strengthen the attractiveness of the degree courses for foreign students and to increase incoming mobility.'

Funding is a big part of internationalisation strategies since schools/universities cannot rely only on tuition fees for that; keeping in mind that a lot of the Moroccan universities/schools studied in this section are public and rely on the government for a large majority of their expenses. When asked about the funding sources the participants use to finance their internationalisation activities, again, ranked from 1 to 5, one being the lowest and five being the highest, the answers were as follows: Business national/international funding came first with a ranking of 4.5 out of 5, 'world' funded internationalisation programmes came second with a ranking of 3.5 out of 5, foundation national/international funding came third with a ranking of 3.2 out of 5, national internationalisation programmes came forth with a 2.6 out of 5 ranking, European Union funded internationalisation programmes came forth with a 1.8 out of 5 ranking, and institutional/university budgets with a 1.6 out of 5 ranking.

As with any other strategy and policy, there are barriers to those developed by the Moroccan higher education schools/universities for internationalisation. Such barriers include a lack of international partnerships and cooperation with a ranking of 3.5 out of 5, a lack of information sources and expertise provided to students and academics with a ranking of 3.4 out of 5, a lack of language proficiency among students and academics with a ranking of 3 out of 5, a lack of a regulatory framework to access the quality of international programs with a ranking of 2.7 out of 5, a lack of agreements regulating the mutual recognition of ECTS or similar credits with a ranking of 2.2 out of 5, a lack of funding provided to participants in mobility programs with a ranking of 2.1 out of 5, and finally an overemphasis of directions other than internationalisation with a ranking of 2 out of 5. To reduce the effects of such barriers, Moroccan education/higher education are working on implementing English bachelor's degree programmes in public universities and higher education schools to facilitate access to the international market and student and staff mobility for research and cultural exchange purposes.

Intercultural Dimensions

In a world where immigration rates are increasing, ensuring that intercultural understanding and communication are enhanced for all university students and staff is an essential function of higher education internationalisation.

The comprehensive IaH infrastructure built in MED2IaH through the International Students' Camp, FRIENDS Teahouses, and the subsequently extended stakeholder networks enhances the student university experience and builds complex skills much needed in a globalised world. Last but not least, the MED2IaH project places great importance on extra-curricular learning (through FRIENDS Teahouses & validation of prior experiential learning). The notion that students learn outside the classroom at least as much as in formal settings is considered another novel concept of MED2IaH applied in 5 PCS.

The main innovative themes the project deals with include intercultural awareness, cross-cultural dialogue in academia, talent management and global competence, creativity, student engagement, and stakeholder management in HE.

The HEI integrates international students in all extracurricular activities for domestic students, like camps, seminars, and volunteer activities. International students are invited to join various student clubs and societies available at the HEI, such as the International Students Association, sports clubs, and volunteer unions. This provides an ideal environment for engagement and collaborative learning among diverse students to take place.

The HEI regularly arranges cultural activities and events for international students to mingle with the local students and share their own culture. The cross-cultural activities may be international days or festivals and can integrate cooking, singing, and dancing. The multicultural events also encourage diversity on campus and offer the opportunity for international students to share their own traditions. The institution also involves international students in national traditional festivals and other religious festivals.

Moreover, the diversity of cultures on campus may also be displayed during an International Sports Day or Competition, which gathers local and international students to compete in traditional and regular sports. The activity can be conducted in cooperation between various student clubs at the HEI and may also include animated traditional games.

Conclusion

The global pandemic brought great challenges to the internationalisation of universities around the world. However, it opened new doors to new opportunities for internationalisation, and more specifically, to deepening internationalisation 'at home' and to improving institutional strategies that promote the exchange of knowledge and intercultural diversity at a global level supported by the use of technology. But it is important for internationalisation at home to be effective, not only as an accompaniment of the entire educational community, namely students, teachers, and collaborators, but also that the unit or office that is in charge of carrying out the international relations of the institution work to raise awareness and support in a planned way and operate through directed and interlinked actions.

The coronavirus, ironically enough, illustrates exactly why we need internationalisation-we need students who understand global phenomena, can see xenophobic and culture-bound reactions for what they are, and are prepared to work with colleagues around the world to address global issues in the short term and contribute to long-term solutions through research and the advancement of knowledge.

We must be aware of the inherent advantages that physical travel can offer to young people as international learning becomes more technologically facilitated and moves toward virtual mobility. Blending learning-the integration of online and offline learning experiences-will take on an ever more important role in the holistic cultivation of young people.

Educators, students, and employers should take this time to think about how to ensure this model can work for all from the perspectives of pedagogy, learning, and employability.

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