

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF STUDY AND TEACHING: INNOVATIVE TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the experience of the organization of interuniversity cooperation and partnership, internationalization of study and teaching on an innovative basis. Ruhr University Bochum is known not only in Germany for its commitment to advanced educational technologies, its desire to develop international relations, and to cultivation of joint training programs with foreign

partners, to which MIIT has been belonging for several years. The author comments on internationalization of educational programs, mobility of students and teachers, exchange of researchers and their contacts at the beginning of a career. At the same time, the problem of the linguistic environment and its importance for the success of teaching and research activities within the walls of the university are also noted.

Keywords: university, training, research, internationalization, interuniversity cooperation.

Background. Ruhr-University Bochum is a young and dynamic research university. It was the first German university founded after World War II. Teaching and research started in 1965. With over 43.000 students and a staff of 6.000, it offers – next to the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg – the largest range of disciplines of any German university. Subjects extend from the humanities and social sciences to the natural sciences, full-fledged engineering sciences, and medicine. RUB's teaching and research mission is the *universitas* – which we interpret as 'the Community of the Learned and the Learning' and which is translated into our motto «humane, accomplished, open to the world».

Our academic structure follows the Anglo-Saxon department model rather than the traditional faculty model of the Humboldtian University. This means flat hierarchies, disciplinary sections, transdisciplinary research units, a high degree of co-operation on campus, and a clear focus on international performance at every level. Ruhr University won and is now realizing projects in two funding lines of the German Excellence Initiative.

Ruhr-University has a continuing history of pioneering major advancements in study, research, and the promotion of early career researchers. To name just two examples: (1) RUB was one of the two German universities (together with TU Munich) introducing a university-wide doctorate college (in Bochum: the RUB Research School, founded in 2006), which became the blueprint for similar institutions at many other German universities in the years thereafter. (2) RUB pioneered the introduction of the bachelor-master study system ('Bologna reform') in Germany.

Objective. The objective of the author is to consider innovative trends which are applied within internationalization of study and teaching at Ruhr University Bochum.

Methods. The author uses general scientific methods, scientific description, comparative analysis.

Results.

Trends in the Internationalization of Study and Teaching at RUB

As part of our all-encompassing international strategy, internationalization of study and teaching plays a prominent role. In this article, the focus is on three measures that have been or are in the process of implementation over the course of the last couple of years:

(1) Internationalization@home,

(2) Mobility of Students and Faculty, and

(3) Exchange and Encounter of Early Career Researchers.

These topics were selected because they are apt to enter into the discussion with the MIIT. We have

been enjoying a partnership with the MIIT for several years and think that it may now be the time for further and stronger joint projects.

(1) Internationalization@home / Internationalization of the Curriculum

These two, intricately related measures encompass actions determined to (a) make all Bochum students aware of the fact that they are living and studying in a globalized and transnational context that allows and demands internationalizing measures, (b) expose German students to intercultural experiences while staying on campus, and (c) allow international students to acquaint themselves with Germany and the study of German as well as to contribute to classes and other activities at RUB in their own mother tongue.

The first and general measure necessitates raising the awareness of the existing everyday and subject-related global interconnectedness of living, studying, and researching on a German university campus. This means, in particular, to integrate students' and professors' daily face-to-face and digital international interactions into teaching and study at RUB. This will require embedding learning arrangements and teaching aims into an international context of knowledge acquisition and exchange as well as securing a critical orientation with regard to global supply and demand structures.

One of our major fields of action guided by the rectorate and the International Office will be to increase the number of international guest lecturers who will take over teaching in parts of the curriculum in various courses. We will not only invite more guest lecturers to RUB, but the idea is to set up especially co-teaching seminars or lectures. This will not only expose the students to different methods of teaching and learning, but will also enrich the professional exchange between the local and the international teaching staff. To support and finance these activities the rectorate of Ruhr-University has already set up a special program to increase the number of international lecturers and, in addition, we will also use EU programs like ERASMUS+ to reach this goal.

So far, measures of E-learning and other forms of research- and teaching-related digitalization have not yet been used systematically and too seldom in content courses for the purpose of internationalization. We are determined to explore this field more intensely in the years to come. Although E-learning has started to be used in more and more courses across various fields, it has rarely been used for the purposes of internationalization.



- Today, Ruhr-University Bochum offers E-learning courses during the pre-arrival or the arrival phase in order to familiarize international students with the conditions of living, learning or doing research in Germany and at the Ruhr-University Bochum. There is e.g. the webpage start@rub.de, advising on the formal and practical aspects of arriving and living in Germany, which is embedded in an online language course.

- Other already existing E-offers, developed at RUB and potentially useful for international students, are preparatory online modules in the fields of engineering and science that combine the teaching of technical terminology (in German) with the introduction to basic skills of thinking and reasoning in the respective subjects in self-learning courses for future students.

Next to existing and developing digital offers, international students and researchers are assisted by a variety of established measures.

- After arriving at Bochum, the 'RUB international student services (RUBiss)' and the 'RUB Welcome Centre für Researchers', both having been offering their services for many years, ensure an easy start for international students and researchers;

- A number of International teams in various university sports brings together local and international students.

- Buddy systems serve the mutual support of language proficiency.

- In special courses, German students can choose to be trained to act as tutors for 'German as a Foreign Language' as part of their undergraduate course work, receiving credit points in their optional courses devoted to the acquisition of non-disciplinary, supplementary skills.

- A new track 'International Studies' was designed for the 30-credit-points part of undergraduate studies that is devoted to the acquisition of non-disciplinary, supplementary skills and can be filled with courses according to the students' own academic and later career preferences ('Optionalbereich'). In this new track, students who do not have the chance to go abroad for a longer time are offered two- or three-part courses devoted to the introduction to the language, culture, and/or economy of different regions, sometimes culminating in an excursion to a respective city. Recent courses took students – prepared by an introductory and/or a language course and a course taught by a guest professor from the respective country – to London, Washington, Krakow, Hong Kong, and various places in Morocco.

(2) Mobility of Students and Faculty

Student mobility is one of the 'traditional' and indispensable means to further internationalization for students. It allows them, as a regular part of their studies, to spend time abroad. Hence, it is one of the most important tasks of the rectorate and the International Office to secure sufficient capacity to increase the number of international exchange and regular students at RUB.

Recent and new actions in the field include

- Using the newly developed track 'International Studies' in the 30-credit-point part of undergraduate

studies devoted to the acquisition of non-disciplinary, supplementary skills, mentioned above, to allow undergraduates to integrate a semester abroad easily and without further delay in their course of studies;

- An international lecturer program open to all disciplines and supported by central funds for longer stays of guest researchers willing to do research and teaching on our campus, called 'The RUB International Faculty';

- A 'Lab Exchange' program involving students who, typically, experiment in a lab at RUB and a lab at an international university. Each student travels to the other university in order to experiment and co-operate on research topics.

(3) Exchange and Encounter of Early Career Researchers

Early career researchers are, according to our definition, doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, including the ones holding a junior professorship without tenure (i.e. Ph.D. students or, (in Russian – aspiranty) and researchers with a Ph.D. before they hold a permanent professorial position).

RUB's efforts to enhance the promotion of early career researchers were honored and have been substantially supported by the successful application in the German Excellence Initiative and led to the establishment of the RUB Research School (RS) in 2006. Since then, the RS co-ordinates and develops not only all activities concerning the general education and promotion of early career researchers but also – in close collaboration with the International Office – all measures pertaining to their acquisition of international experience and the development of their personal international network.

Recent and new activities include:

- The PLUS-programs of the RUB Research School, funded by the German Excellence initiative. These programs – accessible to all doctoral researchers on campus – offer funds for an extended research stay in another country, funds to invite international peers for co-operation on campus, funds to organize and to conduct international doctoral conferences on research topics suggested by the Research School or the early career researchers, and many more programs;

- Programs to bridge the 'postdoc-gap', i.e., funds to allow brilliant doctoral researchers who seek a continuation of their career in research to start a project in a foreign guest lab or other research facility even before funds for their postdoc proposals have been raised.

Conclusion. Internationalization is one of the top priorities of Ruhr-University Bochum and we are happy to have the opportunity to present and discuss our efforts in the fields of internationalization@home, mobility of students and faculty, and the internationalization measures for early career researchers on the occasion of the anniversary of the MIIT in Moscow. We sincerely hope to continue our relationship with the MIIT and are looking forward to a fruitful exchange of ideas and to new co-operative activities. ●

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