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AN EXAMINATION OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN KENYAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FROM THE STRATEGIC INTENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study emphasises how Kenyan universities actively interact with regional and global trends to improve their academic standing, attract diverse student populations, promote international partnerships, and ultimately attain globalization, motivated by the necessity to access and contribute to global knowledge production within a competitive environment. Research demonstrates that the internationalization of Kenyan higher education institutions mirrors the extent of regionalization as it establishes its unique position in the internationalization process. The findings reveal that the strategic intent to establish institutions' vision, commit to it, and implement it is being undermined at Kenyan universities by inadequate leadership, lack of commitment, and insufficient financial, human, and technological resources. Subpar worldwide rankings and inadequate physical infrastructure have also impeded the rate of internationalization. We recommend that higher education institutions cultivate strong partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organisations to broaden their financing sources. Global partnerships with prestigious higher education institutions beyond Africa should be created. The enhancement of university facilities can be realized by intentionally upgrading the infrastructure of higher education institutions to align with worldwide norms, investing in contemporary technology and human resources, and devoting adequate financing to ensure effective implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internationalization is a developing notion (Altbach, 2021). According to De Wit (2009) and Knight (2008), academics frequently employ varying terminology to characterize the internationalization and globalization of higher education. Altbach and Knight (2007) define globalization as the socio-economic and political forces propelling higher education to international standards in the 21st century, while internationalization is characterized as the process of incorporating international, intercultural, or global elements into education to improve the quality of teaching and research (de Wit, 2020). Following the conclusion of the Second World War, nations vied for independence, subsequently initiating robust nationalization efforts designed to align their institutions with the promotion of national loyalty, citizenship, and the cultivation of a sense of national patriotism among their populace. Education was customized to align with the national government's objectives, and internationalization was not regarded as a priority. Global universities are experiencing a rise in the enrolment of overseas students (Shields 2013). Altbach et al. (2019) assert that globalization is profoundly influencing higher education. Internationalization encompasses the policies and programs that Higher Education Institutions (HIEs) and nations adopt in response to globalization, which is characterized by the increasing interconnectedness of the global economy, advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the establishment of a global knowledge network, and the growing prevalence of the English language. De Wit (2011) recognises the hostility around the term internationalization, which is viewed positively for its promotion of humanistic ideals in contrast to the "predatory" economic advantages advocated by globalization. Paige (2005) recognises that higher education institutions are compelled by stakeholders to implement internationalization. The global implementation of internationalization has piqued the interest of scholars aiming to comprehend the underlying motivations for this phenomena. Ayoubi & Massoud (2007) and Ayoubi (2008) assert that internationalization in Higher Education is a systematic process executed in phases, commencing with the design phase, which involves formulating the strategic intent, mission, vision statement, and corporate and strategic design. The second step encompasses design implementation, whilst the last phase entails monitoring and assessment. Ayoubi and Massoud (2007) found that 74% of UK universities' mission statements are focused on the implementation of internationalization. Marginson (2010) asserts that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) pursue internationalization to enhance student and institutional advancement, which Ho et al. (2015) classify into on-campus benefits (i.e., those directly impacting the university and its students) and off-campus benefits, encompassing both domestic and international advantages. A study on higher education institutions in Brazil indicates that universities implement internationalization to provide students with global experiences, protect against academic and scientific isolation, and mitigate helicopter parenting. Study (Finan et al., 2023). Altbach and Knight (2007) assert that non-profit institutions pursue internationalization to generate revenue and mitigate financial difficulties impacting their operations. Knight (2006) notes that not all universities are motivated by profit; instead, they pursue internationalization to enhance academic research, facilitate information sharing, and foster multicultural variety and international coexistence. Davis (2003) asserts that international students enhance the economy of their host nations by their spending in local markets. De Wit (2019) cites national, regional, and worldwide university rankings as primary motivators for the internationalization of higher education. Altbach & Knight (2007) assert that institutions and organisations in the northern hemisphere serve as the primary guardians of knowledge, knowledge repositories, and advanced ICT infrastructure, hence explaining the significant influx of international students to these institutions. This contradicts the prevailing notion that internationalization is a reciprocal process. Altbach and Knight (2007) assert that globalization is defined by the deliberate execution of initiatives that address globalization. Sika & Othoo (2022) assert that internationalization in higher education is markedly imbalanced regarding the mobility of international students, resulting in a minimal number of foreign students selecting African institutions as their preferred destinations for higher education. East African higher education institutions are preparing to transform themselves to align with global expectations and standards. Haigh (2014) identifies eight dimensions of internationalization and globalization in higher education cross-border student recruitment, international students as educators, competitive recruitment of international faculty and students, adherence to international accreditation standards, domestic internationalization, and instruction in global citizenship, E-learning, and the dissemination of

globalised education. Brandenburg & Federkeil (2007) assert that the intentionality behind the internationalization of higher education is evident in the curricula, research initiatives, and the profiles of students and faculty being established. Despite Kenyan higher education institutions' efforts to demonstrate a genuine commitment to the international education landscape through international collaborations and partnerships, these initiatives are frequently ephemeral, sporadic, and poorly planned, often dominated by external donors who exert significant pressure on the host institutions (Obamba, 2009).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In his study on the condition of higher education institutions in Kenya, Muyaka (2019) found that international students perceive Kenyan colleges as unappealing, a conclusion supported by the low enrolment rates of international students in both public and private universities. The research also observed inadequate investments in internationalization infrastructure by Kenyan higher education institutions. This significantly undermines efforts to engage the limited pool of international workers and students whose contributions can advance internationalization and globalization inside their institutions. This study recommends that higher education institutions formulate effective recruitment strategies to attract international students and foster a supportive environment for globalization. Utilizing a multiple case study design, it examines how campus diversity is leveraged to promote internationalization at four selected universities in Kenya, thereby addressing the gap in investigating the strategic intent of higher education institutions. Ogachi (2018), in examining the viability of the East African Community Higher Education Area (EACHEA) as a unified higher education space for the East African Partner States, asserts that external influences associated with higher education systems and private economic interests from developed nations may serve as underlying factors related to internationalization successes. External entities are acknowledged for offering financial and technical assistance, in stark contrast to the insufficient commitment exhibited by local partner states towards the program. This opposes the nationalisation initiatives of Higher Education Institutions among partner governments and their revenue-centric approach, which has led to intense competition for students to augment revenue sources. This study identifies commercial interests as the sole motivation for the internationalization and

globalization of higher education institutions (HEIs) among universities, although governments aim to enhance business through research and innovation derived from HEIs. A research vacuum exists regarding a comprehensive examination of all strategic objectives that the current study aims to address. Kathae (2015) states that the University of Nairobi implemented six strategies for the internationalization of programs, including curriculum review to align with international standards and attract foreign students, engaging in international partnerships and collaborations with foreign universities, and promoting publications in international journals. The strategies included benchmarking against successful international higher education institutions, improving marketing efforts to attract foreign students and staff, optimizing admission processes, restructuring tuition fees to appeal to international students, and upgrading existing academic infrastructure to align with international standards. Their research also identified policies and frameworks implemented to facilitate internationalization. These encompassed worldwide networking and collaborations, admission rules, quality assurance, and the strategic objectives of the universities. The study identified obstacles such as inadequate coordination of international education due to insufficient finance, immigration inefficiencies, a lack of accommodation, substandard current facilities, and a deficiency of qualified professionals to advance the internationalization agenda. This study is informed by Strategic Intent Theory, as opposed to the Uppsala model employed by Kathae (2015), who also confined the research to the University of Nairobi. This creates an opportunity for the current study to provide alternative perspectives on the examination of Internationalization and Globalization in Kenyan universities that accommodate foreign students. In their examination of the Internationalization Perspectives of Kenyan Universities, Muyaka et al. (2020) recognise the pivotal role of university administrators, academic personnel, and students as key stakeholders in the internationalization of higher education institutions in Kenya. The study conclusions criticised Kenyan universities for not leveraging internationalization to enhance the quality of their academic programs. This failure is ascribed to inadequate coordination, resulting in the absence of a shared objective among stakeholders necessary for the successful implementation of internationalization. This study employed Institutional theory to examine stakeholders' understanding and perception of the

internationalization process of higher education institutions (HEIs), whereas the present study concentrates on the strategic aim of HEIs inside Kenyan universities. Obamba's (2009) study indicates that the Kenyan Government and universities are inclined towards the commercialization of higher education institutions, driven by a belief in market-oriented expansion within a fragmented and imperfect market environment. Teferra (2008) and Obamba (2009) assert that the drive for internationalization in Kenyan universities is motivated by various interests, including the pursuit of career development opportunities for staff, diversification of revenue sources from external donors, enhancement of the university's image and prestige, and the promotion of quality assurance and accreditation. The study by Obamba (2009) explored secondary literature to analyze marketization in higher education and the political economy of educational commercialization, whereas the current study investigates the strategic motivations propelling higher education institutions towards internationalization and globalization. Marinoni & de Wit (2019) caution that a strategy lacking actions for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation does not result in internationalization. Although both public and private Kenyan higher education institutions aspire to internationalization and globalization, minimal work has been dedicated to the implementation process. De Wit & Merkx (2022) recognise that universities have consistently incorporated implicit, ad hoc, and fragmented international elements into their curricula. De Wit (2019) identifies several factors motivating higher education institutions (HEIs) to adopt internationalization and globalization the quest for institutional autonomy and academic freedom, the imperative to enhance reputation, the ambition to achieve favorable national, regional, and global university rankings and international distinction, and the evolving political landscape. This study addresses the strategic goal of internationalization and globalization in higher education, a gap often overlooked in academic research that predominantly focusses on the implementation processes (Kehm and Teichler 2007; Deardorff et al. 2012).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the Theory of Strategic Intent, which asserts that Intent is motivated by a robust determination to achieve a specific future state. Year 2012. Strategic intent transcends time-bound objectives and pertains to long-term ambitions, frequently lacking definitive timescales for realization (FitzRoy et al., 2012). This thesis posits that chief executives and senior managers consistently articulate and develop the organization's strategic goal. The strategic intent serves as a unifying emblem for employees striving towards a shared objective (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Hamel & Prahalad (2018) assert that strategic intent comprises intricate, intentional procedures designed to direct managerial and operational activities. These are aimed to concentrate stakeholders' attention on the ultimate objectives and to inspire collaboration in optimizing allotted resources for successful program execution. The contextualization of the study within the Kenyan environment offers a distinctive chance to elucidate the contribution to the Theory of Higher Education from an African viewpoint. This conceptualization seeks to attract qualitative insights from a setting historically overlooked due to its sluggish and relatively low levels of internationalization, so initiating a new discourse on internationalization focused on third-world and developing states. In contrast to earlier theoretical frameworks, Strategic Intent is both proactive and goal-oriented, enabling higher education institutions to establish their own identities in the global education market. Previous frameworks have been recognized for prioritizing reactive strategies, so compelling institutions to conform to global isomorphic demands.

2.2. Research Questions

1. What is the current level of international students in Kenyan Institutions of Higher Education?
2. What strategic intent do Kenyan higher education institutions have towards internationalization in their institutions?
3. How is the correlation pattern between different levels of strategic Intent?
4. Which factors affect the strategic Intent of Internationalization in Kenyan Higher Education Institutions?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data, Population, Sample, and Research Tool

This research employed a mixed-methods approach. Data from the Kenya Commission for University Education was acquired to examine enrolment numbers and research outputs from the 38 higher education institutions in Kenya. These institutions include both public and private universities. Qualitative interviews were employed to record the experiences of the university's personnel. A blend of in-person interviews, virtual interviews, and an online survey was employed. The individuals interviewed included teaching, non-teaching, and administrative personnel. Qualitative data were analysed thematically, and quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 29.0 to demonstrate correlations among research variables. The qualitative approach facilitated a more profound comprehension of the notion and status of internationalization, influenced by a multifaceted array of contextual elements (Patton, 2014). The primary criteria for interview participation were that the institution must be a public or private research university, accommodate at least one international student, and be situated in Kenya. This study employed a purposive sampling method to discover and choose a sample with the highest strategic intent after the "Organizational Intentionality in Campus Internationalization Survey." Although purposive sampling is susceptible to bias, we instituted a series of procedures to alleviate this issue. These encompassed the explicit definition and selection of

respondents based on their experience, expertise, and positions within Kenyan higher education institutions, the utilisation of official secondary data from pertinent Kenyan entities, and the consistent incorporation of open-ended responses to our enquiries to foster comprehensive and nuanced replies that enabled respondents to share their varied perspectives. The conceptual framework and mixed-methods methodology facilitate the study's replication in other contexts, including those with bigger samples. To accept the sample for study, the researcher sought information resources regarding intentionality in internationalization and globalization activities among the population under investigation, as advised by Patton (2002). This research employs Organisational Intentionality within the Campus Internationalization Survey questionnaire, modified from Cornelius (2012). The reliability assessment of the study instrument reveals a Cronbach's Alpha of .847 based on four items. Item statistics indicate that the mean for the Intentionality of practice was 3.05 with a standard deviation of 0.86, whereas the mean for intentionality in organisational commitment to internationalization was 2.90 with a standard deviation of 0.76. The mean for intentionality in formulating an internationalization vision was 2.85, with a standard deviation of 0.76. The mean for reasons for internationalization was 2.64, with a standard deviation of 0.73.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Number of International Students	38	1	840	141.66	192.139
Research Output	38	1	1085	101.87	191.538
Valid N (listwise)	38				
Note: N is the number of Higher Education Institutions.					

3.1.1. Descriptive Finding

As indicated in Table 1, there was a minimum of 1 international student and a maximum

of 840, with a mean of 141.66 and a standard deviation of 192.139. The minimum research output was 1, the maximum was 1085, across the 38 higher education institutions.

Table 2: Distribution of International Students according to Nationality.

|	Nationality	Count	Percentage
1	Uganda	905	3.19
2	South Sudan	847	2.99
3	Tanzania	670	2.36
4	Rwanda	416	1.47
5	Nigeria	362	1.28
6	Somalia	340	1.20
7	America	71	0.25
8	Middle East	32	0.11
9	Oceania	6	0.02
10	Europe	134	0.47
11	Asia	196	0.69
12	Rest of Africa	1951	6.89
13	South Africa	107	0.38
14	Ghana	129	0.45
15	Ethiopia	139	0.49
16	Burundi	249	0.87
17	Others	21800	76.89
		28354	100

As shown in Table 2, international students originated from 17 Nationalities.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of International Students in Kenyan Universities.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Count	17	6	21800	1667.88	5210.16	4.07	.550	16.652	1.063
Percentage	17	.02	76.89	5.88	18.38	4.07	.550	16.652	1.063
Valid N (listwise)	17								
Note: N is the number of Nationalities									

Findings in Table 3 indicate that the category of other nationalities has a higher number of international students, 76.89%, with 0.02% (Oceania) as the minimum. The mean for the aggregate nationalities was 1667.88 with a standard deviation of 5210.16.
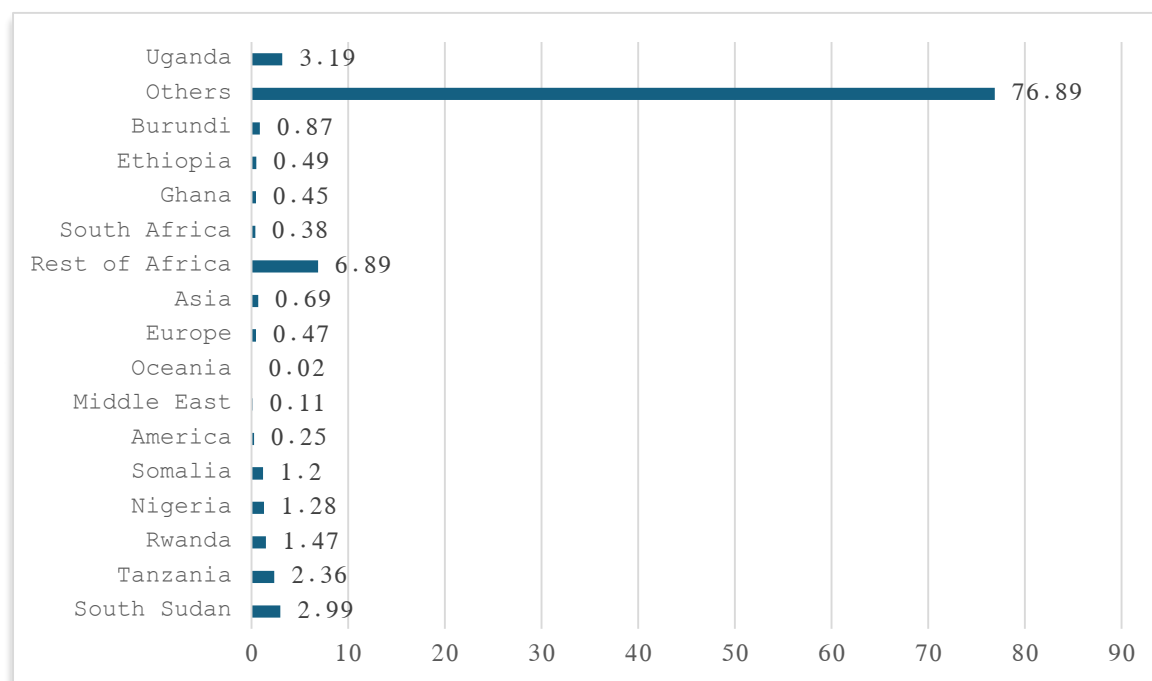
Figure 2: Distribution of International Students in Kenyan Universities.

As shown in Figure 2, Students from other African countries drive most of the internationalization agenda in Kenyan universities. Source Commission for University Education, 2023/2024; Author (2025).

3.2. Interview Findings

From the 36 university staff interviewed, 6 were senior administrators, 13 assistant professors, 2 doctoral fellows, 7 graduate assistants, 5 Deans of students, and 3 heads of departments. All the respondents had served for a period of between 5 and 10 years in various universities.

4. EMERGING THEMES

4.1. Intentionality in Creating a Vision for Internationalization

Research indicates that the internationalization of

the campus commenced with the administration's intentional initiative to integrate the student population with international students. Twenty-one of the thirty-six respondents interviewed asserted that internationalization objectives are significant considerations for university executives in formulating strategies for competitiveness in the educational sector. Despite the university management's emphasis on internationalization, evidence indicates a deficiency in commitment to the institution's future internationalization efforts. Regarding the expression of the internationalization vision, 16 respondents indicated that Kenyan universities have not distinctly defined the objective of internationalization in their institutional purpose statements, in contrast to its delineation in the strategic plans. While most respondents

acknowledged the significance of internationalization for their institutions, they voiced considerable concerns regarding management's commitment to delineating its future, the engagement of all employees in its execution, and accountability for outcomes, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Question: *Why do you think it is important to have an internationalization vision for your institution?*

Respondent 1: Without vision, there is no goal. It provides the direction, without which achieving a common goal becomes impossible. Employees get inspired when they know what they are pursuing and the direction towards attaining internationalization goals. In my institution, we believe in teamwork towards goal achievement.

Respondent 2: I would certainly link vision to strategic thinking. Internationalization goals require a strategic approach, especially in decision-making. In this case, Strategies must be put in place to focus the organization's resources towards attaining it. Unfortunately, my university has no diverse strategies towards internationalization because we only wait for those international students and staff who may show interest in our institution.

Respondent 3: An elaborate vision for internationalization is the mouthpiece for communication with stakeholders, where goals, values, beliefs, and dreams are shared. It aligns all the members towards the common goal and provides reassurance that the team is moving towards hitting the set target. In our case, the relatively high numbers of international students can be attributed to our collective vision.

Findings indicate that creation of an internationalization vision helps in providing a common direction to guide all stakeholders towards achieving their goal. It also guide the stakeholders in decision making, and act as the mouthpiece for articulating the organization's position.

Question: *Describe the Challenges associated with the strategic Intent of creating a vision in your institution*

Respondent 1: The major challenge is defining the vision clearly and communicating it to every stakeholder in an understandable manner. Internationalization and Globalization, for example, are terms that have always generated scholarly debate on how to define them and whether they are synonyms, and if they are not, what is their relationship.

Respondent 2: The Challenge is during team formation. The big headache is who to involve and at what stage. Although there is a need to involve everyone in the development of institutional vision, I believe that different teams should be formed and assigned tasks, so that all the suggestions are finally harmonized to create one vision. In our case, in this institution, the top management holds meetings and passes resolutions without involving the entire membership of the institution, a situation which has created a feeling of isolation, which is reflected in the poor internationalization outlook of our institution.

Respondent 3: It is difficult to harmonize individuals' goals with the university's goals. There is also a lack of motivation, passion, and energy among junior employees because they are often ignored during decision-making processes. In Kenya, there are challenges with the university funding model, which has seen some modifications. These destabilize vision development, as adjustments are often made without prior communication.

Respondent 4: There is a problem of commitment by lower-level employees because, in our case, only the top-down decision-making approach guides program development and implementation in our institution. Moreover, organizational vision is poorly aligned with team culture, values, and norms.

Respondent 5: In my experience, there is no support, especially regarding resources. It is easy to open an office within the institution to take charge of Internationalization and globalization, get a few staff to sit there, and give the impression that the institution is serious about internationalization matters. We cannot function without sufficient funding, despite having an impressive vision. As the world is embracing technology, we face rigidity in aligning the vision to adapt to this.

These sentiments highlight the bottlenecks surrounding strategic intent towards creating an organization's vision. Notably, there is difficulty in defining the vision, team formation and coordination, harmonization of diverse individual goals, and aligning with the organization's vision, lack of commitment during implementation, and poor resource allocation.

4.2. Intentionality in Organizational Commitment to Internationalization

While 33.3% of respondents disagreed that their institution had formulated a strategic plan for campus internationalization along with the goal set by university administration, a majority of 66.7% concurred. Participants concurred that

internationalization constitutes a public agenda recognised by all university stakeholders; however, 41.7% of respondents contended that their institutions had not effectively delineated and communicated the scope and challenges of internationalization to employees across all institutional tiers. The essential competencies, rules, and processes for implementing internationalization were insufficiently articulated across all levels of the universities. This has resulted in a deficiency of identification with the internationalization vision, as evidenced by 52.8% of the respondents. Results suggest that the administrative frameworks at the universities exhibited a lack of coordination (55.6%), characterised by insufficient staff participation across all levels, who infrequently got information regarding the specifics of internationalization initiatives and their expected responsibilities.

Question*: In what areas do you gauge your institution's commitment and intentionality to pursue internationalization?*

Respondent 1: Commitment to the cause of internationalization is reflected in my institution's action of integrating internationalization and globalization in our organization's vision and goals. Inculcating this and mobilizing the collective effort of all the university stakeholders will reflect commitment. In my institution, we always discuss how we can elevate our profile to compete with other international higher education institutions

Respondent 2: Boardroom meetings and resolutions are not enough without action. Unfortunately, most of our universities in Kenya spend time and resources without allocating the resources needed to drive internationalization. We have seen leaders drafting beautiful strategic plans without considering funding and personnel to bring the vision to reality. In my view, commitment to internationalization is reflected in the sufficient resources allocated.

Respondent 3: During this era of technological revolution, investments in technology infrastructure amount to a serious commitment to internationalization and globalization because that is the modern world. The physical presence of international students and staff should not be the only indicator of internationalization, but rather what technology can facilitate in integrating the international dimension into teaching and learning in our institutions.

Respondent 4: The best way of checking the level of internationalization in an institution is to ask all employees and every stakeholder in the institution if they are part of the institution's internationalization team. In this case, commitment is involvement and togetherness in every stage of implementation. I believe that seamless communication and an all-inclusive implementation approach are reflected by the level of perception that all the stakeholders have towards the implementation.

Respondent 5: Commitment is reflected in clearly outlined policies and implementation guidelines. These guiding principles should be communicated to all employees to consolidate their commitment to the internationalization cause. In my institution, for example, our dream is to be an international institution, but we don't have a single document to guide us.

According to the findings, higher education institutions should integrate internationalization and globalization goals in their strategic vision, commit sufficient resources for implementation, harness technology, and eliminate bureaucracy in the organization's communication to create an all-inclusive communication atmosphere. The policy framework should chart the organizational path towards internationalization.

Question: *Explain the challenges you face in the Strategic Intent of organizational Commitment to Internationalization and Globalization in your institution.*

Respondent 1: We have a challenge where there is a disconnect between international vision and action towards attaining it, because employees feel it is either irrelevant in the current Kenyan circumstances or the is no tangible benefit due to a lack of communication. There is no motivation either for employees, either monetary rewards or any other reward. I feel we are insufficiently trained on the topic, and we lack professionals who understand it fully to drive the internationalization and globalization agenda.

Respondent 2: Resource allocation is the major challenge. We lack sufficient financial, human resources, technological, or any other relevant resources. Internationalization and globalization have therefore been growing at a slow pace.

Respondent 3: Lack of involvement during the creation of the vision leads to a lack of commitment from those who were not consulted.

Respondent 4: Poor leadership is the cause of poor internationalization results. We have a breed of leaders who micro-manage employees with constant rebuke and no support. There is no clear direction as policies and rules change with no communication, making everyone disengaged.

This, coupled with unclear targets and expectations and no framework for feedback, is making the process slow and unpredictable.

Respondent 5: While we have several collaboration agreements, we have no follow-up mechanisms and a lack of commitment by the collaborating bodies to allocate relevant resources to actualize the agreed internationalization programs.

There are a myriad of challenges bedeviling commitment to internationalization. Stakeholder inclusivity has been lacking, coupled with poor resource mobilization. Internationalization in Kenyan universities is relatively low because leaders often exercise poor leadership skills as they occasionally perform the work of managers and administrators, and in a crude way, such as micromanaging, instead of democratizing the work environment. Universities should show commitment through the implementation of international collaborations and partnerships signed with international institutions.

4.3. Intentionality in the Practice of Internationalization

Concerning the culture of organisational flexibility and innovation in campus internationalization, 43.9% of respondents asserted its absence, whereas 56.1% concurred that their organisations exhibited creativity and flexibility in internationalization issues. While 36.1% of respondents refuted the assertion that staff were motivated to pursue internationalization inside their institution, a majority of 63.9% expressed a sense of motivation about the internationalization of their university. The internationalization process in Kenyan universities has proven essential in cultivating change agents among university stakeholders (69.4%). A substantial proportion of respondents, specifically 30.6%, held an opposing viewpoint. The process of internationalization has inspired employees to advocate for intercultural diversity. Kenyan universities have excelled in continual risk-taking, improvisation, and the use of innovations to achieve internationalization objectives, resulting in considerable success and motivating staff to surmount obstacles and expedite the internationalization process.

Question 1: *Describe the environment surrounding employees' motivation to participate in the Internationalization process.*

Respondent 1: The presence of international students in this institution has increased the enthusiasm and the momentum of the internationalization process among the employees,

where elevated team spirit has created interest in intercultural competence development. Students are excited to share experiences, cultures, languages, and stories from their home countries, thus creating

Respondent 2: Employees in this institution initially had no clue about the importance of an internationalized institution. A significant number were not interested in the topic, but after encountering international students and interacting with the team, they embraced the idea and became the champions of internationalization. This institution has a global environment, and people discuss global events.

Respondent 3: I must admit that before the idea of internationalization came to this institution, students' and staff's worldview was limited to domestic affairs. Through interactions with international students, the scope of perceiving the world has suddenly changed. It was like a blanket that was limiting the comprehension of the world was removed, and suddenly there was light, and an unlimited worldview.

These findings indicate that university employees are motivated when they witness the actualization of the internationalization vision. Universities should therefore implement intercultural immersive programs targeting the students and staff in the host institutions.

Question 2: *Explain the internationalization process in your institution using an analogy?*

Respondent 1: It is like a pendulum; after you kickstart it, the motion will be continuous.

Respondent 2: Internationalization is like a battery-powered watch. It keeps ticking as long as the battery is charged.

Respondent 3: It is like a loaded truck that gains speed and momentum with time.

Findings further indicate that the internationalization process in Kenyan universities is still low but growing gradually. 44.5% of the respondents agreed that the internationalization pace was systematic and gradual, compared to 25% who did not agree.

Question: *How can you describe the growth of internationalization in your institution?*

Respondent 1: The wave of internationalization originated from outside Africa. Due to the slow pace of infrastructural development and the least attention that higher education stakeholders give to the internationalization agenda, most universities have been implementing the program based on insufficient resources. The pace has been gradual and systematic, following an upward trend.

Respondent 2: The process has been "slow but sure." This implies that despite the little progress reflected in the few international students compared to locals, there is hope for the successful internationalization of Kenyan institutions of higher learning with time. For a long time, the government has been trying to streamline operational challenges that have threatened universities with collapse due to liquidity issues. These financial struggles, which have primarily affected public universities, have harmed the global profiles of the institutions involved, thus discouraging potential international students and faculty.

Respondent 3: Internationalization is attached to prestige and an excellent global ranking. When the university does not appear on any global map, nobody will be interested in associating with it. Most Kenyan universities do not appear in global rankings, and the few that do appear do not fall in the best positions.

The Pace of internationalization, although comparatively slow, with statistics indicating regionalization as seen in a high number of African students, is gaining significant speed, leading to an upward trend. Respondents attribute this slow trend to the economic hardship that Kenyan universities go through, often leading to liquidity issues. Poor global rankings also contribute to the slow growth of internationalization?

Question: *What are the challenges in the practice of internationalization and Globalization in your institution?*

Respondent 1: According to my observation, there is no commitment from the leaders to allocate resources that would enable us to implement the programs. We don't have a problem dreaming about it or writing an eye-catching organization vision and mission statement. International partnerships and research collaborations require significant investments.

Respondent 2,3,4,5: Poor physical infrastructure. The existing lecture halls, hostels, laboratories, and social amenities need an upgrade to meet global standards.

Respondent 6: Sustainable Internationalization goals. Internationalization and Globalization are thriving in developed countries because of realistic targets and an elaborate resource framework to sustain the programs. We need to re-examine our capabilities and develop strategies to fast-track and sustain the internationalization and globalization of our institutions.

In the practice of internationalization, the lack of resource commitment, facilities that do not meet the global standards, hamper the effort towards implementation and practice. Findings also suggest that internationalization strategies and institutional capabilities should be re-aligned to develop a realistic roadmap to successful internationalization.

Table 4: Correlations.

		Intentionality of Practice	Intentionality in Organizational Commitment	Intentionality in Creating Internationalization Vision
Intentionality of Practice	Pearson Correlation	--		
	N	36		
Intentionality in Organizational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.817**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		
	N	36	36	
Intentionality in Creating Internationalization Vision	Pearson Correlation	.723**	.660**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
	N	36	36	36
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Findings in Table 4 indicate a significant correlation between Intentionality of practice and Intentionality in organizational commitment to internationalization at (.817, p<.001), and between Intentionality of practice and Intentionality in Creating Internationalization Vision (.723, p <.001). There is also a significant positive correlation between Intentionality in Organizational Commitment to internationalization and Intentionality in Creating Internationalization Vision for internationalization at (.660** p<.001).

While several studies indicate an unprecedented rise in HE internationalization trends marked by joint partnerships, establishment and expansion of offshore campuses, and an increase in international programs offered in higher HEIs globally (Kudo et al.2020; Hsieh 2020; Moshtari & Safarpour 2024), East Africa is lagging in internationalization and globalization as a result of its perception as an economically poor region with poor technology adoption (Moshtari & Safarpour, 2024). The breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the

situation by further exposing educational inequalities, which affected vulnerable students from poor socio-economic backgrounds who have been experiencing limited access to technology (Du Plessis et al.2022).

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the strategic aim of internationalization among higher education institutions in Kenya and its correlation with research output. Research indicates that higher education institutions in Kenya prioritise internationalization as a method to enhance global variety, showing no motivation for revenue or profit maximisation. Kenyan universities prioritise their global reputation and strive to enhance their international visibility through Internationalization initiatives designed to recruit foreign students and faculty. Results indicate that governmental policies and frameworks do not impose significant pressure on colleges to pursue internationalization.

The formulation of a strategic intent to establish an internationalization vision is essential for the successful execution of internationalization projects. Vision substantiates the establishment of internationalization objectives, delineates tactics, and conveys the message, ideas, and direction that all stakeholders must adhere to in order to achieve their collective aim.

Intentionality and organisational dedication to internationalization necessitate a comprehensive strategic plan and transparent communication throughout all university levels. Commitment is embedded in the organization's vision and objectives, the allocation of enough resources, and the investment in suitable technology infrastructure. The institution's leadership must engage all stakeholders in formulating policies and frameworks to direct the internationalization and globalization process. The limited and even nonexistent internationalization observed in Kenyan institutions is ascribed to inadequate communication and collaboration across university divisions.

Kenyan universities employ unique strategies to achieve their internationalization and globalization objectives. The Africa Economics and Research Consortium (AERC), Pan African University, The Regional Initiative in Science and Education (RISE), the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture, University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in Africa, and the East African Community (EAC) are spearheading regional collaborations among African universities. The considerable population of African students is ascribed to the policy frameworks, aspirations, and objectives of various African consortia.

5.1 Theoretical and Policy Implications

The notion of strategic intent in the internationalization and globalization of higher education institutions is crucial in determining how these institutions incorporate the international aspect into teaching, research, and development, while also positioning themselves competitively to sustainably contend with other institutions in the global arena.

Strategic intent corresponds with other theories, including the Resource-based View, wherein higher education institutions must make informed decisions to optimise their limited resources, such as international research collaborations and worldwide alliances.

Higher education institutions are inclined to replicate global models in their quest for improved international rankings. Strategic Intent enables institutions to concentrate on their objectives and counteract homogenisation by cultivating and preserving their unique identity.

5.2. Recommendations

A collaborative responsibility among all employees is essential for the ownership and enhancement of the internationalization process. The presence of international students serves as a driving influence for staff who may harbour misgivings and exhibit apathy in the procedure.

We advise future researchers to conduct subsequent studies employing several approaches, including a quantitative approach. Moreover, subsequent research should investigate the correlations between the degree of internationalization in African nations and their socio-economic and political contexts.

We recommend that subsequent researchers examine the progression of strategic intent in thedigital age and amid worldwide pandemics like COVID-19. Research opportunities exist about strategic intent and geopolitical alliances, particularly during international crises such as wars.

Ethical Considerations: This study followed NACOSTI guidelines on non-invasive studies involving human subjects.

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