

The internationalization of the educational process: theoretical foundations

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Abstract. The article focuses on the problem of the internationalization of the educational process in the countries of the European Union. The analysis of the theoretical foundations of the internationalization of the educational process is presented in the article. Different approaches to understanding the essence of the concepts «internationalization», «educational process», «curriculum» are defined. The peculiarities and the interaction between the stages of the internationalization of the educational process at the university are clarified in the article.

Keywords: *internationalization, educational process, curriculum, university.*

Introduction. The end of the XX-th and the beginning of the XXI-st centuries is a period of increasing dynamics of global processes such as globalization, development of information and communication technologies and orientation of a large number of countries to build a «knowledge economy», which updated the issues of international competitiveness of higher education for most countries of the world. The governments challenge the national systems of higher education the important task to prepare the graduates with the necessary competences for innovative professional activities. No less significant in the world is preparing students for life and successful work in a multicultural society. In these conditions, one of the most essential tasks of the university becomes the integration of international components in the educational process, that is, internationalization of educational process.

At present education is regarded as one of the main factors of socio-economic development of the country, the formation of the intellectual capital of the nation and one of the main areas productions of innovation. Particular attention is paid to the development of higher education systems, which are on the way of innovative economic development, including the countries of the European Union. Due to the fact that higher educational institutions of any countries operate in the context of socio-economic and political processes taking place both regionally, nationally and internationally, of particular importance is the process of the internationalization of the educational process (hereinafter IEP), that is the integration of international and intercultural components in the content of teaching and learning, as well as organizational support for the training process.

Analysis of relevant research. Prerequisites for internationalization in European higher education have been analyzed by F. Altbach, B. Kehm, S. Marginson, A. Rauhvargers, P. Scott, U. Teichler, V. Baidenko, M. Larionova, V. Filippova and others. The content of the concept of internationalization in application for higher education has been disclosed in the works of J. Beelen, J. K. Hudzik, J. Knight, B. Leask, M. van der Wende, H. de Wit and others. The academic development issues of students' and professors' mobility in the EU countries have been considered in the publications of I. Ferencz, E. Colucci, M. Gaebel, P. Scott, M. Ballatore, M. K. Ferede, C. Van Mol and others. The cross-border education problems, including the implementation of joint/double degree programs, have been covered in the proceedings of V.

Caruana, N. Healey, E. Jones, L. Michael, R. Mellors-Bourne, X. Monné, C. Morel, S. Woodfield and others. The studies on assessment of IEP in the EU countries have been described in the works of U. Brandenburg, H. de Wit, G. Federkail, E. Hazelkorn, J. Hudzik, J. Knight, M. Stoll, I. Arzhanova, M. Larionova, O. Perfilieva, D. Suslova and other researchers.

The aim of the article is to define the theoretical foundations of the internationalization of the educational process in the countries of the European Union; to determine the main characteristics of this phenomenon.

Materials and methods. To achieve the aim of the research a set of interrelated methods has been used: general scientific – analysis, synthesis, systematization, generalization, comparison for the definition of «internationalization», «educational process», «curriculum»; specifically scientific – structural-logical, systematic-structural to clarify the peculiarities and the interaction between the stages of the internationalization of the educational process at the university.

Results and their discussion. In recent decades the universities of the European Union have accumulated a rich experience in the educational sphere. In this regard the analysis of the content and forms of IEP in the European universities is appropriate and timely in the context of our research.

The Canadian scientist J. Knight has revealed the concept of internationalization of higher education as a «process of integrating international and intercultural dimensions in teaching, research and the social function of universities» [6, p. 8]. This definition is still remains a widely cited and most frequently used. Later in her scientific works J. Knight has suggested approaching the interpretation of internationalization of higher education at the national, sectoral and institutional. Moreover J. Knight, as a number of other researchers, in particular, J. Beelen, P. Crowther and H. De Wit [2]., has considered the concept of internationalization as a process consisting of two constantly evolving and increasingly interconnected components – «external internationalization» (internationalization abroad) and «internal internationalization» (internationalization at home) [6, p. 22-24].

While external internationalization is generally understood as the implementation of educational programs requiring intersection by students/teachers/universities of state borders (academic mobility of students and teachers, mobility of projects, educational programs and education

providers), internal internationalization is more focused on curriculum development plans and programs in order to form the necessary students professional competences containing international components and intercultural competence [1, p. 17-16]. If the development of external internationalization is carried out by the universities of many countries for a long time, while the attempts to develop and implement the concept of internal internationalization began to be actively undertaken only in last decade of the 20-th century.

In the context of our research we should characterize internal internationalization which takes place at universities. It is necessary to notice that internal internationalization is an «approach to internationalization that goes beyond academic mobility, the emphasis is shifted to the teaching and learning activities of epy students in the atmosphere of cultural diversity in the native university» [5, p. 6]. The scientific works of P. Crowther, B. Nilsson, B. Wächter and other researchers are devoted to this problem.

One of the first universities in Europe to set a goal of internal internationalization was the University of Malmo (Sweden) in 1999 where B. Nilsson was Vice-Rector for International Affairs. At designing an internal internationalization strategy B. Nilsson raised a number of important issues which were discussed at the annual European Conference Association for International Education (EAIE) in 1999. Thus, the decision on the need to create a special working group whose activities would be aimed at studying the theory and practice of internal internationalization was adopted. In 2001 a working group published a report in which it was proposed to interpret internal internationalization as «any activities with an international focus and excluding outgoing mobility of students and teachers» [10]. However, it was outgoing mobility and internal internationalization which were closely interconnected.

B. Nilsson has proposed developing an internal strategy of the internationalization of the University of Malmo, whose goal would be to increase the level of intercultural competence of students and teachers. The intercultural competence has been described as «knowledge of international relationships and their implementation skills». While the cross-cultural competence was defined as «the development of understanding, respect and empathy for people, belonging to another nationality, culture, religion, having another social status, religious affiliation» [10, p. 36].

The following scientists as F. Rizvi, W. Green, K. Lipponen, M. H. van der Poel and others have constituted the components of intercultural competence: understanding of the global nature of the economic, political and cultural interaction; manifestation of inclusive behavior in relation to various cultures; high appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity; a positive attitude towards changes in life; a critical approach to pluralism of knowledge and awareness of the value of different knowledge; knowledge of one's own culture, understanding of own identity and social components; ability to identify ethical issues that may arise in personal and professional spheres, to live in international and/or intercultural context; application of critical thinking skills in situations having international or intercultural aspects [4, p. 8].

It should be stressed that the multidimensional and

multifactorial nature of intercultural competence is the subject of research in various spheres of knowledge. Thus, the main ways to achieve the increasing intercultural competence of students and teachers of the University of Malmo have been selected the following: the inclusion of intercultural components (disciplines, courses); the involvement of the invited foreign students in the learning process the researchers and students studying in exchange programs; the development and implementation of the courses in regional studies, intercultural communication; the in-depth study of English and teaching disciplines in English; the budget allocation to finance international internships of teachers to teach abroad; the involving of local cultural or ethnic groups to various events within the educational process [10, p. 24].

Despite the fact that internal internationalization at the end of the 20-th century was not presented as a didactic concept containing methodological components, the American of the University of Minnesota J. Mestenhauser has pointed out the importance of a systematic approach to its implementation. In his opinion, «internal internationalization offers the opportunity to choose a new the way in which the international component is inserted in all segments of university activity educational programs, mobilizing community resources; international education turns into a system in this context, focuses attention on the importance of education in the global labor market» [11, p. 70].

Parallel with the development of the concept of internal internationalization in the EU universities the concept of internationalization educational process (internationalization of curriculum), which appeared in Australia, began to develop. On the one hand, it was a solution to the issue of a large number of «non-mobile» students; on the other hand, it was a response to commercialization and commodification of higher education [12, p. 7]. The significant contribution to the development of this concept was introduced by B. Leask, an Executive Director of Education La Trobe University (Melbourne, Australia).

The essence of the notion «curriculum» means compulsory education or training at an educational institution». In this meaning the term was originally disseminated in foreign pedagogy, although today the researchers consider it with other positions: as the content of education, that is, pedagogically adapted social experience that is transmitted to the students; as a product (the results of disciplines teaching students prescribed in the curriculum and the achievement is subsequently verified by the teachers); as a process of teaching and learning.

In a broad sense the concept of «curriculum» combines the content of education and the educational process, representing a holistic system, in which the processes of setting goals, determination of learning outcomes, selection of learning content, choice of training methods and assessment are inextricably linked to. The closest in meaning to the term «curriculum» from the categorical apparatus of pedagogy is «educational process». Thus, the concept of «educational process» is a sufficient accordance to the concept of «curriculum» as it is a purposeful process of an organized interaction between teachers and children, leading to achievement of the planned results through the use of educators selected teaching methods and students mastering selected learning content.

Internationalization of the educational process initially was regarded as an «educational process having an international orientation of the content and aimed at preparing students for activities (professional/social) in international and multicultural context, focused on both local and foreign students» [3, p. 9]. In 2009 the scientist B. Leask proposed a new definition of the internationalization of educational process, describing it as «the integration of international and intercultural components in the content of instruction, teaching and learning, and also organizational support of the educational process» [8]. In our research paper we will adhere to this definition of the term. Moreover, the scholar B. Leask has noted that the internationalized educational process is «a process that brings together students from different cultural language environments and academic schools that purposefully seek to expand their international and intercultural competences in view of self-awareness international professionals and citizens of the world» [7, p. 10]. The author identifies two main characteristics of the internationalized educational process. Firstly, its implementation in the conditions of cultural diversity and going beyond established approaches to cognition (depending on discipline). Secondly, it provides teachers with possessing the necessary experience, knowledge or skills, support from expert methodologists who will help teachers in the formulation of educational tasks, the selection of competences, teaching and assessment methods, and students – with the implementation of the tasks [9, p. 10].

The internationalization of the educational process, as the researchers H. De Wit, B. Leask noted, is not the ultimate goal and aims to improve the quality of the educational process. IEP does not exclude academic mobility of students and teachers, however they become an integral part of this process. The organized mobility is logically integrated into the educational process, clearly defining the goals and results.

For a clearer understanding of the internationalization of educational process in the European universities the current approaches to its analysis content have been considered. In the last decade the IEP experience in the European universities in most cases relies on the research of B. Leask, which believes that the main way to internationalize the educational process is «action research». The main characteristic of this type of research is that it is a continuous cyclic process; its initiator and executor is a teacher (a group of teachers); the incentive is the teacher’s desire to find solutions to the problems arising in the activities, the ways to improve the pedagogical process.

The scientist B. Leask has compiled an educational internationalization model process in the university in accordance with the main provisions of the approach based on «action research». IEP at the university is presented in the works as a cyclic process, consisting of five stages. B. Leask has described the conceptual foundations of internationalization educational process, indicating what lies at its core, as well as what affects its content and implementation (Table 1) [9, p. 25].

Table 1. Stages of internationalization of the educational process at the university (according to B. Leask)

Stage	Key question	Possible options for activity
The analysis of the situation, definition of a problem.	How much educational process is internationalized?	Identification or revision of the main motives for IEP within the framework of this educational program; revision of educational content, teaching methods and assessments within individual disciplines and the program as a whole in consistent with the goal of internationalization; analysis of feedback from local and foreign students, as well as other interested parties such as professional associations and employers regarding content elements of education in this educational program; conducting a SWOT analysis of the educational process.
Mental image solution options problems.	What are other possible approaches to the implementation of the educational process?	Discussion of the cultural foundations of the dominant national concepts within the disciplines taught; analysis of the possibilities of inclusion in the content of educational process new developing concepts; imagine the world of the future: what students will need to live and work in this world efficiently; discussion of possible educational changes of the process with the goal of internationalization.
Re-analysis of the situation, drawing up an action plan.	Pay attention to previous results analysis. What changes did you contribute to the educational process?	Defining the goals and objectives of the IEP within your educational program; identification of the factors inhibiting IEP and stimulating this process; determination of the experts available on your team or university that may help you achieve your goal; setting the priorities and developing an action plan, containing information about what, by whom and by what date must be implemented and what resources are needed for this; determination of criteria and methods for assessing effectiveness process.
Practical Implementation plan.	Were the set of goals achieved ?	Development and implementation of activities to provide support for teachers and students; introduction of new assessment methods; introduction of new courses/modules; data collection to conduct formation assessment of intercultural competence of the students (quality and/or quantitative information).
Evaluation of the results.	Where were the set of goals achieved ?	Analysis of data received from the parties involved; analysis of performance, as well as positive and the negative impact of some «unforeseen» events; collection of additional missing information; summing up the results and preparing information to switch to a new cycle of actions.

According to the author B. Leask, IEP is based on the knowledge in the field of disciplines, as well as related

disciplines, as the solution to modern problems and tasks require knowledge that goes beyond individual disciplines

and cultures. International education requires interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches.

Based on a review of existing content definition approaches to the notion «IEP», as well as the analysis of existing experience in implementing this process in universities of the European countries, it seems possible to highlight the following key characteristics of this process: conditionality of the goals and objectives by external (global, national, regional) and internal (institutional) circumstances for the implementation of educational programs; the key task is the formation of all students' personal and professional competences enabling them to work successfully and live in multicultural and multilingual society; the disciplinary content goes beyond traditional national frameworks and dominant in a particular subject area concepts; this process is aimed at preparing students for action in unfamiliar international situation by expanding the boundaries of their thinking and the formation of the ability to think creatively and critically; a significant role is given to knowledge of foreign languages (in particular English) among students and teachers; stimulating the development of international research activities; application of international standards for inter-

national monitoring of quality assurance of IEP.

The conclusions. Thus, the main objective of the European higher education systems at the turn of the century the preparation of graduates for life and work in global society – a complex interconnected world where everything is local more interconnected with global. Of particular importance in this world are the international and intercultural skills and knowledge, awareness of the need for positive interaction with representatives of other cultures and commitment to these actions, the ability to think at the local, national and global levels.

Internationalization of the educational process in the European universities is a multi-component and multi-factor process. It is also important to understand the socio-cultural, economic and political factors that have stimulated the development of internationalization of the educational process in the countries of the European Union for successful internationalization.

In the future it seems reasonable to study and compare the European higher education systems of the developed countries such as The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, Germany.

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