

**Making sense of the reformulation of the internationalization policy in a
Dutch higher education institution**

Skarlett Mercedes Lozano Munive

Master Thesis Communication Science

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences, University of Twente

Dr. Ardion Beldad (first supervisor)

Prof. Dr. Menno de Jong (second supervisor)

7th July, 2025

University of Twente, Enschede

Declaration of academic integrity - M-COM Master Thesis

I herewith declare that my master thesis is the result of my own work and that materials regarding the works of others, contributing to my master thesis, have been correctly cited and/or acknowledged.

I furthermore declare that I have taken notice of the principles and procedures regarding research ethics and academic integrity as presented in the [UT Student Charter](#) and on the [website of the BMS Examination Board](#), or as mentioned otherwise during the course of my studies.

I finally declare that below actions regarding research ethics and academic integrity have been followed through:

1. In the case human test subjects were involved for data collection, I have filed a request for ethical review and my request has been approved by the [BMS Ethics Committee](#)
2. I have safeguarded the transmission of research files and documents, using my personal folder on the secure university network drive (P:\bms\cw\theses) or other means of safe data transmission.
3. I have stored my final master thesis and (raw) research data on my personal university network folder (P:\bms\cw\theses) or made it otherwise digitally available to my supervisors.
4. I have uploaded my draft master thesis, prior to the "green-light" meeting, for a plagiarism / similarity check on the M-COM Master Thesis Canvas website and I have shared the plagiarism / similarity report with my supervisors prior to the "green-light" meeting.
5. In the case AI generated content has been used, an appendix has been added in which I explain where and how AI generated content has been used for my master thesis (see info on [University of Twente website](#)).

Student name and signature:

Student name:

Skarlett Lozano

Signature:



Abstract

Purpose

Internationalization policy in higher education has been positioned as a strategy across higher education institutions. However, ongoing policy debates have introduced ambiguity and uncertainty in the higher education landscape. The reformulation of the internationalization policy prompts university students and employees to make sense of the policy shift and the concept of internationalization in higher education. Sensemaking is necessary for this study, as the reformulation disrupts routines of the university community. This study addresses the following research question: How do students and employees make sense of the reformulation of the internationalization policy within Dutch higher education?

Methods

To address the central research question, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with 15 university employees and 15 students, at a Dutch university. This sample allowed for a varied and in-depth understanding of the participants' sensemaking of the topic.

Results

Participants interpreted internationalization in higher education as a multilayered and evolving concept through four main logics: academic and personal enrichment, educational opportunity and inequality, economic model, and cultural and linguistic challenges. The reformulation was widely viewed as politically driven and linked to other drivers including language policy laxity, housing shortages and national identity concerns. Participants expressed uncertainty of their futures, emotional distress, and anxiety, even prior to the implementation of the reform. Participants' sensemaking processes varied depending on their background and roles.

Conclusion

The research reveals that students and employees are actively making sense of the reformulation of internationalization policy in higher education through their identity-driven experiences, roles, and evolving cues. This paper contributes to literature on sensemaking by supporting the properties of sensemaking. Also to literature on organizational change and internationalization in higher education by emphasizing the complexity of the policy reform through the accounts of those directly affected.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	6
2. Theoretical framework.....	10
2.1 Internationalization in higher education.....	10
2.2 Reformulation of internationalization as an anticipated organizational change.....	12
2.3 Sensemaking during an organizational change.....	15
3. Method.....	17
3.1 Research Design.....	17
3.2 Research context.....	18
3.3 Participants	19
3.4 Interview guide & procedure	22
3.5 Data analysis.....	24
4. Results.....	24
4.1 Multilayered logics of internationalization in HE	25
4.1.1 Academic and personal enrichment.....	25
4.1.2 Educational opportunity and inequality.....	28
4.1.3 Economic model.....	31
4.1.4 Cultural and linguistic challenges.....	34
4.2 Drivers of the reformulation.....	39
4.2.1 Scaling without strategy.....	39
4.2.2 Political reframing.....	42
4.3 Consequences of the reformulation.....	46
4.3.1 Positive consequences.....	47
4.3.2 Negative consequences.....	51
5. Discussion.....	59
5.1 Main findings.....	59
5.1.1 Multilayered logics of internationalization in HE.....	59
5.1.2 Drivers of the reformulation	63
5.1.3 Consequences of the reformulation.....	65
5.2 Practical implications.....	67
5.3 Theoretical implications.....	69
5.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research	71
5.5 Conclusion	74

<i>References</i>	76
<i>Appendices</i>	85
Appendix A: Ethical approval.....	85
Appendix B: Invitation message for potential participants.....	86
Appendix C: Interview guides.....	87
Appendix D: Explanation of the reformulation during interview.....	93
Appendix E: Codebook.....	94
Appendix F: Use of AI.....	95

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEI's) across the world have embraced internationalization as a core strategy in their academic activities. Internationalization in higher education (HE), defined by Knight (2008, p.21) as “a process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels,” has been embraced as response to globalization (Stromquist, 2007). HEI's have expanded their English-taught program offerings, focused on international collaboration, and adjusted their curriculum to fulfill labor market demands. Internationalization practices have been adopted at an institutional and at a national level driven by many motivations ranging from academic, economic, political, socio-cultural, and branding (Knight & De Wit, 1999; Knight, 2004). Among the goals associated with this policy are, for example, the preparation of students for a globalized world and improving education quality according to international education practitioners (European Association for International Education, 2018).

However, internationalization in HE is currently facing a recalibration. The rapid growth has led to concerns over the availability of student housing, quality of education, and the challenges to national identity (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023). Recently, debates over government intervention in HEIs have intensified. Even countries known for their open policies for student immigration, such as Canada and Australia, are taking measures to limit the entrance of international students to their countries (Government of Canada, 2024; Government of Australia, 2024). Across Europe, tensions around internationalization in HE have become more visible; Denmark provides a notable example. In 2021, Denmark decided to restrict the admission of international students, but reversed its decision due to increasing labor market needs (Packer, 2024). This change illustrates the

complexity of internationalization in HE, and how this one is subject to a re-evaluation. The Danish case also underscored internationalization in HE as a dynamic and evolving policy that is dependent on national interests.

A similar dynamic is manifesting in the Netherlands, a country that currently finds itself in the middle of a potential internationalization policy shift and represents an interesting case within the internationalization in HE trend. The Netherlands, known for its open and internationally oriented HE system, has become a relevant player in the HE sector due to the rise of English-medium instruction (EMI) programs. Nevertheless, the Netherlands is now pursuing a reformulation of their internationalization policy (hereafter reformulation). Dutch HE has seen a steep rise in the number of international students. In 2023-2024, international students represented a 16% of the total HE student population (Nuffic, 2024), compared to 26% of the total HE student population in the United Kingdom in 2022-23 (House of Commons Library, 2024), and a 11% in Denmark in 2024 (Institute of International Education, 2024). Furthermore, international academic staff in Dutch HE increased by 11.2% between 2016 to 2023, to a level of 30.4% of international staff (Times Higher Education, 2023). However, growth in the number of international students has generated concerns in HE and the Dutch government.

The Dutch government intends to address internationalization in HE and its challenges by tackling national concerns, while balancing its benefits presented in the bill “Internationalization in Balance Act.” The bill includes measures such as caps on non-EEA (European Economic Area) students, administrative interventions in student recruitment, and an increased role of the Dutch language in research and teaching (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2024). Research Universities (RU) and Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) have made commitments to the Ministry of Education on topics such as language of instruction, student numbers, and housing availability.

These developments suggest a shift from internationalization practices. It proposes a reformulation of an assumed direction of openness, commonly related to internationalization in HE, towards a more regulated and nationally rooted internationalization in HE. This reformulation involves significant potential changes in HEI's disrupting the academic and working lives of students and employees (hereafter: university members). This shift and evolving process provides an interesting opportunity to understand how university members make sense of this organizational change. Although, internationalization in HE represented a shift from previous academic practices, it has since become part of HEI's daily practices. And now its reformulation introduces uncertainty, ambiguity, and disruption, prompting university members to make sense of the concept and its reformulation. As Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) argue, change presents a strong occasion for sensemaking given its disruptive impact in routinized organizational activities. Similarly, Krogh (2017) describes how this "anticipatory pre-implementation phase," before changes are formally implemented, is already a site of meaning making where individuals are already in a state of change expectation while they are trying to make sense of it. Furthermore, as Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) found that some university members struggle to make sense of their new roles and how they understood their updated responsibilities. In moments of crisis and change, sensemaking becomes essential when individuals attempt to interpret evolving circumstances (Ancona, 2012). The anticipation of the reformulation of internationalization triggers university members to engage in sensemaking as they seek to understand this change in their environment. As emphasized by Dionysiou and Tsoukas (2013), it is essential to understand how sensemaking unfolds in different contexts; and the reformulation provides an interesting context to do this. Sensemaking becomes a valuable lens to examine how university members cope with the reformulation in HE and how they navigate this uncertain environment.

This research bridges both micro (e.g., student learning) and macro levels (e.g., policy) of HE research, thereby contributing to the literature as a connection between the macro and micro perspective is usually lacking in HE research (Daenekindt & Huisman, 2020). By exploring how the university community make sense of the reformulation of internationalization, this paper links the anticipated policy shift with the sensemaking of university members and thus addresses the research gap mentioned by Daenekindt and Huisman (2020). Furthermore, this paper also contributes to the theorization of the internationalization field in HE, which as stated by Lee and Stensaker (2021) is undertheorized, by focusing not just on policy outcome but on how university members make sense of internationalization in HE.

This research aims to understand the sensemaking processes of university members in this moment of policy change, how this affects their work/student life, and their views on internationalization in HE, and its reformulation. By understanding how university members make sense of the reformulation, this research contributes to academic knowledge in internationalization in HE, sensemaking and organizational change theory. Moreover, the study also has practical implications for HEIs managing the reformulation of internationalization and governments. The present study provides insights into how internationalization in HE is viewed and how this one is being reinterpreted through its reformulation. These findings can help academic institutions and governments in the design of the reform by considering these lived day-to-day experiences. Examples of potential outcomes of design improvements are better communication of the reform, actioned strategies for the creation of a blended university community, and (more) effectively addressing concerns about internationalization. Adopting a sensemaking approach allows for gathering in-depth university members' experiences

regarding internationalization. Therefore, to understand this dynamic, this paper addresses the following research question:

“How do university members (students and employees) make sense of the reformulation of internationalization policy within the context of Dutch higher education?”

More specifically:

1. How do university employees and students interpret the concept of internationalization policy within the Dutch higher education?
2. What do university employees and students consider are the drivers of the reformulation of the internationalization policy within the Dutch higher education?
3. What do university employees and students consider are the implications of the reformulation of the internationalization policy within the Dutch higher education?

2. Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how university members make sense of the reformulation in HE, the theoretical framework is divided into three key parts. The first section reviews on internationalization research, defines the concept, its drivers, benefits, and challenges. After this, the second section discusses how its ongoing reformulation can be understood as an anticipated organizational change. The last section introduces the concept of sensemaking during an organizational change and explains how individuals construct meanings in this context.

2.1. Internationalization in higher education

Understanding the concept of internationalization in HE, how it evolved, and why it has been important as an institutional strategy in the past decades, is important to set the context of the study. Internationalization is a concept in constant development and subject to changes in its environment (De Wit & Altbach, 2020). Internationalization in HE is a concept that has generated discussion among scholars, particularly about what it entails. Knight (2008,

p.21) defines internationalization in HE as a “process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels.” De Wit (2015, p.29) build on this definition and defines it 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.” De Wit (2015) adds the intentionality of the process to his definition, framing internationalization as a process consciously adopted and add a purpose to it. As de Wit and Altbach (2020, p.8) stated, this renewed definition “gives a normative direction to the process.” And to understand how university members make sense of this multidimensional and evolving concept, the definition of de Wit (2015) will be used for this research.

Like the definitions, the drivers to embrace internationalization are also varied. Scholars have identified five key rationales: academic, economic, political, social/cultural, and branding (Knight & De Wit, 1999; Knight, 2004). Countries that have embraced internationalization, such as Canada or Australia, often combine these motivations, with cultural and economic reasons typically being the most significant ones (Lee et al., 2006).

The adoption of internationalization in HE has brought several benefits, including providing students with an intercultural environment, a diverse learning setting and preparing them for a globalized labor market (Nuffic, n.d-t). Additional advantages include knowledge exchange, increased economic revenues, international recognition, promotion of diversity, among others (Universiteiten van Nederland, 2024).

Though these benefits are known and commonly mentioned by universities and internationalization research, internationalization of HE is undergoing a shift since HEI's are facing various challenges. One of the main issues associated with internationalization policies

is the financial burden created in HEIs. Universities need to allocate financial resources to cover services, human resources, the use of facilities, or even the investment in marketing campaigns that help gain recognition internationally and compete with other international HEIs for student enrolment (Marginson, 2006). In the Netherlands, current concerns extend beyond financial challenges to include housing shortage, the language of instruction, and the maintenance of the quality of education (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023).

However, other challenges are related to internationalization in HE. Integration challenges frequently surface between local and international students, highlighting the need to create stronger bonds between these groups (Sawir et al., 2007). Although, internationalization in HE aims to create an inclusive international environment where students and faculty can share knowledge and learn from each other, additional resources are required to facilitate this interaction. Having English as the lingua franca for teaching and research has created issues related to national identity in non-English speaking countries. For instance, in Denmark, the anglicization of HE has led to tensions between international aspirations and national interests, raising concerns about the status of the Danish language and the benefits of internationalization for the country (Tange & Jæger, 2021).

These developments denote that internationalization in HE is an evolving multidimensional process which is marked by competing interests. Understanding its dynamic nature is essential for examining how the concept keeps evolving and how university members make sense of its reformulation. The next section will discuss how organizational change theory helps in conceptualizing and analyzing the reformulation of the internationalization process within the context of HE.

2.2. The reformulation of internationalization as an anticipated organizational change

Change is a constant part of higher education institutions (Brankovic & Cantwell, 2022). Internationalization and its current reformulation are examples of those changes in the HE landscape. While internationalization in HE is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of higher education (Knight, 2008; de Wit, 2015), its current reformulation in the Dutch HE reflects a shift in direction since it involves the introduction of caps on non-EEA students, administrative interventions in the recruitment of international students, and an increasing role of the Dutch language in research and teaching (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2024). In the Dutch case, the evolving policy direction is not yet fully realized or implemented. As such, it represents not a completed or an immutable organizational change, but an ongoing attempt to redefine internationalization in HE.

According to Burke (2023) organizational change is defined as a shift in the organization's structure, strategy, and processes to adapt to internal or external forces. The reformulation can be understood as such a change since it is an ongoing, government-led organizational change that is still unfolding and seeks to reassess and regulate the internationalization of HE. It introduces potential reconfigurations in university governance, its operations, and the university's members roles. As such, it aligns with Zorn et al. (1999, p10) definition of change as "any alteration or modification of organizational structures or processes."

Much of the literature on organizational change can be categorized into two streams: one focusing on how it develops and what outcomes it produces, and another evaluating how change affects its recipients (e.g., Oreg et al. 2011; Michela & Vena, 2012; Weber & Weber, 2001). Organizational change studies have focused on change that has already been

implemented or is being implemented (e.g., Leonardi, 2009). However, change can also be studied during its formulation or discussion phases, which is the case of the reformulation.

The ongoing discussion on the reformulation provides a great opportunity to explore organizational change before its implementation, as the change recipients try to understand what the current state of the reformulation can signify for them.

The reformulation of internationalization of Dutch HE, is in the anticipation phase; it has not yet been approved, but its content is publicly known and can already be understood through its discussion and formulation by university members while they are in an expectation state towards its ratification. This waiting period is what Krogh (2017) called “anticipatory pre-implementation phase”, one in which organizational members are already engaging in sensemaking on the upcoming change. However, while Krogh (2017) research explores organizational implications in the anticipatory stage of an already expected organizational change, the reformulation of internationalization of Dutch HE is an organizational change that has not been formally approved and does not have an implementation timeline yet. For this research this waiting period will be referred to as “anticipatory phase,” based on Krogh’s research. In this “anticipatory phase” change recipients, in this case university members, are found in a state of change expectation while trying to make sense of it (Krogh, 2017). The ongoing reformulation brings an absence of concrete timelines and is government-dependent, showing its evolving nature, which could contribute to an atmosphere of uncertainty. As Krogh (2017) discussed that in an anticipatory phase an environment of uncertainty can be created.

Drawing from organizational change literature, such ambiguity can generate feelings of anxiety (Ashford, 1988), and uncertainty among those who will be affected (Lines et al., 2005). This context, often characterized by uncertainty and insecurity, support becomes critical (Cullen et al. 2014, Schreurs et al. 2012). For example, an international student might wonder

whether their program would remain in English. Support might help university members with their questions. Moreover, failing to address the change's potential negative implications could cause negative reactions such as the creation of rumors, misinterpretation, increasing insecurity, uncertainty, and anxiety among organizational members (Men & Bowen, 2017).

Thus, in this anticipated organizational change context, change recipients navigate this evolving event and ask questions about what this reformulation may mean. As Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) argue, organizational change generates uncertainty, ambiguity and creates a disruption in how university members understand their roles and responsibilities, prompting them to make sense of their situation. And to understand how university members make sense of this anticipated change, sensemaking theory helps in answering this question. As Weick (1995) discussed, when faced with uncertainty and ambiguity, individuals engage in sensemaking as they want to understand these ambiguous events. This indicates the importance of examining how individuals engage in sensemaking in this context.

2.3. Sensemaking during organizational change

“Sensemaking is triggered by any interruption to ongoing activity, crisis, and change” (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010, p.552). The reformulation of internationalization policy in Dutch HE is an ongoing process and represents a disruption for the university community, creating uncertainty and prompting them to seek the meaning of the situation. As such, sensemaking theory offers valuable theory to understand how change recipients create, interpret, and enact in this changing situation. Scholars have demonstrated the key role sensemaking has in organizational change (Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick 1995). It has a reactive nature since it emerges when organizational members try to understand the change that interrupts their routine organizational practices. Sensemaking is also a continuous process through which individuals work on understanding ambiguous events and issues presented in

their routine (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Individuals ask, ‘what’s the story’ or ‘what is happening’ (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005), they search for explanations to what they are experiencing or seeing to create meaning of the event.

In an educational setting, sensemaking provides a framework that helps individuals understand the changes brought by an educational reform (Thomson & Hall, 2011). Prior research on educational change indicates that reforms frequently do not reach the intended objectives because of the lack of comprehension of the policy’s intent (Coburn, 2005). In Gioia and Chittipeddi’s (1991) study found that university members had problems in making sense of their new roles and how they understood their updated work responsibilities. These findings are relevant for this paper since it underscores the confusion organizational change can trigger.

A key property of sensemaking is its connection to identity. Individuals make sense of the situation in a manner that matches their identity, by asking themselves, ‘who am I?’ (Weick, 1995). For instance, an international teacher might see the new developments of the reformulation as threatening to their professional identity if they think it is undermining their international collaboration.

Additionally, individuals make sense of a change based on specific cues that will help them in this process, and how they make sense of this one is not related precisely to the accuracy of the event, but driven by plausibility, whether individuals think they have enough information to make sense of the event (Weick, 1995). These specific cues can be derived from prior knowledge, values, and beliefs (Coburn, 2001, Weick, 1995). For example, the announcement of variations of the internationalization policy in Dutch HE would make university members make sense of this situation based on their pre-existing knowledge, their values, and beliefs about internationalization in HE. Beyond these cues, sensemaking also

involves enactment, and this is based on the idea that individuals create and shape the environment they are trying to understand (Orton, 2000; Weick, 1995). Thus, it is relevant to explore the individuals' perspectives, emotions and behavior since they not only interpret the disruption, but they also shape it. Moreover, sensemaking is a social process, individuals also shape each other's meanings by sharing them through their networks (Weick, 1995). In the ongoing reformulation, employees and students can discuss their narratives with each other and influence each other's sensemaking on the matter.

Sensemaking in a change context involves many actors (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), although research has focused on sensemaking of top management (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) and their sense giving to other organizational members and on middle managers (e.g., Balogun, 2003; Beck & Plowman, 2009). However, less attention has been paid to how frontline employees make sense of a change, and this is relevant since they can create different meaning in comparison to the leadership (Bartunek et al, 2006).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This research aims to understand how university members make sense of the ongoing reformulation of internationalization within Dutch HE. To realize this goal, a qualitative approach was taken as it facilitates gathering in-depth experiences and opinions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand how participants make sense of the reformulation of internationalization at their higher education institution. Through interviews, this study can help in gaining insights into how they understand, react, and reflect on this topic in the current context, which an outcome that a quantitative approach such as Likert scales could not have provided. A quantitative approach could not have captured the nuances and complex ways university members understand this change. Therefore, as the study

focuses on sensemaking, semi-structured interviews were more appropriate to allow open-ended responses and help in the potential emergence of themes that could not be captured through a quantitative approach. Moreover, this study was conducted with the approval of the ethics committee (Appendix A).

3.2 Research context

The research was conducted in the context of the ongoing reformulation trend that is being discussed in several countries. In the Netherlands, this reformulation has been shaped in a proposed bill, the “Internationalization in Balance Act,” which has not been approved or implemented yet. The scope of this study is limited to the Netherlands, as a critical setting where internationalization in HE is still part of the HEI’s activities, and where, at the same time, its reformulation is unfolding. While the reformulation affects all universities of the Netherlands, this study focuses on the University of Twente, a university situated in the border between Germany and the Netherlands, with a high influx of international students, particularly Germans. Given its cross-border location, the University of Twente has requested for a regional approach from the national government regarding the reformulation. Therefore, it makes it a relevant case for studying how university members make sense of the reformulation.

At the moment of the preparation of the data collection, universities signed a letter made by the Universiteiten van Nederland (Universities of the Netherlands) in which they outlined their intended commitments towards their internationalization policy. These commitments involve topics such as language of instruction, student numbers, and housing availability. It is relevant to emphasize that this commitment does not represent the implementation of the “Internationalization in Balance Act,” but a tool to help with internationalization in HE during its ongoing discussion.

The University of Twente, as well as other Dutch universities, has recognized the advantages of internationalization policy, as they say it promotes international collaboration, leads to economic benefits, and helps in covering national market demands (Vereniging Universiteiten van Nederland, 2024). However, they also acknowledged that the increase of international students strains educational resources, impacts the education quality and increases the housing shortage in certain regions. Before the interviews took place, the current government has slashed the education budget for HEIs.

And it is in this context in which the study was conducted. University members are in a situation where they do not know what will happen to them, when or how. They are found in this uncertainty, knowing that this anticipated reformulation will affect them. This situation creates a rich setting for research and understand how university members make sense of the reformulation of internationalization policy within the Dutch HE.

3.3 Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling allowing for snowballing which involved the selection of individuals who met specific inclusion criteria to the research. To be eligible, participants had to meet the following criterion: (1) they have to be currently employed or enrolled at the University of Twente when the interview was done, (2) they have studied or worked minimally one year at the University of Twente, and (3) they need to have some knowledge of the internationalization debate in the Netherlands. The minimum of one year for both employees and students is required since the research considers that this minimum time should have allowed university members to experience the reformulation of internationalization at their HEI.

To recruit participants, a combination of strategies were employed. Initially the researcher contacted individuals within her personal academic network, as well as individuals

previously unknown to her by using the University of Twente's email system and randomly selecting individuals. These participants were invited to participate by sending them an email (Appendix B) which included an invitation to participate in the interview online or offline, information about the research and the criterion needed to participate. As the recruitment progressed, some participants shared the invitation message with other university members resulting in the recruitment of five participants who met the criteria and expressed interest to participate. This resulted in a combination of purposive sampling alongside snowball, enabling the researcher to reach a broader range of participants while still maintaining the study's participant criterion.

Upon receiving a positive response from those invited and participants verified their eligibility for their participation, a meeting was planned either at the university campus or online by using the platform Microsoft Teams. A reminder of the invitation was sent to participants who did not answer after two weeks. A total of 70 students and employees were approached. Among those potential participants, 40 either did not answer the email or were not available to participate. However, 30 agreed to participate in the research, from which 15 were students and 15 were employees.

The sample includes participants who are working or studying at one of the faculties of the University of Twente: Behavioral, Management, and Social Sciences (BMS), Engineering Technology (ET), Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science (EEMCS), Science and Technology (TNW) and Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC). Therefore, this sample is expected to generate a comprehensive understanding on their sensemaking processes of university members from all faculties.

To sort all participants, the researcher first grouped university members by nationality, distinguishing between the Netherlands and other nationalities. Within each of these two

groups, participants were further categorized based on their role/occupation within the University of Twente, placing first employees, followed by students. The participant numbers were then assigned sequentially according to this sorting order. This approach ensured a systematic and consistent manner to present the participant data in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants characteristics (N=30)

Participant	Country	Role/Occupation	Faculty
1	The Netherlands	Employee	ET
2	The Netherlands	Employee	ET
3	The Netherlands	Employee	ITC
4	The Netherlands	Employee	TNW
5	The Netherlands	Employee	EEMCS
6	The Netherlands	Employee	BMS
7	The Netherlands	Employee	BMS
8	The Netherlands	Employee	TNW
9	The Netherlands	Employee	ITC
10	The Netherlands	Employee	BMS
11	The Netherlands	Student	EEMCS
12	The Netherlands	Student	ITC
13	The Netherlands	Student	EEMCS
14	The Netherlands	Student	EEMCS
15	The Netherlands	Student	EEMCS
16	The Netherlands	Student	ET
17	The Netherlands	Student	ET
18	Brazil	Employee	EEMCS
19	Mexico	Employee	TNW
20	Iran	Employee	ITC
21	Germany	Employee	BMS
22	Brazil	Employee	EEMCS
23	Indonesia	Student	TNW
24	Panama	Student	BMS
25	Vietnam	Student	ET
26	Panama	Student	ET
27	Cambodia	Student	ET
28	Romania	Student	EEMCS
29	Germany	Student	TNW
30	Zimbabwe	Student	BMS

Note. BMS – Behavioral, Management, and Social Sciences. ET – Engineering Technology. EEMCS – Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science. TNW – Science and Technology. ITC – Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation.

Among employees, there was a mixture of academic and non-academic staff from the different faculties of the university. The category of academic staff includes, for example, *professors* and *PhD candidates*, while the non-academic staff includes individuals such as *study advisors* and *operational staff*. While the student category included both bachelor's and master's program students within the university.

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants' characteristics. This group consisted of 30 participants who hold a wide variety of nationalities. Being Dutch the most common nationality, representing 57% of the total number of participants, whereas 43% were international participants.

According to the University of Twente (2023) facts and figures, international students represent 35% of their student population. Regarding staff demographics data provided by the Human Resources department of the university indicated that employees were composed of 64% Dutch and 36% international. Based on these figures, the average overall composition of employees and students at the University of Twente is approximately 64% Dutch and 36% international.¹ This estimation aligns closely with the composition of the research participant sample, which included 57% Dutch and 43% international participants, which ensures representativeness in terms of nationality and fosters the international quality of the research.

3.4 Procedure & interview guide

The interview guide was divided into three blocks, starting with background questions, continuing with questions related to the internationalization policy in general terms in block two, and then focusing on questions related to the current reformulation of the internationalization policy in Dutch HE in block three (Appendix C). Prior the actual interviews, the interview guide was pre-tested with both a student and an employee to identify

¹ These average proportions were calculated by the researcher by averaging the nationality ratios of students and employees provided and reported by the University of Twente.

language-related issues. Adjustments to the guide, such as the structure in questions, were introduced after the two mock interviews.

Since there were two distinct groups in the research, this being employees and students, each group had its own interview guide to ensure the collection of appropriate data from them. Furthermore, additional questions were added to the employee guide regarding the development of the internationalization process. These questions were reserved for employees who have been working at the university for over five years. This was done to ensure that the employee is familiar with the process.

At the beginning of the interview, all participants were provided information regarding the research, were asked for their verbal consent to record the interview and were invited to ask questions before starting the interview. Only after the interviewees accepted the conditions and their consent was obtained, the interview started. All interviews were held in English, as this is the language that the interviewer speaks and can be understood by all non-Dutch and Dutch-speaking participants.

The questions asked were according to where the interview was leading, though there was a structure maintained during the interview process. The formulation of the questions contained phrases such as *What do you think..? What is your stance...? How is...?* among others (see Appendix C). Questions addressed the perceived benefits, perceived challenges, experiences with and stances on the internationalization process and its current reformulation. During the interviews, two participants asked for information about what the reformulation entails to understand the question that was being asked in block two. In those cases, the researcher provided a neutral and concise explanation of the reformulation of the internationalization policy by focusing on its goals and avoiding any opinion (Appendix D). After this, these two participants were able to continue with the interview.

The interviews were conducted in January and February 2025, with interviews having an average duration of 40 minutes.

3.5 Data Analysis

All interviews, online or offline, were recorded through Microsoft Teams. After this, all interviews were manually checked, transcribed, and anonymized by the researcher. Considering the sensitive nature of the research and the closeness of the participants to the topics, some specific parts of the transcripts were redacted and replaced by *specific function descriptions, specific examples, specific personal information, and association name*. Furthermore, the interviewees' audios were not provided to the researchers in charge of the supervision of this thesis since there were some participants who belonged to the same faculty and their voices could have been recognizable. These measures were taken with the aim of fully protecting the anonymity of the participants and third parties.

Once all transcripts were fully anonymized, these were imported to ATLAS.ti, and the analysis of the data started by going through each one of the interviews to be familiar with the data. A coding book was made (Appendix E), and a thematic analysis was done as this one provides great flexibility to look for nuance and depth of understanding of the participants regarding the evaluated topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006); and helps in answering the research question (Naeem, 2021). To guarantee the reliability of the study, a second coder reviewed 10% of the total interviews resulting in a 0.94 Cohen's kappa.

4. Results

This section presents the findings of the research by focusing on three central themes: (1) multilayered logics of internationalization, (2) drivers of the reformulation, and (3) consequences of the reformulation. Theme one provides a context for understanding the policy by exploring how participants interpret internationalization in HE. Theme two analyzes what respondents considered

to be the drivers of the reformulation, ranging from practical concerns to political motives. Finally, theme three captures what participants considered to be the consequences of the reformulation.

Through these themes, this paper aims to answer the main research question: *How do university members make sense of the reformulation of internationalization policy within Dutch HE?*

4.1. Multilayered logics of internationalization in HE

This theme explores how participants perceived internationalization as a multi-layered experience and a changing concept. The participants' interpretations encompassed academic and personal enrichment, economic model, and educational equality and inequality. At the same time, internationalization was also interpreted through unresolved challenges in the cultural and linguistic dimensions. Therefore, this theme reveals the nuances and sometimes conflicting logics with which the university community interprets internationalization, many times portrayed as inevitable and desirable, but also complicated.

4.1.1. Academic and personal enrichment

A widely shared perception of all participants was how their exposure to internationalization in HE is a contributor to academic and personal enrichment. Their accounts were varied and captured this enrichment not as uniformly experienced and automatic. Participants interpreted this growth through their own roles and backgrounds, sometimes framing it as a transformative process, while others described its complexity in intercultural accommodations.

Both students and employees indicated that their exposure to an intercultural environment, diversity in opinions both on campus and international collaboration, enhanced their work and study. The students' experiences were associated to project work with other cultures and improvement of their international careers to this logic.

“For my studies, we design a lot. User experience is a field that I want to work in the future, and for that it's very important to have a clear understanding of your user. If you have a product that has users all over the world, it's important to understand different cultures and how a user's experience might differ among them.” (Dutch student, P14)

In this quote, the student considers internationalization as a vital tool that helps her in her career readiness. While the majority of employees related to this academic enrichment through their experiences in research activities and the international classroom.

Besides academic enrichment, all participants described internationalization as a tool for personal enrichment in cross-cultural skills. Most of them refer to this as a transformative and introspective experience in which they are confronted with their view of the world and themselves.

“On a personal level,[...] I saw the difference [...] It expanded my worldview, my opinions and my capability to reflect and to take others into consideration.[...] When it comes to my perspectives, my opinions and the way I regard people, it (internationalization) had a huge impact on me because it was part of my everyday life.” (International employee, P21)

This account shows how internationalization is perceived by many employees and students as recalibrating cross-cultural interactions, views and reshaping the participants' values.

Nevertheless, this transformative process is not always easy and automatic. Several respondents, its majority employees, described the cognitive and emotional efforts required to overcome and

make sense of perceived cross-cultural differences. The following employee account shows the difficulty involved in this intercultural learning:

“You are forced to really understand all the cultures and it's not always easy, so that's the thing. [...] And I think it's an enrichment when you are forced to have this struggle. After that, you are culture richer.” (International employee, P18)

This cross-cultural enrichment is not achieved by itself; this reflection demonstrates how many participants referred to it as a learning process characterized by struggles, and which later might have a positive result. This enrichment is gained and not automatic. In line with this reflection, a Dutch employee described how this learning process of academic enrichment was strongly resisted when the university decided to internationalize:

“At the start we were really kind of struggling with this internationalization, [...] we had English as the main language. And that was already a struggle for us, because we argued that a lot of the research that we do in our program is directed towards Dutch companies [...] and we need to translate everything. That felt kind of a burden to teachers. But, once we went English, [...] we started to appreciate the international contribution from international students, the whole climate and the whole international culture.” (Dutch employee, P10)

This quote reflects the process of academic and personal enrichment over time. It illustrates how internationalization started as being resisted by many university employees and how much effort it involved to make sense of internationalization and its cross-cultural enrichment. This one is not

given, it is earned. A student experienced this cross-cultural growth, even when he did not expect it:

“When I came from my high school, I never thought that instead of only learning the educational aspect [of my study] at the university, I would also develop myself further as a person. I think meeting people from other countries is a big part of this.” (Dutch student, P11)

These accounts show how internationalization is closely and widely related, by all participants, to academic and personal enrichment. Many of them described it as a transformative and introspective experience through which they are confronted with their world view, and their cultural self-perception. Nevertheless, differences emerged in how this layer was experienced depending more on the participants’ roles rather than on their national backgrounds.

Students often related academic and personal enrichment in project work and their future international career opportunities. In contrast, employees emphasized this enrichment through international research activities and the creation of an international classroom. While both students and employees acknowledged the efforts required in the acquisition of this enrichment, particularly employees reflected on the gradual acceptance they went through when internationalization was introduced and was met with an initial resistance.

Students focused on their personal growth and project work more than the creation of an international classroom, while employees reflected on an institutional and professional development.

4.1.2. Educational opportunity and inequality

A very small number of participants considered internationalization as an education enabler for students from less developed countries, while also raising questions over brain drain.

Among these participants, there were mainly Dutch employees, and a few international students who emphasized this layer of internationalization. International students associated studying in the Netherlands as an opportunity to gain access to higher education quality and better career prospects while also highlighting the lack of education quality in their home countries.

“To put it simple, I’m getting a lot better education here than I am at home. That means I could improve the quality of my own life [...] And if I decide to bring this knowledge back with me, I could definitely make an impact, like in the engineering aspect of the country.” (International student, P27)

As an international student, this participant sees herself as a beneficiary of internationalization and understands that this one helps in the potential development of her country through her acquired knowledge. Another international student indicated their transformative process associated with having access to a perceived better HE.

“There (in Romania) aren’t many good opportunities for me in higher education And the ones that are available are extremely competitive and oversaturated. I benefited a lot from coming to the Netherlands, broadening my horizons, studying in English, and meeting people from a lot of countries.” (International student, P28)

This quote provides a view of gratitude towards having access to HE through internationalization. Later in the interview, this student also recognized that this educational opportunity brings some tension.

“I think we’ve all heard of brain drain. And this is something that is perhaps a disadvantage to the home country of the person leaving, but it is definitely an advantage of the host country.” (International student, P28)

This account provides the student’s acknowledgement of brain drain as a dilemma of this access to knowledge in another country creates loss of talent and knowledge in the home country. This reflection suggests a generation of unequal global dynamics and complicates the narrative of the educational opportunities resulting from internationalization in HE.

On the Dutch perspective, a few Dutch employees emphasized internationalization as an educational opportunity for international students.

“I’m involved in an international program that generates the incoming of students to here. I think for them it’s also a major opportunity. [...] I think one benefit is a bit more global, the understanding of each other, but also to offer opportunities to people that may not necessarily have the same (study) opportunities elsewhere.” (Dutch employee, P3)

This educational opportunity is lived by this participant through his work in this transnational program. Internationalization is understood as a way to provide disinterested education to people from less developed countries. When comparing this account to the international students’, their reflections are more from the perspective of someone who receives an opportunity. The international students’ perspective is one of conflicted educational opportunities and brain drain dilemmas, while Dutch employees framed internationalization in HE as a way to contribute to the reduction of global education disparities. As one Dutch

employee noted that while contributing to a student's home country may not be an intended goal of internationalization, but one positive result of internationalization in HE.

According to these accounts, internationalization in HE does not only create an international understanding, but is also perceived as an intended or unintended facilitator of educational opportunities, presenting questions concerning who benefits from educational mobility. Although this layer was not mentioned by a few Dutch students and international employees, it captures clear contrasts on how it is interpreted by Dutch employees and international students. On one hand, international students viewed this logic through their experiences of educational mobility, as self-perceived beneficiaries, expressing gratitude and tension within this logic. They also expressed concerns about issues like brain drain and global educational inequality. In contrast with this, Dutch employees framed this logic from their roles, as education providers, emphasizing the benefits for society when offering this educational opportunity to students from less developed countries. Therefore, there is a difference in perspective, while international students spoke as recipients of international education, Dutch employees reflected on its societal and institutional role, as facilitators.

4.1.3 Economic model

More than half of the respondents often described internationalization as beneficial, and a necessity shaped by institutional and national economic pressures. This economic model was related to the perceived revenue generated by non-EEA tuition, the Dutch education funding system, and national labor market demands. This logic was interpreted differently within the university community. For example, only a very small number of participants described internationalization as a strategic response from the institutions and government to help in the institutional funding:

“It was a real trend that had to do with the way that higher education is financed in the Netherlands where part of your financing depends on student numbers [...] So that was a real incentive for many Dutch universities to start offering programs English-taught bachelor’s level. So, not actually to make money because we do not make money out of international students [...] But to keep up with the other universities and not to lose our funding.” (Dutch employee, P1)

Here, internationalization is more about competition with other universities and its instrumental necessity for the university’s survival. Internationalization in HE is taken as a strategic action, and not only an intercultural exchange. Among those employees who described this layer of internationalization, they viewed it as a tool to attract internationals and cover labor shortages and help in the institution’s finances, while students, particularly international students, view it as a tool to attract revenue through tuition fee generation and only a few of them allude to employment. To show this contrast, this is what a teacher described regarding the economic dimension of internationalization in HE:

“At this university, we really value internationalization, international students and staff. But we also need them because my faculty has some disciplines where we see a decrease in the number of Dutch students, and we really need the talent. (Dutch employee, P4)

This quote illustrates the multilayered logic of internationalization in HE, where the value of diversity of the university community coexists and is entangled with needs of the labor market.

When explaining the economic side of internationalization, an international student described the internationalization business logic through the revenue of tuition fees.

“Economically, I do think there are lots of incentives for universities to bring students from abroad. I think these incentives come mostly from the monetary side and capital. So usually, international students are expected to pay a higher fee than local students and which translates to higher budgets for the universities.” (International student, P26)

In this quote, this international student sees himself as expected to pay higher fees and as a revenue generator. Coincidentally, another non-EEA student considered himself a “cash cow” when referring to his perception of international students (non-EEA) within the university funding model which reveals his internalization of being seen as an economic utility by the university. This metaphor captures the student’s identity reduction to an economic asset. In line with this perception, an EEA-student expressed concern about the unequal institutional treatment on non-EEA-students:

“I’ve had a lot of friends that continuously complain that’s unfair. They have to pay around five times the study fee, next to that there are also some regulations (visa). [...] That puts a lot of pressure. [...] I don’t find that very internationally friendly.” (International student, P29)

This account shows that the economic side of internationalization in HE is also felt through pressure and stress, from non-EEA students, and also concern and empathy from some EEA-

students who pay the same tuition fee as Dutch students. In addition to that, this student perceives a disconnection between the university's international-friendly appearance with an anti-international action based on high tuition rates of non-EEA.

These considerations show how some participants interpret internationalization as an institutional and national strategy while others interpret it as transactional relationship illustrating different interpretations of the economic model layer of internationalization. International students, particularly those from non-EEA countries, often emphasized the financial incentives of HEI's, as they described themselves as economic units due to the higher tuition fees paid. Moreover, a few international employees acknowledged this layer, but often in relation to labor market needs in the Netherlands and help in the university funding. However, they did not report the same personal impact as international students.

Among Dutch participants, this economic logic was occasionally mentioned by both employees and students, framed as an economic strategy to help in university funding or address workforce shortages. Nevertheless, and unlike international students, Dutch participants did not refer directly to non-EEA students as economic units, but they framed internationalization as a strategy that helps in the economy of the institution and country.

Overall, while many participants recognized the economic model layer of internationalization, only international students, particularly non-EEA students, expressed feeling an economic contributor.

4.1.4. Cultural and linguistic challenges

Despite its benefits, almost all participants recognized that internationalization in HE comes with challenges, particularly in the cultural and linguistic area between the local and international community. Students and employees spoke of cultural tensions intermingled and accentuated by linguistic barriers. These cultural and linguistic tensions create practical

barriers in cross-cultural enrichment and amalgamation of the university community. Though all respondents described an intercultural setting, they shared experiences of exclusion, majorly experienced by international students. Accounts of misunderstandings, and limited integration were present between the Dutch- and non-Dutch-speaking communities. This recurring social division was encapsulated by the following statement:

“We have international groups and groups of Dutch friends, and they rarely intermingle. It's not because the internationals don't want to, but when you are placed in a situation with a Dutch group where you are then excluded, it results in you sticking to your own group, and you don't really get to know the Dutch people or steer away from that (interaction)” (International student, P29)

This quote illustrates the many sides of this tension within the university community. First, it reveals a clear division between the Dutch and international community and its perceived disconnection caused by isolating experiences. Second, this division generates a rejection of cross-cultural engagement and isolation. And third, it exposes the emergence of a strong sense of group belonging. And it clearly shows the emotional consequence, especially in international students, of this social division between Dutch and non-Dutch communities among students. This dynamic represents a strong challenge identified, by many university employees, as the creation and fomentation of a “blended community.” In line with this challenge, an employee articulated how this intercultural disconnection was reinforced by institutional practices, which might have fomented the creation of a “parallel society.”

“I think that the focus has been far too much on integrating international people into an international university community and far too little attention gets the fact that we need to help our international staff and students in the context of the Dutch society. We're building almost a remote, separate community of experts that are almost a parallel society. They are not taking part or seldom taking part in work for sport clubs or taking on governance roles or cultural associations. They abstain from being involved in the political system. And as such they have become a kind of parallel society.” (Dutch employee, P2)

This respondent offers a macro-level perspective of the cultural and linguistic disconnection of the international community from Dutch society. There is concern about a perceived lack of institutional action to facilitate the international community's participation in Dutch civic life. This specific participant emphasized, during most of the interview, his frustration regarding the lack of institutional support to facilitate the international community's integration in Dutch society while also emphasizing the linguistic limitations fostered by internationalization in HE through the use of English.

Other employees echoed frustrations around the use of the English language, but in a different manner. One teacher expressed, what seems to be a pedagogical agreement, in having English as the main instructional language, as a source of frustration and lax practice:

“Not all of the colleagues are always on board with that baseline (of speaking English). And so, they start doing stuff like talking to students in Dutch in the classroom, which I think is a no for me. And that creates these little bits of tension between colleagues. [...] And that creates tension, not because internationalization is

a bad idea, but because in both cases the students and the staff are either not confident about their English, they feel entitled to speak in Dutch, or they forget the importance of speaking in English.” (Dutch employee, P6)

This respondent illustrated how language policy can become an area of tension among colleagues. This participant was the only one who did not attribute these English-language frictions to internationalization in HE but to its practitioners, such as teachers. International students also experienced linguistic frictions that led to isolation and decreased their sense of belonging. A student shared her experience when working in a project group:

“It was very annoying because we couldn't get any work done. Most of the time, the Dutch students would initially speak in Dutch and the internationals couldn't break into their conversation [...] As internationals, we didn't know if we should interrupt. [...] I felt I could not interrupt them because it feels like I'm being rude, but they're also being rude by having these conversations.” (International student, P25)

This quote not only shows the linguistic barriers and their emotional consequences, but also the cultural differences in conversational norms and unwritten integration expectations. Other international students shared similar experiences where the use of the Dutch language resulted in feelings of isolation. Regarding employees, some of them described tensions among colleagues in the use of the Dutch language in non-educational activities, such as lunch.

“I have older colleagues who when we sit here at the lunch table, we would generally speak English. [...] But there are older colleagues [...] who would mention that people

should learn the language. [...] There is this militant streak in some of these statements.” (Dutch employee, P5)

This account shows how language politics are also lived outside of the classroom, and how these language expectations can be shown through emotional statements related to integration responsibilities. Interestingly, some international employees reflected on this language limitation as lost potential facilitated by the creation of cultural bubbles:

“When I started. I was one of the few foreigners in the group, and this was again kind of positive for me because I learned Dutch quite quickly. But this is not the case anymore. A lot of the international students and researchers who come here, they don't learn Dutch because they are not forced. They have this bubble where they can live and speak in English, which is, in a sense, a pity because I think it's both ways. So, it's valuable to take people in, but it's also valuable to absorb the local culture. [...] There is a lot of value of learning Dutch, if you live in the Netherlands.” (International employee, P18)

The participant shifts the integration approach to a mutual and symbiotic adaptation where both sides, the Dutch and non-Dutch communities, have a dual responsibility in cultural and linguistic adaptation and responsibility. For some participants, international and Dutch, integration is not only about adaptation to the host country, but also about a two-way integration effort.

While nearly all participants described this logic of internationalization, there were some differences that emerged in how they experienced it. International students were

particularly vocal about feelings of exclusion and isolation caused by the Dutch language use in study and informal settings. Their accounts often emphasized cultural misunderstanding and emotional implications of Dutch-language barriers. In contrast, international employees were generally less focus on personal struggles resulting from language limitation. However, some did reflect on this language limitation as a missed integration opportunity for internationals and expressed concern about the creation of cultural bubbles where Dutch language acquisition is not encouraged. In contrast, most of Dutch employees and students either did not emphasize Dutch language acquisition or viewed it as lesser concern.

Employees discussed tensions in the language policy use in professional settings and some of them expressed their frustration with colleagues' laxity in using the English language in study and informal settings. A small mixed group of Dutch and non-Dutch respondents raised concerns about integration responsibilities between Dutch and non-Dutch individuals, and a perceived lack of institutional support to help internationals to engage in Dutch society.

This sub-theme provided narratives that emerged in a multicultural and multilingual university environment, and it also underlines the frictions and complexities involved in building a "blended community."

4.2. Drivers of the reformulation

This theme explains what participants considered to be the drivers of the reformulation. The university community described this reform as being shaped by different dynamics which might, in some accounts, overlap: language policy regulations, growth in student enrollment, housing shortage and political drivers.

4.2.1. Scaling without strategy

The majority of employees described the expansion of English-taught programs as a process developed “organically” and unplanned, driven by institutional incentives and lenient regulations of regulatory frameworks.

“Within the former Minister of Education, they said ‘Okay, all these programs have gone English-taught, there's no really strict laws or regulations that say what the reason behind should be and who should be given permission (...)’ So that was actually, the reason behind it (reformulation) which is a good thing to look at, more closely” (Dutch employee, P1)

This participant looks back to how the reformulation started, and how through her perceived cues on the drivers, she made sense of this reformulation as a way to regulate the programs’ language choices. However, as the interview advanced, this participant expressed her change in her sensemaking by saying that the current reformulation is not focused on helping with this, but it has political motives. This is an example of how sensemaking is ongoing, and how this one can change through new informative cues on the motivations gathered by individuals. Other employees also pointed out a shift in their sensemaking on the reformulation since, for them, this one changed its motivations (e.g., regulations on language policy, continuous growth, and housing shortage) to political ones.

Following these initial motivators of the reformulation, another employee expressed his frustration about the perceived government’s rejection to help in controlling the influx of students where they were asked by universities:

"Universities have been saying for years that they would like to be able to set up entry barriers to control student numbers, and they were not allowed to do this, which is crazy if you think about it." (Dutch employee, P5)

Housing shortages were pointed out as an evident stressor of the reformulation by almost all participants. Housing limitations were not only perceived as a constant and immediate barrier for international students/staff, but also as a wider national problem:

"Housing was one of the drivers. Internationals occupy housing spaces, which makes it harder for Dutch nationals to find housing [...] But this is also a somewhat awkward argument, because internationals point out that it's very hard to find housing, as tenants and landlords are only looking for renters who would only speak Dutch or look for Dutch (people). And it's hard to argue that we're taking over housing when we're not allowed access to some of it because of prejudice within the rental and housing market." (International student, P25)

In this quote, the student felt the housing shortage "was" one of the arguments that drove the reformulation, but she does not accept it as a good argument since according to her experience, international students are being discriminated and face more challenges, therefore this perceived reformulation argument is felt as false and inaccurate with the lived reality, but acknowledged as a driver.

While this sub-theme was primarily discussed by employees, particularly Dutch employees, there was little to no mention of the "scaling without strategy" narrative by students. Mostly Dutch and some international employees often described the reformulation

as a response to prior institutional concerns on the expansion of English-taught programs with limited oversight, unmanaged growth, and housing issues. Students acknowledged housing as a driver, and specifically international students challenged the validity of this argument based on their experiences with the housing market. But students, both international and Dutch, very rarely discussed the planning of the policy itself. This difference suggests that employees, due to their institutional roles, are closer to the policy process dynamics of internationalization. Overall, this sub-theme reflects a role-based difference than a nationality-based one.

4.2.2 Political reframing

While practical limitations were acknowledged to have driven the reform, most of the participants perceived the reformulation has been increasingly shaped by the current political agenda focused on language protection, cultural identity, and perceived electoral populism. The reformulation is not seen as a neutral policy reform, but also as part of a broader ideological policy with a nationalist sentiment.

“This sentiment isn’t limited to the Netherlands; it’s happening in many countries. For example, the [political] situation in the United States is spreading a lot in countries who received many foreigners, and then it extrapolates to any kind of foreigner [...] Of course, we need highly educated foreigners to advance globally, but putting everybody in the same box and blaming them is the easiest route.” (International employee, P22)

Here, the Dutch policy is situated within a global political context of rising populism characterized by debates of immigration and national identity extrapolated into the HE environment. The participant shows frustration and a sense of unfairness towards the treatment

to immigrants. These feelings of frustration, unfairness and even indignation were commonly showed among the international participants towards the current government's motives for the reformulation, for example:

"I'm against it because the reasons they're stating feel like prejudiced, and are not based on research into the internationals' perspectives on why this is happening. They're focusing solely on a Dutch perspective." (International student, P25)

While most of the Dutch participants shared this discomfort on the perceived nationalistic framing of the reformulation, some of them associated the current government's approach as an instrumentalization of the education quality to use prejudice in exchange of political gain.

"I just think the reason we are making these changes is not because of the quality of education [...] If we decided to do this for quality purposes, we would see a very different kind of debate. But we're not doing that. We're doing this for political purposes only." (Dutch employee, P6)

This quote shows how participants are aware of the political reframing of the reformulation and show their discomfort with it. Some participants stated that among the underlying current government's reasoning, a national cost-benefit calculation of international students, is presented.

"The Dutch Government wants to have more Dutch people go to universities. They don't want as many internationals to come here because they feel like they are paying

for the education of people that will live abroad. And they don't want that. (Dutch student, P13)

In this statement, the reform is seen as a way to re-evaluate the investment on international students' education and the need for protection of national economic interests referring to the economic dimension of internationalization.

Participants, mostly Dutch, stated that the government's concern on the Dutch language preservation in HE and its apparent connection to the labor market, is being used as tool in this political conflict. The government frames the language as a concern accessibility and integration of Dutch students to HE, however participants questioned the sincerity of this narrative.

"And the final thing is the language which they start with saying 'if we don't teach in Dutch then, we will have people working in jobs that they don't understand'. As if the Netherlands is the only country that has education in another language." (Dutch employee, P7)

Yet others voiced, mostly internationals, that there might be some legitimacy to the government's concern to preserve the Dutch language. For example, a participant reflects on the linguistic transition difficulties faced by local students.

"I would say that the government is there to serve its own country [...] It can be hard to switch from a Dutch-taught high-school to an English-taught university program and it's easier to study in your own language" (International student, P30)

In this account, the student is not showing their agreement to the reformulation of the policy but empathizes with the Dutch language concerns made by the government and the perceived struggle for Dutch students when studying an English-taught program. Other international participants also articulated the perceived secondary role taken by the Dutch language in the Netherlands. They expressed their empathy towards this sociolinguistic shift and a sense of cultural disarray for the Dutch community.

"I obviously empathize with the locals. [...] they've experienced such a drastic change over a short amount of time -changing from a predominantly Dutch-speaking lifestyle to (one that's) extremely anglophone." (International student, P26)

These last reflections emphasized the discursive tension of the reform debate. These participants adopt the Dutch perspective to understand the government's actions. While some perceived the reform as a tool for nationalist political exclusion, these participants legitimize the reform attempt to help in the perceived loss of Dutch culture and language.

Some internationals also expressed accounts of conflicting feelings between respect of national laws and their vulnerability resulted from the current framing of the reformulation.

"I'm in favor because its citizens must get what the majority wants as the Netherlands is a democratic nation. But I'm also against it because it feels like the majority of the country is pointing fingers at the most vulnerable population." (International student, P24)

This clearly shows the affective dimension of the policy, one in which they are conflicted between their values and identity, or their perception of fairness and self-protection.

This theme shows a varied understanding of why university members considered internationalization in HE is being reformed. Some view the reformulation as a purely nationalist-driven reform, while others acknowledged those nationalistic drivers and added legitimation to the government's concern to regulate internationalization.

Across the participants groups, the political framing of the reformulation generated varied reactions. International students and employees frequently expressed their vulnerability, exclusion, and frustration considering the reformulation as driven by nationalistic rhetoric and anti-immigration sentiment. Dutch employees and students also echoed this criticism and emphasized the instrumentalization of education quality in political discourse. Moreover, Dutch participants expressed concern in the long-term effects of the reformulation in Dutch HE. Interestingly, a smaller group of respondents, mostly international participants, legitimized the government's concerns on Dutch-language preservation and cultural identity, even while also recognizing the nationalist undertones behind it. However, most participants, regardless of role or background, did not consider the loss of Dutch language or cultural identity as a compelling government's justification for the reform.

4.3. Consequences of the reformulation

The reformulation perceived consequences illustrated how it is being lived, felt and experienced by the university community. This theme explores the current and anticipated consequences of the reformulation that affect participants personally, professionally, and academically. For some, it opened the potential for improvements of the Dutch educational environment by reconnecting with the Dutch community and helping them in their linguistic limitation in English-teaching and learning. However, for the majority, the reformulation

generated concerns regarding the university's financial stability because of the perceived decrease of international students, as well as psychological effects resulting from a perceived uncertain environment and future. These accounts expressed how the reformulation is not only seen as a political adjustment, but it is also experienced as a reform of who is welcome in the country.

4.3.1. Positive consequences

4.3.1.1 Strengthening the Dutch educational environment

Many participants expressed that there were no positive implications of the current state of the reform. However, there were a few who indicated that the reformulation could be a potential opportunity to strengthen the Dutch educational environment. These participants referred to the current state of the reformulation goals as an opportunity to recalibrate the university's relationship with their current and potential Dutch students. The shift towards a Dutch-led environment was interpreted as an opportunity to create greater awareness of the Dutch university culture, improved conditions for Dutch-speaking staff, and a potential increase in learning opportunities for Dutch-speaking students. Participants noted that a renewed focus on the Dutch university population has led them to, for instance, think of ways to attract more Dutch students to the university.

“And on the positive side, becoming Dutch or partially Dutch in language might also open opportunities to attract new groups of students. As you recall, the parents that were talking about their son being taught in English, they might have searched for Dutch alternatives, and maybe there are more Dutch students out there who are hesitant to go into university because of the English language. I doubt that. Seriously, I doubt that.” (Dutch employee, P10)

Here, the reformulation is related to strategic recruitment and re-engagement with the local student population, which coincides with the government's rationale. However, this account shows skepticism about that narrative, since the participant does not fully believe that the reform will attract the attention of local students. As this participant, there were others who while acknowledging the potential positive outcomes, they also challenged the current policy's rationale. As illustrated by the following statement:

“One positive outcome that I can think of is that in some way, we will attract more Dutch students and then they'll find out that this is a lovely university with a lovely campus [...] which might make us more appealing to our Dutch students. And this might help some of the programs that are struggling, to get students.” (Dutch employee, P8)

This quote illustrates concern on the low student enrollment of some programs, while considering the reformulation as a possible option to attract Dutch students. It provides a conflicting reasoning of the participant who sees some benefits of the reformulation and at the same time, it expresses hesitancy and hopefulness on the potential reformulation's outcomes.

Alongside a renewed student outreach, some employees also reflected on the pedagogical benefits the reform can bring. Teaching in their native language was described as comfortable and less cognitively demanding since it provides greater nuance and eloquence in their teaching.

"So, would I spend less mental effort on those kinds of things if I were to teach exclusively in Dutch? Yes, but the flip side is I teach a program that is, by definition, very English-oriented. So, then I would trade one type of mental effort for another type." (Dutch employee, P5)

The lecturer illustrates a trade-off situation that could be generated from the reform. He acknowledges the advantages of teaching in his native language, but also that these gains are also met with disadvantages, especially for English-oriented programs. Although this participant shows a nuanced reasoning, he questions the feasibility of the Dutch-teaching aspect of the reform.

In contrast to these views of potential positive outcomes of teaching in Dutch, a Dutch student shared her opinion on this aspect:

"Having all Dutch education would definitely be a negative thing because I have experienced English-taught education in English as a very positive thing. It was not difficult to adjust, and it only added some skills. And for me, I want to work in technology and my study is also in technology, so English is the logical way to go."
(Dutch student, P14)

This quote provides a student perspective on how teaching in Dutch could also be linked to negative implications for Dutch students. Furthermore, the student shared how important is for her to have an English-taught program. This quote coincides with the previous employee who, though admitted that there might be some gains in teaching Dutch, there are also programs that should be in English because of their academic and work orientation. There is a misalignment

between what some considered as a potential positive outcome and what others, such as this Dutch student, saw as incompatible of her career aspirations and program stream.

When internationalization in HE was introduced to Dutch HE, it involved communicating in English which previously represented a struggle to some university members. The current reformulation goes back to a more Dutch-taught HE which for some participants may provide linguistic gains for Dutch-speaking staff who feel limited when using the English language.

“It can be positive in offering education in Dutch, particularly if teachers are not able to express themselves as well in English as in Dutch.” (Dutch employee, P3)

Some employees see the reform as a way to increase teaching effectiveness for those teachers struggling when communicating and teaching in English. This perceived linguistic gain was not limited to employees. A few students, including internationals, recognized how this shift could improve the understanding and study performance of Dutch students.

“It [the reformulation] could make it easier for Dutch students, which I completely understand. It’s their native language and doing a course in it might help them excel more.” (International student, P27)

This quote shows the view of some international participants who, though they may not be benefited from the current ongoing discussion, expressed empathy for the Dutch perspective.

This sub-theme showed observations of the reformulation as a reform with a Dutch-focus realignment, one that though is being criticized, it is perceived to reduce English-related

linguistic constraints but can also bring negative aspects in future career prospect and the study program quality.

Overall, this sub-theme shows accounts of a small mixed group of respondents, mostly Dutch, who considered the reformulation as an opportunity to re-engage with the Dutch student community. When mentioning these potential positive outcomes, they did it with skepticism and hesitancy. Among this small group of participants, international participants focused more on the benefits for Dutch-speaking individuals in learning and teaching in their native language, while Dutch participants additionally emphasized a renewed outreach to local students, and a re-engagement with the Dutch student community. No major differences were found within this small group based on role or nationality. Nevertheless, even among those who acknowledged the reform's potential positive consequences, their accounts were overshadowed by a more widely shared narrative of instability and uncertainty of the reformulation.

4.3.2 Negative consequences

4.3.2.1 Institutional financial fragility

The reformulation is seen as a destabilizer of institutional operations by the university community. A great emphasis was given to the financial sustainability, or even survival, of the university by most of the participants. They reflected on how universities' finances rely on student tuition fees paid particularly by non-EEA students, and the general instability of the current financial model of the Dutch HE.

“The business model of universities is broken there's not enough students, and therefore not enough income.” (Dutch employee, P2)

The potential reduction of English-taught programs generates concerns regarding potential budget cuts, downsizing of programs or faculties, and a general institutional fragility among participants. The potential absence of international students or staff is not only perceived as a diversity loss but also as an economic threat. Participants associated the financial risks for the university with the reformulation, as this one is perceived as influential on the international student enrollment.

“It (the reformulation) would translate into a very low influx of international students which means more capital lost for them (the university). And to compensate for that, Dutch students will either have higher tuition fees, or the government will have to increase subsidies to the university.” (International student, P26)

This account demonstrates the relation of international students and financial gains. This international student reflected on his self-perceived image in the financial system of the university and identified potential financial risks in his interpretation of the current reform.

Participants engaged in a future scenario in which they anticipate how this reform could change the economic model of universities, forming a cause-consequence link between the decrease of international students and the financial model of Dutch HE:

“Cuts have been made already, but no active measures have been taken. It is imaginable that, in the future, studying in the Netherlands might become less attractive to international students. This can cause some problems with funding, especially for the University of Twente, which relies a lot on international students. And that would

be quite negative for them [the University of Twente], considering the way they're currently structured.” (Dutch student, P17)

While the previous international student’s account demonstrated awareness of the university’s economic model, this account showed concern about the potential problems resulting from the decrease in international students. Furthermore, this account combined the national budget education cuts with the reformulation, which is a reflection that other participants also did.

Another aspect that participants illustrated is the potential reduction of workforce resulting from financial losses potentially caused by the reformulation:

“At the end of the day, if the university continuing facing red numbers, it would mean that it will need to reorganize. So, faculties will start also firing employees because they don't have a need for them.” (International employee, P19)

This employee associated this institutional financial fragility with an anticipated expendability of employees within the university. This adds a tangible anticipated consequence perceived by employees, especially by non-Dutch-speaking ones. Nevertheless, there were also a few Dutch participants whose reflections tried to balance the perceived institutional financial needs with the diversity costs the reform might take:

“On a positive side, we’ll get over our budgeting issues. It would also mean scaling down, which could result in having to fire a lot of staff. Since we have a lot of money problems, those will probably be resolved if we need to get rid of many studies and non-Dutch staff

who are unable to switch to Dutch. On a negative side, we will become a very Dutch university, which I see as a downside.” (Dutch student, P15)

This account shows a potential scenario where the reformulation results in the expendability of employees, particularly of non-Dutch-speaking individuals and a decrease of students' numbers, resulting in diversity loss in the university. As this student, there were other participants who imagined potential scenarios in which the institutional financial fragility would lead to budget cuts, downsizing of programs or faculties, loss of jobs, and loss of diversity within the university.

Across participants groups, the reformulation was perceived as a threat to the institutional financial stability. Most participants, both Dutch and international, employees and students recognized the financial reliance of the university with the international student numbers, and expressed concern on how it could affect the university (e.g., loss of diversity). There were differences between groups of participants in how they related to this issue. While Dutch employees often emphasized structural risks such as program cuts and reorganization, international employees, in addition to those risks, viewed it also through job security concerns, particularly for non-Dutch-speaking employees. It is relevant to mention that Dutch employees generally did not talk about job concerns related to financial issues resulting from the reformulation.

International students emphasized the role of non-EEA students in the financial ecosystem, while Dutch students indicated possible financial issues for universities and programs.

Across these accounts, internationalization is understood as, not only a mere cultural exchange, but also a part of integral institutional operations. The reformulation goes beyond

the perceived political rationale of its reform, and it is perceived as a potential threat to the financial model of the university.

4.3.2.2 Psychological effects

Beyond finances, the reformulation is also contested emotionally, especially among international students and employees. According to the participants' reflections, the reform creates an atmosphere of educational and professional disruption. There is a perceived uncertainty over implementation timelines, unclear expectations around Dutch proficiency, and threats to job and study continuation. The reformulation discussion is perceived to have created an uncertain environment where, in many cases, resulted in feelings of exclusion and anxiety.

“Once the government released the plans, I became a bit depressed because my future is uncertain. [...] it feels, at some point, that we were not welcome anymore. I had a depressive moment.” (International student, P24)

There were other international students who felt the reformulation as an emotional disruption to their lives. In the account above, the student reassessed his environment and perceived it as unwelcoming and therefore felt excluded from it. The reformulation produces anxiety and depression, showing the psychological impact this reform has on the university community.

Learning Dutch was perceived as a linguistic challenge and as an unexpected demand that adds on the stress and anxiety on the non-Dutch-speaking employees.

“It’s a big expectation to have and it adds stress. [...]and it actually takes a lot of effort. Having to do that -and not even wanting to do that- can become a mental

burden. It is also kind of tied to anxiety and uncertainty for me.” (International employee, P21)

Although specific Dutch proficiency requirements have not been communicated, non-Dutch-speaking employees experience pressure and stress on the need to master or improve their Dutch proficiency. In the account above, the employee is unsure of what exactly the reformulation will entail, but she is already experiencing some mental costs. Similar psychological implications, resulting from unanticipated demands, were echoed by other participants:

“It creates uncertainty, and fear among the staff. That reduces productivity because people are spending this energy worrying about things that will be beyond doing their work.” (International employee, P22)

This quote illustrates how there is a shared feeling of uncertainty among employees, which is already resulting in productivity issues.

While on the one hand, Dutch students feel safe of their academic future, there is an opposite story for international students who feel uncertain on the trajectory of their studies:

“It’s making my choice to stay in the Netherlands a lot harder. It’s making it difficult to think about studying for my master’s and working in the Netherlands, if this were to continue. [...] It’s no longer as good as an option to stay, to study or to work. Now I have to look at alternatives because there’s a chance that I cannot stay to study at all because of these policies.” (International student, P25)

Many international students, like the student above, were evaluating different future options based on the reform developments and adjusting their plans accordingly. They feel this reform as a threat to their personal, educational, and professional life. Furthermore, Dutch participants showed concern about the institutional diversity of their colleagues or classmates, and some of them empathize with the international community.

“I find it really disheartening that the way it (reformulation) makes people feel, I hate seeing students feel that they're not welcome, and I hate seeing my international colleagues be scared of losing their job when they've just moved with their family to Twente.” (Dutch employee, P1)

This Dutch employee sees the reform as unjust and “disheartening,” while showing solidarity towards the international community. This demonstrates that the reformulation is not only perceived as an operational change, but also it is seen as a destabilizer on work and study dynamics, creating uncertainty to most participants. Although, a small group did not shared uncertainty feelings.

The psychological consequences of the reformulation were particularly expressed among international participants. Both international students and employees described feelings of exclusion, anxiety and uncertainty related to study and job continuity, unclear language expectation and timelines. Dutch participants, by contrast, voiced their concern for diversity and expressed empathy for their international colleagues and students. There was a very small group of Dutch employees who did expressed concern about their job continuity because they believed that the reformulation would mean a low influx of students and therefore study programs could potentially close.

Regarding Dutch students, they did not report any notable emotional impact, and they did not mention concern about their future in Dutch HE. International students and employees differed in their specific concern, while students focused on their academic continuity, employees focused on job security, except Dutch-speaking international employees.

In this sub-theme, the most prominent role-based difference was that international participants felt direct psychological effects from the current state of the reformulation, while most Dutch participants voiced their solidarity towards internationals, but did not expressed concern of their future in Dutch HE.

The three themes presented revealed how university members engage in sensemaking triggered by the disruption represented by the reformulation. In theme one, participants constructed their interpretations on internationalization in HE through its multilayered logics, often conflicting with each other. These logics are shaped in the participants' prior experiences and their roles. The second theme delved into the drivers of the reformulation, it exposed tensions regarding institutional growth, language policy, housing shortages and political rhetoric. While the reformulation was initially related to an unregulated expansion and practical constraints by some employees, its current drivers are perceived to be aligned with political agendas, language protection and national identity by most participants. However, among some participants this reform is both politically charged and a way to solve practical issues generated by internationalization in HE. And the third theme focused on the consequences, both real and anticipated, of the reformulation. While a few participants considered some potential outcomes of the reformulation such as improved work and educational environment for Dutch-speaking employees and students, these were eclipsed by a general concern of most participants. Among these identified concerns were the perceived institutional fragility and psychological effects. Anxiety, uncertainty over job or study

continuity, among other psychological effects were notably present in the international members' accounts.

5. Discussion

The discussion section will outline the main findings of the research while using existing literature, and answer the following main research question: *How do university members make sense of the reformulation of internationalization policy within the Dutch higher education?* And the sub-research questions: (1) How do university employees and students interpret the concept of internationalization in HE? (2) What do university employees and students consider are the drivers of the reformulation of the internationalization policy within the Dutch HE? (3) What do university employees and students consider are the implications of the reformulation of the internationalization policy within the Dutch HE?

This discussion starts with the main findings, to then analyze the practical and theoretical implications, to limitations and recommendations for future research, and it finalizes with a conclusion of the study.

5.1 Main findings

The main findings are divided according to the three themes developed in the results section answering each one of the sub-research questions.

5.1.1 Multilayered logics of internationalization in HE

To answer the first sub-research question, *how do university employees and students interpret the concept of internationalization in HE?*, the findings demonstrate internationalization in HE is not uniformly interpreted, but it is interpreted as a multilayered experience and changing concept in which university members associate diverse meanings depending on their roles and identities. The findings reveal the nuances, often conflicting logics, with which university members interpret internationalization in HE. Among these

identified logic layers of internationalization in HE are: (1) academic and personal enrichment, (2) educational opportunity and inequality, (3) economic model, and (4) cultural and linguistic challenges. These logics are not mutually exclusive, rather participants often navigate between them depending on their identity and experiences. An overview of this paper's multilayered logics of internationalization in HE can be found in Table 2. This table summarizes each logic alongside its core interpretation and its most associated specifications or experiences expressed by participants.

Table 2. Multilayered logics of internationalization in HE

Logic layers of internationalization in HE	Core interpretation	Associated specifications/experiences
(1) Academic and personal enrichment	Support of the academic and personal growth through intercultural exchange.	International collaboration, international classroom, project work, improvement of international career opportunities, emotional and cognitive effort.
(2) Educational opportunity and inequality	Access to a quality education for students from less developed countries.	Accessibility to global education, questions of global education inequality, brain drain.
(3) Economic model	Economic gains for HEI's and countries.	Institutional funding model, fulfillment of national workforce demand, tuition fee revenue, international students as financial assets.
(4) Cultural and linguistic challenges	Creation of cultural and linguistic barriers and disconnection.	Language barriers, isolation, language politics, questions on integration responsibilities

While not all participants referred to every logic outlined in Table 2, the overall pattern across roles and backgrounds demonstrated that internationalization in HE is experienced as a multilayered and evolving concept. The findings concerning each one of these multilayered logics of internationalization in HE, will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

This research found that participants widely framed internationalization in HE as an academic and personal enriching experience. Students experienced this enrichment mainly through group projects with other nationalities and related it to benefits for their international career development. Employees focused more on international collaboration and international classroom experiences. However, this enrichment was not automatic or given, since participants explained that it required emotional and cognitive labor, for example, learning intercultural norms. This highlights a tension between the enriching aspect of internationalization, and the required effort to achieve it.

Furthermore, for some international students, internationalization in HE was perceived as a way to have access to international educational opportunities. However, these accounts were accompanied with concerns of brain drain and reflections on global education inequality. In comparison, some Dutch employees viewed it as a way to provide an educational opportunity for international students from less developed countries which reflected a provider-oriented perspective. These findings reveal a global educational inequality embedded in internationalization in HE. It demonstrates the tension between the individual benefits (e.g., accessibility to a quality education) and a global education inequality.

Moreover, respondents emphasized the economic logic behind internationalization in HE. Students, particularly international students, related this logic to revenue generation through non-EEA tuition fee payments. Especially, students from non-EEA countries expressed awareness of their self-perceived position as revenue sources. This reveals how the economic model of internationalization in HE can become internalized. On the other hand, Dutch employees related this economic model logic to the fulfilment of national work vacancies and help in the institutional survival of their HEI's. This contrast outlines a role-dependent interpretation of this layer of internationalization in HE, one in which international

students experienced it from a personal and revenue-generating role, and employees rationalized it through institutional and national needs.

While there was a widely shared perception of the academic and personal enrichment, internationalization was also interpreted through unresolved challenges in the cultural and linguistic dimension by most participants. These challenges contributed to experiences of exclusion, especially between Dutch and international students. International students often reported accounts of difficulties with these challenges when navigating academic and informal spaces where the Dutch language prevails. Moreover, employees also indicated having experienced those tensions. Particularly Dutch-speaking employees have experience it with less emphasis on personal exclusion and more concern on institutional cohesion (e.g., consistency in the use of the English language), integration responsibilities, and a perceived institutional inaction on integration. The findings underscore the practicalities and reality of internationalization in HE, as well as the tensions created in a multicultural and multilingual university environment, which underlines the need for more supported integration efforts. These accounts echoed critiques in literature, such as the formation of in-groups between local and international students by Sawir et al. (2007) and illustrate tensions between international and national interests identified by Tange and Jæger (2021) in the Danish case. These findings revealed that internationalization in HE is not automatic, it does not naturally lead to inclusion and mutual understanding, it creates an ambiguous integration or social expectation from university members. Internationalization needs the effort of university members, Dutch or international, and the institution to make it work.

As previously mentioned, these multilayered logics were not expressed in isolation. Participants emphasized two or more logics based on their experiences and roles. The most common combination of layered logics was: (1) academic and personal enrichment, (3)

economic model, and (4) cultural and linguistic challenges (see Table 2). For example, a Dutch employee who initially resisted to English-taught teaching (cultural and linguistic challenge) explained that later he appreciated the international classroom (academic and personal enrichment), while also acknowledging that the country's labor shortage can benefit from the arrival of international students (economic model). Tension can also be generated within a layer, for instance an international student who indicated that internationalization in HE is a valuable opportunity to access education abroad, but at the same time expresses concerns about brain drain (educational opportunity and inequality) and recognizes that their presence serves to the host country's economic interests (economic model). These findings demonstrate the multilayered nature of internationalization, and how university members navigate its multiple, evolving, and often conflicting logics.

Moreover, these layers also relate to the rationales such as academic, economic, political social/cultural, and branding (Knight & De Wit, 1999; Knight, 2004), but this study shows these rationales through the experiences and interpretations of university members. For instance, the economic model logic of this study is not shown only as an institutional driver but as a concern for international students who see themselves as revenue sources. The findings demonstrate that these logics are more complicated and nuanced and can often conflict with each other.

Furthermore, these multilayered logics of internationalization in HE are grounded on the participants' roles and identities, which reflect the identity-driven property of sensemaking argued by Weick (1995), and it addresses the first sub-research question. Overall, theme one illustrated that internationalization in HE is not uniformly experienced or interpreted, but it is layered and complicated.

5.1.2 Drivers of the reformulation

To answer the second sub-research question, *what do university employees and students consider are the drivers of the reformulation of the internationalization policy within the Dutch HE?*, the findings reveal drivers such as governance issues (e.g., growth of student number, laxity in language policy), housing shortage, and political motivations (global political trends, protection of a national identity, and national political agendas. As the reformulation is an evolving process, some employees, especially Dutch, reflected on their initial acceptance, as they considered it a helpful tool to manage the language policy laxity, continuous growth of students, and housing shortage. However, as new information emerged and the political landscape changed, these participants began to extract new cues and make sense again of this evolving reform. This shows the properties of sensemaking, such as ‘ongoing’ and the participants’ consideration based on new cues to make sense of the situation (Weick, 1995). The shift often came with frustration, skepticism and hesitancy towards what participants increasingly viewed as a political-driven action covered under an administrative concern. Furthermore, employees commonly framed the reformulation in terms of governance issues (e.g., language policy laxity). Students did not, or rarely mentioned those drivers, but emphasized the political motivations, and practical drivers related to housing shortage. These findings indicate that institutional governance concerns are more visible to employees due to their proximity with the university policy dynamics.

Moreover, most participants did not refer to their previous sensemaking of the reformulation, however they did point out that the reformulation was driven by global political trends, protection of a national identity, and national political agendas. These findings are consistent with de Wit and Altbach (2020) who indicated that internationalization in HE is subject to changes in its environment, in this case political changes.

While many international participants expressed feelings of vulnerability, a small group of participants, mostly internationals, legitimate part of the government perspective.

They expressed that there is some legitimacy to the government's efforts to preserve the Dutch language as they see a decreasing relevance of the Dutch language in the country and in HE. Similarly, this group of participants also acknowledged the political rationales of the reformulation. This reveals some tensions within some individuals who hold both self-protective and other groups' narratives simultaneously. Contrary, other participants questioned the sincerity of the concerns on language and cultural protection in HE from the government. Another shared concern, particularly among Dutch employees and students, was how the reformulation is being politically used to portray a concern in the Dutch education quality.

Furthermore, housing shortages was a constantly considered driver of the reformulation across the groups. However, this driver was criticized by some international students who highlighted discriminatory practices in the housing market. This finding challenges one of the government's justification for the reformulation and reflects a disconnection between the reformulation and the experiences of university members.

5.1.3 Consequences of the reformulation

To answer the third sub-research question, *what do university employees and students consider are the implications of the reformulation of the internationalization policy within the Dutch HE?* participants' considered lived and perceived anticipated implications of the reformulation. The reformulation is experienced beyond a policy adjustment, but as a personal, professional, academic, and institutional disruption to the university members routines. This demonstrates that an organizational change does not need to be implemented to cause a disruption among organizational members. International participants' accounts showed that the reformulation is personal for them and triggers uncertainty in their study and job continuation. As such, it aligns with Lines et al. (2005) study who argued that uncertainty is generated among those who will be affected. These reflections demonstrate how in an anticipatory phase of an

organizational change, members are already engaging in sensemaking on the upcoming change and how an uncertain environment is created (Krogh, 2017). Furthermore, it shows how university members have problems in understanding their roles and work responsibilities when facing a change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Across participant groups, there was a shared narrative on institutional fragility. Participants expressed concern about the potential effects of the reformulation on the university finances due to its reliance with student numbers, as they thought that these were going to decrease. This financial uncertainty was related to potential program cuts and reorganization by Dutch employees, while international employees additionally expressed concerns related to job security.

Furthermore, psychological consequences were more present among international participants as they expressed feelings of anxiety, exclusion and even depression resulting from the Dutch language expectations, and job or study insecurity they feel from the reformulation. Ambiguous situations can generate feelings of anxiety, as Ashford (1988) argued. These consequences demonstrate how an anticipated organizational change is already influencing the workplace and academic experiences of the organizational members., and it does not only involve potential imagined consequences of the anticipated change. In contrast Dutch participants voiced their concerns for diversity and expressed concern with the international community. This shows how distinct groups engage differently with a change.

A small mixed group of participants viewed the reform as an opportunity to strengthen the Dutch education environment by enhancing teaching and learning in their native language. This aligns with the language tension discussed by Tange and Jæger (2021) which raises concerns on the benefits of internationalization of HE. However, these potential benefits for the Dutch-speaking university community were modulated by concerns over the feasibility, in

terms of content and future careers, of all programs if these were taught in Dutch. A minority of participant described a potential benefit of the reformulation in terms of attraction of more local students and help under enrolled programs. Nevertheless, even among these participants, these accounts showed skepticism and hesitancy.

In conclusion, the main findings of this study answered the main research question, *how do university members make sense of the reformulation of internationalization policy within the Dutch higher education?* through the elaborated three sub-themes. It illustrates what meanings university members give to the reformulation and the internationalization of HE, what drivers and implications are considered. University members' sensemaking of the reformulation is shaped by their experiences, their identities, evolving cues and the uncertainty presented in the environment. This supports Krogh's (2017) argument that individuals already make sense of an organizational change even before this one is implemented, as uncertainty has already impregnated the organizational environment. Through these themes university members demonstrate how sensemaking unfolds during the ongoing discussion of the reformulation.

5.2 Practical implications

Based on the findings on the reformulation, there are identified improvement areas. First, since there is an overall uncertain environment perceived by university members, universities can mitigate the generated confusion and anxiety by providing transparent communication (e.g., Q&A sessions with leaders, timelines, expectations) on the developments of the reformulation of internationalization in HE. Though this one is in constant evolution, communication over the specific implications on what the current state can mean to both students and employees could help in reducing this uncertainty and anxiety feelings. Even if these implications might be negative, they should be communicated. As stated by Men and

Bowen (2017), if organizations hide the negative side of a change, this will fuel misinterpretations and rumors, which can increase the organizational members' uncertainty, anxiety, and insecurity.

Another practical implication is related to supporting international employees and students who express concerns about their study and job continuity resulting from the discussion of the reformulation. Universities should openly offer mental health services to help with these feelings caused by the reformulation. The human resources department should actively share information on the reformulation of internationalization in HE, especially for this community, by for example, addressing the topic of job and study continuity. Providing support is especially critical in change contexts that are generally marked by insecurity and uncertainty (Cullen et al. 2014; Schreurs et al. 2012).

Furthermore, another interesting finding were the cultural and linguistic challenges of internationalization in HE. There is a perceived disconnection between the non-Dutch and Dutch community, integration questions on this matter, and perceived laxity in the use of the English language. Universities should also expand their Dutch language programs for those non-Dutch speaking students or employees who would like to learn the local language and facilitate a way to gain its proficiency and know more about the Dutch culture. Universities should communicate to all university members on the relevance of the use of the English language and the consequences this one could have on non-Dutch speaking students or employees, as evidenced by results of this study. Universities should also work on connecting and facilitating interactions between the Dutch and non-Dutch community to avoid the creation of out-groups and alienation of some members. As noted by Sawir et al. (2007), integration challenges often surface among international and local students which emphasizes the need to

create solid bonds between these groups. These suggestions offer practical help, while also reinforcing the university's commitment to an inclusive internationalization.

Policy makers and the government should also consider the perspectives and experiences of international student when designing the reformulation of internationalization, since these students are also part of the HE system. Particularly non-EEA students who are not covered under the Bologna agreement. Thus, policymakers and the government should establish consultative feedback channels with this group of HE stakeholders, which could help in gaining insights on their side of the issue.

Overall, these suggestions recommend an adaptive, transparent and inclusion strategies to the practical implications resulting from the findings of this research.

5.3 Theoretical implications

By understanding how university members make sense of the reformulation of internationalization within Dutch HE, this study adds to the body of literature on sensemaking, organizational change and internationalization in HE research.

Firstly, this paper contributes to the theorization of the internationalization field in HE, which is undertheorized according to Lee and Stensaker (2021), by showing how this one is interpreted through multilayered logics (academic and development enrichment, economic model, cultural and linguistic challenges, and educational opportunity and inequality) that are often conflicting with each other. Furthermore, this study also points out the evolving nature of internationalization in HE and how this one is dependent of its surroundings. As such, it aligns with the assertion by de Wit and Altbach (2020) that internationalization is a concept in constant development and is subject to changes in its environment. Moreover, this study also reveals the experienced tensions resulting from internationalization in HE, by both students and employees. These tensions are related to language and integration, specifically in the

creation of a blended community between locals and internationals. Tange and Jæger (2021) pointed out these tensions generated between international aspirations and national interests by the anglicization of the Danish HE leading to questions concerning the relevance of the local language. And it enriches the conceptual understanding of internationalization in HE as defined by Knight (2008) and de Wit (2015). This study demonstrates that internationalization in HE is interpreted differently by university members and their roles and identity play an important part in their experiences with it.

Secondly, studies such as Bartunek et al. (2006) explore how organizational members make sense of an implemented change, this study contributes to organizational change theory by capturing an organizational change in an anticipatory phase. In this phase participants are making sense of a yet not enacted or approved change, while they rely on evolving cues. This phase is characterized by more uncertainty (e.g., not specific implementation timelines), identity-driven projections of their work/study (e.g., job insecurity due to lack of Dutch proficiency), even speculation (e.g., closing of specific study programs). Participants are not looking back at the change; they are in a phase in which they do not know what to expect. Despite the change not being implemented, their sensemaking, that has been triggered, produces psychological responses (e.g., anxiety, role confusion). Thus, this research extends theoretical understanding on this anticipatory phase, by adding more understanding on how organizational members make sense of an anticipated organizational change.

This research also supports and adds to Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) argument that organizational changes generate uncertainty in how university employees understand their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, this study supports the identity property of sensemaking explained by Weick (2005) along with other sensemaking properties such as ongoing, extracted cues, and retrospectivity. Additionally, this research pays attention to the

sensemaking of frontline employees whose sensemaking on change has been paid less attention according to Bartunek et al. (2006), and therefore contributes to understanding how first-line organizational members make sense.

Finally, this paper contributes to a more in-depth understanding on how university members make sense of an organizational change in an anticipatory phase within the Dutch HE.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

While the present study provides a valuable insight into how university members make sense of the reformulation of internationalization in Dutch HE, as with any other study, this research encountered several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting its results.

Firstly, the interviews were conducted after the Dutch government announced budget cuts to Dutch HE. This announcement may have influenced the participants' opinions on the reformulation and may have intensified their concerns, particularly regarding job security and financial stability.

Moreover, during the recruitment phase of the participants, the researcher experienced challenges when engaging with students, as many expressed disinterest or declined to participate. This situation may have resulted in a self-selection bias, since the participants who decided to participate might have been more willing to share their opinion and be more open about the research topic. Consequently, this may have skewed the range of perspectives. Additionally, the sample was chosen through purposive sampling allowing for snowballing, and was selected based on the participants' availability, which may not have helped in capturing a broad diversity of opinions representing the University of Twente.

Furthermore, though a total of 30 university members participated in the interviews, the sample size is small when comparing it to the entirety universe of the University of Twente. Among these participants, there was an even proportion between students and employees, yet the non-academic staff was underrepresented within the employees group. Furthermore, university members who are part of other departments for example Human Affairs, Finances or Campus and facility management, among others, were not included in the sample. This action may have skewed the findings by excluding their sensemaking of the topic. Integrating them could have enriched the research into how the reformulation is made sense in other sections of the university. Therefore, future research could consider expanding their group of participants, including other departments of the university, to further investigate a more diverse group of university members and explore their sensemaking. Furthermore, future studies could investigate the sense giving aspect of the sensemaking process by focusing on university leadership. In this way, that potential research could reveal how narratives are built or communicates across the university. And this could help in having a wider picture of the sensemaking process on the reformulation of internationalization in Dutch HE.

Another limitation is related to the language used during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in English, and neither researcher and the participants had English as their native language. Consequently, this may have influenced or limited the participants' ability to express complex reflections and nuances in their responses, especially when discussing topics that involved emotional responses (e.g., anxiety).

In addition to this, the reformulation of Dutch HE is an ongoing process, the bill has not been approved or implemented yet. This study examines the reformulation in an anticipatory phase, and it captures a temporal snapshot of the university members' sensemaking during this time. Consequently, a longitudinal approach could be beneficial for future research. This

suggestion could allow the examination of how sensemaking evolves during the different stages of the reformulation. For example, it would be interesting to explore how sensemaking is during the process of implementation or when the bill is approved. This could allow for a comparative analysis of these phases of change with the anticipatory phase of this study. Alternatively, a follow-up study can be beneficial for future research, which can explore the sensemaking of the university members in a future context and identify, for example, changes in the university members' sensemaking in one year. Another suggestion can be a comparison of this research, performed at the University of Twente, with other universities in the Netherlands. This suggestion might reveal other findings or align with the ones portrayed in this study.

Another consideration to contemplate when interpreting these results, is the positionality of the researcher. As the researcher is an international student, this may have shaped the conduction and interpretation of the interviews. For example, this may have helped in building rapport with international students, encouraging them to share openly their experiences. However, throughout the research process, the researcher maintained neutrality, though is not possible to have total neutrality in a qualitative study.

Finally, the study was conducted exclusively at the University of Twente. Therefore, this study may not entirely capture the diversity in sensemaking on the reformulation of internationalization of all Dutch HEI's, however the data collected does offer a nuanced understanding of how university members of the University of Twente. These differences in sensemaking with other universities may be related to different student demographics, location of the university, institutional strategies handled in each university, among other factors.

The limitations outlined helps in delineating the scope within which these findings should be interpreted. Though, there is a context-specific nature of the selected sample, the

collected data provided a richness in the insight on how university members engage in sensemaking amid this anticipatory and evolving reformulation of internationalization in Dutch HE. The qualitative approach helped in capturing the nuances and complexity of the participants' experiences, interpretations and multilayered understandings reflected in the identified themes. These themes revealed a diversity in experiences and views which helps in making the results analytically generalizable for similar HEI's who are going through similar organizational changes.

5.5. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that university members are making sense of the reformulation, even before its implementation. The findings reveal that their sensemaking processes are complex, identity-formed, and evolving. They do not interpret internationalization in HE as a static and uniformly accepted concept, but they do it through multilayered logics that often conflict with each other: from academic and personal enrichment, educational opportunity and inequality, economic model, to cultural and linguistic challenges.

Key drivers shaping their sensemaking include political changes, perceived language policy laxity, continuous growth of students, and the housing shortage. The reformulation is already being experienced as a disruption at a personal, academic, professional, and institutional level. Situated in an anticipatory phase of change, the reformulation has triggered skepticism and uncertainty. It has brought consequences among university members, and altered how university members see their futures.

As the reformulation evolves, university members build meanings, engage with cues, and adjust their interpretations. Capturing these sensemaking processes, the study contributes to a better understanding of how organizational members navigate change.

Finally, this research provides a snapshot of how university members give meaning to the reformulation, as both sensemaking and the reformulation are ongoing. The study underscores the importance of understanding how, those affected by the reform, make sense of this organizational change. Their voices are crucial to the policy-making processes that shape their future and, in this case, the future of Dutch higher education.

References

- Ancona, D. (2012). Framing and acting in the unknown. *The handbook for teaching leadership: Knowing, doing, and being*, 3-19.
- Ashford, S. J. (1988). Individual strategies for coping with stress during organizational transitions. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 24(1), 19–36.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886388241005>
- Balogun, J. (2003). From blaming the middle to harnessing its potential: Creating change intermediaries. *British Journal of Management*, 14(1), 69–83.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.00266>
- Bartunek, J. M., Rousseau, D. M., Rudolph, J. W., & DePalma, J. A. (2006). On the receiving end. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 42(2), 182–206.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886305285455>
- Beck, T. E., & Plowman, D. A. (2009). Experiencing rare and unusual events richly: The role of middle managers in animating and guiding organizational interpretation. *Organization Science*, 20(5), 909–924. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0451>
- Brankovic, J., & Cantwell, B. (2022). Making sense of change in higher education research: Exploring the intersection of science and policy. *Higher Education*, 84(6), 1207–1226. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00928-3>
- Burke, W. W. (2023). *Organization change: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Coburn, C. E. (2001). Collective sensemaking about reading: How teachers mediate reading policy in their professional communities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(2), 145–170. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737023002145>

- Coburn, C. E. (2005). Shaping teacher sensemaking: school leaders and the enactment of reading policy. *Educational Policy*, 19(3), 476–509.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904805276143>
- Cullen, K. L., Edwards, B. D., Casper, W. C., & Gue, K. R. (2014). Employees' adaptability and perceptions of change-related uncertainty: Implications for perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 29, 269–280. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-013-9312-y>
- Daenekindt, S., & Huisman, J. (2020). Mapping the scattered field of research on higher education. A correlated topic model of 17,000 articles, 1991–2018. *Higher Education*, 80, 571–587. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00500-x>
- De Wit, H. (2015). Internationalization misconceptions. *International Higher Education*, (64). <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2011.64.8556>
- De Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2020). Internationalization in higher education: global trends and recommendations for its future. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 5(1), 28–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1820898>
- de Wit, H., Hunter, F., Egron-Polak, E., & Howard, L. (Eds). (2015). *Internationalisation of higher education: A study for the European parliament*.
<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/444393>
- Dionysiou, D. D., & Tsoukas, H. (2013). Understanding the (re)creation of routines from within: A symbolic interactionist perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(2), 181–205. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.0215>
- Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. (2018, September 7). *EAIE Barometer (second edition)*. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from <https://www.eaie.org/resource/eaie-barometer-second-edition.html>

- Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12(6), 433–448.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2486479>
- Government of Australia. Ministers of the Education Portfolio. (2024, May 11). *Next steps in ensuring the integrity and sustainability of the international education sector* [Press release]. Retrieved May 31, 2024, from
<https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/next-steps-ensuring-integrity-and-sustainability-international-education-sector>
- Government of Canada. Immigration, refugees and citizenship Canada. (2024, January 24). *Canada to stabilize growth and decrease number of new international student permits issued to approximately 360,000 for 2024* [Press release].
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/01/canada-to-stabilize-growth-and-decrease-number-of-new-international-student-permits-issued-to-approximately-360000-for-2024.html>
- House of Commons Library. (2024). *International students in UK higher education*. UK Parliament. Retrieved June 1, 2025, from
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7976/#:~:text=In%202022%2F23%20there%20were,of%20the%20total%20student%20population.>
- Hudzik, J. K. (2023, November 4). *Cross-cultural learning is now essential for work and life*. University World News.
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20231031102419265>

- IIE - Institute of International Education & Danish Agency for Higher Education. (2024, September 18). *Denmark | IIE*. IIE. Retrieved June 2, 2025, from <https://www.iie.org/research-initiatives/project-atlas/explore-data/denmark-2/>
- Institute of International Education. (2024). Global mobility trends. In https://www.iie.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Project-Atlas_Infographic_2024-1.pdf. Retrieved June 1, 2025.
- Khaw, K. W., Alnoor, A., Al-Abrow, H., Tiberius, V., Ganesan, Y., & Atshan, N. A. (2022). Reactions towards organizational change: a systematic literature review. *Current Psychology*, 42(22), 19137–19160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03070-6>
- Knight, J., & De Wit, H. (1999). Quality and internationalisation in higher education. In *OECD eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264173361-en>
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303260832>
- Knight, J. (2008). *Higher education in turmoil*. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087905224>
- Kramer, R., & Tyler, T. (1996). *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452243610>
- Krogh, S. (2018). Anticipation of organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 31(6), 1271–1282. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jocm-03-2017-0085>
- Lee, J. J., & Stensaker, B. (2021). Research on internationalisation and globalisation in higher education-Reflections on historical paths, current perspectives and future possibilities. *European Journal of Education*, 56(2), 157–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12448>

- Lee, J. J., Maldonado-Maldonado, A., & Rhoades, G. (2006). The political economy of international student flows: Patterns, ideas, and propositions. In Smart, J.C. (eds), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 545–590).
https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4512-3_11
- Leonardi, P. M. (2009). Why do people reject new technologies and stymie organizational changes of which they are in favor? Exploring misalignments between social interactions and materiality. *Human Communication Research*, 35(3), 407–441.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2009.01357.x>
- Lines, R., Selart, M., Espedal, B., & Johansen, S. T. (2005). The production of trust during organizational change. *Journal of Change Management*, 5(2), 221–245.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14697010500143555>
- Maitlis, S. (2005). The social processes of organizational sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(1), 21–49. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2005.15993111>
- Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. (2014). Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1), 57–125.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2014.873177>
- Maitlis, S., & Sonenshein, S. (2010). Sensemaking in crisis and change: Inspiration and insights from Weick (1988). *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(3), 551–580.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00908.x>
- Marginson, S. W. (2006). Dynamics of national and global competition in higher education. *Higher Education*, 52(1), 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-004-7649-x>
- Maringe, F., & Foskett, N. (2010). *Globalization and internationalization in higher education: Theoretical, strategic and management perspectives*. A&C Black.

Men, R. L., & Bowen, S. A. (2017). *Excellence in internal communication management*.

New York: Business Expert Press.

Michela, J. L., & Vena, J. (2012). A dependence-regulation account of psychological distancing in response to major organizational change. *Journal of Change Management*, 12(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2011.652376>

Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. (2023, December 21). *Government takes the next step to create balance in the internationalisation of education*. News Item | Government.nl.

<https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2023/12/21/government-takes-the-next-step-to-create-balance-in-the-internationalisation-of-education#:~:text=Over%20the%20past%20decade%2C%20the,than%2025%25%20are%20international%20students>

Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. (2024, May 13). *Sturen op gebalanceerde internationalisering hogescholen en universiteiten*. Nieuwsbericht | Rijksoverheid.nl. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-onderwijs-cultuur-en-wetenschap/nieuws/2024/05/13/sturen-op-gebalanceerde-internationalisering-hogescholen-en-universiteiten>

Naeem, M. (2021). The role of social media to generate social proof as engaged society for stockpiling behaviour of customers during Covid-19 pandemic. *Qualitative Market Research an International Journal*, 24(3), 281–301. <https://doi.org/10.1108/qmr-04-2020-0050>

Nuffic (n.d.-t). *Internationalisation: facts and figures* | Nuffic. (n.d.-t).

<https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/research/internationalisation-facts-and-figures#higher-education>

- Nuffic. (2024). Incoming degree mobility in Dutch higher education 2023-24. In *Nuffic* [Report]. Retrieved May 29, 2024, from <https://www.nuffic.nl/sites/default/files/2024-05/incoming-degree-mobility-dutch-higher-education-2023-24.pdf>
- Oreg, S., Vakola, M., & Armenakis, A. (2011). Change recipients' reactions to organizational change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(4), 461–524. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886310396550>
- Orton, J. D. (2000). Enactment, sensemaking and decision making: Redesign processes in the 1976 reorganization of US intelligence. *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(2), 213–234. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00178>
- Packer, H. (2024, May 20). Danish minister calls for international student u-turn amid labour shortages. *The PIE News*. <https://thepienews.com/danish-minister-international-student-labour-shortages/>
- Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Deumert, A., Nyland, C., & Ramia, G. (2007). Loneliness and international students: an Australian study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 148–180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307299699>
- Schreurs, B. H. J., Van Emmerik, I. H., Günter, H., & Germeys, F. (2012). A weekly diary study on the buffering role of social support in the relationship between job insecurity and employee performance. *Human Resource Management*, 51(2), 259–279. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21465>
- Stromquist, N. P. (2007). Internationalization as a response to globalization: Radical shifts in university environments. *Higher Education*, 53(1), 81–105. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-005-1975-5>

- Study in NL. (n.d.). *About the Netherlands | Study in NL*. [Retrieved May 31, 2024]
<https://www.studyinnl.org/life-in-nl/about-the-netherlands>
- Tange, H., & Jæger, K. (2021). From Bologna to welfare nationalism: international higher education in Denmark, 2000–2020. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 21(2), 223–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2020.1865392>
- Thomson, P., & Hall, C. (2011). Sensemaking as a lens on everyday change leadership practice: the case of Holly Tree Primary. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 14(4), 385–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2011.585665>
- Times Higher Education (2023). *International Talent and Hiring*.
https://www.timeshighereducation.com/sites/default/files/the_international_talent_report_-_2023.pdf
- University of Twente. (2023). *Facts & figures 2023*. Universiteit Twente.
<https://www.utwente.nl/en/facts-and-figures/>
- University of Twente. (2024, August 12). *High tech, human touch. Facts & figures*.
 Universiteit Twente. Retrieved June 2, 2025, from <https://www.utwente.nl/en/facts-and-figures/#key-figures>
- Universiteiten van Nederland. (2024). *Package of measures for self-regulation: strengthening the Dutch language and managing the intake of international students*. <https://www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/files/publications/UNL%20-%20Package%20of%20measures%20for%20internationalisation.pdf>
- Weber, P. S., & Weber, J. E. (2001). Changes in employee perceptions during organizational change. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 22(6), 291–300. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730110403222>

- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations* (Vol. 3, pp. 1-231). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409–421.
<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1050.0133>
- Zorn, T., Christensen, L. T., & Cheney, G. (1999). *Do we really want constant change?: Beyond the bottom line*. Berrett-Koehler-Publishers.

Appendices

Appendix A

Ethical approval

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Dear Skarlett Lozano Munive,

This is a notification from the Humanities & Social Sciences (HSS) Ethics Committee to inform you that your research project has received a **positive advice**.

Application nr. : 240899

Title : Master thesis: Sensemaking of Internationalization in Dutch Higher Education

Application date : 11-Oct-2024

Researcher : Skarlett Lozano Munive

Supervisor : Ardion Beldad

SONA : No

Date of advice : 16-Dec-2024

The ethics committee has reviewed the ethical aspects of your research project. Based on the information you have provided in the web application, the ethics committee has no major ethical concerns for the research project to go forward as proposed. Please find attached the PDF with the application together with the review comments and advice.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the research is carried out in line with the information provided.

Future communication regarding this research project should also be directed to the secretary of the HSS Ethics Committee via ethicscommittee-hss@utwente.nl, stating the Application nr: 240899.

If you later make considerable changes to the research project that might affect the ethical aspects or raise new ethical concerns, you must submit an amendment. For this, please send a concise description of the intended changes to the secretary of the HSS Ethics Committee, stating the Application nr: 240899. An additional review of the proposed changes will be performed.

Best regards,

Humanities & Social Sciences (HSS) Ethics Committee

Appendix B

Invitation message for potential participants

Dear [NAME],

My name is Skarlett Lozano, I am currently a master's student of Communication Science at the University of Twente. I am working on my master thesis which is about how university members (both employees and students) make sense /view the current internationalization debate in the Netherlands.

Through this research I aim to gather experiences, perceptions, and views of university members on the internationalization debate. If you are interested in the topic and want to participate, kindly see the participant criteria below:

Who are you?

- You have studied or worked at the University of Twente minimally 1 year.
- You are a current student or employee of the University of Twente.
- You need to know something about the internationalization debate in the Netherlands.

What would be the interview about?

The interview is anonymous, semi-structured, voice recorded, and it has a duration between 40-60 minutes. In this interview, I will ask you questions in line to my research; you do not need to prepare anything in advance.

Thank you for your attention.

You will help my research a lot if you decide to participate.

I am looking forward to your answer.

Best regards,

Skarlett Lozano

Appendix C

Interview guide for employees

1. Introduction of research and consent - 5 minutes

Welcome and thank you for participating in this interview.

For my Master of Science in Communication Science at the University of Twente, I am conducting research that aims to understand how current university employees and students view the internationalization of HE and the ongoing debate on the topic. Therefore, I would like to hear your opinion and experiences about this. This information will be of great value for the research.

Please take into account that everything that will be discussed here will be kept confidential, will be used for research purposes only, and cannot be traced back to you or any other person. This study might cause some participants to experience distress given the current uncertainties in regard to this topic in the Netherlands. Therefore, if at any point you feel uncomfortable or distressed, please know that this is voluntary and remember that you can stop the interview at any moment, you are allowed to withdraw your participation and provided data at any point. In order to analyse the data, I will need to record this interview, and it will later be transcribed. The duration of this interview will be between 50 to 60 minutes. I have divided the interview into three blocks, starting with introductory questions.

Do you give consent to record this interview?

Do you have any questions beforehand? Do you agree with the terms of this interview?

2. Interview questions - 60 minutes

Block 1 - Background of the participant (if employee)- 5 minutes

- How old are you?

- What is your nationality?
- What gender do you identify yourself as?
- What is your current position at the university?
- How long have you been working in the university?

Block 2 - Internationalization of higher education in the Netherlands (30 minutes)

- What comes to your mind when you think of Internationalization in higher education?
- How much knowledge do you think you have on Internationalization as a trend in higher education? (little, medium, a lot)
- What is your view on internationalization in higher education in the Netherlands?
- What are the benefits of internationalization?
- To what extent have you experienced or witness these benefits?
- Follow-up question: how do these benefits impact your role as an employee?
- What do you think are the challenges?
- To what extent have you experience these challenges?
- Follow-up question: how do these challenges impact your role as an employee?
- What do you know about the development of internationalization in higher education in the Netherlands? *(reserve question only for people who have been working more than 5 years at the university)*
- Follow-up question: can you give an account of the internationalization process at the University of Twente? *(reserve question only for people who have been working more than 5 years at the university)*
- Do you know something about the internationalization process in higher education in the Netherlands before you started at a Dutch university? *(reserve question only for employees who have been working minimally 10 years at the university)*

- Follow-up: What challenges and/or benefits did you encounter when the University of Twente decided to internationalize?

Block 3 - Reformulation of internationalization policies in the Netherlands (25 minutes)

- Can you share what you know about the reformulation of the internationalization policy in the Netherlands?
- What do you think are the drivers of the reformulation of the internationalization policy in the Netherlands?
- What do you think are the implications (both positive and negative) of the reformulation of the internationalization policy for the university?
- Follow-up question: What are the consequences for you, as an employee?
- Based on what you have said, can you clearly state your stance on the whole internationalization discussion in the Netherlands? Why?
- What do you think will be the future of internationalization in higher education in the Netherlands?

Any additional questions:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you explain that more?
- What do you mean by that?
- Is there also a positive/negative side to it?
- Can you provide examples of this?
- Why?

Interview guide (for students)

1. Introduction of research and consent - 5 minutes

Welcome and thank you for participating in this interview.

For my Master of Communication Science at the University of Twente, I am conducting research that aims to understand how current university employees and students view the internationalization of HE and the ongoing debate on the topic. Therefore, I would like to hear your opinion and experiences about this. This information will be of great value for the research.

Please take into account that everything that will be discussed here will be kept confidential, will be used for research purposes only, and cannot be traced back to you or any other person. This study might cause some participants to experience distress given the current uncertainties in regard to this topic in the Netherlands. Therefore, if at any point you feel uncomfortable or distressed, please know that this is voluntary and remember that you can stop the interview at any moment you are allowed to withdraw your participation and provide data at any point. In order to analyse the data, I will need to record this interview, and it will later be transcribed. The duration of this interview will be between 50 to 60 minutes. I have divided the interview into three blocks, starting with introductory questions.

Do you give consent to record this interview?

Do you have any questions beforehand? Do you agree with the terms of this interview?

2. Interview questions (student)- 60 minutes

Block 1 - Background of the participant - 5 minutes

- How old are you?
- What is your nationality?
- What gender do you identify yourself as?
- What are you studying at the University of Twente?
- How long have you been studying in the Netherlands?

Block 2 - Internationalization of higher education in the Netherlands (30 minutes)

- What comes to your mind when you think of Internationalization in higher education?
- How much knowledge do you have on Internationalization as a trend in higher education?
(little, medium, a lot)
- What is your view on internationalization in higher education in the Netherlands?
- What are the benefits of internationalization of higher education for the university?
- To what extent have you experienced these benefits?
- Follow-up question: how do these benefits impact your role as a student?
- What do you think are the challenges of internationalization for the university?
- To what extent do you experience (or have you experienced) these challenges?
- Follow-up question: how do these challenges impact your role as a student?

Block 3 - Reformulation of internationalization policies in the Netherlands (25 minutes)

- Can you share what you know about the reformulation of the internationalization policy in the Netherlands?
- What do you think are the drivers of the reformulation of the internationalization policy in the Netherlands?
- What do you think are the implications (both positive and negative) of the reformulation of the internationalization policy for the university?
- Follow-up question: What are the consequences for you, as a student?
- Based on what you have said, can you clearly state your stance on the whole internationalization discussion in the Netherlands? Why?
- What do you think will be the future of internationalization in higher education in the Netherlands?

Any additional questions:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you explain that more?
- What do you mean by that?
- Is there also a positive/negative side to it?
- Can you provide examples of this?
- Why?

Appendix D

Explanation of the reformulation during interview

It is a reassessment of some degrees into whether they should continue in English or Dutch, if they're in Dutch. Or whether they should have two streams, being one in Dutch, and another in English. And then there are also adjustments of international students' intake, etc. That's basically the whole discussion in a nutshell.

Appendix E

Codebook

Themes	Codes
Benefits of Internationalization	
	Cross-cultural awareness
	Global self-development
	Institutional gains
	Societal and national gains
	Language proficiency development
	Global educational equity
Challenges of Internationalization	
	Social and cultural disconnection
	Brain drain
	Linguistic barriers
	Resource and financial limitations
Reformulation drivers	
	Global political trends
	National identity protection
	National political agendas
	Resource constraints
	Education quality concerns
	Backlash to enrollment growth
	Language policy regulations
Reformulation implications	
	Shift toward Dutch student focus
	Improved conditions for Dutch-speaking staff
	Learning in native language
	Uncertainty
	Emotional distress
	Global reputation risk
	Threats to institutional diversity
	Financial constraints
	Perceived academic decline

Appendix F

Use of AI

"During the preparation of this work, I have not used any artificial intelligence tools."