

## The Problems of Internationalization in Poland

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The 2007 report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Review of Tertiary Education in Poland," summarizes in rather unflattering words the state of internationalization of Polish higher education:

"There is no national policy to stimulate activities directed towards internationalization . . . [and] no clarity about any legal instruments that might need to be put in place to foster the internationalization of the system. . . . At the same time, internationalization is very limited in scope."

As the report confirms, the main problem of internationalization in Poland is a lack of coherent national strategy. The involvement of the government in the process is very limited. To make Polish tertiary education more international, attempts have been undertaken by higher education institutions themselves or in cooperation with specialized nongovernmental organizations. These bottom-up initiatives no longer appear sufficient.

The Polish higher education system is already suffering inconvenient outcomes. With only 13,695 international students, 0.71 percent of a 2 million student population (3,989 from Ukraine, 1,805 from Belarus, 1,039 from Norway, 749 from the United States, and 354 from China), Poland has one of the lowest number of international students among the countries of the OECD. Within Erasmus, the European exchange program, for every three Polish students who go abroad only one exchange student travels to Poland.

The Czech Republic, with a population four times smaller (about 10 million) and comparable with Poland in other areas, is ahead not only in percentage but in absolute numbers as well. Twenty-six thousand foreign students in the Czech Republic constitute over 8 percent of the total student population. The proportion in the Erasmus exchange is 3:2 in favor of outgoing students.

### **PROMOTION, STUPID!**

Certain trends have kept Polish higher education institutions from attracting foreign students. Only a limited number of good programs are being taught in English. Poland lacks world-class centers of academic excellence. The two best Polish universities rate only among the 400 lowest institutions in the academic ranking by Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Last but not least, the OECD report states that Polish institutions "have

no strategy for attracting foreign students [and] typically they have not developed a proactive policy for international marketing."

In Germany, the main role in promotion of international higher education is played by DAAD—an organization with a 300 million euro annual budget; the United Kingdom and France also have agencies engaged in international education—the British Council and CampusFrance. The only organization in Poland that serves a similar function is the Perspektywy Education Foundation, a nongovernmental organization. Perspektywy receives no public funds and relies solely on the support of universities. Polish authorities do not seem fully aware of the importance of the internationalization process.

### **THE BOLOGNA PROCESS**

External pressure for change has increased since Poland became a member of the European Union in 2004. The implementation of the Bologna process started five years earlier, and Poland was a cosigner of the Bologna pact establishing benchmarks for the creation of the "European higher education area" in 1999. The most significant policy involved introduction of the three-cycle system (bachelor's+master's+PhD), the European Credit Transfer System, and implementation of mobility programs.

In preparation for the new international requirements, Polish higher education started some serious reforms. Based on the European education programs for academic staff, a buildup of expertise on internationalization of universities is

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under way. Polish higher education institutions have become more active internationally.

### **MILESTONES**

The formula determining government funding of a university has been changed to include an incentive to internationalize. Consequently, universities started to integrate internationalization into their agenda. This approach had been preceded by the Perspektywy Education Foundation, which included internationalization issues in the Polish university ranking. At present, the level of internationalization influences university rankings by about 10 percent.

In May 2005, the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland and the Perspektywy Education Foundation established the Study in Poland program with the aim to strengthen internationalization. A consortium was created of the 40 best universities interested in internationalization. This

program has undertaken the organizing conferences and professional workshops and publishing handbooks and studies of important education markets. Study in Poland has promoted Polish higher education in China, India, Vietnam, Thailand,

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Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the United States, as well as in Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. During the period since the program started, the number of foreign students in Polish higher education institutions increased by 30 percent.

The ruling political party, Platforma Obywatelska (liberal), in its 2007 election program declared support for internationalization of higher education in Poland and for the Study in Poland program. As yet no steps have been taken in this direction, but lobbying efforts are in progress.

#### THE FUTURE

The Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland has affirmed that, to become truly international, Polish higher education institutions will need to activate the field of transnational education, enact policies to attract international students and academic staff, and develop international curricula. Without greater understanding of the international higher education landscape, the process of marginalization of Polish schools will continue. Because of the centralized nature of the public system, funding will be needed to ensure internationalization. ■

## Double- and Joint-Degree Programs: Double Benefits or Double Counting?

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In the current landscape of higher education, international joint-, double-, and combined-degree programs perform an important role and will likely rise in numbers and influence in the coming years. This internationalization strategy brings important benefits to individuals, institutions, and national and regional education systems. Regarding these programs,

interest is expanding, but confusion is also rising about what they characterize and entail.

For many academics and policymakers, double- and joint-degree programs are welcomed as a natural extension of exchange and mobility. For others, they are perceived as a troublesome development leading to double counting of academic work and the thin edge of academic fraud. A broad range of reactions exist because of the diversity of these program models, the involvement of different types of institutions, the uncertainty related to quality assurance and qualifications, and the ethics used in designing the academic workload or new competencies required for the granting of a joint, double, multiple, or combined degree.

#### PROPOSED WORKING DEFINITIONS

A plethora of words are used to describe these programs—double, multiple, trinational, joint, integrated, collaborative, combined, concurrent, consecutive, overlapping, conjoint, parallel, simultaneous, and common. These terms convey different

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meanings among people within and across countries, complicating the situation. The following definitions may provide clarity and common understanding: A joint-degree program awards one joint qualification upon completion of the collaborative program requirements established by the partner institutions. A double-degree program awards two individual qualifications at equivalent levels upon completion of the collaborative program requirements established by the two partner institutions. A combined-degree program awards two different qualifications at consecutive levels upon completion of the requirements established by the partner institutions.

#### BENEFITS

Collaborative-degree programs can lead to a deeper and more sustainable relationship than many internationalization strategies and create such academic benefits as innovation of curriculum, exchange of professors and researchers, and increased access to expertise and research networks. Students are attracted to double degrees for enhanced career opportunities, an international study and life experience, and the perception that “two degrees for one” means decreased workload and tuition fees. At the national and regional level, they are seen to contribute to increased status, competitiveness, and capacity building.

#### CHALLENGES

The benefits of joint-, double-, and combined-degree programs