

## Chapter 4

### **Internationalisation as a cause for innovation in higher education**

*A comparison between European cooperation and the Dutch cross-border cooperation programme*

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Key words: innovation; institutionalisation; internationalisation

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Defining internationalisation**

While internationalism has always been an inherent feature of higher education — students and scholars have travelled since the middle ages; research has never been completely bounded by national borders; and some disciplines and knowledge are universal in nature — it is today gaining even more in importance. International mobility of the workforce, the globalisation of the economy and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are among the most important factors that give rise to the internationalisation of education. In response, active policies for internationalisation have been developed at supra-national, national and institutional levels. As a result, three trends can be observed.

First, international mobility of individual students and scholars has shifted from being an activity of a limited, elite group to one that is in principle

open to the masses, independent of financial position or social status. In Europe, for instance, the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (the ERASMUS programme), which was founded by the European Commission in 1987, grew in less than ten years to more than 100,000 mobile students per year (Teichler 1998). Also, the number of institutions sending their students abroad has expanded: in 1997, almost 1,600 institutions applied for funding under the new version of the programme (Barblan & Teichler 1998).

Second, the concept of internationalisation has been broadened. From its initial and almost exclusive focus on student exchange, it has developed into a concept including curricular reform, improvement of quality in education and research and institution-wide strategic development (Kälvermark & Van der Wende 1997). Recent studies on the internationalisation of higher education report on the development of internationalised curricula (Van der Wende 1996), on the relationship between internationalisation and quality (Van der Wende 1999), and on the broad range of strategies to support institution-wide internationalisation (De Wit 1995). The studies demonstrate that internationalisation is seen more and more as a process related to the strategic orientation of higher education institutions and to the strengthening of the quality of higher education and research.

Third, supra-national decision-making is increasingly affecting higher education. Schemes, conventions and directives regarding the transfer of credits, and the recognition of academic and professional qualifications are influencing curricular structures and content. Even further, proposals such as the Sorbonne Declaration<sup>1</sup> on the harmonisation of the architecture of European higher education, potentially affect higher education at the system level.

In order to define internationalisation more precisely, a differentiation should be made between the various policies and strategies which are covered by the term.

<sup>1</sup> *Joint declaration on the harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system*, Ministers in charge of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, Paris, The Sorbonne, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1998.

*Internationalisation of higher education, in terms of the outcome of intended policies*

This type of internationalisation appears as a result of governmental or supra-national policies aimed at making the higher education system more international. An international dimension is integrated into the teaching, research and service functions by introducing international cooperation, student and staff exchange, recognition measures, internationalised curricula, etc. This type of internationalisation leaves unchanged the national basis of higher education in terms of governmental steering, funding, regulation, evaluation, etc. The initiatives are based on agreements between countries, with full respect of the sovereignty of the nation state in the governance of higher education. In the case of the European Union programmes, this is reflected in Article 126.1 of the Maastricht Treaty and is known as the 'subsidiarity principle'.<sup>2</sup> It seems that higher education institutions tend to respond in a re-active manner to these policies, following the criteria for eligible actions quite closely in order to be awarded extra funds to carry them out.

*De-nationalisation of higher education*

This type of internationalisation refers to a number of processes causing or facilitating the expansion of higher education systems across borders. First of all we should note the changing balance in the control of higher education systems. As introduced by Clark (1983) in his triangle of coordination in higher education, the forces of academic oligarchy, state authority and market demand interact with each other to give shape and direction to academic work in national systems of higher education. In many countries, governments have introduced deregulation policies in favour of more institutional autonomy and stronger market influences (Dill & Sporn 1995; Goedegebuure *et al.* 1994). This deregulation and increased competition, in combination with globalisation and decreasing national funding for higher education, ensure that higher education institutions are motivated to expand their activities across the borders of the nation state. Another factor contributing to this type of internationalisation concerns ICT which enables institutions to deliver their programmes and services internationally and on a large scale to a virtual and borderless world. In this context, higher education institutions generally behave in a more pro-active fashion, since there are no prescribed policies or frameworks to follow. It becomes entrepreneurial and even risk-taking. Many examples of internationally entrepreneurial

<sup>2</sup> The principal of subsidiarity means that in the areas which do not belong to the exclusive competence of the community, communal policy will be developed only where national policy-making does not suffice (Article 3b of the Maastricht Treaty).

universities can be found in countries like the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. These universities not only attract many fee-paying foreign students, they also generate international income through overseas or branch campuses, distance learning and franchised programmes, etc. According to Teichler (1998), the European Commission pursues, more or less overtly (or disguised), a de-nationalisation policy in its approaches to cooperation and mobility in higher education (see also Barblan & Teichler 1999). As well, the European Commission encourages curricular cooperation in the search for facilitating mobility and emphasising a European dimension of higher education, which is bound to conflict with curricular constraints traditionally set at national levels by governments as well as by academic and professional agencies.

#### *Cross-border regionalisation of higher education*

This term can refer to a variety of cooperative settings, which has been analysed and characterised by Race (1997). Examples concern the cooperation between the Nordic countries or between the border regions of France and Germany. In this type of cooperation, the focus is regional instead of international and activities are based on the development of the region as a socio-economic and political entity. The activities are meant to make institutions benefit from each other's vicinity in spite of a national border separating them. The cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, for instance, is aimed at making the systems on both sides of the borders more responsive to the needs of the regional labour market and at enhancing mutual access and complementarity of study programmes. Cross-border mergers of institutions or the creation of bi-national institutions are not ruled out in the future. It seems that this type of internationalisation can be both the result of intended governmental or supra-national policies or from de-nationalisation processes; institutions can operate in a re-active or a pro-active way.

## **1.2 Scope of the chapter**

The massification of internationalisation, the broadening of the concept of internationalisation and the increase in supra-national decision-making, lead to a change in the perception of internationalisation. No longer is internationalisation focused just on the activities of individuals, nor are its effects expected to contribute to their individual development only. Rather, internationalisation is now seen as a process with an impact on the curriculum, at the institutional and system levels. In this respect, it is

important to analyse how this process is taking place, how it is affecting these levels, what types of changes it is actually creating and to what extent the changes will persist. Within the institution, such changes may concern, for instance: new content, objectives, structures, delivery sites and modes for curricular development; change in teaching and learning processes, the language of instruction, the introduction of new types of students and staff, new roles and communication patterns; change in qualification structures and in procedures for grading, credit allocation, recognition and quality assurance; a new orientation in research programmes and practices; the creation of new positions and roles, organisational structures and units; and new procedures for decision-making (including involving foreign partners).

Innovation theory provides a useful framework for this type of analysis. Studies in innovation and the adoption and diffusion of innovations emerged in the 1960s and focused mainly on innovations in the fields of rural sociology, marketing, communication and organisation (Rogers 1983). According to several organisational studies (e.g. Mann & Neff 1961; Hage & Aiken 1970; Havelock 1969), the process of innovation follows a series of predictable sequential stages. We will focus on the final stage of the innovation process, often referred to as the institutionalisation phase (Levine 1980), the routinisation phase (Hage & Aiken 1970) or the stabilisation phase (Mann & Neff 1961). The general and guiding questions for such an analysis would be:

- in what way (internal/external; re-active/pro-active) and to what extent does internationalisation lead to innovation in higher education?
- what type of innovation and to what extent can such innovation(s) be expected to persist?

Below, a theoretical framework for studying innovation in higher education is introduced. This will be used to analyse and compare two examples of internationalisation. Both concern internationalisation as the outcome of deliberate (governmental or supra-national) policies. We will compare a European programme (i.e. the ERASMUS programme) with a regional cooperation programme (i.e. the programme for cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany) in terms of the institutional responses to these policies. We will analyse the responses from the point of view of the innovations that they are likely to cause within the institutions.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: AN INNOVATION PERSPECTIVE ON INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Several studies have been undertaken on innovation processes in organisations (see e.g. Havelock 1969, 1974; Rogers 1983). In this study, we will treat the term innovation from the viewpoint of the adopting unit. Therefore we use Rogers' (1983: 11) definition of an innovation because it stresses the perspective of the adopter, by defining innovation as 'an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' (see also Jenniskens 1997; Bartelse 1998; and in this volume Jenniskens & Morphew, chapter 5, and Bartelse & Goedegebuure, chapter 11). Since higher education institutions are the types of organisations where professionals have a high level of autonomy, the adoption by the individual will be very meaningful indeed. At the same time, these individuals are organised in different units and structures, often on the basis of knowledge areas as an organisational principle. This implies that the various units may differ in their adoption of the same innovation. Furthermore, this definition allows for the fact that what is seen as new by one actor or unit, may not be perceived as such by another actor or unit, even within the same organisation. Moreover, an innovation can come from both various levels within the institution and an external actor (e.g. a government). Consequently, an institution may act in a re-active or pro-active way.

A specific source on innovation in higher education is the work of Arthur Levine. In his book *Why Innovation Fails* (1980) the emphasis is on the last stage of the innovation process which is most often neglected but, in effect, is the most important: institutionalisation. Levine (1980: 7) describes this phase as the institutionalisation or termination of the new operating plan, which is either routinised and integrated into the organisation or it is ended. The term institutionalisation was conceptualised by Broome and Selznick (1955: 238) as 'the emergence of orderly, stable, socially integrating patterns out of unstable, loosely organised activities'. The application of Levine's innovation theory to the process of internationalisation will provide an insight into the factors that define whether or not the internationalisation strategies and efforts will result in a sustainable and enduring change in higher education institutions.

## 2.1 **Types of innovation**

Levine (1980: 4) distinguishes between five basic types of innovation, each of which has its own advantages and disadvantages as well as its own rationale. This typology can be used to analyse and characterise the type of innovation(s) that may occur as a result of an internationalisation process.

### *The establishment of new organisations*

The establishment of new colleges is, according to Levine, the easiest way to establish a non-traditional institutional mission. Although internationalisation is quite often programme-based and many internationalisation strategies aim to diffuse the international dimension throughout entire institutions and their various programmes, this model can definitely be observed. Examples are the colleges or schools that are established as separate institutional structures in order to accommodate international (and often also interdisciplinary) programmes. The creation of such a new structure avoids the effort that would be needed to change the existing structures within the university and to reorient its faculty and students to the international dimension. Moreover, legal obstacles to international programmes, for instance related to the fact that they are taught in a different language or that they are leading to an international degree, are also evaded in this way. However, the creation of new colleges is expensive and (too) high expectations can be imposed. Furthermore, it can be inefficient, especially when over- or under-capacity cannot be compensated for due to separate organisational structures and administrative mechanisms between the college and the parent organisation. In the case of internationalisation, another disadvantage emerges if the new organisation is meant exclusively for foreign students. In that case, opportunities for integration with domestic students and for mutual, cross-cultural learning are not exploited. Also, other forms of synergy between faculty and programmes may become more difficult when the innovation takes place outside the existing institutional context.

### *Innovative enclaves within existing organisations*

Another way to introduce an innovation is to set aside a specific location, unit or experimental programme within the institution in which the innovation is to be implemented. This seems to be a quite popular way of introducing the international dimension into higher education. A special programme or unit within the institution is created in order to accommodate international courses for international groups of students, sometimes

involving international faculty as well. The advantage of this type of innovation is that room for experimenting with international activities is created in a relatively inexpensive and easy to implement way, without changing the status quo and mainstream processes of the institution. One disadvantage related to this type of innovation is that such international programmes or units may become isolated from the rest of the institution and prevent the institution from making the organisational change needed to adopt an international dimension throughout the institution. A more recent concept that seems to provide a solution to this type of disadvantage is the so-called 'matrix structure', which allows a balance of authority between the external and internal demands upon the organisation. It also enables a link between new (temporary) and flexible units and the traditional organisational structure in order to anticipate new scientific and social developments (Van Ginkel 1995). The concept of flexible units that allows the university to respond to developments in its environment can be found also in the work of Clark (1998) who describes the role of such special units as they reach across old university boundaries (disciplines) and link up with outside organisations and groups. Several such units (they may also exist for cooperation with industry, continuing education, knowledge transfer, etc.) together form what Clark calls 'the expanded developmental periphery', which constitutes one of the five characteristics of his concept of the 'entrepreneurial university'.

#### *Holistic changes within existing organisations*

Holistic change involves the adoption of a major institutional innovation with a unified and coherent purpose. In spite of the many mission statements that declare that institutions are truly international in spirit, mission and profile, and notwithstanding that many internationalisation strategies are so ambitious as to internationalise the institution's major functions (research, teaching and services), this type of innovation is very infrequently observed in the context of internationalisation. Obviously, most established higher education institutions are, in the first place, nationally based organisations, that perform international activities in addition to their national role and mission, or that integrate an international dimension into their national mission. Levine (1980) states that in general this type of innovation is the least common in higher education. It is also the most difficult to gain acceptance and the least likely to reach the institutionalisation stage. Moreover, the risks are high, as in this type of innovation the old is replaced by the new and there is thus nothing to fall back on in case the innovation does not succeed.



*Piecemeal changes within existing organisations*

These types of minor innovations are the most common forms of change in higher education and the easiest to implement. They do not affect the institutional mission, function or its organisational principles. Many examples of this type of innovation can indeed be observed in the case of internationalisation. Without affecting the basic structures and mission of the institution, many small and non-mainstream activities can be developed, such as exchange arrangements, international courses, excursions and intensive programmes. It is generally done at a 'grass roots' level and is quite dependent on an individual staff member responsible for it. According to Levine (1980), a series of such innovations can produce more substantial change within the institution. This is what can be observed in many European institutions. From these series of smaller international activities, the initiative to develop an institution-wide internationalisation strategy has ultimately emerged. However, it should be noted that in some cases such an institutional strategy is nothing more than a series of separate and small activities. In other words: the whole is not more than the sum of its parts.

*Peripheral changes outside existing organisations*

Levine (1980: 6) describes this type of innovation as 'the establishment of institutions or changes within institutions that are not traditionally associated with higher education, but that have an effect on the activities of existing colleges and universities'. He gives an early example of the establishment of degree-granting programmes by commercial corporations such as AT&T which he expects to become competitors with traditional higher education institutions. At present, this type of innovation is becoming most significant in the form of virtual universities which operate trans-nationally with great ease, as the delivery of their programmes is supported by ICT. Their quickly emerging presence and the threat they represent have an impact on present debates in higher education. It is most interesting to see how traditional higher education institutions are responding (or not) to this challenge and to speculate on what types of innovations will result from within these organisations. Examples concern institutions that introduce forms of flexible delivery (distance learning) in order to reach out to international students while seeking enhanced cooperation with other higher education institutions and/or corporate partners (Collis & Van der Wende 1999). These peripheral changes are among the most important pushes for new developments in the internationalisation area for the future.

## 2.2 Phases in the innovation process

Various authors have defined different stages in the innovation process (Hage & Aiken 1970; Rogers 1962; Mann & Neff 1961). In his book, Levine (1980) compares a number of authors' views on the various stages that are involved in the process of innovation. He finds consistency between the different theories and the results of his own research and proposes a process having four fundamental steps: (i) recognising the need for change; (ii) planning and formulating a solution; (iii) initiation and implementation of a plan; and (iv) institutionalisation or termination (1980: 7).

Mostly, innovative efforts focus on the first three stages and in many cases it is believed that the third stage (implementation) is the conclusion of the innovation process, as by then the adoption of something new, which was the aim of the innovation, has been achieved. However, institutionalisation is the most critical phase for any innovation and the organisation adopting it. Research has shown that during institutionalisation, innovations usually transform or fade away. Van Vught (1989: 57) concludes that:

*Innovations in higher education institutions may arise easily and often, but their diffusion will be difficult and will mainly take place through communication between colleagues.*

Also, in the area of internationalisation, the stage of institutionalisation is critical, particularly due to the fact that internationalisation in many cases has been a re-active response of institutions to external policies formulated at the supra-national level, making them heavily dependent on external funding and subsidies.

## 2.3 Factors determining institutionalisation

The outcome of the institutionalisation process is dependent on the characteristics of the innovation. First, for institutionalisation to be successful, the innovation has to fit the organisational context in which it has to evolve. Secondly, the actors involved in the institutionalisation process have to perceive the innovation as having a relative advantage, compared with the pre-adoption stage. Levine (1980), in relation to these factors, uses

the terms compatibility and profitability.<sup>3</sup>

- *Compatibility*: This is the degree to which the norms, values and goals associated with the innovation are congruent with those of the host organisation. It depends on the extent to which the innovation fits the institutional mission and goals, as well as its coherence with other policy areas. It is a measure of appropriateness of the innovation within existing organisational boundaries. Rogers (1983: 223) uses a similar definition of compatibility. Furthermore, he states that the innovation can be compatible with (a) the socio-cultural beliefs of the organisation; (b) previously introduced ideas; and (c) client needs for innovation. In general, one might say the greater the degree of compatibility of an innovation within the organisation, the lesser the degree of dissatisfaction. The compatibility factor sets in motion the two mechanisms of the institutionalisation process: when the innovation is incompatible, the innovation characteristics are adjusted to the institutional context; when the innovation is compatible, the institutional context is adjusted to the characteristics of the innovation. These mechanisms are referred to as contraction and expansion (Levine 1980; Bartelse 1998).
  
- *Profitability*: This is the effectiveness of an innovation in satisfying the adopter's needs. This factor is more difficult to define, because it is subjective. What really counts is the adopter's perception of profitability, and not objective profitability. The degree of profitability may be measured in economic terms, but social prestige factors or satisfaction can also be important components. According to Rogers (1983), the rate of adoption of an innovation will be more rapid when the perceived relative advantage is greater. Furthermore, what is perceived as profitable by an individual adopter does not necessarily coincide with what is profitable for the organisation as a whole. Individual adopters within a higher education institution may differ very strongly in what they perceive as profitable!

These two factors can lead to different outcomes of the institutionalisation process (see figure 1).

<sup>3</sup> Complexity is often distinguished as a third variable (Hahn 1974; Kivlin 1960). In this study, complexity will not be regarded as a variable that determines whether institutionalisation occurs, but as a characteristic of the type of innovation that is intended.

**Figure 1:** Possible outcomes of institutionalisation

		Compatibility	
		low	high
Profitability	high	(iv) Resocialisation	(i) Diffusion
	low	(iii) Termination	(ii) Enclaving

Source: based on Levine 1980

When an innovation is compatible with the institutional context, the innovation can either spread throughout the organisation (*diffusion*) or it can assume an isolated position within the organisation (*enclaving*). In both outcomes, the mechanism of expansion is set in motion and the institutional boundaries are adjusted to the characteristics of the innovation; in other words, the innovation's characteristics are accepted by the host. Diffusion will be achieved only when the actors involved perceive the innovation as profitable. When this is not the case, institutional expansion may be explained by rule-following behaviour: actors will comply to the institutional expectations of their context as there is no explicit institutional mismatch (Bartelse 1998). This will result in the innovation being in an isolated position within the institution (*enclaving*).

When the innovation's characteristics are not compatible with the institutional context, the innovation can either be eliminated (*termination*) or forced to adjust to the acceptable norms, values and goals of the institution (*resocialisation*). In either way, contraction occurs and the non-compatible characteristics of the innovation are excluded. Termination will occur when, according to the actors involved, there is no relative advantage to be expected from the innovation; in other words, the innovation is not perceived as profitable. Resocialisation will occur when the innovation is adjusted to the institutional context, and the outcome differs from the innovation that

was originally implemented.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This theoretical analysis of internationalisation as an innovation process has provided an insight into potential factors that define the success of internationalisation in terms of an optimal outcome at the institutionalisation stage. The main outcomes of the theoretical elaboration are:

- internationalisation may lead to various types of innovation within higher education institutions; the most successful outcome of the innovation process is institutionalisation, optimally in terms of diffusion;
- such optimal institutionalisation will occur only when the internationalisation strategy is compatible with the overall institutional strategy and when it is perceived as profitable by the various adopters of the innovation;
- compatibility depends on the extent to which the internationalisation strategy is congruent with the institutional mission and goals, and with other policy areas within the institution;
- profitability depends on the extent to which the innovation is perceived as effective in satisfying the needs of the various adopters, which can be distinguished by units or individuals within the institution and by the institution as a whole.

On this theoretical basis, two internationalisation programmes (i.e. the SOCRATES programme and the programme for cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany) will be analysed and compared. Since both programmes started quite recently (1997), conclusions concerning their effectiveness and eventual success in terms of institutionalisation cannot yet be drawn. Therefore, our focus will be on the initial institutional responses to both programmes, as expressed in the applications and project plans that describe the actions the institutions want to undertake in the context of these internationalisation programmes. In doing so, our aim will be twofold:

- to identify the types of innovation (as characterised by Levine) that these programmes seem to introduce into the higher education institutions concerned;
- to collect some provisional evidence on the extent to which these programmes can be expected to meet the requirements of compatibility and profitability.

In this way, some hypotheses on the eventual success of the programmes in terms of the sustainability of the innovations they introduce can be presented.

The analysis will be based on the results of two research projects: the EUROSTRAT II project<sup>4</sup> and a study on the cross-border cooperation projects between the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.<sup>5</sup> It should be stressed that the original focus of both studies was different from the problem that we are addressing in this chapter. Consequently, secondary data analysis has been the basis of our analyses, which should be considered as exploratory only.

## **4. ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE SOCRATES PROGRAMME**

### **4.1 Introduction to the programme**

The SOCRATES programme was adopted in 1994. It had two predecessors: the Joint Study Programme (JSP) scheme launched in 1976 (aimed mainly at the stimulation of academic mobility within the EC) and ERASMUS (European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) in 1987.

<sup>4</sup> This study, undertaken by the Association of European Universities (CRE) and the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work (University of Kassel, Germany), analysed the European Policy Statements (1,583 in total) as part of the first round of applications for an institutional contract under SOCRATES, which were submitted in 1996 for the academic year 1997–98 (Barblan *et al.* 1998).

<sup>5</sup> This study is being carried out by the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), in cooperation with the Catholic University of Leuven and Hochschul Informations System in Hanover. Both an analysis of the approved projects (83 in total) and a survey on first implementation were carried out for the programme presently in force (from 1997 to 2000) (see Beerkens & Van der Wende 1999).

In 1993 Antonio Ruberti, then Commissioner responsible for education and research, stressed the need for a more coherent continuation of existing programmes. In this approach, educational policy was extended to secondary and vocational education. The new SOCRATES programme was designed to cover these various levels of education. Within this programme, ERASMUS would continue as the programme for higher education. Besides a shift in the area of support (e.g. more support for teaching staff mobility and curricular development), the managerial nature of the programme changed. The Institutional Contract (IC), a contract between the institution and the European Commission, was introduced. The application for an IC contained both a European Policy Statement and a description of all the activities for which the institution was applying for financial support from the European Commission. According to Barblan *et al.* (1998: 10), the changes in SOCRATES meant not just a shift in bureaucratic procedures, but it implicitly challenged institutions to put a stronger emphasis on the coherence of goals and activities, the strengthening of the responsibility of the central level and the development and reinforcement of strategic thinking.

The rationale for the ERASMUS programme was predominantly political and economic: stimulating the European identity and developing international competitiveness. This raises a question about the relationship between Europeanisation and internationalisation. It has been observed that:

*Most departments involved in ERASMUS clearly emphasised an international rather than a European approach. They appreciated European support ... but neither conceptually nor pragmatically did they wish an exclusive emphasis on Europe (Teichler 1998: 93).*

In addition, it was observed that:

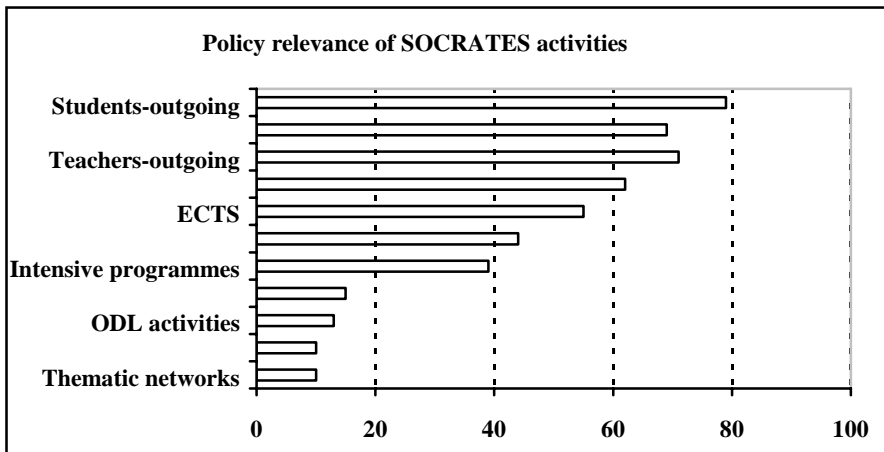
*The European Commission, while talking about Europe, is a powerful actor of internationalisation, whereby Europe is actually predominantly a sub-category of less than systematic relevance. The Commission's contribution to internationalisation rests primarily on its successful challenge to national forces of curricular coordination. In its denationalising effect on curricula ... Europeanisation à la ERASMUS coincides with internationalisation (Teichler 1998: 95).*

## 4.2 Envisaged activities and types of innovation that can be expected

ERASMUS provides three different types of support for European activities: mobility grants for students and institutional grants for activities within as well as outside the IC. Activities within the IC may concern teaching staff mobility, preparatory visits, curricular development, etc. Grants to institutions outside the IC include the university cooperation projects on subjects of mutual interest, better known as the Thematic Network Projects (TNP). Cooperation within these networks is required to have a lasting and widespread impact across a range of universities within or between specific discipline areas.

According to the first round of applications for 1997–98, activities concerning student and staff mobility took priority underscoring the European institutional policy (see figure 2).

**Figure 2:** Policy relevance of SOCRATES activities



Source: Barblan *et al.* 1998

Figure 2 shows that the majority of institutions preferred to stay with the typical ERASMUS activities of *student and staff mobility*. Next, they wished to work on the development of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and on curricular development (programmes with a European dimension). Much less attention was paid to preparatory visits, open and distance learning, cooperation with industry, etc. The first question now is: what type



of innovation can be expected from this approach?

It could be argued that student mobility will lead to none or only little innovation within the institution, since it is a purely individual activity and because the programme provides financial aid to students without direct intervention of the institution. On the other hand, it could be said that indirectly these activities could have an institutional impact because students often turn out to be 'change agents' for host as well as home institutions. It could even be claimed that:

*Support for student mobility was not a means in itself, but rather a means only to introduce curricular change. According to this view, the instrument of student mobility was primarily chosen because it was the only legitimate way of inducing substantial curricular change without obvious disregard of the required respect for the variety of higher education systems and for the prerogative of the national governments to shape those systems (Teichler 1998: 91).*

Staff mobility can by all means be expected to have an effect on the teaching and learning process and on the content of the curricula. Like the students, staff experience major contrasts between curricula, teaching and learning modes, administrative and institutional structures and social environment between host and home institution. This may work as an eye-opener and trigger change.

In terms of Levine's (1980) typology of innovations, these activities are most likely to lead in the first instance to piecemeal changes in the organisations only. This is because, in the first place, student and staff exchanges do not affect the basic structures and mission of the institution. And, secondly, it is because the involvement of students and staff is not systematic and substantial enough to introduce holistic change in terms of a major institutional innovation with a unified and coherent purpose. In particular cases, institutions may choose to accommodate these foreign students together in one specific international unit or class; this may lead to another type of innovation, labelled as an innovative enclave within the existing organisation. However, the general idea of ERASMUS is rather to integrate foreign students and staff into regular courses and into the domestic student and staff population.

The credit framework and curricular development activities also are likely to result, in the first instance, in piecemeal changes within the existing organisation, because they usually concern small parts of curricula and leave

the basic structures and mission of the institution unaffected. The development of intensive programmes, or of joint undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, may result in 'innovative enclaves within existing organisations'. In this way, room for experimenting with new programmes is provided, without changing the status quo of the mainstream processes and curricula. The challenge in this activity would be to fully integrate the international programmes into the regular curricula. Open and distance learning activities, cooperation with industry, thematic networks, etc. could lead to substantial innovations but are not highly rated in terms of relevance (and funding).

In the longer term, the sum of the ERASMUS activities in principle could have a more profound impact and may lead to more holistic change within the institutions. About 55% of institutions actually expect the programme to cause a change in their institutional profile as a whole (Barblan & Teichler 1998). The role of students and staff as change agents, and their effect on the de-nationalisation of curricula provide an indication for this development. Besides, the IC and consequent enhanced involvement of the institutional management may add to this. Whether this will happen or not, depends on the institutions' willingness to adapt to the changes caused by the innovations. This will be dependent on the compatibility and profitability of the innovation.

### **4.3 Compatibility and profitability**

The second question is: can we expect these innovations to be institutionalised? In order to explore this question, we will look at the extent to which innovations meet the requirements of compatibility and profitability.

First, a general observation with regard to compatibility can be made. In section 2.3, we stated that compatibility concerns the degree to which the norms, values and goals associated with the innovation are congruent with the institutional context of the host, and that the innovation can be compatible with the socio-cultural beliefs of the organisation, with previously introduced ideas and with client needs for innovation. There seems to be compatibility with the norms, values and the socio-cultural beliefs of the institutions in the sense that the importance of internationalisation of academia is in general widely subscribed to by staff as well as students. The EUROSTRAT study (Barblan & Teichler 1998) revealed that internationalisation seems to increasingly be embedded into the

overall goals of the higher education institutions. A European or international dimension was found to be a central part of the mission and goals of more than a quarter of the examined institutions and played some role in another third of the cases. The compatibility of the activities with institutional goals, norms and mission is also indicated by the fact that 55% of the institutions see the activities as an instrument to change or enhance their profiles.

Second, the IC can be seen as an instrument to enhance compatibility, in terms of the fit between the innovation and the institutional mission and goals. The IC, and in particular the institution's European Policy Statement as a part of it, challenges the institutions to consider the link between their European activities and their overall institutional mission and goals and their relationship with other policy areas. It also requires institutions to clarify the relationship between their European policy and objectives and the actual activities they will be undertaking. However, the EUROSTRAT analysis revealed that the strategic reasoning that is assumed and implicitly expected from institutions in this approach, does not coincide with the fact that most of the applying institutions do not see themselves as strategic actors and are cautious when asked to commit their future to specific areas.

Third, there seems to be a certain extent of compatibility with previously introduced ideas. Considering the positive appreciation of earlier EU programmes (see e.g. Teichler & Maiworm 1997), the relatively high level of comparability of SOCRATES with previous EU programmes gives some further indication of the compatibility of the innovations introduced by this programme. Especially the student mobility part which, according to institutional representatives, has become a regular part of institutional life (Barblan & Teichler 1998: 6) and therefore one might even say that it has already been institutionalised and diffused throughout the organisation. However, this cannot be said for all parts of the programme. The EUROSTRAT study shows that traditional activities (e.g. mobility and existing inter-institutional agreements) are continued and complemented by further development of previously marginal activities (e.g. use of ECTS or curricular development). Other activities which are high on the agenda of EU higher education policy such as open and distance learning, continuing education and cooperation with industry, do not come to the fore in institutional policies and activities. It seems that these parts of the programme represent innovations that are less compatible with the current mission and goals, beliefs and needs of the institutions, although this of course may change over time.

The other factor determining the outcome of the institutionalisation process is the level of (perceived) profitability of the innovation. Diffusion of the envisaged activities is most likely when these are perceived as profitable by the actors involved. Still, the different actors in higher education may differ in what they perceive as profitable and therefore a distinction between them should be made.

Since the physical mobility of students is still regarded as the core element of SOCRATES, student perception of the activities plays a major role. Obviously, the introduction of ERASMUS in 1987 meant a profitable innovation from the students' point of view. In the new SOCRATES scheme, the financial support to individual students has declined. This is perceived as a setback for students. For the non-mobile students, however, the emphasis in the SOCRATES scheme for teaching staff mobility, intensive programmes and curricular development can be seen as a relative advantage compared to ERASMUS. Although these activities, as well as the open and distance learning projects and the thematic networks, are meant to enrich and broaden the programme, there seems to be an impression that:

*The SOCRATES programme might become overstretched, running the risk of endangering its core activities for the sake of achieving prominent success in new areas ... (Barblan & Teichler 1998: 8).*

The EUROSTRAT study showed that, for academics, the shift of responsibility from the departmental to the institutional level has resulted in a loss of enthusiasm and sense of 'ownership'. This was enforced by the enormous discrepancy between the financial support requested and the funds actually granted and by the shift from multilateral to bilateral cooperation, leading to less frequent meetings between academics. The decrease of the administrative burden for academics, however, was much welcomed by them.

For administrators, the move from ERASMUS to SOCRATES was perceived as bringing about a substantial increase in their administrative load. The shift towards bilateral agreements, however, improved transparency in international cooperation. Another positive aspect of the shift towards bilateralism that was perceived by various institutional representatives was the expectation that the bilateral approach would increase the moral pressure for mutual reciprocity. At the same time, bilateralism was not considered a suitable approach for reinforcing curricular development or intensive programmes:

*If partners place different emphases on such activities ... the activities could suffer from or even be endangered by a lack of matching interests (Barblan & Teichler 1998: 11).*

In general, we can conclude that activities considered to be the core of the SOCRATES programme (i.e. activities relating to physical mobility) can be regarded as compatible with the norms, goals and mission of the institutions. Also, these activities are perceived as profitable by the actors involved, although for some actors this level of profitability is decreasing. These activities will lead basically to piecemeal changes within the organisation, although it can be argued that they could lead, indirectly and in the long run, to more substantial curricular and institutional change. One might expect these core activities to diffuse throughout the organisation. Curriculum-related activities may also lead to piecemeal change, or in some cases perhaps to innovative enclaves. Activities such as open and distance learning and continuing education have potential for innovation but they are only being undertaken on a very small scale. All these activities still raise questions about compatibility and profitability. Therefore, it is difficult to forecast at this point the outcome of their institutionalisation processes, but it cannot be excluded that some of them run the risk of being resocialised, or even terminated. Besides, for all activities the degree of dependence on external funding will be a critical factor with regard to their sustainability.

## **5. ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE DUTCH PROGRAMME FOR CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION WITH BELGIUM AND GERMANY**

### **5.1 Introduction to the programme**

In 1991, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science started the so-called Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) policy, with the aim of contributing towards an 'open higher educational space without any obstacles for mobility' (Ministerie van OC&W 1997). The 'GROS-HO programme', the first for the CBC, was aimed at educational cooperation (e.g. student and staff mobility and curricular development) and was remarkably smaller than the current programme in terms of financial support. Later, in 1996, the Ministry introduced the 'Regulation on Cross-

border Cooperation in Higher Education 1997–2000'. The programme was based on the bilateral agreements between the Dutch Minister of Education and the Ministers of Education in Flanders and the German Länder of North Rhine Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Bremen. According to the programme, higher education institutions were granted financial support for this period for an institutional plan that covered activities aimed at:

- developing structural and strategic cooperation between institutions located near each other but separated by a border, in order to optimally benefit from the educational potential in the region, for example, through joint curricular and other trans-national links between institutions; and
- creating in this way an added value for education, which will result in highly qualified graduates, who will be better equipped for the regional labour market because they will have learned to deal with the cultural differences and to speak the languages of the region.

The criteria that institutional plans had to meet included aspects such as (i) a strong commitment from institutional leadership; (ii) curricular activities that demonstrated the added value of cooperation for the institutions and other partners in the region; (iii) attention to each other's languages and cultures; and (iv) a clear commitment from the partner institution. Furthermore, activities solely focused on mobility were not eligible for support.

## **5.2 Envisaged activities and types of innovation that can be expected**

The criteria and the open character of the regulation resulted in a wide range of project activities. On the basis of an analysis of the proposals and on questionnaires sent to all project coordinators in the various countries, the following distinctions between the envisaged activities can be made (table 1).

**Table 1:** Envisaged activities in the CBC programme

Type of activity	Percentage of all projects (N = 83)
Educational cooperation:	
• Joint curricular development	70
• Transfer of knowledge on educational methodology	42
• Recognition and mobility	27
Focus on regional and social aspects	24
Sharing and joint use of facilities and infrastructure	14
Establishment of legal bodies to facilitate cooperation	13

Source: Beerkens & Van der Wende 1999

The projects demonstrate a remarkably strong focus on curricular issues. These activities may focus on:

- adjustment and coordination of curricula in order to make them mutually accessible to students (67%);
- making curricula which exist on only one side of the border, accessible to students from the entire cross-border region (19%);
- joint development of new curricula, which do not exist in any of the involved institutions (14%).

In this context the transfer of knowledge on educational methodology, mostly in terms of learning about each other's practices in teaching and learning processes and about specific disciplinary approaches, is often part of the pre-stage of these curricular development processes. The mutual access to study programmes across the border requires recognition measures and in some cases joint or double diplomas in order to facilitate students to move between the institutions.

Projects focusing on regional aspects (e.g. labour market demands), on the joint use of facilities and infrastructure (e.g. laboratories, research equipment) or on the establishment of specific bodies to facilitate cooperation are less frequently observed. We will now try to analyse what types of innovations can be expected from this approach.

Firstly, a general remark is necessary concerning the fact that the programme is explicitly meant to create sustainable internationalisation by means of focusing not at the individual (student) level but, rather, at the curricular and

institutional levels. In this programme, there are many small scale activities concerning small parts of curricula only, thus leaving the basic structure and mission of the institution unaffected. These types of activities can be labelled as piecemeal changes. In cases where complete curricula are concerned, the emergence of innovative enclaves can be observed. Within the institutions but outside the mainstream programmes, specific programmes and/or units are created which offer curricula that accommodate students from the various partner institutions. Students, for instance, may follow parts of the curricula in their own institution and other parts in the partner institution and obtain a joint or double diploma. Within the institution, such a special programme or unit may be labelled a 'school'. Besides these two types of innovations, others may be observed. An example of the establishment of a new organisation is the Trans-national Centre for Technology, Innovation and Study that has been established by a Dutch institution and its German partner. An example of peripheral change is illustrated by an organisation which was created by regional companies, governments and higher education institutions, with the aim to create synergy between the expertise from the various partners and to enable knowledge transfer through training and applied research. Holistic change may even be expected in the case of a Flemish and a Dutch institution which are considering a cross-border merger that may result in a true trans-national university.

Another question concerns the extent to which this innovation meets the criteria of compatibility and profitability and, consequently, to what extent we can expect them to be institutionalised.

It can be said that in general the concept of cross-border cooperation, as such, which mainly has a socio-economic rationale of strengthening the regional infrastructure through coordination of higher education provisions, is not very compatible with the norms, values and goals of higher education institutions. Institutions' international interests are usually based on academic concepts like common research or educational interests and the search for excellence; these are not necessarily related to institutions within each other's geographic vicinity. This is illustrated by the fact that, from the CBC policy point of view, cooperation in courses which formerly were offered on only one side of the border, or the joint development of new courses, would be considered most profitable in terms of cost-effectiveness. However, the evaluation study shows that institutions, rather, cooperate in cases where curricula are offered on both sides of the border (67% of curricular projects) because this provides a common basis for their activities. Secondly, a regional focus may not be relevant for those institutions which recruit their students from all over the country and thus do not train them for



a specific regional labour market. Third, as compatibility is a measure of appropriateness of the innovation within existing institutional boundaries, it should be mentioned that the emphasis on strategic cooperation does not match in all cases the degree of autonomy of the institutions. Depending on the degree of direct governmental steering (which is stronger in Germany and Flanders compared to the Netherlands), institutions have more or less freedom in establishing new structures or programmes, or even in adjusting programmes in the context of regional partnerships. Nevertheless, for certain institutions, the regional approach seems to coincide very well with institutional goals. For instance, for those institutions which like to expand their activities across the border in order to enhance their profile in the region, for example, in order to attract more students or to strengthen their relationships with industry, cross-border cooperation is very attractive. Real win-win situations may occur when both partners can only achieve certain institutional goals through cross-border cooperation. An example of this is the case where a single institution is too weak to establish a new study programme, but can do so in cooperation with another institution. This is where the educational offerings of the institutions are complementary to each other, or where joint efforts are required in order to make certain major investments. In some very specific cases these advantages in the future may even be an argument to consider a cross-border merger of institutions.

In terms of profitability for students it can be argued that a stay in a neighbouring country is often perceived as less attractive than a stay in a faraway country. The study indicates that students are less motivated to study abroad at an institution on the other side of the border. On the other hand, this type of cooperation provides them with a wider range of study options without travelling too much and allows them to obtain qualifications that are recognised in the neighbouring country, which may enhance their labour market opportunities.

In cases of compatible educational interests, this type of international cooperation seems to be profitable for academics since they can cooperate quite intensively thanks to the vicinity of their partners and the substantial funding of the activities. Also for administrators and the institution as a whole the size of the funding of activities is attractive. More generally, this type of cooperation is profitable since it creates possibilities for cost-effective use of limited resources and expensive infrastructure and equipment.

A further illustration of the profitability of this type of cooperation in comparison with wider internationalisation is provided in table 2. This

overview shows that the belief that this type of cooperation is presenting fewer problems because of more similarity between the higher education systems and the cultural-linguistic situation at both sides of the border is only shared to a limited extent. However, the vicinity of partner institutions is seen as an advantage.

**Table 2:** Advantages of cross-border cooperation over wider internationalisation

Advantages of cross-border cooperation over wider internationalisation	Agree (%)
Vicinity of partner institutions	97
Cultural similarities	29
Linguistic similarities	29
Similarities in HE systems	15

Source: Beerkens & Van der Wende 1999

It can be concluded that cross-border cooperation may lead to a range of innovations and that institutionalisation will be supported by the fact that the vicinity of partners to each other and the more efficient exploitation of resources that sometimes goes with this type of cooperation, are seen as profitable factors. However, this will only occur in those cases where a regional focus is compatible with the strategic goals of the institutions concerned.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND SOME DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Since our theoretical framework focuses on the institutionalisation stage of the innovation process and since the two programmes have only recently started, our conclusions will be mainly tentative. First of all, it can be concluded that the innovation theory can provide a framework for the analysis of the impact of internationalisation policies on higher education institutions, as well as providing a framework for the factors that relate to the institutionalisation of these innovations. A further elaboration on the types of innovations that can be expected, could reveal more specific types of innovations that are caused by internationalisation. More research is also needed in order to gain further insights into the factors of compatibility and profitability of these innovations. This would lead to valuable knowledge for

the design of internationalisation policies and programmes. Obviously, this chapter, which is based on secondary data analysis, provides only limited empirical basis for such insights. Secondly, it seems that internationalisation causes innovation in higher education indeed, although it primarily takes the form of piecemeal changes or innovative enclaves within higher education institutions. Still, some, albeit few, examples of other types of innovation could be identified. Moreover, it is arguable that these small innovations may lead in the longer term to more important changes. It would be interesting in this respect to compare the impact of internationalisation as an outcome of supra-national policy with de-nationalisation processes, since, in the latter type of internationalisation, higher education institutions seem to be more pro-active and entrepreneurial. Furthermore, questions concerning the influence of internationalisation on the role of national governments and on the use of policy instruments, for example, funding, planning, evaluation and regulation, should be addressed. Another set of research topics concerns the relationship between internationalisation and the influence of market forces on higher education. Also, the consequences for internal management of higher education institutions, for the relationship with wider institutional change and the use of new technologies is worth investigating.

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