

INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Internationalization of higher education is one of the key trends of development. There are several approaches on how to achieve competitiveness and performance in higher education and international academic mobility; students' exchange programs, partnerships are some of the aspects that can play a significant role in this process. This paper wants to point out the student's perception regarding two main directions: one about the master students' expectation regarding how an internationalized master should be organized and should function, and second the degree of satisfaction of the beneficiaries of internationalized master programs from Babe-Bolyai University. This article is based on an empirical qualitative research that was implemented to students of an internationalized master from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. This research can be considered a useful example for those preoccupied to increase the quality of higher education and conclusions drawn have relevance both theoretically and especially practically.

Key words: internationalization, master student, performance, higher education

JEL: A23 , I23, I25

1. Introduction

The growing interest regarding the international dimension of higher education, leads to several theories of how competitiveness can play a major role on higher education development. Even if internationalization has different meanings given the plethora of definitions and approaches, there can be observed a common approach that underlines the fact that multiculturalism imposes a different approach that enriches not only the context of a studied phenomenon, but it imposes a dynamic evolution . There are various related concepts to internationalization in higher education, used as synonyms such as intercultural education, international education, or globalization (Knight and de Wit, 1997). Although there are various approaches to internationalization, the term is not clearly defined and does not appear to be generally accepted among leading scholars in the field of international higher education (Knight, 2004).

The internationalization of higher education at national and institutional level in any country must be understood as the process of integrating an international intercultural or global dimension within the main functions of education system. Very close to this concept is the definition of Knight (Knight, J., 2002), which considers internationalization of higher education, as the integration of international, intercultural and global dimensions within the functions of education.

Internationalization in higher education incorporates intercultural and international dimensions that directly impact both research and teaching process (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri, Arnal, 2008). It involves practices that require the use of new technology, knowledge, people, values and ideas from different international context (Knight and de Wit 1997). Because each culture is affected differently as a result of the nation's history, traditions and culture are heterogeneous, there should be considered the need for pursuing compatibility and harmonization in higher education area, for a smooth internationalization process (Dabija et al., 2014).

International academic mobility favors similarly well-developed education systems and institutions, compounding existing inequalities. The internationalization process is sustained through accreditation and evaluation (Hellmann et al., 2000). Qiang (2003) and Kreber (2009) offer a number of arguments in favor of internationalization such as attracting foreign students, specializing in scientific research or labor market performance. However, internationalization means cooperation with international universities, transparency and recognition of qualifications in the educational process of students (Barnett et al. 2010). A concept of internationalization is seen by Knight, (2004, p. 11) as being 'the process of integrating international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education'.

In order to achieve the desired objectives universities should develop coherent strategies of internationalization and develop of a quality management system providing the framework for effectively implementing the measures needed to reach higher performances. In the current context, internationalization and a quality assurance dimension are interrelated. Moreover, quality assurance in higher education takes place through two processes: assessment and accreditation (Kreber, 2009).

Internationalization of higher education should be undertaken, at the level of individual skills, organizational culture, processes and evaluation should be mandatory (Adams, 1999). Moreover it requires academic exchanges and teaching in a foreign language allowing quality assurance by national and international standards.

This paper wants to present students perspective about internationalization, by underlining their perception of the internationalized master program followed and their expectations and ideas on how an internationalized master should be.

2. Research Methodology

Structure sample

The questionnaire was applied to students of first and second year of the Master Management Business Development (MDA) in English. Quantitative survey sample included a total of 67 respondents. Of the 67 respondents 42 were women and 25 men, Romanian 52 and 4 Hungarian, 2 Chinese, 2 French, 1 Egyptian, 2 Spanish, 2 German, and 2 Swedish.

Research objectives:

O1: Evaluate the satisfaction with the content of master programs and improving the prospects of internationalized master programs.

O2: Identify the importance of skills necessary to pursue an internationalized master.

O3: Identify the qualities required of a teacher who has taught an internationalized master.

O4: Advantages and disadvantages considered in choosing an internationalized master.

Research hypotheses

IP 1: Master students appreciate that an internationalized master offers additional benefits compared to other masters.

IP 2: The most important features that enable master student to follow the courses of an internationalized master are: knowing a foreign languages of international use, analytical and synthesis abilities, willingness to continuously surpass personal limits.

IP3: A performing professor from respondents' perspective is a person that has a more informal student approach being at the same time rigorous due to the teaching style used.

3. Results analyze

A starting point for our research was to identify master students expectations of how an internationalized master should work by underlining the main features. Thus, the greatest majority of the respondents have associated internationalized master with courses held in a foreign international language, (Mean = 4,8696), with exchange programs available to students (Mean = 4,5652) and updated sources of information available in different languages through electronic library resources (4,5435). Most of the respondents believed that internationalized masters should have foreign students and professors (Spearman Coef. = 0.614). Another significant correlation was registered between items foreign teachers and student exchange programs with universities foreign through joint projects (ex. research, summer schools, courses on a particular theme etc.) (coef. Spearman = 0.605).

To evaluate the level of satisfaction among students that attended to courses of internationalized masters we noticed that most of the respondents consider that an internationalized master provides better opportunities on the labor market and better knowledge access than a master held in a native language.

With the purpose of understanding the reasons that determine master student to enrol at internationalized master courses, as well as to identify the main typologies of master students we have performed a factorial analyses. The KMO indicator is 0,751, and the Total Variance Explained formed three factors that explains 76,654% of the model variation (V1=54,461%; V2=19,146%; V3=12,375%). Thus we have seen that we can identify three main profiles, one that is motivated by the multicultural context of acquiring knowledge and the experience gained, another typology that is driven by the certitude of having increased chances on finding a better job, and a third typology driven by the motivation of intercultural changes experiences provided by the possibility of learning abroad as well as studying in a different language than mother tang.

Table1. Typologies of the main advantages provided by an internationalized master

| | Component | | |
|--|-----------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| The opportunity of interacting with people from different cultural context | .909 | | |
| Improved capacity of adapting to different cultural context | .865 | | |
| Better knowledge access in a different cultural context | .806 | | |
| Enriching international practical experience | .479 | | |
| Increased possibilities in finding a job in the mother country | | .914 | |
| Increased possibilities in finding a job abroad | | .821 | |
| Opportunity to study abroad | | | .754 |
| Opportunity to study in a foreign language | | | .696 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

The most important disadvantages mentioned: difficulties of having a job while following courses due to the schedule imposed to attend the classes, additional financial costs determined by supplementary materials needed to be used for the courses and the difficulties encountered because of the differences between the style and requirements imposed by foreign teachers (Table 13).

To identify the most appreciated features of MDA-English master, most of the respondents felt that MDA-English master is appreciated primarily for diversity of subjects contained and quality of informational content (Spearman Coefficient = 0.749, sig 0.01). Another significant correlation was identified between the items teaching system used and teacher competences.

Another component analyzed, aimed at identifying the qualities that a teacher must possess to be able to teach courses to an internationalized master underlines that the most important qualities are very good knowledge of the teaching language (mean = 4.8043), communication skills (mean = 4.7609), timeliness of content (mean = 4.6957).

Moreover to understand students perspective of what makes a professor suitable we have identified three main typologies that underline the profile of an professor from internationalized master. The KMO indicator is 0,842, and the Total Variance Explained formed three factors that explain 76,654% of the model variation (V1=47,237%; V2=11,629%; V3=9,416%). Thus we have seen that we can identify three main profiles, one that is more informal with the students, dynamic and creative, a second profile that is more formal, and a third profile that needs to have technical skills, creative and to have good English knowledge. (see Table 2)

Table 2. The qualities of a well appreciated professor from an internationalized course

| | Component | | |
|--|-----------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| closeness to students | .797 | | |
| initiative in handling interactions between students | .674 | | |
| well-structured informational content | .622 | | |
| variations of teaching methods | .612 | | |
| accurate taught information | | .862 | |
| objectiveness in evaluation process | | .690 | |
| communication abilities | | .607 | |
| up-to-date courses | | .541 | |
| PC skills | | | .775 |
| ingenuity within working materials | | | .662 |
| very good teaching language skills | | | .589 |
| stimulating of students' creativity | .480 | | .547 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Another aspect was to identify those competencies valued by respondents as being important for a student. Thus we noticed that the most important features are: knowing a foreign language, communication skills and collaborative skills are among the most important (see table 3).

Table 3. Skills of a student that wants to enroll to an internationalized master

| Competențe | Mean |
|---|--------|
| Theoretical knowledge | 3,5870 |
| Knowing an international language. | 4,5870 |
| Practical knowledge | 3,4783 |
| Previous experience | 2,8696 |
| Practical abilities | 3,3261 |
| PC skills | 4,0652 |
| Communication and persuasion abilities | 4,1739 |
| Team work ability | 4,1087 |
| Highly developed sense of observation | 3,8043 |
| Adequate ability to analyze and synthetize | 3,8261 |
| Excellent organizational skills | 3,4565 |
| Willingness to learn and permanently self-improve | 4,0870 |
| Personality features | 3,4000 |

After calculating Spearman's correlations we observed that the most cited two features that a master student should have were analytical skills, and a "highly developed sense of observation". Two other significant values were registered between items "highly developed sense of observation" and "excellent organizational skills" (Coef. Spearman = 0.749, sig 0.01) and between "excellent organizational skills" and "willingness to learn and permanently self-improve" (Coef. Spearman = 0.749, sig 0.01). Items that have established fewer correlations have been "theoretical knowledge" and "personality features".

In what regards the students' opinion about competences developed during the internationalized master program, the best rated were "verbal and written professional communication skills in at least one international language" (mean 3.77) and oral presentation skills (mean 3.45).

Table 4. Competences developed during internationalized master program

| Competences | Mean |
|---|------|
| Ability to identify opportunities of launching a new business | 2.86 |
| Ability to transpose environmental opportunities into viable business | 2.76 |
| Apprehension of some practical entrepreneurial activities (financial, marketing, sales, data management, etc.) | 2.8 |
| Ability to manage activities within organizations | 3 |
| Identify the potential solutions for reorganization of a company activity based on external and internal factors that generate change | 2.95 |
| Ability to handle specific problems within the strategic management process | 2.97 |
| Knowledge of best practices of companies in approaching markets | 2.95 |
| Adequate ability to analyze and synthetize | 3.3 |
| Abilities of oral presentations | 3.45 |
| Abilities of persuasive communication | 2.06 |
| Management knowledge comparable with UE students | 3.04 |
| Ability to put into practice the acquired theoretical knowledge | 2.76 |
| Usage of technology and specific instruments for databases management within socio-economic activities | 3 |
| Verbal and written professional communication skills in at least one international language. | 3.77 |
| Development of abilities to work efficiently in different cultural environments | 3.31 |
| Development of entrepreneurial initiatives | 2.8 |

One aspect pursued was to identify some recommendations that would improve performance among students of internationalized master, and it has been noticed that access to valuable documentary materials at national and / or international level, cooperation and exchange programs with foreign universities, better access to on-line libraries and reliable on-line databases, as including more partnerships not only with other universities from abroad but also with the business sector.

4. Conclusions

The new economy and the new knowledge-based society requires to constantly redesign higher education system just to be able to provide the proper skills and abilities for facing the new challenges. In addition, the processes of internationalization are an ongoing process requesting to higher education to provide specialized support for unpredictable situations. A first step that universities and their component entities should do in this direction, is the internationalization of their structures, processes of teaching and research.

Even if the competitiveness of an internationalized master is interpreted from the perspective of the teaches abilities to develop students capabilities along with the ability to create well trained employees for the labor market, or is seen from the perspective of the student rivalry to achieve the best possible assessment from teachers, cultural dimension sets more pressure on how knowledge is created in higher education. We have seen that internationalized masters are perceived to be more challenging and have a better image because are considered to provide more alternatives to master students due to specific skills and abilities achieved; that make these courses to be considered more complex and more knowledge intensive.

In our view, the attractiveness of the program of study must be understood as a set of capabilities held by the participants (students, professors), to attract candidates or students, teachers and scientists, to conduct efficient and beneficial learning. The degree of appreciation of a master program depends on several factors both internally and externally, being a significant a part competitiveness of higher education establishments. Faculties and their master programs, to reach excellence, must have visibility nationally and internationally, but also they must provide students specific scientific conditions to ensure not only their knowledge development, but also their professional success on the labor market.

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