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THE MAIN TRENDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGIES

Abstract. The importance of internationalization for higher education is difficult to overestimate. The increased number of strategies at European, national and institutional level aimed at enhancing higher education internationalization is a positive trend. The programmes, projects, institutions, national and regional policies and strategies is the subject of many governance discussions regarding the internationalization of higher education. There is no general applicable model of internationalization. Most national strategies in Europe and worldwide are focused on mobility, economic gains, recruitment of international students and enhancement of international visibility. The countries with high internationalization results incorporate these approaches into the comprehensive strategies, in which internationalization of the curriculum, digital learning and intercultural competencies as a means to enhance the quality of education and research receive more attention. There is a need to break down the barrier between internationalization of science and education. The interaction between the different stakeholders in higher education is essential for the development of internationalization strategy. It is important to give more autonomy to higher education institutions and governmental support in the development of higher education internationalization, in recognizing the importance of internationalization for the society, in building a dialogue among people of different nations and cultural backgrounds, and for the business sector through talent recruitment, research and commercialization of the innovations. The overview of the main trends in the internationalization strategies in five European Union countries (Finland, France, Italy, Romania and Spain) proved that cooperation in the quadrangle “education–government–business–civil society” provides internationalization enforcement increasing the competitiveness of the higher education system at the global market.

Keywords: higher education internationalization; internationalization strategy; internationalization policies; international cooperation; mobility.

Higher education cannot be aside from internationalization process. Students, lecturers and universities` staff forced to seek the opportunities for international development, including the internationalization in the university`s mission and involve of different stakeholders. As the result there is a need for the leadership of the university to push and support the internationalization process. It is expected that the results of internationalization will extend beyond the educational area and will contribute to the strengthening of international social relationships and meeting social challenges. The beneficiaries of internationalization are the participants of the academic community, and each of them presents its own requirements: professors and scientists are interested in new opportunities for the research, career development and international reputation; students and their families - in improving the quality of education and successful employment, heads of universities - in attraction additional funding, increased visibility of the university and capacity building; governments - in training high-quality personnel and strengthening the position of the country in the global market.

“In the current environment, internationalization of higher education is identified as a response to globalization, and it is in that response that it shifts away from social to more political and economic rationales, from cooperation to competition and to the emergence of new dimensions such as virtual learning and cross-border delivery” [1].

Necessity of the development of internationalization is motivated by various factors, including the need to expand access to sources advanced knowledge, new features for building partnerships and development intercultural communication skills, as well as strengthening civil society, training of personnel ready for work in the conditions of globalization, increasing the reputation of universities, distribution ideas of peace and mutual understanding, etc. [2, p.5].

Although many institutions see the adding value of the internationalization process, it is useful to study what specific benefits are expected from the internationalization in the higher education institutions worldwide. The results of the IAU Global Survey show three ranked benefits of internationalization by

the regions (Table 1). In Europe, the most important benefit identified is “improved quality of teaching and learning” but, for example, in Asia and Pacific Europe and in North America, it was “increased international awareness of / deeper engagement with global issues by students” [3]

Table1

Three top-ranked benefits of internationalization: regional results (IAU4th Global Survey)

	Europe	Asia and Pacific Europe	North America	Latin America and Caribbean	Middle East	Africa
<i>Increased international awareness of / deeper engagement with global issues by students</i>	3	1	1	3		
<i>Improved quality of teaching and learning</i>	1	2	3	2	1	3
<i>Enhanced international cooperation and capacity-building</i>	2				2	2
<i>Strengthened institutional research and knowledge production capacity</i>		3			3	1
<i>Enhanced internationalization of the curriculum</i>			2			
<i>Enhanced prestige/profile for the institution</i>						
<i>Increased international networking by faculty and researchers</i>				1		
<i>Increased/diversified revenue generation</i>						
<i>Opportunity to benchmark/compare institutional performance within the context of international good practice</i>						

Source: [3].

The IAU Global Survey has identified not only benefits but also the risks of the internationalization process (Table 2).

Table 2

The three top international ranked potential risks to institutions associated with internationalization:
regional results (IAU4th Global Survey)

	Europe	Asia and Pacific	North America	Latin America and Caribbean	Middle East	Africa
<i>International opportunities accessible only to students with financial resources</i>	2	1		1	1	1
<i>Difficulty regulating locally the quality of foreign programmes offered</i>	1			2		3
<i>Excessive competition among higher education institutions</i>	3	2				
<i>Over-emphasis on internationalization at the expense of other priorities of importance for staff and students</i>		2			3	
<i>Pursuit of international partnerships/policies only for reasons of prestige</i>		3		3		
<i>Brain drain</i>					2	2
<i>Too much focus on recruitment of fee paying international students</i>						
<i>Over-use of English as a medium of instruction</i>						
<i>Homogenization of curriculum</i>						
<i>Reputational risk derived from our institution's offshore activity</i>						

Source: [3].

European institutions selected “difficulty regulating locally the quality of foreign programmes offered” as the most significant risk. The issues linked to recognition of periods of study taken abroad remain a serious concern for institutions worldwide, including European countries. It is also important to note that “brain drain” continues to be seen as an important risk for institutions in Africa and the Middle East, but is not selected in any other world region. Same is for “pursuit of international partnerships/policies only for reasons of prestige” that is defined as the third most significant risk by

institutions in Asia and Pacific Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean, but is not seen in any other world region [3].

Five countries-EU member states (Finland, France, Italy, Romania and Spain) were selected to analyze the main features in their national strategic policies in the higher education internationalization. The brief overview of this comparison is presented in the Table 3.

Table 3
The main features in their national strategic policies in the higher education internationalization

	Finland	France	Italy	Romania	Spain
<i>The direction in European programmes and policies for internationalisation</i>	The emphasis on mobility of students, teachers and researchers.	Policies related to French speaking countries.	The concept of “good university” aimed at rewarding performance and opening up the system.	Joint capacity building projects and mobility initiatives.	Projects and programmes for ongoing internationalization developments.
<i>National policies aspects</i>	International mobility and internationalization of the curriculum.	A multi-actor, multi-pronged approach, internationalization at home and abroad.	Academic programmes taught in English, encouraging double and joint degree programmes as well as short term academic exchanges.	Strategies to attract foreign students (focus on Moldova), mobility and cultural cooperation with the Romanian diaspora.	The focus on research and innovations.
<i>Additional stakeholders and funding schemes for internationalisation</i>	Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation (CIMO)	The regions, the departments, and the cities have initiatives to encourage and finance mobility, bilateral cooperation and research projects; companies participate in the funding of French programmes delivered abroad.	Italian Foreign Ministry (funded opportunities for study and research); Italian Culture on the Net (courses in Italian language and culture online); Invest Your Talent in Italy (English taught master’s in ICT, management and design); Italian Trade Agency and Chambers of Commerce, The Italian Confederation of Industry, The Regional Governments of Italy (scholarships).	Agency for Students Loans and Scholarships	The Banco Santander (scholarships for international mobility and support for Spanish language learning around the world); Fundación Carolina (scholarships to international students, particularly from Latin America).

Source: completed according to [3].

Finnish higher education already meets many European goals for the internationalization, including the student mobility target of 20 % set out in the EHEA Leuven Communiqué. As a whole, the Finnish higher education system is functioning according to the EU standards: institutions are well funded, they have appropriate infrastructure, quality assurance schemes, research and teaching are conducted at an internationally competitive level and in accordance with academic values [4].

Nonetheless, there are several challenges for furthering the process of internationalization:

- Finnish higher education institutions must become more quality internationalized;
- The structured approach to digital learning, including MOOCs, is needed. Clear strategies and policies on the use of information and communication technologies are lacking;
- Internationalization at home and the internationalization of the curriculum [3].

French strategy for the internationalization of higher education has been built on the principles of cooperation and influence and on attracting highly qualified talent. The national strategies for higher

education and research encourage more quality, more inclusion, more European involvement and more funding diversification [5].

Some of the strategic objectives that have been proposed at national and institutional levels include:

- Enhancing national policy to improve the reception of international students, young researchers and staff and encourage outgoing mobility through the Campus France;
- Improving the balance between national, regional and institutional strategies;
- Encouraging flexible and sustainable European and international cooperation strategies in respect of research and education at university level;
- Developing the systematic use of digital programmes in the curricula and in cooperation activities;
- Optimizing and strengthening the relationship with the economic sector in developing joint programmes in targeted regions and countries (stakeholders engagement) [6].

The internationalization process in Italy was driven by the Bologna process. Italian universities are taking active steps to internationalize higher education. They are given the right conditions to become strong players in the European and international arena. Italian internationalization intentions point to an increase in the number of programmes taught in English, partnership with other institutions, exchange programmes and recruitment of international students. Internationalization of the curriculum in the Italian context means teaching in English or developing joint degrees and there is no specific mention made of online learning or virtual mobility. Efforts are being made to internationalize the academic community through stronger use of cooperation agreements and developing creative solutions for longer-term staff exchanges. It is important to add that a small number of Italian universities open branch campuses outside Italy, often in collaboration with local institutions [7].

Internationalization of higher education is seen as a key element for Romanian higher education reform. Internationalization of higher education was always a constant in terms of governmental priorities. Even though internationalization of higher education has featured high on the Romanian agenda for two and a half decades, Romania's internationalization efforts are still dispersed, managed in an ad focused on credit mobility, attracting degree-seeking foreign students, supporting the Romanian speaking diaspora and on research partnerships, clear attempts are being made to increase strategic efforts at both national and institutional level [8; 9].

Spanish higher education institutional activities are aimed to expand its international agenda and profile. This work has been guided by a strong affiliation with European Union efforts to stimulate mobility and inter-institutional cooperation; a fundamental commitment to cooperation for development through the strengthening of connections with regions of the world of historical relevance to Spain (particularly Latin America). Spain is clearly attractive to international students, and many Spanish students show an interest in international mobility [10].

There are several key limitations of Spanish internationalization: unstable and insufficient funding; an ongoing focus on the quantitative aspects of mobility; short-term leadership (and priorities) within institutions [11].

To sum up, we can make the following recommendations on the internationalization of higher education for all policy levels:

- To increase the dominance of English as the language of international communication in research and education, to stimulate bilingual and multilingual learning at the primary and secondary education level as a language policy based on diversity in European higher education area.
- The synergy of higher education internationalization with internationalization at other levels of education (primary, secondary, vocational and adult education) for their inclusion.
- The importance of work placements in internationalization of higher education (to combine language and culture skills training, study abroad and work placements).
- To improve "Internationalization at Home" integration into the formal and informal curriculum.
- To break down the barrier between internationalization of research and education, at the European, the national and the institutional level, to enhance opportunities.

Most national strategies for internationalization are aimed at excellence in mobility, short and long-term economic benefits, attraction of talented students and staff and international recognition. That means that the introduction of the idea of using internationalization of the curriculum as a tool for raising

the role of the European Union in the development of higher education internationalization needs significant forces. Recognition of internal internationalization as the third condition of the strategy of internationalization adopted by the European Commission as well as national strategies could be a good starting point. However, in order to make it real additional actions are needed, like on European, and national, and especially at the institutional level. It is important to note that positive impact of the internationalization will only take place in a case of interaction between higher education structures with various stakeholders.

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