



## INTERNATIONALISATION TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CHANGING ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY

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## Varia



# Internationalisation Trends in Higher Education and the Changing Role of International Student Mobility

Ulrich Teichler\*

## Abstract

“Internationalization” of higher education has so many meanings that only a few elements are shared by all actors and experts: border-crossing is the key element, and a trend toward growth is implied. International student mobility is a traditional key feature—along with knowledge transfer—to which more attention is paid than to other features. Definitions and statistics vary enormously, e.g. reference to citizenship of mobility for the purpose of study, short-term mobility vs. mobility for the whole study program, “vertical” vs. “horizontal” mobility, and mobility at a certain moment in time vs. the event of mobility in the course of study. Analyses of “vertical mobility” are mostly case studies and can hardly be summarized. Short-term mobility, notably within Europe, is more thoroughly analyzed, thereby comprising comparisons between mobile and non-mobile students and between countries. They suggest that mobility leads only to marginally superior academic and general skills, but to impressive international skills. This is reflected in small career advantages, but substantially higher shares of visible international tasks as well as in frequent international career mobility. Also, former mobile students’ degree of satisfaction is high regarding the impact on international understanding and general personality development. Divergent factors suggest, for the future, that internationalization without mobility will play an increasing role and that it will be more strongly affected by international political conflicts.

**Key words:** *Internationalization, Student mobility, Short-term mobility, Horizontal mobility, Event of mobility, Impacts of mobility*

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## 1. Notions of internationalisation of higher education and the role of student mobility

### 1.1. Meanings of “internationalisation”

Communication across countries about “internationalisation” of higher education is quite complicated. Different observers have varied phenomena in mind, if they are confronted with this theme. The views change over time as regards most salient issues of internationalisation (see Altbach and Teichler, 2001; de Wit 2014). Although “internationalisation” ought to be international by definition, the discussions on internationalisation vary strikingly by country. Finally, the actors and experts discussing issues of internationalisation of higher education have an uneven information base, whereby many of them obviously know the issues at stake only superficially.

Of course, efforts have been made to define “internationalisation” in a way which can be accepted widely. De Wit and Hunter (2015, p. 45) characterize the following quote as the “most commonly accepted definition of internationalisation”: “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2008, p. 21). But a diversity of views surfaces with any step for further clarification and specification.

The author of this contribution has been involved in research on various issues of internationalisation of higher education over a period of about three decades. In this framework, various efforts have been made to summarize the respective academic and political discourse. Based respective summaries of the public discourse and of research in that domain (see Teichler, 1996, 2004; Kehm and Teichler, 2007; Teichler, 2010), it seems appropriate to argue that six key meanings of “internationality” or “internationalisation” of higher education are most widely spread:

- Worldwide/border-crossing knowledge transfer (books, other media, etc.),
- Physical mobility across countries (students, academic staff, administrative staff, etc.),
- International cooperation and communication (between countries, institutions of higher education, individual scholars, etc.),

- International education and research (comparative approaches, intercultural learning, socialisation for international understanding, etc.),
- International similarity (convergence, globalisation, Europeanization, etc.) and,
- International reputation (“world-class universities”, “international quality”, etc.).

But classifications might vary. In a recent book comprising various analyses of the so-called “Bologna Process” in Europe (Curaj *et al.*, 2015), for example, the following features of internationalisation were addressed frequently:

- Flows of student mobility,
- Internationalisation as lever, pressure, initiator of change in higher education,
- “Internationalisation at home”,
- Intercultural competence,
- Internationalisation strategies and strategic international cooperation,
- Funding internationalisation, and,
- Quality review of internationality.

One has to add, though, that the term “international higher education” occasionally is employed far more widely. Some scholars and also a journal with this name, edited by the Center for International Higher Education of Boston College in the U.S, subsume even any issue of higher education in other countries and international comparisons under the term “international higher education” (see for example Altbach, 1991; Maldonado-Maldonado and Basset, 2014). For the latter, “comparative higher education” would be a more suitable term.

The term “international education” (or “international higher education”) is also often employed frequently to point out curricular elements of study programmes aimed at fostering students’ competencies to act in international environments. This might include foreign language training, provision of knowledge on other countries or cross-national features (e.g. international law, international trade), international comparison and various activities aimed at contributing to international and intercultural understanding.

In summing up various notions, we might argue that two views are most widely spread. First, the term “internationalisation” is employed predominantly with regard to border-crossing phenomena. Thereby, various phenomena might be addressed – knowledge transfer, physical mobility, various ways of “collaboration”, etc. It has to be pointed out that the views vary as regards the role borders play as well as the extent to which differences exist between countries; for example, the term “globalisation” is often used to suggest that national powers and differences between countries tend to decline (see Teichler, 2009b).

Second, the term “internationalisation” – similar to that of “diversification” – suggests that there is a major direction of change, *i.e.* a move (or a trend or targeted activities) towards more “internationality”. Quite often, the notion of growth in this area is accompanied by the value judgement that this trend is desirable. However, such a view is by no means univocal.

### *1.2. Student mobility: a major one amidst varied features of internationalisation*

Actually, many available analyses point out that the dominant understandings of “internationalisation of higher education” have substantially changed in recent decades. Some of these analyses explicitly address developments in Europe (e.g. Huisman and van der Wende, 2004/2005; Wächter, 2008; Teichler, 2009a; de Wit *et al.*, 2015). Others are not limited to Europe (e.g. Kehm and Teichler, 2007; OECD, 2010; Deardorff *et al.*, 2012), but strongly pay attention to developments in Europe. According to most of these analyses, higher education is already characterized traditionally by views and activities not confined or restrained by borders, but internationality became a worldwide key issue of policy and in the daily practice in higher education only around the 1980s, and kinds and directions of change since about the 1980s have been frequently paid attention to.

First, as already mentioned above, the growth of key elements of internationality tends to be emphasized, whereby absolute numbers of foreign or international mobile students are the indicator most frequently referred to. While transfer of knowledge across borders – traditionally the core element of internationality of higher education – is so much taken for granted that it has been hardly underscored in the recent public debates,

student mobility became the most prominent theme in this domain in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, both the “success story” of the ERASMUS programme, which notably supports temporary student mobility within Europe, as well as the emphasis placed on student mobility as the single most important aim within the Bologna reform process underscore the key role of student mobility within the internationalisation policies and activities in Europe. This is by no means surprising, because it is highly and can be described simply in quantitative terms.

Second, other modes and activities of border-crossing than those of knowledge transfer and international student mobility newly emerged or expanded substantially in recent decades. As will be discussed later, these international modes and activities are partly viewed as independent from and partly as complementary to or substitutions of the traditional activities:

- More international partnerships between institutions, departments, programmes, etc., in order to stimulate “exchange” in many respects,
- Growing mobility and migration of scholars,
- Increasing provisions of study programmes and degrees in other countries (“branch campuses”, “transnational education”, “programme mobility”, etc.),
- A growing role of virtual border-crossing (e-learning across borders, “Massive Online Open Courseware (MOOCs)”, etc.), and other forms of “open learning”,
- Growing mobility and migration of scholars, and
- An increasing importance of international learning not associated to physical, programme or virtual mobility, for example called “internationalisation at home”.

Third, we note a growth of measures – both on supra-institutional level and within institutions of higher education – to facilitate and accommodate international activities. Various financial support schemes were established or extended. The support structures and service structures grew and became more professional.

Fourth, targeted international and national internationalisation policies emerged or became more elaborate. Similarly, internationalisation strategies are formulated and pursued by an increasing proportion of



individual higher education institutions. In many instances, they became so important that experts observe a frequent “mainstreaming” of higher education strategies: in formulating and pursuing general institutional strategies, the implications for internationalisation are taken care of, and in reverse, internationalisation strategies are coined with the development of the institution as a whole in mind.

Fifth, we note a growing interaction of the initially scattered international activities and policies as well as a growing complexity of the overall setting. Even, concepts of “comprehensive internationalisation” (Hudzik, 2015) are developed. It is difficult yet to establish how far such ideas remain rhetoric or shape the daily life of higher education.

### 1.3. *Controversial judgements*

Sixth, finally, many observers perceive substantial changes in the directions of internationalisation policies. A close view, however, suggests that experts’ view differ dramatically as regards the specific directions pointed out, the relative strengths of the policies, the degree of support *vs.* controversies, and the extent of convergence across countries *vs.* variety between countries. Certainly, it is widely assumed that an “outcome awareness” has increased in higher education in general in recent decades and that it has put its mark on the discourse of value of internationalisation. Obviously, a “regionalisation” trend, *i.e.* towards strong border-crossing cooperation among neighbours, can be observed as well – not only in Europe (Wächter, 2009; Teichler, 2009a), but in some other regions of the world as well (see for example Yonezawa *et al.*, 2014).

But views vary whether other widely assumed “mainstreams” of internationalisation of higher education are really as widely realized, as one tends to believe. For example, many observers have noted an increasing emphasis placed on “competition” instead of “cooperation” and on the economic and political value instead of a traditional emphasis on the academic and cultural value of internationality of higher education. Similarly, many observers point out a growing nationalistic or even imperialistic undercurrent of internationalisation policies – one expert coined the expression “hegemonic internationalisation” (Scott, 2015): how can our country gain financially, economically and politically and be successful at the expense

of other countries through smart internationalisation policies and activities in higher education? Some experts note that growing “anti-internationalisation” affects higher education policies (Rhoades, 2017). There is no doubt that the rhetoric as regards competition and economic benefits has gained momentum, but it is difficult to judge how far actual policies and activities are in tune with such rhetoric. For example, harsh criticism of the economization is widespread in academia, as it is often vividly expressed – for example “From the pursuit of knowledge to the pursuit of revenue” (Reisberg and Rumbley, 2014; cf. also various contributions in Kehm and de Wit, 2005). Moreover, surveys of the views of university leaders suggest that institutional concepts and strategies as regards internationalisation continue to vary substantially (Egron-Polak, Hudson and Sandstrom, 2015). Last but not least, internationalisation policies continue to differ substantially between countries (see notably Huisman and van der Wende, 2004; de Wit *et al.*, 2015).

Finally, it seems questionable, whether the widespread positive judgement of increasing internationality has persisted. Already some decades ago, the negative consequences of “brain drain” were pointed out, and this critique persisted irrespective of some advantages of “brain circulation” for the countries losing talent (see Wächter, 2006). In the meantime, fears have grown that internationality might often be conflicting with quality, economic rationales of internationalisation might undermine academic approaches, as pointed out above, and “international understanding” and “global citizenship” might have lost their position as core values of internationality of higher education. Again, views are so varied that no clear dominance of a certain view or policy can be claimed.

## 2. Definitions and quantities of student mobility

We often read that student mobility has substantially increased over the years: from about 200,000 or 300,000 world-wide about five decades ago to about 3 million or 4 million in recent years (see Cummings, 1991; Banks and Bhandari, 2012). According to recent forecasts, we might expect a further doubling within in a few years ahead. Those referring to such figures point at an enormous growth, but absolute figures are misleading.

As the overall student numbers increased substantially as well, the proportion of students studying in another country has remained more or less constant at about 2 % or only slightly more.

Even more surprising is the fact that figures on international student mobility are often presented in the public discourse without any explanation of the underlying definition of “mobility” and thus, of the features of border-crossing referred to. In response to this chaotic situation, the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) initiated two major studies aimed at conceptual clarification and data improvement (Kelo, Teichler and Wächter, 2006; Teichler, Ferencz and Wächter, 2011). These analyses of the available expert literature and data sets suggest that seven issues have to be clarified: (1) student “mobility” vs. “foreign students” and “study abroad”; (2) inbound vs. outbound mobility; (3) short-term mobility vs. mobility for a whole degree programme; (4) “vertical” vs. “horizontal” mobility; (5) mobility for the purpose of study vs. for “study-related” purposes; (6) the threshold of a period worth to be called mobility; (7) mobility at a certain point in time vs. the event of mobility during the course of study.

It might be added, though, that such a classification covers only the major discourses on international student mobility. Additionally, we note an increasing awareness that the mainstreams of student mobility are not really open for everybody. In Europe, for example, the first major study on ERASMUS student mobility pointed out that the usual schemes do neither fit “adult” students nor those with family responsibilities. Some years later, when the “social dimension” of higher education was emphasized within the Bologna Process (see Kooij, 2014), discussions intensified as well about opportunities for mobility of various socio-biographically disadvantaged groups. Finally, measures have been taken recently in select European countries to involve higher education more strongly in integrating rising numbers of refugees and asylum seekers.

### 2.1. “Foreign” vs. “Mobile”

International statistics are often referred to in claims about the magnitude of internationally mobile students. However, the available statistics traditionally intended to inform about foreign students and study abroad.

Students were classified according to “citizenship”, “nationality” or, “passport”. However, a substantial proportion of foreign students has not been mobile for the purpose of study, but rather has already lived and been educated in the country of study, before they began to study. We even can argue: the more mobility and migration increases all over the world, the less citizenship is suitable as an approximation of student mobility. It would be appropriate to define “international student mobility” as border-crossing for the purpose of embarking into study in the country of destination.

Also, persons might have lived and learned in another country than that of their citizenship prior to study and might have moved to the country of their citizenship for the purpose of study. Also, some students might have moved to another country for the purpose of study and became citizens of that country during the course of study. These students are mobile for the purpose of study, but are not foreign (see Lanzendorf and Teichler, 2005).

The magnitude of error due to different definitions was demonstrated in the above named studies with the help of statistics from countries collecting data both on nationality and mobility. For example, 13.6 % of the students in the United Kingdom in 2007 were foreign mobile and 5.6 % foreign non-mobile, *i.e.* were foreign but had already had their domicile in the UK prior to study. Finally, 0.7 % were mobile, but not foreign (Bürger, Ferencz and Wächter, 2011). On the basis of such statistics available for a select number of countries, the authors of the former of the comparative study named above estimated that about one quarter of foreign students on average of European countries in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were not mobile for the purpose of study and, in reverse, that about one tenth of students mobile for the purpose of study were not foreign (Kelo, Teichler and Wächter, 2006).

In recent years, the institutions collecting international educational statistics (Unesco, OECD, Eurostat) try to provide more reliable statistics on student mobility and encourage the individual countries to collect data both on nationality and mobility. But they are dependent on the data delivered by the individual countries. As a consequence, we are often not certain anymore today, if we see overviews of “foreign”, “mobile” or “international” – a completely vague term – students, which of these definitions are employed, and whether they are really employed consistently for all the countries referred to.

## 2.2. *Inward mobile versus Outward mobile students*

Any move of a student from one to another country, by definition, is concurrently outwards mobile (from the perspective of the country and possibly the institution of “origin” or of the “sending” institution) and inwards mobile (from the perspective of the country and the institution of “destination” or of the “receiving” institution). Various terms are employed, for example “incoming” and “outgoing” students, “inwards” and “outwards” or “inbound” and “outbound” mobility. If statistics report the students’ nationality rather than mobility, the appropriate terms are “foreign students” and “study abroad students”.

Actually, institutions of higher education are accustomed to collect data on incoming (and/or foreign students), and national and international aggregations of these data can be undertaken at ease. In most instances, information is collected and aggregated as well on the inwards mobile (and/or foreign) students’ country of origin. In contrast, data collections of outgoing mobility are rarely undertaken and are likely to be incomplete. Therefore, the international statistics of outward mobile students and/or study abroad are based on the aggregation of the respective data of origin. For example, the number of French students going to other countries is not collected from French sources, but is derived from student statistics of inward mobile (and/or foreign) from all other countries, where France is named as country of origin.

Available data shows that the “in – out ratio” varies substantially by country. For example, the above named latter in-depth study on student mobility showed that the number of foreign/inward mobile students in the UK was about twenty times as high as the number of UK students studying abroad/being outward mobile. There were various countries with an in – out ratio of between 3:1 and 5:1 in 2007, e.g. Belgium, France, Austria and Germany. For some countries a balanced rate held true, e.g. Finland, Norway and Portugal. And finally, students studying abroad/outgoing students were more than three times as frequent as foreign/incoming students in some countries, e.g. Bulgaria and Poland (Bürger, Ferencz and Wächter, 2011).

As regards the direction of student mobility and the “in – out ratio”, we note a highly normative public debate (see Huisman and van der Wende, 2004/2005; de Wit *et al.*, 2015). Three different types of value judgements can be observed.

The first might be named “high inwards mobility is beautiful”: high numbers of incoming (or foreign) students are viewed as indicating the attractiveness and reputation of the hosting country or institution. Therefore, the rate of foreign students among all students is employed as an indicator in some university “rankings” of “world-class universities”. Also, some countries, such as the UK, try to generate funds by charging even higher tuition fees from “overseas” students than from home students. Also, countries providing aid for developing countries through fellowships at least consider respective flows as desirable.

According to the second value judgement, “balance and reciprocity of student flows are beautiful”. “Exchange” of students between partner institutions might be part of intensive cooperation. Balanced flows of students between countries might be most valuable for enhancing mutual understanding across countries. For example, temporary student mobility within ERASMUS has been promoted by the European Union since the late 1980s with the view that reciprocal exchange is highly desirable (see Ferencz, 2011).

The third position, finally, might be named “international experience is beautiful”. For example, the hope is widely spread in low income and middle income countries that outward mobility might be highly beneficial for the individual as well as for the country notably through the enhanced competencies of mobile students who eventually return to the country of origin; however, concern is widely spread as well that many upwards mobile students will not return and contribute to “brain drain”. The value judgement that outgoing mobility is highly desirable was also crucial for an agreement reached in 2009 among the ministers in charge of higher education of the countries collaborating in the Bologna Process. According to the communiqué of the Leuven 2009 ministerial conference, the proportion of graduates from institutions of higher education, who have had at least some period of experience of study in another country, is the most important strategic target for the second phase of the Bologna Process, *i.e.* up to the year 2020.

### 2.3. *Temporary mobility vs. Mobile for a whole study programme*

Many students are internationally mobile for a whole study programme, for example for three or four years to complete a whole bachelor course

in another country. Others study in another country just for a relative short period, such as one semester or one academic year. Different terms are employed for this distinction: the latter might be called “temporarily mobile”, “short-term mobile” or “credit-mobile” students, while the former students “mobile for the whole study programme”, “degree-mobile” or “diploma-mobile” students.

The logic of these different types of mobility is clearly distinct. On the one hand, degree-mobile students want to leave the educational system of their prior learning and to embark totally into another educational system and to eventually get a degree indicating that they have acquired the advanced level of competencies in that country. On the other hand, temporarily mobile students want to experience another educational system for a while, but to spend most of the study time, as a rule, in the country of origin; study abroad provides a contrast or a supplement to study at home at a more or less equal level of quality, and most of these hope that their home institution will recognize the study achievements during the period abroad as equivalent to those in their home country and thus do not force them to study longer than the non-mobile students in order to get a degree.

The available international statistics do not offer any distinction between short-term and degree-mobility. Actually, the agencies collecting the international statistics do not want to include “short-term mobile” students: they ask the national agencies not to include students in statistics of foreign or mobile students those who study in another country for up to one year. Some countries actually deliver data for international statistics, which actually exclude short-term mobile students, while others countries include them. As a consequence, these international statistics undercount the real number of mobile students. On the basis of various sources, we might estimate that about 30 % of the internationally mobile students are short-term mobile students (see Teichler, 2012b). But estimates are on a shaky basis. On the one hand, we do not know how many short-term mobile students are included in the international statistics, because the national statistical agencies do not follow the instruction of the international data-collectors and because we have no international data collection of short-term mobility. Often, data are provided about ERASMUS student mobility, *i.e.* the European programme providing support to temporary student mobility,

but there are obviously much more short-term mobile students in Europe funded by other means (own funds or other scholarships).

#### 2.4. “Vertical” versus “Horizontal” Mobility

A distinction between “vertical” and “horizontal” student mobility is not employed in official statistics or any other official reports by governments and other key organisations in the domain of higher education. And it certainly will be not employed there in the foreseeable future, because a classification cannot be undertaken easily and would be politically sensitive. But it is often referred to in research on the aims, processes and results of student mobility. The author of this article, actually, contributed to the spread of this term (Teichler, 2004).

The term “vertical mobility” is suitable to depict the move of a person to a country and to an institution of higher education which is viewed to be superior in academic quality than the country and the institution where this mobile person comes from. It is often a move as well from an economically less advanced to an economically more advanced country. In contrast, “horizontal mobility” refers to moves whereby the academic quality of the institution and possible country of destination is more or less on equal terms with that of the institution of origin and of the country of origin.

For example, the introduction of “convergent” structures of study programmes and degrees across European countries was advocated in the Bologna Process as serving the increase of student mobility. A careful analysis of various key documents shows that two types of mobility are referred to in this context. On the one hand, study in Europe should be made more attractive for students from other parts of the world. On the other hand, the Bologna Process should facilitate intra-European mobility. These arguments imply that mobility from outside to Europe is upwards vertical mobility in most cases, whereby many students from other regions strive for advanced academic quality in Europe, while fewer students move from Europe to other regions of the world. It is taken for granted that this upwards mobility is degree mobility in most instances. In contrast, mobility within Europe is viewed as horizontal in most instances, and mobility flows are expected to be two-ways flows and ideally “reciprocal” in terms of similar numbers of



both directions of flows and possible direct “exchange” between countries and institutions (see Wächter, 2008; Teichler, 2009a, 2012a).

Altogether, most experts agree that student mobility all over the world is more often vertical than horizontal. Within Europe, however, horizontal mobility is strongly advocated. Most vertical mobility is degree-mobility, while horizontal mobility often is short-term.

The distinction between these two types of mobility might be characterized in an ideal-type way as follows. Vertically upward mobile students aim at reaching a higher level of competencies through mobility than they could expect to reach through study at home. For this purpose, they are expected and willing to adapt to and immerse into the academic life of the host institution and the social and cultural life of the host country in order to reach an advanced academic level. Horizontally mobile students, in contrast, do not expect a higher level of teaching and learning at the institution or in the country of destination, but contrasting experiences to those at home – may it be in the teaching and learning process, the substance of knowledge taught, or the social and cultural environment. Accordingly, the author of this article summarized the findings of his research on the ERASMUS programme as “learning from contrast” (see Teichler and Maiworm, 1997).

### *2.5 Mobility for the purpose of study vs. Mobility for “study-related” purposes*

Many surveys do not only try to find out whether students were enrolled at another institution of higher education for the purpose of regular study. They also ask students whether they spend a period in another country in order to undertake other activities which might be linked either directly to their study programme or which might be international experiences valuable for the overall competences acquired in the course of study – even if they are not directly linked to their study programme. For example, students might acquire work experience, take language courses or participate at a summer school in another country.

As a rule, mobility for purposes of internships, language training, etc. is only reported in educational statistics, if this is coordinated by the hosting institutions or otherwise viewed as part of their study arrangement.

Student and graduate surveys, thus, are best sources to show how widespread these study-related activities really are – either be undertaken in addition to mobility for regular study or independently.

Such activities are by no means rare. For example, an analysis of various national graduate surveys in European countries undertaken in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century noted that almost as many graduates from institutions of higher education in Austria as well as in Germany had been abroad solely for other purposes as those having been mobile for regular study during the course of their study; in France, even more graduates reported that they had been abroad solely for other purposes than those reporting mobility for the purpose of regular study (Schomburg, 2011). Similar findings are reported for students in advanced years of study in regularly undertaken comparative studies on student life in Europe (Hauschildt, 2015).

### *2.6 Threshold of a period worth to be called mobility*

As already pointed out, temporary student mobility often does not show up in international and national statistics, even if it comprises a whole year. But a lower threshold is often discussed in the framework of partnership arrangements between institutions of higher education or in the framework of support programmes for student mobility.

For example, support for student mobility in the framework of the ERAMUS programme was granted for many years under the condition that the period abroad lasts at least three months. In recent years, a minimum is called for study plans leading to 15 credits (within the ECTS scheme comprising 60 credits for an academic year). As this is widely accepted, it excludes shorter activities, such as excursions organized to do one or two weeks “fieldwork” in another country, as well as “summer schools” or short intensive language courses.

### *2.7 Mobility at a certain point in time vs. Event of mobility during the course of study*

Most quantitative overviews refer to international student mobility at a certain point in time. If we read that more than 100,000 foreign or inward

mobile students are enrolled in a certain country, information is provided as regards a certain calendar date, as a rule viewed as prototypical for a certain academic year. In contrast, we could ask: How many students experience international mobility during their course of study?

For example, when ERASMUS was inaugurated in 1987 notably to support short-term student mobility (for a semester or an academic year), the European Commission announced a long-term target: ERASMUS and possibly similar national schemes should help provide the opportunity for 10 % of the European students of studying a period in another country. In specifying the target, a total number of fellowships for 2.5 % of students at any given time was considered necessary; assuming that students study on average four years, this would provide 10 % of the students the chance of studying a period in another country during their total course of study. Actually, ERASMUS provided support as a rule for less than 1 % of eligible students in a given year and, thus, provided mostly a chance for 2-3 % of eligible students to gain international experience during the course of study.

Such a shift of emphasis from looking at current frequencies to those over the whole course of study was also undertaken in 2009, as already pointed out, in the so-called Leuven Communiqué of the Bologna Process. A target was set that 20 % of the European students graduating in the year 2020 should have had international study experiences. Subsequent specifications suggest that this comprises both students spending a period of study and those spending the whole degree programme in another country and should include also periods of internships, if they are regular components of the study programme. We can argue that this target figure indicates the “event of mobility” during the course of study (Teichler, 2013).

The above named analysis of graduate surveys in various European countries allows one to estimate that about 10 % of recent graduates on average of the European countries actually have had international study experiences during their initial course of study. Accordingly, the Leuven Communiqué could be interpreted as a call for doubling this figure within a decade. The surveys showed, however, enormous differences by country. More than 20 % of graduates in countries such as Austria and the Netherlands had international experience during the course of study already prior to the Leuven Communiqué. The respective figure was about

15 % in Germany; thus the target of 20 % by 2020 was in reach to be achieved. In contrast, fewer than 5 % of graduates from higher education institutions in Poland and the United Kingdom at that time were internationally experienced (see Schomburg, 2011): it is unlikely that the target of 20 % by the year 2020 could be realized in these countries.

Surveys of students in advanced years of study and graduate surveys are presently the best procedure for measuring the event of study abroad. But the information they provide cannot be viewed as ideal. First, surveys trace and receive responses only from a proportion of students, whereby the respondents might not be representative for all students. Second, these surveys do not include students from studying the final phase of study or graduating in these countries, and they do not reach and include students from these countries who opted for degree mobility and eventually graduate in other countries.

### *2.8. Quantities of international student mobility – What we don't know and know*

When we read figures of about four million “international” students these days, we have good reasons to assume that three million or five million could have been reported as well. Given the variety of concepts and measurements, it is only surprising how often certain figures are presented without saying what they imply: citizenship, mobility for the purpose of study, inclusion or exclusion of short-term mobility, inclusion or exclusion of “study-related activities”, etc.

A closer look at available sources also suggests that international student mobility is not so clearly on the rise as many sweeping public statements suggest. The proportion of students worldwide moving to another country for the purpose of study has only increased marginally over the decades, and we have noted in some economically advanced countries periods of stagnation or even declines for some periods. But there was an increase of international mobile students in economically advanced countries in recent years notably for two reasons. First, absolute student numbers grew more substantially in low-income and mid-income countries than in economically advanced countries, and as most of the mobile students from these countries moved to economically advanced countries, the

proportion of incoming students among all students increased in the latter countries. Second, short-term mobility between economically advanced countries gained increasing popularity.

National policies and institutional strategies remained varied as regards the prime targets of student flow: in some instances, prime emphasis is placed on high numbers of incoming students, in others on the value of studying abroad. Some policies concentrate on increasing mobility from less to more advanced countries, others on mobility “on equal terms”. Some actors consider mobility for the whole degree programme as crucial, others temporary mobility for large numbers of students.

It does not come as a surprise to note that target numbers for student mobility vary substantially. On the one hand, it is seen as a success that ERASMUS supports annually about 1 % of eligible students. We are also accustomed to the fact that international statistics report an international student quota of less than 3 % worldwide. On the other hand, the target is widely accepted in Europe that 20 % should have some international experience during the course of study. Some European countries even advocate a respective quota of 50 % in the long run. Irrespective of the data actually referred to, international student mobility is considered to be so highly important now and in the foreseeable future that it has to be taken seriously as far as support and service provisions as well as the character of study programmes and the modes of teaching and learning are concerned.

### 3. The value of student mobility: findings in recent decades

#### 3.1 *The state of perceptions and systematic analyses*

Actors and experts in the domain of higher education agree that figures informing about the quantity of student mobility as such do not say anything about the value of study abroad. However, as optimism is widespread that international experience in the course of study is valuable, high numbers of student mobility are often interpreted as indicating success. One should be careful, though, to take for granted that student mobility is a success story. Obviously, it is worth looking at analyses aimed at

identifying strengths and weaknesses of international student mobility and at measuring the effects of international student mobility.

In recent years, activities of evaluation have spread within higher education, individual institutions and their sub-units are expected and expect themselves to be more “accountable”, and attention has increased to get to know the “impact” and “outcome” of the key processes of teaching, learning and research. Hence, the process of “internationalisation” seems to be bound to be accompanied as well with a growing interest of its impact. Actually, surveys of key leaders in higher education certainly suggest that improvement of the quality of learning and of the competences of students, a better preparation of graduates for the internationalising world of work and an increased international awareness are viewed to be among the key objectives of internationalisation (see Egron-Polak, Hudson and Sandstrom, 2015).

A first glance at available information, though, suggests that the issue of identifying and measuring impact of international student mobility is not high on the agenda. For example, a recent overview on articles published in journals specialized on higher education or on international issues of higher education does not name “impact”, “outcomes” or anything similar among the most frequent 20 themes of internationality of higher education (Kosmützky and Putty, 2016). Similarly, a recent study on the state of knowledge and discourse on internationalisation of higher education does not emphasize issues of impact of student mobility (de Wit *et al.*, 2015).

Actually, a close view shows that information on the impact of international student mobility is by no means altogether scarce (see de Wit, 2009; Deardorff and van Gaalen, 2012; van Mol, 2014). Many actually available studies tend to be overlooked, because the findings are widely scattered across different types of documents and publications in different languages. But even efforts to summarize the state of knowledge systematically face substantial problems.

First, many studies are small case studies – focusing on individual institutions or departments, individual country flows of mobility, individual areas of impact, etc. – and, thus, do not provide any answer about the relevance of the findings beyond the case. Some studies at least provide a good overview on mobile students from a certain country, e.g. Norris and Gillepsie (2008) for the U.S. and Potts (2015) for Australia. Other studies provide

good overviews about students mobile in the framework of a certain support programmes. But comparisons across countries and across support programmes are scarce. Overall, measurements of the impact of “vertical mobility” are so widely scattered that summaries hardly can be made.

Second, it is difficult to get a systematic overview of the various dimensions of “success”, “impact”, “effect”, etc. Altogether, a wide range has been addressed so far, which might be grouped into four categories: (a) study success, (b) enhancement of competencies, (c) changes of values and attitudes and (d) career impacts. But individual studies often opt for the analysis of only a small range of impact areas, and for distinct specifications and measurements of these dimensions, thus causing problems of comparability.

The variety of the discussions and analyses in this domain cannot be viewed merely as consequence of simplistic discourse, too high selectivity of analysis or reduced complexity due to lack of time and money for analysis. Rather, we note such a broad range of aims and objectives of internationalisation of higher education as well as of the motives of those shaping the international learning environments and of the mobile students themselves (Caruso and de Wit, 2009). Thus, selectivity is indispensable as regards the assumed value, the desirability and the expected strength of impact. But altogether, one information about an enormously broad range of possible impact of international student mobility is desirable.

The variety of students’ motives might be illustrated. A survey of students in mid-income countries potentially willing to study in economically advanced countries showed that five motives were named each by more than three quarters: “Experience new ways of thinking and acting in my field”, “Improve chances for international career”, “Improve career prospects in my home country”, “Foreign language proficiency”, and “Develop personality/become more independent” (European Commission, 2006). In the first major evaluation study of the ERASMUS programme, the somewhat differently formulated questions led to similar results: more than 70 % stated as motives: “Learning a foreign language”, “Opportunity for self-development”, “Wish to enhance understanding of the host country”, and “Wish to improve career prospects”; additionally more than half wished “to have another perspective on the home country” (Teichler and Maiworm, 1997).

Third, many surveys encourage teachers, administrators and employers to rate and possibly the students and graduates to self-rate the impact of international student mobility. Often, these judgements can be viewed as well-based, and altogether the judgements of these various actors converge. However, more frequently more direct measurement, for example tests of competencies, comparisons of views, also would be desirable, further comparisons of attitudes and activities before and after the sojourn (e.g. Opper, Teichler, & Carlson, 1990), and finally data on drop-out rates, labour market data, etc.

Fourth, many studies report changes of the internationally mobile students' competencies, views and attitudes and well as career successes and attribute them to the international experience without any clear control measures. In only a few studies, a comparison is undertaken between students in different schemes of mobility or between mobile and non-mobile students.

It is not the aim of this article to provide a comprehensive overview on available analyses. There is such a multitude of "bits and pieces" of information that a comprehensive overview would require to write a whole book. Rather, examples of impact will be provided from select highly complex studies – those which undertook a comparison between many countries, covered a broad range of impacts, and often compared mobile and non-mobile students.

First, key findings will be reported from the four large analyses of the functioning and the impact of the ERASMUS programme (Teichler and Maiworm, 1997; Teichler, 2002; Janson, Schomburg and Teichler, 2009; European Commission, 2014). Second, notably professional impact of international student mobility will be illustrated with the help of the major comparative surveys or secondary analyses of national surveys on graduate employment and work (Jahr and Teichler, 2007; Schomburg and Teichler, 2008; Teichler, 2011; Schomburg, 2011; cf. also Bürger and Lanzendorf, 2010). Thus the focus will be the impact of "horizontal mobility", notably of students mobile within Europe, and of those temporarily mobile.

### *3.2. Successful study*

Students intending to spend a whole study programme in another country certainly will consider the successful completion of the study



programme and the award of the respective degree as the most obvious criterion of success. The risk of drop-out is likely to be considered as well as the chances of getting good grades. Moreover, it is important for them to know whether a degree awarded in another country is likely to be recognized in their home country.

There is a wealth of information about problems both students mobile for the whole study programme and those temporarily mobile face in one way or other: funding, administrative issues at the host institution or in the host country, finding appropriate accommodation, getting along with the host country culture, getting in touch with host country students and other host country nationals, coping with the teaching and learning styles at the host institutions, meeting the academic standards of the host study programme, adjusting to climate and food, etc. Thus, even though international mobility seems to have obvious benefits, there are obvious challenges. Precise data as regards study success is not often provided. This is certainly in part a methodological issue, because most surveys either address mobile students during the course of study or graduates, who had been mobile during the course of study, and, thus, do not get hold of drop-outs. But lack of information might be also due to the fact that risks mobile students can face tend to be viewed as a sensitive issue, and some advocates of student mobility might be happy, if little is known about the real risks involved. For example, the publication of a study in Germany some years ago, according to the drop-out rate of inwards mobile students was more than one and a half time as high as that of German students, stirred up quite a debate.

In the public discourse on study success of short-term mobile students in Europe, most attention has been paid to the “recognition” of study during the period in another country upon return by the home institution (see Teichler, 2003). The Council of Europe already started in the 1950s to initiate conventions for the international recognition of entry qualifications, study achievements and degrees, and the 1997 Lisbon Convention – in cooperation with Unesco and the European Commission – is the one most advocacy one. The first major evaluation study of the ERASMUS programme had shown that somewhat the study period in another country counted upon return on average less than three quarters of a corresponding successful study period at home. This figure can be viewed as not

surprising, because many students took fewer courses abroad and reported initial problems of language proficiency and of adaptation to host country life study. The study also showed that a counting of study achievements abroad according to a credit system led to a recognition rate of more than 80 % (ibid.). This success of improved “book-keeping” was crucial for the recommendation in the Bologna Declaration of 1999 that all European countries should introduce a credit system in order to support international student mobility.

However, many former ERASMUS students reported in graduate surveys that the overall prolongation of study due to the study period in another country was higher, than one could have expected from reports as regards recognition. Both surveys undertaken five years later of ERASMUS students of the academic years 1989 and 2001 suggest that the overall study period was prolonged on average by 41 % of the period of study in another country (Janson, Schomburg and Teichler, 2009). That means that a student wanting to study in another country for one academic year should realistically assume that the overall study period is likely be half a year longer as a consequence of mobility. It also shows that emphasis placed on smooth formal recognition immediately upon return might lead to underestimation of the issues of compatibility of study in two or more countries.

### *3.3. Competencies and values subsequent to the sojourn*

Various analyses aim at establishing the impact of international experience during the course of study on the students’ competences and values. Some studies focus on curricular thrusts of training international experts or of reinforcing international understandings and on the respective successes of mobile or possibly also non-mobile students; as a rule, they demonstrate certain envisaged successes and select problems (see for example Leask 2015). Others are case studies of certain student flows – for example at individual institutions, students from certain countries or having gone to certain countries; hardly any general remarks can be made about the results as the consequence of the diverse settings (see Deardorff and van Gaalen, 2012). Only a few studies have strived for a fairly representative overview on competencies and value of mobile students possibly in comparison to non-mobile students.

As regards temporary mobility in Europe, the above-named studies on the ERASMUS programme often show how mobile students and formerly mobile graduates, teachers and coordinators at higher education institutions and employers rate differences of competencies and values after the sojourn between mobile and non-mobile students. Also, the above named comparative graduate surveys informed about self-assessments of competencies and values, whereby comparisons could be undertaken between formerly mobile and non-mobile students.

These studies consistently suggest that formerly mobile students can be viewed as at most slightly superior on average to formerly non-mobile students both regarding specific academic and professional competencies as well as regarding general competencies (e.g. analytical abilities, problem-solving ability and communication skills), but clearly superior regarding international competencies. To take the example of employers surveyed in various European countries in 2005/2006: 65 % of them considered graduates with international experience as good on average on three categories of specific knowledge and methods, and 59 % noted a similar level of competencies among graduates without international experiences. Such a positive view was expressed by 70 % on average as regards twelve categories of the general competencies of the former and 58 % of the latter (Janson, Schomburg and Teichler, 2009). In an earlier survey, 53 % of formerly mobile graduates self-rated their specialized and general competencies at the time of graduation as positive on average as compared of 51 % of the formerly non-mobile students (Teichler, 2002). In contrast, the ratings differed substantially as regards foreign language proficiency (88 % vs. 48 %), knowledge and understanding of international differences in culture and society (76 % vs. 28 %), ability to work with people from different cultural backgrounds (76 % vs. 40 %), and professional knowledge of other countries (59 % vs. 16 %). Similarly, 66 % of formerly mobile graduates rated their foreign proficiency language positively as compared to 22 % of formerly non-mobile graduates. Moreover, formerly mobile students also expressed the conviction in various ERASMUS surveys that “learning from contrast”, *i.e.* experiencing both other social and academic environments, has helped them to strengthen their reflective potentials and to make them constantly aware, that there are more options in life than those customary at home.

### 3.4. *Impact on career*

A look at the impact of international student mobility on the professional career after graduation is bound to end up without any sweeping generalisations. The conditions are too heterogeneous to lead to similar results. Vertically upwards mobile students returning to their country of origin might be accepted as persons with superior competencies, but might have less touch with the national labour market. Vertically upwards mobile students remaining in the country of study might be highly appreciated, but often not on equal terms with the citizens of their host country of study. As regards horizontal mobility for the whole degree programme, the few available studies do not present similar results. On the one hand, many Australian graduates reported that their study abroad experience was valuable for their career (Potts, 2015). On the other hand, surveys in Norway showed that graduates with a degree from a foreign higher education institution have a less successful early career on average than those having studied in Norway. This is interpreted as indicating that employers are less informed and at times sceptical as regards foreign credentials (Wiers-Jensen, 2008, 2011). Also, recent surveys of academics suggest that they hardly expect income advantages through international academic mobility (IDEA Consult, 2013).

As regards temporary mobility, surveys of both employers and graduates suggest that various criteria are clearly more important than international competences in the recruitment of graduates from higher education institutions. More emphasis tend to be placed on disciplinary knowledge, the field of study, areas of specialisation, grades, “personality”, communication skills as well as in some countries on prior work experience and in some countries on the reputation of the degree-granting university. But the majority of formerly mobile graduates report that experience abroad and foreign competences were among the major recruitment criteria (see for example European Commission, 2014). Moreover, various former surveys showed that former ERASMUS students perceived a positive impact of their international experiences on being taken into consideration as a job candidate by employers and eventually on obtaining their first job (Janson, Schomburg and Teichler, 2009).

Actually, both surveys reported as well that the non-employment rate (not “unemployment” according to official criteria) was slightly lower

among formerly mobile than among formerly non-mobile students. A survey of persons graduating from institutions of higher education of various European countries, around 2000, suggested that the average income five years later was almost 15 % higher for formerly mobile students than for formerly non-mobile students (Teichler, 2011). The more recent survey referred to above suggests a smaller difference: 30 % of formerly mobile students have reached chief executive or middle management position as compared to 28 % of formerly non-mobile students (European Commission, 2014). In contrast, only 16 % of students having been mobile in the framework of ERASMUS around the year 2000 believed five years later that their international mobility had a positive impact on their income – even slightly fewer than those noting a negative impact (Janson, Schomburg and Teichler, 2009).

All the surveys show that a substantial proportion of formerly mobile students note a relatively close links between their competencies and their subsequent work tasks. This is often due to the fact that they take over tasks for which international competencies are meaningful. According to an employer survey in 2005/2006, more than twice as many formerly mobile graduates than formerly non-mobile ones each have the following international work tasks: using foreign language on the job, working with colleagues or clients of other countries, using information about other countries, traveling professionally to other countries, or being sent abroad for extended work assignments (*ibid.*).

The single most striking career impact of temporary student mobility in Europe is frequent international professional mobility after graduation. According to a survey undertaken in the late 1990s, 20 % of former ERASMUS students as compared to 5 % of formerly non-mobile students have been employed in another country for some time or all the time during the first three to four years after graduation, and the respective figures were 22 % and 10 % for those sent abroad by their home country employer for a while (Jahr and Teichler, 2007).

### 3.5. *Other results*

Student mobility is by no means viewed as beneficial only in regard to academic progress as well as to subsequent employment and work

of graduates. Rather, mobility during the course of study is likely to affect the whole personality and the subsequent life of formerly mobile students. One hopes that “learning from contrast” changes the ways of reflection. Awareness grows that there is always a wealth of different options and solutions in life. Knowledge about other countries, social settings and cultural environments as well as social skills might emerge helping to get along in different environments. Many advocates of increasing internationalisation of higher education also expect that this will lead to a higher respect and tolerance for other cultures and life-styles.

Some critics point out that “instrumental” values have become dominant in higher education policy all over the world in recent years. Obviously, many recent studies on the impact of international student mobility have concentrated on the impacts on cognitive competencies and career impacts and, thus, provide little information beyond that. Therefore, surveys of former ERASMUS students of the academic year 1988/89 – undertaken shortly after the return, almost three years later and about five years later – are the best source regarding a wide range of impact (see Teichler and Maiworm, 1997). In response to a question about the extent to which formerly mobile persons consider various results of study in another country as worthwhile (on a scale from 1=“extremely worthwhile” to 5=“not at all worthwhile”),

- “Foreign language proficiency”, “maturity and personality development” and “acquaintance with people in another country” were viewed as the most valuable results of mobility (average responses of about 1,5).

- “Knowledge and understanding of the host country” was almost as highly rated (at least 1.7 on average), similarly as “opportunity to travel” and “break from usual surroundings”.

- Academic progress was also positively assessed by most formerly mobile students, though less positively altogether, and more general elements. e.g. “new thinking and reflections” were more highly appreciated (around 2.0 on average) than specific subject matter and academic progress in general (around 2.5).

- Finally, the career and professional impact was viewed least frequently as worthwhile (2.4 on average according to varied criteria and the varied surveys).

It might be added here that a frequent international life of formerly mobile students turns out to be important as well for many features in life, for example, 32 % of former ERASMUS students, who had a life partner, reported that their partner had a different nationality. This compares to only 13 % of persons who had not been internationally mobile during their course of study (European Commission, 2014).

Actually, a comparative study on student mobility already undertaken before the establishment of the ERASMUS programme has made us aware that views and attitudes of formerly mobile students as regards internationality should not be too easily interpreted as results of temporary study in another country. This study confirmed that formerly mobile students in Europe had on average a more positive view of the host country, a higher international awareness and a stronger understanding of the world as a global one than formerly non-mobile students. However, this survey suggested that this difference is only in part the result of the study abroad experience; besides, it noted a “selection effect”: young persons with a higher international awareness etc. are more likely to opt for student mobility, whereas those lacking such awareness are more likely to study at home. The study also showed that mobile students on average did not move towards a more positive opinion as regards the host country in general (Opper, Teichler and Carlson, 1990). Surveys of that kind also showed that not all mobile students develop a more positive view of the host country. Some reported highly appreciated experiences and others that they had bad experiences and that they felt alienated in the host country. This suggests that study in another country is by no means a more or less guarantee for more appreciation and respect of other ways of life.

### 3.6. *International student mobility: A “success story” ?*

The available systematic information confirms the conventional wisdom that international student mobility is viewed as beneficial in various respects by many participating students as well as by actors within the higher education system, policy makers and employers – notably in helping many students to understand and cope with an internationalising world and generally to contribute to a higher quality of competencies and to a more successful life beyond issues of “internationality”. But the findings

altogether do not support the view that international mobility is a more or less perfect “success story”.

For example, as regards “vertical mobility” from economically and academic less favourable to more favourable countries, many reports have been published making us also aware of the hardships of such mobility, the risks and failures, frequent problems of being fully accepted in other countries, the dilemmas of “brain drain”, etc. This article primarily summarizes available information on short-term student mobility within economically advanced countries, notably within Europe. One can draw the conclusion that such short-term mobility is certainly valuable for “learning from contrast”, thereby increasing international understanding, reinforcing reflective thinking and leading to a slightly higher level of academic and general competencies on average. But it often calls for additional time and efforts, and it is not *entrée* for super-careers: it only leads here and there to higher status and income, but temporary study abroad rather is most valuable in preparing students to cope with manifold visible international tasks. Finally, available information suggests that mobile students are by no means only focussing on the possible instrumental value for their career: many formerly mobile students appreciate highly the inspirations they got for understanding the world and the contributions of international experience to personality development and maturity.

#### 4. The future of internationalisation and student mobility

We observe a multitude of forecasts about the future of higher education. We tend to believe that we need forward-looks in this domain, because the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge today might have salient impact on the future. For example, the study programmes of today might have an impact on the graduates’ work for various decades of their career.

Most forecasts in recent years claimed that interactions across borders will increase in almost all spheres in life and that higher education is a sector of society where this is especially frequent and important. As already pointed out above, the widespread use of the term “internationalisation” is based on the assumption that growth is endemic. Views vary, however, how far we will move towards internationalisation, where borders remain



relevant but are frequently crossed, or towards globalisation, whereby increasing worldwide interaction is accompanied by decreasing relevance of nations and borders. Views also vary what role “physical” mobility of students and academics will play in the future. Actually, an in-depth view on the available literature does not lead to any firm forecasts, but suggests reflecting four issues.

First, there are many indications of growing a demand for international competencies in the world of work. For example, a comparison of the above named surveys undertaken around 2005 and around 2013 shows that an increasing number of graduates perceive a high importance of foreign languages (from 60 % to 70 %) and of experiences abroad (from 53 % to 61 %) in employers’ decisions to recruit graduates (European Commission, 2014).

Second, a comparison of various surveys of former ERASMUS students came to the conclusion that the professional value of ERASMUS had declined over the years. For example, the proportion of those using the language of the host country on the job as well as of those using first-hand knowledge of the host country on the job declined according the reports of former ERASMUS students surveyed in 1993 and those surveyed in 2005 during that period by one quarter. Similarly, the proportion of those stating that ERASMUS was helpful for obtaining their first job declined from 71 % to 54 % and of those noting a positive impact on their income level from 25 % to 16 % (Janson, Schomburg and Teichler, 2009).

The authors of the study named various possible reasons for such a declining value: the internationally mobile students might have grown faster than the number of jobs requiring visible international competencies. The more student mobility grows, the more the “exceptionality” of international experience declines by definition. More formerly mobile students might end up in “middle-level position” as a consequence of the overall expansion of higher education. Finally, non-mobile students might acquire more international competencies in recent years than in the past.

Third, as already pointed out above, activities in favour of internationalisation of higher education other than international student mobility gained momentum in recent years.

- International mobility and migration of scholars seems to increase even more than international student mobility. We note many forms and

purposes, e.g. international experience due to migration prior to study, mobility in the course of study or doctoral training, temporary early career mobility, long-term migration during the academic career, short visits for teaching and research collaboration, sabbaticals, guest professorships, etc. (see Cavalli and Teichler, 2015).

- Provisions of study programmes and degrees in other countries, at times fully controlled by the country of origin and at times based on collaboration by institutions and persons from the country of origin and the country of delivery, have spread substantially in recent years. They aim at offering study provisions similar to those abroad for non-mobile students. Dozens of terms are employed to characterize the arrangements, e.g. “branch campuses”, “franchised programmes”, “foreign-based universities”, “collaborative transnational education”, or “international programme”, each expressing links and mixes as well as modes of control *vs.* cooperation (see Knight, 2006; Lanzendorf, 2008; Knight and McNamara, 2017).

- Manifold efforts were made in recent years of changing the curricula in order to provide opportunities of “international learning” not based on physical mobility. “Internationalisation at home” became a widespread slogan (Beelen and Leask, 2011), and the title of the book “Internationalising the curriculum” (Leask, 2015) summarizes many activities in a suitable way.

Finally, virtual border-crossing gained momentum and is widely expected to play a substantially increasing role: “digital learning” or “e-learning” across borders take many forms (see Lawton, 2015). The term “Massive Online Open Courseware (MOOCs)”, is most frequently referred to depict activities of making individual courses available virtually across borders (see de Corte, Engwall and Teichler, 2016), and the term “open learning” is often employed in order to underscore opportunities of wide accessibility of virtually transmitted knowledge.

In many respects, these additional modes of cross-border higher education can be intertwined with international student mobility. Study in another country can be supported by teaching staff mobility. Students in transnational arrangements also can spend some period of the study in the partner country. Students might be better prepared to gain from mobility, if they were enrolled initially in a programme emphasizing

“internationalisation at home”. Digital learning might help creating links between study at home and study in another country. However, these additional modes of cross-border higher education are often promoted with the argument that international student mobility in spite of its remarkable growth is likely to remain an option for a minority, while learning beyond borders is now and even more likely in the future relevant for a much higher proportion of students.

Moreover, international mobility and cooperation is certainly one of the most “political” themes in higher education. Whether partnerships are more likely to be realized with certain countries or less likely with other countries, whether developing aid or competition between advanced countries is in the limelight of discussions and activities, whether “international understanding” or “knowledge society” are underscored, whether political activities in favour of “convergence” of higher education play a small or a substantial role, whether understanding of other cultures is seen as desirable goal in general or almost as a necessity for survival – all of these varied perspectives underscore how much “internationality” of higher education is politically embedded. In recent years, many observers point out that – after some years of increased optimism after the end of the “cold war” – international political tensions and “international misunderstanding” are on the rise. This makes the future of “internationality” of higher education even less predictable, but many observers suggest that it makes efforts in favour of international and intercultural understanding more urgent.

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