



## **Internationalization – Mobility, Competition and Co-operation**

**Christian Bode**

*[Introduction and questions to be dealt with at the Transversal Session on “Challenges for Internationalization of Higher Education in the European Region in a Globalizing World” at **the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in Europe Region: Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness**, 21-24 May 2009, Bucharest, Romania]*

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## Internationalization – Mobility, Competition and Co-operation

**Dr. Christian Bode**

Secretary General

DAAD - The German Academic Exchange Service

### I

From the 1990s on, the international dimension of higher education has gradually developed, alongside with the economic, cultural and political process of globalization, at a pace and with a dynamics unprecedented in history. Meanwhile, it has turned into one of the strongest **driving forces of the reform of higher education**, combining a tendency towards expansion and diversification with a strong element of convergence or “harmonization”.

Some of the characteristics of this process of internationalization are:

- (1) a growing **mobility** of students and academic staff and the emersion of a global „education market“, with an increasing number of institutions of higher education competing to attract paying clients or smart brains in an ever fiercer “war of talents”;
- (2) the **internationalization of curricula** by integrating international and intercultural elements into national study courses, often expanding them into international networks or double degree programmes;
- (3) the **dominance of the English language** as the lingua franca of the global scientific community, widely used in international conferences, for the publication of research findings or as teaching language in the international classroom;
- (4) an increasing „**exportation**“ of education and research services into developing and emerging countries, helping them to cover their domestic demand for highly qualified graduates and experts (transnational education);
- (5) a rapidly growing number of transnational **partnerships and networks** in the fields of study and research, as well as of international consortia of higher education;
- (6) the implementation of **international research schemes** trying to give answers to global challenges, such as climate change, water shortage, infectious diseases, pollution of the environment, lack of food;
- (7) the rapidly growing supra-regional **co-ordination of national policies of higher education**, following similar patterns (i.e. Bologna Process).

### II

These elements of internationalization are to be found, to a varying extent, in **all regions of the world**. This is why also UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the Europe Region: *Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness* [a regional meeting convened in the context of the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, UNESCO, 5-8 July 2009] is addressing these phenomena. Some of these changes are taking place spontaneously and on an individual basis, others result from the massive impact of institutions, governments and supranational organizations.

**Europe** is, at the moment, the area of the world where this process is most actively being steered by the political sphere and where it is, furthermore, enhanced on two different levels. On the one hand, there is a strong political commitment to the tuned reform of higher education throughout Europe widely known as “Bologna Process”. On the other hand, the European Commission has launched an impressive amount of funding schemes to further encourage the implementation of this process (the European mobility scheme ERASMUS and the 8<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Program in particular).

The major goals of the **Bologna Process** – mobility, quality assurance, competitiveness - are, of course, not restricted to the European Area of Higher Education. Many of them are also being discussed in other parts of the world. So, it is not surprising that there is a growing interest in supra-regional dialogue on these topics

and that mutual understanding is close at hand. It is only natural that UNESCO, in partnership with other organizations and institutions, would play an active role in this field.

### III

Despite the financial crisis we are facing at present, this development will continue. Most likely, its pace will even **accelerate in future years**. Global challenges ask for global answers and, thus, for enhanced international co-operation. To cooperate across borders means getting to know each other and acquiring a fair amount of intercultural competence. These are only some of the good reasons to put the internationalization of higher education on top of the agenda of national as well as supra-national policies of higher education to be dealt with at various meetings such the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education: *the New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development* and preceding it regional conferences as the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in Bucharest.

### IV

Today's financial and economic crisis shows that globalization tends to be a **risky enterprise** if it runs out of control. Those related to higher education being:

- the growing **commercialization** of higher education in a world where the role of education as a public good is no longer undisputed,
- the application of the **WTO maxims of free trade** to trans-national education, with the risk of limiting the steering capacity of national governments,
- the **brain gain of high potentials** from developing and emerging countries to the industrial countries, with their decreasing population and their need for skilled personnel, and,
- the disappearance of **cultural and linguistic diversity** due to the dominant strategies of harmonization and efficiency.

Therefore, there is a need to take the initiative to define **common goals and standards** for the ongoing process of internationalization of the global system of higher education, thus contributing to adapting it to the needs and interests of all stakeholders.

One of the major challenges of the future will be to fully benefit from the strong capacities of a global and competitive education market to enhance the quality of teaching and research, while at the same time preserving the solid basis of co-operation and solidarity on which the scientific approach in itself relies quite as much as our educational systems- in short, to balance competition and cooperation appropriately. **Competition and co-operation**, as paradoxical as this may seem at first sight, do not exclude each other in the realm of scientific co-operation, but may be developed, with a fair amount of good will and diplomacy, into a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

### V.

Following the assumption, that the internationalization of higher education is as desirable a development as it is indispensable, and nonetheless needs an orientation towards the common welfare, **the invited speakers at the Transversal Session on "Challenges for Internationalization of Higher Education in the European Region in a Globalizing World" are invited to address the following phenomena of internationalization and/or provide comments to the following general questions:**

- Has the internationalization in different regions of the world – and the dialogue between these regions - achieved a level which is in accordance with the global challenges?
- Which additional efforts need to be developed to steer and support the process of internationalization and who should be in charge?
- And specifically: Which role should UNESCO adopt as a global/multilateral organization?

In order to provide a more concrete factual and conceptual framework for our discussion a set of more specific questions have been formulated according to the above mentioned phenomena of internationalization

**(ad. 1) Mobility:**

1.1. Considering the fact, that only 2.7 million students (i.e. approximately 2% of all students) crossed the border to study in a different country in 2007, and considering furthermore that a study abroad not only contributes to personal qualification and education, but as well to mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence, we ask:

- Does the present extent of international education and mobility meet the needs of the 21st century?
- If not, what can we (higher education institutions, national governments, international and multilateral bodies) do in order to increase this rate substantially?
- Should we not establish and promote quantitative benchmarks? (like that one recently adopted at the Conference of the European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, that in 2020, at least 20 % of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad or the „Lincoln Act“ promoting the aim of „one million Americans abroad“)
- Who has to bear the responsibility for this enhancement of mobility: Mainly the countries of origin of mobile students (push factors), or the destination countries (pull factors), or both sides equally?
- Can we assess the European ERASMUS Programme as best practice and a model for our regions in the world? What are transferable learning outcomes from other mobility programmes?

1.2. Considering the fact, that flows of mobility between different countries and regions are extremely unbalanced (principal destination countries in North America, Europe, and Australia; principal sending countries in Asia; deficit balance also in Latin America, and in particular in Africa), we ask:

- What can be done to achieve a more balanced occurrence of exchange and mobility? In particular, how can we increase the number of students from the northern hemisphere heading to countries in the South?

1.3. Considering the fact, that study stays abroad in most cases involve considerable additional costs, we ask:

- What can be done to provide talented, but less fortunate students the same opportunities of international mobility? (scholarships, portability of student aid, tuition waiving during stays abroad, study loans for the means of studying abroad etc.) ?

1.4. Considering increasing marketing activities of higher education institutions on the global „education market“, we ask:

- Should guidelines of good practice in international marketing be installed, preventing from unfair competition and protecting the „consumer“ from dubious providers?
- If so: Who should be in charge of defining these guidelines, how should they be developed?

1.6. Considering the fact, that large numbers of scholars from developing countries remain in the (industrialized) host countries after having graduated, we ask:

- Is it correct to regard this phenomenon as „brain drain“, and does it really constitute always a loss for their home countries? Or would it make sense to regard this migration (also) as opening new possibilities for international co-operation for the countries of origin?
- How can we avoid or at least mitigate the undesirable effects of „brain drain“(cf. *Sur Place Stipends*; leaves for professionals for study abroad periods with guaranteed return into former position; funding programmes for re-migration and re-integration)?

1.7. Considering our knowledge and data-bases on international mobility, we ask:

- Are the available data on global mobility sufficient and reliable to make the right diagnoses and develop targeted strategies for improvements?
- If not: Who should collect, evaluate and publish data? (i.e. leading publication „Open Doors“ by the International Institute on Education, New York; EURODATA by ACA, Brussels; „*Wissenschaft weltoffen* – facts and figures“ by DAAD, Bonn)

## **(ad. 2) Internationalization of curricula:**

2.1. How can we ensure that students, who do not go abroad, learn about the international relevance and interconnections of their discipline? And how can we make sure that they learn foreign languages and acquire intercultural competences? (e.g. „Internationalization @ home“)

2.2. How can we ensure that international experience – which is commonly esteemed by employers – receives the same (or even higher) credit in the academic community, generating an incentive to international mobility? How can we ensure a fair and generous recognition of study credits and academic degrees earned abroad?

2.3. What has to be changed in order to integrate „windows of mobility“ into the study structure even of shorter programmes in (undergraduate) education?

## **(ad. 3) *Lingua franca* and other foreign languages:**

3.1 To be sure, there is for a number of pragmatic reasons a need for English as *lingua franca* as *the* common communication platform in the world. Yet, there is also a strong desire within the world community to retain language diversity and to promote it as a cultural experience. How can these two seemingly opposing approaches be accommodated? What successful concepts for securing multilingualism are there? And, more specifically, how can monolingual countries learn from multilingual countries?

3.2 If English-taught study degrees were to be expanded in non-English speaking countries, which quality standards must be applied for teachers and learners?

## **(ad. 4) Transnational education ‘off-shore’:**

4.1 There is increasing activity in transnational education, especially regarding study programmes offered by industrial countries to those in the developing world. Must this be regarded as a threat to the domestic tertiary sector and national autonomy? Or is this rather a benefit for these underdeveloped societies because it provides quality education that prevents brain drain of the national elites?

4.2 Is it necessary to establish new regulations, guidelines or a *Code of Good Conduct* in order to secure quality, trustworthiness and fairness of off-shore study programmes? And which role should be assigned to WTO and UNESCO?

## **(ad. 5) Partnership and networks:**

5.1 Is it true that the tradition of unilateral recruitment strategies in internationalisation is moving towards bilateral and multilateral institutional networks and associations, of which there are already a hundred (see *ACA - Handbook of International Associations in Higher Education*, Brussels 2009)?

5.2 Obviously, there is an asymmetric distribution of those networks according to region: there are 44 in Europe, 10 in the Americas, 11 in Asia and Oceania, 9 in Africa and 26 interregional or global networks (see ‘Handbook’). Thus, what can be done to promote and to strengthen south-south networks and north-south networks?

5.3 Are dual degree or mutual degree schemes for graduates and postgraduates a suitable instrument for promoting mobility, innovation and cooperation? And what can be done to enhance these programmes?

## **(ad. 6) International research programmes:**

6.1 Do global problems rightfully enjoy priority on the agendas of research institutions and research promoting bodies? Is this research appropriately coordinated in an international setting? Do we need new mechanisms to reinforce synergy-effects?

6.2. Is academic research in industrialised countries sufficiently concerned about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)? Have universities in underdeveloped countries taken on the task that has been assigned to them? Is development aid for education and higher education powerful enough to turn these into instruments of sustainable development?

**(ad. 7) Coordination of national politics:**

7.1 Is increasing cross-border synchronisation and coordination in higher education policy desirable or even necessary? Are the efforts taken sufficient to meet future challenges?

7.2 What would be the legitimate basis of international or even global coordination of education policies? And which parts should be excluded in order to preserve the “richness in species”, and with it, the creative potential of university systems?

7.3 In this sense, is the Bologna Process – now being extended for another ten years – a blueprint for other parts of the world?

7.4 Do we need a supra-regional dialogue? What would be the right platform?

7.5 What might be the contribution of the forthcoming 2009 World Conference on Higher Education: *the New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development* and its follow-up?