Dr. Annette Julius
DAAD

Internationalization: anticipating tomorrow's trends?

Closing Keynote Speech held at the ACA Annual Conference 2009
"Innovation through internationalization"
Warsaw, May, 15th 2009

One challenge about preparing a closing keynote speech is that you don't know what will have been said when the time of that speech has come. It is, if you like, a case of anticipating the future. The only thing you know for certain is that you are bound to repeat other people's contributions in some way or other. This leads me to the first topic I will talk about – the **future**, why it is difficult to foretell – and why and how it still makes sense trying to anticipate tomorrow's trends.

And because I anticipated that during the course of this conference numerous insights on current trends *within* the field of internationalisation would have already been presented, the topic I have chosen is **internationalisation** as such – how drivers and policies of internationalisation are, despite a rather synchronized internationalisation *rhetoric* - quite diverse, and how, on the other hand, these diverse "internationalisations" are themselves subject to internationalisation.

I. The Future

The saying "It is difficult to make predictions – especially if they are about the future.» is attributed to more than 25 different people, among them Mark Twain, Woody Allen, Niels Bohr and Yogi Berra, and thus seems to be a widespread observation, indeed.

It is estimated that in the technical sphere only 20% of all past prognoses turned out to be true – in other words: four out of five predictions were wrong. – The examples of predictions wildly mistaken fill libraries. *And:* This does not only concern notorious dimwits like Germany's last Emperor, Wilhelm II, who is supposed to have said

- "I believe in horses. Automobiles will only be a temporary phenomenon."
- In 1974 the Club of Rome predicted that even under the most optimistic assumptions South East Asia would face a hunger catastrophe, beginning in the 1980ies and reaching its climax in 2010 with more than a billion victims of starvation.
- All the way to 1989 many most respected and learned men and women insisted that a reunification of the two Germanies would not be possible, unless there were a bloody, murderous war.
- And who would have foretold 9/11 in the middle of the nineties?
- And who that the son of an exchange student from Kenya would be elected 44th president of the United States in a landslide victory?

At present the whole sphere of prognosis seems to have been more discredited than ever – hardly any of the experts or expert institutions did one year ago foresee the scope of the financial crisis the world is facing now. Innocent, trusting souls were assured that buying medium risk shares or investing in real estate would, in the long run, be a better investment than putting your money into boring saving accounts with a fixed interest rate of just two per cent.

And it is not only anecdotal evidence suggesting that there is reason for scepticism: In 2005 the American psychologist Philip Tetlock published the results of his long-term study about “expert political judgement”, which he conducted for over 20 years. His conclusion, in short, was that specialists are not significantly more reliable than non-specialists in predicting what is going to happen in the region they study. In fact – he found experts to perform worse than if they had mechanically assigned an equal probability to each of the three alternative scenarios suggested to them in his interviews – they did worse, in other words, than dart-throwing monkeys.

So should we maybe impose a moratorium on all predictions and prognoses? This at least is conclusion of the German Institute for Economic Research, one of the leading institutions of its type in my country, which recently announced that it would refrain from predicting anything about economic development for 2010. Their argument is that all long-term forecasts since the beginning of the crisis turned out to be wrong, and they feel that the anticipation of future trends does more harm than good right now.

If I shared that view, I could stop talking here and now and call it a day for all of us. But, whether you may find that fortunate under the present circumstances or not – I don’t. I do, however, think that we have every reason to distrust quantitative models coming up with pseudo-precise figures – whether about future numbers of cars driving around in this or that city or of international students cruising the planet by 2020 or 2025 – especially those not laying bare the “ifs” and “buts” inherent in their extrapolations.

The first “but” that always has to be considered with regard to the future is the impact of singular events, which are far-reaching in consequence and at the same time impossible to integrate into any kind of quantitative projection: Because even though undercurrents of hatred in the Muslim world against the West were there all along, the “when” and the “how” of an event like 9/11 cannot be foreseen. Another example is the election of Obama – even though the potential to radically reinvent itself is a well-known strength of the United States of America.

Complexity is the second issue with very similar implications. Poking fun at experts who can afterwards explain *why* they were wrong has become quite a sport these days, and the sometimes arrogance of the former prophets makes such a reaction quite understandable. It is, nevertheless, my conviction that the multitude of dimensions and drivers as well as the effects of their various interactions plus the unreliable numbers we talked about earlier – leaves us nevertheless no choice but to still try and make informed decisions, constantly revising past emerging trends and learning in the process. Complexity is, in short, another reason not for giving up, but for becoming better and at the same time more modest and unassuming.

The most important reason, however, why withdrawal is not an option, is that the future is not independent from our predictions. Anticipating the future always has an element of taking a choice or making a plea that one existing undercurrent will get the upper hand rather than another. If you are unkind, you may call this the interest-drivenness of all predictions. I do, however, think that there are quite legitimate causes to be interested in. The obvious example is climate change, where scientific prognoses transform reality by predicting *possible* futures we must do everything to prevent.

In our own field, the prognosis that demand for international education would increase more than 9-fold over a period of 25 years was *meant* to convince governments to supply funds helping to secure potential shares of future markets – and even if these figures had to be taken back by IDP last year, they sure did the job. Targets (like the 20 % target of the recent Leuwen conference) and also rankings are other variants of these kinds of forecasts, often quite success in influencing the future in their originator's sense. How there are other, more far-reaching choices to be taken with regard to future policies of internationalisation I will try to illustrate in the following.

I will set out on this task by at first quickly going through six (as I see it) of the most relevant drivers of internationalisation and their underlying philosophies. These are much more diverse than often made out to be, each of them following their own rationale and reason, and, as I will try to show, each embedded into specific, often national contexts and traditions, and, finally, each with their own limitations. And as if that wasn't enough, these philosophies do not remain unperturbed by each other's existence, but mutually affect each other, sometimes putting pressure onto the other system, sometimes opening doors for new choices and scopes of action.

II. The multiple drivers of internationalisation

International students' and academics' mobility is driven by framework conditions and attitudes of both the sending as well as the receiving countries. On the sending countries side the two most important drivers are lack of provision at home and, quite differently, the added value of a substantial international experience. On the side of the receiving countries prominent drivers are selling education, recruitment of talent, public diplomacy and development cooperation

1. **Lack of provision** can be of a quantitative or a qualitative nature: When in Korea, Malaysia, India and China purchasing power increased more quickly than it took (and takes) to establish well functioning universities, there were suddenly more people aspiring and able to afford Higher Education than the system could accommodate. In countries like Turkey demographics may reinforce this trend. On the other hand, in some Central and Eastern European countries formerly highly functional systems of Higher Education have over the last two decades suffered from serious cut-backs in their funding, which led to a decline in quality and therefore to relevant numbers of students, for example from Bulgaria, the Ukraine, Russia and also Poland, seeking education or getting involved into research elsewhere.

2. Quite another logic is at work, if students study or do research abroad in order to **widen their horizons**, or acquire what we nowadays call soft skills: Gaining on intercultural competence, multiperspectivity as well as fluency in foreign languages, becoming an expert on certain political or economic systems through first-hand knowledge, searching out complementary strengths and specialisations of expert knowledge – all of these are very good reason to venture abroad, even if your universities at home are not lacking capacity or do not underperform in quality.

The ERASMUS programme is probably *the* most prominent example of this kind of mobility scheme, offering educational opportunities through the diversity of 31 participating partner countries. In Germany, on top of those 29.000 students and academics supported within EU programmes, DAAD funds outbound mobility of more than 21.000 German students, graduates and researchers per year. DAAD-campaigns of recent years to promote outbound mobility were called "**Go East**" (encouraging students to learn more about their Central and Eastern European neighbours, not least of all to balance a little more mobility streams), "**A new passage to India**" (advocating the possibilities of study and research of this sub-continent) or simply "**Go out**".

3. Looking, thirdly, at the most important receiving countries over the past ten years, a major driver for internationalisation has been generating income. The UK as well as Australia nowadays significantly cross-subsidise their universities through international students fees, and "**selling education**" has come to be regarded as a major branch of industry, which is operating inland as well as offshore. These countries clearly dominate the discourse about internationalisation because their intake is so huge.

4. The US and Switzerland are cases in point where the focus lies upon international graduate and doctoral students. To **recruit** these has become vital, <u>not</u> because foreign academics necessarily pay high fees, but in order to keep up the present level of research capacity, especially in the STEM-subjects. On a deeper level reasons for this situation in the two countries differ quite significantly – whereas, broadly speaking, in the US for many national students an academic career may be not as attractive and economically rewarding as other available options, in Switzerland it is the percentage of nationals in tertiary education that, in international comparison, is quite low to start with.

   Both the selling and the recruitment philosophies share a basically **competitive** approach to internationalisation – the one competing for fee-paying "customers", the other for the so-called "High Potentials".

5. **Public diplomacy** through Higher Education used to have a strong tradition in many parts of the world, both east and west of the former Iron Curtain. In countries like France or the UK, a focus has been on former colonies, in order to maintain traditionally close linguistic, political and cultural ties. In Germany, it was first and foremost the moral disaster of the Nazi regime that for decades made it a priority of foreign policy to regain the trust of the international community and win new friends and partners.

   As a non-government membership organisation of universities, DAAD has in many situations been able to do more than the ministries it is funded by: Thus, our branch office in Cairo remained opened, when diplomatic relations with Egypt were cut after West-Germany and Israel had resumed *their* diplomatic relations in 1965. Likewise, since the late sixties and all the way through the so-called Cold War exchange programmes with countries in Central and Eastern Europe kept up communication and exchange, while relations on the political level remained frozen.

In Germany, this public diplomacy approach has rested on steadfast, continuous scholarship programmes open for all countries, supporting first and foremost **individuals** and their projects from all fields. At the same time, it has allowed for enhancing special causes – the reconciliation process with France during the first decades or the fostering of peace through the so-called stability-pact for the ex-Yugoslavian countries are just two examples out of many.

6. **Development aid** is the sixth, the last, but by no means the least important driver for internationalisation. Today fostering exchange and cooperation between universities is seen as contributing to the UN Millennium Goals – because to achieve social progress, good governance, protection of natural resources, better health, nutrition and primary education, academically trained experts are needed, who are internationally trained and linked and at the same time locally committed. In quite a number of countries, such as the Netherlands, the Nordic countries and also in Germany, there are more publicly funded schemes available than ever, serving goals of development aid through Higher Education. These may include scholarships, the support of master courses with special relevance to developing countries as well as funding of institutional cooperation, e.g. for joint curriculum development and training modules.

All of these six drivers depend on **specific framework conditions** and attitudes and are therefore not easy to transplant: Obviously, selling education can only be a driver where universities are *allowed* to charge relevant fees for international students. Similarly, internationalisation policies e.g. of German universities are strongly backed by the availability of significant public funds, and it is difficult to see how institutions of Higher Education without these funds should actively engage for example in development cooperation projects.

All drivers at times **fall short** of their own objectives or encounter **serious limitations**: The up-and-coming Asian countries are clearly aspiring to build up their own capacities in Higher Education and even become major host countries themselves – so there is a serious limit here to other nation's market aspirations. In the US the fact that in some subjects over 50% of PhDs go to foreigners has come to be regarded as a security issue – because, as some see it, the country depends for its innovative capacity too much on people whose loyalty to the system cannot be taken for granted. And if, as the public diplomacy approach suggests, exposure always entailed sympathy and ever-lasting friendship, we wouldn't have to worry so much about Muslim fundamentalist movements, whose leaders have for the most part been educated in the West.

Last but not least, the different internationalisation policies may and in fact *do* interfere with each other. On the example of Germany I will try to explain how other policies may seriously put a system under pressure, but also how internationalisation of the internationalisation policies *themselves* may be a driver for productive and necessary reform.

III. Internationalising internationalisation

As explained above, **outbound mobility** in Germany is supported on quite a significant scale, the idea being that former scholarship holders will then come back

with new ideas and fresh approaches. When recruitment efforts of foreign "competitors" increased and some of the best and brightest actually turned their back on Germany for good, the public funding of this exodus, as some perceived it, came to be seriously questioned.

Luckily in the end the reaction was *not* to withdraw existing scholarship lines, but to improve the quality of the German Higher Education institutions and learn from good examples abroad. Thus competitive wages, top-level equipment and staffing, predictable career paths as well as family-friendly arrangements were all put on the political agenda and led to significant reform efforts. The reaction was, in other words, a competitive one to the competitive approach of others. The most poignant example of how the paradigm of international competition has actually changed our Higher Education system is probably the so-called Excellence Initiative, which was launched with two aims – to enhance *international* visibility of clusters and institutions of excellence and to support existing excellence in a way that will make it *internationally* competitive.

Inbound mobility is faced with similar challenges: Mobility streams to Germany, hitherto reliably stable, were increasingly diverted by attractive offers from elsewhere. The Asian countries, which in a "selling-education-rationale" are potent markets, are, from a public policy point of view, important future political and economic partners. Again, the answer to this challenge has been to embark on reforms, adopting instruments and good practice from other countries: Marketing activities, the introduction of English-taught degree courses, more and better classes in German language, offshore campuses and better student services were some of the measures taken.

Last but not least, it was foreign examples in league with the persuasiveness of the competition paradigm that have helped to prise open the much-too-long-deferred debate about German immigration and employment law. As a result, non-EU students nowadays may seek a career and a life in Germany after obtaining a degree of one of our universities. Thus we have also been able to shed this myth – that migration to Germany is only a temporary phenomenon and are now facing facts that we have work to do integrating those who have been living among us as strangers for three generations now.

An additional development was that the existing support schemes, which had hitherto concentrated on *individual* mobility were complemented by programmes supporting strategic partnerships. These include learning agreements, joint degree programmes and joint research schemes. This move was at least in part consequence of the need to become more efficient in the face of the mounting competition, in order to, among other things, reach a larger visibility or to move a larger number of people.

Whether we call this process migration, transfer, borrowing, export or imitation of policies – I think that regardless of the astonishing breadth and pace of these reforms, up until now it is just ***elements*** of other systems that were adopted – primarily instruments as well as a more competitive mindset – whereas the underlying rationale of the system has in many ways remained intact: Most importantly, fees from international students remain largely a taboo, and the financial crisis has for now bolstered those pleading for more, not less state responsibility.

Recruiting talent is still only slowly becoming an issue – with 15% of German graduates going into doctoral research (and this is not counting medical doctors) there has, up until now, not been a serious lack of national doctoral students. On the other hand, demographics are working against us in this, and when all the new positions created by the Excellence Initiative had to be filled, it became evident that the reservoir of talent might be exhausted more quickly than comfortable.

In sum, the trend up until now has been that the competitive approach is driving changes and reforms – in Germany and elsewhere – and that many of these reforms have been beneficial in terms of **quality** and **efficiency** to the system as a whole.

IV Towards Cooperation

There is, however and finally, another trend more recent and more comprehensive than the others, which goes beyond what has been described so far. This trend is promoted by challenges that are truly global in scope and scale, and it is helped in no small way by the recent advent of the Obama administration. I am talking about the new emphasis lately placed upon international **cooperation** – whether in the field of politics, economics or Higher Education.

The cooperative approach implies partnerships that are drawing upon combined, complementary or synergetic strengths and that are beneficial for all parties involved. The challenges that make this approach a necessity are known to everybody in this room – climate change, international terrorism, pandemics, migration flows caused by poverty and lack of perspective, and, last but not least, the interdependencies within a global financial market and the ensuing need for supranational rules and regulations. These are challenges that no nation can solve by itself *and* that affect each and every nation – admittedly not alike, but seriously enough not to be ignored by anyone.

One indication for a move towards a cooperative approach in Higher Education is the increasing number of bi- and multilateral institutional networks and associations, of which the latest “ACA Handbook” lists no less than a hundred, among them the Academic Cooperation Association itself. And a recently released study of the UK Higher Education Unit with the title “Competition and Internationalisation” voices serious doubts whether “the competitive mindset alone can continue to serve the UK well”, advising UK universities instead “to draw on the more collaborative practices of their neighbours”, where “partnerships within and outside Europe are based on mutual gain rather than financial returns”.

It is not likely that the “traditional” policies and drivers of internationalisation will lose their validity in the foreseeable future. But, in the light of the above-mentioned challenges, they are clearly too limited: To strengthen the financial stability of your Higher Education Institutions or the innovation power of your nation’s industry or even to enhance your nation’s reputation will still be important, but it will not be enough.

In this situation, certain traditions of internationalization offer useful instruments for and experience with a collaborative approach:

- A tradition of both in- and outbound mobility – and thus to have people with

intercultural experience on both sides – helps to form true partnerships.

- Development aid, whether it concerned Higher Education or other fields, used to be quite a one-sided business – there wasn't much of a dialogue going on there. Over the last decades, people have learned how to involve those being aided and how to adapt solutions locally, since without these elements their work has proven to be unsustainable.
- Finally, the move towards strategic partnerships, which, as I explained earlier on the example of Germany, was in part caused by the need to become more efficient, has helped to create the necessary structures to tackle the global challenges.

Thus, the advent of the cooperation paradigm might be a chance of internationalisation working this time in the other direction – the competitive approach adopting instruments and elements of existing public diplomacy and development aid policies and hopefully profiting in a similar way our system has profited from their example.

Brain Drain remains an issue – how to turn it into brain-circulation and how to reconcile the growing need for doctoral students and academics in the research-based knowledge-societies, which are on top of that facing declining birth-rates, on the one hand with the needs of developing countries, which cannot easily enter the competition game, on the other. It is clear that this conflict cannot be solved without a fair amount of goodwill and solidarity on the side of the more advanced countries. It is equally clear that without efforts on the side of the developing or threshold countries – for example towards meritocracy and politically stable institutions – talent will hardly be persuaded to return.

Sandwich-schemes, where supervisors both at home and abroad jointly tutor research, might be one instrumental answer; other instruments will have to be developed and negotiated within national and institutional partnerships. And when the need for young talent grows even more urgent worldwide those who have cultivated these kinds of partnerships and *cooperative* arrangements might eventually even have a *competitive* advantage.

V. Conclusion

If I have made a strong point for learning from each other's internationalisation policies, I don't mean to imply that all internationalisations should converge and ultimately become the same. On the contrary: The beauty of the cooperative approach is that it works not despite, but because of the different strengths of the partners involved.

It is, after all, diversity, that makes cooperation and exchange such an interesting and rewarding experience And it is diversity that is our most important insurance as long as the future remains unpredictable.

Thank you for your attention.