


Chapter-5

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE POLICY-MAKING OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

International students are a tremendous asset in enhancing the internationalization of higher education. However, under the influence of neoliberalism, they are increasingly viewed as a source of revenue, and internationalization is often commercialized as a marketing strategy within the competitive global knowledge economy. In this context, higher education institutions, particularly those relying on international tuition fees, may prioritize profit generation over authentic, inclusive engagement with international students. A qualitative study conducted at UPEI explored how and to what extent international students have been involved in policy-making processes, aiming to foster their meaningful engagement in the international learning environment. The data, drawn from institutional documents and 10 interviews with administrators and international students, revealed that while international education and student support are emphasized in UPEI's strategic plans, internationalization is not explicitly stated in the university's mission and vision, highlighting a disconnect between institutional goals and genuine international engagement. Administrators expressed strong support for international students, including efforts to involve them in policy-making, but international students reported facing significant challenges in both their personal lives and participation in university management, resulting in limited involvement in decision-making processes. The findings suggest a tension between the influence of neoliberalism and the need for transformative practices in the nature of higher education institutions. A truly welcoming campus culture and an inclusive framework are needed to meaningfully engage international students in policy-making. Currently, international students are treated more as visitors than active stakeholders, and to create a genuinely inclusive learning environment, it is critical to ensure their identities are represented and valued in all aspects of teaching and administration. In light of neoliberal trends that commodify education, it is essential to shift away from viewing international students as consumers and instead embrace them as vital contributors to a diverse and globalized academic ecosystem.

Keywords: International Students, Internationalization of Higher Education, Neoliberalism in Education, Student Engagement in Policy-Making, Inclusive Campus Culture, Commercialization of Education, Educational Equity

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Neoliberalism has profoundly influenced higher education institutions by prioritizing market-driven policies and competition in rankings, all of which are driven by economic priorities and commercial interests in internationalization practices (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011). Within this framework, students are perceived as consumers, while education itself is treated as a product and commodity of universities and colleges. In the global market,

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