

Dr. Christian Bode, Secretary General,
German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

**Comments on the Occasion of the Receipt of the Cassandra Pyle Award
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Educators, Minneapolis, MN
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Secretary Powell,
dear Ron,
dear Marlene,
dear colleagues and friends,

It is a great honour for me indeed to receive this renowned prize from the World's leading organisation of international educators. The name which the prize commemorates is a legacy for all of us.

I sincerely thank all those who have participated in this decision. They could have chosen many others from this audience who would have deserved the award even more – but politeness forbids me to further criticize the jury's decision.

So I take it as a recognition of the work of my organisation, the DAAD, and as a surprising gift for myself – just as the one, 56 years ago, that has shaped my relations with your great country till today: my family had just fled from the Russian Zone to the West and our living conditions were hard. Then, all of a sudden, we received a series of Care Packages from an unknown address in the United States. One of these contained a yellow and red plastic Toy Car that turned a shy refugee boy overnight into the king of the streets – at least as long as the batteries worked

This unexpected generosity of the victor, the millions of private Care packages and the Marshall Plan, gave our generation a deeper and more lasting impression than the terrifying power of military might. America in those days had not only won a war but also won the peace. And that is, as we are painfully experiencing today, much more difficult.

It was the same spirit of solidarity and generosity that helped with the founding of DAAD after World War I. The first fellowships for the German students, who later founded DAAD, came from an American donor. And the then recently established Institute of International Education (where Cassandra Pyle worked for a while decades later) opened a German Desk in New York years before DAAD could move into its own office in Berlin.

Today we have our own branch in New York just three blocks away from IIE. With an annual budget of about 350 million dollars and over 55,000 sponsored students and faculty per year we are probably the largest academic exchange organisation in the world. We are proud to be a non-governmental association of the German Universities and to award our grants strictly by independent academic committees. Roughly 300 million dollars of that budget come from departments of the German federal government. Translated into the scale of the US federal budget that would amount to more than two billion dollars per year. That, I assume, would satisfy the most urgent needs and demands of NAFSA for international education, at least for a certain while...

You think that is Utopian? Too expensive? Can we really afford so much money for international education and academic exchange? Well, as Harvard President Derek Bok once said, "if you think education is expensive, try ignorance". I am afraid we have tried too much of ignorance already. In our days of globalisation, the question has to be reversed: How much international indifference and ignorance can we still afford?

I know of course that we live in times when many people, including politicians, prefer counting to thinking, when every effort has to pay off and when the return on investment is required in ever shorter periods. These seem to be bad times for an idealistic discourse. O.k., let's calculate our rates of return, they are not so bad indeed.

Is there anybody here who doubts the economical impact that the study abroad of hundreds of thousands of Asian students in Europe and the US had – and still has – for the rise of these Emerging Markets, the fast growing little tigers, Chinese dragons and Indian elephants?

Or does anybody here believe that the leading US-universities could keep their current academic performance without all the international talent which they have successfully attracted from all over the world? Not to mention the billions of dollars that foreign students bring into the country.

Legitimate as such calculations are, we should not give way to a dangerous change in paradigm – from aid to trade, from cooperation to commercialisation, from mutual benefit to unilateral profit. I doubt that such a strategy will pay off in the long run.

Let us not forget that International Education first and foremost is a crucial element of an individual educational process and that this process is not – or not only – about qualifications, skills and Human Resources, but about virtues, values and character.

The citizens of tomorrow – and the young leaders all the more – have to become “global citizens“ and that cannot be learned from books and CNN News only. Internationality is above all an intellectual attitude that develops from personal experience.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, our greatest writer and philosopher has described that phenomenon in his Italian diary as follows: “Nothing can be compared to the new life that the discovery of another country provides for a thoughtful person. Although I am still the same I believe to have changed to the bones...”

To discover one’s own identity in a foreign environment, to question conventional wisdom, to open up for the new and the different, to see foreign cultures not as a threat and foreign languages not as an obstacle but to appreciate both as enrichment – this is the kind of education that not only serves the individual but society as a whole. Whom else than those internationally educated people can we expect to join forces in order to tackle the many unsolved problems of our common globe, from poverty to diseases, from pollution to climate change, from fundamentalism to terrorism?

Well, it might sound a bit too ambitious or naïve: but this hope to help make the world a better place through a meaningful international education of the future leaders, has always inspired and motivated my colleagues and myself – and has maybe also contributed to our achievements.

It is in this sense that I take the prize home as both an acknowledgment and a mandate for our future cooperation.