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The rise and fall of international higher education in Denmark

Tange, Hanne

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TRANSLATING CULTURES, CULTURES IN TRANSLATION

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Presenter 1 (if more than one, copy as many times as necessary)

First name: Hanne

Last name: Tange

Affiliation (University/Institution, including address): Associate professor, Dept. of Culture & Global Studies, University of Aalborg, Denmark

E-mail address: Mail: tange@cgs.aau.dk

Abstract

A domain where we have seen a dramatic growth in everyday intercultural interaction and cultural translation is higher education. As a result of institutional internationalisation processes, academic staff have developed new pedagogic practices, accommodating a diverse student cohort by attending to language usage, curricular contexts, class activities and socialisation needs (cf. Tange, forthcoming). Building on policy literature, Killick (2017, 26) visualises this development as a continuum where universities are moving from the position of a regional or national institution to that of a global university. Killick describes this as an inevitable, one-directional movement, but this is challenged by recent events in Holland, Hungary and Denmark. This causes the present author to ask if the next stage in university development could be a return to the *national* university?

The paper presents the case of international higher education in Denmark, as this has developed since the signing of the Bologna Treaty, 1999. From the start, Danish universities were actively involved in the Europeanisation of higher education, aligning programmes, grading, entrance requirements and teaching language with standards recognised internationally (de Wit 2000, Wilken/Tange 2014). As a result, Denmark became a popular destination country for international students (Wilken/Dahlberg 2017). However, since 2016 right-wing politicians have expressed concerns over rising numbers of European Union citizens claiming free education and student grants in Denmark. In August 2018, the government intervened, demanding that the number of international students be cut, which resulted in the closure of several programmes and 're-nationalisation'/Danish-isation of others (Bothwell 2018). With an election coming up, academic staff and students are presently engaged in a debate over the future of international education, highlighting to Danish politicians and voters how English-medium courses add value as a site for linguistic and intercultural learning.

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