

The Landscape of Higher Education and Student Support Services in Spanish Institutions

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A recent report launched by the Spanish government about the first national *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities* (Internationalisation of Universities Working Group 2014) points out that Spanish higher education institutions need to be internationalized. Spanish institutions aim to develop their attractiveness and competitiveness in a global context. Therefore, some new internationalization policies and strategies might be developed not only at the national level but also at regional and local levels. One key strategy to promote Spanish higher education is through the potential of the Spanish language to compete in the global market with other institutions. Others could be enhancing support services for international and local students and internationalizing the university at home.

Some of the trends in the Spanish higher education landscape are the increasing number of incoming and outgoing students (according to the European Commission report *Erasmus facts, figures and trends 2012-2013*, the student mobility has grown from 3.244 international students in the academic year 1987-88 to 268.143 in the academic year 2012-13), the importance of the Erasmus + programme as flagship, the enrollment increase of international and local students in Master programmes, the development of internationalization strategies at home and the participation of institutions in e-learning activities.

Spain attracts 2.5% of foreign students in comparison with USA (16.5%), United Kingdom (13.0%), Germany (6.3%), and France (6.2%; OECD 2013). In any case, in an internationalized campus not only mobility numbers are important, there are other factors playing an important role in the whole internationalization framework. The awareness of internationalisation strategies done at home need to be increased and understood by all stakeholders at the university. Providing support services and integration activities by and for staff, faculty and students will increase the internationalization of the campus and moreover enhance their attractiveness within other institutions. Provision and adaptation of support student services is becoming a main topic in the internationalization policies for higher education institutions due to the growing numbers of mobile students and the new coming types of mobility. According to the Erasmus Impact Study (Brandenburg et al. 2014, 164), the increasing number of incoming (and outgoing) students through Erasmus led to a rising awareness of the necessity of support services and the streamlining of administrative procedures. Kelo, Rogers, and Rumbly (2011) recognize that the “student support” and “student services” are considered to be highly equivalent, and refer to a wide variety of services that may be on offer to students. Student services can thus range from practical amenities such as accommodation and dining halls, to information provision and welcome activities, and even to academic or language support.

Spanish universities have great interest in the development of language services for foreign students. Furthermore, they are interested in internationalization at home strategies and in the provision of quality educational programmes (Internationalisation of Universities Working Group, 2014). Support Student Services should be provided for local and international students as it is not only requested by international students. In fact, some domestic students that are already on the campus can be interculturally deficient. Betty Leask (2009) suggested that international educators “move away from deficit models of engagement, which position international students as interculturally deficient and home students as interculturally efficient, when both need support.” In this sense, cultural shock programmes, intercultural

courses and activities as well as language and culture training courses could be promoted by the institutions for all students to activate their intercultural efficiency.

To conclude, we can state that there have not been developed national guidelines for support student services in the Spanish context (Rumbley & Howard, 2014). In many cases institutions are adapting their current services to new demands with monetary constraints and without guidance; consequently more efforts should be done by national policies and institutions themselves in order to internationalized Spanish higher education institutions.

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