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international & quality, a happy couple?

my credentials

- in the domains of ENQA/EURASHE/EUA /ESU
- former international secretary Dutch Student Union
- former President Universiteit & Hogeschool van Amsterdam
- member German Accreditation Council, expert Internationalization Audit in German Higher Education & Institutional Evaluation Program EUA



quality and internationalization are familiar
concepts in Higher Education today

they are a common pair with a positive,
almost magic ring to them:
more internationalization brings higher
quality

better quality requires a higher degree of
internationalization

is it really that simple?



in Higher Education a (self-) *critical attitude* is no sign of disqualification, but of appreciation and support

the same is true for internationalization, the process by which *international dimensions are being introduced, maintained and enhanced in teaching and learning*



international education as a concept has gradually *changed from* specific fields and support programmes stimulating student and staff mobility, exchange and scholarships

to curriculum development, joint degree programmes, international classrooms,

in short to *education* in an international context, on global issues and challenges, and preparing for changing job markets (across national borders)



against this background I'll talk on
internationalization and *quality*

quality is about values

a culture of shared values

well organized responsibilities

and oversight

(important because of high stakes and need for trust)



how is the happy pair doing?

- Jane Knight (Toronto) *Five myths about Internationalization* International Higher Education 62 (2011) 14-15
 - foreign students as internationalization agents
 - international reputation as a proxy for quality
 - international institutional agreements (more is better)
 - international accreditation (more is better)
 - global branding (more marketing better education)



why 'international' higher education

- good reasons and/or real reasons
 - from **student** perspectives: study abroad because of higher reputation, better quality or greater availability, labour market value & job opportunities abroad, sentimental reasons
 - from **institutional** perspectives: budget gains, shortage repairs, reputation benefits, curriculum quality
 - from **national** perspectives: shortage repairs, budget gains, network build-up



'international' higher education

- risks and dangers
 - from **student** perspectives: uncertain outcomes, high opportunity costs
 - from **institutional** perspectives: quality and reputation damage, volatility of demand
 - from **national** perspectives: brain gain or drain, budget losses or gains



'international' higher education

- a **realistic and self-critical** policy approach needed
 - in stead of the cloak of idealism hiding selfish 'business' interests and/or real quality differences
- an **educational quality** approach wanted
 - to maximize value to graduates and to be true to core mission in teaching & learning



let's look at mobility, for example



variety of 'mobilities'

- international student mobility is a container concept
- there are different types of mobility with different motivations and a variety of success & failure factors



variety of types

- **purpose**: mainly for academic reasons – mainly for other purposes (traineeship, family, migration)
- **type**: for credit (temporary short stay, ‘exchange’) - for degree (full qualification / degree)
- **organisation**: as part of a programme - self-organised, free movers
- *and by the way this explains why statistics of student mobility are so unreliable*



variety of success & failure factors

- **students** come well prepared academically, with language & learning skills
- **institutions** offer well planned & delivered programs, recognized results, and good facilities
- **or not**, or only partly



international education is more than a change of location

- a matter of curriculum content, and teaching & learning qualities
 - in terms of content
 - teaching faculty
 - learning modes
 - credentials
 - setting
 - and student support



“this program is offered
in cooperation with foreign partners”

- **a matter of shared responsibilities**
 - in terms of curriculum design & content
 - teaching faculty
 - learning modes
 - credentials
 - setting
 - and student support



“speaking about ideals”

- Higher Education is a for-profit-sector in terms of benefits to graduates and their future
- → international competences in terms of academic qualities, professional skills, and value in the labour market
- → international skills and sensitivities not just for a rich and/or adventurous minority among students



both home and abroad, because

- this is a zipless world
- grand challenges don't stop at customs
- migration is everywhere, so are mixed populations
- “some jobs are mobile, all jobs are changing”



to all of these challenges

- international joint degree programs are among the best possible responses



definition (IIE report 2011)

- “*International joint degree programs* are study programs collaboratively offered by two (or more) higher education institutions located in different countries. They typically feature a jointly developed and integrated curriculum and agreed-on credit recognition. Students typically study at the two (or more) partnering higher education institutions (i.e., 1 home institution + 1 institution abroad). Upon completion of the study program, students are awarded a single degree certificate issued and signed jointly by all institutions involved in the program.”



valuable upsides

- structured, safe & simple
 - part of familiar study programme & setting
 - foreign partners of similar level
 - balanced element of the curriculum
 - designed and recognized as such
 - faculty staff implicated & co-responsible
 - logistics usually facilitated by educational partners
 - relevant internationality



valuable upsides

- promoting international classroom beyond mobility
 - impact on all participants, home and abroad
 - blended modes of delivery & participation feasible
 - teaching staff involved at all sides and on all sites



homemade hurdles

- Higher Education, however, is a very **national** thing in terms of
 - legal prescriptions
 - financials
 - quality assurance
 - academic calendars
 - professional qualification specs
 - et cetera



homemade hurdles

- ..and the paradox about **national** things and thoughts is that even when they want to be inter-national
- we often want them to be in full agreement with local and national preferences and tastes



so we need inter/supra-national values & oversight

-education is to a large degree a matter of trust
-education abroad or delivered by foreign providers for learners themselves often too difficult to judge, measure or benchmark



let's take a look at some risky ranges and slippery slopes (1)

- off shore “branches” & franchising often present many uncertainties about
 - faculty academic and linguistic competences
 - status of accreditation
 - value in the job market
 - continuity



let's take a look at some risky ranges and slippery slopes (2)

- the status of foreign students in national programmes
 - clients or co-creators?
 - international experience or just foreign?
 - portable certified qualifications?
 - teaching & learning cultures
 - protection & support



let's take a look at some risky ranges and slippery slopes (3)

- higher education to some of us is just a commodity in a marketplace
- to others a matter of high ethical standards and ideals in a worldwide commons
- migration & higher education chameleons of many political agendas



in short, quality is an important issue
not just in theory
but very much in practice

and for the future of the happy couple it
would be good if both international and
quality had about the same standing



in case you wonder what ACA is about,
or might want to know more about international
'mobilities'

check the ACA website for recent literature:

<http://www.aca-secretariat.be/index.php?id=4>
<http://www.aca-secretariat.be/index.php?id=41>

thank you for your kind attention

