The Irrelevance of the Re-Configured Definition of Internationalisation to the Global South: Intention Versus Coercion

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Abstract

This article argues that the definition of internationalisation as recast by de Wit, Hunter, Howard and Egron-Polak (2015), which embraced 'intentionality' as its key component, is of no relevance to the reality of the Global South. It maintains that contemporary ontological manifestations of the terminology have been appreciably misrepresented, if not wholly distorted, mainly by a passionate, albeit sincere, desire to advance certain 'good' intentions, while disregarding others, in the process creating dissonance between epistemological reality and a paradigmatic trajectory. In his latest argument, de Wit maintained that the definition is "normative and descriptive", but Teferra countered that it is neither normative nor descriptive but rather prescriptive and coercive. This article argues that this definition requires acceptance of an articulated 'good' intention as fundamental to internationalisation. Intentions are as broad and dynamic as they are subtle and complex. Even 'good' intentions are subjective and are presumed worthy by a certain sector of society (scholarly or otherwise) for a certain period of time and to a certain extent. Thus, the definition of internationalisation, as it stands, does not concur with these basic tenets of intentions, rendering it somewhat irrelevant to most of the Global South, and quite a number of instances in the Global North.

Key words: Internationalisation, globalisation, Global South, Africa, intention, coercion

Cet article maintient que la définition de l'internationalisation telle que remodelée par de Wit, Hunter, Howard et Egron-Polak (2015), qui

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incluait « l'intentionnalité » comme sa composante clé, manque de pertinence vis-à-vis de la réalité des pays de l'hémisphère sud. Il affirme que les manifestations ontologiques contemporaines de la terminologie ont été considérablement mal représentées, voire complètement déformées, principalement par un désir ardent, quoique sincère, de mettre en avant certaines « bonnes » intentions, tout en ignorant d'autres, créant ainsi au cours du processus une dissonance entre la réalité épistémologique et une trajectoire paradigmatique. Dans son dernier argument, de Wit avançait que la définition est « normative et descriptive » mais Teferra répondait qu'elle n'est ni normative ni descriptive mais plutôt prescriptive et coercive. Cet article met en avant le fait que cette définition a besoin d'accepter une « bonne » intention clairement énoncée comme fondamentale à l'internationalisation. Les intentions sont tout aussi larges et dynamiques qu'elles sont subtiles et complexes. Même de « bonnes » intentions sont subjectives et sont présumées louables par un certain secteur de la société (académique ou tout autre) dans une certaine mesure et pour une certaine durée. Ainsi, la définition de l'internationalisation, à ce stade, ne concorde pas avec ces principes de base de l'intention, lui faisant perdre quelque peu sa pertinence pour la plupart des pays de l'hémisphère sud, et pour un nombre assez important d'instances dans l'hémisphère nord.

Mots-clés: internationalisation, mondialisation, pays de l'hémisphère sud, Afrique, intention, coercion

Introduction

This article examines the contemporary—and fairly widely used—definition of internationalisation as espoused by de Wit, Hunter, Howard and Egron Polak (2015) and highlights its gaps. It draws on a series of published and written material as well as oral exchanges between the main architect of the definition, Hans de Wit and this author. First of all, however, some expositions on the term by other scholars who have defined and written on internationalisation are in order.

Altbach (2002) posits that internationalisation refers to the specific policies and initiatives of countries and individual academic institutions or systems to deal with global trends. Furthermore, along with his two former students Reisberg and Rumbley (2010), he expounded that internationalisation is a strategy for societies and institutions to respond to the many demands placed upon them by globalisation and a way for higher education (HE) to prepare individuals for engagement in a globalised world.

Yang (2002) defines internationalisation as a process by which the teaching, research and service functions of a HE system become internationally and cross-culturally compatible. Soderqvist (2002) describes internation-

alisation of HE as a process of change from a national HE institution to an international one, leading to the inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies.

The oft-cited definition of internationalisation considers it as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2004). Building on the 'back' of this definition, in 2015, de Wit et al. articulated a new definition as "the *intentional* process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society."

Many other scholars of HE have endeavoured to provide an all-encompassing definition for the complex term 'internationalisation' in the context of HE. The International Association of Universities (IAU) (2015) observes that "It might be surprising that for such an important process there is no clear-cut definition, and in fact, various definitions have been suggested and adopted for internationalization."

Teferra (2008) also held that the term internationalisation means so many things to so many people and that few other terms in HE are as diverse and as rich, alluding to the difficult task of defining it. He observed that

> When students travel to study abroad, faculty are engaged in collaborative research and publishing, or a university signs a memorandum of understanding with foreign institutional or development partners, it is called internationalization. When satellite campuses or franchise private providers are established in a new locale or when a curriculum with an eye on international issues is developed, or even when an institution or a country reevaluates the mode of instructional delivery, "internationalization" is often invoked as motive and rationale. When countries work toward a common frame of reference such as harmonizing credentials, or attract foreign faculty to their campuses, or even evaluate the essence of brain drain, they still talk about internationalization.

Increasingly popular, but heavily controversial aspects, such as rankings and accreditation, could be added to this list.

Zeleza (2012) also acknowledged that views on internationalisation differ widely in terms of the forces that drive it, the activities that constitute it, the competencies it promotes, the values it creates, the processes that sustain it, the respective roles of key constituencies within and outside universities, and its effects on the core functions of the HE enterprise. Hence, defining the term remains rather elusive.

At the centre of this article is the fact that many institutions vigorously pursue aspects of internationalisation under duress (due to conditions imposed on them in some way) as often as others do so *intentionally*. Therefore, this article takes a strong position that the definition of internationalisation, as embedding 'intentional', is particularly incongruous with the experiences of many institutions, particularly those in the Global South. This definitional defect points to the need to rethink the fundamental characteristics and complex realities of internationalisation—driven both by implicit and explicit intentions and demands on institutions.

The Dialogue

At the heart of the dialogue lies the embedding of a critical word in the definition of internationalisation as expounded by de Wit et al. (2015) as its key component. De Wit further elaborated the definition at the Second Higher Education Forum for Africa, Asia and Latin America (HEFAALA) Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2019 when delivering his keynote address. It was here that Teferra openly countered and subsequently engaged in vigorous debate and dialogue.

This definition falls short of capturing the phenomenon and its reality, particularly as manifested in the Global South, as it situates intentionality as the key component of the definition. Internationalisation—as regards the phenomenon in the Global South, particularly Africa—is far from being an intentional process. This position is in concert with the view that African HE is the most internationalised system in the world—not by participation but by omission (Teferra, 2008).

In submitting that HE in Africa is an international enterprise, Teferra observed that even the most parochial HE institutions exhibit their international dimension in the language of instruction; the books, journals, and other published resources they consume; the methodologies they pursue; and/or the resources they deploy. He further reiterated that African HE is part of the larger global HE system, albeit a much smaller player. Its engagement at the international level is very limited in scope and without notable consequence. As the weakest global HE system, it relies heavily on the discourses, paradigms and parameters set by others, rendering it vulnerable to global whims and idiosyncrasies. African HE assumes the position of the most internationalised system by being the least internationally engaged (Teferra, 2008).

Africa produces a fraction of the world's global knowledge—with the most generous statistics putting such contribution at 2%. The continent thus relies heavily on the knowledge produced by others. The rest of the Global South also falls into this unenviable category (Teferra, 23 August 2019). In participating in the massive consumption of these products and

services while staunchly, but helplessly, adhering to international academic and scholastic norms and values, universities in the Global South are often not willing parties. Neither is the process of their consumption wholly intentional.

De Wit states, "that this [phenomenon] is also true for most higher education institutions in the Global North." But by contrasting the Global North with the South, he tends to normalise—if not minimise—the impact and repercussions of the phenomenon on the main casualties of the "intentional" process.

Intention vs. Coercion

For an institution to be more globally visible or, better still, globally appealing, it ought to raise its profile through a number of intentional activities rather than through coercion. Institutional partnerships are often sought among equals and they maintain a certain level of international standing for such an engagement through a multitude of relevant activities—intentional or otherwise (Teferra, 23 August 2019).

The increasingly popular, but frequently criticised, institutional rankings, which invariably favour the Global North, have pushed the internationalisation pendulum from intention to coercion. For instance, institutions around the world—including those in Africa—are known to deploy resources to hire companies which purport to be able to raise their standing in rankings although such lucrative, but expensive, exercises are considered futile (Teferra, 23 August 2019, in press; Altbach and Hazelkom, 2017).

The choice of a language as a medium of academic and scholarly communication is a key aspect of internationalisation. Virtually all countries with a colonial history maintain the language of their colonialists for their academia and scholarship. This is not by choice (and thus not intentional) but *de facto* a consequence of history. In some countries which set out to change this burden of history, the process has been fraught with contestation—between those in favour and those against change. The push and pull for predominance in international and 'regional' languages—between Arabic and French (as in Tunisia), Arabic and English (as in the Sudan), and English and French (as in Algeria, Rwanda and Senegal)—for the "soul" (Teferra, 2008) of academic space are instructive. Thus, the internationalisation phenomenon is not only intentional, but fraught with tension and contestation—and is therefore far from intentional.

For instance, in the past several years, South African universities have been the scene of an animated dialogue on decolonisation—largely in vocal reaction to internationalisation (and globalisation). While studies indicate numerous understandings of decolonisation, the curriculum has

been charged as a key factor in perpetuating colonisation (Fomunyam and Teferra, 2017).

De Wit (7 September 2019) holds that "the addition of the word 'intentional' highlights that the process must be carefully planned and strategically focused" ... and "Our concern has been to emphasise that internationalisation should no longer be contextualised in terms of a Westernised, largely Anglo-Saxon and predominantly English-speaking paradigm and that there is a need for a different approach."

It is imperative that the internationalisation phenomenon embraces a 'virtuous' cause—contextual, relevant, fair, equitable, and more. But, de Wit et al. overlook the task of defining the term—in its real manifestations—when they advocate a certain path for the phenomenon—of their own preference, however benevolent. It is one thing to define a phenomenon as exhibited by its extant manifestations; it is another to forecast, less so advocate, its future course.

De Wit (7 September 2019) argues that a more descriptive and normative direction to the internationalisation process is imperative. However, the narrative of the definition is neither descriptive nor normative, but rather prescriptive and curative, as it intends to advance ostensible challenges and prescribe arguable—and even contestable—mitigating measures (Teferra, 21 September 2019).

The definition should remain a holistic mapping of the phenomenon as it manifests itself and it cannot be a futuristic rendering of professional goodwill which scaffolds upon ostensibly popular appeal or benevolent desire. For that matter, the goodwill statements stated in the dialogue themselves are fraught with controversy which further undermines the calibre, if not the authenticity, of the definition. While intention in the context of internationalisation may be prompted by enthusiasm, interest, and drive, coercion is manifest in undue indulgence, apprehension and compulsion. Internationalisation has a double-faced character—with both intention and coercion.

Even the idea of internationalisation at home – as innocuous as it sounds – is not that wholly intentional. For instance, the re-curriculation of academic programmes, in reaction to and interest in the growing global realities of institutional cooperation and competition, is not an intentional process with unanimous voices. To be sure, intention is a contested terrain with multiple players—of disparate voices, interests and persuasions—and shifting playing fields.

De Wit, however, holds that internationalisation at home in the African context should intentionally be directed towards embedding and developing it in African values, needs and priorities. Quoting de Wit, Hunter, Egron-Polak and Howard (2015), in this issue, he further underlines that

internationalisation needs to evolve into a more comprehensive, more intentional, and less elitist process which is less focused on mobility and less economically driven, with the goal of enhancing the quality of education and research and making a meaningful contribution to society. Regardless of its intention, such a position simply oversteps the act of defining and crosses into the spirit of advocating.

The IAU (2015) also makes the case that the "definition highlights the fact that internationalization is a means to achieve something and not an end in itself, and it also underlines the fact that internationalization has to be fair and inclusive and that it should aim at improving society." It goes on to state that:

> In all its work, IAU focuses on the academic rationales, the equitable and collaborative nature of the process and aims to minimize the adverse effects of international interactions when these take place in highly unequal and diverse contexts among HEIs with different resources, needs and interests.

There is little contestation on the notion of what internationalisation ought to be—or not. But, the basic argument lies right at the heart of the new definition where, de Wit et al. maintain intentionality, that falls far short of describing the phenomenon aptly, and correctly.

Aspects of Internationalisation
Internationalisation manifests in numerous ways. Key among them are mobility (student and academic), research (cooperation and partnerships), curriculum (delivery and methodology) and language (for instruction and publishing). The following section briefly interrogates each as relevant to the central theme of this article in challenging the notion of intentionality in internationalisation.

Mobility
Academic mobility lies at the epicentre of internationalisation and the internationalisation discourse. The IAU (2015) affirms that, "student mobility remains the most important internationalization activity... [though it] benefits less than 5% of students". Governments, institutions and individuals participate in this exercise for different reasons. For instance, African governments pursue academic mobility for national development, institutions for capacity building and individuals for self-advancement.

Three forms of internationalisation are recognised in mobility: individual (physical) mobility, institutional mobility, and programme mobility. Altbach and de Wit (2017) noted a gradual increase in the number of transnational education initiatives of Western universities in developing countries in the past two decades, including branch campuses, franchise operations, edu-

cation hubs and articulation programmes. They observed that many new transnational activities are now initiated by institutions within the developing world, and in some cases even target the developed world.

Given the catastrophic effects of COVID-19 on all aspects of human life—social, economic, financial, political, cultural and academic—it may be premature to anticipate the future of mobility in all its manifestations as emerging trends in educational delivery defy space and distance. This aspect of internationalisation, mainly as an *intentional* process, is likely to unravel in the wake of this global pandemic with huge implications for mobility in all its forms.

Curriculum

Not only the 'umbrella' terminology, internationalisation, but also its constituent elements such as internationalisation of the curriculum, and research, among others, are expressly defined. The OECD (1996, p. 6) describes internationalisation of the curriculum "with an international orientation in content and/or form, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic and /or foreign students".

Leask's (2015, p. 9) widely used definition states that internationalisation of the curriculum is "the process of incorporating international, intercultural and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study". While these definitions are subject to academic debate, their basis in intentionality remains doubtful, as attested by persistent debates and dialogues on decolonising the curriculum through taming, if not containing the forces of internationalisation in HE.

Research

Research has increasingly taken a more international and regional track as the issues confronting nations have become broader and more complex. Lee and Bozeman (2005) maintain that the increasingly interdisciplinary, complex, and costly characteristics of modern science makes it imperative to pursue collaborative research that funding agencies increasingly require to support it.

In the African context, where huge dependency on foreign funding for research is a reality, countries and their institutions are prodded by their benefactors into multi-country and multi-institutional partnerships (Teferra, 2016). A large body of literature critiques the rapidly shifting funding policies and parameters of development partners, often for a multitude of seeming idiosyncrasies and typically not geared towards the intended beneficiaries, although there have been some recent shifts. While

it is true that competition for funding is an intentional process, it is far from intentional when African countries must engage in such exercises to access critical funding for research and are thereby subjected to these idiosyncrasies. The same could be said of research agenda setting, research partnerships, joint publishing and rankings.

Language

More than half a dozen languages are currently used in African HE institutions, including Afrikaans, Arabic, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Except for Arabic (and, arguably, Afrikaans in South Africa), no native language, *sensu stricto*, is used as an instructional medium in African higher learning institutions. English, French, Portuguese (to a lesser extent) and Spanish (rarely) remain the sole languages of research and academia in African institutions of higher learning (Teferra and Altbach, 2003; Teferra, 2008).

As one of the key aspects of internationalisation, languages are also colonial relics and remain paramount in keeping the African continent within the global orbit that sustains nations and institutions in participating in the globalised academic, research, business, finance, and political spheres. While these legacies continue to dominate the national life of nations, they likewise remain key conduits of internationalisation. Thus, the choice of a language of instruction as a key aspect of internationalisation is far from intentional given its history, status and legacy. This is as much the case elsewhere in the world as it is in Africa.

From 'Dumb' Decolonisation to 'Smart' Internationalisation

Nearly six decades ago, at the dawn of African independence in the 1960s, famous Africanist and founding father of the Republic of Tanzania, former President Julius Nyerere noted the tension and danger of the lack of a balanced view between what is local and what is international. He astutely observed that:

> There are two possible dangers facing a university in a developing nation: the danger of blindly adoring mythical "international standards" which may cast a shadow on national development objectives, and the danger of forcing our university to look inwards and isolate itself from the world (Nyerere, 1966).

The inherent and time-tested tension that exists in the intentionality of issues surrounding internationalisation could not be more evident today. In a book chapter "From 'Dumb' Decolonization to 'Smart' Internationalization" Teferra (2020) argued that "all internationalization, that is, smart internationalization, ought to be locally grounded and internationally flavored". He further elaborated that:

The choice one makes in terms of language use in academic institutions is as local as it is international. Curricula, designated readings, and projects ought to be as local as they are international. The essence of academic mobility—in terms of study destinations and program choices—needs to be as local as it is international. Research must be relevant to national and regional realities but ought to be advanced in keeping with international standards and perspectives.

Furthermore, international partnerships and cooperation need to be significant to local realities and needs. Accordingly, the respective local entities—universities, departments, government offices, and institutes—ought to strategically articulate their needs and frame them within the appropriate international regimes.

Yet, institutional cooperation as well as competition are becoming an everyday reality of the internationalisation phenomenon. For instance, as institutions vigorously compete for increasingly limited grants around the world, they also cooperate in a number of ways to address grand challenges. Thus, the two features of internationalisation—cooperation (as innocent as it sounds) and competition (as harsh as it appears)—may not be simply described as intentional occurrences, as ascribed in the de Wit et al. definition.

Van der Wende (2001) in de Wit (in this issue) recognises a paradigm shift in internationalisation from cooperation to competition. He notes competition for students, for scholars, for talent for the knowledge economy, for funding of complex research, for access to the top 500 in global rankings, and for access to high impact publications. Recruitment, excellence in research and reputation are driving the internationalisation agenda of institutions and national governments, at the cost of the large majority of tertiary education institutions and their students and staff.

According to de Wit and his colleagues, Wende and others, the trend in internationalisation is not moving in the right direction. In a way this prescriptive advocacy to move internationalisation to the 'right' track—from competition to cooperation—prevents them from accurately articulating the phenomenon as it is manifesting itself in the past and currently.

It may be true that the current wave of institutional league table competition—or, to be particular, the zeal to be ranked favourably—has contributed to a level of consciousness that has spurred more active 'intentional' aspects of things. However, these cannot be construed as intentional actions as these intentions are triggered by pressure to do things that are not necessarily within the realm of burning institutional needs; nor are they typically in the respective institutional strategic plans.

Contrasting Internationalisation

As a matter of contrast, the term globalisation is drawn on to examine its definition as a closely related term to internationalisation, with the terms often used interchangeably. Altbach and Knight (2007) define globalisation in the HE context "as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement." The World Bank concisely defines the term as "the growing integration of economies and societies around the world" (World Bank, 2002).

On the other hand, multiple organisations such as the United Nations, the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the World Trade Organization embrace the term globalisation, based on a jointly published document, as "an increasing internationalisation of markets for goods and services, the means of production, financial systems, competition, corporations, technology and industries" (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesm/Seriesm_86e.pdf).

The World Health Organization also describes globalisation as increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries, which is generally understood to include two inter-related elements: opening international borders to increasingly fast flows of goods, services, finance, people and ideas; and changes in institutions and policies at national and international levels that facilitate or promote such flows (https://www.who.int/topics/globalization/en/).

As is evident in the multiple definitions above, they neither advocate, nor advance or denounce globalisation in describing the phenomenon, as massively controversial as it remains. Rather, they simply describe the phenomenon as it manifests itself, as a definition should be.

Thus, in defining a phenomenon such as internationalisation, one ought to carve the boundaries, practice, paradigm and discourse of that phenomenon, captured in time on account of its 'true' manifestations as exhibited in the past, and in the present. Teferra (21 Sept 2019) argues against and continues to challenge the inclusion of 'intention' because a definition of a phenomenon is about the phenomenon, not a projection of one's intention of the phenomenon. By focusing on intention, the definition falls short in capturing the essence of the phenomenon, hence its weakness.

It is probable that those who do not subscribe to, or even reject outright, the key concept of a benevolent intentionality in internationalisation, are likely to discount the essence of the definition. After all, the nature of and motives for intentions are varied and can be a source of tension, discord and conflict as they embody abundant and eclectic views and interests.

This definition of internationalisation which foregrounds 'intentionality' may thus run contrary to the strong views held by those who consider it as a continuation of the neo-colonial project which the Global South needs to do away with as part of the struggle against neo-colonialism and colonisation. The prescribed intention in the definition is thus antithetical to such a discourse. Intentionality also fails due to the constant tension between internationalisation and 'Glosoulisation' [Global South], to give it a broader scope than Africanisation and make it inclusive of the Global South (Teferra, 21 Sept 2019). Therefore, the choices and perspectives towards internationalisation remain as diverse as they are contradictory, and prescribing intentions in the definition, as per de Wit's argument, is out of place, if not completely inapt.

Attempting to render a definition of a phenomenon beyond its current and past 'manifestational boundaries'—for whatever 'good' intentions, such as equity and justice or 'wicked' ones like racism or colonisation—is far from accurate, if not outright flawed discourse. It is one thing to solicit opinions on what an internationalisation phenomenon ought to be, and completely another to describe how this phenomenon manifests itself. For instance, what would have been the definition of colonialism if similar praxis were to have been pursued given the fact that one group denounced its very tenets and even fought it, while another subscribed to and advanced it? It would have meant two forms of definitions for colonialism. One could consider terms like colonisation, neo-colonisation, and de-colonisation as intimate realities of the internationalisation phenomenon and these need to be manifestly described for what they are, without prejudice, distortion, compassion or exaltation.

Venturing to Define Internationalisation

De Wit et al.'s definition of internationalisation can be described as too optimistic and generous, if not totally unrealistic in the face of the reality of HE institutions and systems around the world. In describing the term wrapped in 'intention' they render the definition impractical if not irrelevant to the context of the Global South. The intentions are misplaced and even controversial as the term went overboard in further advocating for enhancement of "the quality of education and research for *all* students and staff". It is way too optimistic if not way too unrealistic to declare *all* students and staff as beneficiaries of the phenomenon as it manifests itself in the past and the present!

The IAU, one of the leading global authorities on internationalisation, in concurrence with and endorsement of de Wit et al.'s definition, describes internationalisation as "an intentional process undertaken by higher education institutions (HEIs) but its implications go beyond the domain of

higher education and affect society at large." The assertion of a "meaningful contribution to society" (de Wit et al.) and "affect society at large" (the IAU) as a definition of internationalisation are also simply goodwill intentions.

Contemporary ontological manifestations of the terminology have been appreciably misrepresented, if not wholly distorted, mainly by the passionate, albeit honest, desire to advance certain 'good' intentions. This selective promotion of a preferred reality that disregards alternative intentions or ignores default realities on the ground creates dissonance between the epistemological reality and paradigmatic trajectory.

Knowledge, at least in the context of interpretive epistemology, is derived from an interpretation and illumination of reality rather than through prediction or favourable assertion, but with interpretation in the context of social practices (Scott and Usher, 2003). Hence, it is argued that the epistemological drift exhibited in the act of defining internationalisation, by including intentions, is tantamount to hermeneutic defiance if not exegesis denunciation.

Conclusion

De Wit et al.'s definition of internationalisation, which embraces intentionality as its key component, is neither descriptive nor normative, but rather unduly prescriptive and curative. The essence of the definition need not be about therapeutic advocacy, nor should it be a restorative discourse, however benevolent or unanimous.

In defining a phenomenon such as internationalisation, one ought to carve the boundaries, practice, paradigm and discourse of that phenomenon, captured in time on account of its 'true' manifestations as exhibited in the past, and in the present. The inclusion of 'intention' in the re-configured definition as a key component is therefore flawed because a definition of a phenomenon should be about the phenomenon and not a projection of the intention of the phenomenon.

It is true that while some institutions are vigorously pursuing aspects of internationalisation intentionally, many others are doing so under coercion, duress, and contestation. Thus, the definition of internationalisation needs to be further reconsidered to accommodate the underlying and complex realities of those in the Global South, and even some in the North.

Defining a phenomenon as contentious as internationalisation based on presumptions about intentions, however benevolent and appealing, will continue to render it vulnerable, if not outright irrelevant. Hence, the search for a more neutral, robust, 'intention-free' and inclusive definition that aptly defines internationalisation should continue.

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