

TRACKING INTERNATIONAL JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMS IN HUNGARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the time of dynamic changes in higher education led by globalization and internationalization discourses, the study examines international joint degree programs as one of the newest developments in international cooperation. Following an overview of the key elements of the recent debates about internationalization process at higher education institutions and forms and evolution of international collaboration, the paper implements a case study approach to track the development of joint degree programs in that context. Specifically, a university in Hungary, Corvinus University of Budapest, which has been particularly successful in ensuring high participation rates in joint degree cooperation, is the focus of the inquiry. The findings imply a more ad-hoc rather than strategy-oriented path of the international programs but two models of development emerge from the evaluation. The observations are then analyzed in the wider context of internationalization efforts and policies of the university and recommendations are put forward for greater horizontal and centrally-led coordination of joint programs in order to signify their importance within the internationalization process.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of internationalization should no longer be seen as a new phenomenon in higher education as it has been on the agenda in some countries for over two decades (Knight 1999). Institutions on all continents are responding to the pressures brought by globalization by attempting to become more international but the ways and pace they achieve that vary by country or even by institution (Altbach 2007, 123; Knight 1999). In reality, for some the experience with the process has been much shorter and the concept is still fresh on the agenda. Moreover, the meaning of internationalization is also evolving and as Knight observes, “it is innovating and growing so quickly that we are seeing many new initiatives as well as unexpected developments and results” (2008, 2), which makes it even more difficult for those who are only beginning to internationalize.

The available research indicates that not only is the definition of internationalization changing but the concept is also expanding and becoming more complex and multidimensional (Kehm and Teichler 2007, 262). In addition to the transformations of its shape on the aggregate stage, there are also different phases of the process identified at the institutional level. Teekens distinguishes “traditional internationalization” from the more recent approaches, which among other characteristics tends to be primarily focused on mobility schemes (Teekens 2005, 2-3). Along the same lines, Knight claims that a high number of established international connections and agreements with foreign partners mostly related to exchange, research or other similar types of cooperation is more typical for the early phases of institutional internationalization process. As higher education institutions (HEIs) become more advanced and knowledgeable about how they can steer the process and which tools are most suitable, they re-consider such “semi-active partnerships” and focus on a smaller number of the most important connections, turning them into **strategic cooperation** schemes

with clearly set objectives (Knight 2004, 27). This general trend toward strategy-oriented internationalization also seems to mirror the arguments presented in the studies on international cooperation that observe that traditional cooperation schemes are transitioning into a more competitive mode, in which selecting appropriate partners becomes the key task for HEIs (Kehm and Teichler 2007, 266).

In this environment of new global trends in higher education, joint and double degree programs are often considered the latest means for internationalizing (Knight 2008, 3). Beerkens refers to them and other new forms of collaboration, such as networks, as “reaching deeper” within the institution (2004, 2). Macquarie University in Australia illustrates how joint programs can serve as a more strategic tool. The university had a long history of joint programs with French higher education institutions that used to emerge unplanned from the international links established of the individual researchers. Three years ago the university officially transformed the institutional approach to joint programs into a more tactical one. As a result new cooperation schemes and partner selection are carefully considered, target specific countries and research areas important to the university, and are actively promoted and supported financially by the institution (Jordan 2010).

A 2002 survey of joint programs in Europe conducted by Tauch and Rauhvargers identified by Knight as “a ground breaking study on Master’s and joint degrees” (Knight 2008, 6) finds that the “development [of such programs is] driven by existing research partnerships, innovative approaches to curricula, and practical considerations of partner choice” (Crosier 2007). This observation further implies classification of joint degree cooperation, at least in some cases, as the more advanced, strategic type of institutional internationalization activity (Beerkens 2004, 2). Nevertheless, joint degree programs emerging worldwide represent

various models and structures, and thus continue to perplex academics, and institutional leaders considering this type of international cooperation on all continents (Knight 2008, 10).

Objective of the research

In the midst of developments in higher education globally and also in Europe with the Bologna Process asking the HEIs to define their policies on internationalization (Teekens 2005, 4) and specifically promoting joint degree development since the Ministerial Conference in Prague in 2001 (Rauhvargers 2002, 27), the two topics sooner or later land on the agendas of all participating countries and consequently the institutions. This has recently been the case also in Hungary, where a number of joint and double degree programs, as well as more articulated approaches of HEIs to internationalization developed less than a decade ago. Most of the collaborative activities are still very new and closely related to the Erasmus Mundus framework of the European Commission. Although, one should be cautious about assessing their effects or effectiveness at this early point, the patterns and circumstances surrounding their initial development can certainly be examined. In 2004 there were not enough international joint program consortia with partners from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) for the EUA in-depth survey of joint degree programs, thus the geographical balance was missing from the study (EUA 2004, 7). Now, along with the Erasmus Mundus scheme, such programs have become more popular in the region and one can begin to assess their early evolution and emerging models. According to the 2009 Erasmus Mundus Compendium, Hungary has one of the highest total participation rates in the framework among the CEE countries along with Poland and Czech Republic¹. The participation in Erasmus Mundus indicates the relatively high activity in the field of joint degree programs, which makes Hungary an appropriate focus.

¹Own calculation: Polish HEIs participate in a total of 18 EM MA level programs, Czech in 9 and Hungarian in 11 EM joint MA programs.

By means of in-depth analysis through semi-structured interviews of six joint programs at Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB), the study explores the institutional environment and other key factors that have allowed for successful participation of the CUB in a high number of international joint degree consortia. The study is driven by the main research question of how international joint degree programs develop at the Hungarian HEI in the context of present internationalization trends. The study seeks to uncover the evolution process in order to learn what the main driving factors were that led to joint degree activity in Hungary and how internationalization relates to that process in case of the CUB.

The findings of the study will be most valuable for the institutional leaders of the examined university as they provide a cross-departmental picture of a number of joint programs within the institution. Since only one institution was examined in this approach, the objective is not to make any generalizations but to explore the selected setting in search for new knowledge. However, an in-depth analysis of one university may still provide some insightful information for other institutional leaders or policy makers in the country, who recently declared joint degrees and internationalization as top priorities for higher education policy in Hungary (Bologna Process– Hungary 2008).

The study first presents the methodological approach implemented and relevant literature available on the subject. Chapter 2 introduces the concept of a joint degree program and the related debates, as well as the definition adopted for the study. Chapter 3 relates joint degrees to the bigger discourse on internationalization in higher education focusing on the institutional level and the most recent trends and practices. The following chapter consequently focuses on international cooperation as an aspect of internationalization process and examines the historical context on the global and European levels. Chapter 5 provides a

background on Hungarian higher education landscape, internationalization and joint degree programs in the country, and presents Corvinus University of Budapest as the case study. In chapter 6 findings from the interviews with the key informants from six joint programs, as well as a member of the international office are presented. Finally, the study suggests how the institution could further encourage international joint program activity with regard to both new and existing schemes, and concludes with recommendations on how to integrate the existing joint programs more effectively into the internationalization process.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Literature

Today, Europe is still the leader in the international joint and double degree program activity followed by the United States (Knight 2008, 6). Therefore, the highest number of available studies focuses on the European experience. But the subject of joint degrees specifically in the context of internationalization trends has not been widely researched.

Internationalization in higher education is a relatively new and still not well-established research field as there are not that many researchers who specialize in the subject (Kehm and Teichler 2007, 261-262). Kehm and Teichler in their overview of the research area since the 1990s, note that it tends to be more oriented toward practitioners and policy makers. A normative approach and political agendas are often present in the available literature as many research projects are initiated and funded by specific national or supra-national policies (ibid). This pattern is also noticeable within the studies on international joint and double degrees, especially since the recent policies in Europe, such as the Bologna Process and the Erasmus Mundus program pay special attention to this particular cooperation scheme.

The key scholarly discussions on internationalization that are regularly updated and adapted to the newest developments are led by international education experts such as Jane Knight, Philip G. Altbach, Hans de Wit, or Ulrich Teichler (Kehm and Teichler 2007, 263). For this study, articles related to the emerging trends in internationalization process and the institutional approaches are particularly relevant. These include the comprehensive “historical and conceptual perspectives” provided by Knight and de Wit (1997) and de Wit (2002), as well as the updated elements regarding the “conceptual framework” and approaches to internationalization including the applied “process definition” brought into the discussion by

Knight (2004)². Moreover, Knight and Altbach (2007) further discuss the changing rationale for internationalizing emphasizing the growing importance of economic incentives over political and cultural ones.

De Wit focuses on the historical development of internationalization trends in Europe and the United States and confirms the increasing role of economic incentives for international cooperation. By means of historical assessment of higher education, de Wit illustrates how over time the concept of “international dimension” turned into a “strategic process of internationalization” that is more closely connected to the societies and economies. Moreover, de Wit further argues that as internationalization continues to evolve closely related to the globalization path, it is becoming more central to higher education and institutions’ main activities rather than considered a marginal “set of (...) strategies, or processes.” The author refers to the more common evaluations of internationalization strategies on the institutional level or the increasing role of university networks and strategic partnerships, as some examples of that shift. (2002, XVI). But the observed trends are not always as consistent in national level realities.

The notion of shifting internationalization to a strategic position within an institution is also linked to the wider concept of university transformation developed by Clark, who distinguishes between activities that are central to the university’s primary functions of teaching and research and those that develop outside that framework and are seen as marginal. Especially relevant to the internationalization discourse and joint degrees is the “strengthened steering core” element as it emphasizes the importance of integration of “central managerial groups and academic departments” (1998, 5). Parallel discussions about

² Both discussed in Chapter 3

internationalization call for better integration of international activities within the core of the institution as international cooperation tends to develop as a marginal activity often based on individual academic contacts (Beerkens 2004, 70-71).

Similarly, Beerkens, in his evaluation of performance of international university consortia in a competitive global environment, initially highlights that during the past decades internationalization has become one of the key concerns and of strategic significance to higher education institutions (Beerkens 2004, 1-2 after Van der Wende 2002). Consequently, he considers the emerging university networks a kind of strategic cooperation and an example of the new trend. However, after a closer assessment of four university consortia in Europe and Asia, Beerkens finds that “cooperation in fields where it is seen as an inherent part of academia is more likely to be the standard than when cooperation is moulded on a business-like model” (2004, 238). The study indicates that consortia members often have to balance the rationale for “cooperating to compete” with the “cooperating to cooperate” approach and that the latter is still quite dominant (ibid). These observations could either indicate that the strategy-oriented approach to international activities is still an aspiration rather than a reality or that it has a different connotation in higher education than the one adopted from business and management theories.

Knight (2008) also tackles the subject of joint and double degree programs and highlights the key debated elements in an attempt to intensify the discussions and attention paid to this form of cooperation. She analyzes joint degrees from institutional, national and more global perspective. She also develops a typology and definitions for the various forms and models of

joint programs that exist worldwide. She also juxtaposes various approaches to defining joint programs that exist, specifically program focus vs. a qualification focused analysis³.

A number of more policy-oriented studies related to the European-level initiatives promoting joint degree development have been conducted and provide an important section in the international joint degree literature. The most prominent studies have been conducted by the European University Association, specifically the 2002 Survey by Tauch and Rauhvargers and the following 2002-2004 Practice Guide published by the EUA gathering best practice examples and guidelines for developing successful joint degree programs. The 2002 Survey was the first one providing an overview on the activity level in joint degree initiatives in Europe with references to particular countries. The study provided a working definition for the cooperation scheme and illustrated the major directions in which such programs developed – the development path, main disciplines as well as key obstacles and challenges.

Another body of studies is emerging in relation to the Erasmus Mundus program that focuses on the promotion of joint degrees. Both the 2007 Interim Evaluation of the program , as well as the 2009 Ex-post Evaluation of Erasmus Mundus provide statistical data collected through surveys of the programs that exist within the EM framework, as well as a number of case studies that provide more in-depth information on particular consortia, their characteristics and set up.

1.2 Methodology

In order to uncover the process of development of joint degree programs⁴ at a Hungarian institution in the context of internationalization pressures in higher education, the study employs a qualitative approach to better understand the factors involved and their

³ A more in-depth explanation of the concepts is presented in the next chapter

⁴ The specific definition of joint degree program adopted for this paper is discussed in chapter 2.

implications. Specifically, the method used is an in-depth analysis of a case study with semi-structured interviews. A case study approach is typically considered in social science as the appropriate method in the exploratory phase of inquiry (Yin 2003, 3). The international joint degrees being a new phenomenon allow for an exploratory approach.

The selected case represents a Hungarian HEI, Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB), which has been particularly successful in recent years in Hungary in becoming a partner in numerous international joint degree consortia. Within the existing literature, there is very little information on cooperation schemes in Hungary as such activities are quite new in the region (Kerekes and Nemeslaki 2009). Focusing on a Hungarian institution will, therefore, contribute to the literature by adding a perspective from a country and relevant institutional setting that so far has not been deeply analyzed. Ideally, a comparative approach would be implemented with at least one other country experience. But given the lack of individual country and institutional studies, especially on joint programs, comparative research in internationalization of CEE higher education is exceedingly difficult to accomplish.

Since the initial development phases of joint programs are the focus of this paper, the the case study was selected based on the highest number of such programs in Hungary. Therefore, the CUB should be considered an extreme (or exceptional) case and the objective of the study is not to generalize but to analyze in depth the processes at this particular institution. The higher number of programs present at an institution allows provides more data and makes identification of patterns more likely. The CUB currently participates in eight joint or double degree programs and at least two more are being actively developed. The total number of collaborative study programs offered at CUB represents approximately 40% of the total number of such programs in Hungary, which by the end of 2008 was approximately 20 (Bologna Process Report Hungary 2008, 51). Moreover, CUB is one of the three institutions,

in Hungary participating in the Erasmus Mundus (EM) scheme, which makes it even more of an exceptional case because EM is a highly competitive program.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with six faculty members directly involved in the process of joint degree program development at the CUB⁵, as well as one representative from the International Office. The interviews with joint program coordinators were organized around the main subject areas⁶: 1) international activity before the joint program emerged; 2) the circumstances how the joint program was developed and how the CUB got involved; 3) motivations for joining; 4) previous cooperation among consortium members; 5) level of “jointness” – specific elements jointly developed; 6) level of cooperation among the institutions within the consortium; and 7) future plans and perspectives for the program. However, since each of the cooperation schemes has a slightly different story the questions were adapted for the relevant setting. The questions for the International Office representative asked about topics of: 1) internationalization strategy of the university; 2) functions of the international office; 3) perception of joint programs and their importance for the strategy; 4) the level of involvement of the international office with joint degree programs; 5) main challenges of internationalization; 6) the future of internationalization at CUB.

In addition to the qualitative data, the outlined literature as well as studies and documents specific to the Hungarian higher education system, such as the 2010 Eurydice report on education in Hungary, The Bologna Process in Hungary Report 2010, and the Bologna Process country progress report for 2008, were used in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of where internationalization and joint degree programs are placed in the

⁵ The faculty members from all eight joint programs offered were contacted regarding the interviews and all of them responded enthusiastically and were willing to meet in person to discuss their experience. Due to scheduling constraints and other circumstances six faculty program coordinators were interviewed.

⁶ Notes from the meetings are available upon request.

context of the national agenda. Additional information on the CUB and the offered international joint programs was obtained from the University's website, as well as the websites of specific joint programs, the EUA institutional evaluation report 2008 and International Advisory Board 2008 meeting minutes both available on the CUB website.

One significant shortcoming of this research project is the lack of representation of the other consortia members and their perspective on the involvement and participation of the Hungarian institution. The views collected all come from the institution in question and there is no external information, which would have greatly improved the analysis. Therefore, one possible enhancement of methodology would be through a more balanced analysis including both internal evaluations as well as external views from the other consortium representatives for each relevant joint program.

CHAPTER 2: MUCH ADO ABOUT JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMS

Joint degrees represent a new tool used for internationalizing that gained significant attention worldwide as their development intensified in Europe. This chapter introduces different approaches, including a historical context, to defining joint degree programs, and presents the most suitable definition adopted for the study, as well as the reasons for the selection. It concludes with the analysis of current trends in an attempt to predict the future of such collaborative activities.

2.1 *Early definitions from Europe*

As new as the concept seems, some of the early discussions about joint programs can be traced in Europe back to at least the 1970s. The European Community in 1976 introduced the first Action Program (“AP”), providing financial support for development of “Joint Study Programmes (JSP),” which were considered key to promoting cooperation among European HEIs. Already then, there was a certain ambiguity surrounding the concept and a rather flexible interpretation of the term was applied. Posser referring to the AP describes joint programs as “opaque term cover[ing] a wide range of [cooperation] possibilities” (Posser 1983, 171).

One example early description of a joint program can be based on the requirements set by the European Community in 1976. According to the AP, in order to qualify as a “Joint Study Programme,” the cooperating institutions were expected to incorporate into their programs either all or some of the elements, such as mandatory student and faculty mobility or joint development of the taught courses or parts of them (Posser 1983, 171). In addition to the mobility component, an established framework for recognition of the time spent abroad had

to be specified within the international cooperation framework (EUROPA 1987). Certain elements highlighted already in the JSP requirements are still relevant to the today's definitions of joint programs. Specifically, the issues of mobility, academic recognition and cooperative development of curriculum, courses and entire programs, remain very applicable to the recent discussions about joint degrees. The overall focus, however, has also shifted from this input-oriented way of looking at joint programs to a more output-centered approach.

2.2 *Joint degree debate*

Despite the increasing popularity of this form of cooperation, the concept of joint and double degree programs remains somewhat a puzzle. The perplexity begins, as Knight emphasizes, with the variety of words used for joint programs such as “double”, “joint”, “multinational”, “combined” or “consecutive” to name just some examples (Knight 2009, 12). The programs developing worldwide tend to not only adopt various names but also different forms and structures (Knight 2008, 5).

Due to this variety of existing models, one can view joint programs as either two diplomas for just one load of academic work or alternatively, as an advanced level of academic cooperation and an expanded mobility scheme (Knight 2008, 5). Two ways of classifying joint degrees dominating in literature are by looking at either the type of qualification conferred or the program structure itself (Knight 2008, 15).

Over time, the focus of the debate on joint degree programs shifted to the type of actual final qualification awarded upon completion of studies. Therefore, the recently developed typology proposed by Knight distinguishes four types of joint programs based on the final qualification. The four kinds include joint degrees, double and multiple degrees, and combined degree programs (Knight 2008, 15). In this terminology an international joint

degree program leads to just one joint qualification awarded by the collaborating institutions; a double degree or multiple degree program leads to two or more single qualifications awarded by the cooperating institutions; and a combined degree program refers to two qualifications but on consecutive levels rather than the same one (Knight 2008, 18). However, such distinction focusing on the awarded qualification requires some further consideration in the context of international cooperation, as acknowledged by Knight (ibid).

The proposed classification of joint programs may prompt some misleading conclusions depending on the research angle, for example if the analysis of joint programs focuses on the aspects of international cooperation. As Knight acknowledged, in many cases the decision whether a program is offered under the “joint” or “double” degree scheme is less irrelevant to the institutional objectives and often dictated by the national legal structures and related obstacles to awarding joint diplomas. This would mean that in some cases the type of the final qualification does not fully reflect the level of intern-institutional cooperation if legal obstacles on the national level are present. Therefore an alternative method of analysis that focuses more on the actual program and thus the collaboration component rather than qualification should be considered (Rauhvargers 2002).

2.3 *Definition adopted for the study*

This program-approach and the related aspects of international cooperation are reflected in the 2002 EUA survey (Rauhvargers 2002). Knight also distinguishes between the qualification awarded- and program itself-angles of analysis of joint programs depending on the context (Knight 2008, 15). The program angle is also relevant to this study which analyzes joint programs from the perspective of international collaboration among HEIs and not the kinds of qualification awarded.

Similarly, Rauhvargers notes that diverse forms of collaboration schemes leading to joint programs yet not necessarily to joint diplomas exist across Europe (2002). In order to distinguish joint degrees from other forms of international cooperation, he identifies the key elements indicating a joint program type of cooperation. This more comprehensive approach to defining joint degrees includes both “input”- and “output”-related joint elements. According to the author’s working definition a joint program consists of six key characteristics, which are similar to those emphasized by the AP already in 1976. Such program has to be “developed and/or approved jointly by several institutions,” include a student mobility feature with the time of similar length spent at each partner institution and automatic recognition of both the period and obtained grades. Moreover, the curricula, as well as admission and examination criteria have to be developed and agreed jointly by faculty members of participating institutions, who should also be mobile and teach at partner institutions. The final characteristic of a joint program refers to the awarded qualification and states that the student should either obtain a jointly established degree or numerous national degrees from the participating institutions (Rauhvargers 2002, 29).

For the purpose of the 2002 study, however, the author further simplifies the working definition in order to gain a more accurate picture of the intensity of inter-institutional links. Specifically, he focuses exclusively on the aspects of international cooperation related to the development phase of joint programs and not on the final degree (*ibid*). This represents a more flexible and exploratory approach to joint degrees as seen through the lens of international cooperation schemes and also best suits the research approach of this paper. Therefore, a joint degree program in this study is defined as a program that is jointly developed, meaning curriculum and program structure, by at least two institutions in different countries regardless of the final qualification awarded. The logic behind adopting this broad

definition is that the focus of the study is on the inter-institutional cooperation aspect and its development in the context of internationalization strategies. The legal obstacles that often exist on the national levels are in this case less relevant (Knight 2008, 4) and are not considered.

2.4 *The future of joint degree programs*

The international joint and double degrees have certainly entered the global higher education debate and receive a growing attention from scholars and professionals. They are typically discussed in the context of internationalization strategies but as they become more common new questions emerge related to a whole spectrum of higher education topics including mobility issues, employability, quality assurance, management and administrative structures, financial aspects as well as teaching methods, or learning outcomes. (Knight 2008)

A 2007 study conducted by the EUA finds that only 4% of the surveyed institutions did not see the need to establish joint programs in the future and 60% were already implementing this form of international collaboration (EUA 2007, 30). Also, the initial results of the 2009 worldwide survey by the International Association of Universities (IAU) also listed joint and double degrees as one of the institutional priorities in internationalization (IAU 2009, 5). It is therefore safe to predict that more joint initiatives will emerge in the near future and more institutions will be interested in such opportunities. The expected increase in the number of programs further increases the need for additional studies that will provide more information about the process how they develop, as well as the main benefits and challenges they bring along to institutions.

Since joint degree programs are considered internationalizing tool, it is appropriate to elaborate on what the process means for institutions and other HE actors and how it is and can be approached on the institutional level. This chapter therefore provides relevant background on the internationalization trends and developments, especially with respect to institutional activities, for further analysis of the international cooperation schemes and the emergence of joint degrees.

3.1 *What it means: defining the concept*

Internationalization has by now established a prominent position within the field of global higher education and the subject cannot be omitted from debates (Knight 2008, 3). The process, in its latest shape, is seen as a reaction of the institutional, national and global actors who are facing the realities and challenges brought to the higher education sector by globalization⁷ in the past two decades (Knight in OECD 1999, 14). Such reasoning implies a dynamic nature of the internationalization process but also the fact that, unlike globalization, it can be controlled and steered, at least to some extent (Knight in OECD 1999, 14; Knight and Altbach 2007, 291). This should theoretically give institutions the ability to identify their priorities and design individual internationalization plans.

Jane Knight, one of the key experts in international education research, explains internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight 2004, 10 after Knight 2003). This rather broad definition of the internationally-oriented developments taking place in higher education systems indeed reflects the current landscape

⁷ The definition of globalization for this context is adopted from Altbach and Knight (2007, 290) “as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement.”

as there are numerous possible ways for subscribing to the process of internationalization and “integrating the international dimension” (Knight 2004, 6). Therefore, despite the overall growing importance of the process for the past two decades, not only do the internationalization policies and efforts often follow a different prescription but they also lead to diverse outcomes at institutional and national levels (Knight in OECD 1999, 13). Some institutions may choose to focus on student mobility, or on increasing connections with institutions worldwide in scientific areas, others will find attracting students from abroad or setting up branch campuses more suitable for their objectives and capabilities.

Although there is certain level of control one can still exert in the internationalization process, opting out seems no longer an option. The increased competition and interconnectedness that came along with globalization (Van Vught, Van der Wende and Don Westerheijden 2002, 106; Beerkens 2004, 18) puts the “international dimension” pressures on the agendas of institutions not only in developed countries with well-funded HE systems. The development of at least some international elements is becoming a growing concern in less-advanced countries, which contributes to the discrepancy among the outcomes of internationalization efforts globally; as a result some institutions are able to set up branch campuses abroad whereas for others the introduction of the first programs in English means a significant step toward internationalizing.

3.2 *Forces driving internationalization*

The factors driving the internationalization efforts historically have been classified as either “political, social/cultural, academic or economic” (Knight 2004, 21 after de Wit 1995; Knight and de Wit 1997). The internationalization of higher education systems is of interest not only to the institutions in question but also to the national and increasingly also supra-national

actors. However, since institutions are becoming more active in responding to the globalization challenges (Kehm 2003, 110) it is important to understand the particular forces driving their internationalization efforts.

The most applicable aspects influencing institutional activities out of the traditional four fall under the last two categories and include incentives such as “quality enhancement,” “international dimension of teaching,” “academic standards”, as well as “financial incentives” and international competitiveness in the economic rationale category (Knight 2004, 23). Knight and Altbach observe that non-economic motivations to internationalize such as the creation of “knowledge capacity” or increasing of the multicultural dimension still dominate at the more traditional public institutions but a growing number of profit-bringing activities such as branch campuses and foreign student tuition fees are becoming an important source of income for many traditional institutions as governments are decreasing public spending (2007 after Knight 2006, 292).

It is important to note that international joint degree programs can combine both the academic factors with the economic ones as tuition fees are often introduced. Therefore even if within an institution where faculty members focus more on the academic benefits resulting from joint program operation, the possible economic advantages can also be identified to attract the operational side of an institution as well.

3.3 *Internationalization at home vs. abroad*

One way to distinguish among the already high and still growing number of internationalization activities or strategies suggested by Knight is to divide them into two types of initiatives: those pertaining to introduction of international elements “at home”

institution and those related to activities taking place abroad away from the home institution (2004, 16).

Wächter explains that in Europe internationalization was originally understood mainly in terms of student mobility and thus as something happening “abroad.” However, the experience with the numerous mobility programs including Erasmus did not dramatically increase the number of mobile individuals leaving the major part of the institution un-internationalized (Wächter 2000, 5). Therefore, the internationalization efforts were consequently re-directed at incorporating the international elements into the institutional activities so that the non-mobile part of the community could also benefit from the internationalization process (ibid). The “internationalization at home” in Wächter’s terms refers to all the activities involving international elements apart from the outgoing mobility programs, thus making internationalization more of an internal concern for institutions.

For Teekens, “internationalization abroad” also means student mobility schemes and rather a traditional illustration of the concept that affecting mostly individuals and requiring a minimal involvement on the side of the institution (2005, 2). This implies that “internationalization at home” requires stronger participation of the “home” institution creating opportunities for a more far-reaching internationalization process affecting not only students but faculty, staff as well as internal functioning of the university (ibid). This reasoning might be true in case of the European experience with internationalization but the development path elsewhere might be different. Countries like the United States or Australia have recently been developing operations abroad by setting up branch campuses (Becker 2010), which should be seen as “internationalization abroad” since it makes programs and institutions the mobile elements, yet it is not traditional at all.

3.4 *Institutional level: activity vs. process approach*

The existing variety of internationalization methods has been categorized by Knight and de Wit into four main approaches: activity, competency, ethos and process approach (Knight and de Wit 1997, 17). The activity and process approaches and the distinction between them are particularly relevant to the discussion of international cooperation schemes including the development and future management of joint degree consortia.

The “activity approach” to internationalization means employing all the academic-related initiatives and programs, such as student and faculty mobility schemes, curriculum innovation, international students or joint research projects. It is the most common and popular way of understanding and applying the concept of internationalization of HE institutions (Knight and de Wit 1997, 16). The objective of implementation of such academic tools is to incorporate the “international dimension” within the HE institution and all of its functions (Knight and de Wit 1997, 20).

However, according to the authors’ classification, this approach employs strategies and instruments related only to the academic instruction, research and service activities of the institution (Knight and de Wit 1997, 17; Knight 2004, 13) and does not include any additional “organizational strategies” pertaining to the wider institutional setting. Therefore, the “process approach”, which is reflected in the Knight’s newest definition but seems less common among HE institutions, suggests a focus on the bigger picture of internationalization strategies and incorporation of both elements: the academic side as well as the higher level institutional activities and developments (ibid). As Knight further explains, this means simultaneous integration of or a “comprehensive approach” to both academic programs such as joint degrees, mobility schemes or research projects, and the organizational elements such as the support systems, policies and institutional planning (Knight 1999).

Knight and de Wit emphasize that unless those international academic or research programs are embedded into the institutional policies and structures, they might remain only marginal activities in danger of vanishing once the academic connections or financial resources become more limited (Knight and de Wit 1997, 20). Therefore, a wider support of the academic programs expressed by the senior leaders or institutional management, new established structures and financial resources supporting the development and management of such international academic and research program initiatives are seen as essential to the long-term internationalization plans of HE institutions (Knight 2004, 13; Knight and de Wit 1997, 20).

This observation is worth emphasizing as studies on the inter-institutional international cooperation schemes, including joint research projects or joint degree programs, indicate that such forms of cooperation often emerge as marginal activities based on links between two individual academics (Beerkens, 70-72), which makes them rather volatile. Thus, the lack of institutional involvement upon the establishment of such academic programs, in other words the absence of introduction of a “process approach”, might make them unsustainable in the long run according to Knight and de Wit. Beerkens quoting Van der Wende (2002) also clearly states that internationalization has already moved from “ [being a] marginal concern towards a central institutional issue with strategic importance” (Beerkens 2004, 1-2), which would confirm the overall growing dominance of the “process approach” to internationalization as opposed to the more peripheral activity approach. The national contexts tend to vary, however, especially for countries where internationalization and international cooperation are still relatively new concepts.

This chapter looks at the cooperation schemes among higher education institutions and how their function has changed over the years. In this historical setting international joint degree consortia appear on the horizon, although it is still not clear if they are a direct consequence of previous collaborations.

4.1 *Historical perspective*

Knight and de Wit identify international linkages emerging among academics and institutions as one of the oldest forms of internationalization in higher education. However, during the past fifty years the cooperation schemes across borders have undergone the most significant transformations (1997, 8). Over time, the higher education institutions rather than national governments have become increasingly more important global actors independently establishing new partnerships with specific strategies in the background (Kehm 2003, 110).

Since the 1950s until the late 1980s and 1990s international cooperation among higher education institutions was used as a foreign policy and diplomatic tool and its direction and function was very much related to the national political goals (Knight and de Wit 1997, 8-9). Only in the late 1980s and 1990s the environment changed again as the globalization signs appeared on the horizon and global competition among nations intensified. In this period international cooperation became driven more by economic rationales than the previous political and cultural ones (ibid). In Europe, this period took a slightly different turn and led to years of “Europeanisation” efforts and even stronger inter-institutional cooperation (de Wit 2002).

4.2 *The European experience and policies*

Hans de Wit provides a general account of the internationalization of higher education in Europe since the 1950s, which has been centered on the issues of institutional cooperation and academic and student mobility. The process in the region developed along the European integration activities and the so-called “Europeanization” and meant an escalation of relevant collaborative educational programs, especially after the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 (de Wit 2002, 42). This evaluation of international cooperation in Europe mostly in the context of EU level policies rather than national trends is relevant to the discussion of joint degree programs as they are one of the actively promoted items on the EU’s agenda for higher education (ibid).

However, although De Wit acknowledges in his assessment the high level of heterogeneity across the national higher education systems in Europe and related individual developments, the historical account of internationalization he presents, seen through the lens of the international cooperation (2002, 42), seems to be more relevant to the developments in continental Europe and not so accurate for the case of the UK, where the focus on international student recruitment has been the key internationalization tool⁸.

The second half of the 1970s marked in Europe the beginning of increased internationalization activity in higher education, which was reflected by intensified cooperation initiatives. Since then several of the EU-initiated programs stimulated the development of cross-border European cooperation schemes and played a significant role in preparing the Europe’s road to joint degree programs. Although the focus of the study is not

⁸ A recent 2009 report supports the argument that internationalization path of the UK has not been centered on cooperation as it has been in continental Europe.
<http://www.international.ac.uk/resources/UK%20Universities%20and%20Europe%20Competition%20and%20Internationalisation.pdf>

on the European Union level policies promoting inter-institutional cooperation and joint degree, it is important to establish the appropriate context illustrating the cooperation activity taking place in order to position the development of joint degree programs in that setting.

4.2.1 The earliest policies: Joint Study Programmes – 1976

In 1976 the ministers of then nine members of the EU adopted the first education-related Action Programme, which used Joint Study Programmes (JSP) as key instrument and was in place until 1986 (Teichler and Steube 1991, 329). Although the impact of the program on the overall internationalization process in Europe is not seen as very significant (de Wit 2002, 47), the initiative is particularly relevant to the origins of the joint degree university collaboration schemes. This early program and the established framework provided the basic structure for the future EU initiatives in the field of inter-institutional cooperation and also contributed to the university network activity (Beerkens 2004, 35 after Jones 1991).

The focus of the JSP was on promoting joint academic cooperation among higher education institutions, especially the initial phases of such initiatives. The program included travel grants for faculty and administration members participating in the development of new JSPs and since 1983 supported exploratory trips to further encourage international collaboration (EUROPA 1987). In fact there was a higher financial support for the initial development of such programs rather than their later administration or student support (Teichler and Steube 1991). By 1987, there were 586 programs established or qualified under the JSP scheme and the top five disciplines included engineering and technology, social sciences, business studies, natural sciences and mathematics, and finally architecture and urban studies (EUROPA 1987).

Although joint qualification was not a requirement of the JSPs at the time, already a number of the JSP programs between 1983 and 1985 already concurrently awarded a degree from

home institution and the host institution, where the mandatory study abroad period was completed (Teichler and Steube 1991, 329). It is visible in the Teichler and Steube study that at the time such developments were quite innovative but nonetheless one can conclude that early forms of joint degree programs were already present in Europe almost three decades ago.

4.2.2 From Erasmus to Socrates

The First Action Program and the JSPs ended by 1987 and the successor initiative was launched and quickly became very well-known among European students. The European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) also focused on international cooperation but this time student mobility was the key ingredient. Even though ERASMUS is typically associated with student and faculty exchange programs, it also had a part in promotion of joint program development. According to the data gathered by de Wit, in the period between 1987 – 1993, in addition to 200,000 student and 15,000 faculty exchanges in the framework of 2200 JSPs with numerous institutions and departments collaborating together, 800 joint curricula were developed during that period (de Wit 2002, 53).

Following the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, which included education as one of the policy areas, more EU initiatives emerged. The SOCRATES Program emerged from combining of various educational programs under one umbrella initiative (de Wit 2002, 55). The SOCRATES grants distributed between 1995 and 1996 allowed for development of “2673 inter-university cooperation programs (...) and 28 major thematic networks in the higher education sector” (Socrates 1995-1996). The ERASMUS program continued to function under the SOCRATES umbrella but in its later version the institutional interactions were lifted from the department level to the central institutional one, in order to enable faculty

members focusing on academic elements such as joint curriculum development even if this transition was criticized by both academics and staff members for its top-down approach (de Wit 2002, 56). The development of the SOCRATES framework also brought the emergence of thematic networks as it was one of the provisions of the program and as de Wit notes after Kehm, the program carried a certain notion of managerialism and aimed at “reinforcement of strategic thinking” in higher education (de Wit 2002, 56). As shown, a number of significant European initiatives focusing on international, though in this context European, cooperation and joint curricula and program development has been in place for a long time.

4.2.3 The Bologna Process

The new Millennium brought further innovations into the European higher education. The Bologna Declaration signed in 1999 by ministers from 29 countries marks the next phase of Europeanization and is considered as the ultimate tool for creation of the European Higher Education Area, increased cooperation, and convergence of the higher education systems (de Wit 2002, 62). Apart from the obvious relevance of the Bologna Process to international cooperation and harmonization of the systems that are at the core of the program, the Process is particularly relevant to the development of joint degree programs in Europe. Specifically, joint programs have been considered, since the Ministerial Conference in Prague in 2001, the essential means for achieving competitive EHEA (Rauhvargers 2002). This emphasis on joint degree programs has been repeatedly emphasized at all the following Ministerial Conferences further promoting such joint collaborations.

4.2.4 The Erasmus Mundus Program

The most recent addition to the EC-level activities directly focusing on joint program development is the Erasmus Mundus (EM) initiative launched for five years in 2004 and extended until 2013. The Erasmus Mundus Program's Action 1 provides a new term in European higher education, an "Erasmus Mundus Masters course," which represents a joint program but one with strictly defined elements. The new European joint programs in the initial Erasmus Mundus framework in 2004 required cooperation among at least three HEIs in three different member states and mobility study periods in at least two of the partner institutions (European Commission 2003). Similar to the original JSP scheme, the EM framework calls for automatic approval of the study abroad periods by the consortium partners and recognition by the national HE systems of the awarded joint, double or even multiple national degrees (ibid).

Based on this brief overview of the variety of European policy initiatives that continuously stimulated inter-institutional cooperation and also specifically joint curriculum and joint degree program development since the late 1970s, it is more understandable that so many joint programs developed in the region.

4.3 *International cooperation: new trends*

As illustrated, the international cooperation and linkages among HE institutions are not a new phenomenon. However, the newly emerging models globally, such as joint and double degree consortia are often considered a more advanced type of inter-institutional relationship (Knight 2008; Knight and de Wit 1997; Beerkens 2004). Knight, who follows the evolution of international education terminology, observes that concepts such as "institutions agreements, partnership projects, bilateral and multilateral agreements and partnerships", which are forms of cooperation, existed already at least twenty-five years ago. But a significant number of

new terms including “international collaborative programmes”, “networks” and “joint and double degrees,” have become popular more recently, within the past fifteen years (Knight 2008, 4).

Similarly, Beerkens in his assessment of the stages of international cooperation, supports the view that **new** elements have been added to the palette of internationalization tools and strategies. Specifically, the author distinguishes the recent intensified efforts toward closer international cooperation among institutions and joint degree program development from all the previous forms of collaborative activities (Beerkens 2004, 2). These observations are also similar to de Wit’s remarks that European institutions are nowadays changing their approach from being only responsive to the EC incentives related to cooperation to actually being proactive and **strategic** in their internationalization efforts (2002, 68-69). However, the general trends do not always fit within the individual national scenarios.

CHAPTER 5: ON THE PATH TO JOINT DEGREES IN HUNGARY

After presenting the wider context of internationalization trends and the development of international joint degree cooperation schemes, a more local picture of higher education sector in Hungary is introduced in this chapter in preparation for the case study analysis and application of the learned concepts.

5.1 *International cooperation and joint degrees in Hungary*

The Hungarian higher education system experienced a rapid increase in the number of students in the first years of post-communist transition. Between 1990 and 2003 the number quadrupled (Pusztai and Szabo 2008, 85), which meant that the HEIs were busy meeting the new demand. Kerekes and Nemeslaki express certain nostalgia about the early 1990s, when the world's focus was on CEE, and “[m]ost universities came to [them] (...) almost everything was interesting what happened in Hungary” (2009, 130). The authors note that at the time the lacking foreign language knowledge or inadequate quality of education were excused. It was also a favorable environment for international cooperation as by 1993 the new law on higher education established legal basis for international inter-institutional partnerships in the field of teaching and awarding of degrees (Rauhvargers 2002, 37). The law, however, did not lead to development of joint degree programs but rather to arrangements in which foreign university partners delivered their programs in Hungary. This scenario indicates a rather passive approach of the HEIs in Hungary with respect to international cooperation opportunities in the period between 1990s and early 2000s.

The environment has changed with the new Millennium when it became clear that the CEE transition focus was fading away along with the international financial resources it initially brought (Kerekes and Nemeslaki 2009, 130-131). After 2001, also the demographic trends

and the labor market conditions became less favorable (ibid). In such declining conditions for higher education in Hungary, the Bologna Process arrived, which emphasized the concept of internationalization in higher education (ibid, 130; Bologna Process in Hungary). A representative from the Ministry of Education also confirms that in Hungary internationalization of higher education is primarily linked to the Bologna Process and the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which implies that prior international strategies were rather sporadic if any at all (Loboda 2008). In 2005, the introduction of the new Higher Education Act cemented the legal framework for Bologna system and also placed an explicit focus on internationalization efforts and joint degree development (Ministry of Education 2006). A change in approaches to internationalization is noticeable and joint degree programs are often in the center. The 2010 Report indicates that the number of international joint programs has been recently added as an indicator of internationalization level of Hungarian HEIs (The Bologna Process in Hungary 2010, 27), which makes their evaluation even more valuable.

5.2 Case study: Corvinus University of Budapest

Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB) is considered one of the top institutions in Hungary (Kerekes and Nemeslaki 2009, 139) and also one of the most internationally-recognized Hungarian universities. It was created by an institutional merger in 2000 of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences, the College of Public Administration and additional faculties of Horticulture and Food Industry in 2003 (University's website). As a result, the CUB currently consists of seven faculties: Faculty of Business Administration, Economics, Social Sciences, Public Administration, Food Science, Horticultural Science and Landscape Architecture. One member of the International Advisory Board (IAB) of the university described the existing organizational structure of Corvinus "similar to a holding company which has been maintaining the predecessor universities exactly as they were" (IAB Statutory Session 2008, 1).

The university also represents a strong international focus. Already in 2005, the MSc program in Business Administration became the only Hungarian program in management ranked by the Financial Times (Kerekes and Nemeslaki 2009, 127). Also in 2005, the CUB received the European Quality label related to its high achievements in ERASMUS mobility scheme (Corvinus website). As the Rector emphasizes on the CUB's website, "It is very important for Corvinus University of Budapest to appear prepared in the European Higher Education Area. The main aim is to maintain and strengthen existing international relations as well as to develop new ones, to take part in international networks and to establish joint programs that provide the students with a double or a joint degree." (Corvinus Website) This statement confirms the points made earlier that although internationalization has become a priority area it is primarily associated with the Bologna Process.

According to the 2008 external review by the European University Association of the CUB, the institution's commitment to international activities is evident (EUA 2008, 13). The EUA's evaluation highlighted that the foundation for the CUB's international strength has been created by, for example, the establishment of an international office, joint degree programs already present, some other programs offered in foreign languages, and a good international partnership profile of the institution, specifically long-term cooperation agreements with over 200 university partners. On the other hand, the International Advisory Board of the university, whose specific function among others is to advise on internationalization, in its session in October 2008, emphasized the impression that the university lacks a clear direction in its internationalization efforts and that the activities undertaken by individual faculties have "no overall strategic impact on the whole university" (IAB Statutory Session 2008, 2).

Although the EUA evaluation report as well as the additional information on the international activity paint a relatively positive picture of the internationalization efforts confirming the CUB's leading position on the national level, the concerns expressed by the IAB about the lack of coordination and distinct internationalization strategy emphasize significant weaknesses in the institutional approach and put in question the strategic nature of the existing international activities, specifically the role and functioning of international joint degree programs.

CHAPTER 6: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The chapter analyzes how the introduced concepts about joint degree programs and internationalization apply in a real-life context of a Hungarian university. It presents the main findings based on the information collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with six program coordinators and one International Office representative. Supplemental information on the CUB's joint programs and internationalization process was obtained from the university's website, as well as Erasmus Mundus 2009 Compendium in case of the relevant EM programs. First, the section discusses the discovered patterns and circumstances surrounding the development of international joint degrees at the CUB. An outline of the CUB's internationalization efforts and policies relevant to the development of joint degree activity follows in the next part.

6.1 *Development phase*

The study analyzed the development of six international joint programs in the following academic units of the CUB: 1. Department of World Economy (FE), 2. Department of Management and Organization (FBA), 3. Institute for Sociology and Social Policy (FSS), 4. Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development (FBA), 5. Department of Oenology (FFS), and 6. Department of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (FHS)⁹. The informants confirmed that there the remaining two faculties: Public Administration and Landscape Architecture are also in the process of development of joint degree schemes. Five programs are offered within the Erasmus Mundus framework except for the MSc in Horticulture (FHS).

⁹ FE- Faculty of Economics; FHS – Faculty of Horticultural Science; FBA- Faculty of Business Administration; FSS – Faculty of Social Sciences; FFS – Faculty of Food Science; For exact names and descriptions of the programs, please refer to: <http://www.uni-corvinus.hu/index.php?id=24193>

6.1.1 Time frame

All of the examined programs emerged in the last decade, especially the last five or six years and are still quite new. The oldest joint program partnership was identified in the Oenology Department and dates back to approximately 2000/2001 with the official agreement signed in 2002. Also, the initial partner discussions about the program run by the Institute of Sociology started relatively early in approximately 2002/2003, and at the time it was still a rather unknown type of international activity. The rest of the programs developed more recently, especially in the context of the EM launch in 2004 as well as institutional changes at the CUB that took place in 2005/2006 that will be discussed in the next sections. Even in the case of the Sociology Institute, the informant indicated that the coordinating institution, University of Trento, was aware of the EM scheme at the time they approached the CUB.

6.1.2 Initial development factors

With regard to the cooperation beginnings, in five out of the six programs international connection was initiated exclusively by the foreign, Western European partner. This means that in the majority of cases, the CUB's participation in the initial phases was rather passive and reactive and the institution was sought out by others. In all five cases foreign institutions were specifically looking for a partner among the new EU member states (or candidate states before 2004) either to improve the geographical balance of the consortium to increase the chances for EU funds¹⁰ or because the designed program included a comparative element as in case of the program of the Institute of Sociology or regional component as in the Department of World Economy focusing on the CEE. Only in the case of Agricultural, Food

¹⁰One might argue that strong financial incentives offered by the EC, especially aimed at integration of new Member states could distort the story about the development of joint programs in Hungary; meaning that it is possible that in the absence of the EM program and its funding, the joint degree programs would have not developed at all. However, as illustrated, similar funding schemes, supporting cooperation and joint degrees among European HEIs have existed for decades and it would be very difficult to separate the impact of the EC financial incentives on most of the joint programs in Europe.

and Environmental Policy Analysis (AFEPA) program slightly more active participation on the CUB side was indicated. Specifically, the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development responded to a call for partners announced within a university network expressing their interest in a joint program initiative rather than being directly approached by a foreign institution.

The more reactive approach of the CUB to international cooperation is not surprising since joint degree programs were hardly known. An important fact about the development stages is that in case of four programs no previous links even on individual academic level existed among the CUB and the consortium members. Thus, the newly established international joint degree consortia for the CUB's departments did not mean a new kind of partnership but in fact some of the first international cooperation activities. On the other hand, the interviews revealed that at least in case of two earlier programs in Comparative Local Development and the International Vintage Master certain level of international linkages existed among the Western European partners. Specifically, a connection between two academics from Italy and Germany was indicated for the first program and cooperation among four individuals was seen as the engine for the second initiative. This illustrates that international cooperation at the CUB at the time was still rather under-developed, which implies that the emergence of joint degree programs as a form of international cooperation was rather ad-hoc and coincidental.

A different story was found in the remaining two departments of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, and Management and Organization as both informants indicated previous connections with the consortium members that were related to the later joint degree programs. The prior links were either through participation in a thematic network in case of

AFEPA or as in case of the latter department previous EU-funded curriculum development project. Moreover, one of the programs that is currently being developed at the Faculty of Public Administration is also based on prior well-established international links through a university network, as the informant from the Faculty of Economics highlighted. Therefore, although previous international linkages have so far been an exception rather than a rule in the context of joint degree program development, they are present at CUB and in two cases are rooted in more established international university networks. The importance of the international connection established through the joint curriculum development project as indicated by the informant from the Management and Organization seems less obvious as the Institute of Sociology also participated in that kind of a project but it did not lead to joint program cooperation.

The evaluation already points to two or perhaps even three development models for joint degree cooperation that evolved at Corvinus University. The most common scheme, valid for four programs, involves: a pro-active approach of the Western European university partner seeking Eastern European partners or Corvinus in particular, no pre-existing cooperation activity between the CUB and consortium members, and a rather coincidental emergence process. The second model, however, which is the case in only one examined program but was indicated to be valid also for the newly emerging initiative reflects a higher level of prior international cooperation activity established within a discipline-related university network, which can possibly stimulate a slightly more active participation of the CUB as illustrated in the case of the AFEPA joint program. The third category could refer to joint program development emerging from previous project-based cooperation but since the two instances led to opposite outcomes and a joint program emerged only in case of Management Department, the scheme would require more examination.

6.1.3 Additional observations

As the international cooperation evolves within the consortia, and there are different paths and levels of intensity, some of the mentioned spill-over effects indicate strengthening of the links among the consortia partners. Interestingly, the most active level of additional cooperation activities seems to take place among the CEE or New Member states institutions within the consortia. The informant from the Department of World Economy highlighted a new ERASMUS exchange active on both student and faculty level with a university in Poland that resulted directly from the EM joint program link. Moreover, a deeper level of cooperation was also the case with a Czech institution and in this case additional joint program activity was being considered. Similarly, the Institute of Sociology remarked on a very good and active relationship with the Slovenian member of consortium and a totally new ERASMUS exchange scheme with them was also an outcome in this case; in case of this program, however, the overall cooperation among all members seems rather active. Whether a tendency to ally more with the partners from the region is a pattern or a coincidental occurring is an interesting question that again should be explored further.

6.2. *Internationalization context at the CUB*

The need to internationalize the department was mentioned by the program coordinator from Sociology Institute as one of the main reasons of participation in a joint program scheme. However, other factors such as enhancement of quality of teaching and learning and the attractiveness of EM label highlighted by the World Economy informant, the prestige of the Erasmus Mundus label or an opportunity to increase the number of students indicated in case of the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Department participating in a non-EM program. In case of the Management Department there were simply no reasons against joining, which indicates that participation of the CUB does not involve any high costs for the institution and is seen as an attractive addition to the academic offer. The informant also admitted that their

involvement in, for example, the EM application was very limited. Therefore, becoming more connected with international institutions does not appear the dominant rationale for joining cooperation schemes.

The representative of the World Economy Department, who also held a position responsible for internationalization within the department, elaborated on the institutional environment with regard to internationalization around the time of development of joint degrees. Specifically, he emphasized the organizational changes at the CUB that became effective around 2006 and led to “decentralization of internationalization process.” This meant that internationalization process was transferred to the level of faculties departments rather than being centralized within top leadership of the university. Academic units were, therefore, granted autonomy to establish international contacts and were in fact responsible for development of international activities. As a result the smaller international units, often constituting of one administrative staff member, were established at each of the faculties. In addition, the international agenda was upheld on the central level through the International Office and a position of vice-rector for international affairs was also established (EUA 2008, 14).

A respondent from the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Department confirmed the CUB policy by indicating that at the time international cooperation evolved, she held a position of a vice-dean with a responsibility to build up international activities within the faculty.

Whether such “decentralization” measures are also common at other universities in Hungary is not clear; a comparison with other institutions would clarify if this kind of policy was in fact unique and possibly a factor leading to more international activity at Corvinus.

According to the respondent from the Department of World Economy it was a different approach from what existed at other Hungarian universities.

The information and observations gathered through the interview process confirmed the impressions expressed by a member of the IAB about the CUB functioning as “a holding company” with seven internationalization approaches established within academic faculties rather than an integrated one for the institution as a whole (IAB 2008, 2). The central International Office (IO) seems to be preoccupied primarily with issues related to student mobility while academic departments develop their own international activities independently.

The IO representative expressed the view that the role of the office was to support the faculties if they request assistance but did not see any particular need at present to get more involved in the existing activities. One of the reasons for the difficulty with coordination between the administrative and academic aspects was touched upon again by the professor from the Department of World Economy. Specifically, international joint degree programs are considered academic activities, which limits the scope of involvement of the administrative and non-academic staff. As the professor highlighted separation of academic matters from administrative ones was very difficult in case of joint degrees and as a result the whole program operation was within the departments. This somewhat constraints the possible further expansion of the cooperation since members of the departments including the international units within are burdened with management of joint programs and related student mobility issues.

These problems are not unknown to the departments, at least in case of World Economy, but development of a suitable solution and finding the right level of involvement of both sides – central and department -has been difficult; partially because of lack of more decisive leadership on the central level and partially because the departments are often too busy with the administration and the horizontal coordination disappears as “there is no energy to stimulate it.” The environment might vary across departments as each joint program cooperation develops at its own pace and direction. However, the overall lack of more active and direct participation and support of the joint program activity by university level management and administration does enhance establishment of additional international activities or expansion of the existing cooperation, which at this point depend on the level of interest and enthusiasm of the involved faculty members and perhaps the leadership of the coordinating foreign institution rather than being steered in a planned direction by the CUB.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has shown that internationalization in higher education is indeed a complex issue and that joint degree programs do not necessarily nicely fit or are handled with the more strategic and innovative approaches to the process in mind. The examined Corvinus University of Budapest had no experience with joint degree international cooperation a decade ago and now participates in eight such schemes and two more are being developed. With the support of the European Commission's funding scheme and pro-active approach of foreign partners, the CUB managed to get involved in a high number of joint degree cooperation schemes. Although such international activity emerged in a somewhat ad-hoc manner, the question now is how the university should handle such developments and how it could make the most of international joint degrees in the context of its internationalization strategy.

In the current setting internationalization process is highly fragmented, which has been also highlighted by the IAB members. The central IO does not seem too have much authority other than handling issues of student mobility. The seven faculties operate within their own international units and are in charge of their international strategies as well as have to carry the administrative burdens. Although centralization is not a favored word in a post-communist setting, the instant recommendation that presents itself would be the introduction of more centralized horizontal coordination of international activities within the individual departments and faculties led by a body of authority for increased effectiveness. The two areas that would benefit from a more centralized management would be the operational administrative side as well as the academic activity in relation to international developments.

In the first case joint management of administrative matters related to the programs would allow for sharing of experiences and facilitate the process. It would also ensure that the program management is more institutionalized and not relying on individual staff members within faculties. This kind of a solution implies more bureaucracy if a new mid-level administrative unit was to be created but in the long run it should ensure more efficient management and administration. Such horizontal coordination could be achieved by consolidation of all the international units that emerged within faculties into a more centralized body led by university management, yet still closely related to the academic departments. The university level involvement and support are essential in order to achieve a more strategic positioning of the joint programs. One respondent also remarked that certain authority element works well for more effective management. One of the partner institutions of the CUB, University of Trento, has developed a similar unit referred to as central office, which supports academic departments with all steps leading to international cooperation schemes, handles mobility issues and other matters particular to joint degree programs (University of Trento 2009); relying on the partner's experience and expertise in this field would be highly recommended.

The second coordination area involves the academic side and offers a further enhancement of international activity. As of now the international programs evolve at their own speed and in various directions, independently of each other. Some of them already resulted in some additional projects but other do not share that experience. Therefore, establishment of an interfaculty center around the international joint programs but inviting also department representatives who are not yet involved in such initiatives would create a platform enabling a wider evaluation of the programs and resulting additional developments. This kind of information exchange would increase the general knowledge how the activities were

developing, would give an opportunity to exchange experiences and tackle challenges. Also, university leadership would be necessary so that the top management is aware where the programs are and could interact and stimulate their evolution in a particular direction that is strategic for the whole university.

In a broader context, the paper has shown that internationalization indeed is a complex concept and understood in different ways by various actors. The preoccupation of the IO with the mobility issues relates to the national agenda and targets set by European policies such as Bologna Process or Europe 2020, which dictate a certain direction. In a setting like the CUB, where internationalization, Bologna Process and joint degree programs all came at the same time, it is more difficult to comprehend and navigate through different agendas in order to define what function each of these elements plays. Ad-hoc implementation of top level prescriptions, as often the case of EU level policies in new member states, most likely will not lead to sustainable results. Therefore on a more regional, EU level, more emphasis should be placed on a broader explanation of the processes and philosophies behind them with a flexibility for interpretation, such as the opportunities internationalization can bring to national HE systems, in order to allow the late comers to really embrace the concepts

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