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THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE WIDER WORLD OF HIGHER EDUCATION: PARADOXES AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN INTERNATIONALIZATION



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INTERNATIONALIZATION A DRIVING RATIONALE

- The Bologna Process is one of the major reforms in higher education
- In addition to harmonization and modernization, Europeanization and internationalization are driving rationales for this reform.
- Together with the European programs for research (Horizon 2020 and its predecessors) and education (Erasmus+ and its predecessors), the Bologna Process has contributed substantively to the internationalization in higher education
- And has travelled around the world, as analysed in the contribution by Woldegiorgis for the case of Africa and its sub-regions (2017).



COLLABORATION AND/OR COMPETITION

- The Bologna Process was intended as a reform to harmonize higher education systems and structures in Europe, and to enhance intra-European collaboration and global competitiveness.
- Evans (2017) in her contribution perceives it as a neoliberal process
- Bisschop (2017) in his analysis of the effects of the Bologna Process on quality assurance regimes in the Post-Soviet space, concludes that there is more diversity than convergence.
- They are not alone in their observations. The paradox between collaboration and competition is manifest in the Bologna Process. The same is true for internationalization.



Focus of national and institutional strategies tends to be on

- **Mobility**
- **Talent recruitment**
- **International positioning**

- **BUT**

- **Focus on internationalization of the curriculum and learning outcomes to enhance quality of education and research, is less emphasised and for sure less put into practice.**



INTERNATIONALIZATION IS NOT PRIMARILY ABROAD

- A main misconception is that internationalization in higher education means “abroad.”
- The nearly exclusive focus, in most national and institutional strategies, on the mobility of students and faculty (for credit or degree, for short-term revenue or long-term soft policy) is elitist in that it concerns a small minority of students and faculty, worldwide only around 1 to 2 percent, with exceptions in Europe (between 15 and 25 percent) and the United States (up to 10 percent).



RETHINKING INTERNATIONALIZATION

- In reaction to the dominant focus on mobility and fragmentation in internationalization policies, a need emerged to rethink internationalization.
- This rethinking process was manifested in a document by the International Association of Universities in April 2012, “Affirming Academic Values in Internationalization of Higher Education: A Call for Action” (International Association of Universities, 2012).
- Yet, in national and institutional strategies, misconceptions are still prevalent (de Wit, 2016).



WHY?

- There is an increasing disconnect between the notion of the relevance of internationalization, within and for the sector, and recent trends in society toward greater inward focus, manifested by anti-global and anti-international tendencies.
- One can speak of paradoxes between internationalization as a collaborative endeavour and internationalization as a competitive approach
- Between internationalization as a key trend in higher education trend around the world and nationalization as a rising social phenomenon globally.



INSTITUTIONAL AND NATIONAL DRIVERS

- Internationalization is still primarily driven by dynamics at the institutional level.
- National policies are often fragmented and tend to be focused on the mobility side and on matters of competition and competitive advantage, while institutional policies tend to be more coordinated and integrated. (de Wit and Rumbley, 2017)
- As also Craciun (2017) in her contribution observes, national attention in all of these countries seems to be more focused toward the competitive end.



DISCONNECTS

- The contributions to this thematic session illustrate that, under the broad concept of the Bologna Process and internationalization, there is great variety in—as well as disconnect between—national and institutional policies and strategies, and between competition and collaboration.



NATIONAL POLICIES

- Crăciun (2017) in her analysis of national policies calls for internationalization as active engagement and policy making
- She comes to the conclusion that national policies for internationalization are still limited in number, mainly a European and developed world phenomenon, stimulated by active inbound mobility of international students.



OTHER DIMENSIONS

- Perez-Encinas (2017) makes a strong appeal for a collaborative approach that fosters community engagement and integration between students and staff members.
- Fit and Gologan (2017) call for a stronger influence of student perspectives of internationalization, more support systems for students and better information and communication channels.
- Denisova-Schmidt (2017) illustrates that corruption, lack of academic integrity and other ethical issues are prevalent in the Bologna signature countries, and calls for more attention and specific measures to address these concerns.



AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

- These papers make clear that the focus is still more on competition than on collaboration.
- That is in line with Evans' (2017) argument that the European Higher Education Area is essentially a neoliberal higher education area.
- Their calls for a more collaborative and student oriented approach, and to address ethics and academic integrity in the European Higher Education Area, align with Evans' analysis that the neoliberal university is coming to its end and needs a reshape of academic professionalism.
- They also align with the call for rethinking internationalization in higher education as called for by IAU.



BOLOGNA AS EXPORT MODEL

- The paradox also manifests itself in the internationalization of the Bologna Process itself, as Woldegiorgis (2017) in his contribution describes: the policy travel of the Bologna Process to Africa and its sub-regions.
- This travel can be perceived either as advantageous and by that collaborative, or as an instrument of neo-colonialism and by that competitive.
- As he makes clear, context is essential and simple transfer is not possible.



OTHER MISCONCEPTIONS

- Some major misconceptions in the coming years to be concerned about:
- Internationalization being equal to “global” and ignoring “local”;
- Internationalization being a risk for national and cultural identities;
- Western values and concepts are the sole models for internationalization; and
- Internationalization unfolding worldwide without any regard for, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the United Nations. (de Wit, 2017b)



DEFINITION OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Reflects awareness that

- **IoHE must be inclusive and not elitist**
- **Mobility must become an integral part of the internationalized curriculum that ensures internationalisation for all**

Emphasises that

- **Internationalization is not a goal in itself, but a means to enhance quality**
- **Should not focus solely on economic rationales**



Definition: Internationalization of Higher Education

- “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**”
- (de Wit et al, 2015, European Parliament Study)



THANK YOU



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