INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME: THE CASE OF ALBANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: *The White paper on Intercultural Dialogue, launched in 2008 by the Council of Europe, emphasizes, among other things, the role universities can play in fostering intercultural dialogue by integrating it into the course content and teaching activities becoming thus actors in putting it into practice. In the growing internationalized context of universities worldwide, there is a need to sustain intercultural dialogue not merely through good policies but above all through good practices that would work primarily towards developing competences, most importantly intercultural competence, for the internationalization of curricula, thus making internationalization a tangible reality for mobile and non-mobile students. In this regard, adopting an intercultural dialogue approach oriented towards internationalization at home (IaH) would benefit universities by equipping their students with competences for building a more interconnected and diverse society. In this paper, I will make an overview of the internationalization process that has swept Albanian higher education drawing more particularly on how universities address the IaH perspective and how, if so, they highlight the importance of intercultural dialogue. For this discussion, I will draw on the content analysis of strategic documents adopted by some Albanian universities, public and private, as well as on the results obtained from a survey on internationalization conducted between December 2018 and January 2019 with students, academic and non-academic staff from these universities. In the end, some suggestions will be attempted as regards the integration of intercultural dialogue in policy documents about internationalization, its role in IaH activities and practices and how these can be implemented.*

Keywords*: Albanian higher education; intercultural dialogue; Internationalization at Home*

1. INTRODUCTION

A national priority for the third year under the Erasmus call, the internationalization of Albanian Higher Education Institutions, is seen as a process that should aid and encourage Albanian universities to create their own profile and brand in the educational market to respond to competition, support teaching and research, create quality mechanisms adhering to European standards in Higher Education. Although internationalization is now an undeniable reality in Albanian Higher Education and some Albanian universities have already adopted an internationalization strategy, responding to internationalization with efficient practices, services and human resources, despite endeavours, is at times a rather unsystematic, spontaneous, or worse, chaotic process.

Embedded in the educational context of modernization and reformation of Albanian Higher Education under the aegis of the law on Higher Education (MESY 2015), the National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Technology 2017-22 (MESY 2017), which aims at reinforcing reforms in research and Higher Education in Albania harmonizing them with the principles of the European Research Area, as well as in the larger political, social and cultural context of the country's European agenda to meet the challenges of EU integration[1], the process of internationalization, which in its most tangible form concerns student and staff exchange, will aid Albanian HEIs to grow internationally and by that become nationally (and not only) more competitive.

Moreover, the institutional review reports from the accreditation process that took place in Albanian Higher Education in 2017 evidenced internationalization as a priority for most Albanian HEIs and their ambition to grow more international. Caught up in the current enthusiasm of the process, which is primarily understood in terms of

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[1] *National Strategy for Development and Integration*, (Këshilli i Ministrave 2016), which has internationalization of Higher Education under pillar 3 'Investing on human capital & social cohesion' (2016: 133), is oriented mainly towards students and staff, exchange opportunities, internationalized study programmes.

possibilities for mobility, the approach that internationalization can also be understood as a process that takes place at home by accommodating local students into an international background through the internationalization of the curricula is somehow overlooked or the attempts to it are rather poor or limited. Albanian Higher Education Institutions are more oriented towards internationalization abroad and less aware of the 'Internationalization at Home' (IaH) approach despite commitment to internationalize the curricula.

The need for international visibility coupled with the recent criticism about the quality of Albanian higher education culminating in a students' protest (December 2018) should somehow dictate this change of focus in the internationalization process and orient it more towards IaH, which I see more closely linked with the university's mission to enhance intercultural dialogue.

In this paper, I will look into how Albanian universities address the IaH perspective and how, if so, they highlight the importance of intercultural dialogue. For this discussion, I will draw on the content analysis of strategic documents adopted by some Albanian universities, public and private, the institutional review reports from the accreditation process in 2017 as well as on the results obtained from a survey on internationalization conducted between December 2018 and January 2019 with students and academic staff from these universities.

In the end, some suggestions will be attempted as regards the integration of intercultural dialogue in policy documents about internationalization, its role in IaH activities and practices and how these can be implemented. Pointing to these issues is important not only for responding to internationalization more adequately to both mobile and non-mobile students and staff but also to work towards improving the quality of education.

2. FROM INTERNATIONALIZATION TO INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

2.1 Internationalization at home. In its most tangible form, internationalization is about free movement of students and staff from their own institutions to others for more opportunities to share their educational and cultural experience. This implies a focus on mobility with an array of various possibilities made available to staff and students by internal and external funding schemes, the most ambitious being the Erasmus programme. In this regard, Olivé-Serret (2009:101) lists three types of consequences of the programme: for students, for universities, and for society and the economy. He (2009:101-102) explains:

> By coming into contact with other cultural and linguistic environments, students change their views on others, they gain much culturally and they learn to work in multicultural groups. […] Because of this mobility, universities have had to adapt to the new situation by learning to understand other educational systems, addressing the equivalence dimension (the Bologna Process) and accommodating international students with different requirements and working methods.
> […] European societies and the economy, in a time of globalisation, are as a result in a better position to address the new challenges by offering posts for young graduates used to multicultural and multilingual environments.

Still, not all students and staff are likely to go on mobility in that the number of those who get the chance to benefit from the mobility experience is always lower compared to those who remain at home. This means that the focus should be on how non-mobile staff and students can enrich their international and intercultural experience at home. This attention given to internationalizing the experience of students and staff on campus known as internationalization at home initiated at the University of Malmo in Sweden by Nilsson aimed to provide equal opportunities for international experience for everyone, especially for those who have fewer chances of studying or working overseas with a view to "develop the international outlook and the intercultural capabilities required for employment and participation in democratic societies (Robson et al., 2017)." (Robson 2017:369-370)

This approach has brought about changes in the way internationalization, a rather shifting concept, is understood or advanced. Internationalization at home cannot be understood without the internationalization of the curriculum, which assumes that academic staff will have to play an important role in the process, which requires a revision of the course content, of the learning outcomes, didactic approaches and all other elements that contribute to promote the teaching of competences, skills, values that work towards building global citizenship in a context largely marked by globalization and internationalization. Global citizenship, an old but rather broad, nonconsensual and interdisciplinary concept, approached differently in literature by scholars from a range of disciplines, is here introduced in terms of learning. I will not attempt a definition here and would rather dismiss the criticism concerning the

global citizenship - national citizenship dichotomy, as posing a risk for national contexts or as favouring certain elite groups (Yemini 2017:62), and approach it rather loosely in terms of individuals supplied with cosmopolitan ideas, views and values, which access this diverse world or encounter with the various cultures more flexibly and easily. I will view it more connected with global learning, global learning communities and how this connects with the internationalization of Higher Education. In this regard, Mullens and Cuper (2012: 42), embed the discourse of global citizenship within higher education and in a highly internationalized context. As they point out, despite the missing consensus on a single definition, what is certain is that:

> There *is* consensus that today's citizens are living in a diverse and globally interconnected world (economically, socially, environmentally, politically), and that it is therefore imperative for institutes of higher education to move decisively forward with plans to design a curriculum that supports students in succeeding in this globalized environment. (Mullens and Cuper, 2012:42; emphasis in original)

This success will largely depend on building in them skills and behaviour patterns that respond to the ever-growingly internationalized university context, globalized economy and society in general. Mullens and Cuper (2012:42) refer to Collins (2009) to point to three worldwide phenomena that dictate the need higher education institutions have for placing globalization and internationalization in their strategic agendas, namely the fact that students will more and more be exposed to cultural encounters whose implications and interrelationships are complex, which might impact them either positively or negatively, and the need for cognitive skills which "will include methodical approaches to inquiry, understanding, and expression—skills needed in our current, information-based economy."

Robson (2017:371) maintains that

> [u]niversities aiming to educate global citizens often focus on generic capabilities such as open and reflective behaviours, self-management, conceptual, and analytical skills, and other competences considered necessary to life and work in international settings.

The concept of competence might need an explanation here. She (2017:371) makes reference to The Council of Europe guide (2016) to competences

necessary for students to live together, as democratic citizens in diverse societies [whose] aim is 'not to teach students what to think, but rather how to think, in order to navigate a world where not everyone holds their views, but we each have a duty to uphold the democratic principles which allow all cultures to co-exist' (Council of Europe, 2016:7).

This takes us back again to the concept of internationalization at home as the path to "develop spaces for rich learning for the non-mobile majority, creating emotional and intellectual engagement with real tasks that enable students to re-think their 'situatedness in the world' and the 'political meaning of intercultural experiences' (Rizvi, 2009:264-265, cited in Robson, 2011)" (Robson, 2017:371). Internationalization at home is even more demanding than internationalization abroad because it requires more efforts from the universities themselves, their staff and units, in particular their teachers who will

> "need to see the value of global learning, for both themselves and their students; […] to advocate for global learning beyond their classrooms; […] to acquire new skills, and they might even be asked to change the way they think about their work or reflect on their own beliefs and values; […] to guide students in their transformations […]; and they must create global learning communities in classrooms and link students' international and local intercultural experiences (study abroad, international service learning, internships, and field/clinical experiences) to classroom learning. (Agnew and Kahn, 2014:35)

2.2 From internationalization to intercultural dialogue. Universities stand thus as "a microcosm of society" (Sarr, 2009:74) in that they are the venues where diversities—individual, cultural ethnic, religious, ideological and many more—encounter. As providers of education, they play an important role, if not the most important, in building values, skills and competences that allow individuals to negotiate their own identities in respect of shared values and cultural diversity enabled by intercultural dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue owes much to the internationalization of higher education. Poglia, Mauri-Brusa, and Fumasoli (2009:24) see intercultural dialogue as a follow up of internationalization in that the momentum internationalization received from late 1990s onwards required that universities dealt with diversity and so make intercultural dialogue "a strategic goal." Furthermore, for them (2009:24) internationalization of higher education is relevant here

because much of the practical experience of intercultural dialogue in academic settings involves foreign students, either those enrolled at the university or those taking part in exchange programmes […].

Moreover,

the internationalisation of higher education is not just an academic management issue but also a matter of scientific fact, one which by its nature is automatically linked to cultural diversity and thus to intercultural dialogue too (2009:24).

In this sense, if internationalization has to be the case, it really has to start at home.

2.3 Why intercultural dialogue matters? To respond to a growingly multicultural environment, recognizing the inadequacy of assimilation and multiculturalism as models to cope with it, the Council of Europe published a White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity" (2008) to encourage intercultural dialogue as the path to respect and promote cultural diversity. In the White Paper (2008:10-11), intercultural dialogue is defined as

an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect […]. It operates at all levels – within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world.

The Paper (2008:31) acknowledges the role higher education institutions should play to sustain it "through their Education Programmes, as actors in broader society and as sites where intercultural dialogue is put into practice." Placing the emphasis on intercultural learning, the Paper calls for scholarly assistance to appropriately address these issues in teaching. Among the five policy approaches for promoting intercultural dialogue, the Paper identifies the promotion of learning and teaching intercultural competences with key competence areas being democratic citizenship, language and history. The role of universities in building citizenship was emphasized earlier on in this paper. Integrating intercultural dialogue in their mission, universities empower their role in teaching and learning citizenship and the competences associated with it, most notably intercultural ones. Foreign language education plays a role here in that it is the viable means towards understanding the various and multiple

cultural realities. The same holds true for history, as it allows entry viewpoints to other perspectives. As such, intercultural dialogue should form part of the internationalization agendas of universities. (Council of Europe, 2008:53-54) Fostering intercultural dialogue empowers the processes and approaches to building competences and values necessary for responding to a growingly internationalized university context. Integrating it in the IaH approach is even more important because it will work towards increasing intercultural awareness even among non-mobile students and staff.

3. THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction. In this article, I will be concerned with the question of intercultural dialogue and in particular with how it is addressed in the internationalization agendas of Albanian universities. I will connect it with the IaH approach in order to question whether it is addressed at all. I will take into consideration six Albanian universities, four public universities and two private ones. For a more comprehensive view, I have selected universities of diverse and varied profiles. The universities under consideration are The University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali" (UV), "Aleksander Moisiu" University of Durres (UAMD), University of Korca "Fan S. Noli" (UNIKO), University of Medicine (UMT), European University of Tirana (UET) and Metropolitan University of Tirana (MTU), hereinafter identified by their acronyms, when necessary.

3.2 Methodology. For the purposes of this analysis, quantitative and qualitative data will be used. Content analysis and survey will be conducted. The aim is to obtain different perspectives into this issue, which I call, the institutional perspective, that is, how the universities see themselves in this process and how they position themselves here, i.e. how they address their mission; the external perspective, that is how reviewers view these universities, their progress and commitment in this regard, and the internal perspective, that is, how students and staff feel about it and how they work together towards it. To examine the first two perspectives, content analysis will be conducted, for which reason the following sources will be used: the strategic documents of each university, basically their internationalization strategies, statutes or development strategies to see whether and how these universities address their role in internationalization and how they foster the

process; the institutional reviews prepared by the external review teams during the accreditation period. The documents are available online and an examination of these documents will allow for some external perspective in this study.

The survey will be used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data but most importantly to learn about the opinion of the main stakeholders in the internationalization process, that is, students and staff. The survey was conducted in December 2018 and January 2019 and formed part of a needs analysis study for internationalization in the framework of writing a proposal for an Erasmus KA 2 project.

The survey was administered online by the University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali" for quick and transparent data collection and analysis using the survey planet app. Two questionnaires were prepared, one for students and one for academic staff. Dedicated links to the questionnaires were sent to the other universities. The items in the questionnaires aimed at identifying awareness of internationalisation among students and staff, if they had benefitted from these processes at their home university, what needs they had and how ready they were to respond to these processes. Some of the items were similar in both questionnaires: language competence, exchange opportunities and their recognition by their home institution, information days for mobility opportunities, applications for grants etc., reasons for applying for mobility, information channels used for exchange opportunities, summer schools, grants etc., the skills needed for a successful international experience abroad, academic programmes and how aligned they were with international ones. The aim was to introduce indicators to measure internationalization qualitatively and quantitatively.

For the purposes of this analysis, only some of the items of the questionnaires will be used whose responses help to get an understanding of how interculturally aware staff and students are and whether there are any attempts to respond to issues such as internationalization at home and intercultural dialogue.

3.3 Research questions. For this study, I focused on the following questions:

a) How universities approach internationalization;

b) How they respond to the global world and to building citizenship;

c) What competences they seek to foster;

d) Do they address intercultural dialogue as one of their aims in their mission;

e) Do they address language learning/teaching for intercultural dialogue and internationalization.

Hypothesizing that Albanian Higher Education is more oriented towards internationalization abroad with a great focus on mobility and international partnership and participation in projects, I conducted a content analysis and a survey to prove it.

3.4 Data analysis. As underlined earlier, for the context analysis I made use of the strategic documents[2] of the universities and the institutional review reports from the accreditation process. In examining these documents, I looked for the following: approach to internationalization, building citizenship, intercultural dialogue, competences other than the professional ones.

The analysis of the strategic documents would reveal the following:

a. internationalization is aimed at mostly in terms of international partnership and collaboration, mobility, joint research and programmes (all);

b. intercultural dialogue is not addressed at all as such (all);

c. there is a strong focus on lifelong learning programmes (UV, UMT, MTU);

d. competences, besides the professional ones, are mainly seen in terms of the interpersonal, individual and transversal (UV, UMT);

e. cultural awareness and intercultural competence are generally overlooked, except for UV, which emphasizes intercultural competence in its internationalization strategy and UAMD, which emphasizes cultural awareness in its mission.

e. the global is mostly viewed in terms of society and environment (UV, UMT).

f. building citizenship is scarcely mentioned, except for UAMD, which has it as one of its missions and UV, which mentions it in its development strategic plan.

g. internationalization at home is not addressed at all as such, except for UV which in its internationalization strategy points to the internationalization of programmes and curricula rather than IaH.

h. as for language, no policy towards fostering internationalization or intercultural dialogue is described as such.

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[2] By strategic documents, I refer to development strategic plans, internationalization strategies, statutes or any other similar documents that emphasize the mission and vision of the universities and help to get an understanding of their approach to internationalization. For this analysis, I have made use of the documents that are available on the official webpages of these universities.

From the analysis of the institutional review reports, the following can be reported:

a. The report for UET (2016) points out that UET has an internationalization agenda, a wide-ranging list of partner organisations, contributions from European and American scholars in their conferences (2016:2), preference for recruiting staff with a PhD from a Western university (2016:11); internationalization and student mobility are key strategies (2016:19), research strategy aims at supporting internationalization (2016:23); priorities are in the area of international cooperation (2016: 8), engagement in international projects and CBHE projects (2016:21-22), high number of cooperation agreements (2016:22), support for staff to apply for international research projects, publish and participate in international conferences (2016:22). However, the report identifies that there are no joint degrees, although this is a priority (2016:17) and that the number of non-Albanian students is low as most programmes are in Albanian 2016:25).

b. The report for MTU (2017) points out that internationalization is a key objective of the university's mid and long-term Development Strategy (2017:20). MTU pursues a strategy of collaboration and partnership (2017:3, 9), advancement of research agendas nationally and internationally (2017: 4). The institution's policy is to invest on academics that have worked or been trained abroad (2017:4). There is continuous improvement of academic programmes based on international models (2017:2). The review notes that MTU has a supporting policy for mobility of student and staff but still there is no significant impact on student mobility (2017: 9) and that there are attempts for modules in English to facilitate student mobility (2017:4).

c. The report for UNIKO (2017) points out that its development plan emphasizes internationalisation policies (2017:15), the institution is committed to internationalization through the mobility of student and staff, the signing of many agreements; it participates in many international projects (2017:4), pursues an open strategy of collaboration and partnership at various levels (2017:9), organizes an annual conference and publication (2017:21). The report points out, however, that professors have had no international teaching experience for the 5 past years (2017:20), internationalization of studies is another step (2017:21) but no evidence of how this is done is provided, the reference is only to research, participation in international projects is good but participation among students and staff is still low (2017: 8), research is carried out individually rather than strategically (2017:21).

d. The report for UV (2017) points out that internationalization is one of its main priorities (2017: 16). UV's internationalization strategy is reflected in its teaching and research ambitions, good participation in external projects, acknowledging the resource constraints (2017:4). Cooperation and partnership are central to the university's goals of internationalization, notable also in the faculty and departmental strategies (2017:9), mobility is at the heart of the Internationalization strategy, the then draft strategy[3], statutes (2017:9). UV encourages international activity in research and scholarship through joint projects and conferences (2017:10), a global network of Albanian researchers that has been set up to assist in developing international relationships and supporting mobility (2017:10), collaboration with other research organisations (2017: 21), prioritisation of candidates with a PhD degree from an overseas HEI (2017:22). The report also notes that the flow of students and staff is modest because of language (2017: 9-10). Erasmus mobilities, foreign language courses in the curricula are encouraged by introducing courses in foreign language sessions (2017:17).

e. The report for UAMD (2016) points out that the university desires to increase the level of international mobility of staff and students (2016: 10), to have study programmes in line with local, national, international trends (2016:4), to provide more cooperation agreements, benefits for students (links with the market), programmes, staff (for mobility) (2016:9). However, the current volume of international activity in both project work and mobility is modest (2016: 4).

f. The report for UMT (2017) points out that the new strategy has internationalization a priority, among its goals, (2017:7). There are plans for further Inter-institutional agreements, for more joint research projects, development of joint programmes. There is a considerable number of signed agreements, exchange arrangements for both students and staff (2017:9), the university is actively engaged in promoting an internationalization agenda. There is a wide range of international collaborative activities that provide opportunities for staff to work with international universities (2017:11).

As for the survey, for the purposes of this analysis, I selected results from items in the

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[3] At the time of the review, the strategic plan of UV was still in its draft form.

questionnaires, which asked questions regarding their language competence, the skills they would need for a fruitful mobility experience, the reasons why they would go on mobility and their opinion about the study programmes at their home university. Below are the responses to these items.

Among the questions asked, one concerned their knowledge of English. English is important for internationalization, which does not mean that the importance of local languages should be overlooked. In any case, to this question, they answered in the following way:

Table1. Students' command of English

Do you speak English?		
	Yes	*No*
UET	94.6	5.4
UAMD	94.4	5.6
UV	93.1	6.9
UNMED	100	0
UNIKO	97.1	2.9
UMT	95.5	4.5
	If yes, what is your level of command		
	Poor	*Intermediate*	*Fluent*
UET	5.6	83.3	11.1
UAMD	4.9	48.1	47
UV	7.9	62.4	29.6
UMT	0	17.4	82.6
UNIKO	5.7	22.9	71.4
MTU	4.5	36.4	59.1

The next item concerned the skills needed for mobility. They were given a list of skills to choose from. Below are the results:

Table 2. Skills needed for mobility

If you were given the opportunity to study on exchange programmes, what do you think would be the skills you would need in order to have a satisfactory and successful experience? You can select more than one alternative.						
	Academic merit	*Knowledge of the local language*	*Knowledge of English*	*Intercultural competence*	*Ability to adapt oneself in a new environment*	*Other*
UET	19.6	16.9	23.3	11.9	27.3	1
UAMD	25	21.9	21.9	3.1	28.1	0
UV	16.3	17.5	25.4	10.8	27.8	2.4
UMT	27.8	18.5	20.4	7.4	25.9	0
UNIKO	16	16	22.2	14.8	30.9	0
MTU	20.8	7.5	30.2	11.3	28.3	1.9

The other item regarded the reasons why they would go on mobility. The results are as follows:

Table 3. Reasons to go on mobility

What would be the reason(s) that would make you apply for an exchange mobility at an international university? You can select more than one alternative.					
	UET	UAMD	UV	UMT	UNIKO	MTU
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Academic experience	18.4	22.2	15.9	52.2	11.4	11.1
Cultural exchange	4.3	0	4.2	4.3	2.9	11.1
New life experience	28.6	16.7	20.6	8.7	28.6	12.5
Knowing people from other cultural backgrounds	1.6	5.6	2.6	0	5.7	8.3
Desire to travel and visit other countries	3.2	0	5.3	0	5.7	8.3
The grant	2.7	5.6	3.2	8.7	0	9.7
Improving communicative and discursive skills in a foreign language	6.5	16.7	12.2	4.3	24.3	6.9
Establishing new contacts	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	12.5
Creating new opportunities	31.9	33.3	31.2	17.4	28.6	15.3
Other	2.2	0	4.2	4.3	2.9	4.2

Last, they were asked to give their opinion about the study programmes offered by their university.

Table 4. Students' opinion about the study programmes

What do you think of the study programmes offered by your home institution? How do they align with those offered by other universities worldwide?			
	Not at all	*Little*	*Satisfactorily*	*Much*
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UET	5.4	15.7	59.5	19.5
UAMD	27.8	66.7	5.6	0
UV	15.9	33.3	46	4.8
UMT	21.7	56.5	17.4	4.3
UNIKO	5.7	25.7	68.6	0
MTU	0	18.2	59.1	22.7

On the other hand, academic staff were asked similar questions. To the question about their command of English, they answered:

Table 5. Teachers' command of English

Do you speak English?

	Yes	*No*	
UET	100	0	
UAMD	100	0	
UV	95.5	4.5	
UMT	100	0	
UNIKO	92.9	7.1	
MTU, international	100	0	
MTU, local	100	0	
	If yes, what is your level of command		
	Poor	*Intermediate*	*Fluent*
UET	5.4	29.7	64.9
UAMD	0	37.1	62.9
UV	3	37.9	59.1
UMT	0	26.3	73.7
UNIKO	7.1	28.6	64.3
MTU, international	0	25	75
MTU, local	0	0	100

Table 6. Teachers' ability to teach in English

Can you teach classes in English or any other foreign language?

	Yes	*No*	*I am not sure*
UET	89.2	0	10.8
UAMD	88.6	2.9	8.6
UV	89.4	0	10.6
UMT	91	0	0.9
UNIKO	89.3	0	10.7
MTU, international	100	0	0
MTU, local	100	0	0

As for the skills needed for mobility, they answered:

Table 7. Skills for mobility

If you were given the opportunity to teach/be trained on exchange programmes, what do you think would be the skills you would need in order to have a satisfactory and successful experience? You can select more than one alternative.

	Academic/professional performance	Knowledge of the local language	Knowledge of English	Intercultural competence	Ability to adapt oneself in a new environment	Other
UET	62.2	5.4	8.1	5.4	13.5	5.4
UAMD	40	5.7	20	17.1	11.4	5.7
UV	30.9	10.7	26.2	12.8	17.4	2
UMT	42.1	18.4	13.2	5.3	18.4	2.6
UNIKO	30.2	7	23.3	20.9	18.6	0
MTU, international	40	10	10	25	15	0
MTU, local	66.7	0	16.7	16.7	0	0

As for the reasons to go on mobility, they selected:

Table 8. Reasons to go on mobility

What would be the reason(s) that would make you apply for an exchange mobility at an international university? You can select more than one alternative.

	UET	UAMD	UV	UMT	UNIKO	UMT, international	UMT, local
Academic experience	19.6	21.4	18.6	12	19.1	25.8	28.6
Cultural exchange	9.2	10	8.6	6.3	8.4	9.7	14.3
New life experience	16.3	15	14.6	18.3	16	6.5	14.3
Knowing people from other cultural backgrounds	10.5	5.7	7.5	6.3	5.3	6.5	7.1
Desire to travel and visit other countries	2.6	4.3	3.6	4.2	3.1	6.5	7.1
The grant	4.6	5	6.1	4.2	6.9	3.2	0
Improving communicative and discursiv	11.1	10.7	8.6	12	8.4	9.7	7.1

e skills in a foreign language						
Establishing new contacts	12.4	14.3	16.1	17.6	15.3	16.1	7.1
Creating new opportunities	13.1	12	16.4	14.8	16.8	16.1	14.3
Other	0.7	0.7	0	0	0.8	0	0

Besides the above, teachers were asked two more questions about the study programmes. Below are the responses:

Table 9. Teaching and learning activities

Do you think the teaching and learning activities foreseen in the study programme(s) your course(s) is/are part of train students to adapt themselves in new intercultural environments and groups?	Not at all	Little	sufficiently	Satisfactorily	Much
UET	2.7	0	24.3	43.2	29.7
UAMD	2.9	2.9	42.9	28.6	22.9
UV	0	6.1	31.8	43.9	18.2
UMT	5.3	5.3	42.1	31.6	15.8
UNIKO	0	7.1	17.9	46.4	28.6
MTU, international	0	37.5	12.5	25	25
MTU, local	0	0	25	75	0

Table 10. Teaching and learning activities for intercultural competence

Do they give students the possibility to build intercultural skills and international knowledge?	Not at all	Little	sufficiently	Satisfactorily	Much
UET	0	2.7	35.1	32.4	29.7
UAMD	2.9	5.7	37.1	25.7	28.6
UV	0	9.1	22.7	4.7	21.2
UMT	0	10.5	42.1	26.3	21.2
UNIKO	0	10.7	21.4	39.3	28.6
MTU, international	0	37.5	25	25	12.5
MTU, local	0	0	25	25	50

3.5 Interpretation of results. The analysis of the strategic documents and institutional review reports reveals that internationalization is taking place in similar lines in Albanian universities: emphasis on international cooperation, preference for recruiting staff with academic qualifications from Western universities, organization of and participation in international conferences, involvement in international projects for research and development, emphasis on student and staff mobilities.

However, the reports also evidence lack of joint degrees, although this is a priority, low flow of international students, as most programmes are in Albanian, attempts for modules in English to facilitate student mobility.

Quantitative data from the survey suggest that language skills (herein English) are in place. The majority of students and staff reported they speak English at an either intermediate or advanced level. Academic staff are confident to teach in English or another foreign language. Almost all students and staff speak another foreign language, Italian mainly, then French, German, Spanish, Greek and others, mostly at an either intermediate. There is awareness of the need to possess good language skills which seems more a matter of individual choice rather than an institutional concern.

Of the skills appreciated most when on mobility (academic merit, knowledge of the local language, knowledge of English, intercultural competence, ability to adapt oneself in a new environment, other), academic merit ranked higher among students and staff, whereas intercultural competence was overlooked. Where high, the respondents came mainly from language departments.

Of the reasons that would make them apply for mobility (academic experience, cultural exchange, new life experience, knowing people from other cultural backgrounds, desire to travel and visit other countries, the grant, improving communicative and discursive skills in a foreign language, establishing new contacts, creating new opportunities, other), students mainly selected 'creating new opportunities' (UMT students selected 'academic experience'). Whereas for most staff academic, experience ranked first.

About study programmes, opinions varied. 59.5% UET, 46% UV and 68.6% UNIKO students find them aligned with international programmes, whereas 66.7% UAMD and 56.5% UNMED students find them little aligned.

As for the course content, the opinions of the staff varied: 45.9% UET, 34.8% UV, 57.1 % UNIKO staff think they satisfactorily integrate an international component. 43.2% UET, 43.9% UV, 46.4% UNIKO think the teaching and learning activities foreseen in the study programme(s) satisfactorily train students to adapt themselves in new intercultural environments and groups, 42.9% UAMD, 42.1% UMT think sufficiently. 35.1% UET, 37.1% UAMD, 22.7% UV, 42.1% UMT academic staff think they sufficiently give students

the possibility to build intercultural skills and international knowledge, whereas 39.3% UNIKO think they satisfactorily do so.

The results presented here suggest that there is not a systematic approach as regards the international and intercultural component in the course curricula. The need to foster the intercultural component in the teaching and learning processes appears to rather be a matter of personal choice on the part of the academic staff.

Intercultural dialogue as a process that strengthens internationalization is not addressed as one of the university's missions.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study presented here aimed at examining the situation of internationalization in some Albanian universities. It was particularly attempted to see how/if intercultural dialogue, a process well connected with the IaH approach, is addressed in the internationalization agendas of these universities.

The interpretation of qualitative data from the content analysis of the strategic documents and the institutional review reports as well as the quantitative data from the survey suggests that although internationalization is now a reality in Albanian Higher Education Institutions, it follows a course of its own rather than takes place along proper institutional approaches. This is so because Albanian HEIs either lack a proper understanding of what it entails or concrete policies and strategies to do so are missing. There is a need to develop, where absent, or revise, where present, internationalization strategies in order to integrate intercultural dialogue, intercultural competences, cultural diversity, global learning, global citizenship and foster an IaH approach to work towards internationalizing the curriculum in order to make local students feel better accommodated in an internationalized educational environment at his/her home university. The growing international landscape in Albanian universities requires effectiveness and adequacy in managing internationalization processes through effective managing practices and good resource allocation. This will require increasing awareness among the university management in the first place and then among other university structures and units.

Highlighting the importance of intercultural dialogue, respecting and promoting cultural diversity, proposing an intercultural approach to manage it will better connect Albanian universities with society at large, locally and internationally.

Integrating these issues in the routine activities organized by the university's support structures as well as in the course content, learning outcomes and didactic approaches, will make both students and staff more responsible about their role in the internationalization of their universities.

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