Abstract. *This paper aims at analyzing the process of academic internationalization from a conceptual perspective. First, it will be introduced and explained the concept of academic internationalization. Next, it will be made a parallel between internationalization, globalization and regionalization, concepts which are frequently used as interchangeable, but express different phenomena considering their broad implications. On focus are also the main factors which trigger internationalization, which can be divided into four categories: political, economic, academic, cultural and social ones. In the next part there are depicted some of the internationalization strategies deployed by most of the very dynamic universities across the world.*

Keywords: universities, academic internationalization, academic globalization, academic regionalization, strategies for internationalization.

TRENDS AND STRATEGIES WITHIN THE PROCESS OF ACADEMIC INTERNATIONALIZATION

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades universities from all over the world have been exposed to increased pressure regarding the adaptability to the conditions from the external environment, which- within the larger context of the new knowledge based economy- undergoes frequent and fundamental changes in different areas: economic, social, technological etc. The very dynamic rhythm of changes as well as the economic, socio-political and technological complexity determined universities to respond to the external pressures by starting a process aimed at increasing the adaptability of the institution, both in terms of conducting research activities and reorganization of teaching and new forms of management and leadership (Bartell, 2003).External forces and the trend towards globalization have become so powerful that triggered fundamental changes in higher education, as well as in other industries. There are of course many critics of the effect of globalization on universities, which argue that different aspects of global capitalism negatively affect universities' ability to fulfill their cultural-educational mission in the society as they focus on developing knowledge and skills which are required on the labor market, which also has an increasingly global character.

Many authors state that one of the key factors which may foster the adaptability of a university's policies to the signals received from the external environment and thus increase the overall competitiveness of the university on the academic market – which is also under the pressure of globalization – is represented by the acceleration of the internationalization process of universities (Bartell, 2003; Marsella, 2001; Sporn, 1999).

One of the most prominent researchers in the field of academic systems, the German Ulrich Teichler (1996, 2004, 2010) states in his papers that at a certain moment one or two major research topics capture and even monopolize the interest of the academic community. Therefore it can be observed, that at the beginning of '80s the research field of tertiary education is dominated by studies analyzing the increasingly important role and mission of universities within the global society and academic management with a focus on identifying financing opportunities. The aforementioned topics represented in their "golden age" also the headline of many specialized conferences and journals from this field of research. In the same decade are established many scientific journals dedicated to the study of different aspects of university education. From the beginning of the '90s the topic of the internationalization of the universities starts to raise the attention of more and more researchers. Nowadays the debate regarding the internationalization strategies are still up to date; however they evolved towards the comparative analysis of academic globalization, regionalization or internationalization and their related subtopics within the larger economic and social framework.

Teichler (2004) considers that higher education has never been "more international" than today and that this process will be even more accelerated in the future. On the one hand, even in the past, when physical boundaries between countries

were still playing a decisive role, universities were perceived as very international organizations compared to other organizations. This is primarily due to the universal dimension of knowledge and appreciation granted by the members of the University to intrinsic and cosmopolitan values, but also to more pragmatic factors such as the educational market which is essentially a reputational market and the prestige of a university is based, to a considerable extent, on its reputation at international level, on the mobility of the students and teaching staff, on the research projects carried out in mixed teams etc. On the other hand universities can be perceived as very national institutions with respect to various other issues: the financing of higher education (especially the European one is financed mainly from public and national sources), educational policies are set by the governments of the different countries and not last the students are trained primarily to serve the national market. Thus, despite all efforts of internationalization of higher education especially in Europe, we are still using the term of "national educational system", not the "European educational system".

2. Internationalization versus globalization

The concept of *internationalization of universities*, although it was frequently debated in academia and represented the main topic for various articles and research projects, has not reached yet its conceptual limits and there is no universally accepted definition of this phenomenon (Kehm and Teichler, 2007).The concept of internationalization can be analyzed from different perspectives, some of them being even divergent ones. Trying to define and set the conceptual boundaries of the phenomenon of "internationalization of higher education institutions" there were identified two distinct approaches (Marginson and van der Wende, 2009; van der Wende, 2010):

- the first one focus on increasing international visibility by organizing international programs which involve cross-border partners, mobility for students, teachers and researchers, double degree programs, joint research projects, language courses focused on developing cross cultural competencies etc.;
- the second one refers to the universalization, globalization and internationalization of the essence and of the basic functions of higher education. Thus, the European Commission prefers the term "European dimension" of education if the dimension of this phenomenon is more complex than some cross-border mobilities or an institutional partnership between two or more universities.

Obviously, policy makers at national and institutional level focused so far mainly on the first approach, the visible and pragmatic one; the second approach has a more philosophical and dogmatic character, whose essence is more difficult to capture and to substantiate. In other words, if we were to make a comparison between the metaphor of organizational culture seen as an iceberg, the first direction would be the

visible peak of the iceberg, while the second one would represent the body of the iceberg, which lies under water.

There are still many controversial issues regarding the distinction and the interconnections between universities' internationalization tendencies and the *globalization* phenomenon which impacts more and more directly the higher education market. Very often these concepts are erroneously considered interchangeable. Globalization can be depicted as the flow of technology, knowledge, people, values, ideas that cross national borders. Globalization exerts a different effect on each country according to its national history, traditions and culture. Internationalization of higher education represents the way how a country responds to the globalization, while respecting the individuality and specificity of its educational system (Knight, 2008a). Therefore, globalization and internationalization should be perceived as two different concepts, between which it is established a positive dynamic interconnection. In other words, globalization is a catalyst for the process of internationalization of universities or the process of internationalization is a prompt response to the widespread phenomenon of globalization (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Chan and Dimmok, 2008; de Wit, 2009; Knight, 2004; Ninomiya et al., 2009).

This distinction between globalization and internationalization is outlined also by Scott (2005). In his view globalization represents an extended and more intensive form of internationalization. He argues for a linear relation between the two concepts. Internationalization of universities represents a public phenomenon which is directly linked to the diplomatic, cultural and economic objectives of a state, respectively to the academic goals of the university – which might consists in curricula internationalization, students' diversification, development of joint research projects etc.

Reviewing the scientific literature, one can remark the existence of a debate on causality or identity of the two terms. However, it can be concluded that between the two concepts of globalization and internationalization is still a dialectical relationship.

Scott (2005) refers to the need to accelerate the process of internationalization of universities in order to cope with the effects of globalization and to prevent its negative effects. Thus, in an increasingly globalized society, very different values come into direct contact, being accepted by other nations or entering into conflict with them. Considering the new societal background, the mutual respect for national values becomes essential to maintain a climate of peace. The achievement of these complex soft skills can be reached by educating the new generations in universities which feature an international character and approach.

Enders (2004) has a more critical perspective on the two concepts. In his vision globalization represents a challenging topic which caused controversy: is globalization a naturally triggered social process or a new element introduced in political speeches or a combination between the two of them? Does internationalization represent a form of domination of more powerful states over the weaker ones? In this case do we face a form of academic neo-imperialism? Many times over

the history it was proven that radical nationalism was caused by a strong international trend. This resulted in a fierce competition that led to the exclusion of weaker players and consequently they revolted against the more powerful ones using extremist approaches and tools (Altbach, 2007).

Teichler (2009) and Bartell (2003) state that internationalization is generally defined as an increase of the cross border activities (when physical borders between countries still exist), while globalization is a more advanced stage of internationalization, characterized by beginning of boundaries' dissolution. Internationalization of higher education represents the process of integrating intercultural and international dimensions in teaching, research and administrative services in a university (Knight, 2004). In this definition there are tackled several fundamental concepts: both the idea of dynamic internationalization and integration are placed in a central position – the international dimension should not represent a peripheral element, but should play a central role when shaping the educational programs and policies. By the early 2000s the concerns regarding the internationalization of universities represented occasional and episodic processes. Therefore, the integration process contributes to the sustainability and long term orientation of the international dimension. The terms "international" and "intercultural" stress the fact that internationalization does not only refer to states or nations, but also to cultural and ethnic groups from a country.

Bartell (2003) defines internationalization as a process of integrating the international perspective in a university. This process is a continuous, multidimensional and interdisciplinary one, future oriented and based on the vision of a leader. It implies the converging efforts of several internal stakeholders (students, teaching and administrative staff) and external ones (decision makers of educational policies in a country). It is a highly nonlinear process especially due to the nonlinearity of the universities intellectual capital, and to their nature of knowledge intensive learning organizations (Brătianu, 2009, 2011; Brătianu and Orzea, 2010).

The extension of the international dimension of universities represents a challenge from the perspective that modern universities have built their academic culture in a national context. They are financed mainly from national funds and they are a symbol of the nation state (Enders, 2004). From Enders' perspective (2004) internationalization refers to the process of intense cooperation between states and implicitly to activities that take place at the cross border level. This way, internationalization reflects an organisation form where the nation states still play a central role and the accent lies on the creation and development of strategic relationships between them. As opposed to the internationalization, globalization refers mainly to an increased interdependency between states and finally to convergence on various levels. Globalization has also an important cultural component: this encourages the creation of a universal culture (usually a western one, but in some cases it includes indigenous traditions). The globalizing process is associated with the reorganization of the nation state, which takes place also by the deregulation of the economic environment, the markets' opening (including the

educational one) and the supremacy of concepts such as competitiveness, efficiency and professionalized management. In the context of globalization the states have a limited control over the policies that regulate the tertiary education system.

3. Drivers of the internationalization of the European academic environment

This simple distinction between internationalization and globalization can be challenged by introducing the concept of *"regionalization"*. Taking as example Europe and looking at *Europeanization* as a form of regionalization, there can be seen two slightly contradictory directions. On one hand, in the field of university education, regionalization can be defined as the cooperation process that can evolve up to regional integration. This means bilateral cooperation and interaction on a horizontal plan and at all the levels: between the national governments, between the universities from Europe or even cooperation at regional level between European university consortia and third institutions. In other words regionalization represents a version of internationalization at a smaller scale.

On the other hand regionalization can be considered a consequence of the globalization process which enforces a close cooperation between neighboring countries in order to achieve a common competitive advantage which helps them to face the pressures coming from other parts of the world. This perspective can be extrapolated in the field of university education in Europe too: the Bologna Declaration reflects the effort to offer a "European" answer to the problems faced by many university systems in Europe. The main objective of the Bologna Declaration is to increase the competitiveness of European Higher Education Institutions by fostering mobilities between the signatory countries and raising the attractiveness of European universities for students from other regions of the world. In the Bologna Declaration it is stated that the vitality and efficiency of any civilization can be measured by the level of attractiveness it exerts on tertiary countries. Thus within the Bologna Process the signatory states express their explicit intention to foster the European University System in order to reach an attractiveness level which complies with Europe's cultural and scientific traditions (Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences and the Association of European Universities CRE, 2010).

The governing at European level in the field of educational policies is performed through negotiations between governments. The national policies are coordinated by treaties concluded between countries, but the governments keep their sovereignty in the decision process, take care of the adjustment of decisions taken at European level and their implementation on national level. The cooperation between the signatory countries can be an example in this respect: Bologna is a voluntary process, without compulsory character and no legal consequences for the participating countries.

Beginning with the mid '70s the educational policies in the European Union were concentrated upon the stimulation of students and teaching staff's mobility,

cooperation at the research level and the accelerating of the Europeanizing process of university education. The climax of the intra-European mobility policies is represented by the ERASMUS programme. Besides the increasing numbers of mobilities, this programme also fostered the cooperation between universities, trying to line up the curriculum content from different universities, to create a framework to facilitate the recognition of studies and grades (introduction of ECTS system) and to ensure a European dimension to university diplomas. Thus, the Bologna Process can be considered means as well as result of the Europeanizing process of universities, contributing to make an important step towards convergence in tertiary education in Europe (Fejes, 2008). The Bologna process aims at denationalizing the university education systems and at substituting the inter-European diversity with intra-European variety (Rosenbilt et al., 2007).

As varied as are the approaches of the university internationalization, the more diverse are the reasons behind the onset of this process and its integration as a fundamental element in the strategy of European universities. The analysis of these reasons in recent years has become a target more and more difficult to achieve due to the emergence of a large number of variables, which are in a constant dynamics. Following a multivariate analysis of the synthesis process four main categories of arguments were selected: political, economic, academic, cultural and social arguments (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Knight, 2006; Knight, 2008b; Knight, 2008c). These categories do not mutually exclude each other, but they are rather strongly interconnected.

The political reasons have a greater relevance from a national perspective than from an institutional setting. Throughout history, the internationalization of education and international education were seen as an effective way of articulating the country's external policies. The primary purpose was to ensure national security and peace between nations. This argument is still present but has no longer the same importance as in the past.

The economic arguments for internationalization have become increasingly important. As a result of the economic globalization, of the increasing interdependence between nations and of the acceleration of knowledge, the states focus on achieving and maintaining economic, scientific and technological competitiveness. One way of achieving these objectives is to properly train citizens and make investments in applied research.

Another important factor on the labor market refers to the identification of those skills considered essential for future graduates so that they can be competitive and provide professional services in an increasingly internationalized environment. The development of these skills requires a close collaboration between academic and private sectors, represented mainly by multinational companies and those that are active internationally. This type of collaboration is not widespread at present, especially in Eastern Europe and in order to create a culture of cooperation in this regard, an optical change for both parties is necessary.

At institutional level, economic factors have also become increasingly important. The rationalization and the reduction of the budgets for higher education, determined the universities to seek alternative financing sources. Many of them have thus turned their attention to international markets in order to export educational products and services to them. These markets, especially the emerging ones, are seen as an opportunity and represent an important income generating activity. On the other hand, along with declining birth rates in Europe and demographic changes, the number of potential students who come from Europe is falling. Students are customers of educational services and the core of academic activity, and hence one of the main source of income for universities. Since the European pool of potential students has dropped dramatically, European universities must shift their strategy in order to attract students from countries with demographic positive growth.

This fact has generated a strong debate over the export of education: is this activity aimed at contributing to fostering the international dimension of teaching and research activities, or just a way to generate profits for the university? Clearly there might be a direct and positive relationship between orientation towards international markets and the internationalization of the basic functions of a university. However, this positive correlation may exist, but is not a certainty. For a university it is essential to understand its reasons to internationalize, so that objectives and strategies set previously will converge on them later. It is also essential to reach equilibrium between financial motivation and academic benefits.

Academic arguments underlying the internationalization of universities are directly related to the early history and development of universities. Including the concept of “universal knowledge” in the very name of “university”, illustrates the intrinsic openness to internationalization. The phenomenon related to mobility of students, teachers and researchers has been encountered for hundreds of years, as well as the international dimension of scientific research.

Cultural and social motivation behind the internationalization process seems to have lost the value it had in the past. Preserving and promoting national culture is still a major reason for those countries that see the process of internationalization as a way to respect cultural diversity and to counterbalance the homogenizing effect of the globalization. The training of the graduates who have skills and expertise in intercultural relations and communication is considered by many scholars one of the fundamental reasons for internationalization activities of the universities. The internationalization of the learning experience creates circumstances for developing an intercultural sensitivity, which according to some psychologists should be stimulated since the primary and secondary school. Thus, cultural and social reasons do not bring into the forefront the development of the state and of the university as an institution, but the personal development of the individual - student, teacher, researcher, and university employee. The emphasis is on individual development as local, national and international citizen.

The reasons that stand for the international development of an individual, a university or a country are complex and multivariate; they evolve and change strongly over time. The four categories presented above are partially overlapping and do not

exclude each other. They were briefly illustrated before in order to create an image of the complexity of the factors which have to be considered when elaborating the internationalization strategy.

4. Strategies for the internationalization of European universities

Conscious of the need to integrate the international dimension within the strategic thinking, universities have developed various strategies for internationalization, which were summarized in four main categories (Knight, 2008c), as shown in the following table.

Table 1

Internationalization strategies

Category	Example
Academic programs	- student mobility programs (incoming and outgoing) - foreign languages classes - internationalized curriculum - internships abroad - international students on campus - double degree programs - study programs in languages of international circulation - intercultural training programs (e.g. orientation week for foreign students, classes to learn the language of the respective country etc.) - exchange programs for the faculty's members (teaching and auxiliary staff) - fellowships for professors
Research activities and common research projects	- participation in international research programs - organizing international lectures and seminars - articles and working papers published in famous international journals - programs for PhD students exchange and young researchers - concluding research partnerships with international institutions and companies from abroad
International relations and services	- university programs that provide support to equivalent institutions in emerging countries - partnerships with NGOs in other countries - strategic partnerships with universities abroad - development of campuses in other countries - on-line and distance courses - gaining membership and active participation in international academic consortia and associations - alumni development programs in other countries
Extracurricular activities	- international student associations and clubs - international and intercultural events organized by the university and hosted in its campus - relationships with different ethnic and cultural groups - international summer schools

Source: Knight, 2008c; Schuller and Vincent-Lancrin, 2009.

The first category, the one of the academic programs is probably in line with the general perception over the internationalization activities and has received the largest attention in scientific literature. At this moment, in the majority of the universities, this category plays the most important role. It is very likely that this is also due to the Bologna Process which is implemented in Europe; this process is aimed at reaching convergence in the European Higher Education and the majority of its action plans could be subscribed to this category.

The second category focuses on the internationalization of scientific research. This includes both research methodology, cooperation agreements concluded with foreign partners and participation in international projects as well as an international approach regarding the dissemination of research results (participation at conferences, symposia etc.).

To the category "international relations and services" can be included mainly the strategies of developing partnerships with foreign universities and other international organizations. Commercial activities, such as export of educational services through campuses in other countries, online courses and distance learning, as well as programs specifically designed for certain multinational companies are gaining importance. University networks and consortia are becoming increasingly common and a higher importance is conferred to alumni associations established abroad (for university graduates working abroad).

Extracurricular activities complement the scope of internationalization and play a major role in providing a "complete international experience" for students in the country as well as for the ones abroad.

The aforementioned categories and examples are not exhaustive and they can be completed by other dimensions. Schuller and Vincent-Lancrin (2009) distinguish four types of internationalization which, had also been recognized by OECD: internationalization among people (students and university personnel), among bidders of educational services (higher education institutions), by means of programs and projects.

The topic of curriculum internationalization can be analyzed either as the introduction of new subjects which approach international topics or as a standardization need, which may lead to the "taylorization" of educational activities (teaching and learning) (Latucca, 2007). Based on a study conducted in Sweden, Svensson and Wihlborg (2010) argue that there are no clear indications on how to internationalize the curriculum, and the curriculum represents actually the essence of education. They condemn the fact that a high attention is given to more formal issues, such as the organizational and administrative ones, while the core of Internationalization, namely the curriculum internationalization has not been decoded yet.

The issue of developing certain international competences is acknowledged in many countries as improving the mobility rate on the labor market and the mobility within different cycles of university training (Badcock et al., 2010). The aspect related to reckoning a set of so – called "European competences" as well as difficulties encountered to this regard due to differences between quality standards as well as the

manner in which they may be overpassed by creating Zones of Mutual Trust is approached by Boni and Lozano (2006), Brockman et al. (2009), Karseth (2008), Powell and Solga (2010) and many others. Boni and Lozano (2006) argue that acquiring such general knowledge, especially the interpersonal and systemic ones, common to all graduate courses, is closely related to the object of ethic learning: acquirement of such knowledge is the result of an independent and responsible autodidactic learning process. Despite the increased efforts to this regard, Karseth (2008) is sceptical regarding the universities' will and capacity to draft a general frame of competences that should fit to all study programs within the signatory countries of Bologna Declaration.

Another issue related to reach convergence into the European higher education refers to the internationalization of academic professions, to get a common profile of the "European" professor (certain qualities that an ideal professor should have, since he teaches students that come from different cultural environments) and to increase the professors mobility between different European universities (Enders, 2007; Huisman et al., 2002; Sanderson, 2006; Vizcarro and Yaniz, 2004).

The linguistic aspect with the purpose of accelerating the internationalization process is debated under different forms: offering different programs in international languages in order to attract foreign students (Kerklaan et al., 2008) and language courses for the students that live in the campus, considering the aspect of linguistic barriers that lead to a segregation of students' population (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2010). Sherry et al. (2010) analyzes the vulnerability of foreign students from a larger perspective than the linguistic one: the financial one, the integration into a new culture, the lack of intercultural and linguistic skills for many individuals engaged in the administrative structure of the universities (as this represents the first contact of foreign students with the faculty).

5. Conclusions

The universities in Europe have always featured an international dimension and attracted students from all continents. Nevertheless, there were historical times when the internationalization played a peripheral role within university's strategy. During the last decade the internationalization process had become a part of institutional and national strategies and the phenomenon related to internationalization and regionalization (Europeanization) incrementally gained importance.

The creation of European Higher Education Area- EHEA and the Europeanization (which is the first stage of internationalization) has been followed by a new internationalization phenomenon that places the European space in a larger context, in an international one. The competition between American universities and those of Western Europe became fiercer both in terms of attracting a larger number of students as well as in terms of consolidating their position within the national education system. The academic internationalization initiates the debate on redefining

the social, cultural and economic role of tertiary education at global level and repositioning the Higher Education Institutions within the national education systems (Enders, 2004).

In our society it can be identified a trend towards the internationalization of different types of organisations and implicitly of universities. Therefore, internationalisation is both a consequence of the necessity to address to a larger public and to maintain the competitive advantage on a more and more dynamic educational market. On the other hand, we can notice the need to train students for an active life in a global economy which requires intercultural skills that may be easier acquired within an "international university".

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