Journal of Business and Economics, ISSN 2155-7950, USA October 2017, Volume 8, No. 10, pp. 857-866 DOI: 10.15341/jbe(2155-7950)/10.08.2017/006 © Academic Star Publishing Company, 2017

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# The Impact of Globalization and Internationalization on the Quality of Bulgarian Higher Education

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**Abstract:** With the progress of globalization and internationalization processes of economy and business, a new goal emerges in front of the higher education-training professionals capable of effectively working in the changing market conditions. Contemporary age of global knowledge and technology requires graduates to have skills for interacting in a global environment. Thus, globalization turns into a catalyst for growing competition in education. Internationalization of education with its diverse forms is a factor that helps students to get high quality education, and academic institutions to respond successfully to the challenges of globalization. The following paper addresses the concepts of globalization and internationalization in the context of their impact on quality of Bulgarian higher education, by the example of Technical University, Varna, Bulgaria.

Key words: education; Europeanization; globalization; internationalization; quality

JEL codes: A2, F6

# 1. Introduction

The term "globalization" is found in all studies devoted to contemporary issues of education, and mainly to higher education. When considering the issues of education in the context of globalization, much attention is paid to the impact of globalization on the development of higher education. According to Prof. Peter Scott, an English researcher, all universities are involved in the globalization process: partially as objects of this process and partly as subjects.

In studying the impact of globalization on the development of education, two points of view of leading experts take precedence. On one hand, the emphasis is put on how the conditions for the development of higher education, modified under the influence of globalization, influence the foundations of functioning and organization of the higher education system. On the other hand, the attention is drawn primarily to the interconnection between globalization and internationalization of education or, more specifically, to how globalization contributes to the increase of international academic cooperation: attracting foreign universities, increasing the "global" components in studying curriculums, establishing branches of the universities abroad, spreading programs for distance learning via the Internet, creating international virtual universities. It is believed

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that thus, with the help of the latest information technologies, the process of globalization of education is being developed. According to Prof. P. Scott, since the beginning of their existence, universities are international institutes, but they have never been global institutes. Globalization is a new phenomenon, unlike internationalization, which is inseparable from the new forms of social life and the new paradigms of knowledge production. Globalization affects universities, as it makes the task of spreading national cultures really important and contributes to the standardization of learning through modern information technologies and to the emergence of global research networks.

Internationalization is linked to such an order of world organization in which the dominant role belongs to the Nation State. Globalization is a phenomenon of a completely different order, which is not limited to the processes of global competition among all separate regional structures in the world. Globalization implies intensive cooperation within the global division of labour for mass production and the provision of services through high technologies and innovation. Globalization cannot and should not be seen as a higher form of internationalization because:

- Internationalization presupposes the existence of national states, and globalization denies them and it is even hostile to them;
- If internationalization is "realized" through diplomacy and culture, then the foundations of globalization are rooted in mass consumption;
- Internationalization, due to its dependence on the existing type of nation states, adheres to reproduction and even to the legitimatization of the system of hierarchical relations and hegemony, while globalization is oriented towards the new daily order climate change, environmental pollution, creation of technologies for sustainable development, issues related to growth and demographic processes, and so on.

Globalization is the most fundamental challenge faced by universities throughout their whole history.

The term "internationalization" is increasingly used in European countries due to the growing interest in introducing an international dimension in higher education. On one hand, it may be assumed that internationalization turns into a much more important and desirable feature for universities. On the other hand, the term is understood differently by the different educational environments and as a result interpretations of this idea are observed. One of the major challenges facing the international academic community is the very orientation among the contradictory notions of internationalization of higher education and its relation to the also controversial attitude towards globalization. Nowadays, with the increasing globalization of economy, technology, communications, etc., a potential threat to the survival of national identity and culture exists. The possibility of homogenization of cultures is a risk, often emphasized by the small states or developing countries, even to the extent of total rejection of globalization as a path to denationalization. Opposing views link globalization with modernization and panacea for finding solutions for environmental protection, health care or other supranational issues. Often the two terms "internationalization" and "globalization" are considered to be synonymous, leading to contradictions and confusion in the formation of specific policies. The following paper gives a comparison between the two terms, according to the definition given by Knight and De Witt (1995):

"Globalization is a movement of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas ... across borders. Globalization affects each country in a different way, according to the country's national history, traditions, culture and priorities."

"Internationalization of higher education is one of the ways in which the State responds to the impact of globalization while respecting the individuality of the nation."

Through these definitions, globalization and internationalization are perceived as different concepts, linked with a dynamic relationship. Globalization can be thought of as a catalyst for the process, while internationalization is a response that opens opportunities for cooperation and links without losing identity. Internationalization focuses on the transfer of personal content in an international environment, on the acceptance of joint cooperation, influence from and on other environments at international or even national level.

Some of the researchers (Knight & de Wit, 1995; Leask, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 2000) consider internationalization as a process of preparing students for participation and realization in the globalizing society. Another group (Hickling & Hudson, 2000; Lee, 2000; King, 2001; Sharma, 2002) considers that internationalization is mainly related to methods of attracting foreign students, usually from the less developed to the more developed countries. There are other positions, such as those of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), defining internationalization as a complex process with diverse tasks and multilateral effects (OECD, 2004).

In the present study, the following working definition is considered the most appropriate: "Internationalization of higher education is a process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research work and other services offered by the institution" (Knight, 1994).

In Knight's definition, internationalization is seen as a dynamic process, and not just as a set of isolated activities. Integration is also a key point because it guarantees a permanent and important place of the internationalization aspect in institution's academic studying curriculums, policies and procedures, not just an additional and easily excluded add-on.

Europeanization is a special case of internationalization. Thanks to its specificity, Europeanization strengthens European interests and values in internationalization. The impact of the European Union is initially achieved through the programs of academic exchange and mobility of students and lecturers. From the moment when the European Union acquires formal authority in the field of education in accordance with the Maastricht Treaty (1993), the idea of Europeanization and creation of "European Dimension" and a "Single European Educational Area" become common EU objectives.

If internationalization is conceptually inseparable from the historic national state, the Europeanization of education is based on the idea of European self-awareness (both of the individual and the citizen), which adds to the ambition of national states but does not replace them and is not a special case of internationalization. Also, it cannot be a manifestation and an isolated case of globalization if the latter takes on itself the subordination of local peculiarities of the world market and ideology.

The process of Europeanization of higher education takes place in different directions and institutional levels. The first direction relates to the mutual recognition of educational documents. European countries, compared to other regions of the world, go on to recognize diplomas and degrees in a comparatively complex way, which is conditioned by the diversity of national education systems in Europe - Anglo-American, German, French, Spanish, Russian.

The way to Europeanization of higher education goes through the European Conventions from 1956 on "Equivalence" of diplomas and access to universities, university teaching periods, and academic recognition of university qualification. Later, the issues of Europeanization of higher education go through the Lisbon Declaration (1997), through the Sorbonne and the Bologna Declaration of Education Ministers on "Harmonizing" European higher education systems. The idea of harmonization is associated with the establishment of a European higher education system with a common structure of educational levels (Bachelor, Master, PhD), but not with the content or structure of studying curricula. The Sorbonne Declaration calls for the creation of a common "European

Higher Education Area". The Bologna Declaration proposes adoption of a system of comparability of degrees through a student crediting system and the introduction of credit units, as well as the introduction of criteria and methodology for assessing the quality of teaching. The establishment of the "European Higher Education Area" opens up opportunities for cooperation; joint training courses, integrated programs, opportunities for students' and lecturers' mobility, for training and joint research programs and projects, etc.

The success of the Bologna Initiative for increasing the competitiveness of European higher education to attract more students outside Europe will depend to a large extent on the convergence of national education programs and the ability of universities to respond to this convergence. The Bologna Declaration requires development of certain criteria and methodology for assessing the quality of education by establishing minimum standards and requirements for measuring qualifications, competency and accreditation — through program and institutional, as well as international accreditation. For this purpose the EU funds different programs in the field of higher education as a basis for its Europeanization and the building of a society of knowledge. More united Europe needs to look at its universities by investing in the scientific and educational spheres.

# 2. Bulgarian Context of Globalization and Europeanization

Bulgarian higher education is part of the common European Higher Education Area. Although with some lagging behind and catching it up, it suffers the impact of globalization and adapts to European requirements.

EU policy on the internationalization of higher education up to 2013 focuses mainly on intra-European cooperation. By announcing the new European Global Higher Education Strategy, European higher education institutions are moving towards strengthening their positions internationally in order to be able to fulfill their responsibility for building the modern European economy. Studies of international organizations point out a strong tendency for a significant increase in the number of students worldwide, as well as in their requirements towards the higher education institutions. Now students find it natural to have a choice of what, how, and where to study according to their needs and interests. This dynamically changing picture calls for a change in the way 4,000 European universities operate — not only in international aspect, but also in terms of how they provide education to European students in their home countries. In order to increase its competitiveness and attractiveness, Bulgarian higher education needs to find its unique way of coping with the challenges posed by globalization in the field of education.

The Bologna Declaration has created a new dimension for integration and development in the European Higher Education Area. The six main objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration are the framework for continuation of educational convergence in the new EU programming period, namely:

- Adoption of a system of easily recognizable and comparable degrees;
- Inclusion in the system of training based on the three cycles of bachelor, master and doctoral training;
- Improvement of the system for accumulation and transfer of credits;
- Stimulation of mobility based on the idea of innovation, sharing of best practices in training, teaching and knowledge sharing;
- Stimulation of European cooperation in the field of quality assurance of training through adoption of innovative practices;
- Stimulation of initiatives of common interest in European dimension of co-operation within the scope of higher education.

Experience shows that integration in the educational sphere is always successful whenever it creates a new, higher level of quality.

# 3. The Experience of Technical University-Varna in Educational Conversion

Since 1962, through the years of its existence, the Higher Institute of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of Varna, has turned from a small institute preparing engineers of regional significance, into a Technical University of national importance, now conducting training of students in 23 majors. The main issue facing TU-Varna as an attractive training and research center for young people and as a university with high reputation in society and business is related to the realization of the goals set in the Bologna Declaration in several key directions, namely:

- Creating trust through forms of cooperating and financial support mechanism that operate at European level, for collaborative work, including monitoring of the results achieved and evaluating the overall activities and achievements for quality assurance in education and research;
- Relevance in accordance to the needs of separate national labor markets, as well as to those of the European labor market;
- Mobility of students, PhD students, lecturers and higher education staff as an essential characteristic of the European Higher Education Area;
- Comparability in terms of qualification and competencies characteristics in the three levels of study (Bachelor, Master and PhD);
- Attractiveness of programs and forms of training; academic growth for young talents, researchers and lecturers.

In the context of the Bologna Declaration on the introduction of a strategy for development of quality in education, TU-Varna has determined that the quality of training is achievable only in an atmosphere of constant work and by developing cooperation with other universities on the basis of exchange of good practices and excellence. For achievement of such results contributes the development of international cooperation on a bilateral and multilateral basis.

The international activity of Technical University-Varna in recent years has been aimed at maintaining the established contacts, renewing relations with universities and expanding the geographical scope of interaction with foreign universities in Western and Central Europe, the Balkan Peninsula, Russia and Ukraine. UK universities have an important role in this direction. In 2016, arrangements with Queen's University of Belfast are done for ERASMUS + student mobility, exchanges of information on studying curricula and curricula development, joint work and funding for international projects, training of PhD students, co-realization of mobility in institutions and companies with which Queen's University of Belfast has already established relations. An important achievement is the establishment of relations with representatives of the senior management of the corporation Norman Hay — a multinational company which has world-leading positions in the manufacturing of parts in the field of aircraft, petroleum and automotive industries.

In 2016 a cooperation agreement was signed with the research institute "AO Foundation", Switzerland, related to the training of PhD students and innovations in the field of new materials and technologies.

The universities from Russia have an important role in the international relations of Technical University-Varna. They have the largest relative share in the total number of contracts signed with universities

abroad. Activation of the already existing contacts and creation of new ones has been undertaken and the aim is to attract citizens from the Russian Federation for training in TU-Varna by providing an "educational franchise".

During this period additional relations were established and new contracts for cooperation and joint work were signed with universities in Macedonia. An academic exchange of lecturers with Gotse Delchev University in Stip was done and the beginning of a successful international project was set, involving representatives of universities and research units from the Western Balkans and Central Europe. Arrangements were made with University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bitola, as well as with St. Paul Apostle Paul University of Information Sciences and Technology in Ohrid.

Another major direction of the geographic scope in which the cooperation of TU-Varna with other universities is implemented, are the universities from Ukraine and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

An agreement for joint training of students with the University of Waters and Natural Resources in Republic of Ukraine was reached. In addition, arrangements for cooperation were made with Admiral Makarov National Shipbuilding University, the Faculty of Cyber Safety at the Academy of Food Technologies in Odessa and with Kharkov National University for Urban Economy "O. M. Beketov".

For a third consecutive academic year, on the basis of a contract between TU-Varna and the Kazakh Academy of Transport and Communications during the winter semester of the academic year 2016/2017 in TU-Varna were accepted students for one semester training. In addition, two universities in Kazakhstan, "Eurasian Technological University" and Kazakh National Technical University "KI Satpaev" demonstrated serious interest in TU-Varna and sent offers for cooperation.

Mato Grosso University, Brazil, is also interested in expanding cooperation with TU-Varna.

In line with the policy of expanding cooperation with representatives of foreign companies for granting opportunities for students of TU-Varna to conduct practical training, the academic management renewed the contacts with the companies "Standard Profile" and "Trakia Glass" that operate in Bulgaria. In addition, a partnership with "411 Marketing" was launched, a leading company with international participation, and joint courses and joint training for students of TU-Varna were organized. Contacts were made with "Best Studies in Bulgaria", Republic of Greece in association with recruitment of foreign students for studying at TU-Varna and joint activities under the ERASMUS + program.

The total number of signed bilateral contracts between TU-Varna and universities in Bulgaria and abroad, as well as those with business formations as of 30 March 2017, are 217. It is also important to take into account the preparation and signing of new inter-institutional agreements with University Aldo Moro, Bari and University of Florence, University of Foggia, Italy; University "Constantin Brâncuşi" Târgu-Jiu, Romania; University of Alba Iulia, Romania; Gdansk University of Technology, Poland; St. Kliment Ohridski University, Bitola, and Saint Paul the Apostle University of Information Science and Technology, Ohrid, Macedonia; Obuda University, Hungary; Technical University of Ostrava (2 contracts) and Tomas Bata University in Zlin, Czech Republic; Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia; Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Institute of Technology, Kavala, Greece; University of Lisbon, I.S.T., Portugal; University of Deusto, Spain; Bayburt University and Kirikkale University Turkey.

For the period June 2016-March 2017, strong efforts in relation to the international activity of TU-Varna are aimed at establishing and maintaining administrative relations with embassies and consulates of countries in Europe and around the world. Steps have been taken and talks have taken place with the diplomatic representatives of France, Russia and Turkey.

### 3.1 ERASMUS + Program at TU-Varna

According to the mandate program of the academic management in TU-Varna, in association with the improvement of training quality, students' practical qualification and lecturers' qualification, the objectives of ERASMUS+ program are the following:

- improving the quality and increasing the number of Student Mobility compared to previous years;
- promoting multilateral cooperation with other European HEIs and with European companies;
- development and transfer of innovative practices, programs and methods of teaching, involvement in joint projects of Erasmus partners from other universities and institutions.

In the past 2016 TU-Varna continued signing new inter-institutional agreements and the renewal of old partnerships. Currently 63 ERASMUS + exchange agreements are signed with European universities.

It is a prerequisite, prior to the implementation of mobility under the program, that the sending and host institutions should sign a Learning Agreement for Traineeships for student mobility, and a Staff Mobility Agreement for teaching and non-teaching staff.

# 3.1.1 Student Mobility Parameters for July 2015-September 2016

During the period under review a total of 52 students and PhD students were sent under ERASMUS + program (11 for education and 41 for training and practice) compared to 46 students (7 for education and 39 for training and practice) during 2014/2015 academic year.

The analysis of the results shows that the interest in student mobility for learning purposes has increased almost twice. The interest in student mobility for practice and training remains, as its number in the current year is almost 4 times greater than the student mobility for education (see Figure 1).

The main reason for the greater interest in student mobility for practice and training is that an ERASMUS experience in a foreign firm or university gives a greater advantage to graduating students when applying for a job. Our students were trained at the Universities of Vyborg (Denmark), Dublin (Ireland), Brno (The Czech Republic), Athens (Greece) and Ljubljana (Slovenia).

Recently, some graduates of TU-Varna, students and PhD students were funded by the ERASMUS + program for practice at the universities of Ghent (Belgium), Ilmenau and Rostock (Germany), Zilina (Slovakia), Rezekne (Lithuania), Ostrava (The Czech Republic) Bucharest (Romania), as well as in some English, German, Italian, Maltese and Turkish companies. Out of a total of 41 trainees in our marine majors, 19 students completed their sailing experience with the financial support of ERASMUS + program.

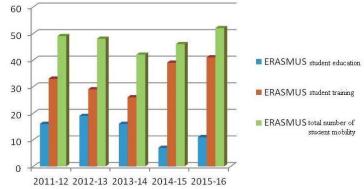


Figure 1 Number of Outgoing Student Mobilities of TU-Varna under ERASMUS Program for 2011-2016 (http://tu-varna.bg)

Currently, the distribution of the ERASAM + student mobility at TU-Varna is as follows:

- Bachelors: 18 (compared to 14 in 2014/2015 academic year);
- Masters: 32 (compared to 29 in 2014/2015 academic year);
- PhD students: 2 (compared to 3 in 2014/2015 academic year);
  Reasons for the Inadequate Student Activity in ERASMUS + Mobility
- Insufficient English-language preparation;
- Uncertainty in their own knowledge and unwillingness for further qualification and improvement. For financial reasons many of the students prefer to go on a student brigade (Work and Travel Program) in the United States or the United Kingdom, and also because this does not require good command of English;
- Another reason to opt out of the program is that today most of the students work and study at the same time and this several-month absence may cost them their jobs.

At TU-Varna in 2016/2017 academic year we had four foreign ERASMUS students from Lithuania. In 2015/2016 two foreign ERASMUS + students were admitted: one from the University of Cartagena, Spain and one from the Polytechnic University in Wroclaw, Poland, compared to ten foreign ERASMUS students accepted in 2014/2015 academic year. (From the University of Cartagena, Spain, from the University of Gyor, Hungary, from the Polytechnic University in Coimbra, Portugal and The Polytechnics in Wroclaw, Poland).

Reasons for the Low Incoming Student Mobility

- Sometimes at the university cannot be formed groups in English language education due to insufficient number of foreign students. In such cases individual education of the accepted foreign ERASMUS + students must be carried out;
- Lack of English language education in some majors, for example, there is an increased interest in our machine majors, but there isn't an English language education in those specialties yet;
- Frequent changes in the studying curricula students have to choose their required disciplines 6 or 9 months prior to their arrival at Technical University of Varna and have to sign a Learning Agreement, but often in the meantime changes have been made in our curricula and the students should replace them with new disciplines. Sometimes the required change is over 50%.

Opportunities for Increasing the Number and Quality of Student Mobility in TU-Varna

- Creating conditions for intensive annual English language courses at Varna Technical University;
- Introducing a recommended exchange semester for students from TU-Varna with other universities in Europe (by the example of universities from France, England, Germany, etc.);
  - Introducing compulsory mobility under ERASMUS + Program for PhD students;
- Assisting students in choosing appropriate mobility (in a university, institute, corporation or firm) in Europe in order to write a thesis;
- Signing long-term agreements with companies and corporations for students' participation in traineeships and practices funded under the ERASMUS + Program.

As a result of the improved operation of the International Cooperation Department, the ERASMUS funds for 2016/2017 academic year are EUR 214,796.

3.1.2 Teaching Mobility (TM) 2015/2016

For the period 2015/2016 at the Technical University of Varna 33 lecturer mobilities (10 for teaching and 23 for education) were implemented for a total of 33 weeks. For comparison, in 2014/2015 academic year there were 24 teaching mobilities (14 for teaching and 10 for education) (Figure 3).

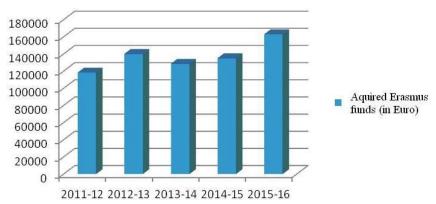


Figure 2 Acquired Funds (in EUR) from TU-Varna under ERASMUS Program by Years for the Period 2011-2016

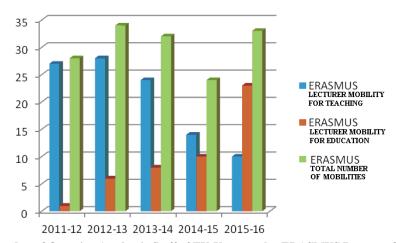


Figure 3 Number of Outgoing Academic Staff of TU-Varna under ERASMUS Program for 2011-2016

During 2015/2016 academic year the total number of lecturers' mobilities is increased by 38%. Special priority was given to young lecturers facing habilitation. The ERASMUS mobility was at the universities of Bilbao (Spain), Stip (Macedonia), Ghent (Belgium), Bremen (Germany), Thessaloniki and Patra (Greece), CENTRIA (Finland), Bari (Italy), Wroclaw Lisbon (Portugal), Nitra and Zilina (Slovakia), Ostrava, Brno and Ceske Budejovice (The Czech Republic), Bucharest and Constanta (Romania), Istanbul and Sakarya (Turkey), Budapest (Hungary).

As a good result of the realized ERASMUS + lecturers' mobility in the last year we can mention the cooperation in publication of joint textbooks and papers.

For the period March 2016-March 2017, 30 foreign lecturers from Centria University of Applied Sciences (Finland), University of Littoral Cote d'Opale (France), Rostock (Germany), Targu Jiu (Romania) and Shtip Macedonia) were admitted, compared to 22 foreign teachers and academic staff accepted in 2014/2015 academic year from the universities in Kaunas and Vilnius (Lithuania), Wroclaw (Poland), Rostock (Germany), Athens (Greece), Brno (The Czech Republic), Constanta and Targu Jiu (Romania).

The main guidelines for improving the activity of TU-Varna for the next reporting period will be related to:

- Further fostering and development of partnership with universities abroad for increasing bilateral exchanges, with a focus on universities in Western Europe;
  - Intensification of the cooperation with international companies and corporations for participation in projects

and other joint initiatives, as well as ensuring the successful professional realization of TU-Varna graduates;

• Ensuring publicity of the results of all ERASMUS activities, improving the awareness of all lecturers and students at TU-Varna about the opportunities for education and specialization abroad.

## 4. Conclusion

The higher level of European integration after the Maastricht Treaty is an important factor for European universities, which creates new opportunities and challenges. EU policy supports the guidelines for higher education in Europe, as they were set out in the well-known Bologna Declaration and the Bologna process. The ultimate goal is creation and successful operation of a European Higher Education Area based on international cooperation and academic exchange. In order for higher education to contribute adequately to the development of European society, it must be attractive for young European citizens as well as for students and scientists from other parts of the world. The introduction and implementation of an international dimension in university activities enhances its attractiveness and competitiveness by enriching the academic mission, expanding international cooperation, and ultimately resulting in higher quality of education, research and services.

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