

Internationalisation in higher education – Risky and beneficial

BY Ines Alica

> INTERNATIONALISATION

The IAU Global Survey Report titled 'Internationalization of Higher Education: New Directions, New Challenges' was released recently in Beijing, China, at the IAU annual international conference where 150 representatives of higher education institutions and associations of universities from 48 countries gathered to debate internationalisation.

Eva Egron-Polak, IAU secretary-general, said the 2005 global survey is conducted on a regular basis to track the latest trends in higher education and to keep education leaders informed of the 'challenges and risks of these developments.'

"The analysis of the results, helps IAU, and perhaps others, determine what actions are needed in the future to address some of these crucial questions that require global attention and debate," she said.

Risks and benefits

Some 3,000 higher education institutions and national university associations from 95 countries were polled for the study. The survey collected views on the importance of, and rationale for, pursuing internationalisation and its benefits and risks.

It found 96 percent of the respondents felt internationalisation offered many benefits, but 70 percent worried that it brought risks that could affect the quality of education. The survey also covered institutional strategies, growth areas and national policies on foreign-language learning. The survey compared regions and the developed and the developing world.

Of the institutions polled, almost half listed competitiveness or strategic alliances as the prime mover of internationalisation. An institution's ability to expand cultural awareness and the international knowledge of its students and faculty and its ability to boost its research capacity were other moti-

While internationalisation is important to the progress of higher education, the growing commercialisation, the threat of brain drain and the increase in foreign degree mills are inherent risks of the concept, say respondents in a survey by the International Association of Universities (IAU)



The Global Survey Report Internationalization of Higher Education was released recently at the IAU annual international conference in Beijing.

Inadequate attention

Yet the picture is "less encouraging" at the national level, where governments pay inadequate attention to international education and do not play the role that they should in terms of national policy and funding to facilitate international research, mobility and development projects, and to ensure that appropriate quality assurance and accreditation systems are in place for cross-border delivery of programs, she said.

Knight predicts an increase in popularity for joint and double degrees in the future, and identifies as key trends the growth of institutional networks, student mobility, the recruitment of fee-paying students and research as a form of international collaboration.

The survey shows that commercialisation of higher education is seen as the number one risk by all higher education institutions. Brain drain ranks third in level of importance. In the 2003 IAU Internationalisation survey, brain drain ranked as the number one risk but its shift in the rankings shows education leaders are more concerned about newer issues as commercialisation and trade of higher education.

vations to internationalise. Excessive commercialisation was the most feared negative effect of internationalisation.

The report's author, Jane Knight of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, said many universities were moving in a positive direction by taking a planned approach rather than an ad hoc approach toward internationalisation. But she said the survey indicated a "shift from international cooperation to the pursuit of national competitiveness as a motive for internationalisation."

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Many universities are moving in a positive direction by taking a planned approach

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