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Students' Attitudes towards the Internationalization of Higher Education

Extended summary

Taking into consideration the changes that have taken place in recent decades in the world in understanding the goals and scope of internationalization of higher education, the international activities of our universities and activities related to the internationalization of higher education can be seen as part of our society's overall efforts to keep pace with the developed world. These efforts, indisputably, represent an incentive for the development of science, modernization of teaching and should have far-reaching consequences for the general development of our society. It is one of the key forms of higher education that through international research activities, students' mobility, teachers and researchers, contributes to raising the quality, recognition and competitiveness in all fields of science and art, but also raising the quality of studies at the national, regional, European and global levels. Higher education implies education and raising new generations capable of lifelong learning, flexible and ready to cope with the growing demands of the modern labour market. In the processes of internationalization of higher education, our universities see an opportunity to strengthen their own identity and develop the potential of individuals as citizens of the world and higher education institutions as a significant factor in international cooperation and exchange.

The main research problem is the examination of students' attitudes towards the internationalization of higher education, as well as the examination of these specific attitudes among

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students of education and medical specializations (future class teachers, preschool teachers and medical workers). The main goal of the research is to analyse the distribution of the obtained results for the general attitude towards the internationalization of higher education, as well as to identify possible differences in these attitudes between students of education and medical specializations. The research was conducted on a sample of 325 students, of which 168 (51.69%) were students - future class teachers and preschool teachers from 2 faculties that educate teachers and preschool teachers, one faculty of medicine and one medical high school in Serbia. The scale of attitudes towards the internationalization of higher education was constructed for the purposes of this research and measured the respondents' general attitude towards the internationalization of higher education. Data on students' attitudes about the internationalization of higher education were collected in 2018/19/20 on several occasions. Students were asked to answer the questions in the attitudes scale with an explanation of the research objectives.

The results of this research indicate that students deal with this topic, but also that they do not have fully formed attitudes on issues related to the internalization of higher education. Students have a generally positive attitude towards the internalization of higher education but do not feel that the state has done everything necessary to become involved in international flows. Students are personally ready and interested in international exchange, but at the same time they are not sufficiently informed about the issues they consider relevant. There are differences between students of education and students of medicine in the general attitude towards the internalization of higher education and in the willingness to seek employment abroad after graduation. This difference is in favour of medical students. Since, according to European criteria, our higher education is insufficiently internationalized in comparison with the universities of developed countries, we believe that it is necessary to act at the level of bachelor studies to change and stabilize students' attitudes towards the internalization of higher education. In order to change the current situation, it is necessary to act in the direction of establishing attractive study programs in undergraduate, graduate, doctoral and postdoctoral studies and appropriate research centres in order to attract researchers, students and professors from the region, Europe and other parts of the world. Also, it is essential to make our professors and students equal participants in the international events.

Keywords: internationalization, higher education, student mobility

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