



## Internationalization of Higher Education

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### **Abstract:**

*This conceptual paper provides an overview of contemporary forms of and recent developments in Internationalization in higher education. From 'traditional' forms of education to mobility of students and teaching staff, application of innovative policies and practices, export higher education via branch campuses and institutional cooperation, developing transnational university networks and virtual delivery of higher education, and harmonizing higher education systems. This paper highlights all of them.*

**Key words:** higher education, internationalization, mobility of students, transnational university networks

### **1.0 PROLOUGE:**

Universities have contributed immensely towards the upliftment of human civilization and aspire not to confine themselves to particular spatial boundaries. Expansion due to internationalization and globalization brings enormous challenges and thus pushes universities to develop new forms of international efforts and policies.

'Internationalization' refers to the activities of higher education institutions, supported or framed by multilateral agreements or programs, to expand their reach over national borders. Internationalization activities and policies can serve a broad variety of objectives, such as the diversification and growth of financial input by the recruitment of fee-paying foreign students, the broadening of curricula and educational experiences for domestic students in foreign partner-institutions, regional networking in order to allow a more cost-effective use of resources and to provoke a process of collective institutional learning and development, or the enhancement of the quality of education and research by bringing students and staff in the realm of international competition.

Activities developed in the context of internationalization encompass joint research projects, student exchange programs, staff mobility projects, specially designed programs for foreign students, joint curriculum development initiatives, specific initiatives in the context of university development aid policies, and the recognition and validation of university diplomas, degrees and credits etc.

At the macro level internationalization of higher education can be understood as the "process of systematic integration of an international dimension into the teaching, research and public service function of a higher education institution" (Wachter 1999).

Let's explore the basic forms and characteristics of the internationalization of higher education in detail.

## **2. FORMS OF AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **2.1 Student mobility**

The best known form of internationalization is the increasing mobility of students studying abroad. Travelling students are of course a very old phenomenon and certain regions of the world have a long experience with it. Most European countries have

known the influx of students from their former colonies. Large numbers of Latin American students seek to obtain postgraduate degrees in Northern American universities. However, nowadays and especially since the seventies international student flows have become a central feature of the global higher education system. Their quantitative development is impressive.

According to UNESCO statistics, there were some 1.5 million foreign students in the top 50 host countries in 1994-1995. Over the last 25 years international student mobility has risen by more than 300% (Bruchand Barty 1998; UNESCO 1997). Most individual countries witness substantial growth rates of foreign student enrolment.

A great deal of international student mobility is supported and stimulated by various kinds of programs and schemes. Most countries have several bilateral and multilateral agreements and programs in this field. The best known framework of international student mobility is the European ERASMUS and subsequent (since 1995) SOCRATES programs. Started in 1987 with a view towards the common market of 1992, ERASMUS (and other schemes such as COMMETT, LINGUA and TEMPUS which specifically deals with exchange with Eastern Europe) had the ambition, among other goals, to increase significantly the mobility of students in order to develop the European dimension of higher education. Student mobility was seen as a powerful means to support the creation of an internal market of professionals and qualified workers and the creation of a European attitude. Initially the European Commission had no competencies in education, because even after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 its powers in educational matters were restricted, and because direct strategies at harmonization of the structures of higher education were not considered as feasible, student mobility was the only means for Europeanization of higher education.

However, ERASMUS and SOCRATES are not the only frameworks of international student mobility in the world,

there is the 'University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific'-program (UMAP), established in 1991, for the Asia/Pacific region, which is equally noteworthy.

Besides this organized mobility, there is also 'spontaneous' mobility, taking place outside the various schemes and programs. As Gordon and Jallade (1996) have shown for the European situation, this spontaneous mobility can be attributed to a mixture of 'push' and 'pull' factors, such as national differences in access (numerous clauses regulations in certain disciplines) on the one hand and language and cultural considerations and the perceived quality differentials on the other hand.

The most important global movement is in the United States, which is the largest receiving country of foreign students with 34% of the OECD total (OECD 1997). The transatlantic mobility between Europe and the US for example, implemented on a multilateral and reciprocal basis under the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) is confronted with an increasing unbalance.

Not only the world-famous top research universities of the US exert an enormous attraction on mobile students all over the world, but also the second rank American universities receive important numbers of foreign students. The dominance of English as the lingua franca in contemporary science and scientific training and the most commonly mastered second language contributes to the fact that besides the US also the UK, Canada and Australia are among the top host countries world-wide.

It is no wonder that the newly industrializing economies of the Asian and Pacific region (Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong) are major sources of foreign students, who aspire to fill the ranks of the growing professional classes.

International student mobility increasingly is a regional and not only an intercontinental phenomenon. Regional economic integration processes also instigate student mobility

and international treaties such as NAFTA, ASEAN or APEC have proven to be very stimulating in this respect. The ERASMUS / SOCRATES program in Europe and the UMAP in the Asia-Pacific region are specifically designed to promote regional student mobility.

Of regional nature is also the NORDPLUS-program of student exchange in the Nordic countries with its original and attractive 'money follows student'-imperative (Nyborg 1996). Increasing student mobility itself has reinforced the conviction that one of the most effective means to prepare future graduates for the needs of an increasingly international professional life in a global economy is to study and live abroad. Powerful messages stress the important educational and social benefits, such as acquiring new and cross-cultural knowledge and competencies, improving foreign language proficiency (especially in English), establishing international personal and professional networks, familiarization with other countries and cultures, etc. In addition, host countries and institutions have strong beliefs in and commitments to student mobility.

Indeed, international student flows have become 'more trade than aid' in most host countries, since in many cases international students are or have become full-fee-paying students. Revenue generation has become an important rationale in institutional policies promoting recruitment of foreign students. A growing part of international student mobility thus is becoming market-driven rather than state driven or aid oriented (Scott 1998).

The international market in education services is becoming a booming sector and the international marketing of domestic universities and the recruitment of students are central elements of it. Some countries are developing well organized national policies in this field, such as France with its 1.058 associations in 132 countries of the Alliance Franqaise or Great Britain with the British Council operating 211 offices in 147 countries.

Education is seen by the Australian state as the fastest growing export industry. The number of full-fee paying international student enrollment rose from 7,131 in 1987 to more than 80,000 in 1995 (Smart and Ang 1996).

This tendency of 'commodification' seems to strengthen the already powerful social selectivity of international student mobility. Even within the ERASMUS-program, the selective nature of participation to such schemes has become evident. These schemes fit young, full-time students from families who can afford the substantial surplus-expenses associated with living and learning in another country.

## **2.2. Teaching staff mobility**

Although not as extensively researched as student mobility, staff mobility can be considered as the second most important form of internationalization in higher education. In a large number of regions and often specifically in certain areas of study such as business administration regional and international training networks for young researchers and professionals are established.

Traditionally international mobility among the professors is focused on research and scholarship and as a recent phenomenon education and teaching have gained significant mileage. Its development is stimulated by the growth of the global and increasingly international and competitive research enterprise with its many conferences, meetings and joint research projects, but also by the availability of cheap air travel.

The US and the UK are the major important exporters of academic labour, but compared to the domestic production of highly skilled academics the picture is much more diverse. Developing countries and countries in Eastern Europe face the problem of emigration of researchers and academic staff to the global centres of research. A massive problem of brain drain therefore exists on a global scale at the expense of developing and 'second world' regions of the world. Especially Africa faces a

huge problem of academic brain drain, caused by political instability and slow social-economic recovery (Mato 1999).

Mobility of professors and scientists seems to have encouraged the emergence of a global marketplace in scientists, rather than to have advanced the internationalization of higher education at a global scale.

Programs such as ERASMUS / SOCRATES and UMAP also promote regional teaching staff mobility projects alongside student mobility and some multilateral programs, such as Fulbright, specifically focus on staff mobility. In the preparatory phase of ERASMUS the 'Inter-university Cooperation Programs' provides opportunities for developing staff exchanges as part of a more or less regular cooperation between European higher education institutions. However, most of the mobility of academic staff within ERASMUS-projects is for relatively short periods. Many travelling professors point to problems associated with combining it with heavy teaching load in their mother universities and with limited financial and administrative support (Enders 1998). It is clear that within ERASMUS teaching staff mobility was not the most successful part.

### **2.3. Internationalization of curricula**

It has already been stressed that, for instance in the ERASMUS / SOCRATES program, student and staff mobility projects were supported because they were expected to induce curricular change in the collaborating institutions and department. There have been some adjustments of curricula to accommodate foreign students, **in the areas of economics and business studies, the humanities and social sciences (Van der Wende 1996)**. The rapid growth in international trade in professional services has provoked several professions to organize themselves at an international scale. These international professional associations have started to deal with issues of education and training, such as quality assurance, international minimum standards, criteria of

professionalism, accreditation, etc. Some professions have been very active in this matter, such as the engineering, the medical or the legal professions. Architects, psychologists, accountants and others are trying to develop international standards, which will lead to a greater convergence of curricula and quality criteria. The European Union for example increasingly deals with minimum standards of education and training in view of the mobility of labor and the recognition of entry into specific professions in the common market.

#### **2.4. Branch campuses**

More and more universities in the 'core' of the academic world, mostly in Anglo-Saxon countries, which tend to adopt a more market-oriented, entrepreneurial approach to the recruitment of students. They combine recruitment of foreign students with extending their educational supply to promising markets in other countries by setting up local campuses under the full authority of the mother institution. Complete programs from commencement through graduation are possible in this system, if the local state legally permits the granting of foreign diplomas and degrees on its territory.

#### **2.5. Institutional cooperation agreements and networks**

Collaboration between universities is hardly new, but institutional forms of cooperation agreements in the field of teaching itself are a very recent phenomenon. Nowadays, many universities sign cooperation agreements dealing with various aspects of education and teaching. Most, they are developed in the context of collaboration projects dealing with student and/or teaching staff exchange. For example, in the framework of ERASMUS-ICPs and certainly within the 'institutional contract' in SOCRATES, institutional relationships have been developing between European universities.

## **2.6. Mutual recognition agreements**

A much deeper institutional engagement is required in various forms of inter institutional agreements that in one way or another recognizes the educational programs of one institution to another. The 'Global Alliance for Transnational Education' (GATE) - an important international organization of businesses, higher education institutions and governmental agencies in the field of quality assurance, accreditation and certification in international education distinguishes the following forms (GATE st.; McBurie and Pollock 1998):

**Franchises:** under franchising agreements an institution grants a host institution in another country the permission to provide some of the programs and degrees of the first under mutually agreed conditions

**Twinning:** twinning agreements between higher education institutions in different countries are set up to offer joint programs. In both universities students follow exactly the same courses, have the same materials and pass the same examinations, be it that the academic staff is usually engaged locally.

Such agreements may lead to the establishment of important international university networks at a global scale. These agreements are made at the institutional level within the autonomy of the University, are mostly unknown to the political authorities. They also transgress national procedures and frameworks of educational planning, recognition of diplomas, accreditation and quality assurance.

## **2.7. Transnational university networks (incl. mergers of institutions)**

In some cases transnational inter-university recognition agreements can become so important that the cooperating

partners transform themselves in real transnational networks of institutions.

Especially in regions in the periphery of the academic world, where the state often exerts a rather weak command over higher education systems, it is probable that large scale transnational University networks will develop in the near future, clustering around some prestigious institutions in the core of the academic world. Degrees and diplomas however will be awarded within the legal framework of foreign higher education systems. Such transnational networks will look after the most marketable compromise of image building on the one hand, by using the names of their most prestigious partners, and freedom from national regulation in the fields of recognition of diplomas and quality assurance on the other hand.

### **3. CONSTRAINTS AND BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONALIZATION**

There are several constraints to the internationalization of higher education. Despite the widely acclaimed importance and necessity of active internationalization policies, various factors hinder the development of programs and policies. Many institutions all over the world face lack of adequate financial resources for major international initiatives.

The electronic survey on the GATE website mentions the following categories of governmental restrictions:

(1) National legislation and higher education policy (examples: laws limiting degrees to be conferred only by or through national universities; policies or laws discriminating against private/non-governmental institutions of higher education; differing approval or quality assurance processes for national and foreign educational providers; etc.);

(2) Qualifications authorities and policy: (example: policies which do not fully recognize foreign educational

credentials whether offered inside or outside national borders; etc.);

(3) Customs: (example: customs restrictions on certain types of cross border educational materials; etc.);

(4) Visas: (example: visa difficulties for students or teaching/administrative staff; etc.);

(5) Telecommunication laws: (example: restrictive use of national satellites or receiving dishes; etc.);

(6) Intellectual property rights: (example: countries with no national policy for or disregard for international agreements concerning intellectual property rights; etc.).

## **DISCUSSION:**

Although Universities have made immense contribution towards the up-liftment of human civilization, it also aspires to align the students according to global requirements. The student who has an appetite for learning is not satisfied to confine himself to spatial boundaries. Expansion due to internationalization and globalization brings enormous challenges and some Universities have kept pace with the changing demand but a lot still needs to be accomplished.

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