

# **The Internationalization of Higher Education – a Change of Paradigm for European Universities**

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# **Internationalization**

Coincides with the development of political and economic globalization

# Internationalization

Why do universities want to be international?

- Students need to be educated for the international labour market
- Education has become a commodity

# A change of paradigm?

- Economy vs. knowledge based notion of education
- Education for economic vs. social benefit

# **Social benefits:**

According to Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideal, education has a social dimension and dedication:

By means of learning the individual is supposed to become incorporated into the social structures of society

# **Economic benefits:**

“Higher education is a commodity”.

It brings accountable economic benefits for the individual and the educational institution, can be traded across borders, exchanged, and used for competition

# Concepts of internationalization

## 1. Emphasis on statistics:

- International experience of professors, young scholars, and administrators
- International professors and young scholars,
- International research networks
- International publications
- Knowledge of foreign languages of teachers and administrators
- Number of English language BA und MA programmes
- International university partnerships and participation in international networks
- Student mobility
- Number of international students and of persons taking care of them

# Criticism

- High numbers of foreign students (Change Agents) and of partner universities as well as international visibility (Branding) do not automatically prove internationalization.
- International reputation does not automatically mean high quality.
- A high number of international contacts does not automatically safeguard positive mutual perceptions and successful cooperation.



# Concepts of internationalization

## 2. Emphasis on interaction

„Internationalization of higher education is the process of creating an international/ intercultural environment in research, in teaching and in studying with the aim of supporting the international/intercultural interactivity of involved individuals in all above mentioned fields.“

*Rainer Lenz, Carol Steinhaus: Internationalization of Universities as Internationalization of Bildung. 9/2010; <http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/26626/>*

# Concepts of internationalization

## 3. Emphasis on integration:

focus on the intercultural encounter and its qualities:

- Frequency of contacts
- Intensity of contacts between internationals and locals
- Degree of personal disclosure
- Motivation for communication and cooperation

# The case of Germany

In the context of German higher education, internationalization translates as the integration of international students and faculty

# Failing integration?

Integration deficits cause international students to

- drop out of school
- be less successful in achieving their academic goals
- isolate themselves from their German environment
- fail in establishing an emotional affiliation to their German Alma Mater
- fail in their role as multipliers of German education

# Internationalization strategy of German universities

The driving force is the *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* (HRK), (“Conference of University Presidents”), the representative body of German universities.

In 2008 the HRK

- requested the universities to become main agents and promoters in the internationalization process
- presented a plan for a national strategy

# Main Actors

In 2009 the HRK provided the backbone for the internationalization strategy:

“National Code of Conduct on Foreign Students at German Universities”

# National Code of Conduct on Foreign Students

The signatory universities pledged to provide international students with

- a hospitable and friendly environment that promotes integration into the university and into German society,
- orientation for studying and for living in Germany,
- courses for the improvement of German language skills,
- integration programmes with advice in social matters,
- special counselling with regard to students' cultural background,
- support for housing, health insurance, residence permits etc.

# Fields of activity

The National Code lists several fields of academic, language, and social support:

- Orientation for studying and living in Germany
- Courses for the improvement of German language skills
- Integration programmes, advice in social matters and special counselling with regard to cultural background
- Housing
- Bureaucracy support: registration, residence permits, health insurance, etc.
- Career services



# Expected Results

International students should

- feel welcome at their German university
- receive additional language support
- be coached by their academic teachers with an understanding of their cultural heritage and academic background
- have advice and counselling for their specific needs
- be offered possibilities to socialize with German students
- be supported when looking for housing, and
- feel well in Germany and at their Alma Mater

# **Ambitious goals and tasks**

The focus on the internationalization of higher education as integration of international students sets high standards for German universities.

# Progress is slow

- Many international students still feel isolated from their German environment, sometimes even create negative feelings,
- are not well integrated with their German mates,
- socialize mostly with their co-nationals or other internationals,
- lack language skills for the high academic level of teaching, and
- need extra help in their academic work.

# A positive outlook

- Recognition of the importance of internationalization
- Beginning changes in attitudes and structures
- Process of „intercultural openness“ initiated