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Staff mobility as an aspect of the quality assurance in Hungarian universities

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Abstract

Internationalisation is one of the most important aspects of the higher educational development in the 21st century. The staff mobility, including the academic and the administrative staff's mobility is a considerable part of this internationalisation. It's impossible to increase the quality level of the higher education without the intensification of the universities' staff mobility rate. This intensification will make the Hungarian higher educational system more attractive for foreigner students too.

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1. Introduction

The demographic indicators of Hungary show the reduction of the age group completing the high school level. This process will cause excessive capacities in the higher educational system. Hungary has to increase the quality level of the national higher educational system to strengthen its international prestige.

The internationalization of the educational practice is a preference for the state, for the higher educational institutions and it creates new career opportunities for the staff too. It facilitates the deepening of the relations between higher educational institutions, it can be the basis of new joint trainings and it can increase the student mobility.

Hungary has to increase the academic staff's mobility rate and the administrative staff's rate too. It's an unequivocal aim to increase the total number of the international students studying in Hungary, where they can find

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a higher educational system with high quality and low prices. Offering a high quality and numerous programs in English the Hungarian higher educational system can be attractive for foreigners.

2. Method

During my research first I tried to clarify the current situation of the Hungarian higher educational system. I read different statistic reports made by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and the Act CCIV of 2011 of the National Higher Educational System – again. Later I tried to collect a few international definition about the meaning of the mobility, and I tried to define, what does the academic staff thinks about the mobility in my home-university, the University of Debrecen. Finally I tried to present the different grants available for the academic staff: these grants aim to increase the international mobility rate of the Hungarian higher educational institutions' academic and administrative staff.

3. Results

I'm a student and PhD student representative of my home country, I'm the head of the Supervisory Board at the National Union of Students' in Hungary and I'm the president of the PhD Students' Union of the University of Debrecen. As a representative of the Hungarian students I had a chance to join the Higher Educational Roundtable led by the Minister responsible for the fields of education, including higher educational and scientific-research policy too. Other member organizations were: Ministry of Human Resources, Hungarian Rectors' Conference, Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, National Union of PhD and DLA Students in Hungary, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungarian Higher Educational Accreditation Committee etc.

As a member of the Higher Educational Roundtable I could recognize many strategic challenge of the Hungarian higher educational system. One of these main challenges is the population decline of Hungary. The country's population was 10375 thousand in 1990, 10200 thousand in 2001 and 9909 thousand in 2013.ⁱ The number of live births shows reduction too: in 1990 more than 125 thousand live births reported, in 2001 more than 97 thousand live births reported and in 2013 only 88700.ⁱⁱ We can enunciate that Hungary slowly loses its population and nowadays I can't see chance to turn these trends.

In Hungary only those can become a student of the higher educational system, who completed a graduation of the secondary school level – at the age around 18 years.ⁱⁱⁱ The number of these graduating students decline too: at the end of the 1990s around 90 thousand people completed the secondary school level.^{iv} In the last six years we have lost more than 10% of this age group: in 2013 there were only less than 77 thousand graduating 18-20 years old student in the country.^v After this information no one will be surprised when I say the Hungarian higher educational system lost more than 100 thousand students: in 2005 we had 424 thousand students but in 2013 we only had 320 thousand.^{vi}

That's how we can summarize the demographic processes of Hungary. These processes will cause excessive capacities in the higher educational system. Hungary has to increase the quality level of the national higher educational system to strengthen its international prestige.

The internationalization of the educational practice is a preference for the state, for the higher educational institutions and it creates new career opportunities for the staff too. It facilitates the deepening of the relations between higher educational institutions, it can be the basis of new joint trainings and it can increase the student mobility.^{vii}

There is an other side of the internationalisation of the higher educational system. "A modern metropolitan state whose system of higher education may itself be an influential model nevertheless admits foreign influences, but these are usually imported piecemeal and rapidly modified and absorbed, more or less successfully, into the native system. Foreign models are often cited (sometimes by both sides) in efforts at reform, as the nineteenth century German model was used in the United Kingdom, France, the United States, and elsewhere.

Colonies of settlement, where a numerically substantial fragment of a European society is established abroad, are likely recipients of a large part, if not the whole, of the mother country's model of higher education, especially if indigenous people and their cultures are largely ignored in the creation of the new society."^{viii} As it's seen national

models of higher education are trying to adjust to other higher educational systems. That's how some countries became exporter of higher educational models and other states became importer of these systems.

Hungary has to increase the academic staff's mobility rate and the administrative staff's rate too. It's an unequivocal aim to increase the total number of the international students studying in Hungary, where they can find a higher educational system with high quality and low prices. Offering a high quality and numerous programs in English the Hungarian higher educational system can be attractive for foreigners.

When I'm writing about the English language programs, I always think of full programs. Part time mobility programs (just like the European Union's Erasmus Program) are very useful for students, but they aren't capable to save a higher educational system. The only appropriate way to increase the international students' number is to start full BA/BSc, MA/MSc, PhD/DLA programmes in English. But it's impossible to start these programmes without academic and administrative staff, who can make presentations and work in English. The English knowledge is essential in the scientific life of the 21st century, because no one can get the latest information without reading the most influent international scientific journals and without joining international congresses.

The meaning of mobility depends on the defining organisation, person etc. For example for the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (P9 Eurydice), mobility means the following definition. "For a country to be able to have a clear policy on mobility, it must have a sense of how it would like mobility phenomena to change and, therefore, a vision of the situation that it considers desirable. While this is an obvious statement, it is nevertheless surprisingly rare for a country to express clear objectives related to student mobility, and it is more common to find general expressions of desires for more mobility – whether incoming or outgoing."^{ix}

It's really interesting what does the mobility means for the Hungarian higher educational institutions' academic staff. "Mobility means possibility for personal and institutional improvement in knowledge and scientific relationship. Seeing other institutions and meeting other people keep your mind open for new methods, new things."^x Another opinion: "Mobility means for me liberty of communication: communication of people or ideas. Mobility makes possible the liberty of exchange, makes possible the openness to the other, the cooperation."^{xi}

There are different mobility possibilities available for the academic staff in Hungary. It's important to declare: the greatest problem of the different mobility systems for Hungarian people is the financing.

The special system called 'Campus Hungary' operated by the state itself offers different kinds of mobility financing for students, academic staff and administrative staff too.^{xii} This system is an optimal solution to finance different research or mobility programmes abroad. Every member of the Hungarian higher educational system can apply for the grant of the Campus Hungary Program: the program can transfer support for individual applicants and for applicant groups too. The support can help to organise a short term or a long term mobility program. The amount of the transferred grant depends on the mobility's destination: the Campus Hungary office will transfer bigger support when the applicant would like to join a scientific program out of Europe. Applicants can travel everywhere with this special grant, only those countries are excluded, which are too dangerous to stay by the opinion of the Ministry of International Relations.

There are many other grants which are trying to increase the mobility rate of the Hungarian higher educational systems academic staff. For example the members of the academic staff, who are supported with the independent OTKA-grant^{xiii} can build in costs for international mobility in the budget of their research application.

The mobility rate of the Hungarian higher educational system is lower than in other European Union member states. For example in 2006 the student mobility from and to Hungary was lower than the mobility average of the 27 member states. In 2006 only 1.7% of the Hungarian students studied abroad – while the EU-27's average was 2.7% - and only the 2.1% of the students came from abroad to the Hungarian higher educational institutions – while the EU-27's average was 3%.^{xiv}

4. Conclusion

The title of my publication says the international mobility is an aspect of quality insurance in the higher educational system. I think it's the essence of the mobility programs: to increase the quality level of the education. When a member of the academic staff starts any kind of program abroad (research program, teaching program etc, it doesn't matter), her or his point of view will be renewed. And with this renewed point of view these professors will

be able to fill the Hungarian higher educational system with the best practices collected abroad. We can make a special concentrate of these best practices. I think this process will make the Hungarian higher education more attractive and useful for every student.

Of course there are other aspects of the international mobility of students. For example the OECD uses the following aspect as a side of the international mobilisation, too. “The increase in student mobility in tertiary education can also provide an opportunity for smaller and/or less-developed host education systems to improve the cost-efficiency of their education systems. For example, it can help countries focus limited resources on educational programmes with potential economies of scale, or expand participation in tertiary education without having to expand the tertiary system within the country itself. For host countries, enrolling international students can not only help raise revenues from higher education, but also can be part of a broader strategy to recruit highly skilled immigrants.”^{xv}

But the statistics of the OECD show the international student mobility can increase the incomes for the higher educational institutions. The most important information of the internationalised students are these: “In 2011, nearly 4.3 million students were enrolled in tertiary education outside their country of citizenship. Australia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria have, in descending order, the highest percentages of international students among their tertiary enrolments. Asian students represent 53% of foreign students enrolled worldwide. The largest numbers of foreign students are from China, India and Korea. In 2011, the number of foreign students enrolled in tertiary education in OECD countries was, on average, almost three times the number of students from OECD countries studying abroad. In the 21 European countries that are members of the OECD, there were 2.7 foreign students per each European citizen enrolled abroad. Some 83% of all foreign students are enrolled in G20 countries, while 77% of all foreign students are enrolled in OECD countries. These proportions have remained stable during the past decade.”^{xvi}

I think it's very important to clarify the importance of the international mobility. Mobile people will be wiser, more open-minded and more experienced. The professors, who spent at least one semester abroad will be more able to integrate the international students. And – based on the demographic indicators – it's an unequivocal aim to make the Hungarian higher educational system more attractive for foreigners.

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