INTERNATIONALIZATION IN POLISH AND UKRAINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Summary: In agreement with P.G. Altbach and J. Knight the international activities of HEIs significantly expanded in volume, scope, and complexity during the past three decades. There are many forms of internationalization, that are presented in this paper. Particular attention is devoted to the issue of internationalization in Polish and Ukrainian higher education. The conducted by the authors research attempts to carry out a comparative analysis of internationalization processes in Polish and Ukrainian higher education as well as to propose recommendations in this regard.

Keywords: internationalization, higher education, Poland, Ukraine.

Introduction

The internationalization of higher education in its current form has been influenced by the globalization of economies and societies and the increased importance of knowledge. Internationalization is a response to changes in the environment of higher education. Higher education institutions (HEIs) adapt to the new situation. They expand the educational offer to include foreign language programs, adjust to international quality assurance standards and open for students and academic staff from abroad.

Promoting mobility of students, researchers, teachers and other staff in higher education has been from the very beginning a central objective of the Bologna Process. High quality mobility not only pursues educational goals such as enhancing the competences, knowledge and skills of those involved, but also
contributes to expanding academic cooperation. Dissemination of innovations and knowledge within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through mobility contributes to internationalising and improving higher education systems and institutions.

Poland as well as the Ukraine, strive to become modern, based on an open society and economy of knowledge countries. That is why there is a need to conduct research in the area of internationalization in Polish and Ukrainian higher education and analyze various aspects of internationalization. It is also important to answer the question about the most effective development path in this area for both countries.

In this paper, the issue of internationalization in Polish and Ukrainian higher education is presented. The research conducted by the authors, attempts to carry out a comparative analysis of the internationalization processes in Polish and Ukrainian higher education, as well as to propose recommendations in this regard.

1. Definition of internalization in higher education

Internationalization in the context of higher education is understood in many ways. It has become a broad term that covers many dimensions, components and activities.

According to P.G. Altbach and J. Knight internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems, institutions and individuals to cope with the global academic environment. The authors note that the motivations for internationalization in higher education include commercial advantage, knowledge and language acquisition, enhancing the curriculum with international content, and many others. In their opinion „specific initiatives such as branch campuses, cross-border collaborative arrangements, programs for international students, establishing English-medium programs and degrees, and others have been put into place as part of internationalization” [Altbach, Knight, 2007, p. 290].

The most commonly accepted definition of internationalization in higher education is the one proposed by J. Knight, whereby it is „the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels” [Knight, 2008, p. 21]. The activities in the scheme of internationalization should be undertaken to „enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society” [Egron-Polak et al., 2015, p. 29]. Among these activities international mobility remains the most visible.
J. Knight notes that there are two key components in internationalization. One is internationalization “abroad”, understood as all forms of education across borders: mobility of people, projects, programmes and providers. The second one is internationalization “at home”, which is more curriculum-orientated and focuses on activities that develop international or global understanding and intercultural skills [Knight, 2008, p. 22-24].

Also H. de Wit points out that there are different accents and approaches in the issue of internationalization. In his opinion “internationalization strategies are filtered and contextualized by the specific internal context of the university, by the type of university, and how they are embedded nationally” [de Wit, 2010, p. 5].

European higher education institutions have always had a wide range of international academic cooperation with partner institutions around the world. It is clear that the internationalization as a strategic process in European higher education, began with the Erasmus programme. This programme created the basics of common understandings and drive for internationalization in most European countries. Later it was empowered by the Bologna Process. In sequence, it can be observed that the development of a European Higher Education Area has led in recent years to intensive and more structured collaboration among European HEIs.

2. Internationalization in Polish higher education

The HEIs in Poland are divided into state (public) and private (non-public) institutions. After many years of considerable growth in the number of HEIs, in the recent academic years it might be observed its decline, which mostly affects non-public schools. In the academic year 2013/2014, there were 438 HEIs. 69.9% of them were non-public. However, public schools recorded a higher number of students (74.3% of all students) [Higher Education…, p. 58].

In 2013/2014 year there were 1 549,9 thousand students in all Polish HEIs. It was the consecutive year when a decline in the number of students was recorded (7.6%), which was influenced by disadvantageous demographic changes. Against this background, the number of foreign students in Polish HEIs has increased, what is shown on Fig. 1.
In the 2013/2014 academic year, the number of foreign students amounted to 35,983\(^1\), i.e. 2.3% of all students [Higher Education…, p. 58]. The most numerous were students from Europe – 29,200 persons. The majority of them came from Ukraine and Belarus. Foreign students by country in Poland are presented in Fig. 2.

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\(^{1}\) In the academic year 2014/2015 Polish HEIs educate approximately 46 thousand foreigners. Citizens of 158 countries study in Poland. Most of them are Ukrainians (23 thousand) and Belarussians (4 thousand), but there are also many Norwegians and Swedes (1,5 thousand) [www 5].
In the academic year 2013/2014 the largest group were students from Ukraine (42% of all foreign students). In the group “Other countries” there were students mainly from European countries: Turkey (882 persons), Russian Federation (810), Germany (743) and Czech Republic (626), but also from Saudi Arabia (688) and United States of America (814) [Higher Education..., p. 138-140].

In Poland, internationalization is understood mainly as “short-term student mobility from the European Union into Poland and international recruitment for full-cycle studies from non-EU countries. Internationalization is sometimes seen as international partnerships or joint projects” [Egron-Polak et al., 2015, p. 147]. It is rarely perceived as “the application of an international perspective to taught subjects and research or intercultural communication on campus through processes of internationalization at home” [Egron-Polak et al., 2015, p. 147].

In the Polish higher education system, not all forms of internationalization are present, neither on the national nor institutional levels. B. Siwińska notes that the activities undertaken in the scheme of internationalization are not on an advanced level [Siwińska, 2014, p. 150]. In her work she proposed simple and transparent classification of the forms of internationalization, presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of internationalization in higher education in Poland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of internationalization</th>
<th>Level*</th>
<th>Examples of activities in Polish higher education system</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support for outgoing mobility</td>
<td>I, N</td>
<td>1. Funding I, N Polish government scholarships, the Erasmus program, own HEIs’ scholarships</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. Creating conditions for mobility (implementation of the provisions of Bologna Process) N The three-cycle system and the development of an overarching qualifications framework, the European Credit Transfer System with the issuing of the Diploma Supplement and quality assurance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Promotion of mobility I, N Promotional campaigns to promote mobility of Polish students (Be mobile!), regional promotion consortia (Teper Wroclaw – aimed at recruiting Ukrainian students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for incoming mobility</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>1. Creation of the offer of study for foreign students I Greater diversity in foreign languages programmes, double degree, joint degree programmes (Double degree in Management run by the Institute of Economics, Finance and Management at the Jagiellonian University and the ESB Business School Reutlingen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(attracting foreign students)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Recruitment of foreign students I Building a positive corporate image of HEI, own HEIs’ scholarships (The Queen Jadwiga Fund)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Support for foreign students I Financial, didactic support, (INTERSTUDENT programme)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility of the programs and institutions</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>1. Validated programs of study and establishment of branch campuses (in Vilnius – branch of the University in Bialystok)</td>
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Table 1 cont.

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<tr>
<td>Development of the culture of internationalization at the HEI (Internationalization at home)</td>
<td>Building strategy of internationalization at HEI</td>
<td>I</td>
<td><strong>51-75% of Polish HEIs have adopted a form of internationalization strategy</strong> focusing on European dimension of international activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative changes at the HEI</td>
<td>Providing organizational structure with units responsible for international issues</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalization of the educational offer</td>
<td>Enrichment of curriculum with foreign languages and subject matter through international studies programs</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing infrastructure</td>
<td>Providing dormitory for foreign students</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting good practices in the area of internationalization</td>
<td>Organization of conferences (Study in Poland)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Building internationalization strategy at the state level</td>
<td>Implementation of the provisions of Bologna Process, creation national informational systems (<a href="http://www.studyinpoland.pl">www.studyinpoland.pl</a>), implementing Higher Education Internationalization Program</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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** [National Report…].
*** [Siwińska, 2014, p. 151].
Source: On the basis of [Siwińska, 2014, pp. 150-156].

It is worth mentioning that there are still some forms of internationalization, that occurred rarely in the Polish higher education. These are: the presence of visiting professors from abroad, implementation of the internationalization issues into the strategic documents on the national level and the establishment of branch campuses abroad. With regard to the internationalization, the lack of strategic thinking is characteristic in the current policies in the field of higher education [Siwińska, 2014, p. 156]. Internationalization in Polish higher education has been a bottom-up process, that has managed for a number of years without a national strategy for internationalization.

3. Internationalization in Ukrainian higher education

Today the process of internationalization penetrates different spheres of human activity affecting all parts of a country's economic and social system, and the system of higher education is no exception. However, the system of higher education in Ukraine has remained rather static. It was formed in the times of the Soviet Union, but has not experienced any significant changes since Ukraine’s independence since 1991. As a result, in the dawn of the 21st century, Ukraine’s system of higher education lags far behind the modern educational systems not only in regards to its facilities and resources, but in regards to instructional
methods, there is a complete gap between the theoretical and practical training of students. Consequently, Ukraine's system of higher education struggles to stay competitive in the modern world.

In 2003 Ukraine announced that it would reform its system of higher education according to international standards, and submitted an application for joining the Bologna Process. In 2005 Ukraine signed the Bologna Declaration and began implementing its formal obligations to begin reforming the system of higher education. However, according to J. Rashkevich, the reforms have been bureaucratized and imitated during the whole period, and only just recently has a veritable reformation of the system of higher education begun. In his paper, J. Rashkevich deeply analyses the reasons why the system of higher education in Ukraine has not yet been transformed and also describes difficulties which have prevented Ukraine from becoming a part of the global educational system. The analysis of academic mobility among students and faculty as a part of the Bologna process is of particular interest, because these processes are considered as the main characteristic of the process of internationalization in the sphere of higher education. Thus, the low level of student and staff mobility is explained by the following reasons [Рашкевич, 2015, p. 9-10]:

- stringent residency regulations which inhibit students from studying abroad, even in situations where grants and scholarships covered expenses;
- the requirements for master’s and bachelor’s degree are at variance with the European standards. The Ukrainian students have to ask for a gap year at the Ukrainian university to complete their education abroad;
- issues concerning the recognition of Ukrainian degrees.

Some of the above-mentioned reasons have been eliminated by the new Law on Higher Education adopted in 2014. But there are also objective and subjective reasons preventing high level of academic mobility in Ukraine. The objective reasons are also proliferated by the lack of financial resources to help cover students' expenses to travel to international conferences and scientific discussions held abroad. This is especially concerning for researchers working in the field of human sciences. The subjective reasons include a poor command of foreign languages among the teaching staff of the universities and the lack of willingness on the part of administration to allow lecturers to spend a year or more abroad. Due to the latter, many scientists have to look for a new job upon their return to Ukraine.

However the notion “internationalization” does not include academic mobility only. Its content is more complicated in terms of phenomena and processes occurring in the sphere of higher education. The most precise definition of this
The notion in the sphere of higher education is given by A. Semchenko. The author considers internationalization as the process of consequent and system-based implementation of the international part into teaching, scientific research and practical activity of the university. However internationalization of the university is not a goal in itself, it represents some means of providing and improving the quality of teaching [Semchenko, 2012]. According to the authors’ opinion the proposed approach enables one to judge about the level of the universities’ internationalization.

Thus the level of internationalization will be estimated not by the number of international students studying at the university or the staff working abroad, but to what extent the international activity of the university facilitates improvement of its teaching process and increases the employment rate among graduates.

The number of foreign students coming to Ukraine annually is presented in Fig. 3. One can see that the numbers of foreign students are constantly increasing, with the exception is the year 2014/2015 because of the war in the eastern part of Ukraine.

![Graph showing the dynamics of the number of foreign students in Ukraine](image)

**Fig. 3.** The dynamics of the number of foreign students in Ukraine

*Source: On the basis of [www 1].*

The largest group of foreign students make the students from Turkmenia. In the year 2014/2015 their number has fallen slightly (from 14 053 to 13 485 persons) [www 1], mainly because the people have fears to go to study to the country with war on its territory. The experts notice that the number of students from Africa has also been growing.
4. Comparative analysis of internationalization in Polish and Ukrainian higher education

In the scientific circles it is widely discussed that Ukraine and Poland face almost the same problems in the sphere of higher education. Both countries suffer from decreased population growth – the number of children and consequently school-leavers has been dropping from year to year. Such tendency leads to a set of negative consequence for the entire social and economic system, but the system of higher education is the first to take the fall.

In Poland, as well as in Ukraine, the number of foreign students is growing. It is worth mentioning that the students from Ukraine who have proven evidences of their Polish origin are more willing to study in Poland than in Ukraine (Fig. 4).

![Bar chart](image)

**Fig. 4.** The dynamics of foreign students, including of Polish origin, coming to Poland
Source: On the basis of [www 2; www 3].

At the moment, the process of internationalization of higher education in Ukraine is in its earliest stage of development, with one formal sign of its commencement being the arrival of foreign students in the country and increasing the number of Ukrainian who are willing to study abroad. Such form of internationalization in the sphere of higher education is driven by the economic and social situation in the country rather than the need to be a part of the global educational environment.
So far, the most developed form of the internationalization process in the sphere of higher education in Ukraine is a willingness to attract foreign students. All the HEIs are interested to attract as many foreign students as it possible, because their existence directly depends on their numbers. Each HEI has its own policy referring to recruitment process of foreign students based on its price policy and accommodation facilities. Under such circumstances there is no questions of any financial support for foreign students. As for language support of foreign students, some disciplines are taught in English, and the number of these disciplines is increasing because of high demand on the part of African students.

It is worth mentioning that today many HEIs have special master’s programs for Ukrainian and foreign students. For example, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics (KhNU) provides French-Ukrainian Master’s Degree Program in the field of “Business Informatics”. Such programs become more popular among Ukrainian students who aspire to work and live abroad after graduating the university. Offering joint programs allows universities to improve their reputation and increasing enrolment.

As for Poland, it is a part of the EU, therefore, the processes occurring in the EU in one way or other influence the speed of the internationalization process. In 1998 Poland joined the Erasmus program, which gave a great impulse to change for the whole system of higher education. This event occurred prior to the accession to the EU and many specialists think that the new generation of students and academic teachers has smoothed the progress of Poland’s integration with other countries of the European Union [www 4]. Students come to Poland from different countries in the EU to receive both a high quality and comparatively inexpensive education. The reforms in the sphere of higher education conducted with support from the Polish society have showed good results and entailed increasing the number of people who choose Poland as an attractive destination to study.

Conclusions and recommendations

In the early 1990s Ukraine and Poland started transformation of their social and economic systems, including higher education. The task was very urgent, because the system of higher education creates the basis for formation and development of human capital. The analysis of today’s situation shows that Poland has succeeded in solving the assigned tasks – the Polish system of higher education is included into the European educational environment, it uses positive ex-
Experience of the European countries in the field of preparation of future specialists. Using the advantages of being an integral part of the EU, Poland improves the quality of higher education and in this way it creates prerequisites for its further economic and social development.

Today Poland has become an attractive country to study not only for Ukraine and Belorussia, the rate of foreign students from other parts of the EU is growing from year to year. This fact allows to assume that Polish higher education becomes more competitive, and in future it can be considered as one of the national assets to attract investments in the country. To achieve such an ambitious goal, the appropriate national policy in the sphere of higher education must be worked out and adopted.

As for Ukraine, the country faces a set of serious problems because of lack of real reforms in the system of higher education. In 2014 a new Law on Higher Education was adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament, and this is the first step to start a real transformation of the out of date educational system, though this process will not be easy for all the participants due to the time waste for almost 25 years. Ukraine has to close the gap between its system of higher education and the European ones. The solution of this problem also lays in the field of the national policy, which must be aimed at intensification of international cooperation between universities, scientific centers and other parties of the educational process.

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**INTERNACJONALIZACJA W POLSKIM I UKRAIŃSKIM SZKOLNICTWIE WYŻSZYM – ANALIZA PORÓWNAWCZA**

**Streszczenie:** Zdaniem P.G. Altbacha i J. Knight zakres działań podejmowanych przez instytucje szkolnictwa wyższego w obszarze internacjonalizacji w ciągu ostatnich trzech dekad został znacznie rozszerzony i stały się one bardziej złożone. W niniejszym opracowaniu przedstawiono różne formy internacjonalizacji. Szczegółną uwagę poświęcono internacjonalizacji w polskim i ukraińskim szkolnictwie wyższym. W ramach przeprowadzonych przez autorki badań podjęto próbę analizy porównawczej procesów internacjonalizacji polskiego i ukraińskiego szkolnictwa wyższego. Ponadto zaproponowano rekomendacje w tym zakresie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** internacjonalizacja, szkolnictwo wyższe, Polska, Ukraina.