The Impact of International Student Mobility on Higher Education Institutions in Hungary. Institutional Practices, Policies, and Approaches

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Proposal information

The social and economic changes have increasingly shaped the higher education system in the last decades. Therefore, it is not surprising that the internationalization (global networking, mobility, and collaboration) has become one of the most significant trends in higher education (Santiago et al. 2008).

The paper shows the research on internationalization of higher education in Hungary as part of my doctoral research project, which is supported by New National Excellence Scholarship. The aim of this study is to examine how international and national initiatives, programs concerning internationalization can influence the policies and practices on the institutional level. The internationalization of higher education is a complex phenomenon, that is difficult to grasp at the system level, but it could be well-documented on the institutional level (Qiang 2003). The paper focuses on the impact of international student mobility initiatives, programs on higher education institutions.

In the last decades, the European integration and the Bologna process gave the framework in which the Hungarian higher education institutions can define their strategic goals and internationalizing activities. In 2013 the Hungarian government launched a new national initiative to enhance inbound student mobility and support higher education institutions. The Stipendium Hungaricum Program aims at strengthening inbound international student (diploma and credit) mobility from outside EU, mainly from Asian and African countries. The other main goal of this program is to support higher education institutions to integrate international students, to develop the international learning environment and other internationalization activities (Kasza

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2017). Besides, in 2016 the Campus Mundi Program was set up (co-financed by EU and the Hungarian government), the aim of which is to enhance outbound student and staff mobility, and to support the internationalization activities on the national and institutional level. These initiatives have resulted in considerable changes in the strategy of higher education institutions, the teaching and learning activities, and student services. Following these changes, it is important to study how these programs have influenced the higher education institutions.

According to some authors, there are more institutional approaches which respond to questions on how higher education institutions consider internationalization, how to react to international processes (Knight-de Wit 1995, Qiang 2003). Based on the literature published from the beginning of the 2000s, four approaches of internationalization (activity-based, process-oriented or organizational, cultural or ethical, competency-based approaches) can be defined, though they contain more overlapping elements but still represent well-described categories (Qiang 2003). The study used the key elements of these institutional approaches.

The study also applied the definition of comprehensive internationalization that is described by Hudzik (Hudzik 2011, Hudzik – McCarthy 2012). “Comprehensive internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise.” Thus this definition facilitates analysis of a range of internationalization regarding articulated institutional commitment, administrative structure and staff, curriculum, co-curriculum and learning outcomes, faculty policies and practices, student mobility, collaboration and partnerships (Hudzik 2011, Hudzik – McCarthy 2012).

**Methods**

The study used both quantitative and qualitative research method. For data collection, the study applied four major research methods: secondary analysis of statistical and administrative datasets, documentary analysis (Bowen 2009), online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

In the first phase of the research, the secondary analysis of statistical and administrative databases had been conducted. The analyzes helped to compare the higher education institutions and identify the sample. The following datasets had been analyzed in the frame of the research project: the dataset of Higher Education Information System in Hungary; and Tempus Public Foundation Mobility Databases (Erasmus, Erasmus +, Campus Mundi, Stipendium Hungaricum). These datasets contain the data of all higher education institutions in Hungary. This secondary analysis gave a snapshot of that how many international students had studied at each higher education institutions, at what levels and what study fields.
In the second phase of the study, the document analysis focused on how the different approaches about internationalization can be grasped through the interpretation of phenomena, how it is influenced on the institutional level, and what kind of institutional areas are affected by international student mobility. The document analysis included Hungarian institutional strategic documents (institutional development plans, strategies, internationalization strategies), management and regulatory documents, and other related documents (grant proposals, curriculums, e.g.). In this phase, the research focused on three higher education institutions selected by quantitative data analysis. In the third phase, the focus had shifted to the individual level. The data collection focused on the experiences of students and university staff of selected three institutions. Semi-structured interviews had been conducted with 2-4 persons per institutional unit (staff responsible for international affairs, international managers, coordinators, teaching professionals and international students).

Conclusions

The study argues that the increasing student mobility has a significant impact on the strategies and activities (especially on curriculum, learning and teaching activities) of higher education institutions. The paper describes the tendencies of international student mobility regarding the national initiatives and presents their impact on the institutional level. Based on the above data, the study focused on the key issues on internationalization of higher education such as the impact of student mobility on the institutional level. Comparing the institutional approaches helps to understand the differences between institutions in their activities and processes. This paper provides the causes of the fact that some higher education institutions are involved proactively in the internationalization process. It is important to understand what are the differences and commonalities in the internationalization practices between higher education institutions. The paper gives insights into the implementation of related national policies, the impact of these policies on the institutions’ strategies and activities and the factors that affect these processes.

Keywords: comprehensive internationalization, student mobility, institutional approaches

References
