

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION

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Abstract: Higher education has now become a part of the wider globalization process. Due to globalization, the internationalization of higher education is regarded as one of the leading trends that determine the value foundations of the functioning of modern universities. The internationalization activities of a university in modern conditions can be perceived as a value that requires its introduction into the general system of norms that form the academic culture of an educational institution. This article investigates the concept of higher education internationalization, which has become common practice for almost all higher education institutions all over the world. It discusses the concept of internationalization and globalization from historical perspective and highlights the difference of internationalization from globalization. It also talks about the way contemporary universities tend to approach this concept at their campuses.

Key words: internationalization, globalization, higher education, university, educational activities and elements, national and global, knowledge, mobility.

INTRODUCTION.

The emergence and definition of ‘Internationalization’ in higher education

After the end of World War II, many new nation-states have emerged on the world map as a result of decolonization. After becoming independent, the new states started nationalizing their schools (Williams, 2015), and the schooling mostly served for the benefits of their governments. According to Williams (2015), the main reason behind the quick nationalization of nationwide schools was to ‘actively promote citizenship, identification, and loyalty to the new nation and its leaders’ (p.17). Against the backdrop of nationalization, the term international within the framework of education was insignificant during the second half of the 20th century. However, over the past two decades, due to globalization process, the notion of internationalization in education has shifted from marginalized existence into wide expansion in all aspects of education (Dolby & Rahman, 2008).

The term of international education itself conveys broad meanings and serves as an umbrella term for different fields and activities. According to Dolby and Rahman (2008), it can foremost signify being involved in ‘cross-national quantitative studies of science education, efforts to produce “global citizens,” research on the internationalising of curriculum in higher education, or research on the privatisation and marketing of education worldwide’ (p. 676). The main objective of this paper is to describe and critically analyze the concept ‘internationalization’ in higher education and discuss its elements and challenges.

The definitions given by the scholars to the terms of internationalization and globalization in higher education can differ to great extent. For example, at some point Scott (2000) and Knight (1994) believe that they can be used interchangeably, whereas Altbach and Knight (2007) warn us to be careful not to confuse the terms. However, according to Mcburnie (2001), the term of internationalization reflects the orientation of the object’s activities directed towards the international dimensions, for example, in the case of higher education, the impulse of a particular university to develop in the international directions.

This definition is based upon the Knight's monograph paper from 1994, where she describes international dimensions as 'a perspective, activity, service or service which introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of an institution of higher education' (Knight, 1994, p.3). Whereas, globalization is associated with the blurring of cultural, economic and other borders between countries, an increase in migration flows in the areas of economy, employment, and education (Mcburnie, 2001). Moreover, Mcburnie emphasizes the critical importance of economic dimensions to the globalization process. He associates globalization with intensive international trade, the mobility of services, including educational ones. A knowledge-based economy is seen as the main source of wealth. Nevertheless, he states the processes of globalization and internationalization are interrelated in different levels: if globalization covers world systems, internationalization affects a lower order, in our case, universities (ibid.).

There is legitimate belief that the concept of educational internationalization itself is not new and was present long before the global economic and cultural changes started affecting the modern world. Signs of internationalization, according to several theorists, can be found by analyzing the activities of the universities of Oxford, Paris and Bologna in the 13th and 17th centuries (Prokhorov, 2012). However, the process of internationalization of higher education has received an additional impetus with the development of globalization. Internationalization has become a sort of reaction to global changes in various areas of social and economic life. The formation of global competence has begun to be seen as a key goal of modern higher education (Brustein, 2007).

The popularity of the concept of HE internationalization in modern day has taken new forms and fashion. Initially, if the internationalization in western European universities implied more academic mobility (training and internships in foreign countries), the exchange of knowledge and ideas, at present, the

internationalization is understood as the sum of all measures aimed at strengthening and promoting the creation of an international academic community, with its aim to prepare students for life in a globalized social and economic environment (Jong & Teekens, 2003).

Furthermore, the internationalization of higher education nowadays is considered as one of the leading trends that determine the value foundations of the functioning of modern universities. Today, almost all countries in the world are increasingly interested in internationalization of their higher education because they feel pressurized to do so due to globalization. However, most importantly, they realize that internationalization ensures the flow of revenue into their schools by attracting more students and enhances their students' learning experiences (Hser, 2005).

THE MAIN PART.

The elements of internationalization in higher education

Majority of the literature on the internationalization process in higher education institutions (HEI) refer to the points proposed by Harari in 1989. He conceptualized and combined three traditionally important main elements: 1) international content of the curriculum; 2) international movement of scholars and students concerned with training and research; and 3) international technical assistance and cooperation programs (Harari, 1989).

Since the internationalization has become important factor for the reputation of HEIs and their nation-states, not only governments and HEI administrators are involved in this processes, but also non-profit organizations and associations are increasingly interested in providing recommendations for internationalization of HE sector across the country (Knight 1994, Altbach & Knight 2007, Eddy et al.

2013). For example, one such prominent organization in Canada, the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) has come up with several recommendations for internationalization process at the Canadian universities. They include making internationalization a priority goal in all HEI mission statements, establishing review process to ensure internationalization of programs, setting quotas for the foreign student acceptance, providing international research in learning resources, recruiting and promoting teaching staff with foreign experience, reviewing international student programs that would encourage active participation, encouraging and supporting national students to study or undertake research abroad (Knight, 1994). Another North American educational association the American Council on Education in the United States (ACE) specifies in its booklet that internationalization is ‘a strategic, coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate international policies, programs, and initiatives, and positions colleges and universities as more globally oriented and internationally connected’ (2012, p.3). ACE has an internationalization framework model that targets six core areas and serves as a measurement rubric to oversee the actual educational success gained through internationalization. These areas include ‘1) articulated institutional commitment; 2) administrative structure and staffing; 3) curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes; 4) faculty policies and practices; 5) student mobility; and 6) collaboration and partnerships’ (ibid. p. 4).

Furthermore, there are wide ranges of literature on the topic of internationalization in HE and they also mainly focus on the above mentioned areas. For example, motivated by the increased internationalization process in higher education world-wide Kehm and Teichler (2007) analyzed diverse publications on internationalization process in the last decade and identified several major issues that are usually addressed by the most HEIs all over the world. They include: ‘mobility of students and academic staff; mutual influences of higher

education systems on each other; internationalization of the substance of teaching, learning, and research; institutional strategies of internationalization; knowledge transfer; cooperation and competition; national and supranational policies as regarding the international dimension of higher education' (Kehm & Teichler, 2007, p. 264).

Generally speaking, we can presume that internationalization in higher education may take various forms, which indicates the complexity of this process. In order to make it comprehensible Knight proposed the classification of these forms depending on the movement of:

- People - the mobility of teaching staff and students, including exchanges and studying abroad;
- Programs - educational program mobility from one country to another;
- Providers - institutions providing access to education;
- Services and Projects - various forms of cooperation, research-oriented or teaching research institutes, curriculum development, quality management (Ennew & Fujia, 2009, p.24).

Many HEIs highlight the mobility of students as a good indicator of internationalization process in their campuses. Even though, foreign students can serve as a good factor for encouraging internationalized institutional culture and curriculum, it was described as a 'long-standing myth' by Knight (2011, p.14). Perhaps that's why De Wit and Hunter omits emphasizing student mobility when they comes up with their definition of HE internationalization based on the revision of Knight's from 1994 (Wu & Zha, 2018). Even if it is not the case, internationalization in HE does not only imply the mobility of students, putting international dimensions into the process of home education, but also it indicates

the situations when universities go across borders and offer their services in other countries that do not have sufficient capacity to meet the growing demand for higher education. This might constitute exporting educational services, creating university branches in foreign countries. These exporters of educational services usually are the universities from developed countries: the UK, Western Europe, and the USA. Whereas, the importers are developing or undeveloped countries, like in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe (Prokhorov, 2012).

In this regard, not only traditional private and public universities, but also commercial and media companies, professional associations, and international conglomerates can give impulse to student mobility and exchange programmes among countries (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In fact, such providers can contribute to the improvement and delivery of education in local institutions. They can establish a physical presence through branch campuses, independent institutions, teaching and testing centers, and acquisitions or mergers with local higher education institutions.

The HEIs in rich and developed countries are usually the pioneers in attracting international bodies to their campuses and exporting domestic knowledge and experience base to non-developed countries because they already developed ‘magnet’ features long ago due to ‘availability of financial and human capital resources’ (Soheyda et al., 2018). This phenomena is also described in the works of Wu and Zha (2018), where they come up with the categorization typology of ‘inward-oriented’ and ‘outward-oriented’ internationalization process (2018, p.260). ‘Inward-oriented’ is the situation when universities learn from the foreign knowledge through internationalization in their campuses, whereas the ‘outward’ is exporting the knowledge and innovations from home to foreign country (Wu & Zha, 2018). They explain the main reason behind these exportation activities are the foreign policy and soft power enhancement. Nevertheless, Wu

and Zha argue that in recent years, countries like China, South Korea, India, Singapore, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates, have become active in introducing their innovations to the world (Wu & Zha, 2018).

The challenges and approaches of internationalization process in higher education

We can assume from above mentioned propositions that internationalization process in HEIs is basically about movement, in the form of knowledge transfer and student/staff mobility. However, these suggestions and recommendations do not mean that they can serve as a perfect framework for internationalization in every higher educational institution across the globe. In fact, Knight warns about the ‘one size fits all’ model of internationalization. He states that the process of internationalization in higher education must take individual approach taking into account each HEIs needs and interests – ‘based on its own clearly articulated rationales, goals, and expected outcomes’ (2012, p.2).

The internationalization process can be broadly categorized into two types: bottom-up, when institutions on their own accord play active role in the international dimension into the purpose and delivery of post-secondary education, or top-down, when nation states initiate and supervise the internationalization of HEIs (Knight, 2004). However, in his earlier work Knight found four particular approaches to the overall activities of internationalization in higher education sector. They are the followings:

- Process approach – focuses on the major functions of the universities
- Activity approach – targets curriculum, exchange mobility programs and cooperation

- Competency approach – embraces the development of new skills (focuses on human capital theory)
- Organizational approach – focuses on the development of global values and perspectives (Knight, 1994, p.4)

As it was discussed earlier these approaches do not mean they work for all and it is usually the administration of the HEIs can decide which approach to go along with based on their shortcomings and needs. Nevertheless, according to Knight (2008) the internationalization process within any HEI is ought to happen through organizational change and in collaboration between different departments.

Nowadays many HEIs believe that the number of international students in their campuses is the good indication of the production of internationalization in their curriculum and they wish to recruit more students from abroad. Altbach and Knight (2007) explain this medium and desire of internationalization primarily for commercial interests. Many developing countries still try to recruit international students in order to earn profits by charging higher fees and ‘to improve the quality and cultural composition of the student body, gain prestige, and earn income’ (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p.294). As an example, they provide the University of Phoenix, a private university in the United States, which takes an active position in the international market of higher education through the establishment of new educational institutions and programs for international students, and signing agreements with foreign companies and educational institutions. Taking into consideration all the views and experiences on the mobility of students, it is a valid to say that internationalization in the traditional sense increases the prestige of the education offered by the university, and contributes to the formation of an attractive image of the institution (Altbach & Knight, 2007). That’s why many experts in the field assume that universities need to align with and orient towards

international dimensions in the training of their students as future specialists (Kehm & Teichler, 2007).

At the same time, there is legitimate belief that the changes accepted by universities can lead to a retreat from the existing values of traditional academic culture. Kehm and Teichler evaluate the internationalization process in a HE as necessary for the development of universities, and at the same time they state that the process of internationalization can influence on and intersect with the systems of the national and academic value. It can invigorate existing inequality between nations and regions (Kehm & Teichler, 2007). In this regard, some of the Russian scholars are also skeptical about the quality and relevance of international education in reference to the home countries of students. For example, Nikolskiy (2004) questions the capacity of international universities to prepare their foreign students with the skills and knowledge that can address the issues in their own localities. He also doubts that foreign universities will burden themselves with the responsibility of educating foreign students about civil-patriotic and national-cultural values and responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, one of the forms of the manifestation of globalization is the internationalization of higher education, which has become one of the main educational policies of both states and HEIs. Internationalization of HE pursues very broad and different goals but the discourse on the topic suggests that the most important aims are diversification of financial income by attracting international students, sending own students and teaching staff to study and teach abroad in order to improve their global perspectives and educational cooperation with foreign HEIs to improve the educational resources of domestic universities. No matter what definitions or approaches are prescribed to the HE internationalization,

in the future, it will always be the case that only the universities that are able to respond and adapt quickly to the ongoing changes in society and in higher education will hold the leading places in the world market of educational services.

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