Abstract Number: T01P03-09

Panel

T01P03 - Higher Education Governance: Theorizing Convergence and Diversity

Author

Mr. Renze Kolster, Research Associate, University of Twente/CHEPS, The Netherlands

Co-Author

Dr. Don Westerheijden, Senior Research Associate, University of Twente/CHEPS, The Netherlands

Title

The Contradictions in and Convergence of Internationalisation Rationales and Practices in Higher Education Systems

Abstract

The discourse of the internationalisation of higher education systems can be connected to the constantly changing higher education landscape, which is shaped by: established as well as new actors, new policies, new technologies, and macro-economic developments, such as globalisation, and demographic as well as economic hegemony fluctuations (Maassen, et al., 2012; De Wit, et al, 2015). Within this landscape, internationalisation has received an ever increasing priority by the complex ecology of actors (Maasssen, 2014): supranational institutions [1], national / local governments, higher education institutions, employers, and students (De Wit, et al, 2015; European Commission, 2013). The different actors have different interests and try to steer the discourse and institutional order (Olson, 2009) in their preferred direction [2]. The interaction between these multi-level actors is highly interesting from a governance point of view: it shows different dimensions of power, resulting in practices that sometimes exists of convergent [3] or contradictory [4] rationales.

The convergent or contradictory rationales and practices are little explored in the academic research on internationalisation. Yet, they may be further indications of the ‘garbage can model’ in higher education systems (Cohen, et al., 1972). From a practical perspective, convergence and contradictions have the potential to guide the
internationalisation discourse in a direction which may not be ideal in particular contexts. To help identify discrepancies in the internationalisation discourse, this paper aims to expose convergent or contradictory rationales existing among different stakeholders and find out how these influence internationalisation practices on an institutional level. We propose to do so from both a theoretical and a practical perspective, thus reflecting on governance trends of higher education systems.

A key contradiction in rationales is shown on the institutional level, where the work and the population are becoming more international and diverse, whilst national governments still regard the same institutions as belonging to and serving the nation (Kolster, 2014; Maassen, 2014 [5]). The rationale is founded on the hypothesised necessity of higher education systems to be international in order to compete on the same level (European Commission, 2013). However, the connection to the national agenda highlights the economic rationale for education and research to service the national knowledge economy (Maassen, 2014). In other words, governments are more likely to view the knowledge and graduates produced within their higher education system as vital for their national economy, whilst the academics producing the knowledge and graduates might rather see their work as serving global interests. The contradictions in rationales of stakeholders lead to conflicting policies, for example in: immigration regulations, tuition fees (costs / benefits of public financial support, Kolster, 2014; Maassen & Cloete, 2006), and language of instruction policies.

**Reference**


European Commission (2013). European higher education in the world, communication from the commission to the European parliament, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, Brussels, 11.7.2013, 499 final


Keyword

Internationalisation, Practices and rationales, Contradictions and convergence, Higher education systems

Other Information

Footnotes in abstract:

[1] For example, Europeanisation of higher education policies (Maassen & Stensaker, 2011).

[2] They do so, inter alia, guided by the availability of data, as shown in league tables, bibliometric and employability statistics.

[3] Striving for similar internationalisation objectives, while increasingly using similar rationales (Kolster, 2014; De Wit, et al, 2015).

[4] Internationalisation rationales that can have an adverse effect on international practices.
