International Cooperation in Higher Education: the Experience, the Challenges, and the Benefits

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What are some influential factors making an impact on higher education today?
Some Factors/Trends Impacting Higher Education in a Borderless World

- World Economy
- Growing Number of Virtual Universities
- Interactive Technology
- Joint/Dual Degrees
- Competition for Students
- Internationalization and Customization of Curricula
- International Branch Campuses and the Acquisition/Purchase of Foreign Private Universities
- Wider Acceptance of Distance Education
The phenomenon of **globalization**, or the “economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement” has had an impact on higher education and its institutions.

(Altbach, 2007)
Internationalization

“The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2003,).
Comprehensive Internationalization

“A commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research and service missions of higher education”

NAFSA 2010 (Comprehensive Internationalization: From Concept to Action).
73% of 745 universities that participated in the global survey on Higher Education Internationalization conducted by the International Association of Universities in 2010 consider Internationalization a PRIORITY.
The need for universities to be

• *less monolithic and bureaucratic*

• *more accountable to a variety of stakeholders*

• *more adaptable*

• *more flexible in their delivery*

*(Hanna & Latchem, 2002, p. 118)*
Some Benefits...

- Increased student and faculty knowledge
- Increased academic quality
- A higher institutional profile and reputation
- Stronger research skills
- Faculty and student diversity/global mindset
- Curriculum development and innovation
- Diversification of income
Some Challenging Preconceptions....

- Over-commercialization of academic offerings
- Diploma mills and low-quality educational providers
- Brain drain
- Loss of national identity and cultural values
- Curriculum adaptation (Knight, 2007)
The international dimension of higher education means different things to different people.
“Higher education is feeling the effects of globalization and has had to re-invent itself to adapt to all the factors that influence it” (Scott, 2000) introducing the element of COOPERATION
“There is a strong pattern of intra-regional cooperation in internationalization activities conducted by HEIs, although Europe remains of highest geographic interest at the global level”
• Countries in the region are becoming active players in the field
• Main Rationales:
  Improvement of quality and academic prestige
There is **NOT** much information or knowledge on:

- the way the process is implemented
- the trends
- issues and opportunities
- policies and strategies
- budgeting and academic design
- human resource development
The Experience

- Two universities:
  - Nova Southeastern University (USA)
  - Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (Ecuador)
- Distance education organization
  - Inter-American Distance Education Network (CREAD)
- Dual master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.
The process...

- Establish the need - Framework Agreement
- Negotiations - Specific Agreement
- Program design (structure and delivery)
- Syllabi creation
- Syllabi validation
- Program outline established
- Promotion/Marketing
- Program implementation

Two Years (2006-2008)
The Collaboration

- **Program:** M.S. in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

- **Location:** Loja, Quito, and Guayaquil, Ecuador

- **Partner:** Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja locations in Loja, Quito and Guayaquil

- **Instructional Delivery Model:** Blended (on-site, online, compressed video, on campus)

- **Dual Degree Program**
Courses delivered by N.S.U. (21 credits)

- EDU 5000 Interactive Technology for Graduate Ed.
- TEFL 535 Structure of English or Foreign Language
- TEFL 515 TEFL Curriculum and Materials Development
- TEFL 569 Methods of Teaching English to EFL speakers
- CUR 526 Educational Research for Practitioners
- TEFL 530 Use of Technology in TEFL
- TEFL 547 Testing and Evaluation in TEFL
- Position Paper and Electronic Portfolio

Courses delivered by CREAD/UTPL (15 credits)

- English for Academic Purposes
- Applied Linguistics
- Teaching English for Specific Purposes
- Sociolinguistics for TEFL Practitioners
- Teaching English to Adolescents and Adults
First Group

• Fall 2008
• 15 students
• Ecuadorian teachers of English as a Foreign Language
• Graduation: June 2010
Second Group

- Fall 2010
- 18 students
- Ecuadorian professionals
- Graduation: June 2012
A study of the process

“International Cooperation in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Dual Master's Degree Program”

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler School of Education in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University 2013
• To **explore the process** that a United States and an Ecuadorian university went through to adapt to internationalization and globalization

• To observe how they **established an international model of cooperation**: a dual master’s degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.
The theoretical framework
Diffusion of Innovations in Organizations

How do these two higher education organizations understand globalization as the phenomenon that has encouraged the resulting internationalization of their institutions?

The five stages of the diffusion of an innovation in an organization

**Initiation**
- How did the two organizations work together in the conceptualization of this collaborative program?

**Implementation**
- What led to the creation, design, and implementation of the program?
- How did the two organizations work together to sustain this collaborative model?

(Rogers, 2003)
Who participated?

PARTICIPANTS

• US and Ecuadorian university administrators directly involved in the process

• US and Ecuadorian faculty directly involved in the implementation process

• Executive director of international organization who bought the two universities together

• TOTAL: 12 participants
How?

DATA COLLECTION

Individual semi-structured interviews
Follow-up Individual E-mail
Document and promotional materials analysis

DATA ANALYSIS

NVIVO Software
Coding process of data gathered
Finding guiding themes
Globalization is regarded as a vehicle to:

- reach integration
- transmit knowledge
- encourage a borderless world
- gain prestige
- increase enrollment
- encourage global citizenship
Internationalization

• increases student mobility and
• promotes cross-cultural understanding

BUT the concerns are

• brain drain
• loss of national identity
Positive Elements.....

- A shared profound interest in internationalization
- A careful and detailed negotiation process
- Lots of flexibility on both sides
- Both universities knew each other very well
- Common academic goals and needs
- The existence of “champions” at each institution
Not so positive....

- Institutional changes at each university
- Government changes = Ministry of Education changes
- Lack of financial support to continue program
Limitations?

• The story of only 2 universities and 12 participants
• Particular synergy between the 2 universities
• Program implemented at a particular moment in Ecuador.
The future?

- Further research on the success and sustainability of similar programs
- Explore new strategies for collaboration implementation
- Research on strategies for the prevention of brain drain
- Explore credit transfer and course validation processes
A hope.....

......that some of the **conclusions and findings** that emerged from the analysis of the data collected during the implementation of the program and the **program characteristics and methodology** will be **useful** in the implementation of similar collaborative models in international higher education **in the future** (Parra, 2013)
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