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five uneasy questions

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Summary

Internationalization is generally seen as key element of modernizing our universities. But what is inside this container concept?

What do mobility figures signify, which role do we expect to be played by international students, and how do we deal with ethical questions of talent import?

In this talk I shall argue that universities will only benefit from internationalization – and be able to develop it further - if they **move away from broad, imprecise umbrella concepts** and start to seriously re-think and re-set our internationalization agendas.



- Internationalization [ⓘ] is ***an umbrella concept*** encompassing many different ideals, actions and developments.
- It is about time to identify those individual elements hiding under the umbrella, and take a closer look at some of them



- *“Over the past three decades, **the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship** has risen dramatically, from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to 4.3 million in 2011, a more than fivefold increase. This remarkable expansion stems from an interest in promoting academic, cultural, social and political ties among countries, particularly as the European Union was taking shape, to a substantial increase in global access to tertiary education, and to reduced transportation costs.” [Education at a Glance OECD 2013, 308]*



1st issue: ⓘ > mobility

- A success story? the remarkable increase is only slightly more than the remarkable increase in total student numbers in these years. Like in 1971 it is today still only ***a small minority*** of students that study abroad, outside their country of origin.
- What do mobility figures exactly signify? Do they indeed indicate a remarkable growth of ***international*** higher education, or rather the success of mass higher education and the undersupply of schools in many countries?



Mobility figures - and above all total numbers - by itself may not be very reliable indicators of the degree of internationality in higher education.

It may be a clear case of valuing what is measurable instead of measuring what is valuable.




① for all students?!

- Shouldn't universities translate their international ideals and ambitions *into the regular curricula* they offer and offer internationalization at home?
- Shouldn't **every** classroom experience in our present globalized world mirror a variety of backgrounds and points of view while using a diversity of textbooks (be they traditional or digital) and teachers?
- I'll get back to this later on



2nd question: the role of foreign students on campus

- Do we appreciate and treat them as carriers of ? Or are they rather welcomed as fee-paying customers, contributors to the financial health and stability of our institutions? Is our rhetoric of a welcoming culture (on university websites all over the world) really true for all of us, or is it only true for those working in the international office?



① a reality on campus?

- Jane Knight: “a long-standing myth” that “more foreign students on campus will produce more internationalized institutional culture”.
- “In many institutions international students feel marginalized socially and academically”



① same for every institution?

- 3rd question: ***does the ① ideal apply to all of higher education in the same way?***
- Variety is the key to success, because only this way Higher Education will be able to respond to the natural variety of demand, in very different local, regional, national and international contexts



- Are universities and polytechnics really keen on being different from others?
- In reality there is great attraction in imitation, in following leading brands and thus promoting equality and sameness instead of diversity and distinctiveness.
- Just take a look at business schools



- The basic question should be about the international dimension in relation to the mission of the institution in its societal context.
- International collaborations, mobility schemes, international faculty et cetera should be in function of this basic question, rather than vice versa.
- This then will (should) lead to a variety of answers, and of profiles. ***A variety that should be stimulated by rankings and bonuses, not reduced and belittled.***



① and the mission in t & l

- 4th issue: ***how to make ① operational in teaching and learning?***
- an solid analysis and a strategy are needed for the long term usefulness of learning outcomes



which trends are defining demand?

- growing *complexities* & social dynamics
- *trust* crisis & quest for integrity, transparency, openness and accountability
- grand challenges requiring new ways of *multidisciplinary* thinking
- globalization, culture blending & parochialism
- increasing competition & volatility
- et cetera



21st century academic skills

- *academic* skills, in terms of powers of thinking and argumentation, intellectual independence & drive to inquire
- scientific *integrity*, in terms of working with evidence, sources, methods & colleagues
- professional *ethics*, as part of socialization & the ability to handle risks and complexities
- *civic* qualities, in terms of public interest & world citizenship



core academic competences

- it is clear that such competences can only be acquired if spread throughout the *curriculum*, by a mix of implicit learning & explicit training
- and in a *community* that shows what it tells
- based upon and expressed by shared values of the faculty



5th question: on the ethics of headhunting

- Haiti suffered a devastating earthquake four years ago. The country is in a dire state. One of the many negative factors behind this is the loss of talent. 85 per cent of its educated people live and work abroad, most of them in the USA. On a population of 10 million this is a heavy handicap.



- Brain drain is the flip side of ***brain gain***, and brain gain is exactly what most societies are looking for
- to such an extent that one might stop speaking of ⓘ and call it regular headhunting instead.
- As a matter of fact we convince ourselves that we are not only gaining brains, but making money as well.



- Of course it will not be practicable to refuse individual students from smaller developing countries, deny them access to our institutions.
- What we could do, however, is collaborating with these countries and their Higher Education institutions to create a stronger local educational infrastructure, strengthen their societies and in doing so enhance the possibilities of return over migration.



- I have raised a couple of questions that I called uneasy questions, partly because they may be disturbing a more pleasant picture, partly because they are not easy to answer.
- Yet these issues shouldn't be forgotten, in the interest of seriously re-thinking and re-setting the internationalization agenda
- and doing exactly that is our professional duty

