

Globalization Strategies and Higher Education. A Dutch—Romanian Perspective

Florentin Popescu

Abstract Higher education institutions throughout the world are undergoing considerable functional and structural changes as they adapt to meet the needs of a global and knowledge-based economy. There is an urgent call for them to be equipped with an well-defined and implanted globalization strategy to tap and provide useful and simple planning tools to utilize global resources effectively. In this sense, this paper seeks to investigate the problem of how and why HAN University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands) and Bucharest University of Economic Studies (Romania) have responded to globalization within the context of their strategic planning and their local, regional, national and global roles and responsibilities. It seeks to document how these aspects of globalization are perceived by the both universities faculty and higher management. The paper traces the chosen universities recent development and seeks to account for this in terms of their institutional strategic planning.

Keywords Higher education · Globalization strategy · Global competitiveness · Institutional strategic planning · Institutional policies development · Global university

1 Introduction

This paper seeks to highlight major issues in connection with institutional responses to the impact of globalization with respect to responsibilities that range from being local to global in nature. Continuing, it explores higher education in the context of

F. Popescu (✉)
HAN University of Applied Sciences, Ruitenberglaan 31,
6826 CC Arnhem, The Netherlands
e-mail: florentin.popescu@han.nl

F. Popescu
Bucharest University of Economic Studies,
Piata Romana Nr.6, Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania

globalization, with a particular emphasis on academic motives for globalization and its part in the response to opportunities presented by globalization shown by the universities. The researcher is planning to encompass a consideration/evaluation of the specific country government policies and practices in relation to the theme as well as an evaluation of institutional responses of HAN University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands) and Bucharest University of Economic Studies (Romania) to a range of issues, policies and strategies concerning globalization. Possible the extent of study is wider and includes other responses to globalization such as academic relevance and quality, curriculum development, mobility of programmes, and so forth.

2 Academic, Societal and Institutional Contribution to Knowledge

This paper contributes to knowledge by attempting to quantify how and why some universities are striving to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the impact of globalization and consequently to increase their global competitiveness. It positions the responses to globalization of chosen universities within the policy context that each university sets. In a world that is globalizing rapidly, in which the central role of universities in the knowledge economy and in civil society is articulated more strongly and more widely than ever, we do not have a clear sense of what it takes or what it means to be a global university [31]. This paper strives to contribute to this discourse. In a conceptual context, this research is exploring the various tiers of globalization and to equate them to the overall responses to globalization from the context of institutional strategic planning made by the different universities.

3 Globalisation and Higher Education

The changes that have taken place in higher education globally over the last few years can be referred to as a revolution [2]. Globalization and internationalization are today major drivers of change in higher education systems globally [20]. Matthews and Sidhu [26] argue that international education is a direct manifestation of globalization, concentrating their study only on its economic drivers, an interpretation that is lacking the direct response to globalization. While national and international strategies for remodeling existing methods and instruments of higher education management must develop [7, 11, 29, 35, 36], a drastic change of responsibilities and resources has to consequently shift towards a common model of higher education [5, 28, 34].

There is a vast body of studies dealing with different aspects of higher education development in context of national economies globalization and societies integration. Although all these studies are focused on different issues and their results vary from country to country, nevertheless they all can be placed within the following scheme: they either (1) investigate the nature of globalization and integration in field of higher education or vice versa, that is, the role of higher education in promotion of national economies globalization and societies integration; or (2) analyze attributes and challenges imposed by integration of national universities into world system of higher education; or (3) study actions undertaken and policies conducted by national governments and managements of local universities to prepare and adjust national higher education for its integration into world system of higher education [21].

Studies focusing on nature of globalization and integration in context of higher education often try to identify and analyze a nexus between these three elements. In particular, they consider higher education in context of globalization and integration as: (1) as a system of functionally dependent universities and R&D institutes, or universities and institutes from different countries that are bound together by different frequent interactions, e.g. exchange student flow, R&D cooperation etc., across national borders; or (2) as groups of national universities and institutes that share values and beliefs that transcend national systemic boundaries [4, 10].

As for globalization of national higher education from emerging market economies, such studies confirm general worldwide tendencies described above and additionally analyze the role of international organizations such as OECD and UNESCO in transforming local systems of higher education in accordance with world accepted standards and best practices [12, 15].

Other studies focusing on crucial role of higher education for maximizing the benefits of national economies globalization and societies integration state that cooperation between universities and R&D institutes increases wealth of societies and promotes international cooperation between nations [25]. Studies analyzing attributes and challenges imposed by integration of national universities into world system of higher education work with such attributes as cross-border collaborative arrangements, knowledge and language acquisition, adoption of curriculum with international content etc., and connected with them challenges such as building up of knowledge economy and technology, establishing of lifelong learning, challenges of governance and financing of universities in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy etc. [3].

Finally, studies focusing on actions undertaken and policies conducted by national governments and managements of local universities mainly focused on organizational issues, that is, they analyze the appropriateness of the existing landscape of national higher education to tackle the challenges imposed by integration and try to find the correct degree of autonomy of national higher education institutions under internationalization and globalization [25]. In addition to educational issues, political and economic aspects are involved in the process of globalization and regionalization of higher education [16].

The Governments and Universities are implementing the variety of policies and programs to respond to globalization. These typically include sending students to study abroad, setting up a branch campus overseas, or engaging in some type of inter-institutional partnership. Higher education systems, policies and institutions are being transformed by globalization, which is “the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness” [14]. The different higher education reforms and instruments are growing and developing [23, 30, 33], therefore the transformation of higher education can also be motivated by the impact of globalization with direct influence on the educational motives and institutional strategic management decisions of those institutions. Given resource constraints and different institutional missions, not all universities will try to achieve global competence; but at a minimum they should try to attain global understanding [1, 17].

As Bradley Cook mentioned in his review on trends in education, the globalization theme in comparative education studies is most commonly used [9]; a theme that is not adequately accounted for in the literature. This gap has been partially filled in by University of Bath School of Management doctoral thesis of Sally-Ann Burnett [6]. This study explores how chosen universities, have responded or, should respond, to the impact of globalization on the academic motives of their educational programmes. It examines the globalization context and the processes and priorities in institutional responses that affect the short and long term global managerial strategies. Nevertheless there is one good reason for this research to look into a more specific area of academic motives and strategic globalization strategies.

4 Problem Definition & Research Design

This paper traces the chosen university recent development and seeks to account for this in terms of institutional strategic planning. It seeks to document how these aspects of globalization are perceived by university administrators and faculty. In addition, this paper highlights some of the major issues in connection with institutional responses to the impact of globalization with respect to responsibilities that range from being local to global in nature. In particular, culture and strategic planning are explored, as the literature shows that these aspects of universities are critical in identifying reasons for institutional responses of complex organizations, such as universities. The research questions addressed in my research evolve from the literature review that demonstrates a gap in the literature specifically to do with individual university responses to globalization. There is a lack of empirical research in this field hence the author is keen to add to the research and quantify such activity.

It is acknowledged that institutional strategic planning relevance is a small part of globalization and this is used as the anchor point for case study interviews. This research is designed from a point of curiosity hence it is important that there is a starting point for discussion on the impact of globalization and what it means at each case study university. This however, does not limit or hinder the discussion.

Still, the choice of data collection methods is also subject to constraints in time, financial resources, and access. For the purposes of the case studies within the thesis of which this paper is a part of, and interviews to be carried out, globalization is taken specifically to be ‘the activities undertaken to fulfil the goal of increasing the global dimension of the institution.

In line with the explorative nature of the study, the goal of the interviews was to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand why he or she came to have this particular perspective. To meet this goal, King [18] recommends that one have “a low degree of structure imposed on the interviewer, a preponderance of open questions, a focus on specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee rather than abstractions and general opinions.”

In line with these recommendations, I chose a combination of interviews, archives, and observation, with main emphasis on the first two. Conducting a survey was inappropriate due to the lack of established concepts and indicators [32, 37]. The reason for limited observation, on the other hand, was due to problems in obtaining access early in the study and time and resource constraints. In addition to choosing among several different data collection methods, there are a number of choices to be made for each individual method. When relying on interviews as the primary data collection method, the issue of building trust between the researcher and the interviewees becomes very important. I addressed this issue by several means and I established a procedure of how to approach the interviewees.

Policy and other documentation for each university was collected on site, to supplement the primary and secondary data gathered, when made and recorded. For the national policy context, sources of documentary information were used to gauge the international, national and local position on higher education in selected universities. Several government and other websites were used to glean policy and positional information. Sources referenced in research papers were also utilized as resources from online searches through various electronic databases and search engines. The documentation from institution for each of the case studies was collected to gain an insight into each institution and the strategies and policies in place. Sources of this information may include: strategic plans; management and academic structure charts; annual reports; internationalization policy documents; websites etc. These documents are the first types of units of observation for each of the case studies.

5 Higher Education Policies in Romania and the Netherlands

Institutional arrangements set by national governments serve as the principle factors in shaping the dynamics of both structuring, regulating and financing where the government is a dominant factor influencing higher education institutions. Within

the context of the Romanian Higher Education, key policies and legislations were developed and can be summarized as follows: the Law of National Education (Law nr. 1/2011); the Constitution of Romania (passed in 1991); the organic law of education (Education Act 84/1995); common specialized laws (Act 88/1993 regarding the accreditation of higher education institutions and the recognition of university diplomas and the Act regarding the Statute of the Teaching Staff no 128/1997); government decisions having the force of Acts of Parliament over an established period and different Orders of the Minister of Education. Devised as a strategy to “remove the last vestiges of communist heritage” [24], the Ministry’s reform package not only aimed to put an end to the transition phase and bring the education system more in tune with socio-economic needs, but also to bring Romania closer to western European points of reference [24].

Romania has made major steps towards the European Higher Education Area by reorganizing the entire higher education system in 2005. Still, the importance of the existence of a strategy for higher education that promotes a strategy for higher education that must be correlated nationally with the strategy for research and development aiming to obtain autonomy for higher education institutions is a must. To meet this objective the Romanian higher education system should attract diverse sources of funding, including partnerships with firms, partners that will finance the research and development activity in the domains they are interested in. Having financial autonomy is a fundamental aspect of the current tendencies in the higher education governance.

The new Law of National Education, which came into effect in February 2011, paves the way for the diversification of university missions and for a better use of resources for advanced university research. All Romanian universities, state and private, are classified in three categories according to their prevailing missions: (1) educational universities, (2) education and research universities, and (3) advanced research and education universities. On the long term, to achieve the targets set by the Europe 2020 the Romanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to improve the quality and increase the investments in education, vocational education and training. Also, it is necessary to increase the mobility of students and teachers to improve the quality of teaching.

The Dutch HEIs are subject to the rules and regulations of the Dutch Higher Education Act (WHW—BWBR0005682). They are obligatory signatories to the “Code of Conduct for international students in higher education” if they wish to recruit students outside the EU/EEA or Switzerland. Other relevant legislation includes the Aliens Decree 2000 and Chapter B3 of the Aliens Act Implementation Guidelines 2000. Effectively, the immigration authorities generally accept the decisions of HEIs as to the admissibility of foreign nationals as bona fide students. Non-compliance with the Code of Conduct can lead to revocation of the admissibility status.

The quality control mechanism for educational delivery throughout the entire system consists of a cyclical accreditation (at the institutional level and/or programme level) under the auspices of the Accreditation Organization of the Netherlands and Flanders (DFAO a.k.a NVAO). This is in effect a managed

peer-review system. The same organization has created a special audit procedure to be able to award, inter alia, a special distinction to programmes (or institutions) for having achieved a high level of internationalization.

6 Results & Outcomes

Besides the interviews held at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (BUES), a number of internal and external planning documents were used, including the BUES Institutional Evaluation Programme 2012, Self-Evaluation Report 2012, BUES Development Strategy 2011–2020, the Institutional Project on “Development Strategy and Increasing the Competitiveness of BUES” 2014–2020, Self-Evaluation Quality Control Report 2013–2014, BUES Students Independent Report on Quality Assurance 2014–2015, Action Plan (to increase the international visibility of the university/faculty and attract foreign students) 2014–2015.

From the key documents mentioned above (Self-Evaluation Report and the Development Strategy 2011–2020 the university’s version is as follows: “BUES aims to hold a leading position in the field of economic and administrative sciences in the classification of universities from Central and Eastern European countries and to achieve high competitiveness in the European and international area for all the undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes it provides. This vision is based on promoting an authentic quality culture, on creating, disseminating and capitalising on top knowledge, the proactive involvement of all the members of the academic community, and on encouraging functional entrepreneurial partnerships which bring national and international benefits.”

The above two key documents also outline the mission of the BUES and its strategic goals which in fact reflect the intended profile of the BUES as:

- A university of advanced research and education
- An entrepreneurial university
- A university with a high degree of motivation and performance
- A sound work environment that generates high performance in education and research
- A university with international visibility
- A university respecting fundamental human values: morality, ethics, human beings, honest, well-done work, the environment.

Regarding the HAN University of Applied Sciences policies and internal documentation, the following internal and external planning documents were used: the Strategic Research Policy Plan 2012–2016, HAN Development Plan 2012–2016 (Reflection on trends and future HAN external partners, Lectors Meetings Reports, The Education Chapter, Employees and Students Meetings Reports, Trend Analysis), The Future of the HAN 2016–2020, Learning and innovation: working

together in trust and confidence—HAN ambitions for 2016–2020 and the HAN Institutional Plan 2016–2020.

HAN University of Applied Sciences holds paramount its responsibility to contribute to the development of society. As such, HAN is strongly committed to promoting and sharing knowledge and skills, and to making these available to a wider audience. They achieve this by:

- Providing superior quality education while adhering to a code of conscientious and responsible professional practice
- Striving towards sustainability in all that we undertake
- Ensuring that our employees act with personal integrity and social responsibility
- Embodying our core values of involvement, responsibility, ownership and professional identity
- Working on the basis of honesty, trust, and clear, concise agreements

The significance and urgency of examining the relationship between governmental policies and higher education growth patterns and strategies is something that scholars need to address. Among universities, motivations for globalization vary substantially, and often they reflect the culture of the school and its management or the pressures applied by stakeholders. In many cases, multiple motivating factors originate from the school itself, the business community that it serves, and/or the country/region in which the university is located. The AACSB globalization report mentions that schools focus on globalizing the learning experiences of students, but often neglect to put the same emphasis on ensuring faculty have global developmental opportunities [1]. As from the interviews and discussions with the management of both universities the global developmental opportunities are actually one of the motives for globalization strategies that both institutions are implanting.

Bucharest University of Economic Studies strives to ensure openness, promoting cooperation with partners in Romania and the world's most excellent centers of higher education and research; while the HAN University of Applied Sciences takes active measures to further internationalize the institution and development of research and new national and international study programme. They also provide international orientation courses by involving lecturers from foreign higher education institutions. Hall [13] asserted that it is as important for faculty members to teach abroad as much as it is for students to study abroad. He states that he learned important pedagogical, research-related, and life lessons from his teaching abroad experiences that he could not have learned otherwise.

This sentiment is corroborated by a study by Finkelstein and Chen (cited in the AACSB Report, [1], which found a positive correlation between a faculty member incorporating international issues into the classroom and the amount of time the faculty member had spent abroad after earning an undergraduate degree. Clark and Arbel [8] noted that to globalize faculty, universities should require more international faculty exchanges and sabbaticals, have more international faculty members and use industry professionals with global experience in the classroom.

In this sense, HAN University of Applied Sciences has initiated programmes to attract foreign and other higher educational institutions professors as guest lecturers for teaching internationally related subjects and took necessary steps for ensuring the further training for the academic staff, including participation of lecturers and students in international seminars, workshops, conferences as well as exchange programmes. They also looked for both new opportunities for participation in international projects and joint research as well as organized scientific international conferences to encourage student participation on regular basis.

One of the many ways in which HAN displays its international focus is through international projects. Each faculty has its own specific cross-national initiatives. Some international projects are HAN-wide and include students and teaching staff from all faculties. A striking example is the community project in Theewaterskloof municipality, South Africa, where students and staff of HAN University of Applied Sciences and the University of the Western Cape in South Africa help local communities to develop small businesses. The project gives students a once-in-a-lifetime learning experience while at the same time making a very valuable contribution to society. Because of the multidisciplinary nature of the project, all the departments at both universities are involved in carrying out project activities, teaching or doing research.

Over the past 2 years, 111 students have worked in Theewaterskloof on 59 different projects. Most of these are multi-year, multidisciplinary projects, focused mainly on education and health. Some examples are:

- A project where students in the fields of industrial design, psychotherapy and speech therapy work together to design toys for children with a mental health disorder
- An education project in Genadendal, where students of education, social work, physiotherapy and occupational therapy together support home-based care programmes for a local elementary school
- A project in Grabouw that allows students in the fields of built environment, educational theory and industrial design to build outdoor play equipment while simultaneously helping teaching staff

Globalization reshape how universities are positioned relative to one another and differentiate themselves in this environment, therefore their responses to globalization differ along lines that define strategy and the strategic position of an institution including reputation, mission, and resources. Regardless, the economics of globalization will have a tremendous impact on the future of globalization, and the answers may depend on specific characteristics of the university and national and international policies.

Globalization has led to growth in interdependence, interconnectedness and mobility across global communities, making global challenges and achievements transcend national boundaries [22]. It is not surprising that sustainable solutions to emerging global development problems cannot be found through efforts and resources confined within one locality [27]. In this evolving context, partnerships

across national and disciplinary boundaries are rapidly emerging as the dominant model for organising international research and development [19].

The AACSB Globalization Report noted three dimensions of faculty strategies for globalization: recruit, develop, and manage. To foster globalization, business schools recruiting strategy should include recruiting faculty that have interest in international issues. An additional recruiting strategy would be to recruit faculty who have international knowledge, perspectives, or experiences. A third recruiting strategy would be to recruit faculty for the international connections, for example, recruiting a faculty member that is currently working in a foreign university [1]. In this light

Regarding the above mentioned faculty strategies for globalization, Bucharest University of Economic Studies is actively engaged in the development of scientific research infrastructure by participation in research projects' competitions by developing defined key scientific research directions through cooperation with international higher education and research institutions. The University has concluded research agreements with various partners from Romania and abroad, including bilateral agreements. Here are the main funding sources for the research projects undertaken at University level: Framework Programme 7; Bilateral Agreements; COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology); CERGE (Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education); EUREKA and the European Social Fund - SOP HRD projects. The University aims to maintain excellence in research by undertaking scientific research projects and topics in co-operation with other national and international education and research institutions, as well as within research networks and consortia. To perform scientific research activities, the University's research teams have benefitted from the cooperation of leading international figures in their respective fields.

By illuminating the strategies, practices, and social impacts of business globalization, management educators not only can accelerate it, they also can help ameliorate its costs and disruptions. Better international management education promotes more responsible globalization in business and society.

7 Conclusions & Further Research

Globalization reshape how universities are positioned relative to one another and differentiate themselves in this environment, therefore their responses to globalization differ along lines that define strategy and the strategic position of an institution including reputation, mission, and resources. Regardless, the economics of globalization will have a tremendous impact on the future of globalization, and the answers may depend on specific characteristics of the university and national and international policies.

This paper suggests that globalization is changing former assumptions, practices, and strategies. Among the universities studied, globalization was motivated by strategic objectives related to many trends within the global business and economic

environment as well as those related to globalization trends within national higher education. After summarizing the findings of the interviews at the university and the analysed strategic objectives and national policies I find that universities globalize for many reasons: to secure their position in the higher education market, to improve international competitiveness, to gain wider international recognition, to facilitate the development and growth of the institution, to be allied with the national agencies for higher education quality assessment, to increase and promote internationally accredited study programmes, to improve quality of research to raise the quality of study programmes, to produce for the corporate goal of improving the universities international rating through publication in international journals, to diversify research resources, to provide international orientation courses and to increase the number of international students.

It is essential that universities have a well-defined globalization strategy plan which reflects a culmination of a series of discussions amongst stakeholders presenting an integrated action plan for the implementation of the strategy that deliberately look into the opportunities and challenges that globalization poses to higher education.

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