



Universities as Actors of Intercultural Dialogue in Wider Society, Moscow June 2-3, 2009

How Can the Leadership of the Universities
Promote Intercultural Dialogue?

Lars Ekholm, PhD



Starting-points

- The theme will be treated in general terms
- Major argument: Students take their essential values with them in their professional careers
- University values
 - Official goals, such as human rights
 - The real core values: Rationalism, respect for facts, acceptance of all people, humbleness



Promotion of intercultural dialogue (1)

- “Hard-ware” : University leadership must keep its institution in good shape, no discrepancy can be allowed between aspirations of intercultural dialogue and day-to-day practice

Cf. the twin conference on Intercultural dialogue on campus in 2008



Promotion of intercultural dialogue (2)

- “Soft-ware”: Students leave for various professional careers, active for decades.
- The values, attitudes and beliefs that you have met during your life as a student will have an impact later on in life. Long-term effects.
- Direct influences (courses, staff etc)



Promotion of intercultural dialogue (3)

- Even more important: Indirect influences – not least the university core values, such as rationalism, human rights, readiness to incorporate the unknown. Knowledge matters!
- The argument once more: Major long-term effects through the students – and intercultural dialogue as a life-long undertaking.



University leadership in wider society

- The variety of national settings, of rectors, of orientations. It depends...
- A few have access to national fora
- Most rectors work within their organizations, and appear when asked
- The position of universities in general, a “moral” platform or not



The Bologna Process and the EHEA

- The process up to 2010
- The mobility goal – can indeed effect intercultural dialogue
- The course structure could be positive
- The degree structure as a contributing factor
- Joint degree in intercultural dialogue!