



Marta Tutko

Jagiellonian University
Faculty of Management and Social Communication
Institute of Economy, Finance and Management
Department of Quality Management
marta.tutko@uj.edu.pl

ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Summary: The goals of the paper apply to higher education institutions and are: (1) elaboration of the definition of the quality of internationalisation and identification of (2) instruments used in the assessment process and (3) the benefits of assessing the quality of internationalisation. In order to achieve this goal, the analysis of existing data (desk research) method was used. The paper concludes with the observation that there are no universal standards for assessment of the quality of internationalisation. However, some interesting instruments, which have been developed over the last years, have been presented in the article.

Keywords: quality of internationalisation, higher education, assessment.

JEL Classification: F53.

Introduction

Over the past three decades the international dimension of higher education in Europe, as well as in Poland, has become more important for higher education institutions (HEIs), governments and accreditation agencies. Internationalisation results from the nature of the changing world, and it is an attempt of HEIs to adapt to new conditions. Often, quality of internationalisation is perceived as an indicator for the quality of higher education.

The goals of the paper are: (1) elaboration of the definition of the quality of internationalisation in higher education, (2) identification of instruments used in the assessment of the quality of internationalisation in higher education, and

(3) identification of the benefits of assessing the quality of internationalisation in higher education. In order to achieve this goal, the analysis of existing data (desk research) method was used. The scientific publications, reports, studies and websites devoted to the instruments used in assessing the quality of internationalisation were analysed (including in particular their compilation, verification and processing).

1. The definition of the quality of internationalisation

Quality is one of those concepts that are difficult to define because of their ambiguity. Even if some authors argue that quality is indefinable, it must be defined in order to assess it. PN-EN ISO 9000:2015 defines quality as the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics (distinguishing features) of an object fulfils requirements, where an object is anything perceivable or conceivable [PN-EN ISO 9000:2015, p. 22]. The quality of an object can be determined by comparing a set of inherent characteristics against a set of requirements. If those characteristics meet all requirements, high quality is achieved but if they do not meet all requirements, a low quality is achieved.

Defining quality in the context of higher education continues to pose significant challenges. A review of literature, conducted by L. Schindler et al. [2015], confirms that there is still no agreement on a definition of a quality in higher education. The above mentioned review of literature allowed to identify four conceptualisations of a quality: quality as purposeful (conformance to a stated mission/vision or a set of standards), transformative (positive change in student learning), exceptional (fulfilment of high standards) and accountable (accountability to stakeholders for the optimal use of resources). Defining quality certainly requires consideration of the stakeholders perspectives.

Internationalisation in the context of higher education is also difficult to define because it is understood in a variety of ways. Same as quality, internationalisation might be interpreted differently depending on various stakeholders.

The most commonly accepted definition of internationalisation 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” [2008, p. 21]. J. Knight notes that there are two key components in internationalisation. One is internationalisation ‘abroad’, understood as all forms of education across borders: mobility of people, projects, programmes and providers. The

second one is internationalisation ‘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]. Internationalisation as defined by J. Knight is a process and it reflects a set of activities that HEI formulate in order to respond to globalisation. Some of them implement such internationalisation activities more than others, what leads to more or less internationalised institutions.

Also H. de Wit points out that there are different accents and approaches in the issue of internationalisation. 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” [2010, p. 5]. In 2015 he proposed a new definition of internationalisation, which combines the two definitions above: “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” [de Wit, 2015]. The definitions presented above suggest that there are many dimensions of internationalisation and that it is a dynamic process of institutional change.

The issue of quality of internationalisation is not new. In 1993 the European Association for International Education dedicated its conference to the topic of “Quality in International Education” and published document, in which issues of quality of internationalisation were raised. The debate about the quality of internationalisation was continued in the book, *Quality and Internationalisation in Higher Education* [OECD, 1999], where it was noted that “it is challenging to find a definition of internationalisation which is appropriate and sensitive to the higher education systems in a wide variety of countries and cultures” [OECD, 1999, p. 17]. Unfortunately the definition of the quality of internationalisation was not given in the mentioned book.

Referring to the definition of quality proposed in PN-EN ISO 9000:2015, and the definitions of internationalisation presented above, it was assumed, for the purposes of this article, that the quality of internationalisation is the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an internationalisation fulfils requirements. These requirements can be generated by different interested parties (stakeholders).

The growing importance of internationalisation in higher education and the diversity approaches and strategies of institutions and programmes call for an assessment of the quality of internationalisation at the programme and the institutional level.

2. Assessment of the quality of internationalisation

The term assessment has a multiple meanings and can be very broad. Some authors use assessment interchangeably with evaluation or measurement. For the purposes of this paper, this approach is also adopted. According to M. Wójcicka [2001, s. 89], assessment of quality in higher education is a specific aspect of evaluation. It means gathering information about the study programmes and the conditions of their implementation, what enables to express the opinion about their quality. A.I. Vroeijerstijn also does not see the difference between the terms assessment, evaluation and review of the quality. He defines assessment as any activity that leads to an estimation of the quality of the learning/learning and/or research process, both through self-assessment and through external assessment [Vroeijerstijn, 1995, p. xviii]. Reasuming, assessment is understood as a process whereby HEI assess the quality of their international dimension according to their own aims and objectives.

Internationalisation is a complex phenomenon and is influenced by the context in which it takes places. It can take many different forms, entails much more than singular activities and it varies in different higher education settings. This means the context needs to be taken into account when assessing the quality of internationalisation.

J.K. Hudzik and M. Stohl [2009, p. 9] point out that the assessment of international activity focuses on three core questions: What are the institutional objectives related to international activity? How do we measure and know whether objectives have been achieved? What do the achievements contribute or what value do they add to overall missions and objectives of the institution? In their opinion three elements allow to measure unique assessment dimensions:

- Inputs: resources available to support internationalisation efforts;
- Outputs: the amount of activity undertaken in support of internationalisation efforts;
- Outcomes: impacts or end results [Hudzik and Stohl, 2009, p. 14].

The outcome measures are the most important ones, but input and output measures are also valid, as they help track progress toward achieving goals. The assessment of outcomes should incorporate a set of measures that allow for cross-institutional comparisons and measures specific to the institution because HEIs are diverse, as are the outcomes they demand.

3. Instruments for assessment of the quality of internationalisation

Over the past decades, many instruments have been designed for assessment of the quality of internationalisation in HEIs. Also a significant number of indicators have been developed to help these institutions assess the extent to which they are successful in reaching their internationalisation goals and objectives. The quantitative indicators are most frequently considered (e.g. number of incoming international students, number of students sent abroad, number of incoming international staff, number of staff sent abroad, etc.). It is important that in the process of developing indicators the input of stakeholders should be required to determine which are most appropriate.

Assessment of the quality of internationalisation among others allows defining what kind of progress a HEI is making toward the achievement of internationalisation goals and objectives. The process of assessment contains data collection and verification methods. As part of data collection it might include institutional data collection systems, use of data from external databases or surveys. In the scheme of verification methods peer reviews might be implemented.

De Wit [2009, p. 3] points out that as “there is not one model for internationalisation, so in measuring internationalisation this diversity of rationales, approaches, objectives and strategies by region, country and institution must be taken into account”.

The sample instruments for assessment of the quality of internationalisation in the HEIs are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Instruments for assessment of the quality of internationalisation

Name of the instrument	Name of the organisation(s) that created the instrument	Purpose of the instrument	Level of assessment
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Internationalization Quality Review Process (IQRP)	Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in collaboration with the Academic Co-operation Association	The purpose of IQRP is to assist institutions to improve their internationalisation work	Institution
Mapping Internationalisation (MINT)	The Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education	MINT is a tool for self-evaluation and benchmarking. It can be used to develop and manage internationalisation policy at HEI, faculty or programme	Programme, institution

Table 1 cont.

1	2	3	4
CeQuInt project	European Consortium for Accreditation	CeQuInt offers methodology to assess the quality of internationalisation in higher education	Programme, institution
The project Dutch-Flemish pilot certifying internationalisation	Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders	The purpose is to measure the quality of internationalisation	Programme, institution
Quality Improvement Program QUIP	The Forum on Education Abroad	QUIP is designed to help an organisation improve the quality of its education abroad programming	Programme
Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses (MI)	American Council on Education	MI assesses the current state of internationalisation at American colleges and universities, analyses progress and trends over time, and identifies future priorities	Institution
HEIDA project	Koç University (Turkey)	A tool for measuring and monitoring internationalisation activities	Institution

Source: Based on: OECD [1999, p. 47], [www 1], [www 2], [www 3], [www 4], [www 5].

The above table lists several instruments that can be used for assessment of the quality of internationalisation on programme or institutional level. This list is not complete and contains selected instruments that have been identified in the research. It seems, however, that the presented instruments show diversity of rationales, approaches and strategies. A few of them will be described below.

Internationalization Quality Review Process (IQRP) assessments involve internationalisation policies, support structures, academic programs, grants and contracts, students, research and scholarly collaboration, and human resource development programs and opportunities. The IQRP is a process whereby individual HEIs assess and enhance the quality of their international dimension according to their own goals and objectives [OECD, 1999, p. 241]. It can be used in small and large institutions wishing to assess an existing strategy for internationalisation but also institutions wishing to initiate such a strategy. The IQRP includes procedures, guidelines and tools to provide institutions with assistance in developing their internationalisation strategies.

The IQRP process is based on two main components: self-assessment and external review by an international review team. The goal of the self-assessment, is to provide a critical opinion on issues related to the quality of the internationalisation. At this stage institution should conduct an analysis of the quality of internationalisation initiatives. The self-assessment report should be more than

a description of the internationalisation issues. It should critically assess and present ways to improve the quality of internationalisation. The aim of the external peer-review is to mirror the self-assessment process, to provide feedback and a complementary analysis from an external and international perspective.

Mapping Internationalisation (MINT) aims to support higher education institutions and provide them with a complete overview of their internationalisation policy, activities and support. The tool was developed to support institutions as a service from the national body for internationalisation of higher education in the Netherlands. It combines a self-evaluation tool with a benchmarking tool.

MINT consists of a digital self-evaluation form that generates an outline of various activities and goals related to internationalisation. The tool enables higher education institutions to get an overview of internationalisation activities, develop a clear internationalisation profile and policy, define improvement plans and prepare for a visitation [www 1].

The aim of the **CeQuInt project**, realised by the European Consortium for Accreditation, was the development of an assessment methodology that could be used to assess the internationalisation of a programme or a HEI in Europe and which could lead to the award of a European certificate for internationalisation. In the scheme of the project several objectives were defined: to develop a European methodology, to pilot-test it, to analyse the results and effects on HEIs and their stakeholders and to implement a European certificate for internationalisation [www 2]. The mentioned certificate is a “distinctive quality feature and shall be awarded to those study programmes and/or institutions which have successfully incorporated an international and intercultural dimension into the purpose, function and delivery of education” [www 6]. It is a proof of successful internationalisation efforts and it can be used for branding and attracting students from abroad.

Assessments for the certificate may be combined with regular programme or institutional accreditation, as they are a voluntary, supplementary and improvement oriented additional service. In Poland, since 2015, the Polish Accreditation Committee is authorised to coordinate procedures of awarding Certificate for Quality in Internationalization. Such procedure consists of four stages and may be applied to programmes or basic organisational units of HEIs. These stages are: self-evaluation report, site visit, assessment report and decision-making.

4. The benefits of assessment of the quality of internationalisation

An assessment of the quality of internationalisation gives HEIs and offered study programmes an insight into their performance in the area of internationalisation. But what is more important it provides them with numerous recommendations for improvements. The more emphasis given to the assessment of the quality of internationalisation, the more activities undertaken in the area of quality improvement.

There are many benefits to the HEIs in developing assessment instruments and conducting an assessment of the quality of internationalisation. Developing such tools increases the institution's opportunities and encourages behaviours that promote engagement in the issues related to the internationalisation.

The assessment procedures (a specially self-assessment) allow to gather the wide range of information on internationalisation, which often is spread in many places in the institutions. Many valuable ideas are born during brainstorming and discussions, what is another advantage. However, the benefit from the external assessment is the possibility to receive feedback and development tips from the peer review team.

Assessment helps to identify areas of strength, and weak areas demanding improvement. It also helps to estimate the extent to which HEIs achieve the internationalisation goals defined in their strategic plans and the contribution of internationalisation activities to overall institutional goals and mission. Thru reviewing the current state of internationalisation, it can be also used in the processes of planning.

Besides, an assessment allows to evaluate the quantity and quality of internationalisation, as well as it helps to benchmark with other HEIs. It also strengthens the debate on internationalisation within the institution and complements internal assumptions with an external outlook of critical colleagues.

Conclusions

An assessment of the quality of internationalisation plays a significant role in determining the success of internationalisation efforts and in increasing the quality of higher education in general. It is not developing in the same ways in HEIs throughout Europe and the world as a whole. There are many different emphases and approaches and therefore it is difficult to assess the quality of the internationalisation.

There are no universal standards for assessment of the quality of internationalisation. However, some interesting instruments, which have been developed over the last years, have been presented in the article.

Nowadays, when public institutions are being held ever more accountable by various stakeholders, assessment of the quality of internationalisation has become an increasingly important topic. Also in Poland, higher education institutions are trying to assess the quality of internationalisation and are applying for certificates confirming the high quality of internationalisation.

It is worth to mention that the Polish Accreditation Committee, which conducts obligatory programme evaluations of quality of education in all HEIs in Poland, included issues relating internationalisation in the self-assessment template. Special attention is paid to the role of internationalisation of the learning process, aspects of the curriculum that support internationalisation (with particular emphasis on education in foreign languages), level of preparation of students to learn foreign languages and international mobility of students and staff.

References

- De Wit H. (2009), *Measuring Success in the Internationalisation of Higher Education: An Introduction* [in:] H. De Wit (ed.), *Measuring Success in the Internationalisation of Higher Education*, EAIE Occasional Paper 22, European Association for International Education, Amsterdam.
- De Wit H. (2010), *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe and Its Assessment, Trends and Issues*, Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders, Den Haag.
- De Wit H. (2015), *Quality Assurance and Internationalization*, Trends, Challenges and Opportunities INQAAHE Conference, Chicago, IL.
- Hudzik J.K., Stohl M. (2009), *Modelling Assessment of the Outcomes and Impacts of Internationalisation* [in:] H. De Wit (ed.), *Measuring Success in the Internationalisation of Higher Education*, EAIE Occasional Paper 22, European Association for International Education, Amsterdam.
- Knight J. (2008), *Higher Education in Turmoil. The Changing World of Internationalization*, Sense Publisher, Rotterdam.
- OECD (1999), *Quality and Internationalisation in Higher Education*, Paris.
- PN-EN ISO 9000:2015. Systemy zarządzania jakością. Podstawy i terminologia (2016), Polski Komitet Normalizacyjny, Warszawa.
- Schindler L., Puls-Elvidge S., Welzant H., Crawford L. (2015), *Definitions of Quality in Higher Education: A Synthesis of the Literature*, "Higher Learning Research Communications", Vol. 5(3), pp. 3-13.

- Vroeijenstijn A.I. (1995), *Improvement and Accountability: Navigating between Scylla and Charybdis, Guide for External Quality Assessment in Higher Education*, Higher Education Policy Series 30, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London-Bristol, PA.
- Wójcicka M. (2001), *Jakość kształcenia w szkolnictwie wyższym. Słownik tematyczny*, Wydawnictwa Przemysłowe WEMA, Warszawa.
- [www 1] <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/internationalisation/quality-assurance/mapping-internationalisation-mint/mapping-internationalisation-mint/mapping-internationalisation-mint> (accessed: 15.09.2017).
- [www 2] <http://ecahe.eu/home/about/projects/cequint/> (accessed: 15.09.2017).
- [www 3] <https://forumea.org/get-involved/quality-assurance-programs/quip/> (accessed: 15.09.2017).
- [www 4] <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Mapping-Internationalization-on-U-S-Campuses.aspx> (accessed: 15.09.2017).
- [www 5] <https://heida.ku.edu.tr/> (accessed: 15.09.2017).
- [www 6] <http://ecahe.eu/home/about/projects/cequint/aims-and-objectives/> (accessed: 15.09.2017).

OCENA JAKOŚCI INTERNACJONALIZACJI W SZKOŁACH WYŻSZYCH

Streszczenie: W artykule określono następujące cele odnoszące się do szkół wyższych: (1) opracowanie definicji jakości internacjonalizacji, (2) identyfikacja instrumentów wykorzystywanych w procesie oceny oraz (3) ukazanie korzyści z oceny jakości umiędzynarodowienia. Wykorzystano w nim analizę danych zastanych (*desk research*). Artykuł kończy się stwierdzeniem, że nie ma uniwersalnych standardów oceny jakości internacjonalizacji. Przedstawiono w nim jednak kilka interesujących, opracowanych w ostatnich latach instrumentów oceny jakości umiędzynarodowienia.

Słowa kluczowe: jakość internacjonalizacji, szkolnictwo wyższe, ocena.