

Internationalisation strategy to attract foreign students and qualified labour

"It's easy to attract a lot of students, the problem is to attract the right students¹"

The global battle for talent has reached fever pitch. The winners of this battle will be countries with a whole-hearted, serious and professional approach. The losers will have a half-hearted, tentative approach, with a "nice-to-do" rather than "need-to-do" view of internationalisation.

The "whole-hearted" approach is led politically with the government setting the pace for national internationalisation efforts so that the political/administrative system and institutions work together, create synergy through coordinated efforts and, equally importantly, ensure the public investment necessary to realise the strategy.

The "half-hearted" approach means that internationalisation efforts are primarily at institution level. Some institutions will have a formal strategy laid down by management, while others will benefit from enthusiastic individuals who create international contacts on behalf of their institution. There is only limited political leadership, with inadequate and short-sighted public investment.

Attracting foreign students and highly educated labour is too important for society to leave to institutions and business. AC (the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations) acknowledges that there is political recognition of the need for a more offensive internationalisation strategy, as evidenced by the establishment of the government's Globalisation Council as well as the subsequent agreement on offensive global marketing of Denmark. AC also welcomes the government's embracing of the pivotal role of universities in many of the initiatives in its globalisation strategy, which was subsequently realised in the Welfare Agreement and the Globalisation Fund.

Furthermore, universities also account for by far the majority of internationalisation activity for higher education programmes². In the 2004/05 educational year there were 4357 foreign exchange students, while there were 3158 foreign students taking full education programmes at Danish universities. This corresponds to 73 per cent of the exchange activity for higher education and 68 per cent of the total number of foreign students attending higher education in Denmark. In 2004 there were also 283 foreign students on PhD scholarships in Denmark. Foreign students taking full education programmes make up 3 per cent of the total number of students at Danish universities.

¹ Mr Helge Sander, Danish Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation in JP, a Danish national newspaper, 18 December 2006.

² The figures in the section refer to "Mobilitetsstatistik – videregående uddannelser" (mobility statistics - higher education), CIRIUS (April 2006).

This is a good beginning, but if we look at experience from abroad there can be no doubt that much greater political effort is required if the full internationalisation potential of universities is to be exploited. Not only to attract foreign students, PhD scholarship holders, researchers and graduates to Danish businesses, but also to develop and maintain international research networks and education partnerships.

In the view of AC, the following rationale should guide internationalisation efforts for university education programmes:

- Internationalisation of university education programmes accounts for a significant part of quality development and assurance of the programmes. At national level, the political/administrative system should contribute by supporting internationalisation activities by universities so that universities are provided with the best framework to develop international study environments with foreign students, teachers and researchers as well as to take part in formal education and research partnerships with foreign universities.
- Universities' education programmes are a channel to attract foreign students, PhD scholarship holders and graduates to Denmark. The political/administrative system should be at the forefront of an international marketing strategy for Danish education programmes which will profile Denmark and Danish universities as attractive suppliers of research-based education at the highest international level.

Foreign students taking full education programmes are particularly attractive because they help create international study environments and because, after attaining a Danish MSc degree, they can be recruited on university PhD programmes, by Danish businesses, or act as ambassadors for Denmark and Danish education programmes in their home country.

AC proposes the following target figures for Danish internationalisation efforts for university education programmes and their contribution to attracting qualified labour:

- In 2012 the percentage of foreign students taking a full education programme in Denmark makes up 10 per cent of the total number of students, compared with the current 3 per cent. This corresponds to 11,000 foreign students.
- In 2013 almost half of foreign graduates, corresponding to 5,000 individuals, are in ordinary employment in Danish enterprises one year after attaining their degrees.
- In 2014 foreign PhD scholarship holders account for 30 per cent of total PhD admissions, corresponding to 750 PhD scholarships.

These are ambitious, yet realistic targets to be achieved through coordinated national internationalisation efforts operating at two levels - national and institutional.

The individual university will decide how it will act in the growing market for international education programmes. Clearly foreign students will carry with them a demand culture where the relationship between quality and price is carefully balanced in their decision-making process. In this decision-making process, the Danish university will be compared with other foreign universities and their education programmes. Therefore, institutions will have to pay much more

consideration to students who, justifiably, expect quality which corresponds to price. These students will put demands on teaching, study environment, including the physical facilities and the skills of fellow students, as well as the relevance of programmes for job opportunities.

In order to support internationalisation activities by universities, national internationalisation efforts should comprise the following initiatives:

- Establishment of a Danish education brand to be used in all marketing of Danish higher education programmes abroad. This brand should clearly and accurately describe what Denmark can offer. For example, a brand should highlight the characteristic Danish educational practices of project work, active contributions from students during teaching, independent and critical analysis, the flat teacher/student hierarchy, etc.
- The foreign service should be involved in national marketing efforts. One way could be by linking special education attachés to the Danish embassies and consulates. Such education attachés will be responsible for advising potential students of the opportunities at Danish universities, including guiding them further towards the Danish institutions and helping them with the formalities regarding residency permits. Furthermore, the education service could contribute market analyses of the number of potential applicants in the respective countries and it could establish contacts with players and authorities in the education sector.
- The education attaché could also manage specific marketing campaigns, co-financed with interested universities and/or enterprises and organisations which want to attract qualified labour.
- Initially, the USA, India and China should be focus countries for targeted marketing initiatives involving the Danish foreign service. These three countries are growing markets for Danish businesses and therefore people from these countries with Danish degrees will be valuable cultural bridge-builders for Danish businesses.
- A user-friendly English-language internet portal should be established which provides an overview of Danish higher education programmes and their institutions, and which provides information about the practicalities to be dealt with before starting a programme, job opportunities after attaining a degree, etc.
- A national task force should be established to ensure Danish attendance at relevant international education conferences and fairs, with special focus on events outside the EU/EEA.
- Coordinated efforts between the three ministries responsible for higher education and the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs should ensure quicker and smoother case processing for foreign applicants so that the first meetings with Danish bureaucracy proceed professionally and smoothly for the foreign students. Currently there are too many reports of foreign students who have not been able to complete residency formalities before their courses start.
- There should be improvements in the scholarship scheme for talented foreign students from outside the EU/EEA. The combination of payment for courses and scholarships for particularly talented students is an effective way of attracting foreign students who can contribute to the quality of university programmes and who can subsequently be recruited by university

research programmes or by Danish businesses. The Globalisation Fund has earmarked funding for 245 scholarships for allocation between short, medium and long-cycle higher education programmes. The scholarship programme should be increased ten-fold over the next 10 years on the basis of allocations which correspond to the activity level of the three educational areas.

- Statistical tools should be established making it possible to monitor developments in the various internationalisation activities for short, medium and long-cycle programmes.