PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME IN WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract
The practice of Internationalisation at Home (IaH) in Higher Education institutions (HEIs) is a good initiative to support the cross-regional cooperation amongst HEIs of Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia Herzegovina. The scope of the initiative is to contribute to spread the existing local knowledge capital into a regional knowledge repository within Western Balkan (WB). Using a synchronization model through the standardization of courses including a match-making mechanism between the courses and the network of experts can stimulate an effective exploitation of knowledge capital in WB countries. The collected data source has courses and experts from six universities in WB region, respectively two from Albania, two from Bosnia and Herzegovina and two from Kosovo that include potential courses and experts linking to the last 5-years projects funded by European Union. The synchronization model uses a Scope Content Activities Think Extra (SCATE) pedagogy model for the standardization of courses and a using a match-making mechanism to link the courses with the network of experts based on International Standard Classification of Education Fields (ISCED-F) classification. The findings have demonstrated that the implementation of twelve pilot courses in "FIVE ISCED-F" areas has significantly increased the number of experts in the network and their distribution in the region.

Keywords: **Internationalization at home; western Balkan, cross-regional cooperation; ISCED-F; higher education.**

1. Introduction

The Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) within the Western Balkan (WB) universities can contribute toward the European standards of relevant curriculum and effective practices of novelty teaching and learning approaches. These standards can provide dynamic integration through the enhancement of education quality through the implementation of Internationalisation at Home (IaH) in WB universities. The appropriate instruments recommended by European partners will support the goals of IaH in WB countries through the creation of

(1) training expert pool,
(2) launching of an online platform,
(3) establishing a new structure and renovating the current structure of HEIs courses.

These initiatives aim to transform the current local knowledge capital within the WB HEIs into a regional knowledge hub, leveraging a network of experts. The synchronization model is designed to enhance the efficient utilization of knowledge capital across WB countries facilitated by this network. This propensity can embed the potential opportunities to cooperate amongst regional partners through research and innovation, and more particularly cross-regional cooperation amongst representative universities of Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia Herzegovina. The data are collected from courses and experts associated with two representative universities in the WB region, specifically Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The selection criteria include potential courses and experts linked to EU-funded projects from the last five

years. The practice of IaH through embedding approaches and structures to foster internationalization in WB can enhance the research capacities and the quality of research outcomes within the universities. The cross-regional collaboration amongst WB countries will promote research and knowledge transfer within the cross-regional network of experts in HEIs and business environments. Additionally, this practice can enable students who may face barriers to studying abroad and accessing courses taught by international experts. The synchronization model proposed is done by the standardization of courses using a Scope Content Activities Think Extra (SCATE) pedagogy model and by using a match-making mechanism between the courses themselves and a network of experts based on International Standard Classification of Education Fields (ISCED-F) classification. This investigation contributes to the understanding of the benefits and challenges of implementing IaH within the context of higher education in WB countries.

The paper is structured as follows: section two presents the literature review related to the practices and results of IaH concept; section three demonstrates the methodological approach and empirical results related to the impact of implementing IaH in WB HEIs; and the last section follows with the concluding remarks according to the practice of IaH.

2. Literature review

Weimer (2020) emphasized that the European Commission highlighted the significance of IaH considering one of the core concerns of the European Union's internationalization strategy related to higher education. The European Commission accepted the lack of international mobility related to the preponderance of higher education students and had to foster more chances according to them through embedding the enhancement of international aptitudes within a globalized world. The core principle of this strategy promoted the integration of global dimensions into the curricula's content and design of teaching and learning practices.

De Wit (2015) examined the mainstreaming internationalization meaning that the internationalization was an incorporated pillar of university policies and strategies within additional comprehensive pillars like education, research, human resources, finances, student affairs, faculties, etc. Meanwhile, Hudzik (2015) investigated comprehensive internationalization meaning an obligation to permeate international and comparative perspectives of higher education into the teaching, research, and other undertakings.

Robson (2017) emphasized that internationalization practices might support the higher education institution to converge according to the values-based and ethical method of internationalization. These practices would support real internationalization by starting at home compared to the international view and intercultural competencies through the mobility of staff and students. Robson et al. (2017) examined the understanding and operation of IaH related to two universities, particularly, in the United Kingdom and Portugal. Their outcomes specified the appropriate illustrative determinants to support further institutions to comprehend and interconnect the practice of IaH. The authors emphasized that the practice of internationalized universities should be arranged continuously into the institutional plans towards internationalization through learning and social benefits.

Nilsson (2003) explored the progress of the IaH outlook related to the Swedish context. The author investigated the diverse approaches by applying the IaH notions according to the results of Malmö University cases. Also, the study is highlighted that

IaH was whatever worldwide correlated action excluding the outbound student mobility.

Meanwhile, Beelen and Jones (2015) have described IaH as like “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments”.

Otherwise, Brooks and Waters (2011) highlighted that the student mobility programs have been controlled particularly by the communally fortunate persons due to the economic and cultural resources to obtain the benefits of offered odds.

Sercu (2022) investigated the intercultural competence of Flemish university students and the determinants of intercultural competence development. The author highlighted that the contribution of significant determinants on intercultural competence development, particularly, the involvement in co-curricular of IaH inventiveness, the usage of foreign languages, friendliness, and frankness behaviours. Also, in the study is emphasized that the integration of international and intercultural measurements through formal and informal national curricula including entire students converges to evolving the international and intercultural outlooks towards students.

To summarize the literature on IaH, the last is seen as a useful strategy for a diverse learning environment bringing together a wide range of experiences and viewpoints. It will contribute by the involvement in co-curricular courses and offering students the chance to access the similar courses taught in the foreign HEIs avoiding their isolation by the practice of international mobility.

3. Methodology

In this study six HEIs from WB participated. They are codified as follows: P01 & P06 are HEIs from Albania, P07 & P08 are HEIs from Kosovo, and P09 & P10 are HEIs from Bosnia & Herzegovina. Each coordinator of the respective HEI was asked to catalogue a list of possible courses generated by projects funded by the EU in the last 5 years and a list of experts who have participated in those projects.

The methodology used to achieve the scope of having a knowledge repository within WB HEIs through the potential network of knowledge experts was by using a match-making mechanism and a standard structure of the courses offered. Once these components are implemented the next step was the piloting of 2 courses for each WB HEI to train and retrain potential experts in the region. The KPI used for evaluation is the number of new experts matched and their distribution in the WB region.

For the pilot courses standardization, it is used a pedagogy model called SCATE based on the following five pillars Scope, Content, Activity, Think, and Extra. Each course should have its own goal and aim, the target group or stakeholders, structured content with specific actions and related thinking techniques, and optional extra resources and examples. To realize the training process efficiently the courses were standardized in 2-days and 4-days activities.

For match-making between courses offered by Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and experts in the different areas of the academic world in Western Balkans (WB), first, we need a codifying system. Our choice fell on the framework ISCED-F (2015), which stands for the International Standard Classification of Education - Fields, and was developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to categorize and classify different levels and fields of education across countries. It is a widely used international standard for classifying

and comparing educational systems and qualifications worldwide. ISCED-F categorizes the subjects in ten big areas as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. International Standard Classification of Education Fields.
Source: ISCED-F two-code classification (ISCED-F, 2015).

ISCED field (level 1- code)	Description
00	Generic programmes and qualifications
01	Education
02	Arts and Humanities
03	Social Sciences, Journalism and Information
04	Business, Administration and Law
05	Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics
06	Information and Communication Technologies
07	Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction
08	Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary
09	Health and Welfare
10	Services

To have a deeper match, we considered the most detailed fields used in ISCED-F, which are identified with a unique 4-digit code. This code is used both in courses and experts' fields. ISCED-F 2013 contains 11 broad fields (2 digits), 29 narrow fields (3 digits), and about 80 detailed fields (4 digits).

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows the detailed fields of ISCED-F where the identified course falls. The results show some facts related to the coverage of the areas by each partner HEI or country HEIs, as defined by ISCED-F. Understandably, this isn't the best sample to categorize the real world but gives some good insights. The whole HEIs in the region cover 28/80 of fields present in ISCED-F, which translated in percentage is 35%. In detail, P01 has 12/80 (15%) of coverage, P06 has 12/80 (15%), P07 has 6/80 (7.5%), P08 has 2/80 (2.5%), P09 has 11/80 (13.8%), and P10 has 10/80 (12.5%). In terms of countries Albania has 20/80 (25%) of coverage, Kosovo has 8/80 (10%), and Bosnia & Herzegovina has 13/80 (16.3%).

Table 2. Courses identified by HEI and their relative ISCED-F code.
Source: Data elaborated from the authors based on raw data (INTERBA, 2023).

ISCED field (detail-code)	Description	**P01**	**P06**	**P07**	**P08**	**P09**	**P10**	**N. Courses**
0021	Literacy and numeracy	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
0031	Personal skills and development	1	2	0	0	0	1	4
0111	Education science	0	5	3	0	0	4	12
0188	Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving education	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
0211	Audio-visual techniques and media production	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
0231	Language acquisition	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
0311	Economics	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0312	Political sciences and civics	1	3	0	0	0	0	4

0313	Psychology	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
0314	Sociology and cultural studies	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
0412	Finance, banking and insurance	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
0413	Management and administration	2	6	4	0	0	2	14
0414	Marketing and advertising	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
0416	Wholesale and retails sales	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
0417	Work skills	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0421	Law	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
0511	Biology	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
0521	Environmental sciences	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0612	Database and network design and administration	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
0613	Software and applications development and analysis	1	3	2	0	3	0	9
0619	Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not elsewhere classified	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
0688	Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Information and Communication Technologies	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
0711	Chemical engineering and processes	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
0713	Electricity and energy	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
0812	Horticulture	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
0912	Medicine	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
0916	Pharmacy	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
0988	Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving health and welfare	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
1015	Travel, tourism and leisure	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	TOT	**18**	**28**	**15**	**02**	**11**	**10**	**84**

The next table (Tab. 3) shows the number of experts individuated from HEIs that have participated in EU projects and their respective field of expertise. The first insight is that there are 24 fields covered of a total of 80, which differ from the 28 fields covered by the courses from Table 2. The reason can be that not all the experts participating in the projects have responded to the questionnaire or aren't employed any more in the HEIs. In terms of experts from each HEI, P01 experts cover 15/80 of ISCED fields which is in percentage 18.8%, P06 experts covers 5/80 or 6.3%, P07 experts has 0% coverage, P08 has 1.3%, P09 has 11.3% and P10 has 7.5%. Grouping by countries there are 18.8% fields covered by the Albanian experts, 1.4% from the Kosovo experts and 16.3% from the Bosnia-Hercegovina experts.

In terms of distribution, there are 20 fields covered by experts of 1 country, 3 fields by 2 countries and only 1 field is covered from all countries. This outcome indicates that the distribution of knowledge in the region is significantly limited in relation to the available course offerings.

Table 3. Number of experts with the respective field of expertise.
Source: Data elaborated from the authors based on raw data (INTERBA, 2023).

ISCED field (detail-code)	Description	**P01**	**P06**	**P07**	**P08**	**P09**	**P10**	**N. Experts**
0111	Education science	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

0188	Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving education	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
0232	Literature and linguistics	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
0311	Economics	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0312	Political sciences and civics	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
0313	Psychology	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
0314	Sociology and cultural studies	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0411	Accounting and taxation	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0412	Finance, banking and insurance	1	1	0	0	2	1	5
0413	Management and administration	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
0414	Marketing and advertising	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
0421	Law	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
0511	Biology	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
0512	Biochemistry	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
0521	Environmental sciences	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0531	Chemistry	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0532	Earth sciences	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0533	Physics	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
0542	Statistics	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0613	Software and applications development and analysis	6	2	0	10	3	1	22
0711	Chemical engineering and processes	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
0812	Horticulture	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
0912	Medicine	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
0916	Pharmacy	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
	Total of experts	**24**	**7**	**0**	**10**	**20**	**8**	**69**
	Total of fields covered	**15**	**5**	**0**	**1**	**9**	**6**	

Table 4 shows the results of the matching mechanism using the ISCED-F four digits codes, where given the ISCED field of the course the last column shows the number of experts matched. By observing the data, it is seen that 12 courses do not have a match (41.4%), 13 courses have a match from at least HEI experts of 1 country that translated in percentage is 44.8%, 3 courses matched from experts of 2 country HEIs that is 10.3% and only 1 course can be covered by the experts of all three countries (3.5%).

Table 4. Fields of Courses matched by Experts from HEIs.
Source: Data elaborated from the authors based on raw data (INTERBA, 2023).

ISCED field (detail-code)	Description	**P01**	**P06**	**P07**	**P08**	**P09**	**P10**	**N. Matches**
0021	Literacy and numeracy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0031	Personal skills and development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0111	Education science	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0188	Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving education	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
0211	Audio-visual techniques and media production	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0231	Language acquisition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0311	Economics	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0312	Political sciences and civics	1	1	0	0	0	0	2

0313	Psychology	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
0314	Sociology and cultural studies	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0412	Finance, banking and insurance	1	1	0	0	2	1	5
0413	Management and administration	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
0414	Marketing and advertising	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
0416	Wholesale and retails sales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0417	Work skills	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0421	Law	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
0511	Biology	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
0521	Environmental sciences	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
0612	Database and network design and administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0613	Software and applications development and analysis	6	2	0	10	3	1	12
0619	Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not elsewhere classified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0688	Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Information and Communication Technologies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0711	Chemical engineering and processes	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
0713	Electricity and energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0812	Horticulture	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
0912	Medicine	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
0916	Pharmacy	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
0988	Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving health and welfare	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1015	Travel, tourism and leisure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Experts matched	**20**	**6**	**0**	**10**	**18**	**4**	**58**
	Nr. of fields matched by Experts	**11**	**5**	**0**	**1**	**8**	**4**	

As described in the methodology section, 12 courses were identified by the HEIs coordinators for piloting. Table 5 shows the title of the course, the HEI partner that offers it, and the respective ISCED-F code. It can be evidenced that the courses fall into 8 fields: 0111 (Education science), 0314 (Sociology and cultural studies), 0413 (Management and administration), 0414 (Marketing and advertising), 0613 (Software and applications development and analysis), 0619 (Information and Communication Technologies, not elsewhere classified, 0711 (Chemical engineering and processes), and 0988 (Interdisciplinary health and welfare Health and welfare, interdisciplinary programs).

Table 5. Courses and respective ISCED fields selected for re-training.
Source: Data elaborated from the authors based on raw data (INTERBA, 2023).

Partner ID	Title	ISCED field (detail-code)
P01	Achieving gender equality through gender equality plans and gender budgeting	0314
P01	Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Sustainable Blue Economy	0413
P06	IT Governance for Higher Education Institutions	0613
P06	Quality Development of International Cooperation and Project Management	0413
P07	Digital Marketing Training	0414

P07	Social Entrepreneurship	0413
P08	Methodologies of scientific research in ICT	0619
P08	Online Collaboration Tools	0619
P09	Combined Water and Energy integration in the Process Industries	0711
P09	The Impact of COVID-19 on Students with Disabilities	0988
P10	didactics and curriculum planning	0111
P10	Research Methodology, Scientific Writing and Result Presentation: Humanities and Social Sciences	0111

In Table 6 are shown the numbers of experts of each HEI related to ISCED-F course field, before (P01, P06, P07, P08, P09 & P10) and after (P01-R, P06-R, P07-R, P08-R, P09-R & P10-R) the 2 training sections held in each HEI. The last four columns show the total number of experts before (Ms) and after (Ms-R) the 2 training sections of the pilot courses. Meanwhile, the distribution of experts by HEI's country, before (D) and after the 2 training sections, is shown by columns titled "D" and "D-R".

Table 6. Matching distribution of experts after re-training.
Source: Data elaborated by the authors based on raw data (INTERBA, 2023).

ISCED-F code	P01	P01-R	P06	P06-R	P07	P07-R	P08	P08-R	P09	P09-R	P10	P10-R	Ms	Ms-R	D	D-R
0111	1	0	0	93	0	10	0	34	0	68	0	0	1	**206**	1	**3**
0314	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	0	0	1	**44**	1	**2**
0413	1	31	2	0	0	16	0	0	1	0	0	46	4	**97**	2	**3**
0613	6	26	2	0	0	0	10	28	3	0	1		22	**76**	3	**3**
0619	0	0	0	53	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	0	**87**	0	**2**

5. Conclusions

The concept of "Internationalization at Home" in the context of higher education institutions can be defined as the practice of creating an inclusive and diverse campus environment that fosters global perspectives and cross-cultural understanding among students without the need for them to study abroad. The core goal is to prepare students and academics to be culturally competent and globally aware individuals, even when they don't have the opportunity to study or work abroad. The strategy offered in this investigation is based on the standardization of courses by using the SCATE model and by offering a match-making mechanism for courses and experts based on ISCED-F codes.

Findings show that applying for just 12 pilot courses in 5 ISCED-F fields has increased the number of experts in the field of "Education science" from 1 to 206, and the distribution of experts from 1 country to 3 countries; in the field of "Sociology and cultural studies" from 1 to 44 experts, and distribution from 1 to 2 countries; in the field of "Management and administration" from 4 to 97 experts, and a distribution from 2 to 3 countries; in the field of "Software and applications development and analysis" from 22 to 76 experts, and distribution unchanged to 3 countries; in the field of "Information and Communication Technologies, not elsewhere classified" from 0 to 87 experts, and distribution from 0 to 2 countries.

Referring to concluding remarks, we may emphasize that practicing of Internationalization at Home in the Western Balkans can contribute to foster inclusivity by reducing the isolation of HEIs in the region related to the specific research field where other HEIs are more advanced and furthermore to increase the number of experts related to a certain field of expertise. Another impact is reaching internationalization goals by enabling students who may not have the opportunity to study abroad for various reasons to have the same courses taught abroad.

6. Limitations and future work

The data collection is limited to courses and experts from six universities in the WB countries, namely Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia Herzegovina. The narrow scope of data may not represent the diversity of courses and expertise available in the region and can bring a limited generalizability of the findings for the WB region.

Another limitation is the potential bias in expert responses, as the data on experts' fields of expertise are based on self-reports, and there is a possibility of bias in how experts perceive and categorize their own expertise. The accuracy and reliability of this information are dependent on the honesty and self-awareness of the respondents.

The success of the synchronization model is evaluated, based on the increase in the number of experts and their distribution. However, as future work, a comprehensive evaluation metrics for assessing the overall effectiveness of IaH initiative, such as the impact on student learning outcomes or the quality of education is needed.

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