

Internationalisation of higher education: European experiences

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Abstract ‘Internationalisation’ is generally defined as increasing cross-border activities amidst persistence of borders, while ‘globalisation’ refers to similar activities concurrent to an erosion of borders. Study mobility is viewed as the most visible component in this framework in Europe with ERASMUS as the largest scheme of temporary mobility. ERASMUS was a trigger for a qualitative leap of internationalisation strategies and policies since the 1990s: towards cooperation and mobility on equal terms, and towards systematic and strategic internationalisation. The ‘Bologna Process’ aimed to make higher education more attractive to students from other parts of the world and to facilitate intra-European mobility; however, many other activities are needed to stimulate mobility, and the Bologna Process pursues many other objectives. It remains to be seen whether supra-national and national policies and institutional strategies will continue to opt for wide-ranging cooperation based on mutual trust or whether the ‘competition paradigm’ will determine the scene.

Keywords Internationalisation · Mobility · International cooperation · Bologna process · ERASMUS programme

The role of internationalisation in higher education discourses and policies

Long-term trends can be noted in public debates on higher education, both within individual countries and at international and European levels. For example, the emergence of mass higher education has been discussed since the 1970s and is referred to in one way or another again and again in various contexts. Examples include in the context of establishing non-university higher education, the funding of study programmes, quality assurance, specific support for an ‘elite’ or ‘excellence’ sector, or new challenges of the knowledge society. Concurrently, a single issue, or in some cases two or three issues, can also become the absolute focus of the debate for much shorter periods, for about five or at most ten years. Key terms are coined to raise attention, to prioritise the debate and to influence fashions.

In the last four or five decades, similar debates have taken place concerning key issues of higher education in many economically advanced countries. This held true for internationalisation, although the proportion of foreign students among all students in some countries was more than ten times as high as in other economically advanced countries, which rarely took in foreign students. The striking similarity of debates across varying conditions might evoke the suspicion that international debates, or the supra-national organisations often stimulating such debates, contribute to a spread of ideas like epidemics.

International components of higher education are by no means new. Historians refer in this respect to medieval times. International education statistics have been systematically collected in recent decades, and the most frequently employed indicator for internationalisation shows a rise of the proportion of foreign students among students in

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economically advanced countries. It is obvious, though, that internationalisation of higher education became a key issue in debates and policies in the 1990s. Experts agree that the single strongest driver for this emphasis was the success story of the ERASMUS programme, which has successfully stimulated and supported temporary mobility of students within Europe.

It was to be expected that the high public popularity of such ideas could not be sustained for a long period. There were already signs in the late 1990s of turning away from the term ‘internationalisation’ towards the more frequent use of ‘globalisation’. Eventually, however, the Bologna process succeeded in absorbing the highest attention in public discourse, and various aspects of internationalisation and globalisation continued to be relatively high on the agenda as one of the major issues pursued in the Bologna framework.

The aim of this article, first, is to discuss the major lines of debates, policies and trends of internationalisation in Europe primarily with respect to teaching and learning since about 1990, while also making reference to prior developments. Second, attention will be paid to research on international aspects of higher education. The arguments presented are certainly influenced by the author’s effort to analyse available research on internationalisation of higher education (Kehm and Teichler 2007; Teekens and de Wit 2007) and his personal views (Teichler 2007b).

Major dimensions and terms

Key thematic areas

Key analyses of internationalisation in higher education point to a broad range of international dimensions in higher education (de Wit 2002; van der Wende 2001; Altbach and Teichler 2001; OECD 2004; Knight 2004). One might argue, though, that the term internationalisation has been employed regarding seven themes (Teichler 2007b, pp. 10–11):

- Physical mobility, notably of students, but also of academic staff and occasionally administrative staff as well, is obviously the most visible international activity, and it is in the forefront of programmes aiming to promote internationalisation.
- Recognition across borders of study achievements is a second major theme which, naturally, is clearly linked to the first one: are the results of learning in one country accepted as equivalent to that which is expected to be learned in another country, if persons are mobile at the beginning of their study, during the course of study, upon graduation or in later stages of learning and work, and what endangers and facilitates such acceptance?

- Other modes of transfer of knowledge across borders have less been the focus of recent public debates, but certainly have altogether a stronger weight than physical mobility of students and scholars: e.g. international knowledge transfer through media (printed publications as the traditionally open mode of transfer within and across countries, patents as an example of knowledge transfer with financial constraints, virtual communication for varied purpose, and ‘trans-national education’ as modes of transporting study programmes across borders).
- International orientations and attitudes, or, in contrast, national orientations and attitudes of the actors, the students and possibly the academics are a major issue of internationalisation. For example, various programmes for the support of student mobility were established with the hope, in mind or officially declared, that cognitive enhancement would be accompanied with attitudinal change: growing ‘global understanding’, more favourable views of the partner country, a growing empathy with other cultures, etc.

These five themes can certainly be viewed as genuine themes of ‘internationalisation’. Two other themes play a role as well and are often referred to when ‘internationalisation’ is on the agenda, though one could argue that they are at most loosely related to it:

- The similarity or heterogeneity of national systems of higher education plays an ambivalent role in this respect. On the one hand, a variety of national higher education systems, for example, are considered beneficial to provide mobile students the opportunity to learn from contrasts, and thus to develop a more reflective mind and a better understanding of diversity. On the other hand, for example, the Bologna Declaration called for a structural convergence of higher education systems in Europe, among other reasons, as a means of facilitating intra-European student mobility.
- Finally, internationalisation is underscored as an argument for almost any higher education reform. No matter whether one discusses the steering of higher education systems, the management of higher education institutions, quality and relevance of research and study programmes, efficiency of the utilisation of resources or other topics: higher education should improve in those respects, in order not to fall behind in worldwide competition and to be successful according to ‘international standards’. Top quality is called ‘world class’, efforts for quality enhancement are viewed as part of ‘global competition’, and regional and national approaches are often seen as academically less demanding, though some experts claim that the divides between ‘regional’, ‘national’ and ‘global’ are vanishing.

Strictly speaking, these are seven areas of direct or indirect international processes, substances and linkages. The term internationalisation, in addition, hints at a trend towards 'more'. Terms with the ending '-sation', if the trend is viewed as predominantly positive, usually signal that there was a problem in the past, there is an opportunity for improvement and there are trends facilitating the grasping of this opportunity.

In fact, the European debate on internationalisation in higher education since the 1990s has a strong positive undercurrent: internationalisation is expected to serve peace and mutual understanding, quality enhancement, a richer cultural life and personality development, the increase of academic quality, technological innovation, economic growth and societal well-being. This does not mean, however, that negative elements are not also visible: additional burdens and costs for the individuals and higher risks as far as success is concerned, more efforts for academic and administrative support on the part of the institutions, misunderstandings and new mistrust, chauvinistic attitudes and—last but not least—'brain drain'. However, predominantly positive expectations were clearly the drivers of the debates, policies and in actions addressing the internationalisation of higher education since the 1990s.

Internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation

When higher education issues are discussed on a supra-national basis, three terms are most often employed in Europe (Teichler 2004): international, European and global.

If references are made to a trend or a policy direction, we talk of internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation (cf. the overviews in Blumenthal et al. 1996; de Wit 2002; Wächter 1999). The uses of these three terms are similar in two respects (Knight 1997; Scott 1998; van der Wende 2001). First, all the three terms claim there is a trend or a policy direction away from a more or less closed national system of higher education and therefore, as will be pointed out below, towards a growing role for the long-distance transport of knowledge in higher education and a more complex setting of multilevel actors and other forces. Second, all the three terms might refer either to the changing context which poses a challenge for higher education or to changes which occur within higher education itself.

The uses of the three terms, however, differ in two respects. First, they vary in their main meaning:

- Internationalisation tends to address an increase of cross-border activities amidst a more or alle persistent national system of higher education.
- Globalisation tends to assume that borders and national systems as such get blurred or might even disappear.

- Europeanisation is the regionally oriented version of either internationalisation or globalisation. At present, it is more often the regional version of internationalisation than of globalisation (cf. Race 1997).

Second, specific issues tend to be linked to the use of the individual terms:

- Internationalisation is often discussed in relation to physical mobility, academic cooperation and academic knowledge transfer, as well as international education.
- Europeanisation is frequently addressed with reference to cooperation and mobility. Beyond that, this term also covers such issues as integration, convergence of contexts, structures and substance (European dimension, European culture and European higher education space) or to segmentation between regions of the world ('fortress Europe').
- Globalisation is often associated with competition and market-steering, trans-national education and finally with commercial knowledge transfer (Middlehurst 2000; Sadlak 2001).

One might ask in this context, how the terms internalisation and globalisation relate to each other. Are they opposites? Do they express degrees of difference on a continuum? Or are they related to each other dialectally in a way that every border-crossing leads to something of a crumbling of borders, and that every global pressure leads to a national border-construction?

One might also ask whether the issues we like to discuss in close relationship to these terms are bound to be seen as closely tied to individual terms, or whether they are more or less coincidentally related to one of these terms and also could be linked to the others. For example, could trans-national education be linked to internalisation as well, or is it bound to be linked to globalisation?

Since the late 1990s, we note a growing popularity of the term 'globalisation' in Europe as well as in other parts of the world, almost displacing the term 'internalisation'. 'Global' is often employed merely to depict supra-national trends and policies related to marketisation, increasing supra-national competition as well as the growth of trans-national education and commercial knowledge transfer. It seems to be used without any concern as to whether these trends and policies are really related to a blurring of borders. Often, 'global' could be substituted by 'supra-national', 'worldwide', or 'world competition society'.

Internationalisation or 're-internationalisation'?

The claim that higher education is internationalising or ought to be is somewhat surprising, because universities have long been considered one of society's most

international institutions. The knowledge stored, generated and transmitted is often universal (i.e. not systematically bound by borders). It has long been seen as desirable to gather systematic information from all over the world and to generate innovation on a world scale. Most academics hold cosmopolitan values in high esteem. Cross-border communication and cross-border reputation seem to be viewed as almost identical with ‘quality’, the most positive thing in academia.

We first note, however, that in the past higher education was divided between universal or international substance and national structure or organisation, be it funding, regulatory framework, governance, curricula, or credentials (Kerr 1990, p. 5). Second, international activities, though principally accepted as valuable, are often relatively small in size. For example, the two percent who were mobile as students is lower than migration of persons who never enrolled in higher education (Teichler and Jahr 2001, pp. 455–456).

Historians, however, inform us that the strong national focus of higher education, coupled with relatively low levels of mobility, might have been temporary phenomena, i.e. prevailing through the two hundred years of the dominance of the nation state, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, there are estimates that intra-European student mobility, now possibly on the level of about 3%, stood around 10% in the seventeenth century (Neave 2002, p. 181). Thus, ‘re-internationalisation’ might be a more appropriate term to describe recent developments.

One might add that some scholars—most consistently Knight (2004)—defined globalisation and internationalisation in a different way: globalisation as the economic, political and societal forces pushing higher education towards greater international involvement; and internationalisation as the activities of higher education institutions in response to these forces. These definitions, though, can be viewed as a misunderstanding both of the societal contexts of higher education and the activities of the higher education institutions. We note both increasing border-crossing activities amidst a persistence of national boundaries and a blurring of national boundaries, and we also note both international strategies and activities of higher education institutions and scholars driven by an understanding that the borders are relatively persistent, or by a view that they are largely blurred. Similarly, we also note varying views as to whether international activities ought to be taken as a frame of reference to strengthen cooperation and open knowledge transfer, or to underscore rivalries between institutions and countries and the commercialisation of international activities.

Student mobility and recognition of study abroad: developments in the 1990s

Quantitative developments in student mobility

Student mobility has always been conceived as one of the key elements of the international aspects of higher education. Therefore, the increase in student mobility is obviously a good starting point for illustrating the internationalisation trend.

International educational statistics on education in Europe, collected by UNESCO, together in recent years with OECD and EUROSTAT, do not inform us primarily about ‘inwardly mobile’ and ‘outwardly mobile’ students, but rather about ‘foreign students’ and ‘students studying abroad’. Ironically, the more internationally mobile people become, the less their nationality is an indication of mobility. ‘Mobile students’ differ from ‘foreign students’ because,

- On the one hand, some foreign students have not been mobile for the purpose of study, but have lived and learned in the country of study before they have started to study;
- On the other hand, some persons move from somewhere else to the country of their citizenship for the purpose of study.

Moreover, statistics on foreign students are in various respects incomplete: some countries do not deliver data and some deliver according to other definitions, furthermore data tends to be incomplete as regards those sectors of ‘tertiary education’ not considered ‘higher education’ and regarding doctoral candidates. Finally, some countries do not include temporarily mobile students (Kelo et al. 2006).

The total absolute number of foreign students worldwide was about 200,000 in the mid-1950s. It surpassed 500,000 in 1970. It reached one million in the late 1970s and was about 1.2 million in 1987, when the ERASMUS programme was established. Within the following 17 years, i.e. until 2004, the number of foreign students reached 2.5 million (Cummings 1991; UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2006).

However, the total number of students in tertiary education increased at more or less the same pace during the same period. Thus, the *study abroad rate* remained constant at about two percent. The rates of foreign students within Europe, according to the available statistics, seem to have increased during this five-decade period, from less than three to more than seven percent. This is primarily due to the fact that the absolute number of students increased to a higher extent outside Europe, notably in developing countries, as a combined effect of demographic

development and a higher growth of enrolment rates, and only to a very limited extent due to a relatively growing popularity of Europe as a destination for study abroad.

After world war II: the hope for conciliation and mutual understanding

After World War II, there was widely felt shock at the inhumanity of the preceding years. Enormous hatred between countries and even genocide had emerged in regions of the world where people had been proud of cultural diversity, had respected human values and rights across cultures and countries, and where cosmopolitan values were highly appreciated. Under these conditions, international mobility was expected not only to spread educational and professional achievement but also to contribute to furthering universal and cosmopolitan values and enhancing mutual understanding across countries.

The movement of advocating a ‘junior year abroad’ in the United States, as well as the Fulbright programme established in 1948, was based on the hope that study abroad could enhance international understanding (cf. Altbach and Teichler 2001). When Western European countries began to cooperate in the 1950s, education was viewed as an important means to overcome mistrust. Also, mobility of students in Eastern Europe was considered a means of political integration of the countries politically dominated by the Soviet Union.

Many empirical research projects, however, provide evidence that students neither become more internationally minded nor friendlier to their host country during a short period of study abroad. Yet students interested in international mobility and actually studying abroad are more internationally minded and more open to cultural diversity than those who remain in their home country all the time. There seem to be long-lasting socialisation effects towards internationalisation in which mobility during the course of study might play a supporting role (Oppen et al. 1990).

Recognition of higher education: the European conventions

The Council of Europe, an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1949 for cooperation in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, with related involvement in educational issues, was active from its inception in the area of higher education recognition. Three European conventions were signed in the 1950s and subsequently ratified by most member countries (the overview in NARIC 1987, and the analysis in Teichler 2003).

The European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities, signed in 1953, provides that each signatory ‘shall recognise for the

purpose of admission to the universities situated in its territory, admission to which is subject to state control, the equivalence of those diplomas awarded in the territory of each other contracting party which constitute a requisite qualification for admission to similar institutions in the country in which these diplomas were awarded’.

The European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of Study, signed in 1956, provides, initially for a few fields of study only, that where the State is competent in matters of equivalence, each signatory ‘shall recognise a period of study spent by a student of modern languages in another member country of the Council of Europe as equivalent to similar period spent in his home university, provided that the authorities of the first-mentioned university have issued to such a student a certificate attesting that he has completed the said period of study to their satisfaction’.

The European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications, signed in 1959, provides that where the State is competent in matters of the equivalence of university qualifications, the signatories ‘shall grant academic recognition to university qualifications conferred by a university situated in the territory of another contracting party’. Recognition—this Convention applies only to universities, not to other higher education institutions—will entitle the holder to:

- ‘Pursue further university studies and sit for academic examination on completion of such studies with a view to proceeding to a further degree, including that of a doctorate, on the same conditions as those applicable to nationals of the Contracting Party, where admission to such studies and examinations depends on the possession of a similar national university qualification...
- ‘Use an academic title conferred by a foreign university, accompanied by an indication of its origin’.

The practical relevance of these conventions faded over the years because more precise bilateral conventions were signed in large numbers and because other multilateral conventions (e.g. in the Nordic countries or the countries of the Warsaw Pact) gained momentum, but they turned out to be important initial steps of underscoring the equivalence of study programmes in Europe (cf. Deloz 1986).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, UNESCO began to explore the possibility of studying the comparability and equivalence of studies, diplomas and qualifications aimed at establishing an international recommendation or convention worldwide. The aim turned out to be too ambitious, and UNESCO turned to the promotion of regional cooperation in this respect. This has led to various regional conventions, among them by the States of the Europe Region in 1979 (additionally including, at that time, Israel, the United States and Canada).

The Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees Concerning Higher Education in the Europe Region addressed issues of recognition of entry qualifications, study periods, and interim qualifications as well as academic degrees and titles, in a similar way to its predecessor conventions signed under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Beyond that, the UNESCO convention advocated flexible criteria for the evaluation of equivalences, suggested improvements be made to the exchange of information regarding recognition and encouraged the national authorities to recognise professional credentials as well, without, however, calling for a clear professional recognition (cf. Dolezal 1996, p. 15).

In 1997, the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region was signed in Lisbon under the joint auspices of the Council of Europe and UNESCO; it also addressed the European Community as a potential signatory party. It calls for recognition with a more demanding voice, and is far more specific with regard to the implementation of these goals than preceding multilateral conventions in Europe (Council of Europe 1997). With respect to recognition regarding access to higher education, periods of study and qualifications, the Lisbon Convention states as follows:

- ‘Each Party shall recognise the qualifications issued by other Parties meeting the general requirements for access to higher education in those Parties for the purpose of access to programmes belonging to its higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the general requirements for access in the Party in which the qualification was obtained and in the Party in which recognition of the qualification is sought’;
- Periods of study should also be recognised as equivalent ‘unless substantial differences can be shown’, and
- ‘To the extent that recognition is based on the knowledge and skills certified by the higher education qualification, each Party shall recognise the higher education qualifications conferred in another Party, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification in the Party in which recognition is sought’.

EU support for student mobility: the central role of ERASMUS

The predecessor organisations of the EU, the European Coal and Steel Community, established in 1951, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community, both established in 1957 and eventually the European Community, established in the

early 1980s, did not play any significant role in matters of cooperation and recognition in the domain of higher education. In the early years, matters of professional recognition for the sake of facilitating occupational mobility as well as a certain degree of coordination of vocational education were the only educational issues addressed (see Neave 1984).

From the 1970s onward, the European Community became the most active political actor in Europe in stimulating cross-border mobility of students and reinforcing recognition of study in another European country (de Wit 2002; European Commission 1994; Wächter et al. 1999). In 1971, the first meeting of ministers of education in the framework of the EEC took place. They proposed to draft a community action programme in the field of education. Eventually, in 1976, the European Council, which is the assembly of national government heads of the member states, agreed that the EEC should play a role in selected matters of education and adopted the first ‘Education Action Programme’. Accordingly, cooperation between member states was to be realised, notably regarding youth unemployment. A decision was taken to establish a pilot programme of cooperation and mobility in higher education, the so-called Joint Study Programmes (JSP). These steps were undertaken with the understanding that the activities of cooperation should not create pressure towards a convergence of the national higher education systems but, on the contrary, should respect and reinforce the cultural diversity of Europe. Students’ exposure to contrasting study experiences in other European countries fits well into this concept (Smith 1979).

The JSP provided financial support, from 1976 to 1986, to a few hundred multinational networks of departments from higher education institutions, which cooperated in curricular and organisational matters for the purpose of improving the value of temporary study in another European country and ensuring a high level of recognition on return. Evaluation studies confirmed the impressive results of this pilot scheme (Dalichow and Teichler 1986; Opper et al. 1990), but argued that temporary student mobility in Europe would become popular only if scholarships were provided to students.

From 1986 to the early 1990s, the European Community established 14 programmes aiming to provide support for European cooperation in education (Kehm 1994). The largest and certainly the most successful one, ERASMUS, (acronym for European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was established in 1987. Notably, it provided scholarships for a period of up to one year to mobile students as well as financial support for various activities of the networks of cooperating departments under the conditions that they strive for organisational improvement as well as curricular coordination, with

the aim of assuring the recognition of the study achievement at the host institution on return by the home institution. Additionally, support was made available for curricular innovation, teaching staff exchange, information activities and so forth (Teichler and Maiworm 1997, pp. 3–16).

In the mid-1990s, after educational activities have been endorsed as a regular domain of EU policy in the Treaty of Maastricht signed in 1992, the various European education programmes were restructured and merged into the large umbrella programmes of SOCRATES for education and LEONARDO DA VINCI for vocational training. ERASMUS became a sub-programme of SOCRATES. Continuous support was provided for student mobility, again under the condition that recognition was provided for, and support was enlarged for teaching staff mobility and for projects of curricular innovation. However, institutional support was no longer granted to networks of departments but rather to the institutions of higher education, under the condition that they formulate European policies and safeguard a good quality of cooperation with partners through bilateral contracts (Barblan et al. 1998). Altogether, ERASMUS support was expected to strive more strongly than in the past for the enhancement of a ‘European Dimension’ in the course programmes and also to serve non-mobile students.

Beginning in 1989, the EC supported the establishment of a European Credit Transfer System (ETCS). After a pilot period, all institutions of higher education awarded ERASMUS support were recommended to grant recognition by means of credit transfer (Wuttig 2001).

Actually, a major evaluation study of ERASMUS undertaken in 2000 (Teichler 2002) shows that the numbers of ERASMUS-supported students increased from about 3,000 in 1987/88 to about 86,000 in 1997/98. The expansion of ERASMUS was implemented without any major change in the composition of students; for example the parental educational background of ERASMUS students remained only marginally more privileged than the average of students in the participating European countries. The frequency and nature of serious problems encountered remained more or less constant. This also holds true as regards financial matters, though the ERASMUS scholarship initially more or less covered the average additional costs of study abroad, but fell to a substantially lower level over the years.

ERASMUS students of the late 1980s and the late 1990s reported similar positive outcomes in terms of improvement of foreign language proficiency, knowledge of the host country and cultural learning. Moreover, half of the students at both points in time believed that their academic progress during the ERASMUS period was higher than during a corresponding period at home, while less than a

quarter perceived a lower progress abroad. Recognition of the study achievement abroad slightly increased over that period as a consequence of the introduction of ECTS; in contrast, the percentage of students grew slightly, who believe that their overall study period has been prolonged as a consequence of the study period abroad. Many former ERASMUS students were convinced that study abroad helped them to get initial employment and to get jobs requiring foreign language proficiency, knowledge of other countries and empathy for other cultures and persons.

Internationalisation: a qualitative leap forward in the 1990s

A tentative developmental theory

The author of this article suggested in the late 1990s that the time was ripe ‘to move from being overwhelmed by the bewildering variety of phenomena to a more systematic definition of what we mean by internationalisation’ (Teichler 1999, p. 8), and towards a theory of developmental stages of internationalisation of higher education.

After discussing both the changes in the phenomena and their changing contexts, the conclusion was drawn that changes of activities in higher education linked to internationalisation of higher education in European societies could be interpreted as a series of qualitative leaps.

Two of them seemed to have taken place in the 1990s:

- From a predominantly ‘vertical’ pattern of cooperation and mobility towards a major role of ‘horizontal’ international relationships, i.e. links ‘on equal terms’, and
- From casuistic action towards systematic policies and related activities of internationalisation.

A third leap seemed to have been in process, but was not realised to the same extent:

- From scattered specific international activities and from internationalisation of the core of higher education towards an integrated internationalisation of higher education.

These changes and their implications for higher education will be discussed subsequently.

Towards cooperation and mobility on equal terms

In the past, internationalisation was clearly a ‘vertical’ phenomenon. It is a long-standing practice in higher education to seek knowledge abroad, where the highest quality is offered. Besides, there is a neo-colonial dimension to higher education: developing countries were freed

politically, but many of them remained academic colonies, either having established an incomplete higher education system, or a system following rigidly some foreign model, or offering a quality and reputation not viewed as sufficient by many students from these countries.

The majority of international students come from 'developing' countries, and most of them go to—according to UNESCO terminology—'developed' countries. Mobility within developed countries formed little more than a quarter of all international student mobility in the mid-1990s; however, some European countries recorded about half of their foreign students as coming from other industrial societies. Student mobility from developing countries and newly emerging economies going to industrial societies is a valuable asset for the European institutions of higher education in various ways. However, the 'vertically mobile' students, as a rule, are expected to adapt to the provisions for, and conditions of, higher education in the host country.

In contrast, an exchange of students within industrial countries takes place mostly among person's programmes with a similar academic standard. This obviously presents a greater challenge if it implies reconsidering one's own practices; ERASMUS triggered off a re-thinking in higher education. Those responsible for student exchange believe that students arriving from partner institutions are on average at least as capable as their own students. And the students seem to compare the study provisions and conditions at the home and the host institutions critically, to voice their criticisms and to call for change.

Figures available suggest that study abroad, even with the help of ERASMUS, did not become a mass phenomenon in the 1990s. However, the numbers were sufficiently large to lift student mobility within Europe from being an exceptional activity to a normal option for individual students, and to challenge institutions to reconsider the curricula and services provided to these students.

Towards systematic and strategic internationalisation

Most international activities at higher education institutions have been linked to specific teaching and research activities, dispersed in the institution and diverse as far as the foreign partners and the type of activities are concerned. Often, they are short-term collaborations.

This made identifying any international policy of the higher education institutions a casuistic and almost random exercise. Cooperation agreements with foreign institutions traditionally were signed if a few individuals were involved at the home institution, and if the foreign partners or the leadership of the home institution were in favour of symbolic reinforcement. As a consequence, most universities considered their list of formal partnerships as a worthless

piece of paper. Services were provided by international offices largely only if those initiating the activities in the departments asked for them.

When evaluation and the 'performance' measurement spread in European higher education in the 1980s, examining the international activities of institutions was also considered appropriate. However, could measurement of the degree of internationalisation, for example, by the number of foreign guest researchers, really be more than an artificial aggregation of dispersed and diverse international links?

Similar observations could be made regarding mobility and cooperation. ERASMUS activities were initially in the hands of pioneers: individual academics who had decided to devote their time and energy to make the innovation a success. This was helpful at times of mobilisation, when the mainstream of a department and institution share a sceptical view, take a wait-and-see posture, or consider it as an activity of secondary importance. The ERASMUS pioneers often made use of this anarchic state of internationalisation to seize more resources and to shape the character of curricula and their departments to a greater extent than might have been accepted in the framework of any deliberate and legitimated institutional policy.

When ERASMUS activities had existed for some time and had grown in size, questions arose as to whether one has to move from a pioneering stage to a stage of normalisation and routinisation. The pioneers got tired or retired. The activities needed continuity and could not be left at the mercy of the coincidental strengths and weaknesses of the pioneers. Questions were asked such as the following: Does experience permit us to mainstream the activities? Can the activities be undertaken more efficiently through coordination and economy of scale? Should individual initiatives be replaced by continuous departmental or institutional responsibilities? Is there a need for prioritisation? Does having a common institutional profile of international activities help individual activities?

Many institutions opted for systematic approaches, notably in three respects:

- Regular responsibilities and modes of decision making regarding international issues were established at many institutions of higher education. For example, vice-presidents were assigned the task of coordinating international issues. Committees for international affairs were set up, or committees primarily responsible for other tasks were entrusted with the additional task of taking care for international matters. Similarly, at departmental level, deans began explicitly to take care of these tasks, or staff responsible for international matters were appointed.
- International activities are more complicated than national activities. Internationalisation is not conceivable

without the extension of services. Institutions vary, of course, regarding what they do in respect of foreign language training, accommodation for foreign scholars and students, information and administrative support, counselling, etc., but they were at least doing something about these things.

- Many institutions of higher education created new international offices, or extended their existing offices (Maiworm et al. 1996). At most institutions, international offices play a double role, both providing services for regular international activities and preparing and implementing international strategies.

At the end of the 1990s, institutions of higher education varied substantially in the extent to which their steps towards a regular and systematic treatment of international matters could be characterised as a coherent and targeted policy, or even a strategy, although moves in that direction have obviously increased.

The Bologna process: a new stage of internationalisation

Rationales of the reform efforts

In the late 1990s, a new theme seized the attention of policy makers, actors and experts: efforts were made to establish similar systems of study programmes and degrees all over Europe. Internationalisation as such was no longer the key theme; however, the new Europe-wide system of study programmes and degrees was considered as crucial for the future development of mobility and international cooperation in higher education (cf. Teichler 2007c).

In May 1998, the ministers in charge of higher education in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom signed, at the Sorbonne University in Paris, the so-called Sorbonne Declaration on the ‘harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system’. In June 1999, the ministers in charge of higher education from 29 European countries signed a joint declaration in Bologna. This Bologna Declaration called for a convergent system of two main cycles. Subsequently, the concept was specified as a first cycle leading, after three years or more of study, to a bachelor degree, both professionally relevant and preparing for subsequent stages of study, a second cycle leading to a master degree after between one and two years of study and a third cycle leading to a doctoral degree.

The call for structural reform was embedded into a broader range of objectives and activities. This was symbolically underscored by a call for a European Higher Education Area. In official follow-up conferences of the ministers in charge of higher education, in Prague (2001),

Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007), the Bologna Process agenda was extended and made more detailed. Official conferences, arranged under the auspices of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), the coordination group between the ministerial conferences, served to increase mutual understanding at a variety of levels below that of ministers.

In fact, the Bologna Declaration triggered off the most significant reform movement in Europe since the activities in the 1970s following the student protest of the late 1960s. The debates, despite controversial as regards the possible benefits and harms of the envisaged reforms, moved from ‘if’ towards ‘how’ within a few years (Reichert and Tauch 2005; Witte 2006; Kehm and Teichler 2006). Substantial changes were realised, though they seemed to fall short of the initial ambitious aims.

The Bologna Process is shaped primarily by efforts to establish new, more convergent structures of study programmes and degrees across Europe. However, two principle areas of reforms are closely associated. The Bologna Process aims also to contribute to the internationalisation of higher education. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on curricular reform, to reflect and possibly enhance the professional relevance of study programmes. Operational measures are likewise advocated as accompanying the structural reform, notably the introduction of a credit system and the delivery of ‘diploma supplements’ upon graduation. Additional topics play a role as well, although less clearly linked to structural reform and its implication for internationalisation; these notably include efforts to increase European cooperation in quality assurance and to strengthen the ‘social dimension’ of the Bologna Process.

The aim of the following analysis is to point out the international objectives emphasise, and to explore assumptions and knowledge on the actual role the Bologna reforms play as regards the internationalisation of higher education.

Bologna and Internationalisation

The Sorbonne Declaration of 1998 expressed the possible international value of a new ‘harmonized’ system of study programmes and degrees as follows:

- As regards intra-European mobility and cooperation: ‘An open European area for higher learning carries a wealth of positive perspectives, whilst of course respecting our diversity, but requires on the other hand continuous efforts to remove barriers and to develop a framework for teaching and learning, which would enhance mobility and ever closer cooperation’.
- As regards worldwide mobility: ‘The international recognition and attractive potential of our systems are

directly related to their external and internal readabilities’.

The Bologna Declaration of 1999 refers to intra-European mobility in various instances. Mobility should be promoted by overcoming existing obstacles. A credit system should be established ‘as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility’. The reference to ECTS underscores that the authors have temporary mobility and intra-European mobility primarily in mind.

As regards worldwide mobility, the Bologna Declaration points out: ‘We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a worldwide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions’, and ‘...we engage in co-ordinating our policies to reach ... the following objectives, which we consider of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide ...’

Taking the overall text of the Bologna Declaration, we note that the most strongly emphasised aims of the structural reform of study programmes and degrees are to make higher education in Europe more attractive for students from other parts of the world and to facilitate intra-European student mobility.

These formulations clearly signal a shift of attention since the early years of ERASMUS. Since about the mid-1990s, increasing attention has been paid in Europe to worldwide mobility. In public debates, the term ‘globalisation’ has gradually challenged or even substituted the term ‘internationalisation’. Heads of governments became aware in 1996, in the framework of European–Asian intergovernmental consultation, of the fact that continental Europe was hardly on the agenda when Asian students chose a host country for study abroad. In France and Germany, this triggered off lively debates and measures to make higher education more attractive for students from other parts of the world, even before Sorbonne Declaration was signed. We might argue that the enormous efforts in the Bologna process to establish convergent degree structures never would have been undertaken, if this was just for the purpose of facilitating intra-European student mobility.

The increase in student mobility within Europe and growth in intake of students from other parts of the world are by no means just small variations of the same development, as statistics on the growth of foreign or mobile students reported by European countries or individual higher education institutions might suggest. Rather, it can be seen that:

- The debate on the worldwide attractiveness of European higher education focuses on European higher

education institutions importing students from other continents, while reciprocal mobility is advocated within Europe;

- Inward mobility from other parts of the world is understood primarily as ‘vertical’, i.e. from a lower to an advanced educational level, while intra-European mobility is interpreted primarily as ‘horizontal’, as mobility between programmes of equal value, which might be stimulating through their substantive contrast to the programme at home;
- Students from other parts of the world are primarily expected to adapt to the educational, cultural and social environment of their host institutions, while students mobile within Europe might challenge established practices and contribute to educational innovation;
- Degree-mobility, i.e. mobility for whole degree programmes, is prevalent among students coming to Europe from other parts of the world, while temporary mobility is widespread within Europe;
- As a consequence, the granting of credits for transfer, one of the accompanying measures of the Bologna Process, is important for intra-European mobility, while the Diploma Supplement, the other accompanying measure, is more relevant for inter-continental mobility;
- Last but not least, the types of students vary across fields of study: temporary ‘horizontal’ student mobility in Europe is, on average, disproportionately chosen by students in humanities and social sciences, while ‘vertical’ degree-mobility across continents is more widespread among students in science and technology.

It should be noted that the basic assumptions regarding mobility which triggered off the Bologna process were not well founded. The proportion of students worldwide studying abroad opting for study in the non-English-speaking European countries was not really on the decline, as often claimed (cf. Teichler 1999). It is not certain whether measures of structural convergence are of primary importance in making higher education in Europe more attractive to students from other parts of the world. The language issue, the scarcity of well-organised doctoral programmes, or the deficiencies regarding individual academic and administrative support for the students in some European countries might be more salient factors. Beliefs, however, are also facts: The belief spread quickly in Europe that structural similarity between European higher education systems would make them more attractive for persons from outside Europe.

The second assumption underlying the Bologna Process is also questionable, that similar study programmes and degrees in Europe will also facilitate intra-European student mobility. Intra-European student mobility had worked

quite well in the framework of ERASMUS, with varied programmes and degrees. It might work better if study programmes and degrees are similar, but why should one opt for the burden of revamping the programmes and degrees in Europe, if all that is to be achieved is a moderate increase of mobility of students within Europe? It will be interesting to analyse the impact of the Bologna process on student mobility by seeing whether the number of students coming to Europe for the purpose of study from other parts of the world and the number of students mobile within Europe grows in the wake of the structural reform and other related changes, and whether such growth, if applicable, can be attributed to Bologna.

In fact, it is not yet possible to measure the impact of Bologna properly. It takes time to introduce and implement reform, to make it known to the prospective students, for them to study and graduate in the new system, and then to gather data on outputs and outcomes. Really valid information will probably be available no earlier than around 2015.

Available statistics on foreign students from countries outside Europe show an increase from 2000 to 2005, but this can be explained by a ‘push effect’ of more students from other parts of the world studying abroad and by an intervening variable of a lower—real or perceived—will- ingness of the U.S. to host such students due to security concerns. A genuine Bologna ‘pull effect’ cannot yet be established. As regards intra-European mobility, there are indications of a growth of both temporary mobility and degree-mobility, but none that the growth is higher than during the years preceding the Bologna Declaration, and there is no evidence that the convergent structures play a supportive role.

A survey undertaken in 2005 (Bürger et al. 2005) shows that some, though a minority, experts in Europe are convinced that the Bologna process discourages intra-European mobility and creates new barriers: About one quarter of the experts and actors at central level and about one-sixth of the experts and actors at the departmental level each believe that

- The short duration of the new study programmes will lead to an increase in numbers of mobile students,
- The curriculum is too dense to enable students to go abroad temporarily and
- The curricula are not flexible enough to take some of the courses abroad.

Graduate surveys of the early cohorts of bachelor students undertaken in Italy and Germany show that the proportion of students studying temporarily abroad within the bachelor programmes is somewhat lower than those temporarily mobile in the old long study programmes. However, the small difference is compensated by master

programmes. For the moment, this does not provide evidence of either a negative or positive impact of the new study programmes and degrees on intra-student mobility.

One additional major debate taking place in the context of the Bologna Process deserves attention in this framework. The word ‘employability’ is referred to in the Sorbonne Declaration and in the Bologna Declaration, but most emphasis is placed on the need to ensure a realistic possibility that a person awarded a bachelor degree from a university could transfer to the world of work, rather than having completed a programme whose only value is as an interim stage towards a master: ‘The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification’.

Attention to curricular matters has grown over time in the Bologna Process, and employability became the most popular term within this discourse (Teichler 2007a). The term is misleading, because universities do not have to be strongly concerned with ‘youth at risk’, to whom this term usually refers. In addition, the Bologna Process cannot be interpreted as calling primarily for a certain minimum standard, as the term also suggests. Finally, it does not put primary emphasis on the employment dimension of the relationships between higher education and the world of work, e.g. income, status, contract stability and social benefits, but rather on the work dimension of competences needed in advanced societies and within a European socio-political entity.

However, the employability debate is important in the search for new curricular advances and new developments in competences. This debate is influenced by specific views within individual countries about the demands of the employment system, the deficiencies of higher education and by specific concepts regarding the appropriate functions of higher education vis-à-vis the world of work. International dimensions of competences or the impact of the desired configuration of competences on international professional mobility play at most a subordinate role in those debates.

Globalisation and Bologna: compatible or conflicting?

As already pointed out, the term globalisation spread across Europe in the mid-1990s to depict a paradigmatic notion of the conditions in which higher education operates, as well as of the imperatives higher education should opt for in its activities oriented towards the wider world. According to these views, knowledge generation is increasingly driven by technological and economic utility; and higher education is expected to compete globally and on a commercial basis. Accordingly, international academic and institutional interaction would be shaped predominantly by a notion of rivalry, while only selective ‘strategic alliances’ might be

based on a cooperative approach, while knowledge is seen as a commodity which can be traded through attracting students paying high fees, or through ‘trans-national education’, e.g. setting up branch campuses abroad or ‘franchising’ programmes. Finally, higher education institutions are viewed as being most likely to be successful if they put all their competitive efforts in enhancing their international reputation and visibility as a ‘world-class university’.

Advocates of such a paradigm shift often claim that higher education can either remain ‘traditional’ in preferring cooperation and open knowledge transfer, or become increasingly ‘competitive’ in strengthening income-generating international activities and in gearing activities towards the enhancement of international reputation, according to criteria employed in worldwide ‘rankings’ of universities.

Available information suggest that regulatory conditions have emerged in some countries—the United Kingdom, Australia, and to some extent in the U.S.—which push institutions to ensure their financial survival and well-being through the ‘commodification’ of their international activities. Surveys on the international views and activities of higher education institutions in Europe (Huisman and van der Wende 2005) and worldwide (Knight 2006) both suggest that income generation through international activities, involvement in trans-national education and notions of a predominance of rivalry over a cooperative spirit have spread to some extent, but that institutions, scholars and related national policies vary substantially in the extent to which they favour, disregard, or oppose those notions. We also note efforts counterbalancing the ‘imbalances’ resulting from globalisation (van der Wende 2007, pp. 286–287).

In some respects, globalisation-oriented higher education policies and strategies seem to conflict with the strategies underlying the Bologna process or reinforced by it, even though the Bologna Declaration points to the need for Europe to succeed in a global competitive environment:

- Strategies for gearing international activities towards income generation collide with those of promoting intra-European mobility alongside worldwide mobility, for educational provisions can be sold more easily to foreign students from countries not on equal terms as far as the quality of their higher education system is concerned. Moreover, the intra-European mobility through ERASMUS requires host institutions not to charge tuition fees.
- Strategies of commercialising higher education, as a rule, aim to increase the importing of foreign students or to sell programmes internationally. They are less interested in the internationalisation of their own students.

- It is widely assumed that competitive international activities and a desire to be visible in ranking of ‘world-class universities’ contribute towards a growing vertical stratification of national higher education systems. As a consequence, temporary student exchange is likely to be confined to small sets of institutions of higher education belonging to the same stratum. In contrast, the Bologna Declaration seems to be based on the rationale that student mobility within Europe should be as open and wide as possible. Widespread mutual trust can only be expected in flat institutional hierarchies.

Again, it would be premature to assess the actual results of this potentially conflict-ridden situation within the Bologna process.

Concluding observations

All available analysis suggests that international activities within higher education have substantially increased over recent years, and predictions suggest that they are likely to increase further in the future. International activities are no longer the rare and possibly eccentric domain of a few. For example, the majority of students in Europe consider study in another country, at least for a short period, as a feasible and meaningful option.

The ERASMUS programme inaugurated in 1987 is widely viewed as a major trigger for a qualitative leap of internationalisation activities. Cooperation and mobility on equal terms turn out to be a creative challenge to reconsider one’s own activities in every respect. It also has led to the systematic embedding of international activities into the general activities of higher education institutions: efforts are increasingly made to shape international activities into mainstream activities and to ensure that the mainstream activities are developed in such a way that they serve the international activities.

These achievements were reached in a period when special emphasis was placed on student mobility within Europe.

Since the mid-1990s, three shifts can be noted in the discourse on internationalisation of higher education in Europe:

- Growing attention to worldwide mobility;
- Growing emphasis on types of internationalisation other than mobility, for example an increasingly international aspect to curricula and an increasing emphasis on ‘internationalisation at home’;
- Growing popularity of the concept of globalisation, according to which a commercialisation of the international relationships in higher education, a spread of transnational education, an increased notion of rivalry

dominating the cross-national interactions and increased efforts to enhance one's rank in worldwide reputation are desirable.

In Europe, the Bologna Process seems to be most influential in shaping the activities of higher education institutions in the field of internationalisation. However, some experts point out that these directions apply only to the educational policies and activities of higher education in Europe, while the research-oriented policies and activities—strongly influenced in the European Union by the imperatives of the Lisbon Declaration of 2000, to expand research in order to make Europe the 'most competitive economy'—follow other imperatives (van Vught et al. 2002).

The Bologna Process is expected to serve internationalisation in the way it is conceived conventionally. Europe is expected to become more attractive for students from other parts of the world, and intra-European student mobility is to be facilitated. However, the Bologna Process dilutes previous notions of what is national, what are similarities and distinctions between national systems of higher education and what is international. What has been viewed as international might continue to be relevant or become more highly relevant in the future, but explicit policies and strategies of internationalisation might fade away in the future because they will no longer be viewed as distinct from mainstream challenges and tasks.

This does not mean that distinctive international activities will disappear. Student mobility appears to be growing, but can no longer expect to be viewed entirely in a positive light. Vertical mobility from outside Europe to Europe is criticised as calling for adaptation rather than for learning from contrast, for benefiting the financial elites of poor countries, and for contributing to brain drain. As regards intra-European mobility, a recent survey has shown that the professional value of studying in another European country is declining to some extent, because such international experiences are losing more and more their exclusiveness and distinctiveness (Teichler and Janson 2007). Again, these observations strengthen the view that efforts to internationalise higher education cannot opt anymore for stand-alone activities, but have to integrate border-crossing activities with some steps towards international convergence and with mainstream activities at home.

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