

INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEX OF CURRENT EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION MARKET¹

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Abstract:

The higher education market is becoming increasingly competitive and dynamic. The higher education institutions still constitute the centres of knowledge but at the same time they have to face social, financial and demographic challenges - they have to change to market and performance orientated organizations. Currently higher education goes worldwide through a process characterized by significant changes both in educational demand and in the educational offer. The universities have become more active of using in the business world applied marketing techniques and strategies to attract more students, while on the other hand they have to keep their role in the society and provide other specific services usually connected with the development of society, region and community that is sometimes called the third role of the higher education. Globalization and internationalisation belong actually to the key factors that influence the competitiveness in the higher education sector. The article introduces the theoretical background and approaches to higher education marketing, defines current challenges that higher education institutions must face while preparing their internationalisation strategies and offers an overview of relevant European higher education policies and responses to global competition.

Keywords: Internationalisation, Marketing, SWOT, Strategies, Globalization, Europeanization

JEL classification: M31, I23

Introduction

Current situation and extensive reforms in European higher education constitute real challenge for academic world in the historical context. Higher education is exposed to market conditions as any other commercial sector and institutions are forced to compete and offer such products and services that are interesting and are able to attract their most important customers – students.

The activities and the behaviour of higher education institutions are considerably influenced by external factors such as technological developments, globalization processes, economic crisis and demographic trends. These processes have changed elite position of traditional higher education that is now open to everybody and the new trend of massification continues to transform higher education.

Internationalisation of the higher education at all levels means unavoidable challenge to higher education and the common approaches connected with establishing the European Higher Education and Research Area are leading to significant transformation of traditional higher education institutions.

1. Universities as a part of higher education market

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The role of higher education in the modern society has three main dimensions: providing education of the highest level, it is base of research and development potential of the country and provides other specific services usually connected with the development of society, region and community that is sometimes called the third role of the higher education. Education is - in the sense of marketing classification of products - a service that is provided to satisfy the customers and stakeholders. The essence of each organization, also the higher education institution, is not the sale of the products, but the solving of problems, desires and demands of its customers. Educational services do not have the character of pure services – they contain both the intangible and tangible component [1]. Services provided are perceived as the competitive limitation between institutions in terms of their superiority in creating unique experiences. Teaching is a service while learning is an experience. Dichotomizing the two complicates what it is to define quality education [2]. Four distinctive service characteristics greatly affect the design of marketing programmes: intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability. The typical attribute of educational services is the inevitable cooperation of customers – they play an active role in its delivery [3].

Currently higher education goes worldwide through a process characterized by significant changes both in educational demand and in the educational offer. The universities have become more active of using in the business world applied marketing techniques and strategies to attract more students. The application of marketing approaches in the management of higher education institutions as a system solution seems inevitable.

Marketing approach enables to analyse the needs and desires of the customers, identifies institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It's a way of continuing monitoring of the external and internal marketing environment. The building of the positive image and systematic communication with all stakeholders is extremely important. Marketing and its instruments have to be included in the overall development strategy if the institution – it is inevitable to develop and retain the competitive advantage and to communicate it to all publics of the institution [4]. Marketing succeeds only when all departments work together to achieve goals. To address all these different shifts, marketers are practicing new approach of holistic marketing. In the non-profit sector marketing is more about philosophy than about business function. According to Bruhn [5] non-profit marketing is a special way of thinking that is made specific by analysis, planning, realization and control of all the internal and external activities that through the orientation on needs and expectations of all stakeholders (target group, sponsors, members, general public) focus at meeting the organization's goals connected with finances, employers and marketing objectives. Non-profit organizations often struggle with funding problems, they have to rely on public subsidies, projects, grants, sponsors or they organize fundraising activities and campaigns.

It is important also to remark the existence of the opposite opinions regarding marketing approach in the educational sector, mentioned by Kotler [6] and many other authors e.g. Czarniawska – Genell [7], Bruhn [5], Maringe – Gibbs [8]. The application of marketing tools might be perceived as incompatible with the primary mission of the institution – the goal of education is to bring knowledge, analytical skills, critical and rational thinking, and not to behave as a entrepreneurial subject shaped by the market. From the pedagogical point of view, the position of the student as the customer might not be acceptable. Currently there is a change in the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the student – the teachers are not the only source of wisdom and information anymore - it is more like partnership, the focus is on students and their collaboration in the learning process (learning outcomes). The education should not be commoditized. It is both a process and product of interaction between the students, the material of learning, the instructors or facilitators of learning, and the variety of resources used to aid the learning process [8]. Marketing as a concept goes beyond the ordinarily accepted views of advertising and promotion – marketing is about the exchange and delivery of value between those who provide the educational service and those who seek to benefit from it. It is a process of building relationships based on trust and aimed at empowering the clients or customers of higher education.

2. Actual trends in the higher education market

Higher education is growing rapidly and is becoming a veritable global sector in its own right. That means challenges for educators, students and policy makers. If higher education were an industry, it would be one of the world's biggest and most dynamic. In some countries the total revenue earned by universities there was comparable in gross output terms to the printing and publishing industry, and considerably larger than the pharmaceuticals industry [9]. Higher education institutions compete to attract paying students from abroad and in some countries the education sector is one of the country's largest exports and brings significant income. In times of economic crisis when all governments are working with tight budgets the higher educational institutions are forced to use all sources very effectively. Students consider the achieving of higher education degree as their right, they require wide offer and later the return of their investment in terms of their success at the labour market. The developments in the higher education market are very fast and the education is regarded as commodity. The trends can be observed:

- Internationalisation of higher education and its financial context;
- New tasks of universities connected with the employment, development of regions and lifelong learning;
- Branding of higher education;
- Pressure on quality assurance in higher education and introducing internal quality management systems;
- National and international university rankings;
- New educational possibilities and techniques connected with development of new technologies, e-learning, distance learning, virtual universities, new types of courses and teaching materials, free online courses (MOOC - Massive Open Online Course, OERs - Open Educational Resources);
- New educational possibilities for disadvantaged groups of students as a special segment;
- Students have become active in their educational pathway, whole process is becoming student-orientated – knowledge, skills and competencies that is supposed to gain during his/her studies (learning outcomes).

Universities have always been affected by international trends and to a certain degree operated within a broader international community. 21st century realities have magnified the importance of the global context. The rise of English as the dominant language of scientific communication is unprecedented and information and communications technologies have created a universal means of instantaneous contact and simplified scientific communication [10].

The education is also influenced by the European policies – the European Union's strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('Education & Training 2020 - ET 2020') [11] and the Council conclusions The internationalisation of higher education [12]. (ET 2020) is the framework for cooperation in education and training, is a forum for exchanges of best practices, mutual learning, gathering and dissemination of information and evidence of what works, as well as advice and support for policy reforms. In 2009, ET 2020 set four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

As a means of monitoring progress and identifying challenges, as well as contributing to evidence-based policy making, a series of reference levels of European average performance ('European benchmarks') should support the strategic objectives outlined in the above conclusions for the period 2010-2020.

Considering higher education, the following EU benchmarks for 2020 have been set:

- at least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education;
- at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning;
- at least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad.

Progress on the EU benchmarks is assessed annually in the Education and Training Monitor. Drawing on the conclusions from the stocktaking, the European Commission has proposed six new priorities for 2016-2020 (The Joint Report from the Commission and Member States adopted at the November 2015 Education Council) [13]:

- Relevant and high-quality knowledge, skills and competences developed throughout lifelong learning, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, innovation, active citizenship and well-being;
- Inclusive education, equality, equity, non-discrimination and the promotion of civic competences;
- Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era;
- Strong support for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other educational staff;
- Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility;
- Sustainable investment, quality and efficiency of education and training systems.

The EU policies are very important for strategic decisions of the institutions and can be crucial in planning further development strategies in line with the policies and the needs of the society and the labour market.

3. Globalization, internationalisation and Europeanization

Globalisation vs. internationalisation

Globalization is defined as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas ... across borders. Globalization affects each country in a different way due to a nation’s individual history, traditions, culture and priorities” [14]. This definition recognizes that globalization is a complicated process that can influence countries in various ways; it does not take a position as to whether this impact is positive or negative. Definitions that include rationales or consequences can be very limiting because they cannot be applied in the individual national contexts. The definition also remarks the reality of crossing the borders and worldwide impact of globalization.

Key elements of globalization involve [15]:

- a) The knowledge society;
- b) Information and communication technologies;
- c) The market economy;
- d) Trade liberalization;
- e) Changes in governance structures.

It remains a matter of debate whether these factors are causes or effects of globalization (in many cases they are almost certainly both); but this discussion treats them as critical elements of globalization that have

a major impact on the education sector. The perception of the relationship between the term globalization and internationalisation can be different, sometimes they are considered substitutes. **Internationalisation** is considered as a rather the consequence of the globalization and emphasizes the cooperation between nations. According to De Wit [10] the internationalisation is defined as 'the variety of policies and programmes that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization trend in society.' Internationalisation of higher education is also the process of 'integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into

the purpose, functions (teaching, research, and service), and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels' [15].

In this context, the **Europeanization** is addressed frequently when referring to cooperation and mobility. Beyond that it also covers such issues as integration, convergence of contexts, structures and substance ('European dimension', 'European culture', 'European citizen', 'European higher education and research area') or to segmentation between regions of the world ('fortress Europe') [16].

The internationalisation of higher education has two dimensions: 'abroad' and 'at home'. Both are closely connected and complement each other. Classical understanding of internationalisation contains all forms of cross-border educational activities: physical mobility of students and staff, educational and research international projects, preparation of joint/double degrees etc. Evidence shows that the highest priorities of internationalisation policies are still the outgoing mobility for students and staff, student exchanges, and attracting international students. However, mobility will always be limited to a relatively small percentage of the student and staff population: higher education policies must increasingly focus on the integration of a global dimension in the design and content of all curricula and teaching/learning processes (sometimes called 'internationalisation at home'), to ensure that the large majority of learners, the 80-90% who are not internationally mobile for either degree or credit mobility, are nonetheless able to acquire the international skills required in a globalised world.

The internal internationalisation is a new trend in understanding the context of internationalisation – it means introduction of intercultural and international dimension into the teaching process and research, extra-curricular and local activities. The presence on campus of internationally minded and foreign teaching/research staff in addition to foreign students is an instrument to expose the non-mobile student majority to international approaches; it has the potential to enhance the performance of HEIs and the quality of their education, by encouraging the exchange of course material, organising conferences, using new information and communication technologies - facilitating the efficient use of virtual campuses. Disciplinary and multidisciplinary networks can be vehicles for staff exchanges and for internationalisation of the curriculum.

4. Internationalisation – actual trends and strategies

European education policy is grounded in Articles 149 and 150 of the Maastricht Treaty. In the field of education, the Treaty narrows the EU intervention to fostering quality of education by a process of cooperation between the member states. The Treaty also covers programmes to promote Europe in education, the teaching and learning of foreign languages, student and teacher mobility, information exchanges, etc.

The adoption of Bologna declaration in 1999 and in March 2000 of the Lisbon strategy to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010 has led the EU to publicize and spread by any means possible a number of specific goals and norms in education, notably around standards and the number of unskilled students. This accounts for the fact that the rest of the book is concerned with the informal norms, rules, procedures and practices developed at the European level that may impact national education systems. By adopting those declaration, the two dimensions of internationalisation have met: the cooperation and the competition. Both processes emphasise the need of cooperation to develop the European higher education and research area on one hand, on the other hand there is an accent to cooperate to face the competition from USA, Japan, China and other developing economies.

In 2013 the European Commission introduced the document European higher education in the world [17] and the challenge of internationalisation of higher education and the need to attract talents to Europe. Globalisation and technological development are radically changing the landscape of higher education. Over the next twenty years the demand for higher education is expected to grow exponentially, from the current 99 million students worldwide to 414 million by 2030, with China showing by far the highest increase in recent years followed by Brazil and India. The thirst for knowledge and social mobility in emerging economies will place higher education within the reach of hundreds of millions of citizens around the world.

Technology and the expectations of students are also changing. Students increasingly expect to choose what they learn, how they learn and when they learn, according to their individual needs and interests. They

are ready to do it in their country of origin, abroad, via courses offered online or via blended forms of learning combining all of these possibilities. Education, and in particular higher education, is at the heart of the Europe 2020 Strategy and of Europe's ambition to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy: it plays a crucial role in individual and societal advancement; and, with its impact on innovation and research, it provides the highly skilled human capital that knowledge-based economies need to generate growth and prosperity. Building on the recent initiatives on Modernising Europe's Higher Education Systems and Rethinking Education to be updated in 2016, higher education institutions develop strategic partnerships that will allow Europe to tackle global challenges more effectively.

Cooperation at EU level and in a wider European framework has already facilitated the development of a high level of comparability, compatibility and exchange among the universities and systems of the European Higher Education and Research Area. The Bologna Process, programmes such as Erasmus, Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and Marie Curie, and transparency tools such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) have helped EU national higher education systems to achieve a significant degree of intra-European internationalisation. It is expected that the number of higher education students will increase by 400% to 400 million in 2030 (100 million in 2000).

Europe remains an attractive destination for mobile learners with a stable share of around 45% of the internationally mobile student population, a population expected to grow from around 4 million today to 7 million by the end of the decade [17].

Developing a framework of internationalisation

Comprehensive internationalisation is "a commitment, confirmed through action, to integrate international, global, and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education" [18]. Sometimes there is also misunderstanding of the concept of the internationalisation – the typical misconceptions and challenges for higher education are [19]:

- Internationalisation is similar to teaching in English.
- Internationalisation is similar to studying abroad.
- Internationalisation is similar to teaching an international subject.
- Internationalisation means having many international students.
- Internationalisation can be implemented successfully with only a few international students in the classroom.
- Intercultural and international competencies do not necessarily have to be assessed as such.
- The more agreements an institution has, the more international it is.
- Higher education is international by its very nature.
- Internationalisation is an objective in itself.

Rationales for internationalisation can differ over time and by country/region, they are not mutually exclusive, and they lead to different approaches and policies. Currently, changes are taking place at a rapid pace in many parts of the world, and rationales are becoming more and more interconnected. Institutions also have differing starting points in the process as they confront the internationalisation challenge. Some will have long histories of international engagement while others might have none. Institutions will differ in how they engage in

internationalisation, but there are four aspirations that undergird any institution's effort to pursue it [18]:

1. Mainstream internationalisation strategy to include faculty and increase impact on all students so that internationalisation touches the majority and not just the few.
2. Integrate internationalisation strategy into the core institutional teaching, research, and service missions.
3. Expand the range of stakeholders who lead, support, and contribute to internationalisation to distribute responsibility and embed the concept within a wide array of academic and support units.

4. Interconnect internationalisation strategy activities to produce synergies and build partnerships across units throughout campus to support a bold unifying vision and outcomes.

In the first analytical phase of the process of strategic planning the higher education institution can include the SWOT analysis - a mechanism to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the organisations (internal factors) as well as the opportunities and threats in the environment (external factors). Such analysis can play an essential role to help in order to illustrate the status of the organisation and recognise precisely what information is required and also what decisions to be made for both personal and organisational level. It also gives a clear picture of institution's products and services within the context of its competitive environment. The example of such analysis can be seen in Tab. (1).

Tab. (1) Internationalisation SWOT analysis in HE

Strengths	Weaknesses
* Higher number of international staff, students and researchers, who have been internationally trained and well prepared	* Lack of adequate budget for internationalisation
* Generating income and foreign exchange savings through the enrolment of international students	* The bureaucratic procedures and decision processes are complex and tedious
* Increasing the ranking of the particular university /institute as well as creating the strong international recognition and reputation	* Vague definitions of internationalisation strategy
* Creating knowledge sharing among the local and international staff, students and researchers	* High cost of staying abroad
* Study programmes differ among countries	* Lack of equipment and facilities
* Motivating the local admins / students and staff to improve their English language and enhance their communication skills	* Not all of the international staff are very active in doing research
* The growth of the university based on dynamics and innovation	* Creating challenge and motivate the local staff, students and researchers to compete
Opportunities	Threats
* Long-lasting international partnerships/collaboration	* Lack of corporate identity / organisational culture
* Improving quality	* Tuition fees may decrease the number of international students
* Improving reputation	* Economic crisis
* Social engagement in an international multicultural society	* Brain drain – losing prominent academic staff to institutions abroad
* Strategic geographic position	* Decreasing public funding
* Technological development	* Progressing globalisation of higher education market
* International networking	
* Raising cultural/ racial/ ethnic diversity of staff body	
* Competition from other universities /institutions	

Source: Shahijan, M.K., Rezaei, S. and Preece, C.N., 2016 [20]

Internationalisation strategies on the national and institutional level

The topic of internationalisation is the very important issue in the last decades. The term “internationalisation strategy” means more than the international dimension in education. Strategy covers programme and organisational initiatives on the institutional level and means the strategic approach in all fields of management [14]. The European Association for International Education (EAIE) helps since 1989 the higher education institutions with the realization of their internationalisation strategies and international marketing activities, the association is respected expert centre on internationalisation issues, it publishes educational materials, organizes courses, conferences and supports the area of cooperation among higher education institutions. NAFSA (established in 1948) is another organization dealing with the internationalisation of universities in the world (Association of International Educators).

At the national level various approaches to internationalisation can be noticed. In some countries it is ad-hoc approach, according to the actual situation and needs, in some countries there are long-term national strategies, that include more sectors of economics, not just education. National politics are often influenced by voluntary or compulsory obligation to adapt various directives, communications or other international programmes into national legislation respecting the agreements resulting from membership in international unions and organizations. National strategies deal with national targets and priorities on the domestic and international level as well and can include e.g. financing of the study programmes, research projects, development programmes, language education support. In the wider context it can be also cross-sectoral cooperation connected with economical, immigration, visa and cultural policy.

At the institutional level the term strategy reflects the initiatives on the academic and the programme level as well. The strategy shall define the institutional missions and values in global terms as well as in local and national terms. It recognizes the interconnection of local and global issues and how higher education institutions play a pivotal role in mediating between global forces and local impact and how an institution of higher education becomes broader and more inclusive. The core mission rationale advocates strongly for an institutional vision that mainstreams student access to global content and talent. It also dramatically expands faculty and staff access to a global marketplace of ideas and collaboration [18].

The basic overview can be seen in Tab. (2) – the strategies cover also the interest in cross-border cooperation and internal internationalisation.

Tab. (2) Internationalisation strategies at the institutional level

Academic strategies	
Academic programmes	Student exchange programmes, foreign language studies, full degree programmes abroad, internships abroad, international students, double/joint degrees, host teachers and experts from the world of work, cross cultural training
Research and staff collaboration	Area and theme centers, joint research projects, international conferences and seminars, published articles and papers, international research agreements, research exchange programmes, international research partners in academic and other sectors
External relations: domestic and crossborder	Domestic: Community-based partnerships with NGO groups or public/private sector groups, community service and intercultural project work, customized education and training programs for international partners and clients Crossborder: International development assistance projects, crossborder delivery of education programmes (commercial and noncommercial) Branch campuses, international linkages, partnerships, and networks Contract-based training and research programmes and services, alumni abroad programmes
Extra-curricular	Student clubs and associations, international and intercultural campus events, liaison with community-based cultural and ethnic groups, peer support groups and programmes
Organization strategies	
Governance	Expressed commitment by senior leaders, active involvement of faculty and staff, articulated rationale and goals for internationalization, recognition of the international dimension in institutional mission/mandate statements, and in planning, management, and evaluation policy documents
Operations	Integrated into institution-wide and department/college-level planning, budgeting, and quality review systems; appropriate organizational structures; systems (formal and informal) for communication, liaison, and coordination; balance between centralized and decentralized promotion and management of internationalization; adequate financial support and resource allocation systems
Services	Support from institution-wide service units, i.e., student housing, registrar, fundraising, alumni, information technology; involvement of academic support units, i.e., library, teaching and learning, curriculum development, faculty and staff training, research services; student support services for incoming and outgoing students, i.e., orientation programmes counseling, cross-cultural training, visa advice
Human resources	Recruitment and selection procedures that recognize international expertise; reward and promotion policies to reinforce faculty and staff contributions; faculty and staff professional development activities; support for international assignments and sabbaticals

Source: Knight, 2008 [15]

Strategies and strategic approach is essential for success and sustainability of the internationalisation efforts at the institutional level. The following of the national strategies is important as well by defying the strategy and the analytic framework and is widening the organizational strategies concept by the national politics and programmes.

5. Results and Discussions

Considering the importance of market orientation in higher education it is necessary to adopt the strategic concept of marketing-managed higher education institution - the effort to meet the needs of the

customers and the society, to identify those factors that determine the customer satisfaction, to adapt the functional structure so that the employees know very well the requirements of customers that they try to satisfy at the highest level, better than the competition and thus creating a competitive advantage while keeping its role in the society and the community. In higher education institutions all activities struggle to reach the external customer satisfaction (students, employers, society, etc.) as well as the satisfaction of internal customers (teaching and nonteaching staff) as a condition of sustainability. The universities have to adapt the educational and research approach to offer programmes that maintain or improve long-term satisfaction of their and the society's interests.

Preparing students for their life in a fast moving global economy is very challenging for higher education institutions. The demographic changes with the rapid introduction of new information and communication technologies, economic crises and political situation has changed the environment of the world of education. The growing global competition in which knowledge is a prime factor for economic growth is influencing policies of higher education in Europe. Higher education can no longer be viewed just in the national context. Internationalisation of higher education is a strategic theme and one of the increasing challenges at present. Both at national and institutional levels, in many countries, internationalisation is considered to be an educational goal. There are also various common policies formulated at the European Union level that influence the national policies in positive and also negative way. The opening of the European education to the world means great opportunity and many possibilities but also the massive change of the long-term status quo, need for changes and new strategies and increased competition. There is also a discussion about the ideal level of internationalisation in order to preserve also national/local attributes and needs.

Higher education internationalisation has two different contexts - internationalisation at home which relates to the intercultural as well as international aspects of the teaching or learning process, and internationalisation abroad - common understanding of internationalisation containing all forms of cross-border educational activities: physical mobility of students and staff, educational and research international projects, preparation of joint/double degrees etc. Internationalisation of higher education can in this ways contribute to raising awareness for providing the quality education within the country as well as cross-border, and such dimension can increase the attractiveness of the programmes offered and means a competitive advantage for the higher education institution.

The definition of an appropriate level and range of activities should be part of all internationalisation strategies. The process of strategic planning in the higher education institution can include the SWOT analysis - a mechanism to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the organisations (internal factors) as well as the opportunities and threats in the environment (external factors). Higher education institutions have to decide about the conceptual and organization framework of internationalisation which includes a discussion on the meaning and definition of the internationalisation, a description of the rationales and approaches to internationalisation and an analysis of strategies of integrating international dimension into mission of the institutions and overall strategic and operative planning. Conscious decisions concerning the internationalisation need to be taken in relation to global, regional and local conditions, and educational aims for higher education. Comprehensive knowledge about these questions and how they relate to curriculum can give a basis for internationalising higher education, in ways that do not simply constitute an adaptive reaction to globalisation processes.

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