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KNOWLEDGE DIPLOMACY IN THE HUNGARIAN HEI CONTEXT: INNOVATIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION

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Summary:

This paper aims at addressing East-West cohesion in the context of international relations and mobility in higher education. The geopolitical and domestic structural challenges in HE that Central European HEIs face nowadays call for an immediate action of the management and decision makers for revitalizing institutions and enabling them to achieve success in increased enrollments and international academic activity. Innovative approaches and experimental attitude may help satisfy the fundamental need of every HEI to increase recruitment both among domestic and international students as well as to provide a unique and attractive educational program portfolio and mobility services and experiment with effective new methods in mobility, international relations, education, research and varsity promotion. Beyond intra and inter-institutional collaboration, we will explore how can Hungarian universities implement knowledge diplomacy of the East-West axis successfully. Some recent Asian educational business experiences are to be shared, too.

Keywords:

knowledge diplomacy/ internationalization/ intra- and inter-institutional collaboration

Bio:

Judit Kádár has taught American and Canadian culture studies at the Department of American Studies of Eszterházy College in Eger, Hungary for 24 years, more recently with a focus on ethnic and multicultural studies. She published a textbook (*Critical Perspectives on English-Canadian Literature*, 1996). She has received some research grants (FEFA, FEP, FRP/CEACS, JFK, Fulbright) and hold a temporary lecturing position at GCSU (Georgia, USA, 2009), taught and did research at UNM (Albuquerque, USA, 2012-3). As for research, earlier she studied alternative histories in recent western Canadian fiction (PhD thesis), then the psychological and sociological implications of the gone indigenous passage rites (Othering/indigenization) in US and Canadian literature and culture, and has published *Going Indian: Cultural Appropriation in Recent North American Literature* (2012, University of Valencia Press). In 2013, she obtained her habilitation at ELTE University of Budapest. Currently she explores mixed blood narratives and identity negotiation in the SW literature and recent *Nuevomexicano* writing respectively. She was the director of the International Relations Center at Eszterházy University and has worked in internationalization for years. From 2015, she has been the country representative of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies (CEACS) and board member of Hungarian Association for the Study of English (HUSSE). She works as the educational expert of the Hungarian National Bank.

This paper addresses East-West cohesion in the context of international relations and mobility in higher education. The geopolitical and domestic structural challenges in higher education (HE) that Central European higher educational institutions face nowadays call for an immediate action of the management and decision makers for revitalizing institutions and enabling them to achieve success in increased enrollments and international academic activity. Innovative approaches and experimental attitude may help satisfy the fundamental need of every higher education institution (HEI) to increase recruitment both among domestic and international students as well as to provide a unique and attractive educational program portfolio and mobility services and experiment with effective new methods in mobility, international relations, education, research and varsity promotion. Beyond intra and inter-institutional collaboration, I believe that knowledge diplomacy of the East-West axis should be implemented effectively at Hungarian universities that wish to expand their Asian pool of students and research collaborations.

Nowadays the actual context of Asian academic expansion of East-Central European (and Hungarian) HE is the so called **Eastern Opening** policy (2010) in the course of which HE exchange is interpreted as a tool for a larger social transformation. William J. Jones focuses on the particular intercultural agenda in his "European Union Soft Power: Cultural Diplomacy & Higher Education in Southeast Asia." Jones has explained how the policy had been established by the New Asia Strategy of the European Commission in 1994, and how the number of Asian students overseas has increased especially in the US, Great Britain and Australia. He also called attention to the massive potential of 1.2 million Asian study abroads in OECD countries and the fact that the Bologna Process has increased the attractiveness of European universities for Asian students. In his view, exchange and mobility are important cultural assets that can turn into economic one, while increased cultural transmission may also entail some fears of illegal impact in Europe, especially in view of the most recent events in Western Europe. Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monet chairs in Asia, the King Abdullah Grant, the Confucius Institute system and various student grants are examples of the intensifying educational relations between Europe and Asia, while the dynamics of cultural, financial and educational symmetry work in altering ways. However, there are experts who criticize the efficiency of the Asian expansion program (<http://www.paprikapolitik.com/2015/03/pivot-to-the-east-or-global-rebalancing/>, and "Orient Express"—Lessons of Hungary's opening to the East." http://www.budapesttelegraph.com/news/653/%E2%80%9Corient_express%E2%80%9D_%E2%80%93_lessons_of_hungary%E2%80%99s_opening_to_the_east), too.

As all who work for international relations (IR) at HEI in Central Europe know, there are some major geopolitical, structural and financial **challenges** that the majority of universities, especially state owned ones face nowadays. In addition, the declining demographic tendencies and correlated fall in enrollment numbers, the increasing global and national competition for domestic and international students as well as the profoundly new student population representing the Z generation that differs in so many ways from any earlier generation, all accumulate new challenges and call for a new attitude

of the decision makes and immediate action. In reality, most HE leaders have got adequate academic professional training, but do not necessarily have any formal education in business, diplomacy or culture studies. That is why it is pretty much personality dependent how open-minded one is towards internationalization, and that is why for the majority learning by doing (through mistakes...) is a widespread experience.

When agreements for academic cooperation are signed by university presidents, the setting and formalities have all the trappings of an international agreement. The signing, as with all treaties, represents significant groundwork laid by institutional representatives. The celebratory moment is not always followed by sustainable relationships, and expectations are sometimes met with deep disappointment. The result can have a negative impact on institutional as well as national relations, although the latter may be an unintended consequence.
(<file:///C:/Users/Acer/Downloads/5410-10579-1-SM.pdf>)

I have found some sources very helpful in understanding the constraints that pose obstacles to HEI nowadays. M. C. Wende and Edit Rohonczy have highlighted the accumulative impacts of the followings: European universities are generally underfinanced, short of efficient motivation tools and mostly lack of long-term industrial partnerships. As opposed to the past, less European universities appear in top 20 rankings, there are less European scholars among Nobel Prize winners, indicating not only the inefficiencies in management but also the upcoming tendency Asian universities present. Furthermore, European, especially East-Central European universities have difficulty in stopping the brain drain mostly due to insufficient financing of academics. Following a 2015 conference on internationalization of HE at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Livius Matei has analyzed the specific difficulties that East-Central European universities face in internationalization in his essay. While the geopolitical situation of these countries has dramatically changed with the leap from the Communist past through a post-Communist transition, the economic realities, HEI in the new EU member states had had their distinct HE system that had to be adjusted to a unified one that did not necessarily fit or suit them. In addition, the sharply declining demography of their student population presented a relatively worse scenario than that of the Western European countries, since on the average ECE HEIs have lost 60-80% as compared to 20-25% average of the Western countries, according to the 2015 Sursock Trends report. The emergence of a new political narrative that is less supportive for HE has also undermined the situation of Eastern Central European universities. The earlier narrative of the value of knowledge society and that of EU integration has been corroding, further worsening the position of the tertiary educational institutions.

Revitalizing institutions is indispensable once we acknowledge the need to enable our universities to achieve success in two important areas, i.e. increased enrollments both in the areas of

domestic and international recruitment, and successful international academic exchange and research collaboration based on sustainable institutional relationships. These goals require the development of a complex system that the umbrella term innovative **internationalization** may cover. Among others in the international arena, Viktória Endrődi-Kovács discusses the necessity of innovative internationalization at HEIs in her essay (“A nemzetköziesítés támogató komplex szervezet és szolgáltatásfejlesztés”). It includes a number of factors that every single university and its management at all levels need to understand. We need innovative approaches and an experimental attitude, project-oriented, business-like thinking as well as what we call a smart management in charge of and controlling internationalization at a specific university. The institution needs a thorough SWOT analysis that can serve as the basis of strategic planning that significantly covers the international area, too. Beyond that, international relations should be based on strategic planning, replacing “follow the funding source” tactics and random visits that often had been characteristic of university IR.

As for another important factor, the institution should possess a unique, attractive, market-sensitive educational program portfolio as well as a unique and powerful research portfolio (**signature training programs and research projects**). Some other features may be recognized and promoted as signature features, too, such as a successful sports team, an outstanding library or high tech labs. Furthermore, a modern university often elaborates clusters with corporate partners, though the latter depends on the nature of the given institution, i.e. if it is a research university or a community type, practical or vocational type one. Research universities are the ones that have the best opportunities to run for U-ranking successfully, which also may substantially help international enrollment and funding sources obtained. Asian universities and parents pay special attention to U-Ranking, when deciding on partnership or sending their kids overseas to study. No matter what type of institution, all are in need of increasing incoming student turnout that is why effective mobility services, sophisticated administration with English and intercultural skills and capacities should serve and support international mobility. Without some understanding of differences between Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese culture, the regional diversities within China, the diverse motivation that Malaysian and Taiwanese universities and students have as compared to other Asians, we cannot run IR successfully in the region.

If an institution has got all the above features, but does not invest in marketing, chances are that all the energy of the participants is wasted since without powerful varsity promotion prospective students and international partners may not see why the given institution should be chosen for studies or collaboration. One might want to bear in mind that marketing should also be country specific, for instance guerilla online marketing and especially Facebook based techniques do not work in China, thus alternative media has to be identified to convey information for youngsters there. Furthermore, it is not only the format but the content that we should tailor to the given country and its student population: in some areas of Asia gender and generational relations are very different from East

Central Europe and we need to be careful when planning the design and content for those markets, for instance when preparing for educational fairs or when creating online or printed publications.

When HEIs set goals and work on the exchange and recruitment of foreign students, all participants of the process should have a clear understanding of what we mean by **mobility**. We often use the term meaning a few days' conference trip of a faculty, a few months' sabbatical a student takes and or a whole three-year degree program one participates, moreover, mobility equally means inbound and outbound activities. What I considered useful in daily work and communication was a chart that provides the framework of inbound and outbound student and academic mobility, and that may be extended with process description charts, too. The latter may serve as manuals for those who are planning a particular international activity, since the descriptive charts also included links to documents, contact info and other assistance required. Furthermore, at a CEO level, we need to set up certain targets in line with the strategic goals of the institution. Should those targets follow the Bologna benchmark 20% increase? If yes, an increase in what specifically? And how can we measure the outcome of the mobility processes? How can knowledge gain and employability be measured?

Once we are able to set up the mobility related goals properly, , several challenges affect our institutions to various extents, including social bias, co-financing issues, the gap between policy and practice, recruiting, the lack of resources, grading and credit transfer, and last but not least academic staff capacity, as Michael Gaebel, Head of the Higher Education Policy Unit at EUA has claimed at the MPPC Workshop "Taking stock of strategies and actions: internationalisation of Hungarian higher education" held at Szent István University of Gödöllő, Hungary (21-22 May, 2014). A conscious management saves enough time and attention to go through each and every one of these challenges from time to time and elaborate a task force initiative which could give a framework for action, including the entities in charge of the particular steps to take.

New educational formats and technology serves successful internationalization of our universities as well. Globalization and digitalization, the speeding up of our pace of life as well as the diminishing physical distances in our interactions have entailed that for instance E-learning and MOOCs have increasingly become part of HE (see M. Gaebel: "MOOCs" in EUA Occasional papers January, 2013), while new collaborative work formats like cluster and joint grant also have called for skype conference calls and discussions, shared drive engines and a wide array of other online work formats. For our students and faculty, more and more technical support is provided to accommodate their need to bridge the physical distance and study, teach, research, consult and negotiate without actual physical presence at a particular location. Last but not least, a number of advanced universities establish headquarters far from their original campus at distanced locations where the pool of prospective students is way larger. Such a venture is highly complex and demands substantial investment, intercultural, diplomatic and business information accumulated. This is a long-term investment that certainly proves the fact that business not only has entered academia but also has overtaking some areas of successful management. Acknowledging this fact is the merit of those

management representatives who turn our universities into success these days. Especially in the context of Asian expansion and outreach, the above new techniques and methods have become absolutely relevant. The institution we work for should study the question which alternative technique can be applied where and how to achieve an ultimate efficiency and success.

Distance has been decreasing not only in a physical sense over the last few decades. Distance between some areas like **business and tertiary education** has disappeared. Previously unfamiliar tasks have become essential for cutting edge universities, thus marketing, branding, data and risk analysis, management training, competition, entrepreneurial attitudes and business performance are the means how we can turn our institution successful. Obviously it also means that a new approach to what universities do and whom they serve has emerged, i.e. considering educational programs as products to sell and familiarizing our faculty and administrators with a service provider attitude. At this point we can utilize in HE what business management studies had already educated for those doing business in Asia: the intercultural negotiation skills should be improved to better serve our needs.

Another area where an altered attitude of the institutional decision makers is required is intra- and **inter-institutional collaboration**. Traditionally the latter has been recognized mostly in quantitative numbers, meaning that a high number of **international institutional partners** was earlier enough to get some public recognition and/or financial support. However, these days qualitative measures should be implemented to secure that in line with the institution's general strategic plan and directives, internationalization and partnership development are fostered in view of which partners should be prioritized and what difference should be made between strategic and short term partners. European and global partnerships, strong institutional cohesion require tremendous financial and human resources to maintain, that is why a very rational consideration in the selection of partners and continuous re-evaluation of the partnerships are needed to effectively utilize the resources allocated to that purpose.

For another approach to inter-institutional collaboration, there are increasing number of **European and national facilitators** supporting HEI internationalization initiatives and development. Organizations like ACA and EUA are dedicated to the support of universities in various forms from trainings, online seminars, conferences, publications and data bases to auditing. Attempting to meet a European standard in internationalization is helpful to become more competitive among HEIs, while every single institution is unique in its opportunities, resources and interests, too. Beyond the theoretical support these organizations provide, they also provide discussion opportunities and the sharing of good practices as well. On the home front, national agencies like Tempus Foundation, Balassi institute and the Fulbright Commission of Budapest also significantly foster internationalization in multiple ways. The ministries in charge (Ministry of Human Resources typically), embassies and the Rectors' Conference coordinate the diverse areas of work in the network

of universities and elaborate/share new opportunities, for instance regarding the Eastern Opening Policy and specific country-related ones, too.

As for the **facilitator of the European and Asian academic exchanges**, assistance is provided by the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), "an intergovernmental forum for dialogue and cooperation which fosters political dialogue, reinforces economic cooperation, and promotes collaboration in other areas of mutual interest" and the Asia-Europe Foundation. A number of theoretical resources also have helped this intercontinental exchange, for instance G. Wiessala's publication entitled *Enhancing Asia-Europe—Cooperation through Educational Exchange* (2010).

As for **intra-institutional collaboration** though, my considered opinion is that Hungarian institutions have a lot to improve. Basically the international desk and HE CEOs should have optimal communication, without that no effort can result in success. The partner institution agencies, diplomatic entities (embassies, ministries of education, etc.) and alumni, student ambassadors, exchange lecturers, researchers and anchors all make up the collaborative framework behind internationalization. Understanding the constrictions that the existing institutional systems carry by nature and have developed historically, on the one hand there negative practices of inappropriate communication, irrational hierarchies, inefficient administrative procedures and old school and less motivated educators and management altogether slowing down the development of intra-institutional collaboration in internationalization. In my professional experiences larger universities seem to have a rigid and tradition bound communication and international relations operating within the institutions, while even the younger and smaller institutions might have issues like ever changing directions and power relations in the management, uncertain financing, not sustainable systems or less appropriate and unprofessional top down communication and decision making. What I see as a possible way out is a SWOT in internationalization and a CEO decision to dedicated systematic change. In my experiences for instance a thorough audit process and the consecutive planning and changes may prove successful and ensure that internationalization profoundly contributes to the overall success of the institution in the long run, supposing that the management is loyal to the cause and consistent all along the change process.

In the context of East-West institutional collaborations, there is another important element in internationalization that is essential, knowledge diplomacy (KD). It "encompasses student mobility and collaborative research across borders (and across disciplines too). It has elsewhere been suggested that knowledge should contribute to a country's selection of foreign policy objectives, and that knowledge diplomacy offers the opportunity to work at all education levels in a range of fields to develop common approaches to shared global challenges." (<http://www.oui-iohe.org/the-diplomacy-of-knowledge-and-our-common-future/>). We should implement KD of the East-West axis as complementary with military and economic power, in J. Nye's views (<http://publicdiplomacymagazine.com/soft-power-and-cultural-diplomacy/>). If diplomacy is the art of international relations, public diplomacy in higher education is the vehicle of "soft power" (e.g. Fulbright Program, research collaboration programs).

David Johnston calls knowledge the new intellectual currency (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/the-diplomacy-of-knowledge/article546590>). This currency derives directly from the collaborative research international partners may convey and mutually benefit from, from student mobility and especially inbound tuition fee paying enrollments for full training programs. Furthermore, indirectly knowledge as an asset may develop from academic mobility that perpetuates the values and expertise the guest professors as emissaries of their countries may share. Academic may develop common approaches to shared global challenges and can collaborates with colleagues overseas, bringing home new information and technology. Finally, as the Rector of Montreal University, Luc Vinet has emphasized, following Michael Ryan's earlier theory, international institutional partnerships advance the exchange of national values (<http://www.oui-iohe.org/the-diplomacy-of-knowledge-and-our-common-future/>) and this implied benefit is based on the respect for our partners that is also essential in our endeavors.

Obviously these are the broader scope implied goals of what our efforts may aim at, while some more profane motivations lead the actual steps we take in knowledge diplomacy. Academic and business interests, priorities, strategic goals of HEIs all formulate the motivations behind KD. In the context of East-West academic institutional collaboration, we, East-Central Europeans move out of our "comfort zone," i.e. the well-known cultural ways of doing business and negotiating about academic programs, mobility and research projects. Thus the complexity of multicultural negotiations needs an intercultural understanding bridging cultural differences. However, there are some other restricting factors that shape KD, such as on the one hand the national HE frameworks, regulations and directions, and on the other hand the international and global political and diplomatic arena. Decision makers and IR experts need a profound knowledge of all those when entering internationalization with Asian partners. In addition, there are certain skills and competencies necessary to create and properly implement any agreement, for instance a rationale in preparations, advanced language skills, intercultural knowledge (CQ), some diplomatic skills and last but not least, the capacity to obtain and synthesize relevant information on the partner institution, academic diplomacy as well as national affairs.

As for the specific **KD process**, I am convinced that practicing any form of internationalization in the Asian context requires relatively more care and attention than doing the same with other European partners, probably the cultural and physical distances are the main reasons for that matter. Initiatives might come from outside, for instance a Japanese or Malaysian university seeks research or exchange collaboration, or MRK (the Rectors' Conference) comes up with a project initiative, like that of the Indonesian academic requesting MA/PhD training abroad. However, another possible initiative might emerge from our own institution, i.e. from a faculty, department or from an existing partner university with whom we wish to renew and expand the collaboration. Obviously the

process at this point is different, but from here the steps may follow a general line for a successful negotiation process.

The first step is to check if and how much the initiative suits the strategic plans of our institution and to prepare a sketch of tasks to do, which apparently might also serve as a kind of business plans. Preparation include the identification of our goals and what I call the "goal window", that is, if during the negotiations our original plans seem not to work out well, perhaps some other goals may be achieved, too. To give an example, a seemingly smooth start up of a mobility for incoming Chinese students might fail for the time being for some reasons beyond the academic discussions. If we are flexible and capable to renegotiate the terms with the partner, and/or seek new partners for the original goal, perhaps we end up offering research collaboration beneficial for our partner, while the following year, once their trust is achieved, the partner sends a group of students to participate a short term exchange, and then some more for longer training programs. That is what I call "fine tuning" and readjustment of our goals.

When the delegation is to leave for the on site talks, gathering all information available from diverse sources is essential to be best prepared. Those working in IR know, that prior and following the actual trip, especially if a university higher up and some dignities meet, is a tremendous work to elaborate all the details and get ready to meet unexpected events, too. The second step is gathering knowledge at the specific location. Moving along the East-West axis we might face some special challenges that claim for special tools, too. Asia experts, culture studies, country specific information, for instance on current politics, the academic situation, holidays, religion, body language, gender relations, and the "art of patience" are extremely helpful in my experiences. Of course every country is different and even regions might show major differences in the KD we can convey with partners. However, some general guidelines may serve us and our colleagues, and may increase the awareness of the university decision makers and community for the value of internationalization and the value of the work we do under this umbrella term for our institutions.

Visiting the institution, talks with specific units and decision makers, with local agencies for instance the Hungarian embassy, Balassi Institute, mobility agencies and Hungarian organizations located there gives us way more insight and understanding of our partner institution's capacities, interests as well as of what we can aim at and achieve in reality. After the first actual talks with decision makers there, the renegotiation of the specific issues is necessary to get all the details we need to settle before we return home. If there is a proper "chemistry" between the partners, a consensus should be achieved by all means, an agreement that names the mutual benefits and gives us the framework of action in the future. It might be an MOU (memorandum of agreement) or Letter of Intent, any format of fixing what the partners desire to do in the collaborative framework. IR experts know how complex the whole process is, especially if we include intercultural learning and ensuring

that we record the process from the media, both universities and outside agencies, too. Besides, we need to continuously communicate the tasks with the agents involved, i.e. our IR staff, the academic faculties, International Committee of the home university, the local governments or foundations. This is what we need to do in the follow up, too, at the international desk, adding the relevance of feedback as well.

Over the years we had to learn that internationalization is a highly demanding work in an ever changing HE, national and global environment. The list of challenges mentioned earlier is not complete, every day brings up some new ones, for instance in HR, national security and financing. Adaptability, flexibility and goal oriented business skills have become fundamental requirements of IR professionals at all levels. When we are offered the opportunity to join a major international project, like some initiatives of the Rectors' Conference or Tempus Foundation in charge of Stipendium Hungaricum and we need to act extra fast, not even allowing too much time to consult the procedures within the institution, our responsibility, including IR staff and CEOs, is to make sure that all efforts are done to utilize the opportunity and also to secure that the institutional interests, capacities and strategic directives are kept in view, too. If a former less vital partner university comes up with new plans in sending their students to our university, we normally have limited time to respond positively and make sure that we can adjust our existing programs to their needs as much as possible. In the Asian context, we are often advised to keep Asian students in a homogeneous classroom, even considering the cultural controversies that a Korean, a Chinese and a Vietnamese student might have historically conditioned prior to their studies in Europe. What happens if faculty signals that Brazilian and Tunisian students enjoy the multicultural classroom, but some Asians do not, but class number restrictions tie up our sphere of action? What can we do if higher ups in charge of academic affairs or those responsible for finances are a little late with proper decisions and still you need to act and make sure that the overall interests of the institution in internationalization are best fostered? How can different units, like the international committee help the rapid and effective communication between the schools, faculties, IR staff and CEOs when a particular initiative demands immediate action? How much structural and systematic features decide the outcome of procedures related to internationalization, and where is our university in that evolution? What is the philosophy of our institutional leaders and those in national level HE administration on professional academic quality demands versus financial and business pressures?

Well, if we take East-West cohesion in a close up, East-Central European universities might utilize innovative, tailored internationalization and knowledge diplomacy to exchange soft power and accumulate intellectual and financial assets as well, as detailed above. However, I have been arguing for the increased relevance of the "listen, respect your partner, be patient and flexible model" when doing business in Asia. My strategy for successful, long-term and mutually beneficial institutional partnerships is based on the "**must**" list for IR professionals that includes the followings: listen, gather

country specific information on power agents, decision making process, dynamics and the national political contexts. Develop your CQ (intercultural quotient). Identify the fields of collaboration (research, mobility, shared events and projects) and the strength and weaknesses of your own institution. Consult your plans with experts and synthesize the accumulated information. Elaborate your business strategy, discuss it with whoever is affected and should make a related decision. Readjust your plans to the reality you find there, test the prospective steps (e.g. market research for a specific educational program), reevaluate your original plans and listen again. Respect your partners constantly, practice fairness and build trust. Be patient, and then launch program, with feedback panels built in the application process. Create and sustain strong collaboration with distinguished strategic partners in Asia. Once the mutual benefits are identified and the collaboration is respected, nurtured and developed, we will need a little luck, too, to keep the dedicated persons in our system, those who after years will still devote energy to cultivate the collaboration, a job similar to that of a good gardener.

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