



Jiddu Krishnamurti's concept of holistic education: Challenging the dominance of world rankings and internationalization in higher education institutions

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Abstract

World rankings and internationalization have become dominant indicators of prestige in higher education, driving institutions to remodel policies for global recognition and marketability. In pursuit of “world-class” status, universities often prioritize branding over the holistic development of learners. This study challenges these prevailing norms by applying Jiddu Krishnamurti’s concept of holistic education, which views intelligence not as the accumulation of information, but as the capacity to perceive the essential and awaken insight in oneself and others. Using qualitative content analysis and critical theory, the study examines how global metrics perpetuate power dynamics and commodify education. Krishnamurti’s philosophy offers a counter-framework that emphasizes introspection, ethical pedagogy, and learner autonomy. Thematic categories such as “Critical Thinking and Autonomy,” “Creation of New Mind,” and “Understanding Beyond Conformity” emerged through iterative reading, pattern recognition, and cross-validation with peer-reviewed literature. Findings reveal that while rankings and internationalization may elevate institutional status, they conflict with the transformative aims of holistic education. In response, the study recommends curriculum reorientation to integrate critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and experiential learning; faculty development that fosters moral integrity and reflective teaching; and institutional support for student-led initiatives that promote creativity, collaboration, and social responsibility. This study contributes to reimagining higher education beyond market-driven imperatives, offering a framework centered on human flourishing and the reinvigoration of education’s emancipatory purpose.

Keywords: *Krishnamurti, world rankings, internationalization, holistic education, higher education institutions (HEIs)*

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1. Introduction

Education is not merely about the acquisition or mastery of technical knowledge. It is about providing meaningful learning experiences and fostering critical thinking, moving beyond technical instruction toward compassion and social responsibility. According to Rodríguez (2022), Krishnamurti's educational philosophy emphasizes perceiving the world with unbiased awareness, that is, understanding what is happening in the world: brutality, wars, destruction, and violence. Seeing things objectively enables individuals to approach the world and its problems more intelligently. For Krishnamurti (2003), this is called holistic education. Jiddu Krishnamurti's holistic education calls for awakening intelligence through ethical awareness and lived experience. This vision aligns with Kambuga's (2025) assertion that *"Higher Education Institutions are responsible for improving the quality of life in their local communities by searching for social needs through research partnerships"* (p. 87). Such engagement reflects Krishnamurti's vision of holistic education as a catalyst for personal growth and collective well-being.

According to Krishnamurti (2003), holistic education neither supports nor encourages any ideology or adherence to idealistic patterns. It does not create mental, societal, or cultural conditioning; instead, it supports individuals in becoming free and mature, allowing them to blossom in love and goodness. Holistic education does not compel individuals to conform to social norms and structures but helps them uncover their inner potential to become catalysts for societal change. This becomes possible when genuine values, self-knowledge, and critical inquiry continuously flourish in human experience. Similarly, Nussbaum (1997) underscores the importance of an educational system that prioritizes skills beyond vocational pursuits. Beyond developing individuals' capabilities, she stresses the importance of learning how to be fully human, capable of love, empathy, and imagination. Therefore, schools and universities must prioritize creating pedagogical spaces where curriculum, instruction, and academic activities promote human flourishing for both learners and educators. Holistic education, thus, provides hope for the future by supporting not merely employability but the full development of the individual.

However, present-day education often focuses on and prioritizes competition to secure global ranking positions (Zhang & Cao, 2024). This emphasis on rankings has become a dominant trend for higher education institutions seeking to enhance their international standing, leading to the prioritization of standardization and global competitiveness. Such an

approach highlights the education system's preoccupation with outward efficiency, prioritizing students' marketability upon graduation, while relegating essential aspects such as humanity and intelligence to a secondary priority (Khan et al., 2020).

According to Krishnamurti (2010), this represents a deprivation of what he considers "right education," which should be manifested by both learners and educators. He underscores the importance of integrating the heart and mind as a vital process in understanding self-knowing or self-cultivation. Krishnamurti offers a comprehensive view of the importance of holistic or right education: to nurture learners and educators who are empowered to flourish as individuals and contribute meaningfully to society for the common good.

To address the dominance of world rankings and internationalization in higher education, this study aims to critically examine their implications on current educational systems and practices through the lens of Jiddu Krishnamurti's concept of holistic education. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) analyze how these global trends influence institutional priorities and learner development; and (2) explore Krishnamurti's educational principles as a counter-framework.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Critical theory, inspired by various schools of thought, represents a complex set of analytical strategies. It is a social theory that seeks to understand human experience as a means to change the world (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016). This paper employs critical theory as its theoretical framework because the study critically examines how dominant trends in higher education, specifically world rankings and internationalization, shape educational practices. Moreover, the study investigates the implications of these trends not only for the education system but also for the holistic development of individuals. Thus, this paper underscores the importance of recognizing the role of holistic education in higher education, particularly in light of the marketization and commodification associated with emerging global pressures such as world rankings and internationalization.

This research is philosophically grounded in the insights of the modern Asian thinker Jiddu Krishnamurti, with particular emphasis on his concept of holistic education. Krishnamurti was a revolutionary educational philosopher whose ideas challenged conventional views on nationalism, tradition, religion, and authority (Krishnamurti, 2003).

Often described as prophetic, his philosophy critiques humanity's increasing fixation on materialism and highlights the need for inner transformation through education (Majumdar, 2023). Krishnamurti's educational principles are embedded in his dialogues with students and in his writings, particularly *On Education*. He believed that education should help create a new culture through the transformation of the human mind (Krishnamurti, 1974). His pedagogical philosophy rests on the understanding that external conflict is rooted in internal contradiction and that education should awaken intelligence, not merely the intellect. In this sense, education and philosophy were inseparable for him, as his "*educational teachings ... are integrally woven into his thinking on life, world and humanity*" (Mishra & Basu, 2023; Seshadri, 2006).

Krishnamurti critiqued the structure and content of traditional education, arguing that it often fails to address the deeper complexities of human consciousness. He called for the development of individuals who possess both clarity of thought and emotional depth. He encouraged educational reformers to cultivate awareness of both the internal and external dimensions of human experience. While acknowledging the value of knowledge and skills, he cautioned against blind obedience to authority and emphasized the importance of independent reasoning (Krishnamurti, 1974). He criticized the test-driven and overly technical character of modern education, asserting that learning should not be reduced to employment or certification but should foster self-discovery and the flowering of intelligence (Majumdar, 2023). By integrating this theoretical lens, the study critically examines whether world rankings and internationalization align with, or diverge from, Jiddu Krishnamurti's concept of holistic education.

2.2. Understanding the Purpose of Education

Mishra and Basu (2023) investigate the purpose of education and the most effective ways to facilitate learning. They argue that as the world becomes increasingly shaped by globalization, economic inequality, and the rapid advancement of digital and networking technologies, the nature of education is undergoing constant transformation. Recognizing that these forces influence both learning and educational structures, their article centers on the significance of education in a reality where technological systems increasingly mediate human experience. The authors also revisit the American philosopher John Dewey's understanding of the purpose of education. They reiterate that Dewey critiqued the industrialized "factory model" of schooling, which prioritizes rote learning and marketization. In contrast, Dewey

emphasized learning through experience, reflection, and social interaction. Thus, in Dewey's vision, echoed by Hildebrand (2018), the concerns of philosophy and education converge, as he sought to reconnect philosophical inquiry with the mission of education-for-living.

Aligned with Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning, it is important to consider a complementary perspective that situates education beyond the mere accumulation of knowledge. Majumdar (2023), drawing from Krishnamurti's concept of education, suggests that learning is not simply the acquisition of information. Instead, it involves observing nature, cultivating awareness, and engaging holistically with life. As Khairnar (2023) notes, it is as much about feeling the sky and hearing birds as it is about reading books. Education, for Krishnamurti (1974), signifies involvement in the totality of life.

Krishnamurti described education as guiding learners to live fulfilling lives in harmony with nature and human values. He emphasized awakening insight, nurturing awareness, and fostering spiritual realization, encouraging children to become whole human beings rather than mere functionaries of societal systems. Both Dewey and Krishnamurti strongly critiqued secondhand learning and advocated for firsthand experience, inquiry, reflection, and direct engagement with the world instead of passively accepting inherited knowledge structures (Mishra & Basu, 2023). Given their shared focus on experiential learning, an emerging question concerns the essence of educational experience in a context where many of our encounters are virtual or technologically mediated (Mishra & Terzian, 2024). Before exploring this further, it is necessary to understand these mediated experiences, their forms, strengths, limitations, potentials, and risks (Mishra & Basu, 2023).

2.3. World Ranking, Internationalization, and Neoliberal Approach to Education

The concept of neoliberalism in education is not new. According to Santone (2019), the neoliberal approach to education arises from inequalities embedded in free-market strategies, where monopolies are encouraged for profiteering purposes. The operations of world rankings and internationalization reflect this neoliberal logic, positioning students and educators as product-competitors in the global market, a dynamic that weakens their capacity for critical thinking, empathy, understanding, and holistic intelligence (Salera, 2025). The growing admiration for world rankings and the internationalization of education promotes the implementation of curricula rooted primarily in economic interests. This orientation privileges

institutions and individuals in mainstream sectors while marginalizing those at the periphery (Santone, 2019).

In this context, it is essential to examine the broader implications of such neoliberal practices. Euro-North American multilateral institutions, as key drivers of neoliberal capitalism, technological imperialism, and economic expansionism, have had devastating effects on developing regions, particularly Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016). This form of economic globalization exacerbates inequalities between nations, institutionalizes systemic violence, perpetuates cycles of poverty, and contributes to environmental destruction. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) argues that neoliberal ideology has given rise to Westernized corporate universities characterized by consumerism and wealth accumulation rather than the genuine pursuit of knowledge. If the goal is to challenge the corporatization, marketization, and commodification of higher education, then it becomes necessary to disrupt, question, and unsettle the academic methodologies and theoretical approaches that normalize, institutionalize, and naturalize what Methula (2017) describes as “the beast of modernity.”

2.4. Benefits and Drawbacks of World Ranking and Internationalization of Education

Moustafa (2024) highlights both the positive aspects and drawbacks of world ranking indicators. Higher education institutions strive for high positions in global rankings because, aside from representing a financial competition, rankings are believed to enhance the academic quality offered to students. Universities that achieve top ranks are more likely to attract higher enrollment, secure funding, and improve working conditions and institutional outcomes (Times Higher Education, 2025). Moustafa (2024) further emphasizes that world rankings help institutions identify the areas in which they excel and the aspects that require improvement.

However, despite the benefits they promise, world rankings have also been widely sensationalized on social media, contributing to negative perceptions. Many critics argue that rankings create a false sense of excellence because they encourage excessive competition, burdensome demands, and continuous pressure, often leading to short-term academic and societal gains rather than sustainable development (United Nations University, 2023). Moustafa argues that universities should prioritize their mission and values, the well-being and satisfaction of their members, and their capacity to provide inclusive, quality education that

genuinely prepares students for future careers, rather than focusing disproportionately on achieving high rankings.

Contrasting with the competitive landscape, De Wit (2019) notes that some countries develop “excellence programs” specifically to improve their position in global rankings. These initiatives often push institutions to concentrate solely on quantitative international indicators. De Wit’s analysis raises critical questions about the evolving nature of internationalization: Have we moved beyond the traditional Western paradigm toward a more inclusive model? Has global engagement shifted from competition to cooperation? He argues that, in reality, internationalization has shifted from exchange and collaboration toward a highly competitive process. Therefore, internationalization must evolve into a more comprehensive, intentional, and less elitist practice, one not driven primarily by mobility or economic metrics.

Similarly, Fauzi et al. (2020) acknowledge the significant influence of university ranking systems on modern education but also underscore potential flaws and misleading outcomes associated with them. These consequences affect a wide range of stakeholders, including prospective students, employers, investors, and government agencies responsible for funding allocation. Their study stresses the need to review the methodologies used by major ranking systems such as the 2018 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), 2018 Times Higher Education (THE), 2018 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), Leiden University Ranking, and Webometrics Ranking. They advocate for the development of a more comprehensive and holistic evaluation tool that accounts for the broader context of each institution, including cultural and cross-border heritage values, which better reflects its mission, vision, and core objectives.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed qualitative content analysis. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research prioritizes understanding the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences, focusing on depth and complexity over statistical generalizations. This approach was particularly suited for this study to analyze the emergence, significance, and positive and negative impacts of world ranking and internationalization in the global market, where Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are the primary target. The study also used content analysis as a methodology. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is a research technique for

making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use, while also allowing for systematic coding and categorization of the content by focusing on some patterns, themes, and meanings to answer the research questions. Thus, the use of content analysis enabled the researchers to collect relevant texts, speeches, and interviews (Hassan, 2024) of Jiddu Krishnamurti, highlighting his vision on holistic education.

Researchers also gathered relevant literature on world ranking and internationalization in higher education institutions. By using content analysis, the researchers determined central themes and concepts of Krishnamurti, such as *Critical Thinking and Autonomy*, *Creation of New Mind*, and *Understanding and Intelligence Beyond Conformity and Competition*. Researchers coded and developed these themes to analyze how Krishnamurti's holistic education concept related to and challenges the dominance of world rankings and internationalization in higher education institutions. Content analysis allowed the researchers to interpret the research study's findings in obtaining a deeper understanding of Krishnamurti's concept of holistic education by emphasizing its relevance to contemporary issues in higher education.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The study data was derived primarily from Krishnamurti's collected and compiled talks, which are available online. The analysis drew upon books, secondary literature, and relevant peer-reviewed journal articles from reputable online websites. The researchers used thematic analysis to focus on the most common and recurring themes from different texts and journal articles, which allowed them to interpret documents to justify and answer the research problems of the study. Thematic analysis was conducted through iterative reading, pattern recognition, and cross-validation with peer-reviewed literature. Through pattern recognition, key phrases and conceptual clusters were extracted and coded manually. These codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories that reflect Krishnamurti's educational philosophy. The primary themes identified were:

Critical thinking and autonomy: Emphasizing independent inquiry and resistance to conformity.

Creation of new mind: Advocating for inner transformation and moral awakening

Understanding beyond conformity: Challenging standardized learning and market-driven education.

3.3. Research Ethics

No ethical approval was sought for this study as it involved a critical analysis of existing literature and theoretical frameworks concerning world ranking and internationalization, holistic education, and marketization of education without direct involvement of human participants or empirical data collection. The authors maintained the authenticity, honesty, and integrity of the data inputted. The authors carefully analyzed, reviewed, and evaluated relevant literature, avoided fabrication, and maintained critical interpretations accordingly (Lincoln et al., 1985). All sources that were used in the study to enhance, provide background, or generally aid the study are cited. The researchers transcribed the information through careful extraction and paraphrasing to ensure that the sources are not distorted. The researchers also acknowledged the substantive contributions of all co-authors whose collaborative expertise, critical insights, and sustained commitment were integral to the development of this research. Their roles in conceptual framing, methodological refinement, and institutional alignment reflected the principles of ethical co-authorship and academic integrity (University of Cambridge, 2025).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Holistic Education: Critical Thinking and Autonomy

To clearly understand Jiddu Krishnamurti's concept of holistic education, what follows are unadulterated passages taken directly from his talk on "On Education" at the Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh and the Rajghat School in Varanasi in 1974. In his talk, Krishnamurti described holistic education as:

"Education is not only learning from books, memorizing some facts, but also learning how to look, how to listen to what the books are saying, whether they are saying something true or false. All that is part of education" (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 6).

Analyzing the passage, Krishnamurti explicitly emphasized that holistic education involves teaching students how to think rather than what to think, respecting student autonomy and encouraging independent inquiry. It includes viewing teachers as partners in a shared journey of learning, tailoring teaching methods to individual learners through observation and flexibility, and creating schools as living spaces for mutual growth and reflection (Majumdar,

2023). While recognizing the utility of knowledge and skills, he cautioned against blind submission to authority and emphasized independent reasoning. Krishnamurti denounced the test-focused and overly technical nature of modern education and asserted that learning is not merely for employment or certification but for self-discovery and the flowering of intelligence (Majumdar, 2023).

In stark contrast to Krishnamurti's vision, the current education system places significant constraints on both students and teachers (Anand, 2021). Today, students and teachers feel compelled to adhere to the demands of controlling and standardized systems, where rigid policies and instructions are widely implemented and promoted. Such conditions hinder creativity, force conformity and uniformity, and limit educational experiences to a narrow horizon. As a result, voices that express ideas and imagination often remain silent. In reality, learning is not confined to textbooks and other provided materials. Learning should be enjoyable, offering a sense of freedom and healthy self-expression. The path for education is broad, yet it is being compromised and narrowed due to specific interests that do not truly benefit learners (Moravec, 2025). Similarly, Krishnamurti continues to stress the following points:

“Education is not just to pass examinations, take a degree and a job, get married and settle down, but also to be able to listen to the birds, to see the sky, to see the extraordinary beauty of a tree, and the shape of the hills, and to feel with them, to be really, directly in touch with them” (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 6).

With the emergence of internationalization and world rankings, some higher education institutions have become authoritative corporations obsessed with rubrics, standards, grades, credits, and penalties (Methula, 2017; Mbembe, 2016; Vidal & Ferreira, 2020; Harvey, 2023; Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2018). Classroom strategies predominantly employ assessments that usually involve administering quizzes and examinations, conforming to the demands of standardized rubrics to measure and evaluate learning outcomes. Examinations are typically designed using patterned and time-restricted formats, administered once every term (prelim, midterm, and final), and expected to be completed within one to two hours, requiring students to recall all the information taught by the class facilitator. As such, students often focus on memorizing information, through repetition and rehearsal, instead of actively understanding the material. This passive absorption of knowledge leads to information not being retained in

students' minds, and as time goes on, more and more information needs to be memorized. This overreliance on rote memorization highlights the shortcomings of the current state of education. The repetitive nature of learning limits both creative and critical thinking, as students may conform to various expectations, are trained to use immediate formulas to solve problems, and master mnemonic-abbreviated information to pass examinations. This teaching strategy turns students into robotic mimicry, where perpetual replication of information is encouraged without understanding (Methula, 2017; Mbembe, 2016).

The quotation also emphasizes that real or holistic education has nothing to do with obtaining certifications and degrees. Holistic education should advocate for a curriculum rich in arts, dance, music, theater, yoga, swimming, and gardening, activities that engage a child's body, mind, and spirit. Holistic education aims to create an environment where teachers and students can prosper and where future generations can develop (Majumdar, 2023). Krishnamurti argued that education should strive for a holistic approach encompassing all aspects of life. Learning should harness human curiosity, especially among young learners who are just beginning their educational journey, and foster their desire to learn. By creating a healthier and more inclusive atmosphere, the stress of individual competition can be reduced by encouraging collaboration and teaching students to accompany each other without judgment (Majumdar, 2023).

On the contrary, art-related programs and activities within universities and student organizations often receive inadequate funding, as school administrators and government agencies prioritize programs associated with science and technology. This unequal treatment in the learning environment promotes unhealthy relationships among teachers and students. Students in science-related programs often develop a sense of arrogant confidence, leading to a strong sense of entitlement due to the higher tuition fees they pay compared with those in other programs. Thus, learning environments become limited and create an atmosphere unfit to promote inclusivity, creativity, and a love for the arts (Majumdar, 2023).

Moreover, teaching is not merely a profession; it is a sacred vocation. Teachers, Krishnamurti believed, must be moral exemplars, honest, self-reflective, and compassionate. A teacher must understand students deeply through ongoing observation, maintain self-awareness, especially during moments of challenge, and serve as a facilitator of students' self-discovery, not merely a source of rote knowledge (Ryan & Niemiec, 2015). The real teacher points not to himself but to truth and wisdom (Majumdar, 2023). However, in today's

competitive classroom environment, students and teachers often feel burdened by the pressure to expedite outcomes—earning good grades, completing requirements, and securing a degree or diploma—with no assurance that what has been learned or taught in the classroom will be retained. This reality in education echoes what Jiddu Krishnamurti emphasized when he said:

We are only concerned with helping the student to get a degree and to get a job and then we allow him to sink into this monstrous society. To help him to be alive it is imperative for a student to have this extraordinary feeling for life, not his life or somebody's else's life, but for life, for the villager, for the tree. (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 167)

4.2. Holistic Education: Cultivates Understanding and Intelligence Beyond Competition and Conformity

Jiddu Krishnamurti advocates for an education that holistically nurtures and develops the human person. He points out that “*the highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole*” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 63). Moreover, education should focus on creating an environment that cultivates the learner’s intelligence rather than merely forcing it through textbooks or rote learning. Krishnamurti’s belief stemmed from his observations, wherein he saw the effects of science and technology leading to the division of life “*into many different pieces without realizing its generality*” (Tuyet & Tan, 2020, p. 1). He warns that “*present-day education is a complete failure because it has over-emphasized technique. In over-emphasizing technique we destroy man*” (Krishnamurti, p. 18). He added:

I think it is fairly clear that competitive education and the development of the student in that process is very destructive. I do not know how deeply one has grasped the significance of this. If one has, then what is right education? I think it is clear that the pattern which we now cultivate and call education, which is conformity to society, is very, very destructive. In its ambitious activities, it is frustrating in the extreme. (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 75)

While Krishnamurti’s vision of education emphasizes holistic development and the integration of knowledge to prepare individuals for the complexities of life, the reality of contemporary educational systems, shaped by the emergence of the world ranking system and the internationalization of education, shows a departure from these ideals. In Vietnam, the educational system remains focused on academic achievement and post-educational employment. Neglecting the broader understanding of life and the holistic growth of students,

educational programs from high school to postgraduate levels have become mere pipelines of specialization, designed to meet the human resource needs of the economy (Tuyet & Tan, 2020). This leaves students unprepared to face complex societal challenges after graduation. Moreover, the separation of subjects in the curriculum, with math, Vietnamese, and foreign languages prioritized while most other subjects, such as history, geography, and fine arts, are sidelined, results in students who can memorize information but lack an in-depth understanding of life as a whole (Tuyet & Tan, 2020).

The neglect of broader understanding and holistic growth is not unique to Vietnam; it also resonates across various educational systems worldwide. In Australia, for example, the federal Labor Party introduced the ‘user pays’ system, separated funding for teaching from funding for research, and opened a market in which public and private education competed for clients to internationalize the education market (Blackmore, 2002). Additionally, education was deregulated and government funds were cut. Over 40 percent of universities now operate on a ‘self-funding’ model, where students bear the full cost of their education. The effects of this system are particularly evident for Indigenous groups and older students, most of whom are women returning to study (Blackmore, 2002).

The articles discuss how globalization, or more precisely, internationalization, exacerbates existing inequities while introducing new ones, such as disparities related to race and ethnicity, amid the rapid flow of connections and ideas between nation-states, described as “differential, uneven and unpredictable.” While globalization often refers to the general homogenization of countries, it fails to consider the experiences of women. Furthermore, globalization has driven Australia’s restructuring of higher education, resulting in the privatization of universities and placing the financial burden on students, thereby deepening social divisions.

Expanding the discussion on the impacts of globalization and the world ranking system, it is crucial to recognize how these forces shape societal values and individual aspirations. Understanding these dynamics is essential to critically analyze the educational landscape. In this context, Krishnamurti reiterates that:

The whole of civilization, not only in India but in the rest of the world, is geared to competition, to success, to achievement. The ambitious man seems to be the respected entity – the ambitious man, the aggressive man who wants to succeed, to intrigue, to pull strings and so get to the top of the heap. (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 108)

World ranking and internationalization have established themselves as seemingly peaceful means for institutions to assert superiority, but in reality, they exacerbate inequalities. Universities with established legacies, in pursuit of higher rankings, have outpaced and stunted the growth of developing institutions. The increased mobility of scholars has created an imbalance among higher education institutions, transforming these opportunities into advantages for the elite. This elite-centered mentality is evident not only in institutional structures but also in program curricula. For example, given the weight research carries in rankings, Science, Technology, Economics, and Management (STEM) programs attract growth and investment, while the humanities are less appreciated and often neglected.

However, the most drastic consequence of the internationalization of education and global rankings lies in their propensity to quantify and commodify learning. Education has been transformed into a bargaining chip among countries and reduced to numerical indicators. The overemphasis on rankings has led institutions to treat their scholars as products manufactured to bolster institutional status (Vidal & Ferreira, 2020; Harvey, 2023; Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2018). Internationalization and global rankings have thus turned education into a divisive force (Onyancha & Tella, 2023).

According to Mamdani (2007), commercialization has altered knowledge production by prioritizing market-driven programs. This shift has led to the casualization of academic labor and increased inter-departmental competition for funding, as universities began functioning like businesses. Universities worldwide feel obligated to justify the funding they receive from foreign governments, creating significant pressure on the humanities, including theology. This pressure fosters a “publish or perish” culture (Tshaka, 2014; Methula, 2017). This culture is driven by consumerization, privatization, and the rationalization of social sciences and humanities, propelled by innovation and entrepreneurial narratives. The rise of superficial, consumer-driven academic writings, the commercialization of knowledge, and consultancy cultures enable external and private funders to enforce their commercialization agendas, ultimately undermining genuine learning and research (Methula, 2017).

Furthermore, Saeed et al. (2015) examined Pakistani policy-making through the lens of dependency theory and colonialism, evaluating how international powers (i.e., “international representatives of colonialism”) continue to shape the country and its policies even after independence. The study highlighted the growing number of international bodies and their increasing influence. After its implementation in 2009, Pakistan’s education policy

was initially based on EFA (Education for All), but this influence gradually expanded to include other international agencies such as the United Nations, international NGOs, and the World Bank. Regarding financial aid, Pakistan ranked seventh, receiving USD 150.4 million in 2003 alone. This support brought significant debt and pressure from external organizations. Pakistan has struggled with tensions at both national and international levels in its educational policies, often needing to balance globalization demands with the country's socio-cultural realities. It was argued that, while Pakistan attempts to secure a place on the globalized stage, it often fails to prioritize the needs of its own people. In this context, Krishnamurti's understanding of the nature of competition becomes particularly relevant:

We compete, worship success, because we feel that if we did not compete, we would stagnate. That is merely a speculative response; it is not a fact. You do not know what would happen. When you see what you are, whatever it is, then you begin to learn. (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 110)

Similarly, Natale and Doran (2012) underscore the implications of the economic competitiveness inherent in the world ranking system and the internationalization of education. Educational institutions are pressured to produce graduates with strong technical skills. World ranking systems and internationalization have the potential to transform universities into business landscapes, where education becomes a mere commodity. As a result, students and teachers are constantly subject to commodification. Moreover, institutions are encouraged to offer marketable programs that generate profit. Programs that do not have high-profit potential are often treated as liabilities, and students are discouraged from enrolling in them. This reality highlights the contemporary face of education, which reduces students to revenue streams and universities to businesses. Institutions focus resources on improving their rankings to increase enrollment and boost revenue. Consequently, students pursue degrees primarily to acquire skills for employment and income maximization, rather than to experience genuine learning.

In Vietnam, teachers continue to face challenges such as large class sizes and minimal compensation. Moreover, teachers managing part-time work just to make ends meet cannot fully commit to educating students. The state of schools in Vietnam also requires attention. Most schools are “overloaded, cramped, and lacking in educational spirit. In particular, universities are built in big cities, have narrow campuses, and mostly contain classrooms without trees or natural landscapes that impact the psychology of learners” (Tuyet & Tan,

2020, p. 4). Real transformation must begin not with reforms or policies alone but with the creation of quiet, tree-filled campuses that nurture reflection and connection to life's beauty.

The atmosphere around education, and learning in general, may be one of anxiety, where students worry about excelling in school or fear being left behind. The competitiveness of the education system reflects the competitiveness of the job market, where only those with superior qualifications can secure well-paying jobs capable of sustaining them financially. From the moment students enroll in their first year, they are expected to compete with one another for years in preparation for the labor market they will enter after completing higher education.

4.3. Holistic Education: Cultivation of New Mind

Are we only educators or are we human beings who see education as a significant and true way of helping human beings to cultivate the total mind? (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 162)

Krishnamurti stresses the role of teachers in a child's learning process, stating, "*the teacher is the most sacred and the most important to the nation, because it builds the characters of the boys and girls who will be its future citizens*" (Krishnamurti, 1912, p. 15). To fulfill their responsibilities, teachers must clearly understand what they teach, be intelligent, show love for their pupils, avoid exerting authority over them, and maintain equality and sympathy in their relationships with students (Tuyet & Tan, 2020). However, unlike the traditional model of education, which places the child's learning entirely in the hands of teachers, Krishnamurti considers everyone involved in the educational process, parents, educational leaders, and other professionals dedicated to education, as educators. In particular, parents are responsible for helping children experience life as a whole and develop integrity through freedom and intelligence.

This collaborative approach to education contrasts sharply with contemporary trends, where external pressures influence educational priorities. Today, the impact of world rankings and internationalization leads parents, teachers, and government institutions to prioritize science-related programs that are perceived to offer better career prospects. Consequently, programs associated with the arts and humanities receive less attention and lower priority, as

they are considered to have lower employability and limited income-generating potential in the current job market.

And I think the purpose of education is to create this new mind, which is explosive, and does not conform to a pattern which society has set. (Krishnamurti, 1974, p. 17-18)

The quotation calls for reflection on the current educational landscape. Education should foster innovative, independent thinkers capable of navigating and contributing meaningfully to society. Depicting universities as commercial businesses that provide knowledge through teaching programs is overly simplistic. Acquiring knowledge involves more than the procurement of skills; it also encompasses the development of disciplines and values that cannot simply be purchased. The role of universities is not to produce large amounts of superficial, decontextualized information devoid of theoretical depth (Barnett, 2018). Knowledge should not be confined to monetary considerations or economic feasibility, nor should students be viewed as customers within the framework of an entrepreneurial university (Conradie, 2011; Methula, 2017).

Tuyet and Tan (2020) suggest that, in addition to imparting knowledge, teachers serve as architects of the soul, guiding students to appreciate the beauty of nature and life and to understand and achieve the fundamental values of truth, goodness, and beauty. The urgency to rebuild the nation is particularly pronounced for countries emerging from conflict, where developing a skilled generation capable of excelling in science and technology is essential (Krishnamurti, 1974).

5. Conclusion

The study reveals that the world ranking system and the internationalization of education can produce favorable outcomes, such as elevating university status by meeting international standards and enabling effective competition in the global market. Nevertheless, these developments and trends are inconsistent with Jiddu Krishnamurti's vision of holistic education, as they primarily perpetuate, accept, and tolerate the commodification and marketization of learning, along with the resulting inequalities, divisions, and exploitation. In this context, universities, policymakers, parents, learners, and educators are increasingly transformed into profit-driven entities. Krishnamurti argued that education should not merely

serve as a pipeline to employment; rather, it should empower individuals to engage in critical discourse, promote personal values, and create opportunities for the development of good character, ultimately contributing to societal transformation. This study is significant for its role in reshaping the discourse on higher education by challenging market-oriented priorities and presenting an alternative framework that emphasizes personal growth, morally grounded teaching, and the revitalization of education as a liberating force.

6. Recommendation

Based on the findings and philosophical grounding of this study, it is recommended that universities and institutions urgently undertake curriculum reorientation. Curriculum reorientation, as proposed by Apolo et al. (2025), affirms Krishnamurti's concept of holistic education by embracing diverse perspectives and "queering" or deconstructing philosophical pedagogy to foster inclusive, liberating learning environments. Such an initiative will enable universities and schools to evaluate whether Krishnamurti's concept of holistic education is being effectively integrated into their curricula, promoting critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and experiential learning. This includes embedding arts, ethics, and nature-based learning alongside technical subjects.

Educational policymakers should develop evaluation frameworks that prioritize inclusivity, human development, and community impact, aligning with calls for a more comprehensive and less elitist approach to internationalization (De Wit, 2019). Schools and universities must support and provide opportunities for faculty to be trained not only in pedagogical skills but also in the principles of moral integrity, student autonomy, and careful observation to maximize the learning process.

Furthermore, universities and schools should fulfill their responsibility to provide safe spaces for student-led initiatives that challenge conformity and promote collaborative learning, creativity, and social responsibility. This aligns with Garo et al.'s (2025) understanding of education as a vehicle for social justice and identity affirmation. Overall, the argument presented in this study reflects Krishnamurti's belief in education as a transformative force for humanity, one that liberates individuals from societal conditioning and fosters holistic awareness.

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AI Declaration

The authors declare that AI tools were minimally used throughout the study to address sweeping statements, enhance sentence transitions, and generate citations. All relevant information used is cited and referenced accordingly.

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