

TRANSNATIONAL, BI-NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL?

The German approach

Germany may not be the first country that comes to mind as a major stakeholder in the transnational education (TNE) sector – the head start of Australian, British and American universities in the field has led to the perception of TNE as a primarily Anglo-Saxon phenomenon. However, German institutions have been highly proactive of late, with some very interesting results.

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Photo: Seider



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01, 02 Engineering and Management Master Programme kick off at the Vietnamese-German University VGU, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

03 Kazakh students at the German-Kazakh University in Almaty, Kazakhstan

German TNE engagement started later and took a different turn to its Australian, British and American forerunners, but proved to be successful in its own way. In part, this can be explained by the fact that German universities were encouraged

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and supported to venture abroad by the German government (via DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service) as part of the government's higher education internationalisation strategy. A key-word in understanding this engagement is 'sustainability': the supported TNE study offerings aim to foster bilateral scientific exchange on a long-term basis and strengthen higher education infrastructures in their host countries. While students profit from an addition to the study opportunities within their reach, the involved German institutions benefit from an improved position in the international education market and bolstered industry contacts as well as an expansion of their course portfolios.

GERMAN ENGAGEMENT

The 'German model' of TNE is based on cooperative interaction between German universities and their international partners. This concept informed the formulation of a 'Code of Conduct for Higher Education Projects Abroad' which was adopted by the members of the German Rectors' Conference in 2013. The Code lays down standards for the provision of higher education by German universities outside their national borders, stressing a collaborative approach in dealings with universities abroad, assurance of a high quality of content, provision and administration and opportunities for contact with Germany as major features.¹

AROUND 17 000 GERMAN STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED AT SEVEN BI-NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

The specific approach of German institutions shows in the types of TNE engagement they enter into, with franchise or validation being virtually non-existent in German TNE. Branch campuses are a rare phenomenon, too, despite a few notable exceptions run by institutions of international renown, such as Munich Technical University's TUM Asia

Campus in Singapore or the El Gouna Campus of Technical University Berlin in Egypt.

BI-NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

German degree programmes offered at partner institutions abroad registered more than 3000 students in 2013–2014. However, the most popular mode of engagement is the support of bi-national universities abroad. Of more than 20 000 students taking part in German TNE study offers worldwide, around 17 000 are currently enrolled at seven bi-national institutions in different countries. These numbers have never been higher and the signs point strongly to a further increase in the future.

The oldest of these 'X-plus-German' bi-national institutions is the German University Cairo (GUC). Founded in 2001 as a private institution with support of the Universities of Ulm, Stuttgart and Tübingen, in one decade the GUC succeeded to firmly establish itself among the top 10 Egyptian universities in regional rankings. To date, it is the only Egyptian university

whose degrees conform to Bologna standards, thus opening the door for GUC graduates to advanced studies in Europe. The concept has resulted in a constant rise of applications for admission and an expansion of the number of study places provided by the GUC: latest figures indicate 7500 graduates, 10 000 students and a record intake of 2000 new enrolments in the academic year 2013–2014.

MIDDLE EAST

In Amman, a specific German type of higher education institution was imported and adapted to meet the needs of a Middle Eastern country: the state-owned German Jordanian University (GJU). Its curricula and organisation of studies are based on the example of the German universities of applied sciences. About 80 of these institutions in Germany, headed by the University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg-Stendal, cooperate with the GJU to guarantee state-of-the-art higher education and practice-oriented training in fields like architecture, engineering or management. Since its inception in 2004, the GJU has evolved into one of the most successful university projects in the Arab region with 3700 students this winter term and around 1200 graduates to date.

WESTERN ASIA

On the Persian Gulf, the German University of Technology (GUtech) in the Omani capital almost doubled the number of enrolments from 650 to 1200 in the winter term 2013/14. GUtech maintains close ties with its partner institution RWTH Aachen University. For students, these ties can be seen not only with the German fly-in teachers, but also with excursions to Germany – for example, 15 GUtech students travelled to Aachen last November. Their programme comprised of a German language course as well as an introduction to a series of research projects, *eg* the excellence cluster ‘Tailor-Made Fuels from Biomass’. With its focus on engineering

and natural sciences, GUtech attracts students in the region through its teaching, training and administration which all follow German standards.

KAZAKHSTAN

Further northeast, a consortium of German universities led by the International Institute (IHI) Zittau of TU Dresden engages with local academic partners in the Kazakh German University (DKU). More than 500 students in Almaty strive for a DKU degree or one of seven double degrees with German higher education institutions in disciplines such as industrial engineering, logistics or integrated water management. Their academic training gives them additional linguistic and intercultural skills since the DKU

marked by the dynamic growth of its production-related industry. Supported by a consortium of 37 German institutions and by DAAD from its very beginning in 2008, the VGU now has around 750 students.

TURKEY

The youngest large-scale project in this branch of transnational education has just opened its doors: The Turkish-German University (TDU) in Istanbul commenced operations this academic year with five degree courses. After the official inauguration with both countries’ Presidents of State in April, the new institution has ambitious plans: starting with a first intake of around 130 students, it soon wants to train up to 5000 students.

MORE THAN 10 000 STUDENTS HAVE COMPLETED THEIR DEGREES THROUGH TNE OFFERED BY GERMAN UNIVERSITIES

follows a concept that builds on the acquisition of German and English as an integrated part of subject-specific studies. Students who start with classes in Russian in their first year are able to follow lectures and discuss with German professors in German towards the end of their degree courses.

VIETNAM

Strong local roots and a claim to become an integral part of the surrounding education landscape imply an obligation to constantly adapt and develop in order to meet the local needs. This academic year, the Vietnamese-German University (VGU) in Ho Chi Minh City launched new study programmes with their German partners. Master’s courses like FU Berlin’s international ‘Global Production Engineering and Management’ or TU Darmstadt’s ‘Sustainable Urban Development’ were tailored to the demands of the country. Qualified engineers are especially sought after in Vietnam, whose economic growth is

Over the last years, more than 10 000 students have successfully completed their degrees through TNE offered by German universities, the majority of them at bi-national universities. Due to the combination of research-based teaching and practice-oriented training in their study courses, these graduates usually enter the job market with very good career prospects. At the same time, the ‘German approach’ increasingly receives attention in the international discourse on transnational education and is analysed in papers and conference sessions. At the EAIE Conference in September 2014, German models will be discussed in the context of the implications of TNE for internationalisation in the session ‘Transnational education: the next step for internationalisation’ organised by DAAD. **E**

1. For more information on the Code of Conduct, please visit: www.hrk.de/resolutions-publications/resolutions