

INTERNATIONALISATION AS A CONTINUING PROCESS

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Abstract $\frac{3}{4}$ Until recently the Nordic universities have mainly recruited students from the Nordic countries. Due to students mobility programs a high number of foreign students have come to the Nordic countries over the last years and in many institutions this has led to development of study programs in English. Further some of these programs have been developed into M.Sc. programs. These programs might help recruiting more students to the engineering schools that have over the last decade suffered from a serious decrease in the intake of "ordinary" students. But students coming from abroad have needs and expectations that differ very much from those of the Nordic countries. How do we handle these expectations concerning for instance application procedures, integration and accommodation? Do we want to develop into a "fully international university" and how can we handle this change?

- Operational
- Pedagogical
- Social
- Organisational aspects.

Furtherweshall point out some of the obstacles we'll have to overcome in order to continue the process of internationalising universities.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF UNIVERSITIES

Internationalisation seems to be a mass movement these years. From our point of view internationalisation of universities in Europe started about 15 years ago - promoted by the European Union programme Erasmus, and over the years the process has extended both geographically and concerning ongoing activities.

Internationalisation has developed from student mobility into a second stage of internationalising curricula and in some places into a third stage of internationalising institutions as such.

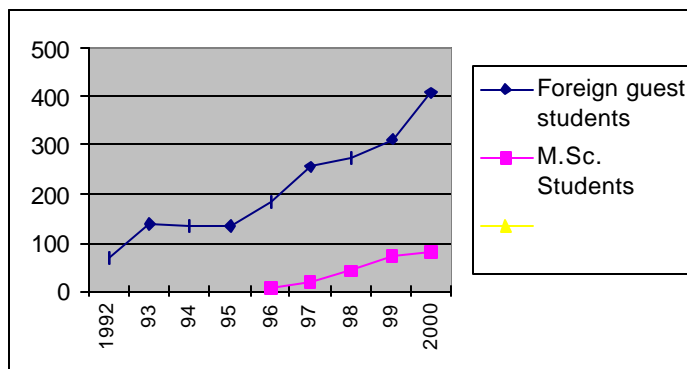
But at the universities we are still heavily involved in student mobility. Mobility in general is increasing - especially because more countries are taking part now.

In some countries - for instance in the Nordic countries - the flow of international students has resulted in development of a number of programmes taught in English - study programmes for exchange students and M.Sc. programmes for degree seeking students.

Due to the number of international students and due to the fact that some of these students actually seek a degree the impact of the students has changed dramatically.

In the followingweshall present the experiences from DTU concerning the *impact of an increasing intake of international students* in relation to

- Practical



THE IMPACT OF A GROWING NUMBER OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

FIGURE 1
THE NUMBER OF STUDENT FROM ABROAD ACCEPTED AT DTU
1992 - 2000

PRACTICAL ASPECTS

Over the last years the number of international students has developed dramatically.

In order to handle 500 students (2000) compared to 70 (1992) resources need to be available:

- Accommodation
- Introduction courses and supervision
- Language courses

Accommodation

Universities in Denmark are normally not directly involved in housing and accommodation of students. Domestic students apply to a central committee

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(Centralindstillingsudvalget) to get a room in a student hostel in the university cities or rented rooms or flats on a private basis. Further student residence halls are owned by student organisations.

During recent years the growth in the overall number of students together with a decrease in the number of flats available has led to a severe lack of low cost accommodation for students.

The universities want to have accommodation to our disposal in order to assist students from abroad.

The lack of accommodation has led to alternative solutions concerning the housing of international students:

- Most universities operate with a group of private landlords and landladies renting part of their house or flat
- Some universities have initiated co-operation with student hostels who reserve a limited number of rooms for foreign students
- A few universities have initiated building international student hostels.

But nevertheless housing has become one of the main obstacles in a further increase of foreign students in Danish universities and the problem is now discussed at university as well as national level in order to find a solution where universities are directly involved.

Introduction courses and supervision

International students need an introduction to their new university. Most international students will stay for a relatively short period - ½-2 years - and expect to study efficiently without too much loss of time.

Introduction of international students has to take into account that: they have already experienced a university system and very often they have a different cultural background. Therefore the general introduction for new domestic students is not suitable for this group.

At DTU we offer a one-week course on campus for new international students just before the autumn semester starts (and a shorter version in winter) - and for some groups a follow-up course about two months later. The course includes

- Practical information about housing, residence permit etc.
- Practical information about the campus and facilities available to students
- Information about pedagogical methods and study techniques
- Information about Danish culture
- Social arrangements, get-together with Danish students

During the semester international students need more thorough supervision - especially those students studying in

master-courses are often surprised by the workload. Further due to restrictions in immigration law universities must follow international students quite close and report if the students are no more active in the university.

Language courses

As a part of the introduction course we offer a language course for students who want to learn Danish. Although Danish is not necessary from a study point of view - because courses are given in English - students often feel more comfortable when they can get along in Danish in local shops etc. Therefore a language course is offered at a favourable price in co-operation with a local language school.

OPERATIONAL ASPECTS

In order to accept a large number of students from abroad and to operate programs in a foreign language a number of criteria have to be fulfilled

- A designated staff and appropriate resources
- Co-operation with the national immigration authorities
- Co-operation with industry and funding institutions

Staff and resources

A designated staff is necessary in order to admit foreign students. University administrations have become professional in operating exchange programs but the evaluation process for degree students is individualised as students apply from many different countries and with different educational and cultural backgrounds. Dealing with this demand qualifications in languages and cultural awareness from the staff in general.

Resources to operate the process are necessary as well: students from abroad can be much more time-consuming than domestic students.

National immigration authorities

Decisions regarding immigration and award of residence permit are dealt with on a central level in Denmark. Every student from a non-EU country has to send an application signed by the host university through the local Danish embassy to the immigration authorities in Denmark.

This procedure means a heavy workload in the university as well as by the immigration authorities during especially May-August in order to finish the procedure before the semester starts in September.

We have worked hard on setting up good relations with the national immigration authorities as well as Danish embassies abroad in order to facilitate the process.

Funding for international students

The Danish government finances education. Danish students will normally receive scholarships through the National Educational Grant Scheme (SU) which is not available for international students. Some students will be able to fund their room and board by their own means or by grants from their home country. In general, though, funding through the host university must be available in order to attract the best students for full degree programs.

The Danish Ministry of Education has tried out a system combining government money with industry money: a student accepted by the university and by a company will receive a grant paid 1/3 by the government and 2/3 by the company. This initiative has made it possible to accept students who would otherwise not have been able to meet the economic requirements.

The lack of substantial sources of funding for international students may turn out as another of the major obstacles in the internationalisation process as the living costs are relatively high in Denmark.

seems that only few domestic students are really inclined to mingle with the foreign students. This situation leads to prejudices, misunderstandings and finally failure of the whole process of internationalisation. True internationalisation must build on acceptance, integration and co-operation.

We have to assure - through integration - that domestic and international students work together and get to know each other.

Danish students are used to play an active role in the decision-making process in the university through study boards and other governing bodies. International students will have to take part in this as well.

To reach full integration language is an obstacle. Even if English is the common working language in many areas within engineering, everyday communication is still in Danish and true integration may well depend on the students ability and possibility to learn Danish. At the university we offer a crash course in Danish but further language studies are limited at the moment. Local authorities are responsible for setting up these language courses for the time being.

PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS

Part of the process of internationalisation is about learning from each other. The pedagogical methods in universities depend among other things on cultural background. As proposed by Hofstede [1] four dimensions of cultural variability affect relationship between people:

- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Power Distance
- Expected gender roles
- Individualism vs. Collectivism

Engineering programs may seem very much alike concerning lectures, exercises, labs etc. But the underlying expectations may vary very much from one university system to another:

Are students expected to experiment or follow clear instructions?

Are students often tested?

Are students allowed to discuss with the professors?

Are students working on their own or as part of a group?

The shift from teaching to learning that we experience these years will demand further independence and this may well be unexpected by students from some regions in the world.

Large groups of international students may well affect the teaching by different expectations and professors will have to be prepared to handle this situation.

SOCIAL ASPECTS

In general it seems that international students tend to keep together: they are all in "the same boat". On the other hand it

ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS

The internationalisation process started off as a minor project driven by idealists. It has developed into one of the core activities of the university. How does this situation reflect in the organisation of the university?

In general it seems that units like international offices drive the process. Typically these units have student exchange, admission of foreign students and program administration as their primary tasks and they try to fill out the gap between these operational tasks and the need for further development across the barriers of traditional university administration. In many cases

- A foreign researcher is still considered an exception and will often receive letters in the national language,
- Funding from international sources may still be difficult to track in the economy system and
- Participation in international research programs may still be dealt with on a decentralised level with no central follow-up.

So in general – except for student administration - internationalisation has had a minor effect on the organisation.

STATUS

We may well say that the process of studying abroad is close to drowning in its own success. One reason is the rapidly increasing number of students travelling, another may be the huge numbers of players in the game: students, professors, university administrators, researchers, policy makers and public administrators.

We think we have reached a point of reflection: do we want a further increase in student exchange and a growing number of international students in our universities?

The growth in the number of exchange students (exchange in the broad sense: horizontal exchange as well as vertical exchange³) has efficiently blocked our view to the next steps in the internationalisation process. As mentioned above the practical, operational, pedagogical, social and organisational challenges risk to stop the development towards "international universities" offering high quality programmes.

THE NEXT STEP IN THE PROCESS

We have mentioned a number of aspects of student mobility: the first step of internationalisation.

How do we overcome the obstacles and where do we proceed from here?

The first question to consider is which obstacles concerning student mobility can we manage as universities and which must be dealt with on other levels?

The next question is in our opinion: do we really want to internationalise universities to the full extent of what that means?

How to overcome obstacles concerning mobility

As universities we must accept the responsibility and to a certain extent the costs within areas such as:

- Allocate resources to admit highly qualified students and to service students from abroad
- Attract financing for building accommodation dedicated to international students
- Make an effort on the pedagogical level and make students from different countries work together
- Allocate resources and develop plans for integrating international students into the university culture, social as well as pedagogical

Accepting the responsibility also means that we have to take the risks by setting up goals for our activities and for setting up our own profile as institution. Whether we like competition or not it is part of our fundamental conditions – not only related to funding of research and teaching but also concerning our possibilities of attracting students, staff and resources in general.

In a system based on tuition *free* education competitiveness is at least as important as in tuition based systems – but the universities are not free to set their own

standards. Therefore co-operation on the national level is very important in order to assure:

- The quality of educational programs
- A flexible framework / legal constitutions in deciding curricula and study plans
- Ressources available for student accommodation
- Scholarships available for international students
- Common efforts in marketing the country and the universities
- Residence permits available for students

On the national level and above we have to decide how we want to describe the level of quality of our university education - leaving room for each institution to define its own specialities. We need to do so in order to attract the right students.

Do we want to further internationalise universities?

Internationalisation has become a buzzword in Europe up through the 1990'ies. In some areas – for instance engineering - the mobility process has had a tremendous success in terms of numbers of exchanged students.

But will we continue to admit students from abroad when the number of domestic students increases in a couple of years? Are we going to admit better-qualified students from abroad in stead of domestic students? Do we intend to push domestic students to working together with students from abroad in order to give them a sense of intercultural qualifications?

Do we accept domestic students leaving the university after their first degree in order to go abroad? Do we accept to operate in more competitive surroundings?

One of the important issues is who will finance the universities in the future: as long as national ministries fund the major part of the university budget and co-ordinate the intake of domestic students as well as financial support for domestic students, we'll probably experience some limitations in the process towards full internationalisation.

BACK TO OUR STARTING POINT

As mentioned earlier the growth rate in student mobility has blocked our view efficiently to the next steps in the internationalisation process.

When we started exchanging students (horizontal exchange) during the 1980'ies we assumed that student mobility would lead to higher quality 1) for the student 2) for university programmes - this assumption is difficult to prove. For many years we have taken for granted that students would benefit from a stay abroad. No doubt that many students have learned a lot and "grown-up" during their exchange but we are not able to "measure" the quality of their study experience [2]. And to our knowledge few or

³ horizontal exchange: traditional exchange, a student stays with a university for one or two semesters and then returns to the home university vs. vertical exchange: the student finishes a degree at the first institution and then moves on to another university to get the second degree

no universities have worked out systems to institutionalise students' experiences, i.e. assure that the experiences are worked into current study plans etc. in order to improve the overall quality of the university programmes. In that sense, traditional exchange is still a "personal experience". Credit transfer is still a personal matter.

Vertical exchange offers a different opportunity to evaluate the students' previous career and their degree. Vertical exchange leading to a degree is much more committing: the sending institution wants to offer good opportunities to the students and the receiving institution will only accept qualified students.

We may have come to a point where we have to reconsider if we obtain what we want through a continuation of traditional student exchange.

If our goal is to give students a first-hand experience in a foreign culture - without too much delay in their studies - then traditional student exchange is OK. If we want to raise the quality of our university programmes then we have to think of other means.

CONCLUSION

Concluding on a continuing process is a difficult task but anyway:

We have to make our goals clear before we rush to any kind of solution on all practical matters concerning the rapid increase in student mobility.

Do we want to support a growing industry of studying tourists (to make it very categorical) or do we want to prepare our students to work and study in a global world? Or do we want to do both - but knowing the difference?

We guess we want to do both, but we might give priority to vertical exchange, which is - from an institutional point of view - more fruitful. Vertical exchange designed as joint degrees or double degrees will optimize the outcome.

Do we want to turn into fully internationalized universities? Again, we guess the answer is yes and no! We want to internationalize concerning the content and the level of quality but we don't want to commercialize. And in that case we'll have to live with a number of limitations concerning the operational aspects of student exchange: funding for students, immigration etc. which are at the moment regulated at the national level.

[1] Hofstede, Geert, "Cultures and organizations: Software of the Mind", book, McGraw-Hill.

[2] Opper, S., Teichler, U., Carlson, J., "Impacts of Study Abroad Programmes on Students and Graduates", *Journal Higher Education Policy Series II*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, vol. 2.