Talent – The new competitive parameter

HANS DE WIT,

PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONALISATION, AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES (AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS)

PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALISATION (CHEI), UNIVERSITA CATTOLICÀ SACRO CUORE (MILAN, ITALY)

CO-EDITOR 'JOURNAL OF STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION'

Aarhus University Seminar, Copenhagen, January 29, 2013

The notion of 'internationalisation of higher education' dates from the 1990's.

- Before, there exited already a tradition of international dimensions of higher education, in general under the term 'international education'.

- Or under terms that reflect some kind of international activity, either related to mobility, such as study abroad, exchanges, international students or academic mobility, or to curriculum, such as multicultural education, international studies, peace education, area studies.

- These terms described a concrete but isolated element of international education, and in many cases were used, and still are, as pars pro toto and as a synonym for the overall term.

Internationalisation as a Concept

- In the 1990s the term 'internationalisation' really takes over from 'international education' as describing the different ways the international dimensions in higher education are taking shape.

- This shift is a reflection of the increasing importance of these international dimensions in higher education and of the related transfer from a marginal set of programs and activities to a more comprehensive process.

Internationalisation of Higher Education

The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education

(Knight, 2003)

It is this process oriented view on internationalisation of higher education that can be accredited mostly for the shift from the more static term 'international education' into 'internationalisation', even though the reality not always confirms this shift.

Internationalisation though

- Is still largely embedded in institutional, national and regional cultures and systems

- Expresses itself in specific ways by disciplines and their relation to society

- As well as by levels and type of education

- And changes over time in response to political, societal and academic developments

Talent: the new competitive parameter

- There is an increasingly more **competitive higher education environment** (impact of international rankings), although in most European countries the cooperative approach still prevails

- The role of **cross-border delivery of education** is becoming an alternative for student mobility, although also there continental Europe is less active

- **Skilled immigration**: competition for skilled labour and top talents in the global knowledge economy between developed countries and emerging countries **is becoming more driving** and moves away from the classical North-South divide into global competition

- **Outcomes and competences**: a move from input and output to outcomes and competences

These last two aspects are the new driving forces for internationalisation in Northern Europe: focus on Talent

From margin to centre

- '**Over the last two decades, the concept of the internationalization of higher education is moved from the fringe of institutional interest to the very core.**'

- (The End of Internationalization, *Brandenburg and De Wit, 2011*)

- **This process is also described as *mainstreaming of internationalisation.***

- **And by others as *comprehensive internationalisation.***

- **Basically labels that re-emphasize the integrative and *process component* in the definition of internationalisation by Jane Knight.**

Emerging concerns with the concept

- **At the same time internationalisation has become a rather *broad concept*, combining many different and even contradictive elements and activities.**

- **Internationalisation has moved from innovation to tradition.**

- **One can observe an inclination to divide the concept of internationalisation into different categories/ dimensions/ideologies, as well as the emergence of new generic terms.**

Internationalisation can be seen as to consist of **two components**:

Internationalisation at Home: activities that help students develop international understanding and intercultural skills

Internationalisation Abroad: all forms of education crossing borders, mobility of students, teachers, scholars, programmes, courses, curriculum, projects

(Knight, 2006)

Globalisation and Internationalisation

Van Vught, van der Wende, and Westerheijden make a distinction between globalisation and internationalisation:

"In terms of both practice and perceptions, **internationalization** is closer to the well-established tradition of international *cooperation* and *mobility* and to *the core values of quality and excellence*, whereas **globalization** refers more to *competition*, pushing the concept of higher education as a *tradable commodity* and *challenging the concept of higher education as a public good.*"

Emerging notions and terms

- And internationalisation also is related to terms and concepts such as

- Intercultural,
- International and
- Global,

- without clearly defining them and distinguishing between them and increasingly labelling them under vague notions, such as global competence, global citizenship and global engagement.

Discrepancy between discourse and reality

- There seems to be in the discourse a move towards a process oriented and comprehensive internationalisation, for instance expressed in the paper by John Hudzik *'Comprehensive Internationalization'* (NAFSA, 2011, www.nafsa.org/cizn)

- In reality there appears to be still a predominantly activity- oriented or even instrumental approach towards internationalisation.

- This leads to major myths and misconceptions about what internationalisation actually means.

Misconceptions about internationalisation

- Internationalisation is regarded as synonymous with a specific programmatic or organisational strategy to promote internationalisation

- In other words: *the means appear to be the goal*.

We have to go back to the fundamental question: Why internationalisation?

- That question requires different answers and related approaches and strategies than in the previous decades, in the light of the global knowledge society, and moving away from the misconceptions of the past years.

- At the same time, the foundation remains the same: internationalisation is not a goal in itself but a way to enhance the quality of education and research and their contribution to society.

Rethinking Internationalisation

A process of **rethinking of internationalisation** is taking place currently, in response to:

- The changing environment for higher education and its international dimensions in the global knowledge economy,

- The broader scope of the notion of internationalisation, and

- The lack of innovative response to the challenges resulting from them

Rethinking Internationalisation

" A re-orientation towards outcomes and impacts and away from a purely input and output approach.

Instead of bragging about the number of students going abroad and reception of international fee paying students, the number of courses in English and the abstract claim of making students global citizens, we want to focus on learning outcomes."

(Brandenburg and de Wit, 2012)

Rationales for Rethinking Internationalisation

1. The discourse of internationalisation does not seem to meet always the reality, in which internationalisation is still more a synonym of international education

2. The further development of globalisation, the increase of commodification in higher education and of the notion of a global knowledge society and economy, has also resulted in a new range of forms, providers and products, such as branch campuses, franchises, trade in education services.

And as a consequence new, sometimes even conflicting dimensions, views and elements are emerging in the discourse of internationalisation.

Rationales for Rethinking

3. The international higher education context is rapidly changing. Was until recently 'internationalisation' like 'international education' predominantly a western phenomenon, in which the developing countries only played a reactive role, the emerging economies and the higher education community in other parts of the world alter the landscape of internationalisation.

Moving away from a western, neocolonial concept, as several educators perceive 'internationalisation', it has to incorporate these emerging other views.

Rationales for Rethinking

4. The discourse on internationalisation is too much dominated by a small group of stakeholders: higher education leaders, governments and international bodies.

Other stakeholders, such as the professional field, and in particular the faculty and the student voice are far less heard, and by that the discourse is insufficiently influenced by those who should be impacted most by it.

Rationales for Rethinking

5. Too much of the discourse is oriented to the national and institutional level with little attention for the program level:

Research, the curriculum, and the teaching and learning process, which should be more at the core of internationalisation, as expressed by movements such as

'Internationalisation at Home'.

Rationales for Rethinking

6. Internationalisation is too much input/output focused, a quantitative approach on numbers instead of an outcome based approach.

7. There has also been in the discourse too little attention on norms, values, ethics of internationalisation practice. The approach has been too pragmatically oriented to reaching targets without a debate on the potential risks and ethical consequences.

Rationales for Rethinking

8. The increased awareness that the notion of 'internationalisation' should not only be related to the relation between nations,

but even more to the relation between cultures and between the global and local.

Options for the Future

- Move away from the traditional path of mobility to innovative forms of interaction and cooperation: Virtual Mobility; Free Massive Open Online Courseware (MOOC)

- More focus on learning outcomes and competences

- A move away from quantity to quality of inbound and outbound credit and degree mobility

- More attention to employability aspects of internationalisation (increasing the stay rate of international students, more focus on international and intercultural competencies of local students)

- A more balanced approach to competition and cooperation

- The need for an ethical debate on the potential risks of increased market-orientation

- A stronger focus on disciplines

- A stronger link to the professional field and society

Thank You:
j.w.m.de.wit@hva.nl/hans.dewit@unicatt.it