

Chapter 26

Promotion of Internationalization of Teacher Education: A Case Study from Croatia

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ABSTRACT

Internationalization in (pre)school teachers' education presents a great challenge for all professionals included in the Higher Education (HE) sector, especially professors. As such, it implies a significant change that is accepted by students and professors who see it as a way of enrichment. In relation to the experiences of an Erasmus Coordinator and Assistant Professor in the field of social sciences (psychology major) at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka, Croatia, this chapter describes and analyzes this information in the context of internationalization promotion within this faculty. Implications that could be drawn from this analysis are closely related to running objective empirical research on students and professors toward internationalization in (pre)school teachers' education, creating clear and formal Erasmus procedures, and developing the pre-requisites for international (post)graduate study programs.

INTRODUCTION

I think therefore I am -Descartes

In the context of education, although significant progress in 'internationalization' may be observed over the last two decades, the concept is *not* so well known. It has been applied in political science and diplomacy for centuries. Its popularity slowly started to grow in the 1980s within the field of education. The concept is widely defined as the integration process of international and intercultural dimensions that are in the function of teaching, researching, and institutional service delivery. A decade later, domi-

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nant discourse has been placed in the frame of distinguishing concepts such as ‘internationalization of education’, ‘comparative education’, ‘global education’, and ‘multicultural education’. As we move into the 21st Century, the need to further differentiate the term ‘internationalization of education’ from other terms such as ‘transnational education’, ‘borderless education’, and ‘cross-border education training’ has ensued (Knight, 2013).

Frequent overlaps and/or unclear differentiations of these key terms indicate problems in defining the ‘internationalization of education’. Fundamental problems may be detected in the application of this term in various countries, cultures and educational systems. It was concluded that its general definition should *not* contain all the elements that vary considerably in different countries, such as the rationales, benefits, outcomes, actors, activities or stakeholders of internationalization. Therefore, the definition of internationalization has been used in order to define ‘internationalization at the national, sector and institutional level, as the process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education’ (Knight, 2013, p. 2).

In this definition, several key concepts need to be elaborated. The first relates to the notion of process. The internationalization of education is *not* a static concept, but represents the continued investment of effort in some changes, which provides it with evolutionary and developmental features. The second important concept is related to the triad, which intentionally appears together. This triad consists of international, intercultural, and global dimensions. The *first* dimension refers to the sensitivity of the relations between/among nations, cultures and countries. The *second* dimension is related to the diversity of cultures that exists within countries and HEIs. The *third* dimension relates to the ability of global perspectives in a great number of readings. The common occurrence of these three dimensions is explained by their complementarity, resulting in enriching the concept of internationalization of education at all levels.

The third concept refers to the integration process, which involves the implementation of international and intercultural dimensions into existing policies and programs, which allows for their sustainability. The fourth group is another major triad in the definition; rationales, functions and outcomes. The rationales include the overall purpose of the role of Higher Education (HE) in a particular country or mission of the institution. The functions are related to the basic elements or tasks that characterize the national HE system or individual institution (HEI). As for the outcomes, they refer to all educational programs offered in the country (home) or in another country (host). In this way, the definition of internationalization has achieved the uniformity criterion that simultaneously takes into account all the peculiarities and variances of education systems in different countries.

The main contribution of this chapter is in the detailed analysis and discussion about teacher internationalization in the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka, Croatia, regarding the implementation of Erasmus. As many other significant Bologna determinants, Erasmus mobility has been put in the focus of much contemporary literature. On the other hand, the idea that has been in the background of Erasmus has not been properly introduced to professors and students, as with relevant formal procedures and other significant factors, especially, in the field of teacher education. Teachers express their insufficient intercultural competences, because teacher preparation programs rarely provide adequate opportunities to learn and practice (Aguado, Ballesteros, & Malik, 2003), even though this is expected (Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012). Based on this analysis, therefore, only understood as the beginning of critically and scientifically thinking of education internationalization, some important implications and future research guidelines may be drawn.

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