

Preface

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This book on intercultural dialogue on campus is a natural part of the Council of Europe Higher Education Series and a valuable addition to it. In May 2008, the Council of Europe adopted a White Paper on intercultural dialogue (see Appendix 1), which not only brings together and formalises the long-standing commitment of the Council of Europe in this area but strengthens it. Education is one of the key areas in the implementation of the White Paper, as it is in developing the democratic culture that makes our democratic institutions work in practice. The Higher Education Series, which (with this book) now comprises 11 volumes, also illustrates the close connection between structural reform and the broader purposes of higher education in modern societies.

The book examines intercultural dialogue on the higher education campus. This is an important topic because education institutions cannot prepare learners for intercultural dialogue, or promote dialogue in society at large, unless they are also able to practise intercultural dialogue within their own particular setting. Higher education institutions are a part of broader society and at the same time societies of their own.

The book is in itself an exercise in intercultural dialogue, with contributors from all parts of Europe, as well as one contributor from an African country who also has experience of European higher education. Some of the views expressed are likely to meet with disagreement from some readers, which illustrates that intercultural dialogue is, among other things, an exercise in accepting the right of others to express their views forcefully and with conviction even when we disagree with these views. The views expressed are, of course, those of each author and not those of the Council of Europe, and the fact that they are to be found in this book cannot in any way be construed as implying official approval or disapproval by the Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the book and the conference on which the book is based: especially the authors, but also the Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research (CDESR), in particular its Chair, Radu Damian, and its Vice-Chair, Virgílio Meira Soares. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Higher Education and Research Division – Sophie Ashmore, Katia Dolgova-Dreyer, Jean-Philippe Restoueix and Mireille Wendling, as well as Christine Keller, who was a trainee with the Division in spring 2008 – all of whom worked hard to make the conference and the book a reality. My thanks also extend to Sjur Bergan, the Head of our Department of Higher Education and History Teaching and the Series Editor of the Council of Europe Higher Education Series.

1. Introduction

Sjur Bergan

The idea of the higher education campus as a site of intercultural dialogue is perhaps relatively new if it is articulated in those terms, but the reality of the idea is as old as the university itself. With the possible exception of the Church, there is hardly a more international institution than the university. In its conception and early development, the university¹ was an international quest for knowledge – and, one would hope, also wisdom, knowing that the two are not the same thing – relatively unhindered by national borders and formalities of immigration. Surprisingly, the medieval university also seemed to be relatively unhindered by distance at a time when travel was a serious investment of time and money, a guarantee of prolonged discomfort and only rarely undertaken for pleasure.

Even if a plurality of nationalities gives some indication of cultural diversity – and hence the need for intercultural dialogue – one’s national roots are not the only factor that determines one’s cultural identity. If the medieval university was diverse in terms of nationality, it was relatively homogeneous in several other ways. For one, gender diversity was not a hallmark of the early university. Women were present in students’ thoughts and in their songs, and they were visited by students in their off hours, but women were hardly seen as equals and not as part of the academic community. In its origins, the university was a male institution, and that is how it remained for centuries.

The early university was also relatively homogeneous in the social background of students and teachers. The university was an elite institution, and mass higher education is historically a very recent phenomenon, dating from the 1960s or even later in most European countries. In an age with few opportunities for financial support from scholarships, most students came from a background where some funds were available for the formal education of at least one son. Even if the education requirements for access to universities were relatively modest by today’s standards, they nevertheless also had the effect of making the medieval university far less than a mirror image of medieval society. Incidentally, the Church played a far from negligible role in offering educational opportunities for those less privileged.

Not least, in spite of national diversity, the early universities were relatively homogeneous in cultural terms. Firstly, the range of academic disciplines covered by the medieval university was a narrow one: theology, law, medicine and the *artes liberales*. It is perhaps worth noting that, with the exception of the *artes liberales*, these are at the core of what developed into the regulated professions.² Secondly,

1. See Nuria Sanz and Sjur Bergan (eds), *The Heritage of European Universities* (2nd edn, Strasbourg 2006: Council of Europe Publishing. Council of Europe Higher Education Series, Vol. 7).

within as well as across disciplines, academic culture was international but fairly homogeneous. Even if students and teachers had their roots in different countries of Europe – and very rarely, if ever, beyond – the culture of the university emphasised what they had in common rather than what differentiated them, notwithstanding the fact that, in many university towns, students from the same part of Europe lived together as nations.

Wherever students and teachers travelled, they could also use the same language: Latin. Granted, this was not the native language of any of them, so all students needed to be at least bilingual – and some were certainly more than that – but the world of higher education was not one that encouraged great linguistic diversity. To the extent that it did, it was at a certain point in its history through the rediscovery of an ancient language – Greek – rather than through the study of modern languages. To take just four examples, Antonio de Nébrija's Spanish grammar dates from 1492, the first grammar of Lithuanian dates from 1653-54 and INALCO – the French Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales – was established in 1795;³ and Europeans discovered the linguistic diversity of India and the link between Sanskrit and classical (as well as modern) European languages at about the same time. Not all parts of academic culture were European in origin: the contribution of Arab intellectuals to the development of knowledge and understanding was considerable and was known and appreciated in Europe.

The medieval university, then, had every opportunity to develop into a venue of intercultural dialogue, but it grasped this opportunity only to a very limited extent. In this, the medieval university was hardly the ivory tower of lore, but rather a faithful reflection of the society of which it was a part. That society was socially and cultural more diverse than the university, but it was not a society that valued its diversity. Rather, it was a highly normative society with clear and largely uncontested ideas about what expressions were culturally and linguistically valid and what were not.

Rather than a long-standing tradition, valuing diversity is a relatively new phenomenon, and it is not universally acquired. One hardly needs look further than today's newspaper pages – and often the local and regional pages at that – to see that official discourse, which tends to value diversity, is at some variance with popular and populist discourse, which in many cases finds the thought that those different from us can have equal rights and be of equal value quite disturbing. Some populist discourse also seeks to distinguish between those who are only somewhat different from those who are truly different, for which the Germanic languages have terms like *Fernkulturelle*.⁴

Today's society is nevertheless hardly imaginable without extensive contacts across borders. The culturally homogeneous country is a thing of the past, despite the

2. Even if the number of regulated professions is far greater today and varies from one country to another.

3. Although it built on a school of interpretation founded by Colbert in 1669.

4. Literally, 'culturally distant', *Fernkulturell* is the German form; other Germanic languages have similar terms.

nostalgia of those who would like to make it also a thing of the future. The point here is not that few if any countries were culturally and linguistically homogeneous – it is enough to remember that the spread of French to all parts of the population of France effectively began with the French Revolution. The point is rather that the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population was rarely reflected in national life and official ideology. That is where modern society is different.

The value of cultural diversity is most probably linked to the value of the individual human being. Valuing the individual has deep historical roots, but its predominance is relatively recent. It is only fitting that the Council of Europe, which safeguards individual dignity through its emphasis on human rights and through its role as the custodian of the European Convention on Human Rights, adopted in 1950, has now become a pioneer in promoting intercultural dialogue. In 2007, the Committee of Ministers adopted a White Paper on the subject, with the programmatic title “Living Together As Equals in Dignity”. The White Paper, which will be found as Appendix 1 to this book and is also available in electronic form,⁵ fully recognises the importance of education in furthering intercultural dialogue. The White Paper lays the foundation for the Council’s future work in promoting intercultural dialogue and has been influenced by what the Council of Europe has already done in this area. One example is the “Statement on the contribution of higher education to intercultural dialogue”, adopted by the Council’s Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research (CDESR) in 2006 and reproduced in Appendix 2.

It is worth noting that the White Paper understands intercultural dialogue as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. The White Paper states that intercultural dialogue operates at all levels – within societies, between the societies of Europe, and between Europe and the wider world – and maintains that it can only thrive if certain preconditions are met. To advance intercultural dialogue, the White Paper argues, many aspects of the democratic governance of cultural diversity should be adapted; democratic citizenship and participation should be strengthened; intercultural competences should be taught and learned; spaces for intercultural dialogue should be created and widened, and intercultural dialogue should reach the international level.

The book you are about to read – like the conference on which it builds – considers the role of higher education in developing and promoting intercultural dialogue in greater detail than a statement or even a White Paper covering all aspects of the Council of Europe’s activities could possibly do. More specifically, this book looks at the higher education campus as a venue of intercultural dialogue. This is not the only role higher education plays in promoting intercultural dialogue, and a later contribution will aim to look at the role of higher education as an actor in the broader society of which it is a part. What happens on campus is nevertheless a

5. See: www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/White%20Paper%20final%20EN%20020508.pdf.

precondition for the role higher education should play in society at large. In the sense of the White Paper, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph, intercultural dialogue on campus is an example of dialogue within a society.

Because of the international character of higher education, and the fact that the society one finds at a given campus at any one time is likely to be a temporary one, dialogue on campus is also a dialogue between groups and societies. Few individuals have only one identity, and members of the academic community are also members of other communities. Higher education cannot teach intercultural dialogue without practising it on campus, just as higher education cannot act in support of intercultural dialogue in society at large while neglecting it in its own institutional policies, practices and daily life. Higher education cannot be a credible voice for intercultural dialogue if it does not practise what it teaches. No individual or institution can preach virtue and practise vice and still hope to remain credible.

To explore intercultural dialogue on the higher education campus, the Council of Europe invited contributions from all parts of Europe and also from a higher education personality who combines an African background with experience of European higher education. The contributors come from a variety of institutions and have a range of responsibilities. In some of the contributions, readers are likely to find views with which they disagree or with which they may even feel uncomfortable. Confronting views that differ sharply from one's own and that are expressed forcefully is a part of the challenge of intercultural dialogue, as it is of being citizens of democratic societies. All authors express their own views, and none of the views expressed should be taken to be those of the Council of Europe. The official position of the Council of Europe on intercultural dialogue is to be found in the White Paper.

The long contribution by Edo Poggia, Manuel Mauri-Brusa and Tatiana Fumasoli served as the background study for the conference. It gives an overview of the place and role of intercultural dialogue in higher education in Europe, and is based on research carried out at the Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano, which is itself a leading institution in teaching and research into intercultural dialogue. Chapter 2 explores the relationship between the internationalisation of higher education, in particular through academic mobility, and intercultural dialogue. It points out that, even in an age of great mobility, almost half the foreign students in the 34 countries referred to came from another European country. However, there were about as many students from Asia and Africa put together as there were students from Europe. The chapter also makes the point that a concern for intercultural dialogue is not a luxury that higher education staff and institutions can add to their core tasks only if time and resources are available. Rather, intercultural dialogue is part and parcel of the mission of higher education. The authors also look at how multiculturalism may enrich higher education curricula. One of the strengths of the chapter is that it addresses both key aspects of the university mission, teaching and research, in relation to intercultural dialogue.

Fatou Sarr addresses issues of intercultural dialogue from an African (more precisely a Senegalese) viewpoint, and she does so as a woman and as an academic. She is critical of some European attitudes to Africa, and she also describes the challenges of the intercultural campus in an African context, using her own institution, Cheikh Anta Diop University, as an example. At this institution, some 40 nationalities are represented among a student population of about 50 000, and many of the associations active within the university are identity-based. Not least, Fatou Sarr underlines the need for higher education institutions to nurture close contacts with other parts of society.

Ian Law examines the sources and effects of intercultural conflicts. He identifies three broad categories among them: durable historical forms of hostility, newly articulated forms of hostility and everyday cultural ignorance, and he strongly makes the claim that intercultural conflicts are not natural or primordial. The second part of Chapter 4 examines, in some detail, lessons and issues from the experience of tackling racism and eurocentrism at campuses in the United Kingdom, spurred in part by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. In particular, Ian Law refers to the Leeds Toolkit, which he played an important role in developing.

Enric Olivé-Serret's contribution deals with an area of particular concern to current political debate in Europe, and to the Council of Europe's efforts in intercultural dialogue, namely the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. The Mediterranean area is one in which many cultural, political, linguistic and religious traditions meet and where fault lines appear. These conflicts have an impact on universities, exemplified here by the situation of women, by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and by the position of religion and religious expression. The chapter explores university networking in the Mediterranean, based on the Tarragona Declaration of 2005, and outlines a set of challenges as well as possibilities.

Gundula Gwenn Hiller describes intercultural dialogue in a context that is narrower in geographical terms, but still difficult and significant because of the background of history. The European University Viadrina is German, but located on the German-Polish border, and it has a policy of seeking an enrolment of about 30% Polish students. In this context, the university found that a specific effort was needed to promote dialogue between the two major groups of students – German and Polish – while also involving the 10% or so of the student population that came from other countries. As the author puts it, intercultural competence is not something that happens automatically when people from different countries and backgrounds meet in a certain institutional framework. International institutions need to develop special strategies to sensitise their members and to encourage intercultural communication. The programme developed at the European University Viadrina is of interest because it won an award for intercultural learning in Germany in March 2008.

Vladimir Filippov, Rector of the Russian University of Peoples' Friendship and former Russian Minister of Education, describes the unusual context of his

institution. Hosting foreign students is at the core of this university, which – as Patrice Lumumba University – was established for the specific purpose of offering higher education to foreign students, in particular from Africa, Asia and Latin America. It also enrolls Russian students, but the highly international student body of 28 000 comes from 130 to 140 countries. The university has adopted a complex internationalisation programme that introduces intercultural awareness into teaching, research and extracurricular activities. Students share a room with a student from another country, and all students (regardless of their academic specialism) are required to study a foreign language. Options include a range of European languages as well as Arabic and Chinese, and foreign students are of course also required to learn Russian, which is the language of instruction. The university also has a policy of marking its international character through cultural events.

Qatip Arifi examines the challenges of intercultural dialogue in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” from his position on the staff of an institution set up specifically to further relations between the two major groups in the country and offer courses in both its major languages as well as in English: the South East European University in Tetovo. Arifi contrasts the policy of cultural inclusiveness in this university with what he sees as policies of non-inclusion in the major public institution of the country. He also draws parallels between the difficulty of intercultural dialogue on campus and the tensions between groups in broader society, thus pointing directly to the interaction between the academic community and the society of which it is a part. He underlines that, while democracy means majority rule, it also presupposes trust between majority and minority groups, and he ends by formulating a set of objectives and conditions for intercultural dialogue.

Anne-Marie Mallet examines the multiple facets of interculturalism on the basis of her experience at a French university, Paris V Descartes, and that of two other Paris universities that decided to join forces in providing a preparatory course for newly admitted foreign students, aiming to help their integration in their new place of study. The programme emphasises French language training as well as an awareness of French and European culture and society. The language courses focus on the needs of students and have a strong component of French for professional and academic purposes. A significant aspect is that students play an important part in organising and running the programme, and it benefits from the experience and suggestions for improvement of those who have already undergone it. The second part of this chapter explores the effect of mass higher education on French universities in changing institutional culture and participation. She also explores the impact of the 2007 Act on the Freedom and Responsibility of Universities, in particular as concerns the reform of university councils and the recruitment of teaching staff.

Bernd Wächter’s article, which closes this volume, builds on his report as General Rapporteur for the conference but also on his very broad experience with intercultural issues in higher education as Director of the Academic Co-operation Association (ACA). Rather than offering a summary of the other contributions,

Bernd Wächter puts them together in a coherent whole through a text that is analytical rather than descriptive. He presents a set of 10 conclusions that lead to the recommendations that were adopted by the conference.

The two appendices referred to at the start – the Council of Europe White Paper and the CDESR statement on the contribution of higher education to intercultural dialogue – are reference texts as well as texts to be read and reflected upon.

I hope this volume will serve multiple purposes: raise awareness, stimulate reflection and point to possibilities for action by those who believe that higher education is essential to modern societies and also that one of the major challenges we face as societies is to learn how to live together in dignity as equals, across cultural, linguistic, religious, social and national differences. On reflection, most of us will admit to and even embrace a whole range of identities: as citizens of our city, our region, our country, Europe and the world, as speakers of one or more languages, as members of a community of religion or conviction, as members of an association, or as members of the academic community as well as of the community of a specific discipline. This list is far from exclusive, but it does show some of the many facets of identity. The fact that humans are rarely mono-identity beings may seem problematic to some, especially in situations of conflict where one particular facet of one's identity becomes dominant. If one's future seems to be determined by which language one spoke as a child, it requires considerable courage and dedication also to identify with a community of religious belief or political conviction, of chemists, gardeners or musicians.

Nevertheless, our multiple identities offer great hope, not only because the saying that whoever knows only his mother's tongue is limited to his mother's world applies far beyond the realm of language, but also because political science research shows that the truly dangerous conflicts arise when the different facets of people's identity flow together into insurmountable walls. A society that is turned into a set of pillars⁶ where members live their lives as stylites, each on top of a particular pillar with little except shouting contact with the stylites on other pillars, is likely to be more affected by conflict and less fit to thrive in the modern world than one characterised by the exchanges, openness of mind and willingness to re-examine one's own convictions that is a hallmark of intercultural dialogue – and also of our academic heritage.

6. From the Dutch *verzuiling*, a term coined by the political scientist Arend Lijphart.