Chapter 12

Convergence and Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe: The Case of Romania

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ABSTRACT

This chapter approaches the internationalization of higher education in Europe in terms of its relationship with convergence trends in European higher education. It starts with illustrating a relationship of mutual influence between convergence and internationalization at a conceptual level. The chapter looks at developments of European higher education over the past two decades, including the Bologna process, as triggers for increased harmonization of the European higher education systems. Among others, the internationalization of higher education is a way forward in implementing the Bologna process. These aspects are illustrated on a national example: Romania, through the influences of European, national, and institutional developments on the internationalization of higher education. The analysis at institutional level comprises a review conducted for all the 92 accredited universities from Romania, public and private. The study searches the information available on universities’ Websites in relation with their internationalization processes. The chapter ends with the discussion of the internationalization process as a trigger and as a way forward for increased convergence in European higher education from multiple perspectives that are applied to Romania: conceptual and applied, European, national and institutional, and strategic and operational.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter approaches the internationalization of higher education in Europe in terms of its relationship with convergence trends in European higher education. The connection is manifested at regional, national and institutional levels and the discussion is conducted through the example of Romania. The chapter starts with a conceptually directed discussion of the relationship between
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The discussion starts by looking at the relationship between convergence and internationalization for the European higher education and continues by discussing how this relationship has evolved over time. To start with, the concepts will be defined. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, convergence represents the act of converging and especially moving toward union or uniformity. In other words, convergence refers to integration and harmony.

In the case of higher education, convergence is seen as the harmonization of educational systems by pursuing the goal of and by establishing guidelines to be used internationally in respect of various aspects of the higher education life (quality, qualifications, and study organization). Internationalization of higher education refers to “a process of integrating an international and cultural dimension into the teaching, research and service function of an institution” (Knight, 2008, p. 19) and needs to be constantly scrutinised, as the same author emphasizes:
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