

# Internationalization of Universities : the causes of difference, fields of study or social background

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## INTRODUCTION

Internationalization of universities recently emerging worldwide has produced several arguments concerning its aims and consequences. Should internationalization of universities serve the international learning community or should it serve the nation's purposes? Would it create better understanding and respect of the differences between countries and cultures or would it violate national identity and national culture? Would it bring about uniformity or a diversity of university models? To date, there is little research concerned available to answer these questions.

Those who take the side of internationalization of universities to serve the international learning community usually refer to the historic movement of universities. This perspective is based on the assumption

that universities in the past have gone from a global to a more isolationist period, and that the globalization of present society requires a renewal of their universal role. One who takes this side is, therefore, likely to agree that when the internationalization of universities is accomplished there would be a uniformity of university model.

The other side, internationalization of universities is to serve the nation's purposes, though agrees with the historic movement of universities, argues that diversification of universities has been developing for a long time. There is also a trend towards decentralization and increasing institutional autonomy in many countries. Moreover, collaborations among multiple universities will cause borrowing and copying, and by that developing into more diversification. One who

takes this side is likely to agree that the internationalization of universities will bring about a diversity rather than uniformity of university model.

However, in practice, the direction and success of internationalization of university will depend on acceptance and cooperation of academic staff and students. The study about the perspectives of academic staff and students on the internationalization of universities is, therefore, needed. Because it could produce a better understanding about what academic staff and students think and want to do about the internationalization of

universities. Do they think differently? What are the factors that affect their ways of thinking? The results perhaps could give the answers to the argument mentioned above.

This paper, first, presents the opinions of the academic staff and students from universities in Europe and Asia whether they line up on the side of universalization or nationalization. Secondly, it studies whether social background and fields of study affect their opinions. Finally, the factor analysis is performed to examine the components of the internationalization of universities.

## **PERSPECTIVES on INTERNATIONALIZATION of UNIVERSITIES**

Kerr (1990) described the development of university models from convergence to divergence and at present to a partial reconvergence. From the Academy up to 500 years ago, higher education could be typified by the convergent model of universal learning in which universities were fully autonomous from governments. Scholars and students at that time travelled freely from place to place. University first served the universal knowledge. There was one scholarly language, Latin in Europe, and one curriculum.

The model was replaced after the Middle Ages by a divergence model in which universities came to serve the nation's purposes and became an essential institution

for the development of the national identity. Several distinctive models of universities were created. The flow of scholars and students was controlled by the nation states. There was no longer a single curriculum, and national rather than international languages were promoted. Recently, there is a tendency for a reconvergence from distinctive national models of universities to the convergence model of university in which *"nation states and ideologies playing a lesser role in defining university behaviour, and new languages, English and mathematics, are coming to unite intellectual discourse"*. However, Kerr judges that it will take a century for universities to finally develop in

the direction of the supremacy of what he called the pure model of academic life: the universalization of learning

From Kerr's point of view, the national purpose for higher education is opposite to the universalization of learning. Universities are, at present, situated between these two poles. According to Kerr, "it might also be expected that the academic profession would line up on the side of internationalization, that it would be dedicated to the free advancement of learning everywhere and all the time-not bound by the parochial interests of nations" However, from the reviewed literature, there is no related research available to suggest where the universities are between these two poles.

The issue that English will become a common scholarly language corresponds with the viewpoint of Altbach (1987) On his analysis of "International Knowledge network", Altbach comments that never before any language has been widely used throughout the world as English is used at present. Especially, scientific knowledge that widely disseminated in terms of scientific journal, textbook, database, and the computer network is mainly in English One reason is that most of the producers and consumers of scientific knowledge are located in English speaking countries: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. He then prospects that English will become

"Latin of the 21st Century". Therefore, English is seen as the factor that highly correlates to the universalization of knowledge.

Following Kerr's analysis, this research is based on the assumption that universalization and nationalization are opposite to each other English is included in the universalization because of its predominance as the language of knowledge dissemination worldwide And then it leads to the first hypothesis that academic staff and students would line up on the side of universalization.

There is a diversity of the definitions of internationalization of universities. In this research, we define internationalization of universities as the process to develop universities into a more global dimension Universalization means the viewpoint that the internationalization of universities should aim at serving the international learning community Nationalization means the viewpoint that the internationalization of universities should aim at serving the nation's purposes

Also, from his observations, Kerr found that faculty members in some fields of study were more international than those in other fields The causes of difference are due to the language used for communication, the differences in methodology employed, and the content. First, the language used for communication, in some fields, people use fewer words for communication than other

fields, for instance, the scientists could say more with fewer words than the humanists. In some fields, the methodology employed are diversified, "as Neil J. Smelser has noted for sociology, contrasting the more empirical Americans and the less empirical Europeans" (cited in Kerr, 1990). And in some fields, for instance, Science has a single content, while Law has several contents ranging from domestic to international.

Kerr divided the fields of study into three categories: areas of world orbit, areas of intra-cultural orbit, and areas of *intranational orbit*. He defined these three categories of knowledge:

" ( i ) Areas of worldwide uniformity in the content of knowledge, as in mathematics, science and engineering. In some areas, all leading scholars even seem to know each other-to constitute a fraternity, as in astronomy. Anthropology, more than any of the other social sciences, falls in this group.

( ii ) Areas of intra-cultural similarity of knowledge, as in the study of history and of the classical literature of each civilisation. These culture loops of knowledge include particularly the Western and the Oriental, with many subdivisions in each.

( iii ) Areas of intra-national particularity, as in domestic law, public administration, education and social welfare-all marked by great diversity in national content. Diversity may also follow the methodology employed"

Kerr said that faculty members in the fields of world-orbit are the most international. This leads to the second hypothesis that academic staff and students in different fields of study would have different viewpoints on the internationalization of universities. Those who are in the fields of world-orbit such as Sciences and Applied Sciences are more likely to agree with the universalization than those who are in the fields of Liberal Arts and Applied Arts.

As mentioned earlier, the aims and consequences of the internationalization of universities are still debatable issues. Cerych (1989) believes that the diversity of higher education system would be continued because of two main reasons. First, until now, diversification of universities has been taking place for more than fifty years. Moreover, a tendency towards decentralization and greater institutional autonomy in several traditionally centralized countries could be seen. Secondly, the collaborations of multi-partners from different countries will cause the borrowing and copying from multiple resources, thereby producing a diversification of higher education models instead of unification. This implies that increasing of internationalization of universities will cause the decreasing of or discarding the national identity is still a question.

According to Cerych, universities in different countries have created their own

system for a long time. Each country has its own historical and sociological development. Therefore, it is perhaps difficult for some countries to discard their identities and cultures. Moreover, increasing of protectionist nationalism could be seen in many places, for instance, the voting for independence of Quebec from Canada. However, the emerging of globalization system makes countries around the world become more interdependence. It is difficult for any country to individually survive. Nationalization and universalization are then becoming essential dimensions for countries across the world.

This leads to an idea that perhaps the internationalization of universities will result in the increasing instead of decreasing of nationalization. In other words, nationalization might have a positive relation with universalization. However, as mentioned earlier that countries are different in historical and sociological development, their standing

points on nationalization and universalization are possibly different. Furthermore, perhaps it is not always the case that universalization will have a positive correlation to nationalization. Occasionally, universalization may have a negative correlation to nationalization. Or sometimes universalization might have no correlation to nationalization. This gives us an alternate assumption that universalization and nationalization are not in conflict because they are different dimensions.

This alternate assumption then leads to the third hypothesis and the fourth hypothesis. The third hypothesis is that academic staff and students who have different social background are likely to have different opinions on the internationalization of universities. The fourth hypothesis is that universalization and nationalization are different dimensions. However, English is still likely to correlate with universalization.

## **INSTRUMENT and DATA COLLECTION**

The instrument used for data-gathering was the questionnaire constructed by the researcher. The first part of the questionnaire was devoted to the demographic data. The second part was devoted to the opinions about the aims and consequences of the internationalization of universities, and the use of English the medium for instruction and

communication. This part consisted of 25 items with a five-point Likert scale. The 25 questionnaire items were constructed based on Kerr's analysis together with the issues obtained from the interviews of the university administrators and the reviewed literature.

This research intended to examine the differences of the opinions of academic

staff and students who had different social background, and were in different fields of study. The other topic was the use of English for instruction and communication. Therefore, the samples were the academic staff and the students selected from universities in different countries where English was not the mother tongue. Those selected universities were the University of Amsterdam of the Netherlands, the Katholieke University of Leuven of Belgium; Chulalongkorn University of Thailand, the University of Malaya of Malaysia, and the National University of Singapore of Singapore.

The selected faculties were based on four fields of study: Liberal Arts, Applied Arts, Basic Sciences, and Applied Sciences. However, the organization of each university

is different. Therefore, to be able to do a comparison, the selected faculties were divided into four groups: Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Sciences, and Faculty of Medical Sciences.

The names and addresses of the samples were drawn randomly from the computerized records. The questionnaire with a covering letter explaining the purposes of the research, and returned envelop were sent to the samples. Two weeks after the first mail, a reminding letter was sent to the samples again. The rates of return of all sub-sample groups were over 60%. The total number of the returned questionnaires used in the analyses was 2133 (for more details see Table 1).

## RESULTS

The reliability of the 25 items of the second part of the questionnaire for each subgroup sample and for the total sample was satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha for the subgroup of the University of Amsterdam, the Katholieke University of Leuven, Chulalongkorn University, the University of Malaya, and the National University of Singapore were 0.72, 0.64, 0.73, 0.65, and 0.61 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha for the total sample was 0.68.

First, we examined the results of all 25 items. The total mean scores showed

that the academic staff and students lied up on the side of the universalization (mean = 3.45, sd = 0.35 and mean = 3.45, sd = 0.37 respectively). The first hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2 shows the results of a comparison among group mean scores. It shows that there are significant differences among academic staff and students who are in different countries. From the Scheffe multiple comparison test, it was found that the academic staff and students of the Katholieke University of Leuven had the

lowest score and that was significantly different from the other universities. There was no significant difference among the Asian universities. It could be seen that the academic staff and students of the Asian universities were more likely to agree with the universalization than those who are in the European universities.

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference among fields of study. This implies that fields of study are becoming less important factors that affect the opinions about the internationalization of universities. From these results, the second hypothesis is rejected, but the third hypothesis is accepted.

Next, the factor analysis was used to examine the components of the internationalization of universities. The analysis was performed for each university and each field of study separately. This was also performed for the total samples. A principal components analysis with varimax and oblique rotations was used. It was found that the factor results from each subgroup sample and total samples were the same, and the three factor extraction analysis with oblique rotation gave the most interpretable of the factors obtained. Cronbach's alpha for Factor 1, 2 and 3 were 0.80, 0.65, and 0.68 respectively. Table 4 presents the results of the factor analysis for the total sample together.

Consequently, three factor variables namely, Universalization, Nationalization, and

English Domination were created. The differences among universities on each factor variable, as shown in Table 5, could be seen. The results from the Scheffe multiple comparison test showed that for the Universalization, the Asian universities had higher scores and were significantly different from the European universities. For the Nationalization, Chulalongkorn University and the Katholieke University of Leuven were significantly different from the rest. And for the English Domination, the University of Malaya, the University of Amsterdam, and the Katholieke University of Leuven were significantly different from Chulalongkorn University and the National University of Singapore.

The differences among fields of study on each factor variable are shown in Table 6. The multiple comparison test indicated that for the Universalization, only the field of Sciences was significantly different from the field of Medical Sciences. There was no significant difference on the Nationalization among fields of study. Lastly, for the English Domination, only the field of Medical Sciences was significantly different from the field of Arts and Social Sciences. This confirms that the fields of study have less influence on the opinions of the internationalization of universities.

Furthermore, from factor correlation matrix ( see Table 4 ), it could be seen that

the Universalization was orthogonal to the Nationalization, they were not correlated. The English Domination was different. It was orthogonal to the Nationalization, but positively correlated to the Universalization. This implies that increasing of the universalization does not always result in decreasing of the nationalization. The fourth hypothesis is accepted. This could be clearly seen from Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Figure 1 shows the differences of universities on two factor variables, Universalization and Nationalization. Chulalongkorn University has highest scores on both variables while, the University of Amsterdam has lower scores on both variables. The Katholieke University of Leuven has a higher score on the Nationalization, but a lower score on the Universalization. The University of Malaya and the National University of Singapore are almost the same. They have higher scores on the Universalization, but lower scores on the Nationalization.

Figure 2 shows that the Katholieke University of Leuven has higher scores on

both variables, the Nationalization and the English Domination. Chulalongkorn University has a higher score on the Nationalization, but a lower score on the English Domination. The University of Amsterdam and the University of Malaya have higher scores on the English Domination but lower scores on the Nationalization. In contrast, the National University of Singapore has lower scores on both variables.

Also, Figures 3 and 4 show the differences among fields of study. However, compared to the differences among universities the differences among universities the differences among fields of study are relatively small.

According to the factor correlation matrix, the English Domination correlated with the Universalization. However, the magnitude of the correlation coefficient is rather small ( $r = 0.30$ ). Therefore, the possibility that English becoming a common scholarly language as a consequence of internationalization is not clearly foreseeable.

## DISCUSSION

In general, we found that the academic staff and students of all universities lined up on the side of universalization. However, the findings of the factor analysis give more details for the explanation of the international-

ization of universities. One finding, the universalization was orthogonal to the nationalization gives another approach to the argument about the internationalization of universities. It implies that the universalization



is not opposite to the nationalization like Kerr described. Therefore, it is not always the case that if academic staff and students agree with the universalization, they should disagree with the nationalization

The empirical data showed that the opinions of academic staff and students differed from university to university. This indicates that the differences could be influenced by the historical and social background of the universities. For example, the Katholieke University of Leuven has a higher score on the nationalization. This is not a surprise given the historical background of education in Belgium. Belgium is a geographical bilingual country. People in the northern part speak Dutch, and people in the southern part speak French. In the eastern part, there is also a small German-speaking region. The Katholieke University of Leuven is situated in the Dutch speaking region ( Flemish ). In this region, the French language used to be the language of education. French, therefore, was the language of educated elites in Flemish. It was about fifty years ago that they could shift the language of education from French to Dutch. Therefore, the Flemish want to maintain the Dutch as the native language. This makes the academic staff and students of the Katholieke University of Leuven react highly on the nationalization

Among the Asian countries concerned, the University of Malaya and the National

University of Singapore have lower scores on the nationalization. The population of Malaysia and Singapore are multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi - religious, and multi - lingual. The three main races in these countries are Malays, Chinese, and Indians. The creation of national identity is said to be the problem of multi-racial countries. This is a possible reason that the academic staff and students of these two universities react lower on the nationalization.

For Thailand the academic staff and students of Chulalongkorn University reacted highly on both scales, the universalization and nationalization. This is because the internationalization of universities in Thailand has been widely promoted by the Ministry of University Affairs since 1989. The internationalization of universities has been stated as a goal of the Long-Range Plan of Thai universities. Moreover, Thai universities have four main functions, to teach, to seek for knowledge, to service the community, and to conserve the national heritage and culture. It is, therefore, the responsibility of Thai universities to promote both universalization and nationalization.

It is expected that developing countries would agree on the internationalization of universities. This is because the internationalization of universities is seen as the mean to transfer technology from the more developed countries to the less developed countries. It then could be seen from the results that

the Asian universities are more likely to agree with the universalization than the European universities. However, the other possible reason is that the European countries put priority on Europeanization rather than internationalization throughout the world.

For the English domination, each university reacted differently into all directions. It is surprising that the University of Amsterdam reacted to the English domination differently from the National University of Singapore. Though, The Netherlands and Singapore are trade countries, and English is, at present, accepted to be a trade language. However, this finding agrees with the study of Cha (1995) which found that the individual national characteristics seem to play an insignificant role in the worldwide expansion of English in the school curriculum. Therefore, a further study about the social backgrounds of the universities is needed in order to understand these differences.

Most publications on the internationalization issue indicate that the internationalization of universities differs from field of study to field of study. From the results, it could

be seen that the academic staff and students in the fields of Sciences and Medical Sciences are more likely to agree with the universalization and the English domination than those in the field of Arts and Social Sciences. However, the differences among fields of study are remarkably small. This implies that fields of study are becoming less influence on the differences of the internationalization of universities.

The general findings in this study indicate that the internationalization of universities differs from university to university. The causes of differences are due to the social backgrounds rather than the fields of study. Although the academic staff and students agree with the universalization, this does not mean that they discard the nationalization. Therefore, the tendency of internationalization of universities ending with the universalization as it used to be in former time is not foreseeable. The possibility that the English language will become a common scholarly language as a consequence of internationalization is also not clearly foreseeable.

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**Table 1** Number of samples by status, sex, faculties, and universities

	University					Total
	UvA	KUL	CU	UM	NUS	
Status : Academic	218	151	183	168	147	867
staff						
Students	213	301	331	211	210	1266
Total	431	452	514	379	357	2133
Sex : Male	241	284	226	211	223	1185
Female	211	147	288	168	134	948
Total	431	452	514	379	357	2133
Faculty:						
Arts	71	54	102			
Social Sciences				123	121	971
Law	85	139	96			
Sciences	80	80	82	44	56	342
Medical Sciences	90	76	137	112	116	531
Total	105	103	97	100	64	469
Total	431	452	514	379	357	2133

Note : UvA = University of Amsterdam of the Netherlands  
 KUL = Katholieke University of Leuven of Belgium  
 CU = Chulalongkorn University of Thailand.  
 UM = University of Malaya of Malaysia  
 NUS = National University of Singapore of Singapore.

For UM and NUS, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Social Sciences are roganized into one faculty, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

**Table 2** Mean differences in total scores by universities

University	Mean	Sd	F	Prob.
University of Amsterdam	3.36	.35	84.96	.00
Katholieke University of Leuven	3.26	.31		
Chulalongkorn University	3.57	.37		
University of Malaya	3.61	.33		
National University of Singapore	3.53	.30		

**Table 3** Mean differences in total scores by fields of study

Field of Study	Mean	Sd	F	Prob.
Arts and Social Sciences	3.45	.35	2.41	.06
Laws	3.43	.38		
Sciences	3.48	.36		
Medical Sciences	3.49	.35		

**Table 4** Factor loadings for total samples

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
12 All programmes should be handled in English	73	-03	-07
14 Universities should create more courses teaching in English	73	07	05
25 Internationalization should aim at international competition	65	07	10
5 Teachers and students should have international experience	61	01	17
13 Teaching in English will help teachers and students keeping pace with advanced knowledge	56	25	07
3 Universities should serve the universal truth rather than the nation's purposes	55	18	16
23 To distribute knowledge widely reports must be written in English	54	00	29
21 Language for communication among scholars should be the or three international languages	52	-06	01
16 All programmes should be handled only in the native language	10	62	-01
4 Having extensive international relations makes a nation's culture vanish	30	62	-14
17 Teaching all programmes in English will create an educated elite in societies	06	60	11
18 Teaching all programmes in a foreign language will damage the native languages	34	60	10
6 In the future a single university model may be needed	21	47	08
20 There should be a diversity of university models	02	46	10
15 Undergraduate programmes should be conducted only in the native languages	40	41	02
19 Teaching in English should be only in upper courses	06	34	11
2 Universities should be places where teachers and students come from various countries	24	26	19
11 English has become the worldwide dominant language of knowledge	20	-02	73
8 University collaborations need a common language for communication	01	01	63
10 Graduates should be competent in English	01	03	61
7 Graduates should handle at least two languages	03	07	53
24 English is an important tool to access and contribute to knowledge worldwide	14	04	52
9 English could be a common university language	06	06	51
22 University curricula should introduce more global perspectives and understanding of other cultures	19	11	36
1 University studies should be comparable to the international level	19	10	31
Eigenvalue	4.78	2.55	1.70
Cumulative variance	19.1	29.3	36.1
Factor correlation matrix			
F 1	1.00		
F 2	0.00	1.00	
F 3	0.30	-0.08	1.00

**Table 5** Mean differences in factor variables by universities

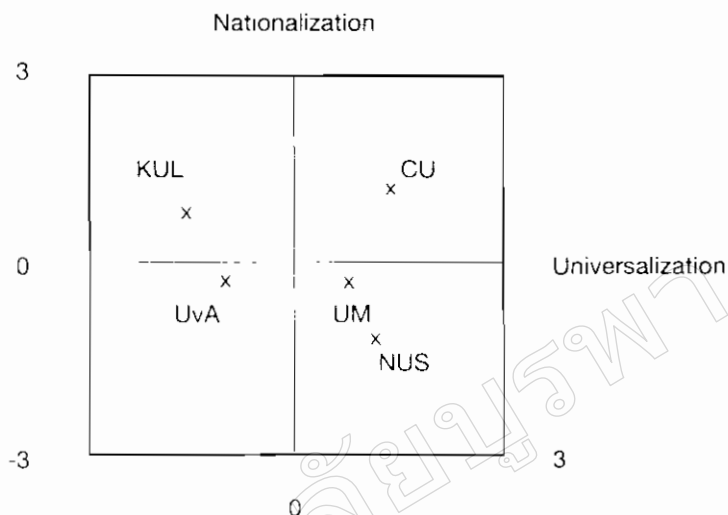
Universities	Universalization	Nationalization	English Domination
University of Amsterdam	-0.85	-0.16	0.23
Katholieke University of Leuven	-0.9	0.16	0.12
Chulalongkorn University	1.14	0.29	-0.34
University of Malaya	0.18	-0.16	0.25
National University of Singapore	0.33	-0.25	-0.19
F	771.65	25.24	30.05
Prob.	.00	.00	.00

**Table 6** Mean differences in factor variables by fields of study

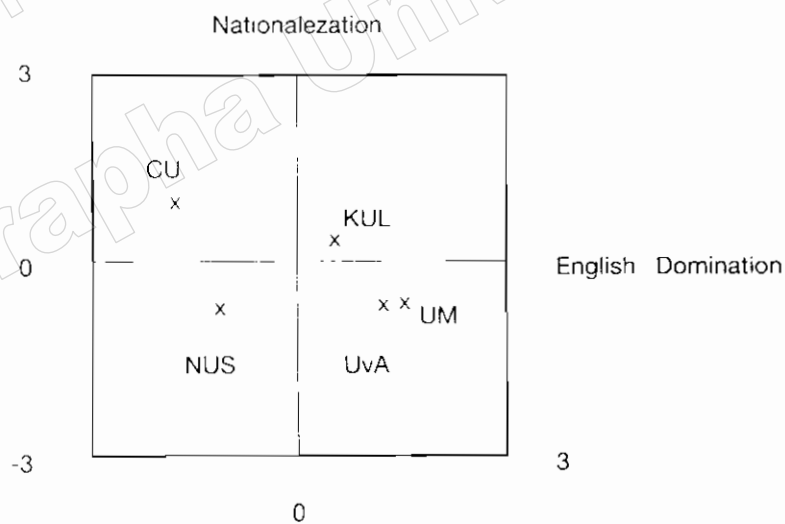
Fields of study	Universalization	Nationalization	English Domination
Arts & Social Sciences	0.01	-0.04	-0.08
Laws	-0.07	0.04	-0.04
Sciences	0.12	0.07	0.02
Medical Sciences	-0.11	-0.05	0.15
F	4.57	1.77	4.78
Prob.	.00	.15	.00



**Figure 1** Mean differences in universalization and nationalization variables among difference universities

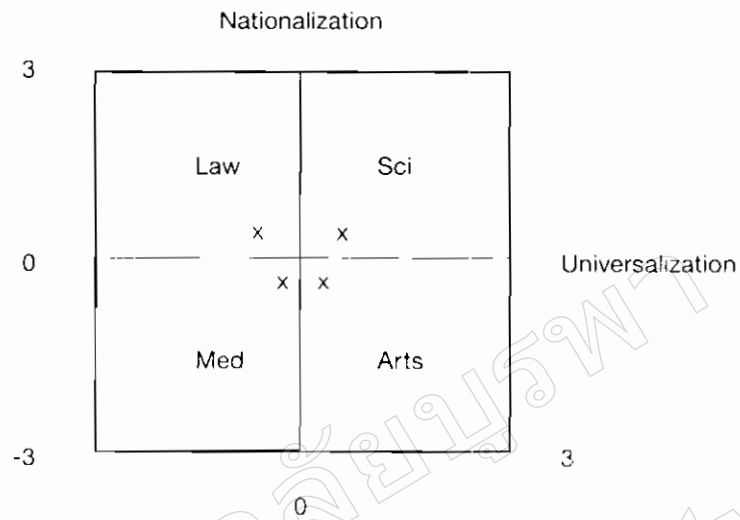


**Figure 2** Mean differences in nationalization and English domination variables among different universities

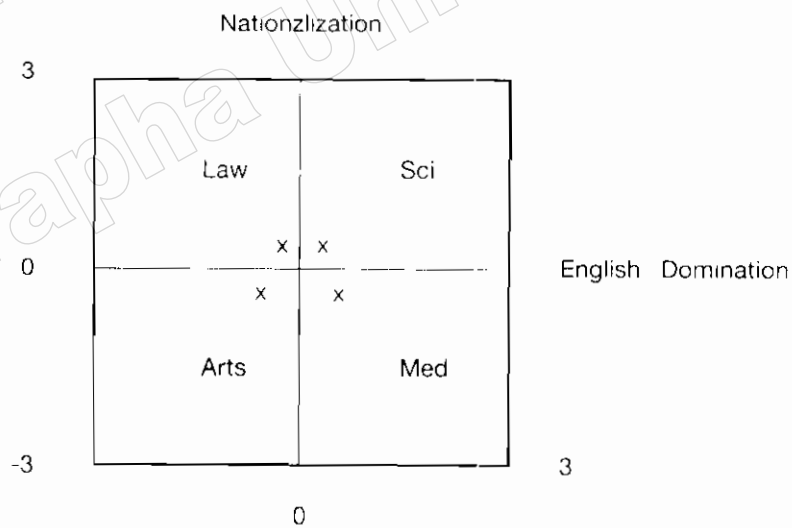


Note : UvA = University of Amsterdam of the Netherlands.  
 KUL = Katholieke University of Belgium.  
 CU = Chulalongkorn University of Thailand  
 UM = University of Malaya of Malaysia  
 NUS = National University of Singapore of Singapore

**Figure 3** Mean differences in universalization and nationalization variables among different fields of study



**Figure 4** Mean differences in nationalization and English domination among different fields of study



Noe : Arts = Arts and Social Sciences  
Law = Law  
Sci = Sciences  
Med = Medical Sciences