

## **Professional Identity – an international perspective**

A few years back, internationalisation was very high on the educational policy agenda in Denmark, and it was a stated ambition that all institutions of higher education should turn out graduates who were citizens of the world - with broader insights based on a global outlook.

At that time, internationalisation was its own justification. We did not even have to ask ourselves why internationalisation was important, only how we could live up to the political requirements of the time concerning the volume of student mobility.

Today it is different and not least in the light of the current situation with Corona virus in the world. Answering the question 'why internationalisation?' is now vitally important if we are to attract the attention of politicians and corner resources for international work. Higher education institutions in Denmark - Universities, University Colleges, Academies - have been forced to think creatively in order to explain why we really need to internationalise our academic courses and our young people. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, as the saying goes, and at this point both research and professional identity can step in to play their part on the international scene.

Danish institutions of higher education have thus begun digging down to a deeper level of justification, which is now required if we are to give internationalisation the attention it deserves, both within institutions and, of course, in relation to the wider world.

Whereas research is almost by definition international in nature - so much so that we almost forget that an international perspective is the very foundation of research - the international angle is not naturally associated with our professional identity. If we look at a teacher or a social pedagogue/social worker for example, these professional workers mostly identify themselves as locals because their profession is framed and embedded in a local cultural context. Nevertheless, the international perspective is a formidable tool to open up new realms of discourse, which lead to new inspiration, innovation and thus development of the professions and their practice field. By gaining insight into the professions in other countries, and the cultures in which they are embedded, professional workers may become much more aware of why things are as they are in their own countries, as well as the advantages and limitations of their home culture.

Internationalisation is so much more than student mobility - an important point that this conference will focus on. Whether we come from a large country or a small one like Denmark, our courses of study and the whole study environment benefit greatly from all kinds of international cooperation. International cooperation must be seen as a means to ensure greater quality and relevance in the strategic planning of our educational institutions – never as a goal in itself.