Power through Legitimacy:
Internationalization, Quality Assurance & Curriculum in Global Higher Education
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The World Bank (2021) estimates that nearly 220 million students are enrolled in tertiary education around the world. While the national systems of higher education that serve these students vary widely in size, mission, and resources, they perform similar roles within their communities. In the modern era, societies tend to sort and allocate their citizenry on the basis of educational and professional experience. To meet society's material needs, systems of education construct categories of instruction that standardize and manage the production of knowledge. Postsecondary institutions set standards for academic quality that seek to create "standard types of graduates from standard categories of pupils using standard types of teachers and topics"; completion of a college degree thus represents an act of ritual classification in which the educational experience codifies the rules, norms, and ideologies of its surrounding communities (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 219). The question is: whose rules, norms, and ideologies confer the most legitimacy? Uncovering the power dynamics that create systems of inequity and oppression is more imperative than ever as rules, norms, and epistemologies continue to cross cultures and borders (Blanco Ramírez, 2014; de Wit & Altbach, 2021; George Mwangi et al., 2021; Lee, 2021).

The following critical literature review seeks to accomplish two goals. First, we scrutinize normative practices in the internationalization of higher education and quality assurance that export a dominant Global North perspective, a process which can delegitimize and erase Global South perspectives even as it seeks to bring them into the Global North fold (Blanco, 2021; Blanco Ramírez, 2014; George Mwangi et al., 2021; Lee, 2021).[1] A recent focus, in Global North tertiary institutions, on implementing processes of comprehensive internationalization (hereafter referred to as CI) demonstrates a need to consider culture and context in order to ensure sustainable organizational

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[1] Authors' Note: In this literature review, our use of "Global North" and "Global South" terminology borrows from Blanco Ramírez's (2014) focus on the impact of colonialism and international power structures in the twenty-first century, though we acknowledge that a similar analysis could focus on comparisons between geographic regions or the historical east-west divide. We do not divide these categories up geographically. Rather, we focus on the historical and economic impacts of colonization in different parts of the world, particularly the potential for global quality assurance networks to exacerbate neocolonialist tendencies in the Global North (Marginson, 2023). In our understanding, the "Global South" includes most formerly colonized nations and territories, while the "Global North" represents the former Western colonial powers (including the U.S. and Australia), many of whom still engage in colonizing practices today. We eschew the use of other binary labels such as first/third world or developed/developing nations.

change and continuous improvement over time (Hudzik & Stohl, 2012). CI can provide a framework for addressing the hegemonic structures that transmit Global North standards by interrogating the power dynamics implicit in global policy diffusion (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Mintrom & Vergari, 1998).

Given the need for new tools to address evolving global standards of academic quality and student success, the second half of this critical literature review focuses on curriculum as a key potential site of negotiation. We review some approaches to curriculum policy that may assist higher education institutions in negotiating with their nation's quality assurance and higher education system to maintain local culture and global relevance. Specifically, we highlight curricular reform efforts that utilize theories of decolonization and internationalizing the curriculum because the constructs champion a diversity of epistemology that incorporates voices from the Global South. We also engage critical topics such as assimilation, colonization, settler colonialism, and epistemic violence throughout this essay. The goal of this critical literature review is to expose readers to different sources of scholarship on the topic of internationalization in higher education. We hope to encourage wide and ranging discussions in this vein.

Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

International quality assurance agreements and national systems of accreditation drive standards of academic quality around the globe (Blanco, 2021; Kumar et al., 2020). The spread of these standards has become increasingly complex and controversial as the forces of globalization export best practices in higher education administration and organization across national boundaries, forcing institutions that seek international legitimacy to move towards a competitive approach to higher education (Blanco, 2021; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). For example, the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education seeks to "facilitate global mobility and achievement in higher education" by promoting a "culture of quality assurance in higher-education [*sic*] institutions and systems" that emphasizes transparency, fairness, and a non-discriminatory approach (UNESCO, 2019). An institution's ability to meet such standards effectively represents a claim to legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). That so many institutions seek legitimacy in similar ways reflects the normative, mimetic, and coercive isomorphic tendencies that influence global tertiary policy today (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Blanco, 2021).

The internationalization of higher education has increased cooperation and partnerships around the globe, from a government perspective down to the level of individual institutions. Traditionally, the definition of internationalization reflects an "intentional process of integrating an international,

intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education", which has guided nations, supranational organizations, and institutions in the execution of internationalization processes over time (Knight, 2003, p. 2). When Knight developed the definition, the intention was to define a phenomenon that was already trending in global higher education. However, Knight's definition was quickly universalized, adopted by scholars, practitioners, and policy makers, and normalized without acknowledging the power dynamics in play (Lee, 2021). Although the definition does not include a recognition of power and resource inequity around the globe, it has come to symbolize a standard of good practice for the internationalization of higher education, which includes international quality assurance systems and procedures (George Mwangi et al., 2021). If scholars, practitioners, and policy makers do not recognize and critique power differentials in global standards for higher education, the movement of Global North standards of quality assurance across borders could be considered a renewed form of colonization (Blanco Ramírez, 2014, de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Marginson, 2023).

Global North processes of internationalization and quality assurance have become standardized and dominant measures for the successful internationalization of higher education. As a result, Global South institutions and systems of quality assurance seek legitimacy from the Global North through the adoption of dominant theories and practices (Blanco, 2021). The Global North may help legitimize select Global South institutional practices while accommodating some regional differences. However, the Global North approach to international quality assurance does not automatically acknowledge Global South institutions as equal, indicating an inherent power imbalance (Blanco, 2021; George Mwangi et al., 2021; Lee, 2021). A variety of scholarship questions the dominant presence of Global North paradigms in the practice of internationalization and international quality assurance, providing an illustration of the complex relationships and interdependencies involved in international policy diffusion (Blanco Ramírez, 2014; de Wit & Altbach, 2021; George Mwangi et al., 2021; Last, 2018; Lee, 2021). Such scholarship also offers critique of what some have described as a settler colonial mentality in Western internationalization efforts and international quality assurance today (Masta, 2019).

Interrogating Power in International Higher Education

Defining Comprehensive Internationalization & International Quality Assurance

While Knight's (2003) definition of internationalization in higher education has evolved into best practice (Hudzik, 2011, 2015), the American Council on Education (hereafter referred to as ACE),

has expanded the definition over time to include a more comprehensive perspective. ACE defines "comprehensive internationalization" as

a strategic, coordinated framework that integrates policies, programs, initiatives, and individuals to make colleges and universities more globally oriented and internationally connected. In order to foster sustainable and just global engagement, the comprehensive internationalization model embraces an organizational growth mindset. It frames internationalization as an ongoing process rather than a static goal (Godwin, 2023, p. 1).

ACE's definition of CI identifies the concept as a process of institutional advancement, which suggests that this activity reflects successful and normative organizational behavior. ACE presents the process as a seemingly benign and beneficial endeavor. However, uncritical exportation and adoption of CI practices, without a consideration of Global North and South power differentials, may perpetuate existing inequities in the global postsecondary landscape (Blanco Ramírez, 2014; George Mwangi et al., 2021; Lee, 2021). Across the landscape of internationalization and CI in higher education, concerns about inequity in international quality assurance have emerged as a key point of contention for scholars interested in examining how import-export models of higher education impact academic quality. Practitioners who engage in CI and international quality assurance need new tools to expose and ameliorate existing power differentials between Global North and Global South, especially when it comes to defining metrics related to academic quality, student success, and knowledge discovery.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation defines quality assurance (hereafter referred to as QA) as policy, process, and procedures for assuring a threshold of quality in higher education and quality improvement (CHEA, 2016). QA includes quality management and quality improvement, and QA practices are intended to provide a model for continuous institutional improvement over time. The topics of accreditation, the existence of a variety of QA systems globally, and contextual relevance dominate the activities and discussions of international QA organizations and professionals across the global higher education landscape (Blanco, 2021; INQAAHE, 2023). The practice of QA was developed within a Global North paradigm. This paradigm has been normalized over time through the exportation of best practices by U.S., European, Canadian, and Australian stakeholders.

Problems with Practice and Policy in Comprehensive Internationalization & Quality Assurance

Practices related to CI and QA are important for discourse and development in international higher education. In this discourse, it is helpful to visualize CI as a complex matrix of systems, policies, and activities that pervade every aspect of an institution (Hudzik, 2015). Examples of CI include government compliance across borders; the recruitment and support of international students and

study abroad development; recognition of international research in faculty tenure processes; the accreditation of joint- or dual-degrees with international partners; and the accreditation of international branch campuses. These efforts, although well-intended in theory, predominantly export best practices, theories, and policies designed to serve Global North education systems within their own historical and cultural contexts. Today's global spread of accreditation and QA practices perpetuates the dominance of Global North standards of success in the Global South (Blanco, 2021).

Current CI models perpetuate the adoption of Global North QA practices because the standard definition of CI does not address the inequitable power dynamics implicit in the process of internationalization. International tertiary institutions and national systems of higher education are effectively required to assimilate Global North best practices if they want to be recognized as equal and engage in activities across national borders (Blanco, 2021; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). In other words, Global North systems of QA require the Global South to assimilate in order to achieve legitimacy, which may dismiss and negate the cultural and historical realities that make Global South institutions relevant to and in service of their local communities. U.S.-based practitioners and scholars in QA must recognize the impact of this assimilation process abroad. Assimilation promotes a normative understanding of Global North practices as the 'right' way to teach, to learn, to set outcomes and define success (George Mwangi et al., 2021; Lee, 2021). Through assimilation, Global North systems of QA can also coerce Global South institutions into costly, bureaucratic, and marginalizing activities. This assimilation process can also erase opportunities for understanding, cooperation, and cross-pollination between Global North and Global South QA theories and practice. The QA assimilation requirement transforms the practice of QA into an act of colonization, regardless of Global North good-faith intentions and continuing Global South involvement in QA practice.

For positive change through CI to take place, higher education institutions in the Global South must continue to critically interrogate the Global North paradigms that undergird international QA practice and share these narratives with the Global North (Blanco Ramírez, 2014; George Mwangi et al., 2021; Lee, 2021). Concurrently, Global North stakeholders should also engage in a similar process of critical self-reflection to develop more culturally and contextually adaptable systems of QA and accreditation which support CI. In the spirit of CI, QA practitioners and scholars in the U.S. should seek to expose and address the incompatibilities that exist between standards of institutional and student success in the Global North and Global South. The purpose of this endeavor is to apply critical theories and research methods to better understand the convergence of CI initiatives and international QA practice. Scholarship on U.S. accreditation needs to be able to acknowledge the dominance of U.S.-based practices in the Global South. Doing so could help instigate an intentional effort to transform QA and CI initiatives from an act of colonization into a process that recognizes

and preserves the cultures, histories, and epistemologies of the Global South. Through this effort, scholars and practitioners can uncover the inequitable dynamics that exist in international QA practice by acknowledging the historical and cultural power differentials that organize Global North-Global South relations today. Two questions can help guide practitioners and scholars in critically evaluating theory and practice in international QA and CI:

1. What issues, paradigms, or systems lead to incompatibilities between Global North QA systems and the practice of CI in the Global South?
2. How does the Global South address, assimilate, emulate, and/or critique Global North QA systems?

Careful examination of Global South narratives, research, and counterstories provides an opportunity to inform and inspire change in the Global North paradigm. For example, Blanco Ramírez (2014) employs the concepts of decolonization and settler colonialism, analyzing the language of international QA to name and challenge the presence of hegemonic, imperialistic standards of quality in higher education. Last (2018) labels Western systems of higher education as spaces of racial exclusion; to disrupt this reality, Last encourages white, Western scholars and practitioners to work intentionally and continuously to create space for faculty and students of color and minorities.[2] Lee (2021) interrogates how inequitable power structures are normalized in international education activities. And George Mwangi et al. (2021) expose how normalized structures are adopted and promoted as best practices, without critically addressing incompatibilities and inequities. Global North scholars and practitioners of QA should seek to actively include diverse voices and perspectives from the Global South in their research and scholarship, such as these scholars.

In addition to reading research and engaging in discourse with international QA agencies and experts, Global North scholars and practitioners should begin to interrogate what it means for Global South tertiary institutions to assimilate into Global North QA systems. This interrogation is important because it is necessary to identify and address the historical and cultural differences between Global South and Global North contexts. A variety of U.S. and European accrediting agencies conduct site and virtual visits at Global South campuses around the world. Though these teams may include members from the local country, the very act of needing to engage in a dominant culture's quality assurance system in order to gain institutional legitimacy could be considered an act of oppression.

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[2] The authors acknowledge that, while the Global North-Global South paradigm can and should involve a discussion of racial inequities, inequitable power structures arising from caste or class conflict, religious affiliation, ethnicity, or national origin can and do impact QA practice in other parts of the world.

Despite the numerous issues outlined above, CI can provide an opportunity to address the issues of assimilation and coercion in international QA. Equitable CI practices include

a commitment and action to infuse international global and comparative content and perspective throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It not only impacts all of campus life, but the institution's external frameworks of reference, partnerships and relationships (Hudzik, 2011, p. 10).

Incorporating theories of CI into Global North accreditation practice could help scholars and practitioners recognize a diversity of approaches to internationalization and QA that do not prescribe a normative model or set of objectives. CI advocates for sharing or providing access to intellectual wealth in a more equitable manner, which could help restore counterstories and diverse narratives from the Global South as a worthy component of global knowledge production (Hudzik, 2015). Equitable practice of CI can provide a platform that includes voices from the Global South in an effort to address issues related to fairness and inclusion in international QA. Ultimately, CI can help scholars and practitioners expose the power dynamics that structure Global North-Global South relations in international QA and accreditation.

Exposing the power dynamics inherent in CI and international QA is an important practice QA scholars and practitioners can engage in, in order to critically address the inequities and issues inherent in Global South institutions' assimilation of Global North QA standards. At the same time, QA scholars and practitioners should seek to implement CI concepts and practices, ensuring that intercultural competence and communication skills drive international QA through a recognition of and adaptation to local history and culture. The high-level arguments made in this essay require unpacking in useful and applicable terms for practitioners. Because bureaucracy is designed to change incrementally, administrators need practical approaches to effect change on the ground (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). The second half of this critical literature review involves a discussion of organizational change within individual institutions of higher education, with an explicit focus on curriculum design as a practical strategy of reform.

Implementing Change through Curricular Reform

As more and more nations, institutions, and academic programs turn to regional, national, and increasingly global regulatory bodies in search of legitimacy, research on accreditation and QA practices must critically examine the source(s) of standards that dictate success for both national systems of higher education and their individual institutions, especially whether those standards can

(or should) be suitable for all environments. Part of this examination includes an analysis of institutional outcomes related to academic quality and student success, which necessarily involves a conversation about curriculum.

An institution's curriculum structure functions as a site of ongoing negotiation and contestation (Tierney, 1989). For example, current curricular debates in U.S. higher education revolve around the topic of critical race theory in collegiate instruction, a perspective that originally emerged from U.S. law schools seeking to theorize the impact of systemic racism on the nation's legal system (Bell, 1980; Lawrence, 1987; Crenshaw, 1988). The U.S. accreditation system, led by independent, non-governmental accrediting organizations, does not explicitly prescribe which topics individual postsecondary institutions or academic programs must cover within their curriculum, beyond the expectation that a college's general education model should emphasize the breadth and depth of student learning by challenging students to "integrate knowledge and develop skills of analysis and inquiry" (SACSCOC, 2018). As institutions seek status and legitimacy, they tend to gravitate toward curricular models that will enhance such efforts (Blanco, 2021). In the U.S., the critical mass of general education curriculum requirements, which make up thirty percent of the undergraduate curriculum structure (Brint et al., 2009), represent a dominant paradigm that effectively defines what counts as knowledge within the academy. Outcomes for student success are constructed in a similar process of policy diffusion. Through the dissemination of best practices in accreditation and QA, the U.S. knowledge paradigm has been transmitted around the globe.

Around the world, many individual institutions do not have the authority to make changes to their curriculum structures. In these instances, a nation's ministry of education typically sets system-wide standards of success. Reform, however, can occur in either environment. Practitioners situated within both individual institutions of higher education and government education agencies require new theories and approaches to curriculum design that move beyond assimilation and can translate external quality assurance systems into local contexts. The institutions and government bodies that choose to import curriculum requirements from other contexts must recognize that such knowledge sharing is not neutral.

Internationalizing the Curriculum

A variety of scholarship critically examines the impact of U.S. accreditation practices on the construction of knowledge in the Global South (Alcadipani & Rosa, 2011; Blanco Ramírez, 2014; Darley & Luethge 2019; Romanowski, 2017). Much of this scholarship engages issues related to curricular reform. We highlight two specific approaches to curricular reform that offer promising

alternatives for postsecondary practitioners interested in disrupting taken-for-granted understandings of the academic canon and metrics for student success. First, we extend our earlier discussion of internationalization to examine efforts to "internationalize the curriculum" (hereafter referred to as IoC) (Brewer & Leask, 2012; Stein, 2021). We then analyze efforts to decolonize the curriculum as a unique means of reinvigorating Indigenous voices within the academy. Ultimately, we argue that, to affect sustained curricular reform, an institution's curricular structure must be examined from three perspectives, specifically in terms of degree requirements (which represent an institution's overarching philosophy of education), curricular content (i.e., the variety of course topics available to students), and pedagogical practice.

IoC efforts have taken many forms. In the U.S. such efforts began as a response to national security interests, utilizing arguments in favor of student mobility to encourage foreign language acquisition and area studies (Brewer & Leask, 2021). A gap remains, however, between teaching students to speak new languages and building a student's capacity to integrate that knowledge into their ability to navigate an increasingly multicultural global society. More recent definitions of the term 'internationalization' emphasize intentionality, quality, improvement, teaching and learning, inclusiveness, and a connection to social responsibility (Brewer & Leask, 2021). IoC, therefore, represents "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" (Leask, 2015, p. 9). Significantly, such a process is not prescriptive, but it does require individual institutions to ask an important set of questions ('why', 'what for', and 'for whom') when beginning to internationalize the curriculum.

Proponents of IoC stress that the term represents both a concept and a process. Scholars in the field outline ten key priorities for practitioners to consider when attempting to internationalize the curriculum (Brewer & Leask, 2021):

1. Focus on learning outcomes that are relevant to all students.
2. Approach internationalizing the curriculum as a process of holistic reform.
3. Pay attention to the co-curriculum.
4. Look beyond the dominant knowledge paradigm.
5. Design for learning.
6. Pedagogy and assessment.
7. Build the intercultural capacity of staff and students.
8. Engage with diversity at home.
9. Engage students as partners.

10. Support faculty and staff.

We highlight priorities one, two, four, and six for the purposes of this critical literature review. This paper in and of itself represents an effort to explore research beyond the dominant knowledge paradigm (priority four). Any effort to internationalize the curriculum must be situated within an institution's larger mission and strategy (Hudzik, 2011). Doing so provides a clear focus for the development and assessment of an institution's educational philosophy as an integral part of campus culture. Making an internationalized curriculum available to all students is a key component in efforts to develop all students' understanding of our interconnected world (priority one) (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). By grounding IoC principles in an institution's mission and strategic outcomes, holistic curriculum reform can align program, department, college, and institutional outcomes, all supported by the co-curriculum (priority two).

An ideal curricular alignment structure links curricular content, pedagogy, and student assessment on behalf of the institutional mission (priority six) (Banta & Palomba, 2015), and it is important to note that within nationalized systems of higher education an individual institution's mission and strategic outcomes must also align with government policies in order to achieve legitimacy domestically. Pedagogy represents the active component of an institution's curriculum - it is where the curriculum comes to life for millions of students every day. Structural curricular reform cannot be successful if an institution's faculty are not on board with the process and cannot enact the institution's mission within the classroom, a concern that is even more crucial when attempting to implement government-directed reform across an entire national system of higher education.

Decolonizing the Curriculum

It is important to note that any attempt to revise an institution's curriculum must occur within the institution's local, regional, and national context. This context is especially crucial when engaging decolonial approaches to curricular reform. Though "decolonization" does not represent a new term or initiative in the twenty-first century, the issue is still alive and well in the West and the next generation of QA practitioners and scholars need to be aware of the path that decolonial efforts have taken over time in order to continue identifying inequities, realizing that decolonization is a continuous improvement process and not a goal. In Western nations, decolonial perspectives tend to be applied as a metaphor to talk about larger issues related to civil rights and social justice; scholarship on the topic, however, stresses that decolonization is not a metaphor but rather a distinct project involving Indigenous sovereignty and futurity (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Recent work on decolonizing the field of education research has important implications for curricular reform efforts at large. Scholars

argue that decolonizing efforts "require understanding of western [*sic*] intellectual canon-building dating back to the European Enlightenment, and disruption of such superiority of knowledge construction through knowledge democracy, intellectual diversity, and pluriversity" (Bhattacharya, 2021, summary para. 2).

The results of decolonial initiatives are necessarily dependent on geography, discipline, and institutional type, as well as on the unique national histories and government policies that continue to define settler/native relations today (Shahjahan et al., 2021). Within curriculum structures, decolonization efforts represent a call to reinvigorate Indigenous sources of knowledge and ways of being as viable sources of experience that are worthy of study and discussion. Scholars warn that ignoring such efforts may equate to an act of epistemic violence in which disciplinary standards are perpetuated based on the colonizer's language and sensibilities (Bhattacharya, 2021). To disrupt such violence, scholars argue that educational practitioners must challenge orthodoxy, particularly the dominance of English as the academy's lingua franca (Bhattacharya, 2021). Reflecting this call to action, a variety of scholarship on decolonial pedagogy prioritizes Indigenous solidarity and ethics, including talking circles, storytelling, and land-based pedagogies (Fellner, 2018; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012; Wildcat et al., 2014). It should be stressed that the process of decolonization can be fraught and unsettling for a variety of institutional stakeholders. South Africa's efforts to decolonize its national system of higher education provide an example of the various challenges practitioners may face in implementing reform (Du Plessis, 2021; Heleta, 2018).

A recent meta-analysis of research on decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy initiatives offers a succinct review of the myriad ways institutions can actualize their decolonial goals (Shahjahan et al., 2021). Shahjahan et al. (2021) broadly categorize four approaches to actualizing decolonization. By critiquing and probing the positionality of knowledge in educational environments, national governments and their systems of higher education can provide an opportunity for students to "question fundamental assumptions about knowledge and power, and engage questions such as what counts as knowledge, who produces knowledge and how, and what/who are absent" (Shahjahan et al., 2021, citing Dutta, 2018, p. 278). In calling for an inclusive curriculum that expands beyond the Western canon, individual institutions can begin conversations about what knowledge and content have been excluded from their curriculum structures over time. Institutions can also choose to foreground relational approaches to teaching and learning that emphasize the collaborative nature of knowledge production within the classroom; pedagogical approaches in this vein could take on active learning techniques that encourage critical reflexivity, or they could focus on the role of cultural and spiritual practice in co-creating knowledge. Finally, by strengthening collaboration between institutions, the local communities, and stakeholders tied to larger sociopolitical movements, a

decolonized curriculum structure can link knowledge production to real-world activity (Shahjahan et al., 2021).

Our focus on international and decolonial efforts to reform the curriculum aligns with a variety of theoretical literature on the way students learn. An institution can guide its approach to curriculum and assessment by tying curriculum structures to an explicit theory of student development. Paulo Freire (1972) offers a liberatory form of pedagogy that builds curricular content through collaboration between teacher and student. David Kolb (1984) extends constructivist theories of education to articulate experiential learning, a process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting that encourages students to become actively engaged with the way they learn. Jack Mezirow (1991) examines the disorienting dilemmas that challenge students to question their worldviews as adults, offering a transformative framework of critical self-reflection that emphasizes the continuous evaluation of a person's source(s) of knowledge. Each of these approaches offer unique alternatives to defining academic quality within the larger structures of international QA and accreditation that governments and institutions of higher education navigate around the world.

An institution's curricular structure represents a worldview, one that charts a supposedly objective epistemological point of reference that ultimately dictates what counts as knowledge. Therefore, interrogating an institution's curricular structure (what courses are offered, who teaches these courses, when courses are offered, at what level they are taught, and which students can take these classes) can have an outsized impact on a student's ability to engage with their learning experience in a meaningful way. In order to redefine what counts as good educational practice, decolonial and international critiques of accreditation and quality assurance must include an examination of educational policies, procedures, and practices, which necessarily involves a discussion of academic quality and the curriculum. Whether an individual institution is considering curriculum change or a nation's ministry of education chooses to lead a system wide reform effort, the IoC and decolonial approaches to curriculum reform outlined in this critical literature review offer practitioners and scholars working theories that can be applied in praxis.

The purpose of this critical literature review is not to issue a blanket condemnation of Global North practice in quality assurance and internationalization. Some of the same critical scholars cited above also point to the U.S. higher education system as providing a globally recognized high standard of academic rigor worthy of emulation (Blanco, 2021). Rather, we seek to encourage a larger discussion about the implications and unintended consequences of exporting Global North policy and practice

around the world. The issues we address here are complicated and multifaceted, but scholars and practitioners can and should play an important role in broadening this conversation. As two U.S.-based scholar-practitioners, this essay represents the results of a shared commitment to critical self-reflection about the research we conduct and the values we seek to reflect in our professional careers. We aspire to add our voices to a community of learning and practice in international higher education, where scholars and practitioners around the world can grow and evolve together, and we hope that this critical literature review has provided a useful introduction to critical approaches in the field. We round out our analysis with a list of practical recommendations, for both scholars and practitioners, that stems directly from the literature reviewed in this essay.

Recommendations Addressing Inequities in Quality Assurance and CI

1. Recognize and include varying historical, political, and financial paradigms in CI and QA measures. Be aware that the scope and impact of internationalization and QA measures vary by country.
2. Review CI and QA practices within a decolonial context. Ask who is being coerced into assimilation, and for what reasons? Ask if this practice or policy is sustainable and/or inclusive? Include counter narratives and stories about CI and QA to expose inequities and incompatibilities.
3. Provide open access to sources of knowledge and increase global cooperation through knowledge diplomacy.
4. Join and advocate within QA organizations for more inclusive and diverse policies, strategies, and definitions of QA. Support international dialogue of QA concepts to seek understanding and more equitable pathways to seeking legitimacy across national contexts.

Recommendations for Quality Assurance Scholars and Practitioners in the U.S.

1. Approach positionality from a critical perspective at the individual, institutional, system, and national levels. Continually ask what more can be done to be inclusive and welcome diverse voices and narratives.
2. Research the complexities and incompatibilities between international QA systems and comprehensive internationalization.
3. Propose and advocate for inclusivity and diversity in both policy and practice between the Global South and North and other geographic power paradigms, e.g., east-west. Develop an understanding of how the Global South (and other global groups) addresses/assimilates

and/or emulates/critiques international QA systems. Learn from best practices in the Global South and other regions.

4. Ensure that Global South scholars and practitioners are welcomed in their contribution to transforming the fields of CI and QA. Seek to better know and understand Global South histories and cultures, data and research, policy development, and publications.

Recommendations for practitioners contemplating curricular reform at the institutional, system, or national level:

1. Carefully articulate the "why", "what for", and "for whom" of any efforts to transform the curriculum.
2. Begin curricular reform discussions with a conversation regarding how a reform effort enhances or augments the institution's existing mission and strategic goals.
3. Implement curricular reform efforts holistically and consider how reform the initiative will impact the institution's (or system's) network of degree requirements, curricular content, and pedagogical norms.
4. Incorporate theories of student learning and development into curricular design.

Conclusion

This critical literature review is intended to inspire discussion and debate about power relations in CI, QA, and IoC efforts, as well as to inform future scholarship and practice related to these topics. Students, institutions, and standards continue to cross borders, and the issues we bring up in this literature review are likely to impact an entire generation of tertiary students around the world. Highlighting the curriculum as a key component of international quality assurance has allowed us to link a high-level discussion of theory and power to the practice of change on the ground within national contexts and even within individual institutions. There are limitations to our study. We focus on a Global North-Global South context that could easily be flipped for a consideration of east-west power dynamics. While quality assurance in some regions may be more transparent, operating with less coercion, QA practitioners must be aware of the field's overall history. Our purpose is to provide resources to scholars and practitioners around the world who may be looking for new ways to update old standards of success.

In publishing this essay through the Council for Higher Education Accreditation's Quality International Newsletter, we recognize the implicit and explicit reach that U.S. accreditation structures have around the world; CHEA's International Quality Group (CIQG) maintains members in thirty-

five countries across five continents (Blanco, 2021). CIQG has the reach to invigorate new conversations regarding internationalization and decolonization around the world.

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