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## **Starting from home: Analysis of an education faculty's process of internationalisation**

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Internationalisation is the process of integrating an international dimension into the research, teaching and services function of higher education. (Knight, 1993)

Nous ne coalisons pas des États, nous unissons des hommes.  
(Jean Monnet)

### **Introduction: From national to global citizenship**

As the European Union is working towards building a common political space via democratic instruments, it is also involved in other important global changes. For instance, the European Union is engaged in an ongoing process of worldwide expansion of economic activities, much of which is facilitated by new technological advances. Inevitably, these far-reaching processes bring about rapid social and political changes, not the least incidental of which is the construction of a new concept of European citizenship (European Commission, 2006). All of these changes require new regulations and educational responses for the aforementioned common political space since they must respond to local, European and international dimensions. The need to develop a democratic and educational framework to accommodate this has meant that the concept of citizenship has become a priority in the political and educational European agenda: 'once Europe is created, let's create the Europeans'. (This is a paraphrase of the now famous sentence attributed to the politician and military leader, Giuseppe Garibaldi. Garibaldi, leader of the Italian unification (1861) said: *Fatta l'Italia, facciamo gli Italiani*: 'Now that we have created Italy, let's create the Italians').

European citizenship creates new educational challenges in terms of promoting and respecting diversity; education systems are considered, indeed expected, to be a central instrument for facilitating the mutual understanding and respect for this diversity, on both the individual and cultural level. In order for educators to be able to face these challenges, special attention must be paid to teachers as they are essential components in the eventual education of all future European citizens (Villanueva and Gonzalo, 2002). For teachers to provide effective education for their students, they must be aware of human development within a World context and within intercultural parameters, so that their students will be responsible and informed citizens, capable of living in an ever-connected World. One element for achieving this is through greater international awareness of the educators themselves.

At the level of higher education, the need for greater international awareness has brought about structural changes in faculties and departments in order to promote more international profiles in higher education.

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Perhaps at no time since the establishment of the universities in the medieval period has higher education been so international in scope. Internationalism is a key part of the future, and higher education is a central element in the knowledge based global economy. (Altbach and Teichler 2001: 24)

This is most noticeable in changes in subject content and more international participation and interaction of the faculty staff. As Wende (2002) has pointed out, development in international educational policy is only now beginning to move beyond the type of marginal, add-on activities which have mainly focused on the international mobility of students and teachers. Other evidence of an increase in 'internationalisation' is the use of the major world languages in teaching, and in the convergence or homogenisation of degrees among European universities. The Bologna regulations are a clear consequence of these trends, aiming to make European Higher Education competitive on a global scale. This results in institutions pursuing an international dimension to help students become literate global citizens, but at the same time internationalisation is also often designed for global marketing and part of the university's neo liberal agenda (Solem and Ray, 2005).

Thus, it would seem that the term 'globalisation' is a catch-all phrase for almost everything from advances in information technology, greater capital flow across borders, international mobility of teachers and students, to credit transfer in higher education and international recognition of degrees. Moreover, 'globalisation' and 'internationalisation' frequently seem interchangeable and are both used to describe all the international activities carried out in higher education. However, following Scott's (1998) proposal for distinguishing between the two terms, this article identifies internationalisation as the processes of greater transnational co-operation between institutions and consequent transnational activities. Thus the emphasis is on the building of strategic, collaborative international relationships rather than a focus on increased interdependence and liberalisation of trade, as might fall into the definition of globalisation. This paper will describe the different steps taken towards collaborative internationalisation of an Education Faculty, followed by an outline of the impact each step has had on the internationalisation process of the faculty. Some final thoughts on the next steps which must be taken will be discussed in the conclusion.

### **The first steps taken: study abroad programmes and a new subject developed**

Since 1990, international policy at the Education Faculty of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (henceforth referred to as UAB) has been principally focused on so-called mobility actions, especially that of staff mobility (ICP projects) and student mobility (ERASMUS), both of which are programmes that involve an exchange of visits between institutions which have previously signed agreements. These exchanges, while proving to be an excellent instrument for widening the student's general background, have almost exclusively centred on the dimension of foreign languages, thus emphasising language learning over other possible dimensions of the exchange.

An analysis of results carried out in 2005 (Ferrer, 2006) showed a noticeable impact in students' attitudes and perceptions towards other cultures among all those who received mobility grants. At the same time, the growing increase of international contacts and

exchanges were also transforming general perspectives concerning the need for internationalisation of the Faculty, and therefore, in the mid-1990s, for the first time, the need for a policy to cope with the requirements of a society which was moving into the 21st century was brought into the Faculty agenda.

One of the first changes in the agenda was a move to introduce the European perspective into the curriculum. It was recognised by the Education Faculty that the process of internationalisation requires committed people who can face the challenges of an intercultural education perspective. This must include ongoing education of trainees and must include both theory and practical skills. It also implies the implementation of more direct attention to the students and teachers' understandings of issues related to internationalisation and globalisation. The impact of the new European context and the need for building a new international working environment were intensely discussed by the UAB staff at the incipient stages of the Faculty's internationalisation process. It should be noted that at the time (1992), Europe was not considered by many members of the Faculty to be a vital element for the curriculum, for the students or for the staff. Indeed, there was considerable reticence on the whole and during the first years of transformation (1992-1996), the process was sustained by a very small group of convinced teachers interested in the incorporation of new international dimensions into teacher training. In the end, these efforts paid off. As the results of a study conducted in 2004 indicate, more exposure to diversity and international opportunities helps teacher trainees to be more willing and able to find innovative strategies for confronting new situations, including diversity inside and outside the classroom (Dooly and Villanueva, 2005).

In order to introduce new elements of internationalisation which went beyond exchange programmes and could thus encompass a wider range of students, the core group of teachers interested in internationalisation worked to integrate into the curriculum new topics related to the European dimension, and a new subject was developed and introduced into the curriculum in 1992. Entitled *European Issues*, it was made compulsory for all Early Childhood and Primary teacher trainees studying at the Faculty. The subject emerged alongside a curriculum development project on European citizenship in which 19 European Universities were involved. The project was a joint module development (PIC UK 2180: 1992-1996; ERASMUS), coordinated by Westminster College, Oxford. As a result of this project the new course was fully integrated into the education curriculum.

The aim of the course is to give the students the opportunity to reflect about common values and heritage amongst all European nations and to reflect on the changes which are transforming the European space and society and which have a serious impact on education. Notably, this course is still the only one of its kind taught in teacher training throughout Spain. Since then, another cross-disciplinary optional course has been added to the curriculum entitled 'Education within an International Context' which integrates approximately fifteen visiting teachers per year into a plurilingual lecture series targeted for all the Education faculty students, no matter what their major.

### Impact of the first steps

The initiative of new, internationally focussed courses proved to be useful in several ways: not only has it increased the general knowledge of the students about European dimensions, but this knowledge about social, economic and educational international issues helped increase students' interest in ERASMUS exchanges (fig.1). Moreover, in the course's second phase (1996-2000), results from a survey (Villanueva, 2004) indicated that this subject has also proved to be strong motivation for students' enrolment in other available international experiences apart from ERASMUS mobility, such as teaching practice abroad, language internships, international sports and youth programmes (not to mention individual travel abroad). Last, but not least, the students' knowledge of European programmes, stemming from the course and participation in the abovementioned courses, has been helpful for the practice schools linked to the UAB Education Faculty. There are several documented examples of practice school teachers who found out about COMENIUS programmes and became involved in international project thanks to the UAB teacher trainees who had participated in such projects themselves. These same trainees then worked with the practice school teachers to set up new international school projects, demonstrating that the impact of the international dimension of the UAB Education Faculty has gone beyond the campus boundaries into the very community it proposes to serve.

### Evolution of mobility: UAB Education Faculty - Number of outgoing students (1992-2005)

Year	1992-1993	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-003	2003-2004	2004-2005
ERASMUS mobility	10	66	72	52	46	92	79
Other European projects	3	10	14	-	-	11	27
Towards Central and Latin America	-	5	5	10	10	18	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>126</b>

### Internationalisation of Faculty staff

Supporters of internationalised education argue that teaching should promote knowledge and understanding of world issues and events, appreciation for global, cultural and environmental diversity, cognitive and social abilities for intercultural communication, and a mindset for working constructively and democratically for the welfare of all peoples (Lamy, 1990; Schukar, 1993). Moreover, while global citizenship may be a controversial concept, all these competencies define the intellectual and moral dimensions of what it means to be a global citizen (ibid.). In order for this to be successfully transmitted to the students, the faculty members themselves must embrace these same competencies as worthy achievements for both themselves and their students.

Short-term strategies will not work; there is a need for commitment at all policy levels. Intercultural education must also be included in the ongoing education of faculty members and trainee teachers alike (Dooly and Villanueva, 2006).

The first experiences of the European dimension of the UAB Education Faculty began in the early nineties and the results were relevant for later integration of both faculty and trainees into the internationalisation process. In the framework of the SOCRATES program (1990-1995), an international Postgraduate course addressed to Early Childhood teacher trainees and two other international projects on English teaching in primary school were developed. The success and impact on the schools participating in the experiences was the first step in this European perspective of the Faculty (1993) and motivated a group of Faculty members to pursue further possibilities for mobility and international projects. Still, the numbers of participants in exchange programmes at this time were low (13 outgoing students to Europe, 12 to Latin America and 6 teachers in 1993). For the first years of the internationalisation process, many faculty members were reluctant to ask for exchange grants and the staff who requested mobility grants were considered 'exotic', with such grants being limited to only a few members.

The impact of internationalisation on teacher trainers has been relatively slow; the causes for which are diverse and complex. Largely, the concern for the European dimension as an integral part of teacher training was seen as an individual activity until 1995, and teachers who participated in exchanges or projects did so principally within the scope of their subject parameters. Ways to integrate international exchange or international projects into interdisciplinary activities were not pursued and the impact of individual participation was not taken advantage of on any largescale within the Faculty itself.

The launching of the second SOCRATES program proved to be a turning point for the building of an institutional framework and infrastructure addressed to promote the activities of the European perspective as one of the main objectives of the Faculty. Using the second phase of SOCRATES as a lever for getting wider acceptance of an international dimension in the Faculty policy, a framework was established to help consolidate student mobility. At the same time, two other objectives were envisaged: a greater involvement of the UAB Education Faculty staff in European projects and an increase in staff mobility. Both initiatives have been quite successful, especially the second one, as the Figure 2 shows. In the last 10 years, the staff mobility to Europe increased from 6 to 30 per year. It should be noted that the demand is higher than the figures; the restraints on numbers of staff members allowed mobility is applied by the University itself, not by the Education Faculty. Of the members who ask for staff mobility each year, 90% of participants are also involved in European or international projects. (See Figure 3).

**Figure 2 Teaching Mobility (1992-2005)**

Year	1992-1993	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Staff Involved in actions	6	17	13	19	28	30	30

**Figure 3 Evolution of participation in European projects**

Year	1992-1993	1999-2000	2000-2002	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
PIC (till 1996)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
European Modules		1	1	1	1	1	
Curriculum Development advanced	1	2	2	2	2	3	2
Intensive courses	1	1	1	3	3	3	
Thematic Networks		1	3	3	3	4	4
LINGUA		1	1	1	1	1	1
COMENIUS 2.1		2	2	1	3	3	3
OTHER (Minerva, Grundvig, Alfa, Institutional initiatives, etc.)		1	1	1	4	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>

### Beyond the European borders: Other international impulses

The increase of European activities has run parallel to other international perspectives outside of the European context. For historical and linguistic reasons, the UAB Education Faculty has had strong links with Latin American teacher training institutions. There are many in-service courses for school trainers held at the Faculty which attract Latin American participants. At the same time many of the faculty members coordinate and teach in postgraduate degrees in education in Nicaragua, Chile, Argentina, and Venezuela, to name a few. There has also been a marked increase in the number of doctoral students enrolling in the Faculty from these countries. This transnational cooperation has represented, since 1995, the involvement of approximately 40 teachers in different programs and activities. Subsequently, this has also opened a small flow of teacher trainees going to Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and El Salvador to do their practice teaching. The faculty has participated in the 'European Space of Higher Education Tuning' projects, as well as in many of the European forums which are leading this process of expanding into transnational projects which incorporate European and non-European institutions.

**Reflection: Successes and Setbacks**

Upon reflection of the difficulties encountered during this transformational process, one of the outstanding issues which comes to fore is the complexity of the linguistic situation in Spain which adds a certain sensitivity to the process of internationalisation. At the UAB, Catalan is the main language of instruction, a fact which continues to surprise many incoming students and visiting teachers. Furthermore, many ERASMUS students are still convinced that to be skilful in English is a sufficient condition for studying abroad and this attitude tends to reproduce that of the academic world where the growing hegemony of English as a global language privileges the discourse of the Anglophone world with a consequent loss of cultural diversity (Wise, 2005). Linguistic hegemony is a form of power that empowers some, while disempowering others and language is much more than a communicative tool for exchanging ideas: it represents a way of thinking (Garcia Ramon, 2003). In the context of internationalisation, the issue becomes how to balance the positioning of two languages where one is in an inevitably weaker position when faced with two of the most powerful languages in the world. This question has been temporarily resolved at the UAB Education Faculty through the introduction of some subjects which are now taught in English; nevertheless, this is not entirely satisfactory, as these subjects are mainly chosen by foreign students and it tends to isolate the Erasmus in a cluster and does not integrate them into the normal life of the Faculty.

Another notable issue which needs to be confronted is that since the year 2000 the number of students who are willing and able to spend a period abroad has not increased at the same rate as the first years of Erasmus programme. Questionnaires and informal interviews demonstrate that this is mainly due to the reduced amount of financial aide provided through the grant. It has been determined that ERASMUS grants are considered to be attractive mostly for the students who would have probably gone abroad with or without any financial support, while students who could not afford to maintain themselves while staying abroad are less likely to apply for ERASMUS grants. This is also an issue with teaching staff mobility, as frequently staff members must subsidise their own exchanges or else make such short visits that there is very little time to explore possibilities for further international opportunities, not to mention the lack of time for fully appreciating the possibility of finding out about new theoretical constructs and different methods of doing research and teaching. Frequently, staff members will use mobility grants to compile foreign data to test their hypotheses, thus providing an opportunity for an international dimension in their research which might not have been available otherwise but in order to do so, they must combine the required teaching hours with their research in a very short period of time.

A further evolution of the international facet of the Faculty can be seen in the way in which Faculty members arrange their sabbatical years. There has been a growing interest in incorporating international research into the sabbatical periods and at the moment, Faculty members on sabbatical have integrated into international research teams in Argentina, Peru, Columbia, Hong Kong, Finland, Belgium, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Brazil, France, Chile, Germany and the United States.



Indeed, it can be argued that the desired consolidation of student and teacher mobility through ERASMUS exchanges has been achieved. Despite this, however, it may not be sustainable if other ways are not explored to support exchanges. Furthermore, another goal of the internationalisation policy should be to 'internationalise' not only the students who go abroad, but also those who do not have grants. There is also a need to increase the scope of 'internationalisation' beyond the members of the staff who request mobility or who are involved in international projects. This idea, qualified by some authors as 'internationalisation at home' (Crowther et al, 2000) constitutes an attempt to answer the question: if they cannot go out into the international world, how can this world be brought to their home campus? Internationalisation in this case should not be understood as a summing up of separate international activities, instead there should be a coherent relationship between them which links institutional objectives and policies that encourage participation in the internationalisation process, and works to change teachers' and students' attitudes towards these objectives (Wächter, 2003).

In retrospect, it would seem that the achievement of adding international perspectives, both theoretically and in practice, to the Faculty of Education of the UAB has been implemented through changes to the academic curriculum and has been supplemented by diverse activities which have been the initiative of Faculty administration and Faculty teachers alike, reflecting a change in their attitudes and objectives over the years. Faculty members committed to creating 'institutional internationalisation' have helped embed global perspectives across the curriculum through study abroad programmes, through getting themselves and their students involved in international courses, through e-learning projects that involve transnational partners, through short-term immersion experiences for themselves and their students and through collaborative teaching and research done on an international basis. All of these efforts have resulted in bringing international and global perspectives to the fore of the teacher training at the faculty. It has resulted in teacher trainees who are more capable of considering human development within a World context and within intercultural parameters, thus empowering them to teach their future students to efficiently live in an ever-connected, global context. And, perhaps most importantly, wider global perspectives have become a part of the daily life of the Faculty itself.

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