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## 20. INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

### *Dutch Higher Education Policies*<sup>1</sup>

#### CONTEXT

The internationalisation of higher education is a key priority for the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Its aim is that all students in the Netherlands will have obtained international and intercultural competences upon graduation. As it is expected that, even in the near future, not all students will go abroad during their studies, this article discusses how internationalisation at home (IaH) can be stimulated based on the results of a study of 54 Dutch Higher Education institutions (van Gaalen, Hobbes, Roodenburg, & Gielesen, 2014). No less than 91% of Dutch institutions participating in the study have an internationalisation policy at the central level. Some institutions include the policy in their institutional plan, but close to 76% of all Dutch HE institutions have a specific internationalisation plan or are currently working to develop one. This is comparable to the global average of 75% in the IAU 4th Global Survey (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014).

#### INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES

International and/or intercultural competencies of students are mentioned in many of the institutional strategy documents as the main goal of internationalisation (van Gaalen et al., 2014). Institutions tend to describe these competencies in general terms, specifying that further elaboration is to take place at program level. Most institutions opt for a program-specific approach of international and intercultural competences and are cautious when it comes to the implementation of a centralised institutional policy. Several policy plans explicitly mention that the context of a study program is essential in determining the relevant international and intercultural competences.

Van Gaalen et al. (2014) notice that institutions which do formulate competencies do not often distinguish between international and intercultural competencies. Examples of such competencies include 1) an attentive and inquisitive attitude; 2) intercultural effectiveness and communication; 3) knowledge of foreign languages; 4) flexibility and the ability to apply knowledge, and 5) innovation according to international standards. This serves to demonstrate that, in addition to international and intercultural outcomes, internationalisation can yield general learning outcomes

such as professional knowledge and transferable (also called transversal) skills. The Erasmus Impact study (European Commission, 2014) found that 92% of employers are looking for such transversal skills.

#### INTERNATIONALISATION IN THE HOME COUNTRY

These competences cannot be achieved by all students through mobility alone. Between 2003 and 2013 a stable average of 22,6% of Dutch graduates have been internationally mobile within their study program (Nuffic, forthcoming), as opposed to 77,4% who stayed at home. In consultation with the Ministry, and based on the definition by Beelen and Leask (2010), internationalisation at home for this study has been interpreted as 'all activities within the formal curriculum which take place in the home country or are short study trips abroad accompanied by staff of the home institution'. As Beelen and Jones (2015) point out these study trips only contribute to IaH if integrated into other curriculum activity. Internationalisation at home can potentially reach all students when structurally implemented in the curriculum.

The IAU 4th Global Survey (E. Egron-Polak & R. Hudson, 2014) shows that globally 14% of the participating institutions consider internationalisation of the curriculum as the single most important internationalisation activity. One of the main reasons could be that it brings internationalisation to the core of education.

According to van Gaalen et al. (2014) Institutional policy plans of Dutch HE institutions mention many types of internationalisation at home, such as inviting foreign lecturers, participating in international projects, offering intercultural skills modules and tailoring components of the study program to include different intercultural perspectives on a specific topic (Nuffic, 2012). Beelen and Jones (2015) also provide a detailed list of internationalisation at home activities. In general, Dutch institutions do not regard internationalisation at home as a literal alternative to mobility, but are inclined to view the two as complementary.

Yet this relationship between the two sides of the internationalisation coin is not reflected in policy documents (van Gaalen et al., 2014). In fact, few institutions formulate a coherent and detailed internationalisation at home strategy or deploy monitoring tools. In addition, a lack of time or financial resources is an obstacle for implementation in many institutions. However, these are by no means the only reasons for the modest level of internationalisation at home in some Dutch Higher education institutions.

#### STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Although internationalisation at home is one of the key elements of the internationalisation agenda, implementation is challenged by a lack of attention to training of staff in this specific field. Preparation of teaching staff seems to be key in the success of internationalisation strategies as teachers are essential for developing and carrying out curriculum changes. One of the most eye-catching

results of the Dutch study by van Gaalen et al. (2014) reveals, however, that international institutional strategies devote little attention to the development of competencies of lecturers and staff to prepare them for the implementation of the various forms of internationalisation at home. Both Hanze University of Applied Sciences, (see van der Poel, this volume), and Avans University of Applied Sciences (van Melle & Muffels, 2015) have set up an intercultural learning lab for their teaching staff to support teachers reporting stress, from failing communication strategies when dealing with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Incorporating internationalisation at home as a standard component of lecturer professionalisation programs such as the Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO) in the Netherlands can open teachers' minds to the possibilities internationalisation offers them. Some institutions have already taken this idea a little further and developed a voluntary extra module in the BKO framework. Hanze University of Applied Sciences, for instance, has designed a development track for its teaching staff (Van der Werf & Troia, 2014). This track offers teachers assignments and tutoring to develop six competences needed in internationalising education. The choice of assignments is based on an intake interview which addresses individual needs and wishes of the participant and the future role that s/he will have in his/her team.

#### CONSCIOUS EFFORTS

In general, it seems that the concept of the international classroom in Dutch higher education institutions is aimed mainly at talented students from abroad. In some instances, it is almost seen as a side effect that Dutch students could increase their international and intercultural competences in an international classroom. And it is often assumed, even by those institutions which consider intercultural competence development as important, that simple exposure is sufficient to develop these competencies (van Gaalen et al., 2014).

However, higher levels of internationally and interculturally competent graduates may be achieved if institutions consciously create situations that facilitate intercultural collaboration and guide students through the process of intercultural learning. Such measures can help institutions to make optimal use of the international classroom's added value including the knowledge of international students.

Other activities which seem to offer great potential to develop international and intercultural competences in students and yet are mentioned only rarely in policy documents according to van Gaalen et al. (2014) are virtual mobility and development cooperation projects. Virtual mobility projects have been developed over the past five to ten years in many Dutch institutions, such as Tilburg University, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Radboud University etc.

Yet this is not reflected in the attention this activity is given in institutional plans. Dutch institutions participating in development cooperation projects such

as the University of Groningen, VU University Amsterdam and Fontys University of Applied Sciences are rather modest in referring to them in terms of sources for building competences of Dutch students.

#### INSTITUTIONAL AND NATIONAL POLICIES

Most Dutch higher education institutions specifically mention the importance of international and intercultural competencies for their students in their institutional strategies. In addition, Internationalisation at Home receives a fair amount of attention in these documents (van Gaalen et al., 2014). However, the concept will benefit from greater clarity and possibly an institutional framework. Institutional policies could for instance include a provision specifying that all study programs must incorporate relevant international and intercultural competencies. An example of such a provision comes from the policy plan of Utrecht University: "...also students who are not mobile need to acquire competencies required for a professional in an international environment. Internationalisation with focus on developing multicultural competencies is a quality feature of all our undergraduate programs."

In Australia and the UK this would be called specifying international and intercultural competences as graduate attributes. The appropriate method of testing these competencies should then also be specified in institutional policies. In addition, policies can be further elaborated by a clear definition of terms such as *curricular internationalisation*, *internationally oriented curricula* and *international classroom*.

The Dutch government is interested in increasing the number and impact of internationalisation at home activities in higher education. In a society where HE Institutions have a high level of autonomy, as is the case in the Netherlands, national internationalisation policies need not only reflect national economic objectives but first and foremost the core tasks of higher education institutions in order to be effective.

Any national framework for internationalisation at home might include direction, means and methods but more importantly should go hand in hand with sufficient freedom. This allows study programs to experiment and discover which forms of internationalisation (at home) suit their specific program profile.

The focus on students' international and intercultural competencies can be intensified by the Dutch government by encouraging study programs and institutions to apply for a Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education. This certificate replaces the BKI certificate of the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). Core to the evaluation framework for the certificate are the international and intercultural learning outcomes as defined by the program itself. The advantage of this model

is that it supports and even stimulates program-specific internationalisation. This allows for an optimal value adding of internationalisation for the unique features of a program, while still using a framework which can be applied to all programs.

#### CONCLUSION

The main point made in this article is that almost all Dutch HE institutions pay attention to aspects of internationalisation at home in their strategies. However, in general, they do not have an internationalisation at home strategy or deploy monitoring tools. Still, a wide range of activities are mentioned, mostly aimed at increasing the international and intercultural competences of students. In addition quality assurance tools are being developed. Assessment of intercultural competences is however, is rarely mentioned in policy documents. The professional development of staff in this area has only just started to become an item on the HE internationalisation agenda.

#### NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this chapter appeared as an essay: Van Gaalen, A. and R. Gielesen (2014). Internationalizing Students in the Home Country—Dutch Policies. In *International Higher Education. Number 78. Special issue 2014*. Boston, MA: The Boston College Center for International Higher Education.

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