



For institutions of all kinds, the written fixation of strategies serves several purposes. Such papers provide, on the one hand, a framework for institutional development and, on the other hand, an orientation framework for the institution's members as well as external partners. Although significant progress in formulating essential fields of action and measures of the internationalization of teacher education as recommendations, resolutions, or working papers has been made, strategy papers focusing solely on the internationalization of teacher education are still a rarity. Two papers published by German higher education institutions, however, show different approaches to formulating such strategy papers.

Schlagworte: strategy paper; internationalization strategy; position paper; Germany

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A Spotlight: Strategy Papers on the Internationalization of Teacher Education

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Abstract

For institutions of all kinds, the written fixation of strategies serves several purposes. Such papers provide, on the one hand, a framework for institutional development and, on the other hand, an orientation framework for the institution's members as well as external partners. Although significant progress in formulating essential fields of action and measures of the internationalization of teacher education as recommendations, resolutions, or working papers has been made, strategy papers focusing solely on the internationalization of teacher education are still a rarity. Two papers published by German higher education institutions, however, show different approaches to formulating such strategy papers.

Keywords: strategy paper, internationalization strategy, position paper, Germany

Outline

1. Introduction: Strategy and Internationalization Strategies in Teacher Education
2. Strategy Papers: Two German Examples
3. Conclusion
4. References

1 Introduction: Strategy and Internationalization Strategies in Teacher Education

Although internationalization with its underlying political and economic interests has been problematized in the past (Binder, 2016), it has long been and is more and more becoming a pronounced focus of higher education institutions (for example de Wit & Deca, 2020; Teichler, 2007; Huisman & van der Wende, 2004). Strategy papers are, according to Bode, fundamental for internationalization because it relies in any case on planned action, time, personnel, and money (Bode, 2012, p. 7). According to Borgwardt, overarching internationalization strategies are also crucial to coordinate measures and use synergies, to raise an institutional profile, and to increase international visibility (Borgwardt, 2012, p. 33). They also define the institution's priorities and practices (O'Dowd 2023, p. 132).

Bode differentiates as two basic pillars of strategies the process and the content. No internationalization strategy, he states, should be isolated from the institution's mission statement. At the same time, a strategy should contain long-term objectives in combination with concrete actions, milestones, and calculation of resources. Finally, he claims, every strategy should be an intelligent mixture of central/university-wide and decentralized/individual initiatives (Bode, 2012, p. 9). Bode notes that internationalization strategies usually focus on student and (teaching) staff mobility, thematic implementation in teaching and research, working with strategic partners, and exporting study programs (Bode, 2012, p. 10). Regarding the internationalization of teacher education, Falkenhagen, Grimm & Volkmann (2019, 1) identify seven core topics which are also reflected in several strategy papers.

Naturally, strategies differ according to the institution's conditions (Bode, 2012, p. 7; cf. also Knight, 1994, pp. 10–11). This leads to internationalization strategies of universities being different from strategies issued by the federal government, national science organizations, or European/global organizations (Bode, 2012, pp. 7–12). In addition to universities, teacher education in southern Germany also takes place at University Colleges of Education (Pädagogische Hochschulen). With their profile in teacher education, any institutional internationalization strategy is simultaneously a strategy for internationalizing teacher education. At universities, however, internationalization strategies are always related to the institutional entirety. In this case, only a specified internationalization strategy can give visibility and importance to the internationalization of teacher education.

2 Strategy Papers: Two German Examples

An exploratory research has revealed a representative number of papers dealing with the internationalization of teacher education. It might just be a topic of single sections or the whole paper's focus. Those papers can be divided into two groups (see table 1 that in no way claims to be complete). One group (Position paper) provides positions and recommendations, or lays out priorities, measures, and development opportunities. Umbrella organizations or funding institutions like the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) are responsible for their creation.¹ These third-party papers do admittedly influence the discourse and are meant to be taken into account by policy makers as well as institutions involved in teacher education. Some also contain recommendations on strategic measures such as including the topic into the universities' internationalization strategies (Lower Saxony Network for Teacher Education, 2017, p. 4). Another group (Strategy paper) declares the institution's strategic focus. Two German examples of such strategy papers from higher education institutions – University of Potsdam (1) and Freiburg Advanced Center for Education (2) – are presented below as good practice. Both are based on German discourses about teacher education, which is

¹ We can generally see that some universities involved in projects funded within the DAAD programme *Lehramt International* (see Bloch, 2024, in this anthology) are planning to prepare or are in the process of preparing university-wide concepts or strategies.

why contents may not necessarily be applicable to other contexts or one's own institution.

Table 1: Overview of exploratory research results²

	Title	Strategy paper	Position paper	Issued by	Year of publication
1	Internationalization strategies 2017–2019	x		University of Potsdam/Center for Teacher Training and Education Research	2017
2	Working paper on strategy development in the field of action “internationalization” from 2019–2023	x		Freiburg Advanced Center of Education/ School of Education	2020
3	Internationalization strategy University College of Teacher Education Heidelberg 2026	x		Heidelberg University of Education	2021
4	Short version internationalization strategy	x		Ludwigsburg University of Education	2022
5	Recommendations and catalog of measures to promote the internationalization of teacher education at universities in Lower Saxony		x	Lower Saxony Association for Teacher Education	2017
6	Recommendations for future-oriented teacher education		x	German U15	2023
7	Recommendations to federal and state governments on teacher education		x	Stifterverband	2023
8	Nizza resolution		x	DAAD, Franco-German University, Franco-German Youth Office	2019
9	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025		x	European Commission	2020
10	Berlin declaration		x	BAK Teacher Education	2015/2022
11	Priorities, fields of development, and measures to internationalize teacher education		x	DAAD	2021
12	Resolution on the internationalization of teacher education		x	DAAD	2013
13	Recommendations on teacher education		x	HRK	2013

2 Translations into English by the author if no English translation was available.

2.1 University of Potsdam: Internationalisierungsstrategien 2017–2019

In their paper called *Internationalisierungsstrategien 2017–2019*, the University of Potsdam defines six packages of measures dedicated to the internationalization of teacher education alone:

1. Overall strategy
2. International partnership to increase outgoing student mobility
3. Reduction of barriers to mobility
4. Internationalization@home
5. International teaching degrees
6. Information, public relations, and marketing

The packages, it seems, draw on a profound analysis of the target group's special needs and their specific barriers to mobility. Package one (Overall strategy) names as overarching goal the implementation and permanent establishment of an overall internationalization strategy. At the beginning, the authors recognize that structural and human resources are essential to achieve this goal and to bundle, evaluate, and prioritize activities. The steering of the process, therefore, lies in the hand of a specialized officer in cooperation with the members of a working group (p. 1).

Strategic measures of packages two and three refer to the biggest mobility barriers for student teachers. Package two states that international partnerships in teacher education should be adapted more to conditions set by German teaching degrees (minimum of two subjects plus education sciences). To address the student teachers' biggest fear of an extension of their standard period of study (DAAD, 2021, p. 4), multi-subject contracts with partner universities specialized in teacher education are identified as one strategic dimension. Closely linked in terms of barriers is package three referring to curricular as well as organizational barriers resulting from the general study conditions. Strategic measures to counteract these are the identification of suitable mobility windows and a corresponding practice of recognition (pp. 1–2).

Packages four and six make specific reference to two common internationalization practices, internationalization@home and information/marketing (pp. 2–3/4–5). Both point out deficits often standing in the way of the internationalization of teacher education: rigid curricula with little room for the integration of international elements, the lack of knowledge about opportunities plus students' reservations about a study abroad period. Package four stresses that incoming students and lecturers play an important role in the internationalization@home as well. It names English as language of instruction or short-term mobility offers like summer schools (cf. Nierste, 2024, in this anthology) as means to increase the attractiveness for stays at German universities.

Indicating far-reaching ramifications of a holistic approach to the internationalization of teacher education is package five commenting on international teaching degrees (pp. 3–4). The strategy paper encourages focusing attention also on integrating teachers into the German school system who received their degrees in other countries. This relies on authorities outside the university to act, but can be a worthwhile field of action with regard to the teacher shortage not only Germany currently faces.

From a practitioner's perspective, the University of Potsdam addresses a number of important dimensions with these six packages. The paper reveals a strong awareness for the need to take into account the special nationally regulated study context, which is reflected in the design of curricula and which exerts significant influence on possible mobility periods or recognition opportunities. Responding to this situation in terms of internationalization requires not only targeted strategic measures, but also a change of mind set of student teachers as well as teacher educators. Administrative units like Centres for Teacher Education/Schools of Education or International Offices can fulfil a key role as administrative as well as strategic ambassadors for the internationalization of teacher education.

2.2 Strategy Paper of Freiburg Advanced Center of Education (FACE)

The Freiburg Advanced Center of Education is a cross-university institution (University of Freiburg, University of Education Freiburg, Freiburg University of Music) with an overall focus on teacher education and qualification. The 2020 working paper on strategic development comments on goals, measures, and instruments of internationalization. The common strategy allows the perception of internationalization of teacher education as a cross-institutional task that shows an obvious connection to the single institutions' overarching internationalization strategies (p. 2). The paper defines two target areas. The area *Teaching and Curriculum Development* (pp. 3–5) addresses in particular students and teaching staff. The need for short-term mobility offers, intensive counseling, preparation, and follow-up for students is as acknowledged as the importance of further and continuing education of teaching staff. Teaching awards are supposed to function as incentives to include international elements into one's own teaching. Regarding curricula, recognition, and the integration of study abroad periods as mobility windows or as compulsory electives shall ensure a continuous engagement with international and intercultural elements. In addition to certificates, the paper mentions other prioritized measures like double/joint degrees with partner universities or subject-specific language courses to foster multilingualism. The second area, *Research* (p. 6), emphasizes the awareness that educators are also researchers. International networks focusing on empirical and educational research, international conferences, guest researchers, and support for internationally oriented research proposals are only a few measures mentioned in this field.

Taken together, the strategy papers set different priorities and show different approaches to the topic. The University of Potsdam paper subdivides the strategic measures into six sub-items making them more concrete at first glance; the FACE paper summarizes important measures under two overarching aspects. Both, however, clarify the complexity of the topic at hand by referring to the high diversity of stakeholders like administration, students, teacher educators, or researchers involved. They also show overlaps in areas such as subject-specific cooperation with partner universities, reduction of mobility barriers, or curriculum development. The re-appearing topic of the recognition of international teaching degrees illustrates an awareness of the importance of a holistic approach to the internationalization of teacher education.

3 Conclusion

This short article is the result of an exploratory research on strategy papers published by German higher education institutions dealing with the internationalization of teacher education. The overview in Table 1 demonstrates the broad range of academic and institutional approaches to the topic. All papers illustrate the need for goal-oriented positioning to navigate the subsequent implementation of internationalization measures at higher education institutions in Germany and worldwide. The two examples illustrate different ways to design such strategy papers against the background of institutional policies and contexts.

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