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Internationalization by Innovative Technology

Internationalization in Higher Education – From Ad Hoc to Maturity

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Abstract

The author describes the transformation from ad hoc and incidental international activities to strategy driven and mature internationalisation process. The criteria of internationalisation maturity in HEIs are defined and explained.

Introduction – understanding internationalisation

Over the past 30 years or so a transition from an activities-based approach to a process view was observed. Nowadays, internationalisation of higher education is defined as a dynamic, multi-dimensional and comprehensive process – see the extension of Jane Knight's definition by Delphi group of experts [4].

> *„the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society"*

Internationalisation spans over a wide spectrum of activities within the university including teaching, research, students and service functions, as shown in Fig. (1).
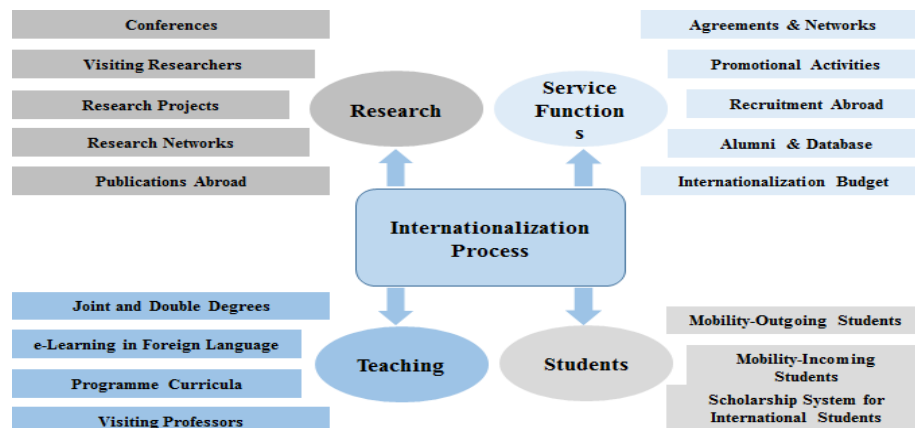

Fig. (1) Common International University Activities (source: author).

The above understanding of internationalisation was applied in TEMPUS projects ([1], [2]) and in Erasmus+ Capacity Building project ([3]). It is also commonly applied by the most of European universities.

Four key-important factors make the internationalisation process well progressing and successful: **Strategic Approach,** sufficient **Funding,** efficient **Institutional Support** and effective academic **Governance**. The meanings of strategic approach and funding

are explained in the next parts of the article. Institutional support should be understood as operational management (allocation of staff, functions of International Office, internal communications and coordination, organizational and methodological support to international initiatives, etc.). The governance relates to strategic management and issues being beyond the competencies of International Office (regular monitoring and assessment of the process, supportive regulatory framework, proactive governing bodies like Senate and Management Board, clear decision making and reporting rules, etc.).

1. Developing Strategic Plan for Internationalisation

Integration of internationalisation into existing university **mission**, **values** and **strategy** is a must. The **internationalisation strategy** can be a part of overall university strategy or developed as a separate document closely referred to it.

Strategic approach to internationalisation

- *Clarify the institution's **objectives for internationalisation** and articulate how internationalisation is expected to enhance the institution's main mission(s).*
- *Select the most **appropriate modes and forms of internationalisation** for the institution, taking into account both the institution's missions and objectives and the environment affecting internationalisation.*
- ***Involve key stakeholders** actively in developing the internationalisation approach.*
- *Develop a **sustainable business model** to support internationalisation, taking into account:*
  - *expected benefits and costs over the medium term;*
  - *financing arrangements;*
  - *timing of roll out and phasing of implementation;*
  - *assessment of risks;*
  - *ability to respond rapidly in light of experience and to new challenges.*
- *Establish the **partnerships and join the international networks** that will be most relevant and effective to achieving the institution's objectives for internationalisation.*
- *Verify that the institution has the full set of **capacities** required to support the internationalisation strategy and take steps to fill gaps identified or adjust the strategy in light of capacity constraints.*
- *Incorporate **monitoring and evaluation processes** into the strategic plan.*

[5] OECD Guide for HE Institutions, 2012

Basically, the strategic approach enables the answer three fundamental questions [6]:

- Where are we now with our internationalisation?
- Where do we want to be in the (defined) future?
- How can we get from where we are now to where we want to be in the future?

1.1. Step 1 - Diagnosis of current status and defining strategic objectives

SWOT analysis [17] makes possible to establish the present state of university as regards its competitive situation on international higher education market. Identified strengths and weaknesses represent internal environment while opportunities and threats are referred to external situation.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• The management fully supports internationalisation. • Effective reporting rules in internationalisation. • Organisational setup (IRO) in place. • Strong links with international business and industry. • High quality of teaching staff, inclusive visiting professors. • Competitive academic programs (50% in English). • Satisfactory level of English proficiency among students. • Mandatory learning of foreign languages (4 semesters). • Reasonable Teacher/Student Ratio.	• Insufficient support for international research. • Limited international research output. • Limited synergy between research and education. • University budget derived mostly from tuition fees – very limited government and private sector financial support. • Unstable and fluctuating budget for internationalisation. • Very limited budget for international student scholarships. • Average quality of international students' intake. • Unsatisfactory outputs of established international partnerships.
Opportunities	Threats
• Availability of European and international funding programs (educational and research). • Effective support and guidance from Erasmus+ National Agency. • Planned revision of international students' quality admission criteria. • Planned new strategic partnerships with universities in Europe and Asia.	• Strong regional competition for high quality staff with international experience. • No government (MoHE) support to internationalisation activities. • Absence of internationalisation criteria in national ranking system for HE. • Unstable political situation in the region affecting student and staff mobility. • Rising populism and nationalistic ideas in the country.

Table (1) – Example of SWOT in HE institution

In the next step, four strategic internationalisation alternatives are identified:

SO – Strengths and Opportunities – Aggressive strategy (maxi-maxi) – How can university use the strengths to take advantage of opportunities?

ST – Strengths and Threats – Conservative strategy (maxi-mini) – How can university take advantage of the strengths to avoid real and potential threats?

WO – Weaknesses and Opportunities – Competitive strategy (mini-maxi) – How can university use their opportunities to overcome experienced weaknesses?

WT – Weaknesses and Threats – Defensive Strategy (mini-mini) – How can university minimize the weaknesses and avoid threats?

Internationalisation Strategy is not a uniform guide applicable for many institutions. It has to be individually tailored and developed in line with the needs and priorities of a given university or college. The rationales for internationalisation largely differ between institutions. The IAU 4th Global Survey [13], [14] and the EAIE Barometer [15] present the most common ones which are:

- improve the overall quality of education (EAIE) / improve quality of teaching and learning (IAU),

- prepare students for a global world (EAIE) / increase international awareness of students (IAU),

- attract more international students (EAIE),

- enhance international cooperation and capacity building (IAU),

- improve international reputation (EAIE),

- strengthen research and knowledge production capacity (IAU).

At this point it is necessary to mention some alarming voices on misconceptions about internationalisation which unfortunately still exist in academic world (see [8], [9], [10]). The strategy should take into account that internationalisation is not a goal itself. The emphasis is on "to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society" [4].

> *„…how can one define clear objectives and goals, and how can one define and assess the intercultural and international learning outcomes, without first having described the specific (inter)national, institutional and-or programmatic context and, based on that, the relevance of the internationalisation strategy?"* [9] Hans de Wit, 2014
>
> *"If a strong international purpose for the institution has been defined in the institution's vision and mission statements, then all activities, be they in the domains of academic, support and/or resources, need to be consciously evaluated. You should be asking how, and to what extent, do courses, projects, departments, expenditure, organisational structure, committees, etc. help to deliver the institution's vision and mission?"* [7] Fiona Hunter, 2013

1.2. Step 2 - Defining Operational Objectives

The next step is a sort of "translation" of strategic goals into operational objectives.

STRATEGIC GOALS (examples)	OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES (examples)
To make the university better oriented to interculture and internationality and to focus on better integration of foreign students and staff into core activities of the institution.	• To develop intercultural training programs for home staff and students • To develop adaptation programs for foreign students and staff
To organize effectively the internationalisation process in the university.	• To upgrade central IRO and provide proper conditions for process management. • To establish function of Dean's Proxy for international cooperation at each Faculty.
To make degree studies in the university effectively internationalised and attractive for home and foreign students.	• To internationalise curricula (teaching programs) and make them available in foreign language. • To establish support system for foreign students (scholarships and accommodation).
To make university research better visible on international scene.	• To implement system of incentives for researchers publishing abroad or in cooperation with foreign partners. • To provide budget for participation in international research conferences.

Table (2) – Translation of Strategic Goals into Operational Objective

1.3. Step 3 - Planning inputs, activities and outputs of the process?

At this stage, it is absolutely necessary to consult all academic community (top management, academic staff, administration, students) in the widest possible way.

Strategy driven internationalisation means that all **inputs** (e.g. allocation of dedicated staff, allocated budget, office space and equipment, etc.), **activities** (e.g. work on new partnerships, work on internationalising of curricula, taking care of foreign students, etc.) and **outputs** (e.g. internationalised curricula, established IRO, established International Students Office, bi-lingual information system in the campus, etc.) **are aimed at achieving strategic goals and outcomes.**

There is no room for ad hoc decided international activities if not aligned with institutional strategy (plan) for internationalisation.
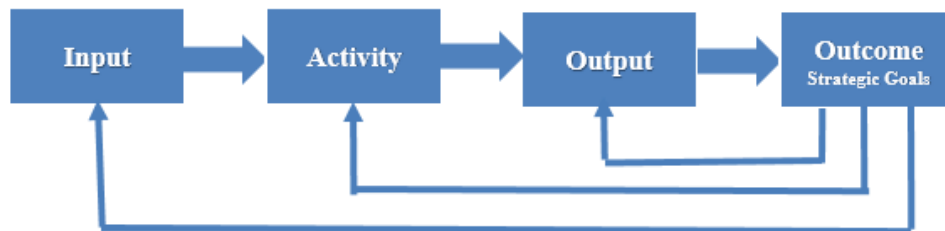

Fig. (3) Planning inputs, activities and outputs (source: author)

So-called Internationalisation Matrix ends the planning phase of the process (Table (3). The matrix becomes an indispensable part of internationalisation strategy.

Strategic Goals & Operational Objectives	Activities	Inputs	Outputs
Strategic Goal 1	Activity 1.1	Input 1.1	Output 1.1
	Activity 1.2	Input 1.2	Output 1.2
	Activity 1.3	Input 1.3	Output 1.3
Strategic Goal 2	Activity 2.1	Input 2.1	Output 2.1
	Activity 2.2	Input 2.2	Output 2.2
	Activity 2.3	Input 2.3	Output 2.3
Strategic Goal 3	Activity 3.1	Input 3.1	Output 3.1
	Activity 3.2	Input 3.2	Output 3.2
	Activity 3.3	Input 3.3	Output 3.3

Table (3) Internationalisation Matrix

1.4. Step 4 – Monitoring and Performance Measures

The process has to be monitored and continuously evaluated against established strategic goals and objectives. There is a number of different approaches to monitoring and measuring internationalisation. Some of them are rather complicated in terms of time and resources spent for implementation. The author opts for practical and simple solutions, based on performance indicators, periodically monitored.

The selected performance indicators have to:

- be related to inputs or activities or outputs and in line with strategic goals (Fig. (3)),
- cover all spectrum of activities within the university (e.g. teaching, research, students and service functions),
- be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bounded (SMART principle).

The set of selected indicators has to be economically accepted (cost of implementation / benefits ratio). The number of indicators is depending on the size of university and the level of internationalisation maturity. In case of Warsaw University of Technology (36 000+ students, 5 000+ staff) the designed system is based on 28 indicators (12 – teaching & learning, 10 – research, 5 – institutional support, 1 – students' life). Out of them, 23 are quantitative and 5 are qualitative ones.

> **Example 1**: Measuring the progress in English proficiency of students?
>
> Indicator: "The number of students who completed English courses" is not SMART.
>
> Indicator: "The number of students who completed B2 or higher English courses at the University in the academic year 2016/2017 and got B2 or higher certificates, compared with the total number of students attending courses" is SMART.
>
> **Example 2**: Measuring the progress in internationalisation of curricula?
>
> Indicator: "The number of courses in English and French" is not SMART.
>
> Indicator: "The number of credit points allocated to Master courses in English and French at the University in academic year 2016/2017, compared with total number of credit points allocated to all Master programs at the University" is SMART.

Important question is: how to measure the process - at university / college level or at the level of each Faculty / Department? It seems that it depends mostly on the size of institution and its organizational scheme. In case of big institutions, it is highly recommended to step down to Faculty / Department level where specifics differ largely. However, departmental internationalisation policies should be aligned with overall Internationalisation Strategy of the institution.

There are different possible ways to present the results of consecutive performance surveys. It is important that form of presentation is easy and understandable for the university management and whole academic community. Two simple forms of presentation of results are illustrated below (Fig. (4) and (5)).

It is very clear that after each periodical performance measurement the results have to be analysed and adequate conclusions and recommendations have to be drawn up and reported to the management. A very typical questions at this stage are:

What makes our progress in XXX lower than expected?

Why there is no progress in YYY despite our efforts and allocated resources?

What should we do to be back on right track with ZZZ?

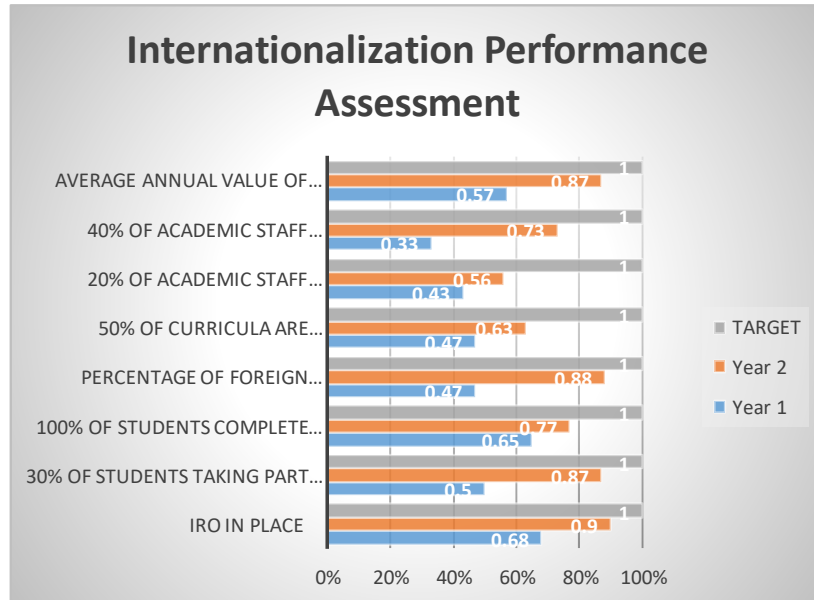Should we continue with XYZ having in mind that target is achieved? etc.

Fig (4) Internationalization performance assessment – results of Year 1 and Year 2 against the target
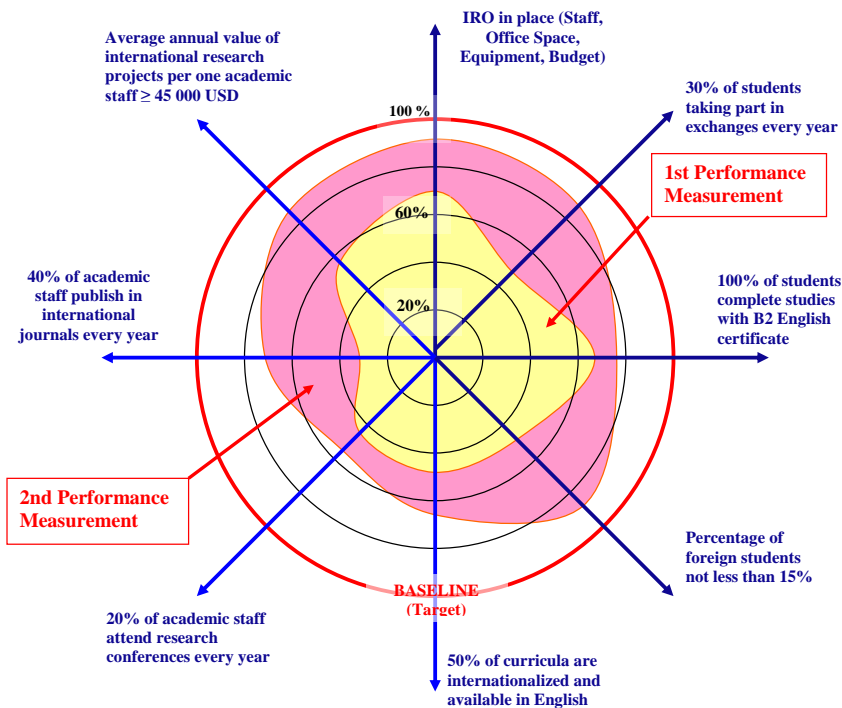

Fig (5) Internationalization performance assessment – results of Year 1 and Year 2 against the target

2. Managing Internationalisation

The process of internationalisation is subject to **different influences and interactions** and is dependent on a variety of **different constraints** (administrative, financial, organizational, etc.). The Management Model has to take into account such a complicated environment (Table (4)).

Institutional level (university, college)	National level	External level (international, global)
University Internationalisation		
Dependent on: budget constraints, lack of qualified staff, attitude of University Management, university bureaucracy & regulations, university development strategy, ...	Dependent on: National Higher Education Law, national regulations, subsidies from the Government, national sponsors, policy of Ministry of Internal Affairs (immigration), ...	Dependent on: Availability of EU-supported programs, EU financial guidelines, international partnership agreements, political situation in the region, political relationships, ...

Table (4) Internationalisation environment and dependencies

The model of institutional support to internationalisation process depends largely on two main factors, the size of the university and the progress in implementation of internationalisation process. In general, there are three approaches to that issue:

- a centralized model where most of responsibilities are allocated to adequately developed, centrally structured IRO, collaborating with faculties/departments and reporting to the President / Rector or to the Vice President for International Affairs,
- a semi-centralized model, where responsibilities are logically shared between reasonably developed IRO and faculties and other university units; in this case the supervisory function of VP is usually in place,
- a de-centralized model (dispersed), with most of responsibilities allocated to properly prepared faculties/departments and evidently limited role of central IRO; in this case the supervision is allocated mostly with Faculty Deans.

The common opinion is that the centralized model is proved in practice for universities which are at the initial stage of implementation of internationalisation process, while a de-centralized model is adequate for those who are really matured and advanced in this regard. It is not necessarily always true as there are also other factors influencing the institutional approach of a given university like volume of foreign students and exchanges, funding system for internationalisation, level of university commercialisation, and number of international projects in research and educational areas.

3. Mastering funding for internationalisation

All recent surveys show that funding is one of critical obstacles in practical implementation of internationalisation process in HE institutions. It is clear that the problem affects both public and private HE institutions. In many cases very interesting initiatives have to be stopped due to lack of finance. The problem is extremely painful in case of institutions being at the beginning of internationalisation path. Institutions with mature and advanced approach can cope much better with financial obstacles.

> - *61% of the institutions report having a dedicated budget for internationalisation; 53% of respondents report that the general institutional budget is the largest single source of internationalisation funding, while 24% cite external public funds as the largest single source.*
> - *Insufficient financial resources are ranked as the top-most internal (49%) and external (38%) obstacle. Lack of funds is seen as a serious obstacle in advancing internationalisation.*
>
> [14] Eva Egron-Polak, 2016

It becomes quite clear that mastering financial part of internationalisation is the skill which is highly needed for those who manage the process (e.g. VPs for Internationalisation, Directors / Heads of International Offices, responsible IO staff, etc.).

Based on practices of institutions where internationalisation reached advanced and mature level it is advised to follow some practical recommendations in this regard:

- Diversification of funding sources improves the financial security of internationalisation process. The search for and proper use of other sources of funding is a must in most cases.
- The search for funding should not be limited to internal (institutional) sources only. There are many external possibilities available (governmental subsidies, donations from industry or business, cooperation agreements with industry or business, EU and other international funding programs, international projects and others).
- The healthiest approach to funding is a mix of institution's budget and result-based component. For instance, the institution guarantees basic funding for operational cost of IO (e.g. salaries of core staff, basic infrastructure, etc.) while the funding for international activities is proportional to achievements (e.g. number of fee-paying international students, volume of international research projects, volume of international educational projects, number of inbound exchange students, etc.).
- The budget for internationalisation should be entirely in disposal of those who are responsible for the process. However, it has to be very clear that it also means the responsibility for the acquisition of funds and development of fundraising strategy.

- The funding at institutional level has to correspond with the Internationalisation Strategy (or Policy) of the institution. The strategic approach to the process makes funding better planned and increases chances for positive socio-economic result (B/C – benefit/cost ratio).

Fig (6) presents the case of diversified funding sources for some typical international activities. The solution is very individual and dependent of institution's progress in internationalisation, scale and volume of international operations and … ingenuity of involved staff.
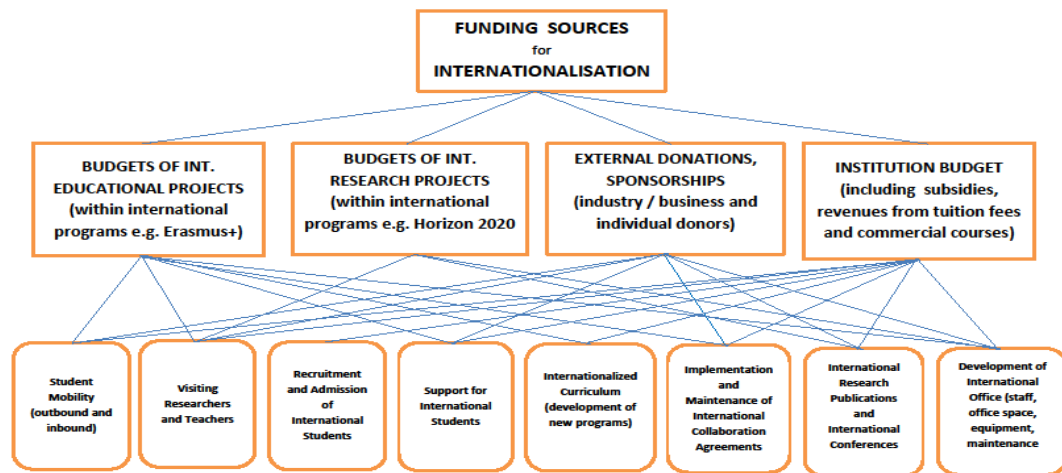

Fig. (6) Structure of funding for internationalization (source: author)

Table (5) presents example of internationalisation "funding matrix" – typical case for the most of European universities, advanced in the internationalisation process.

Funding source / Activity	Institution budget (including governmental subsidy)	Revenues from tuition fee for int. students)	Int. edu projects (Erasmus+ and other)	Int. research projects (Horizon 2020 and other)	Agreements with industry / business	EU structural funds for the country (projects focused on internationalisation)
Student and staff mobility (outgoing)	+		+			
Recruitment and admission of international students	+	+				
Support to international students	+	+	+			
Implementation and maintenance of international agreements	+				+	

Funding source Activity	Institution budget (including governmental subsidy)	Revenues from tuition fee for int. students)	Int. edu projects (Erasmus+ and other)	Int. research projects (Horizon 2020 and other)	Agreements with industry / business	EU structural funds for the country (projects focused on internationalisation)
Internationalisation of curriculum	+		+			+
International activity of researchers	+			+	+	
Running and development of International Office	+		+	+		+

Table (5) Internationalisation Funding Matrix

4. Quality and risk in internationalisation process

The quality of internationalisation process is a key issue. However, the meaning of "internationalisation quality" is sometimes misunderstood and in many cases misused. A typical example is recruitment of foreign students for fee-based studies. If the only criterion in this regard is high number of admitted candidates and the amount of collected fees, most probably it has nothing common with quality of the process. It automatically raises a number of questions like: availability of internationalised curricula, preparedness of academic staff to teach foreign students, availability of support system for foreign students, institutional readiness to accept intercultural environment, etc. And it also generates a basic question if such an approach really "*enhances the quality of education for all students and staff, and makes a meaningful contribution to society*" [4].

In general, there are some basic preconditions to recognize the quality of a given international activity:

- it has to be in line with the adopted strategy and has to aim for achieving strategic goals to benefit the institution,
- it has to be in line with the spirit of internationalisation process (see the definition [4]),
- it has to be furnished with some quality control mechanisms, based on efficient qualitative criteria.

The quality assessment of internationalisation should be performed at different levels: institutional level, teaching programme level and research level. Unfortunately, many of institutions pay less attention to quality assessment of teaching programmes and research activities, and focus only on institutional support aspects.

It has to be noticed that set of selected performance indicators (see part 1.4) includes qualitative indicators apart from quantitative ones. Qualitative indicators "automatically" provide information on process quality. Examples: level of international student satisfaction from lectures or success ratio in international submissions (no. of accepted proposals versus no. of submissions).

Typical examples of negligence in quality assurance:

- no policy and low admission criteria for foreign students > very low success ratio,

- no criteria in signing partnership agreements > a lot of „dead" agreements with no results,

- no carefully prepared learning agreement for exchange student > no recognition of learning outcomes, no recognition of earned credits,

- no internal or external evaluation of project results > results not compliant with declarations,

- carelessness in the preparation of internationalised curriculum > students resigning from the course; critical opinions in student surveys; no accreditation; low reputation in rankings,

- no quality plan in research project > no final acceptance by the auditor, no final payment released,

- insufficient information addressed to foreign students > complaints by students and bad opinion in surveys and rankings.

Internationalisation, as a comprehensive process, is subject to many risks which have to be properly managed. Risk analysis (see [18], [19], [20]) should precede the decision about allocation of resources and starting new activity (Fig. (7)).
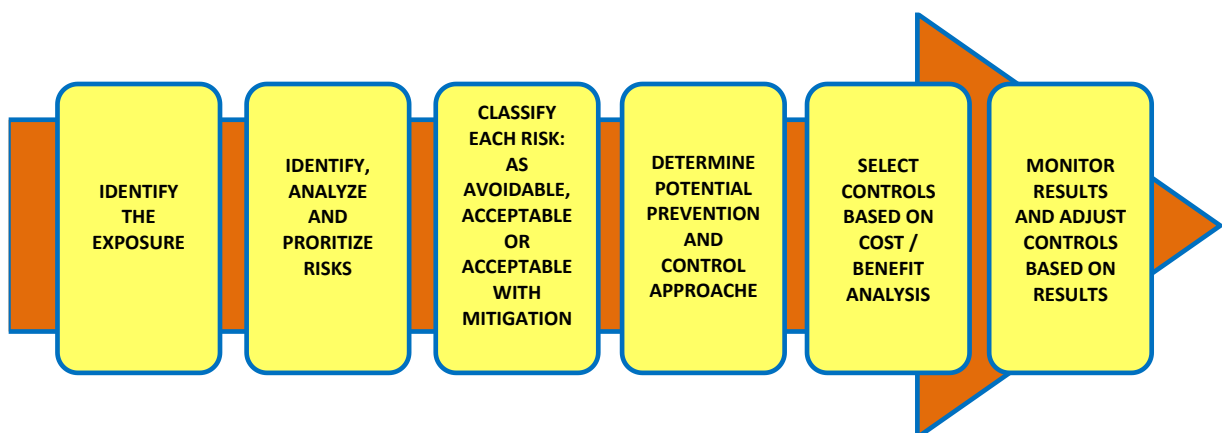

Fig (7) Risk management procedure (source: author)

In practice, a risk factor appears in all international activities. Few typical examples:

- the opening of new program of studies addressed to international students is biased with a risk of too low number of interested candidates,
- international summer school is biased with a risk of insufficient amount of money collected for organization of the school,
- intake (admission) of foreign students is biased with a risk that significant percentage of them is not prepared for studies in terms of their scientific background and/or language proficiency,
- signing research cooperation agreement with foreign partner is biased with a risk of lack of finance needed to develop the cooperation,
- realisation of international research project is biased with a risk of misunderstandings between partners and uncertainty of final result.

Example:

Activity:

University ABC in Spain is negotiating student exchange agreement with Polish University XYZ. 20 undergraduate students of the second grade from IT department expressed their interest for one-semester study at XYZ. IRO is processing agreement and organizing exchange planned 6 months from now. The plan is to send 8 students to Poland.

Risk Exposures:
- Organisational:
  - The budget allocated for exchange program at ABC is not allowing for individual scholarship higher than 900 € a month per student plus 500 € for return air-ticket. It may be not enough to cover accommodation and basic cost of living.

- Didactic (program of studies):
  - Applicants represent different levels of English proficiency and minimum requirement by Polish party is B2.
  - Program of studies at XYZ is not 100% compliant with that of ABC. Polish party suggested that students can select courses on individual basis.
  - The learning outcomes of exchange studies have to be recognized by ABC College.

5. Reflection and Evaluation

In most cases, the strategy of internationalisation is developed for the period of 5-7 years. In Europe, it usually coincides with programming periods for EU funds (e.g. 2014-2020). It is rather unlikely that all operational objectives as well as all planned activities will remain untouched for such a long time period.

It is nothing wrong in verification and modification of the strategy taking into consideration the dynamic changes on HE scene, changes in political situation, changes in HE Law or changes in the university itself.
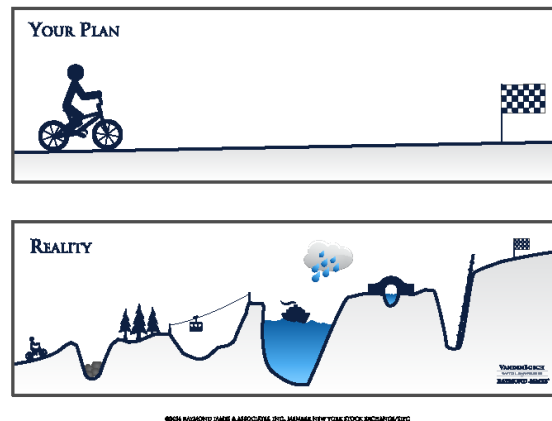
However, it is not recommended to implement the changes ad hoc i.e. without earlier analysis and wide consultation with university stakeholders. The revision cannot be used as a tool for hiding possible failures.

In order to avoid problems and make the process aligned with the strategy, there is a need for periodical evaluation, based on selected evaluation criteria. It is recommended to engage external evaluator to get information unbiased by local environment. There are some basic criteria to be used in evaluation process:

- **Relevance** (the extent to which the objectives and activities are consistent with the needs of institution and strategic goals).
- **Effectiveness** (the extent to which the process achieves its objectives and outcomes; are there any results achieved beyond the plan and expectations?).
- **Efficiency** (cost/benefit ratio; were the resources and inputs converted to outputs and results in a timely and cost-effective manner?).
- **Sustainability** (whether the benefits of internationalisation are likely to continue? to what extend are the results likely to continue?).
- **Impact** (positive and negative, intended or unintended, long-term socio-economic, technical or organizational changes, observed or likely to be observed in the institution and in its environment as a result of internationalisation process).

If internationalisation strategy spans over a number of years, it is advised that periodical and less complex evaluation is performed every 1-2 academic years while at the end of programming period (for instance coinciding with programming periods of EU) the evaluation process is more comprehensive and deeper. In all cases, the evaluation should end with recommendations addressed to the process owner and lessons learned should be taken into account for future developments to avoid misconceptions and unintended consequences.

Unfortunately, not all of HE institutions are trying to comply with the definition of internationalisation process. Still there are cases where numbers are more important than results, especially if rationale is dominated by commercial approach. It happens that core internationalisation values and long-term socio-economic benefits are completely forgotten.

Thus, there is no surprise that some experts and researchers are very critical about misconceptions and degenerations observed in internationalisation of HEIs [9], [10]. The author is not sharing a very dramatic and revolutionary opinion expressed recently in this regard by [8]. However, these alarming voices seem to illustrate rising critical opinions on internationalisation, especially from Asia, Africa and South America.

6. Mature Internationalisation

It is understandable and logical that HEI aims to achieve the **mature level of internationalisation.** The meaning of "internationalisation maturity" is close to "business process maturity" (Fig. (8)).
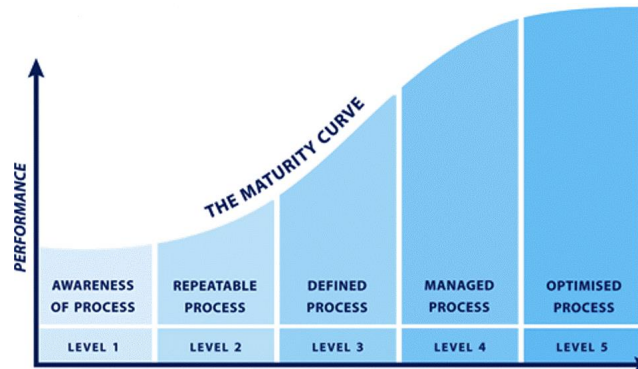

Fig. (8) – Business process maturity (source: ILX Consulting Australia)

In many universities the process starts at very initial level and continues through intermediate phases to reach finally some level of maturity.

Similarly to business process maturity, we can distinguish five levels of the internationalisation process maturity.

Int. Maturity Level	Description	Phase of internationalization
1	Process undefined, activities planned ad hoc, no relation to strategy, institutional support not in place.	Ad hoc approach, functional mess.
2	Process preliminarily defined, planning activities in relation to university mission, increased need for interdepartmental cooperation, building up institutional support, partial repeatability of applied procedures.	Birth of process approach
3	Internationalisation strategy in place, internationalisation process defined (inputs, activities, outputs, expected outcomes), full repeatability of applied procedures, increased awareness among university community, institutional support in place.	Enforcement of process approach
4	Strategic approach in place, internationalisation process management in place, results measured and analysed, intercultural orientation of university in place, institutional support functioning very well.	Implemented process management
5	Internationalisation quality assurance in place, socio-economic efficiency (cost/benefit ratio) analysed, lessons learned and recommendations implemented, internationalisation process permanently optimised.	Process optimisation, drive for perfection and maturity

Table (6) Levels of internationalisation maturity

Based on available surveys and statistics as well on author's observations, it seems that vast majority of HEIs worldwide are currently between 2nd and 4th level of internationalisation maturity. The author is a little bit sceptical about very optimistic statements expressed in available surveys (based on [13], 61% of HEIs in Europe and 56% of HEIs in Asia have their internationalisation strategies in place). The way from elaboration of strategic document to its real implementation is long and consuming a lot of dedicated resources. It needs also a very strong motivation and determination of the institution.

In practical terms, the **internationalisation maturity (Level 5)** may be understood as:

- Fully aligned with institutional internationalisation strategy.
- Strategy driven activities where:
    - Internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad are equally important and well balanced,
    - International research and internationalised teaching are in close interaction and create a valuable synergy.
- Well defined and described (inputs, related activities, outputs and expected strategic outcomes).
- Effectively managed:
    - Well organized institutional support,
    - Clearly defined leadership and responsibility,
    - Implemented Risk Management for all international initiatives,
    - Performance assessment and monitoring of process in place; evaluation in place,
    - Efficient and solid funding mechanisms for internationalisation assured in longer time perspective,
    - Quality Assurance implemented for all international initiatives.
- Awareness and acceptance of internationalisation among university management, academic staff and students.
- Intercultural orientation of university staff and students (intercultural maturity).
- Easy approach to student services by international students (scholarships, guidance, counselling, language support, accommodation, work opportunities, internships, students' research, students' culture, student's parliament, etc.).
- The codes of ethics, conduct and good practice observed by the institution in internationalisation process.
- Efficient use of ICT techniques for internationalisation purposes (digital maturity of the process).
- Continuous improvement / optimisation of the process.

The maturity not necessarily means a very wide and extensive range of international activities. The range of process has to be always correlated with institution's profile,

scale of international operations and institutional capability. The process can be seen as mature even in case of small university or college with limited but effectively managed activities, compliant with institution's strategy and goals.

The drive to internationalisation maturity has been recommended and implemented in partner universities and colleges taking part in two TEMPUS projects: "MIMI - Modernisation of Institutional Management of Internationalisation" [2] and "IRIS – Fostering International Relations in Israeli Colleges to Promote Education, Research and Innovation" [1] as well as in Erasmus+ Capacity Building in HE project "IN2IT – Internationalisation by Innovative Technology" [3].

All participating universities and colleges from Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Lebanon significantly benefited from the results of these projects. A very important outcome was a fundamental change in understanding of internationalisation process. The strategic approach has been visibly implemented in their international operations. All managed to improve their organisational support to the process (modernised or enforced International Offices, trained staff, better governance, quality assessment of the process, etc.). It is also worth emphasizing that thanks to above mentioned projects all established new international partnerships and networks, EU partners inclusive.

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