

**ID-E opening remarks,**

**Exploring Difference: Positioning your Institution - Marketing and Branding  
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Minister Childs-Adams, Chargées d'affaires of the Canadian Embassy,  
dear guest speakers,

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends of ID-E,

on behalf of DAAD German Academic Exchange Service, I am pleased to welcome you to the forth edition of our "international dialogue on education".

Secretary General Christian Bode is, unfortunately, unable to attend and to open this conference.

He was called to report at a hearing at the Wissenschaftsrat (German Council of Science and Humanities) in Cologne, today.

Instead, he decided to send another "Christian" – this is me, Christian Müller. Actually, there is quite a large number of senior staff named Christian or Christiane, at DAAD, so he had a certain choice.

But, being head of the division "Communication and Marketing", it was somewhat natural that he asked me. And it was hard to refuse this kind invitation. Especially, coming from my Secretary General.

My division at DAAD is in charge of international marketing for Germany's higher education institutions looking to recruit students, graduates and academic staff from abroad.

So, in a nutshell, we work on the brand of Germany as a destination country for internationally mobile academics.

This has to build on strong brands of our universities as key stakeholders of all DAADs activities.

Marketing and communication is understood here as one element, one strand of a comprehensive internationalisation strategy.

It relates tightly with scholarship programmes, the establishment of DAAD (and universities') offices abroad, with partnership networks, joint and double-degree programmes, with the support for projects in transnational education a.s.o. a.s.f.

It seems that we are not doing this too bad at all. At least, a recent study commissioned by the International Unit of Universities UK entitled “UK Universities and Europe: Competition and Internationalisation” states (and I quote):

“Germany is both a current and future competitive threat to the UK. Overall, UK universities are [...] likely to face increased competition for international students in [...] many subject areas from German universities.”

If you were not afraid, until now, of the German threat, now you should be! - I cannot tell you exactly what else this report says, because it is classified and we do not have it.

All this is, obviously, closely related to the question of strong individual brands of German HEIs. Our feeling, in Germany, is that universities in Britain, US, Australia and Canada are doing much better in this respect.

So we would like to learn more about concepts, strategies, contents and practical solutions on the core questions (like: who can help me in analysing my brand values and working on new content and communication?).

These questions are, in my view:

- How to develop a brand?
- How to manage a brand?
- How to maintain and explore a brand?

Here are my thoughts on what could – or should – be discussed today afternoon:

### **1<sup>st</sup> There is a lot more to a brand than just a logo.**

Or a tag line. A brand is a complex mixture of general perceptions, facts and figures, achievements and incidents, of people, students, academic and administrative staff, alumni, of physical appearance, buildings, monuments, etc. etc.

Whether we like it or not, whether we interfere systematically or not: Our institutions do have brands. You may not remember the logo of the ETH Zurich (which, by the way, is plain and simple) – however, we all know that it is a great university.

At least, we all assume it to be – and that leads me to

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Facts are facts, but perceptions are reality.**

You may have the best researchers in the world. But: If nobody perceives and presumes that, it does not pay into your institutional brand.

One example: Those of you who are, at least, as old as I am (that must be very few), may recall the image of the Universität Bremen to be a leftist, laissez-faire university, a famous “linke Kader-Schmiede” in the early 70s.

It took a lot of years and efforts to change this view. Today, the Universität Bremen stands for being one of the most innovative and productive HEIs: The so-called “Wunder an der Weser“.

It was hard to change the university, but much harder to change its brand image, the way we see it. This illustrates my 3<sup>rd</sup> point, which is

### **3<sup>rd</sup>: There is nothing about branding, if there is no substance.**

This sounds trivial. However, on the long run, you will never produce and maintain a brand if there is no coherence between what you say and what you really are, what you deliver. Some may remember the nation-branding campaign “India Shining”. It failed mainly

because people did not find India “shining” in all aspects, or at least as a predominant characteristic. Instead, we all find India “incredible” whenever we go there. And that exactly is the tag-line for the new “visit India” campaign: “Incredible India” – and this is running very successfully.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> You cannot *not* brand your institution.**

If there is a market, if there are customers, there are competitors, there is a need for differentiation and positioning. And that is: brand development and management. Be that on regional, national or international level.

We may still advocate that education is not a tradeable service, is not a commodity, that it remains a public and intangible good. However, paying fees for education is nothing new (instead, it used to be the common way of financing in all former times).

This implies that students look for the best offer for their needs and capabilities. And it changes our relationship with students. In the same way, scientists select a university to work for not only for salary and research funding. They also look for a good employer, for reputation and international outreach.

I think my dear colleague Rolf Hoffmann is going to expand on this further.

I would like to thank the Canadian Embassy for kindly hosting this ID-E conference,

I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent co-operation with the partners

- British Council
- Fulbright Commission
- the Australian Group of Eight
- and, again, the Canadian Embassy,

and I wish to thank our staff which joined in organising this event.

I am looking forward to an interesting afternoon and evening with lively and fruitful discussion. I hope you will enjoy the ID-E conference “Exploring Difference”!

Thank you for your attention.