

Hieber, S. (1998). Internationalization of German higher education. *Millenium*, 11

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF GERMAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Among the over 1.8 million students enrolled at the 335 German institutions of higher education there is also a large number of foreign students. In the winter semester 1995/96, the number of foreign students was about 150,000; however, approximately 40% of them lived in Germany before embarking on academic studies and acquired their higher education entrance qualification in Germany. Foreign students account for a share of 8.2% of the total number of students in Germanyⁱ⁾. At the same time 42,600 German students were enrolled at higher education institutions abroadⁱⁱ⁾. For Portugal this means: in 1995, 1,204 Portuguese students studied at German higher education institutionsⁱⁱⁱ⁾ while 55 Germans studied in Portugal.^{iv)}

The percentage of foreign students in Germany is similar to that in other industrialized countries (1996: France 8.7%, Australia 8.4%, Great Britain 8%). However, more than half of foreign students in Germany (about 87,500) come from European countries while the number of students from other major regions has been stagnating recently.

The German higher education system offers a large variety of opportunities for students. But they also have to confront difficulties, from learning a foreign language to having their German degree recognized in their home countries.

In the face of this situation, the heads of the Federal Government and the Länder governments in Germany have declared jointly that "enhancing the international attractiveness of science and higher education in Germany is currently a central task of higher education policy".^{v)}

Some reform projects are also aimed at helping foreign students to decide in favour of studying in Germany and at removing difficulties confronting them in Germany in the study environment and in

studies themselves. Relevant projects, either planned or already under way, are expected to help increase the number of foreigners deciding to enrol in German academic institutions:

- **Information on study opportunities in Germany**

In other countries, information on studies in Germany can be obtained from 230 German embassies and consulates general, 140 Goethe Institutes, 13 branch offices of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) as well as from about 440 German language teachers and 80 guest lecturers all over the world. The DAAD, as German marketing agency, presents the German higher education system at fairs and exhibitions worldwide.

Persons interested in studies in Germany can also obtain written informatory material. In addition to the brochure "Studien- und Berufswahl"^{vi)}, which provides an overview of all study opportunities in Germany, there is an increasing number of target group-specific brochures providing information on internationally oriented studies (for example, the DAAD's brochures entitled "Undergraduate Degree Programmes in English and German" and "Postgraduate Degree Programmes in English and German"^{vii)}; various brochures published in foreign languages by individual institutions).

The rapid dissemination of new media worldwide offers an opportunity for improving the information flow in qualitative terms. Most written information can now be found directly in the Internet (<http://www.daad.de>). Information activities currently focus on feeding into the Internet - in German and other languages - information on study opportunities in Germany and abroad. Information on study opportunities can, for example, be found in ORTELIUS^{viii)}, an EU-initiated database on study opportunities in EU member states.

- **Easier entrance to higher education**

Study applicants who have graduated from secondary schools in other countries are admitted to studies in Germany if their qualification is considered equivalent to German higher education entrance qualifications. The evaluation practice was modified in 1997 with due consideration of new and reformed training courses abroad^{ix)} so that access to higher education institutions in Germany became easier for applicants from quite a number of countries. At the same time, evaluation of foreign school-leaving certificates was adapted to the differentiated system of higher education entrance qualifications in Germany. Thus, a certificate may qualify for study at a Fachhochschule (FH) but not at a university.

Access to postgraduate study courses leading to a Master's degree has been made easier in particular for foreign holders of Bachelor's degrees.

- **Removing language barriers**

A sufficient knowledge of the respective foreign language is an important prerequisite for successful studies abroad. Persons interested in such studies consider carefully whether the course offered is worth the trouble of learning the language needed. In particular short postgraduate courses have therefore increasingly been offered also in English in recent years. Even courses offered in German increasingly include the possibility of writing theses in English. The knowledge of the German language required for courses given in German can be acquired either in relevant prep courses in Germany or in the student's home country. Currently, a central, standardized test of German as a foreign language is being prepared, modelled on the Test of English as a Foreign Language, to ensure uniform language standards to an even greater extent than so far.

- **Legal framework for non-nationals**

Legal provisions concerning aliens can make access to studies in Germany difficult for non-EU nationals. If interested students do not come from countries which have concluded bilateral agreements with Germany (for example Switzerland, Liechtenstein, USA), permits are required for entering and staying in Germany. Very recently, new relevant administrative provisions were introduced including a binding interpretation of the existing law in the interest of the students. These provisions are meant to ensure that qualified persons interested in study and research periods in Germany can obtain their entry and residence permits quickly without any bureaucratic delays. The aim is to demonstrate the openness of German higher education institutions and to make foreign students and researchers feel welcome.

- **Social support**

A major factor determining studies in Germany is the living environment (for example housing, health insurance) and the integration into a foreign culture. At a number of German universities, the Deutsches Studentenwerk^{x)} introduced a service package for foreign students in 1997 which includes accommodation, meals, cultural guidance and, if desired, insurance. Tutorial programmes - in particular for students from developing countries - provide orientation in matters of everyday life.

The institutions of higher education themselves increasingly offer programmes geared in particular to the integration of foreign students.

• **International orientation of undergraduate and postgraduate courses**

Special support is given to the establishment of internationally oriented study courses. Under the programme "Internationally oriented study courses", 12 pilot courses are being offered which integrate training in a particular discipline with the use of a foreign language as teaching and working language, include study periods abroad and lead to internationally comparable degrees. Another eight courses will start in autumn 1998.

Institution	Study course	UG ^{xi)}
		PG ^{xii)}
FH Aachen	Intern. Studies of Technology	UG
HU Berlin	Intern. Agricultural Sciences	PG
FH Darmstadt	Electrical Engineering, System Design and Technology	PG
TU Dresden	Computer Science, Computational Logic	PG
U-GH Duisburg	Information and Communications Technology	UG
U Erlangen-Nürnberg	Chemical Engineering	UG, PG
TU Hamburg-Harburg	Engineering Science, Electrical Eng., Mechanical Eng., Process Eng., Civil Engineering	UG, PG
U Kaiserslautern	Mathematics. Technomathematics, Business Mathematics	UG, PG
U Leipzig	Physics	UG
U Magdeburg	Economics	UG

FH Reutlingen	External economic relations	UG
FH Stralsund	Baltic Management Studies	UG
U Stuttgart	Water Resources Engineering and Management	PG
TU Cottbus	Environmental and Resources Management	UG
U Kiel	Coastal Geosciences and Engineering	PG
FH Mannheim, HS für Technik und Gestaltung	Biotechnology	UG, PG
LMU München	Psychology	PG
FH Nürnberg	International Business Studies	UG
U Oldenburg, FH Emden	Engineering Physics	UG
U Osnabrück	Cognitive Science	UG

The "Bachelor-Master Programme" currently includes eight study courses, which enable foreign holders of Bachelor's degrees to spend postgraduate study periods in Germany which are competitive in terms of duration and lead to a Diplom or Master's degree. In addition there are currently about 30 postgraduate study courses dealing with topics related to the developing countries. Further courses are planned under these programmes.

- **Internationally recognized degrees**

In the past, foreigners interested in studying in Germany were discouraged by the lack of comparability of German degrees with degrees awarded in the students' home countries. The German higher education system is characterized by a horizontal distinction between types of institutions and

disciplines. Universities with their more science-oriented training on the one hand and Fachhochschulen with their shorter and markedly application-oriented training courses on the other hand offer study courses and award degrees which are roughly equivalent. But what has become a standard recognized almost worldwide is the vertical grading of training under the Bachelor/Master system. In order to improve comparability, Bachelor and Master programmes are to be introduced in Germany in addition to the existing study possibilities. In parallel to this, it will be possible to translate German degrees into English as Bachelor's or Master's degrees so that they can be classified properly abroad.

- **Subject-related guidance, tutoring**

In view of the organization of studies in Germany, with which foreigners are usually hardly familiar, subject-related guidance and support is of special importance. Together with the offices for international affairs at the respective universities or Fachhochschulen, individual departments organize orientation and guidance events, above all at the beginning of the semester.

As a follow-up, some institutions support the work of tutors for foreign students during study courses.

In future, increasing efforts will be made to introduce model programmes under which the institutions nominate particular liaison teachers for foreign students in every department. These teachers will then answer study-related questions or establish contacts with relevant professors.

Credit point system

The planned large-scale introduction of the credit point system tested by individual institutions of higher education is to facilitate the crediting of evidence of study progress towards examinations, replacing examinations fully or in part, and the transfer of study and examination credits in the event of a student's transfer to another institution. This will not only enhance student mobility within Germany but also encourage German students to go abroad and foreign students to come to Germany. An international credit point system is interesting in particular to foreign students who wish to spend only part of their study period in Germany.

The credit point system to be introduced and the related modularization is to cover all suitable study courses in Europe.

- **Increasing researcher and teacher exchanges**

Reforms aimed at internationalizing German higher education are addressed not only to students but also to researchers and teachers from other countries. They are to be given an opportunity to contribute their experience to German academic teaching and research. In 1997, a programme supporting teaching periods of foreign guest lecturers at German institutions of higher education was launched and will provide funding over the next few years for an average of about 50 visiting professors each year.

Initial experience and feedback have shown that the approach chosen is approved by foreigners interested in studies in Germany. Assistance is also provided to German students looking for opportunities abroad. Both Germans and foreigners applying for study places are interested particularly in the above-described internationally oriented study courses. By crossing national borders in education and research, policy on higher education and education in general can contribute to globalization.

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- i. In the winter semester 1996/97; source: Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Statistical Office)
- ii. In the winter semester 1995/96; source: Statistisches Bundesamt
- iii. BMBF and Statistisches Bundesamt in Basic and Structural Data 97/98 p. 92
- iv. UNESCO in Basic and Structural Data 97/98, for 1993/94, p. 94
- v. Joint declaration of the heads of the Federal Government and the Länder governments on enhancing the international competitiveness of Germany in the field of academic studies, December 18, 1996
- vi. Studien- und Berufswahl 1997/98, edited by the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) and the Federal Employment Office (BA) 1997, Bad Honnef; to be obtained from BMBF via BMBF@BMBF.BUND400.DE, postal address: Heinemannstraße 2, D-53175 BONN
- vii. Information can be obtained via <http://www.daad.de>
- viii. <http://ortelius.unifi.it>
- ix. Decision by the Conference of Länder Ministers of Education of September 12, 1997
- x. <http://www.student-affairs.de>
- xi. Undergraduate
- xii. Postgraduate