

INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY AS A MEANS OF ENSURING INCLUSIVE GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION SPACE

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The paper deals with the notion of international mobility analysed within the context of internationalisation process in higher education as a means of ensuring inclusive global higher education space. International mobility is looked upon as a two-way process – on the one hand, for countries mobility is of vital importance since they are competing to attract top talent and thus benefit economically, diplomatically, and academically in keeping their academic doors open to students from all over the world. On the other hand, students' interest in mobility programmes, international internships and other forms of mobility is growing and has become a crucial component of the current higher education landscape since having the experience of participating in international mobility programmes has an overall positive impact on the development of a wide range of twenty-first-century job skills that result in career promotion. Based on up-to-date statistics an attempt has been made to prove the following – as more countries around the world become active hosts of international students and implement national strategies to attract them, the competition for top global talent in higher education will intensify; as the result, the role of global student mobility and international experiential learning as components of internationalisation process will become more prominent. It has also been stated that as the context of higher education has gradually been changing in the result of international mobility process, comprehensive data is crucial for affirming institutional goals of enhancing internationalisation and correspondingly implementing new policies in order to meet new students' and competitive job market's demands.

Keywords: internationalisation; international mobility; international experiential learning; higher education.

Introduction

Many countries turn to international education and different mobility programmes in the competition for global talent. In recent years, with the expanding scale of knowledge-based and innovation-driven economies worldwide, countries are turning to international higher education to provide a pool from which to recruit highly skilled job applicants. Canada, Germany, Japan, and China are among the many countries that have initiated policies to not only bolster the enrollment of international students, but also to retain them in their labour markets. Ever since the concept of internationalisation in higher education was firstly defined by Knight (1994), global student mobility and international experiential learning has continued to flourish, and the number of international students around the world has been constantly on increase. The reasons are the following: the beginning of the new millennium was characterised by profound changes in society, rapid social transformations and globalisation. Political, economic, socio-cultural events became analysed and understood only in the global context. Globalisation has become the most fundamental challenge for higher education of the twenty first century. As a response to this, the following issues became of greatest importance for higher education authoritative bodies: how to teach students to adjust in the world with a fairly diverse range of values and ways of life, how to enhance their ability to keep in touch with people of different cultures who represent diverse cultural and moral values, ability to respond adequately to new demands of changing labour market, be attentive to environmental and social consequences of consumption, make responsible life and political decisions, etc. As such, internationalisation trend in higher education has started to be looked upon as the answer to these and much more other questions. In many higher education institutions around the world international exchange has become a core value and strength of national higher education, and global student mobility along with international experiential learning has got the status of an important component of the twenty-first-century higher education. Multiple surveys prove that employers are constantly in search of new-type-of-graduates who not only have cross-cultural competence and cutting-edge technical skills, but also those who have applied these skills in an international professional environment.

However, recent political developments and global events have led some to question whether international students will continue to view foreign countries in the same way. (For the purposes of this paper, *an international student* is defined as an individual enrolled for courses at an accredited, degree-granting higher education institution on a temporary visa that allows for academic study, and who is not an immigrant, a citizen, an undocumented immigrant, an individual with deferred action status, or a refugee / asylee). And it is indeed an important question to ask given the impact that international students have on globalising European, U.S., and Asian campuses, classrooms and communities, and the amount of income

that they bring into foreign economies each year. Internationalisation that was thought to be the answer has turned to become the question. As it has been initially defined, internationalisation of higher education is a process of change through integrating an international, intercultural and global dimensions in the goals, functions and delivery of higher education (Knight, 1994). Thus, it is the phenomenon that is constantly continuing to evolve – in terms of priorities, rationales and scope. The growth of cross-border education all around the world (people, programmes, providers, projects, policy and mobility) has been unexpected and unprecedented. At the same time, campus-based internationalisation has increased in importance and become strengthened by the emphasis on learning outcomes and multi-disciplinary approaches. Thus, internationalisation has brought multiple benefits to individuals, institutions and societies, but at the same time has introduced new risks to higher education. These issues are the focus of our research.

The research goal has been set to prove the fact that international mobility of different types has gradually become a global process, part of internationalisation trend in contemporary higher education aimed at ensuring inclusive global higher education space. The tasks have been outlined as following: 1) to offer an additional point of view on the epistemology of internationalisation trend in the twenty-first-century higher education; 2) by means of up-to-date statistics to prove that global student mobility and international experiential learning are vital components of internationalisation process in higher education and thus means of ensuring inclusive global higher education space; 3) to outline possible influence of international mobility on the process of transformation of higher education.

Research Methodology

The methodological and theoretical basis of the research is represented by scientific works on international higher education, quality and management in higher education, entrepreneurial education, national and institutional strategies for incorporation of international education into existing curricula. Practical data is based on the findings from a higher education study 2016 – 2017 published as a part of the *Institute of International Education (IIE) Generation Study Abroad® initiative*. The study examines the range of experiential learning internships, non-credit internships, work abroad, and other Non-Credit Education Abroad (NCEA) activities during the 2016 – 2017 academic year as well as institutions' data collection practices and their capacity to track NCEA. The validity of the obtained results is confirmed using various generally accepted and specific methods: theoretical generalisation, abstraction, dialectical analysis, comparison and systematisation, system approach.

Internationalisation Trend in the Twenty-First-Century Higher Education

The end of the twentieth – beginning of the twenty first century in higher education has been defined as the time lag between 1999 and 2020, during which the implementation of Bologna reforms took place which led to the creation of a pan-European higher education area (Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the *European Higher Education Area*). During this period the percentage of foreign students amongst all students has globally increased, and internationalisation of higher education became viewed as a transition phase, which, if being taken into account, might influence the future of higher education in the way that it might make higher education one day fully international.

In late 2008 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) began a series of international debates on the theme of “*Higher Education to 2030*”, drawing together academics, national policy-makers and transnational organisations to consider a range of key policy issues. At the heart of these debates lie four themes which OECD believes will be of central importance to policy development at national and institutional level – among them, the challenges of funding higher education, and the impact of globalisation on the role and governance of the higher education sector. Underpinning these issues, the OECD's first report in the series (OECD, 2008) recognises that responses to these policy issues will be shaped to the following meta trends: 1) the increasing international mobility of students; 2) the increasing international mobility of graduates as the graduate labour market is less constrained by national boundaries; 3) the increasing international mobility of academic staff.

The basis for these trends are extrinsic market forces along with government intervention. At the root of this lies the global economic imperative, for the economic importance of universities is now strongly recognised. As it has been indicated (Berglund, 2009, pp. 7 – 8), “Governments, and arguably electorates, now perceive and measure university activities within a framework of cost-benefit analysis and direct accountability to funders”. Boulton & Lucas (2008), in their review of the nature and purpose of universities, refer to this change as “the new discourse of the primacy of direct economic benefit”, and identify that “increasingly, discussions about the organization of research and indeed of university systems across Europe have become dominated by analyses of the ways in which they can best fulfil an immediate economic

function” (p. 6). Similarly, a report commissioned for the British prime minister on the role of universities in the world's leading economies concludes that: “Universities and colleges have a profound responsibility to ensure that they supply young citizens from around the world with the deep understanding and the intellectual tools which they will need to become wise leaders of commerce, industry and politics in a world that is at once conceptually borderless and yet in some ways more fraught than ever by national conflicts” (UK/US Study Group, 2009, p. 2).

The above provides the overall context of change for higher educational institutions. Within all the trends identified here, the theme of increasing internationalisation is strong. Universities are faced, therefore, with the task of developing strategies and operations with a clear awareness of how the “international” is shaping the “local” and “national”, and will need to identify how they can respond to international opportunities to secure a strong economic, intellectual and academic future. Internationalisation has become to be viewed as the complex of processes whose combined effect, whether planned or not, is to enhance the international dimension of the experience of higher education in universities or similar educational institutions, involving cooperation with public authorities, university leaders, faculty and students from different countries to support international component of higher education.

Offering an additional point of view on the epistemology of internationalisation trend in the twenty-first-century higher education, below we provide some of the perspectives on internationalisation based on different conceptual views on the phenomenon.

– **Internationalisation is an integration of international dimension in higher education:**

1) Internationalisation at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education (Knight, 1994); 2) The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society (Wit, 2003).

– **Internationalisation is a way to international education:** [Internationalisation] ... ranges from traditional study abroad programmes, which allow students to learn about other cultures, to providing access to higher education in countries where local institutions cannot meet the demand. Other activities stress upgrading the international perspectives and skills of students, enhancing foreign language programmes, and providing cross-cultural understanding (Altbach and Knight, 2007).

– **Internationalisation is a way to growth of entrepreneurialism in higher education:** ... internationalisation as crucial for universities to retain competitiveness through university business models which underpin an entrepreneurial culture ... universities as entirely business entities (Goddard, 2006).

– **Internationalisation is a process with overseas student recruitment and staff mobility focus:** ... flows of staff and students in both directions, strategic alliances, joint programmes with external institutions (Fielden, 2008).

Beyond these differences in defining internationalisation process in higher education, unprecedented world changes in recent years – including political shifts, the surge of refugee populations, the rapid expansion of learning opportunities that reach more learners than ever before, and the employers’ need for new type of graduates who not only have cross-cultural competence and profound skills, but also those who have applied these skills in an international professional environment – have influenced the internationalisation higher education landscape putting stress on global student mobility and international experiential learning as vital components of internationalisation process in higher education and thus means of ensuring inclusive global higher education space. One might say that most universities operate primarily in their own national space and context, and are part of the educational system within their own country. Shaped in many ways by history and legislative / governmental acts and policies in relation to education, their key accountabilities lie within their own national boundaries. However, for those universities in national systems where participation rates have already reached high levels, the only response in the market is to compete for students internationally. Increased internationalisation is therefore the inevitable future path for universities to enable them to operate in the global markets to which they will be exposed.

Global Student Mobility and International Experiential Learning as Components of Internationalisation Process and Means of Ensuring Inclusive Global Higher Education Space

Accurate tracking and understanding international student movements is an imperative of countries, organisations and individuals that monitor global trends in higher education. There is a general consensus that global student mobility is determined by the notion of *an international student* whom we define as an

individual that crosses national boundaries with the primary objective of pursuing education. We should mention here significant variance in key elements of the notion, including the place of citizenship or prior residence, the duration of study, and the form or level of the academic programme. For instance, in the United States, international students are defined as those who travel to the country on a temporary, non-immigrant visa that allows for academic study. The United Arab Emirates and other Gulf countries provide a different example in which all non-citizens are counted as international students regardless of whether they have come to the country to study or if they or their families are primarily there for employment. Therefore, expatriates and their children may be counted as international students even if they have resided in the country for decades. Thus, interpreting the implications of global student mobility for economic and other types of global societal processes depends on the criteria used and the comparability of definitions across countries. Following the lead of global student mobility, we define international experiential learning as international internships that provide valuable educational and career opportunities such as gaining an international perspective while putting academic knowledge into practice, obtaining exposure to potential careers, building global professional networks, having possible offers to work abroad after graduation, etc.

Many factors driving international mobility and international experiential learning have persisted for decades. Limited home country higher education capacity, access and equity, personal and professional goals, and human capital needs play a critical part in whether students pursue education abroad. In 2013, there were an estimated 4.1 million globally mobile higher education students (UNESCO, 2016b). The United States, United Kingdom, China, France, and Australia rank as top host destinations of international students worldwide and collectively host an estimated two-thirds of all international students (Project Atlas, 2016). The academic levels and degree types pursued by international students vary by destination. Degree-seeking undergraduates form the majority of international students in New Zealand (75 per cent), Russia (54 per cent), and Australia (50 per cent), while Germany attracts more graduate full-degree students (53 per cent). In the United States and the United Kingdom, degree-seeking international students' academic levels are evenly divided. Driven by the desire to acquire advanced knowledge and specialised skills, a large proportion of students in these key destinations pursue STEM fields, including 50 per cent of all international students in Germany and 46 per cent in the United States.

European students comprised 9 per cent of international students in the United States during the 2015 – 2016 academic year, reaching almost 92,000 students and inching towards the 2001 – 2002 peak of over 95,000 students from Europe. Five countries – the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany, France and Spain – accounted for more than half of all European students in the United States (52 per cent). Among the top European places of origin, students from Spain and the United Kingdom increased at the highest rates (8 per cent each) while German, Turkish, and French student populations remained stable.

Europe continues to attract the majority of U.S. students who go abroad for non-degree study. In 2014 – 2015, 170,879 U.S. students studied in Europe for credit back at their home campuses, accounting for 54 per cent of all U.S. study abroad and reflecting a 5 per cent increase from 2013 – 2014. The United Kingdom remains the leading destination for both American study abroad students and U.S. students seeking full degrees abroad. Over 38,000 American students chose the United Kingdom as their study abroad destination, in addition to 18,050 enrolled in full degree programmes at U.K. universities.

Growth in U.S. study abroad in Europe is driven by a wide range of host countries. Italy, Spain, and France remain among top destinations for American students and high growth was seen to Greece, Austria, Ireland, Czech Republic, and Denmark in 2014 – 2015. Over the last five years, Denmark and Ireland have seen large consistent growth (81 and 52 per cent respectively). In 2009 – 2010, 6,798 American students participated in study abroad to Ireland and in 2014 – 2015, 10,230. In 2009 – 2010, 2,228 students chose to study in Denmark and in 2014 – 2015, 4,034, moving it from the twenty fourth most popular destination for study abroad to fifteenth in just five years.

The current landscape of academic mobility in the fifteen post-Soviet countries is a result of their shared history throughout the twentieth century when these states constituted the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and experienced the impacts of the Cold War. The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 gave way to more international education opportunities after a period of low migration and isolation from global economies. However, remnants of former Russification policies such as imposing Russian as the common language, as well as various economic, social, and political links among these countries continue to position Russia as a natural destination for students from the region (Chankseliani, 2015). In addition to historical and diaspora linkages, Russia's appeal as a higher education destination for students from post-Soviet states lies in the sheer size of its higher education sector, bilateral academic mobility agreements with former Soviet states, and its affordability as a study abroad destination (Minsky, 2015; Study In Russia, 2016).

To date, eleven post-Soviet states have joined the *European Higher Education Area (EHEA)* and participate in the Bologna Process. To various degrees, these countries have aimed to align their higher education systems with Western European structures to increase the mobility of their students and the transferability of their degrees. Yet, despite national efforts to align post-Soviet systems with Bologna norms, many globally mobile students from these countries continue to study in other post-Soviet states, including those within and outside the EHEA (Heyneman & Skinner, 2014). This trend is juxtaposed against academic mobility patterns among other EHEA members, which collectively send only a small proportion of their students to post-Soviet countries.

In 2013, the 352,644 students from former Soviet states comprised approximately 9 per cent of worldwide student mobility, with an estimated 63 per cent of their outbound students choosing to study in another former Soviet state in 2014 (UNESCO, 2016c; UNESCO, 2016d). Russia ranks among the top five destinations for all students from former Soviet states and is the number one destination for students from nine countries. Countries sending the highest proportion of their international students to Russia include Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Uzbekistan. Together, students from these four countries account for 44 per cent of international students in Russia (Project Atlas, 2016). Outside of post-Soviet countries, Europe – particularly Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and the Netherlands – as well as the United States are popular destinations for those post-Soviet students pursuing education abroad (UNESCO, 2016d). In 2015 – 2016, 12,862 students from these countries studied in the United States with the majority coming from Russia (42 per cent), Kazakhstan (15 per cent), and Ukraine (13 per cent). Student mobility from post-Soviet countries to the United States reflects a 12 per cent increase from 2005 – 2006 to 2015 – 2016.

Across all post-Soviet countries, greater proportions of domestic students study abroad than do international students who are hosted by post-Soviet countries. Moldova (14 per cent), Azerbaijan (9 per cent), Georgia (9 per cent), and Latvia (7 per cent) have the highest ratio of higher education students pursuing education abroad relative to their domestic higher education enrollments. Between 2003 and 2013, Belarus quadrupled and Tajikistan, Georgia, and Latvia more than doubled their outbound mobility ratios (UNESCO, 2016a), indicating growing student interest and opportunity to study abroad (for more information see <http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?queryid=174>).

Thus, the percentage of foreign students among all students has globally remained stable in the past decades, and international experiential learning still provides valuable educational and career opportunities for students. The studies show that among new graduates, candidates who hold domestic or international internship experiences are most sought after by senior and hiring managers (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2012; Gardner, Chao, & Hearst, 2009; Christian & Johnson, 2007; Trooboff, Vande Berg, & Rayman, 2008). Students have taken note and are responding to meet employers' standards. According to the *National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)* 2015 Student Survey findings, 63 per cent of respondents held an internship experience at home or abroad and more than half (52 per cent) of 2015 U.S. interns matriculated into full-time hires.

Despite the importance assigned to experiential learning abroad, higher educational institutions face definitional inconsistencies and challenges when it comes to measuring and reporting their students' experiential activities overseas. Many students who engage in international experiential learning do not seek academic credit for these experiences from their home campuses, resulting in an undercount of mobility for these increasingly popular *non-credit educational experiences abroad (NCEA)* (Mahmoud & Fairugia, 2016). Studies show that American students are pursuing both for-credit and non-credit international educational experiences in growing numbers. In 2014 – 2015, of the 313,415 students who received academic credit for study abroad, 23,719 engaged in for-credit work, internship, and volunteer abroad (WIVA) experiences. Not limiting themselves to for-credit opportunities, the additional 22,431 American students from 373 institutions participated in non-credit WIVA in 2014 – 2015. This number is more than double the number of students reported as engaging in these activities in 2010 – 2011 (8,700 students reported by 116 institutions) (Fairugia & Bhandari, 2013). This significant growth is attributed to both students' increased interest in experiential learning activities as well as more U.S. institutions' awareness and ability to measure and report these data. At the same time not all U.S. higher education institutions recognise internships and work abroad as legitimate non-credit educational activities. The study revealed that 68 per cent of responding institutions define non-credit internships and work abroad as valid NCEA experiences (Mahmoud & Fairugia, 2016). Altogether, non-credit internship and work abroad comprise only 7 per cent of all reported 2012 – 2013 NCEA activity. Findings reveal that U.S. institutions may not recognise non-credit international internships if they do not have an established formal definition for the experience, if the activity was not coordinated under the institution's auspices, or if they generally do not recognise non-credit activities as academically significant. Almost all of the top destinations for non-credit internship and work abroad

activities are countries that rank among the world's top economies (Heerman, 2016). With a booming economy and rising business opportunities, China emerges as the top destination for students seeking NCEA internship and work abroad experiences, hosting 11 per cent of all activities reported in this category. Germany is the second most popular destination for students to pursue non-credit internship and work activities (9 per cent). Costa Rica, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Brazil also place among the top destinations and illustrate the wide regional distribution among students' destinations for NCEA internship and work abroad.

Conclusions

The research findings show that internationalisation process, with global student mobility and international experiential learning as its vital components, is both cause and consequence of the emerging inclusive global higher education space, a positive feedback loop which obliges higher educational institutions to engage increasingly in the international arena. Capitalising on multicultural educational environment, universities also promote global character of business education, merge of Eastern and Western world perspectives, introduction of courses and study programmes that are recognised and accredited internationally.

The existing studies show that the higher education system of the future will continue its gradual transformation and become global in organisation and international in culture, and international experiences will be personally transformative for students and faculty alike. In today's global economy, most students will move into jobs where they work for or do business with international companies, as well as work with diverse colleagues. Accordingly, the work-related skills gained through international mobility programmes can be powerful tools for career success. While institutions face challenges in defining and capturing data on international internships and other forms of NCEA mobility, student interest in these kinds of experiential activities is growing and has become a crucial component of the current education abroad landscape. As the context of education abroad changes, comprehensive and reliable data is crucial for affirming institutional goals of enhancing internationalisation, and informing whether institutions need to implement new policies, partnerships, or curricula re-organisation in order to meet students' and the competitive job market's demands.

One of the prospects for further research in the area of international student mobility lies in more precise investigation of the notion of an internationally mobile student, namely whether stateless and displaced people enrolled in higher education can be considered as international students. However, despite the fact that there have been various global responses to create pathways for displaced individuals into higher education, the students who arrive in a country as refugees are generally not identified as internationally mobile ones. Yet, their academic and social needs are similar to those of "traditional" international students. Also we will investigate the expansion of learning mobilities as the result of transnational or offshore, cross-border, and borderless higher education learning opportunities

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