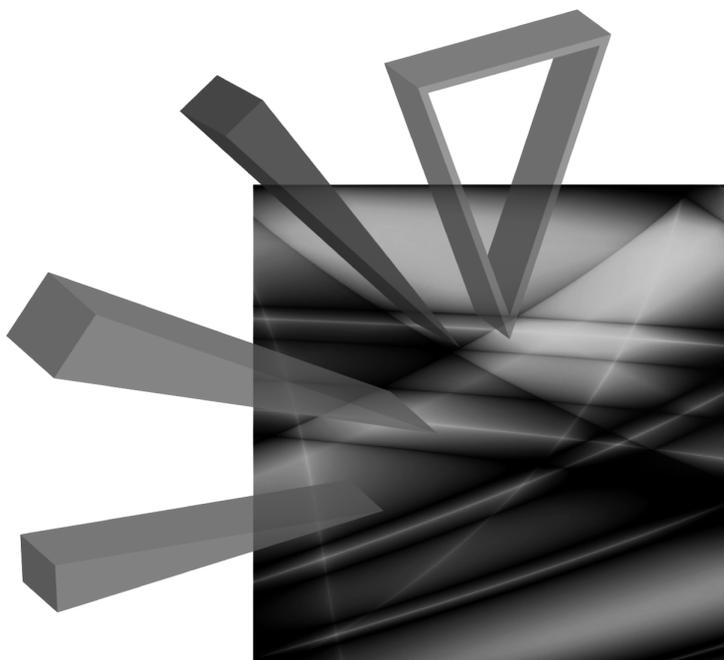


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Nikita Nikiforov, Valery Nikiforov

The Baltic International Academy

THE MAIN DIRECTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE SPHERE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Summary: The international co-operation in the sphere of higher education is considered as being one of the important factors of human development, as an organic part of international relations. The international co-operation is considered at the three levels: universal, regional, and local. The article analyzes 1) the role of the international co-operation in the development of higher schools, 2) the quality of higher education within the context of the international co-operation, 3) the realisation of international joint education programs, 4) the international mobility of the academic and administrative personnel.

Key words: institutionalisation, internalisation, educational process actors, multilateral co-operation.

1. Introduction

The second half of the 20th century was marked by a rapid development of the sphere of higher education, which was characterized by a huge increase in the number of higher school students, change of forms, methods, and the circle of participants in the process of preparation of professional high level experts, active expansion of international educational contacts. Especially important, qualitative changes in the sphere of higher education took place in the 1990s in connection with the significant activation of humanitarian co-operation, and also along with the distribution of new technologies concerning the access to knowledge.

At the same time, the tendencies in the sphere of higher education, obvious for the last ten to fifteen years, created a number of universal calls to the world community. Thus, by the end of the 20th century the gap between the industrially advanced countries and the less developed ones increased, in particular the least advanced in terms of access to higher education, scientific research, and the allocated resources. This period was also characterized by the growth of distinctions from the point of view of opportunities regarding the reception of education inside the majority of other countries, including some most advanced and rich states.

In this connection providing a number of qualified and educated people necessary for the steady development on an isolated basis appeared impossible practically for all members of the world community. Therefore, the sharing of knowledge and international co-operation began to be considered **as some important imperatives of human development** (set bold by N.N.) which caused consolidation of multilateral and national efforts¹.

2. Internationalisation of educational space

International co-operation in the sphere of higher education can really be considered **as an organic part of international relations**, as it does imply interaction among the states, organisations, and establishments, separate people working in the sphere of higher education in different countries. Attributes of activation of scientific, political, and public interest to these problems become more and more obvious².

International co-operation changes its forms and kinds of activities. It is formed within the three basic directions: achievement of the higher education level corresponding to the needs of a modern society, perfection of national educational systems, preparation of qualified personnel for an innovative development.

These problems are solved rather synchronously at the three levels of the international system interaction: **universal**, through the activity of UNESCO as a specialized structure of the United Nations; **regional**, following the adoption of conventions on recognition of documents of education; and especially due to the process of formation of the all-European educational space (the Bologna process); and **local**, formed by educational connections of universities worldwide. Bilateral and multilateral scientific and pedagogical co-operation of universities, exchange of teachers and students, including those with assistance of target supranational EU programs (COMETT, ERASMUS, LINGUA, SOCRATES, and others), have especially enjoyed wide development in this decade, being popular not only in Europe, but also on other continents, also among educational establishments.

It is typical that both governmental and non-governmental actors do participate at all the three levels. Among the actors there are for example, professional associations and members of expert communities. The activities of the European University Association, which became an active participant of formation of all-European policy within the context of the Bologna process, are indicative in this

¹ *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action*, Paris Oct. 9, 1998, articles 15, 16.

² A. Amaral, *Higher Education in the Process of European Integration. Globalizing Economies and Mobility of Students and Staff*, [in:] *Higher Education and the Nation State. The International Dimension of Higher Education*, ed. J. Huisman, P. Maassen, G. Neave, Pergamon 2001, p. 121-148; B. Barthelemy, *Analysis of the concept of European dimension*, "European Education", September 1999, vol. 31, p. 64-95; B. Clark, *The Higher Education System. Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1983.

respect. The role and importance of international organisations, funds, and programs of financial support of projects grow in the field of education and science as well.

The interaction of actors within the educational processes in the direction of co-operation provides a process of international integration of higher education, which has been promoted to the highest degree on the European continent. Hence, there is a process **of institutionalization of relations** between the producers and the consumers of educational services, in which an appreciable role has to be allocated to specialized agencies acting as more and more important functional parts.

The scales **of internationalisation of educational space** which can be observed at the present stage objectively cause a problem concerning the variety of directions and forms of the international educational co-operation. Most universally they are reflected in the activities of UNESCO, which is the major multilateral institution regulating the interaction of members of the world community concerning the problems of culture and education, and with which above 600 most authoritative international non-governmental, educational, scientific, cultural, and other organisations cooperate in an active way.

UNESCO is a large multilateral structure, which as one of the first, has turned to the problem of reforming the sphere of education during the postbipolar period and consistently advances its ideas in interrelation with the wide processes of international co-operation. The world conference on problems of higher education in Paris in 1998 under the aegis of UNESCO, which essentially determined the strategic line of its development in the 21st century, was symbolic for the organization's further development. At this conference, there were accepted two major documents: "World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century: Vision and Action" and "Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development of Higher Education". Since then the International bureau of education of UNESCO has been conducting once every two years international conferences on education at the level of ministers of the member states of the organisation, at which, as provided, also problems of the higher school are considered. The last in due time world conference on education took place in Bonn in March 2009 within the framework of a decade of the United Nations on education concerning steady development (2005-2014), which has been coordinated by UNESCO.

In the development of international co-operation in the sphere of higher education an important role has been attached to the project UNESCO-UNITWIN, a UNESCO program, within the framework of which a world net of faculties intended for the development of interuniversity co-operation has been created. At present, in the world there are created about 100 interuniversity networks and more than 300 faculties of UNESCO, which are involved in the exchange of experience, teachers, technologies in education in such spheres as human rights, ecology, copyrights, communications, preservation of natural and cultural heritages. This co-operation among the faculties is considered also as a mechanism of counteraction to the "brain drain".

A special contribution to the development of the international educational co-operation in the sphere of higher education and at the same time one of the major directions of its development has become signing under the aegis of UNESCO the six regional conventions on recognition of qualifications: in Africa, the Arabian region, Asian Pacific Region, Latin America, on the Caribbean islands, and two conventions in Europe along with the creation of the European higher education area (the Bologna process).

The regional conventions of UNESCO on recognition of certificates on education are legally obliging legal acts, which have been so far ratified by over 100 – member states from all regions of the world. The basic purpose of these documents will consist in the assistance to international co-operation in the field of higher education and in the reduction of obstacles concerning the mobility of students and teachers. The initial conventions on reciprocal recognition of the degrees in the field of higher education appeared in the 1960s³. In 1992 within the framework of UNESCO a joint meeting of regional committees was called for considering an opportunity of acceptance of a general convention on recognition of study courses and educational degrees in the field of higher education. However, as no consensus was reached (it was not possible) the 27th session of the general conference of UNESCO was limited to the acceptance of a legal document of a somewhat less obliging form named after recommendation.

In the spirit of this document, as the first one, the European convention (1979), known at present as “The Lisbon convention on recognition for Europe”, has been updated. It is a joint document of the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The Lisbon convention serves as an important landmark in the practice of recognition in Europe thanks to a number of major introduced conceptions, and it is connected to such subsequent trends as that of Bologna, which is the largest regional project of the reform of higher education. On the basis of the Lisbon convention another important document has also been adopted: “The Code of diligent practice for transnational education” (Riga, June 2001). In the middle of this decade the process of revision of the Arusha (Africa) Convention of 1981 started to take into account the needs connected, in particular, with the evaluation of certificates given out on the basis of distant education.

The basic feature of regional conventions on recognition is that they finally contribute **to preservation and strengthening of cultural originality of peoples, thus at the same time keeping respect for the specific character of their educational systems.** They recognize that the right to education is one of the human rights and that higher education, which serves as the key factor of expansion and development of knowledge, represents an extremely valuable cultural and scientific property, both for any person, and for a society.

³ <http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/index.shtml>.

Expansion of a spectrum of the questions concerning the problem of recognition of personal documents of education, which is marked in connection with the development of educational co-operation in Europe and Africa, confirms that regional conventions are an adequate way of the accounting of the newest international tendencies in the area of transnational education. It is possible that in the foreseeable future regional conventions can form a basis for the development of basic frame agreements on recognition of certificates along with the quality assurance of education on a universal scale.

The process of renewal of regional conventions on recognition, and the aspiration to the rapprochement of their positions, as to the accounting of the newest phenomena in the sphere of education, concerning the prospects of development of international co-operation in the educational sphere, started under the aegis of UNESCO about ten years ago. Now, the renewal of the regional conventions contents on recognition is at various stages of its development. It is important that UNESCO, as a specialized establishment of the system of the United Nations Organization along with the state-members should represent themselves as the major centre of the multilateral regulation of international co-operation in the sphere of education. The importance of such a centre is caused not only by its status, but also by the non-uniformity of the development of the integration tendencies in educational processes at regional levels.

The most completed in this respect is the interaction of educational actors in Europe. During several decades within the European Union a unitary policy in the field of higher education has been developed and carried out and regional institutions of intergovernmental coordination and management have been formed by educational connections. About ten conventions on reciprocal recognition of documents issued by secondary educational institutions, study courses, and periods of education, diplomas of higher education, scientific degrees are prepared and adopted, all of them creating a normative basis of the integration process in the sphere of higher education in the EU. However, by the dynamics of the Bologna process, which will be analyzed in more details in the third section of the thesis research, the regional direction of the international educational co-operation becomes an organic element of the sphere of higher education only in that measure in which it is based on the activity of a considerable number of higher educational institutions (universities) of the countries of that area.

The balanced interaction with foreign partners became one of the conditions of the normal functioning of a modern university, and not only a factor of increasing its competitiveness under the given conditions of globalization in the educational markets, but also a status factor at a national level.

International co-operation plays an important role in the development of modern higher schools. One of the forms of international co-operation and real opportunities of conducting scientific research on any actual issue is the membership of higher schools in various multilateral associations in the field of higher education,

and also their interactions with research structures of the largest West-European and American higher schools and scientific centers. An important criterion, which is invariably taken into account while estimating the potential of international co-operation of universities, especially in European countries, is signing the Great Charter of Universities (*Magna Charta Universitatum*) by a specific higher school.

Usually the geography of bilateral higher school connections covers various countries of the world, both near and more remote, but necessarily these are guided by the co-operation opportunities with educational establishments of Western Europe and North America. However, as rather attractive partners for the co-operation, higher schools of Latin America have recently come forward, which essentially managed to raise the quality of educational services and curriculums due to the important modernization of all educational process and, especially, the attraction of the highly skilled teaching personnel.

The experience of Latin American countries in the sense of a breakthrough in the sphere of the international educational co-operation is especially remarkable. For the last five years the regional level of their teaching and research basis has sharply increased. Consequently a number of higher schools in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Chile have reached the opportunity to carry out large scaled research in the sphere of business and economy in that area; on the other hand they have drawn to themselves the attention of business schools in North America and Europe, which have started to offer joint projects to them.

The international network of programs, professors, and researchers have become an additional stimulus for the authority growth of the Latin American higher education, in which there are leaders and outsiders. Good schools, as a rule, have joint programs with American and European educational institutions, which offer two diplomas and an opportunity to pass a part of a course abroad. Rather specific, made-to-order programs are also tailored. For example, a business school INCAE (Costa Rica / Nicaragua) offers a master course of management in medicine (Master of Medical Management) and Panama Canal Authority offers MBA, the latter created especially for the needs of the main corporation in Central America managing the Panama channel. Moreover, some leading business schools in the area are opening affiliations in other countries. Today their network covers almost all Latin America. On the whole, in some specializations, for example, the management of environment, free market competition in the countries with developing economy, corporate and social responsibility, Latin American business schools start to win advanced positions in the world. Consequently an increasing number of Latin American higher schools become a place for international conferences: a factor that also raises their rating.

3. Factors determining international co-operation

While analyzing substantial aspects of international co-operation in the sphere of higher education at universal, regional, and local (university) levels, it is necessary

to mention that at all various forms, methods, and dynamics of its realization, three strategic problems, both in professional discourse and in practice, are invariable. the quality assurance of education, the joint programs development, and the academic mobility.

1. *Quality of higher education within the context of international co-operation.* Following the process of expansion and deepening the internationalization of higher education, the attention to its quality grows, being the key factor to the achievement of educational purposes of the 21st century formulated by the world community. The systems of quality assurance normally provide an evaluation of programs or educational institutions, including carrying out examinations by structures of higher schools themselves (internal evaluation), external examinations, presence of comparable systems of accreditation, certification or similar tools; international partnership, co-operation, and participation in international educational networks. Attention to the problems of the quality of higher education within the context of international co-operation can be explained, firstly, more and more often from the governmental withdrawal of any active regulation within the sphere of higher education; secondly, from the aspiration to be guided by the productivity of the educational process when the stress is displaced on the readiness of graduates to the employment; thirdly, from the aspiration to the clearness and the comparability as far as diplomas and degrees are concerned and finally turning to an increase in the higher education attraction for the youth.

In this connection "World declaration on higher education for the 21st century: vision and action" adopted at the world conference on higher education in 1998 defined that the quality in the sphere of higher education is a multivariate concept, which should cover all its functions and kinds of activities: educational and academic programs, scientific research and grants, staff formations, students, buildings, material basis, equipment as well as working towards the prosperity of the social and academic environment. Furthermore, despite the variability of terminology in various international documents it is possible to point out some general instances in the understanding of the quality of education that is treated as a system forming assurance mechanisms for monitoring, estimations, maintenance or improvement of the quality in the activities of higher schools. At present there are not any essential definitions of the quality of higher education necessary for international recognition in Europe at its minimally acceptable level even at the closing stages of the Bologna process. The European university association (EUA) has come to the conclusion that under conditions of the variety of higher schools on the whole continent it is impossible to come to an agreement on the quality standards. The most important thing is the higher schools' reaction to possible changes. Within the context of the communiqué of the Berlin conference on problems of the Bologna process the European university association started working on the preparation of coor-

minated standards and procedures of the quality assurance; however, this activity has not been completed.

Absence of rigid fixing parameters while estimating the quality of higher education is compensated by developing other elements of its institutionalization. Today practically all European countries have officially founded structures (agencies) or other structures on the quality assurance of higher education. Hence, there is a huge variety of forms and methods of activity of the agencies involved in problems of the related qualities and accreditations in Europe. Their scales, aims, and tasks concerning their activities are non-uniform. There are even more distinctions to explore at the level of functional aspects, such as methods of the quality management, use of the working standards, criteria and trendsetters, methods and means of evaluation, reporting, etc. ENQA's research in the field of national systems of the quality assurance has reflected the presence of eight various basic kinds of such evaluation, but the dominating trend of such types as evaluation of programs, accreditation of programs, and institutional checks can actually be traced.

Last years especially in view of the problems of achieving a full integration within the European educational space by 2020, the international co-operation among the agencies of the quality assurance of higher education in Europe has been considerably intensified. It covers such forms as involving foreign experts on diverse disciplines into the process of evaluation or their inclusion into commission structures on accreditation, including foreign experts into the controls of the agencies of a country, using the existing international standards and criteria for estimations and accreditations, using descriptors at the levels of internationally developed preparation for both degrees (bachelor and master)⁴. To promote the development of the process of the compatibility the idea of creation of a European consortium on accreditation⁵ is also considered. Such organizations as INQAAAHE⁶ and a number of regional associations have already functioned. However, on the whole, despite the successful promotion of the European countries in the sphere of establishing an integrated quality of education, the distinctions in the approaches to this problem still remain. Globally it is just necessary to introduce an effective culture of the quality of education, especially within the sphere of higher education, that implies the expansion of interactions concerning active participation of all parties: governments, higher schools, bodies of accreditation and evaluation, teachers and students working together on the problem of assuring the transparency of the processes of accreditations being an obligatory condition of trust.

2. *Realization of joint educational programs as a factor of expansion of the international educational co-operation.* This kind of activities became possible,

⁴ http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Maindoc/050520_Bergen_Communique.pdf.

⁵ *European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)*, <http://www.eaconsortium.net>.

⁶ <http://www.forumea.org/documents/ForumEAStandardsGoodPrctMarch2008.pdf>.

though not being brought to the end, due to the formation of an integrated, international legal basis of multilateral regulation of the educational processes, which goes back to the European cultural convention (Paris, 1954) and includes some various types of documents: Conventions of UNESCO, joint Lisbon convention of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, documents accepted by the participants of the Bologna process, various multilateral and bilateral agreements among separate countries.

Joint programs meet a lot of subject domains; however, they have become most popular in economy, business education, jurisprudence, management, and engineering. They are widely present also in humanitarian and linguistic disciplines.

For the EU member states the decision of problems of joint programs is essentially facilitated by the Lisbon document of 1997 “Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region”⁷. According to the modular training concept accepted within the framework of the Bologna process at all three levels of the university studies, a part of the modules is subject without fail to be studied at partner universities, and the modules are mutually credited due to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)⁸.

The creation of joint programs at the European universities includes various formats. In documents on results of a meeting of the European Ministers of Education in Prague in 2001 the problem of expansion of joint programs is specified due to the recommendation on the development of the interuniversity programs leading to the reception of joint degrees (diplomas)⁹. However, the development of all kinds of joint programs including those among the European universities, has been accompanied by a set of problems frequently being a consequence of incompatibilities within the requirements of various educational structures. Among these problems the most important are the following: financing of studies, recognition of joint degrees, control and assurance of the quality of education, efficiency of management of education, and synchronization of learning of students at universities in different countries.

The most complicated problem while propagating joint or double diplomas is the necessity of expansion of financing their basis. Such programs are less cost-effective owing to the mobility included in them¹⁰.

⁷ *Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process: Recommendations of the International Seminar*, Lisbon, 11-12 April 2002.

⁸ http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education, ECC Bureau – Meeting of the CC-HER, Strasbourg, 21-22 June, Final report.

⁹ S. Bergan, *The New European Higher Education Area and Its Implications*, [in:] *News of the Recognition Field: Background Information for the ACE Track*, 13th Annual Conference of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), Tampere-Riga, 5-8 December 2001, EAIE, Latvian ENIC/NARJC, p. 10-14.

¹⁰ *Development of Joint Masters Programs for Europe. Results of the EAU Masters Programmes*. 2005, EAU, Socrates.

Today a number of universities in the Baltics issue “double” diplomas while higher schools as partners from various countries coordinate a contractual basis programs of learning along with the periods of learning abroad for their students; therefore the graduates receive diplomas at two universities. In the Baltics as an example of a successful realisation of joint educational programs the International Baltic Academy (Riga) is to be mentioned. In Russia from 600 governmental higher schools only about 50 realize programs of double diplomas in one or two directions of the vocational training.

3. *Mobility of students, teachers, and management personnel* of higher schools as an independent direction of the international educational co-operation enjoys a great importance. It is realized according to the international contracts and on the basis of direct agreements among educational establishments. In many countries of the world the international academic mobility is one of the components of the government policy. The academic mobility differs from the traditional trainings abroad. First of all, students go to study abroad for longer periods of time, from one semester till one academic year; and, secondly, during this stay they pass their full curriculum, which is credited after their return into the former higher school, in which these students initially studied.

Within the European space the academic mobility is based on the “Great Charter of Universities”, joined declaration of Sorbonne and Bologna. Furthermore, in the communiqué of the Berlin conference (2003) it is emphasized that the mobility of students, academics, and administrative personnel acts as a basis while creating the European space of higher education. The overall objective of the mobility is to enable any student to receive a versatile European education in the chosen direction of learning, to provide the student with the access to recognized centers of knowledge where leading scientific schools have traditionally been formed, to expand knowledge of students in all areas of the European culture, to impart the student the feeling of the citizen of Europe.

The European practice concerning the organization of students' mobility shows that this process has rather modest scales, especially in view of the fact that annually in the European high schools there are educated about ten millions students. Hence, even within the framework of the continent the misbalance in the exchange of the students' streams from several known regions has arisen. On the realization of the academic mobility the streams of students, who go to Western Europe from Scandinavian countries and the Baltics, and also from Eastern Europe, prevail slightly in comparison with the mobility of students from Western Europe coming to eastern and northern Europe. An important problem of practice concerning the academic mobility is learning the language, while there are no uniform approaches to its solution.

It is typical that during the realization of the academic mobility an increasing role at the present stage is played by specialized agencies created by various Euro-

pean governments to assist the international co-operation in the field of education, training, culture, business life among the youth. These agencies work as national ones within the framework of such programs of the EU as “Socrates” and “Youth”, and they also act as consulting and administrative centers of “TEMPUS”, “Leonardo da Vinci” and some other programs. The agencies coordinate a broad spectrum of international programs of grants and trainings, support teaching national languages (especially rare European languages) and popularization of national cultures at universities abroad¹¹.

On the whole, in the middle of this decade according to experts’ estimation thousands of people and hundreds of organizations participate in programs of academic exchange. At the same time, the academic mobility is stimulated by West-European countries, first of all inside the EU. Such a well known program as “Erasmus Mundus” is directed towards that goal. Writing about the academic mobility, it is necessary to mention the approaches concerning the solution of a painful problem of the “brain drain”. The EU mechanism does apply reintegration grants for the European scholars who have lived abroad (i.e. grants for returning) on the ground of bilateral agreements among separate countries.

4. Critical summing up the results of international co-operation

The above analysis of the main directions of the international co-operation in the sphere of higher education concerning their institutional and substantial aspects allows to make a number of general conclusions, as follows.

1. The international co-operation in the sphere of higher education has become within the last decade a more and more significant and actively developing part of modern global processes, in which an impressive number of various actors take part, and which strengthens the integration tendencies of the international interaction at the whole system levels.

2. While the development of the international co-operation in the sphere of higher education at universal, regional, and local (university) levels of the interaction of its actors remains balanced on the whole, a special attention has been paid to various forms of international educational activities within Europe, thus enjoying the promotion to an integrated regional system of higher education.

3. The development of the international co-operation in the sphere of higher education has been restrained not only by the objective distinctions concerning the conditions of learning in various countries, but also by the complexities of solutions in regard to practical questions while coordinating the quality of learning, conducting joint educational programs, awarding scientific degrees, considering the costs’ issues of education with an included international component.

¹¹ *The Centre for International Mobility (CIMO)*, <http://www.cimo.fi>.

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GLÓWNE DETERMINANTY MIĘDZYNARODOWEJ WSPÓLPRACY W ZAKRESIE SZKOLNICTWA WYŻSZEGO

Streszczenie: Współpracę międzynarodową w zakresie szkolnictwa wyższego rozważa się jako jeden z najważniejszych czynników rozwoju człowieka, jako organiczną część stosunków międzynarodowych. Współpraca międzynarodowa jest rozpatrywana na trzech poziomach, może być: uniwersalna, regionalna i lokalna. W artykule zostały przeanalizowane: 1) rola stosunków międzynarodowych w rozwoju szkoły wyższej; 2) jakość szkolnictwa wyższego w kontekście współpracy międzynarodowej; 3) realizacja wspólnych międzynarodowych programów szkoleniowych; 4) mobilność międzynarodowa personelu akademickiego i administracji.

Słowa kluczowe: potencjał intelektualny, elity polityczne, dywersyfikacja, faktory systemów edukacyjnych, mobilność akademicka.