

Internationalization of College Education – the Role of New Technologies

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Abstract

Each day the world is more connected and the population and companies think that international experience increases students' professional capacities in the areas of communication, flexibility, innovations and ambitions among others. It is the duty of institutions of higher education to ensure that graduates have received a complete training, including skills to cope with globalization. While only a small percentage of graduates actually have the opportunity to take part in an international program abroad during their studies, internationalization of the home campus offers many possibilities. Allowing and inviting professors to participate in global education, universities must think of implementing a comprehensive strategy to modernize teaching methods and train global citizens.

Introduction

Society believes that it is the obligation of universities to offer young people an education that prepares them to face the challenges of a globalized world. This preparation of young people by universities necessarily includes an international vision.

Some efforts have been made to internationalize the campus environment, but a real change from regionally focused teaching to true international education is missing. Traditionally universities have demonstrated some international mission (Foskett & Maringe, 2010), but they do not seem to keep up with the current reality. Most academic institutions lack a straightforward internationalization strategy. More or less, what is done by universities seems to be an answer to existing opportunities; planning, if any, is expressed only within development policies or guidelines (de Wit, Jaramillo, & Knight, 2005).

The point of departure is the word "internationalization". Its definition is unclear. Some people even think of internationalization as expanding the university to new international markets by recruiting international students. This can be done by exporting education through virtual programs or even through new university campuses abroad (the so called campus franchising; compare van der Wende, 2007).

Generally speaking, internationalization includes all the aspects that enrich college life with intercultural elements, such as direct international experience on trips, contacts with international students on campus, foreign points of view in textbooks, use of a second language in the classroom, visiting professors, and so on.

Internationalization also happens through mobility, flexible curriculum, and activities in the university environment to present the student with cultural diversity. These intercultural activities link the theoretical learning with real life diversity.

The use of modern information and communication technology (ICT) can also help create international learning settings. ICT is internet-mediated communication, including various videoconference systems, chat and social networks. About 80% of students report having social network profiles and over 50% use social networks frequently (Mikal & Grace, 2012). While Mikal and Grace speak of the millennial generation. It can be assumed that most college students are from this age group. ICT has been identified as a way to support students during the culture shock experienced on exchange programs (Mikal & Grace, 2012). It has also been used sporadically for networking within the classroom. There are many options to use ICT to create modern international settings and foster intercultural cooperation. This helps the internationalization of colleges and universities and meets the needs of students regarding international training.

Internationalization and Globalization

Training needs today are not the same as 50 years ago. Today's students live in an information society. Living in the modern society of information and knowledge means being interconnected on all levels and facing the challenges of globalization, which is not synonymous with internationalization. The word globalization refers to the changes of the society, the formation of a society of information, ways of mobility, integration of markets and also political, economic and socio-cultural changes. (compare Wächter, 2000)

Reichert and Wächter (2000) confirm this idea that: "Globalization refers to forceful changes in the economic, social, political and cultural environment, brought about by global competition, the integration of markets, increasingly dense communication networks, information flows and mobility." (p.10)

Internationalization on the other hand is the answer to this change. It looks for ways to face the challenges of globalization (Wächter, 2000).

Many authors (e.g., de Wit et al., 2005; Ramirez, 2011) have wondered about the purpose of internationalization. It seems to be the key concept, but still there are no answers yet. De Wit et al. formulate some important questions: "What is the purpose of internationalization? What are the expected benefits or outcomes? What values underpin it? Who are the main actors, stakeholders, and beneficiaries? What are the positive consequences, the unintended results, and the negative implications? Is internationalization a passing fad?" (p. 350) There are many unanswered questions. Finding the answers is important to develop a comprehensive internationalization strategy and will help to reach the goal of truly facing globalization.

Within the era of the global economy as a result of globalization, it makes no sense to train students for the local market (Wächter, 2000). While the purpose of internationalization is defined accordingly as preparing young professionals for global environments, no consensus has been reached about the definition of Internationalization itself. "... there is a great deal of confusion about what it

(internationalization) means. For some people, it means a series of international activities, such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages, partnerships, and projects; new international academic programs and research initiatives. For others it means delivering education to other countries using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques and such new types of arrangements as branch campuses and franchising.” (Knight, 2008, p. 1)

The traditional concept of internationalization: Mobility Programs

Historically internationalization is understood widely as the mobility of individuals (e.g. Otten, 2000 or Altbach & Knight, 2007). A key or important part to mobility is international programs (e.g. study abroad) for students. Including such an experience on the resume not only shows future employers intercultural competence, but also adaptability, autonomy, maturity and leadership abilities.

In this context, internationalization is traditionally seen as a service provided by a specific area, i.e. the international office of the university. The international office provides study abroad trips to students and works in close proximity with the academic fields, but the study plan itself remains untouched by international viewpoints and other intercultural encounters (Nilsson, 2000). Although few students go on study abroad programs, growth of participation in international student mobility programs is expected to increase from 2 million students participating now to 15 million within the next 10 years, due to the awareness of students about the importance of functioning in multicultural environments (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Even though some believe that the importance of mobility decreases because of the existing international environment (Kehm & Teichler, 2007), without a doubt, traditional mobility programs will remain a tool for internationalization of individuals; however, changes in international programs are to be expected. Internationalization will be better integrated in study plans and directed towards a bigger public inside the universities.

There are some initiatives to offer international experiences to more than one student at a time. Group programs are done usually as academic study trips of a few weeks of length. Yet short term programs lack the typical exchange experience as students tend to stay in their group and are guided throughout the whole experience. Typically students on a study abroad experience benefit from being in a completely different environment and having to face day to day challenges by themselves. This increases the above mentioned skill of adaptability to different work environments. Staying in a group with members of the same cultural background and with a professor taking care of unexpected throwbacks reduces the development of new skills and can only serve to awaken the interest of the student to search for other international experiences.

Even considering group travel, the larger part of the student community still remains without contact to the internationalization efforts of the university. Usually only about 5-10% of the students can leave home for a considerable amount of time and participate in a semester abroad experience (of course the numbers worldwide differ extremely, with only 3% participation in the US (Engle & Engle, 2001), 25% participation in Germany (Siems & Suermann, 2012) or Mexico, where there is a huge difference in participation numbers between public and private universities

(compare Patlani, <http://www.patlanimexico.org/>). As shown in studies of Avila, with only 4% of students participating in study abroad, Latin America has in general very low student mobility (Avila, 2007).

Probably the maximum that a university can hope for is to have around 20% of graduates with direct international experience. Of course while there are incredible examples like 54% of international participation in the Europa University Viadrina of Frankfurt Oder, a university located directly on the border, (Weber, 2010), unfortunately this is the exception. This is due to obstacles students face when they consider studying abroad.

The efforts of the family supporting the extra expenses for traveling and living cannot be underestimated. Altbach and Knight (2007) found “Most of the world’s more than 2 million international students are self-funded, that is, they and their families pay for their own academic work.” (p. 294). Families make huge sacrifices to make study abroad possible and there will always be many students without the possibility to participate. Aside from finances, other reasons for not being able to participate in study abroad programs include family and work related issues.

What can institutions of higher education do if not all students can travel to get international experience? Being a trained professional today includes knowing what is going on outside of the direct environment, not only to know there are other cultures, but to understand the context of the professional fields in a global environment. The changes brought on by globalization demand an international profile and a network of contacts, provided during college education and contributing to a global economy by putting the international dimension into teaching (Foskett & Maringe, 2010; Gibbs & Maringe, 2008).

Universities search to fill the gap in education and include an international point of view into the curricula. Now that faculties begin to understand that the traditional teaching methods need to be re-done and completed with international elements, new ideas are needed and the question about “internationalization at home” arises.

Internationalization at Home

The classic definition of internationalization at home is Knights’ (1993): “the process of integrating an international dimension into the research, teaching and services function of higher education.” (as cited in Wächter, 2000, p. 5). For the first time internationalization is not reduced to study abroad travel, but looks for local options to bring international aspects into the students’ regular environment. De Wit et al. (2005) clarifies that internationalization at home wants to add the international concepts to a traditional education.

To the point, Wächter confirms that internationalization at home is any internationally related activity with exception of the traditional mobility of students and staff (Wächter, 2000, p.10). In other words, internationalization at home is any innovative and creative way that professors and universities can think of incorporating international components into the classrooms. There are no limitations or end of possibilities. More possibilities are likely to emerge every day, especially when

thinking of the modern world applications within the information society. Examples of these types of activities are discussed later in this paper.

The Modern Internationalization Concept

The five most important aspects of internationalization in this broader sense including traditional mobility and Internationalization at Home are (1) to recruit international students. This aspect is very important in commercial universities as it opens new markets. (2) The mobility of students and university staff. Traditional mobility and especially student exchange programs are the core of internationalization. These study abroad experiences are highly valued within the labor market as they increase not only the cultural awareness, but help students to develop maturity and problem solving skills. It makes them effective communicators, leaders and team players. (3) Cooperation between professors of different institutions and countries becomes increasingly important and allows sharing knowledge, co-teaching and using intercultural projects and dynamics in class. (4) The development of global research partnerships and (5) an international curriculum, from minor changes in the content to a complete re-design of learning methods (Foskett & Maringe, 2010). Developing an international curriculum means including lectures of regional studies and global topics, raising the awareness of the need for bi- or multilingualism, having internationally trained professors who share their experience with students about the need for intercultural understanding and an outcome based approach such as students' competences. All those efforts lead to young professionals trained to face the challenges of globalization as described above.

For many universities expanding the marketing strategy to attract international students is important. This tendency can be seen especially within younger universities without a research division (Foskett & Maringe, 2010). Marketing attracts students from developing countries to universities in the first world. English speaking countries receive most of these students with universities high in global rankings getting the largest portion (Van der Wende, 2007). Interestingly there is a tendency for international students to stay in their country of study professionally, resulting in academic loss in their countries of origin.

However, within the criteria of training students to be better prepared for a globalized environment, the recruitment of international students for profit is not analyzed. But, having those international students sharing their point of view within the classroom helps to create a diverse environment and plays into other elements of internationalization.

Internationalization today within the institutions of higher education

In order to set the correct internationalization strategy within a university, the student profile is of major interest. The student population has suffered important changes. Traditionally students used to present similar socioeconomic patterns, but with time, two groups, 1) the already internationally active (internationalized) students and 2) first generation college students, can be detected and will demand attention and the correct type of education.

First, universities already have internationalized students. Without the need for the university to act, students have looked for internationalization by themselves, and entered the universities already globalized. They have fully understood the importance of learning a second language and demand opportunities for growth in a very specialized level from their universities. They are looking for academic study abroad options that not only offer a first insight into other cultures but offer new specialized knowledge in the academic field. They want added value to the content taught at the home university. Students want to grow not only in cultural aspects, but also academically.

Look at the recent studies of Kehm and Teichler (2007): “Many students newly entering higher education have already experienced stays abroad or have gained knowledge about other countries through the media and actual encounters with people from other countries in their daily life that the “added value” of study abroad is most likely decreasing.”(p. 271)

This is the top group of students. Global citizens of this kind do not require internationalization with basic mobility programs; they need different international programs challenging them academically. They will search for special offers adding value in any aspect of their studies, not only through isolated experiences in a mobility program. Those students need the opportunity to get involved in specific activities and training global leadership skills that are highly connected to their academic sectors. Adequate programs, such as those offered through the Free Trade Alliance Education Foundation, can include international competitions related to the field of study, such as, for example, an international business plan development contest.

Then there is the increasing group of students from a lower socioeconomic level and whose families traditionally have no involvement in university education. These first generation college students, now more and more at universities, will not participate in study abroad experiences for different reasons and will need internationalization at home tools.

“If Internationalization cannot be realized to a higher degree, internationalization efforts of higher education institutions will lead to a polarization of winners and losers.” (Kehm & Teichler, 2007, p.271). Ramirez (2011) reported a similar observation.

This important thought underlines the importance of finding appealing international education options not only for the top group of students but for all students. This will increase the employability of the entirety of the college population.

Applying Internationalization at the Campus

Universities have a myriad of possibilities to internationalize the study environment and offer intercultural experiences to their student populations. Some methods stand out and should be examined further.

Generally speaking, universities can put into place activities to create an international feeling on campus. This means international activities not related to the

study plan. They can also foster internationalization of the curriculum, such as the incorporation of international aspects into course work.

The experiences on campus not directly related to course work that create an international environment can be free time activities with exchange students, language cafes, international brochures and newspapers in waiting areas, foreign movies on campus and so on. Such learning experience through meetings with international students and other contacts with international contexts within the campus raises the perception of their own culture and values and it trains the ability to act efficiently and appropriately in multicultural endeavors (Nilsson, 2000).

Then there is the international curriculum. Sometimes the expression internationalization at home and internationalization of the curricula seem to overlap (Beleen, 2011). However, internationalization includes both international activities of any kind at the campus and international coursework directly leading towards an international curriculum. Without a doubt the key to internationalizing students lies within the curriculum. The curriculum is the logical starting point to look for a change towards global education. Pacheco (2009a) underlines the need: The curriculum used to be abstract and without links to real life, students developed their aptitudes more in individual work than together, teachers and students do not connect with experts outside the classroom doors as part of their general learning process, and the majority of the academic institutions' work is being separated from the communities'. While Pacheco states the need of both internationalized curricula and an international environment, he puts emphasis on the curricula.

De Wit et al. (2005) offers a variety of ideas for the revision of academics: new programs with international topics, an international dimension in already existing courses, language training, regional studies, joint programs, including international students with active roles into the class, virtual mobility, international professors, conferences and much more.

Some topics of importance are mentioned below:

Teaching in a second language

Teaching in a second language trains linguistic abilities and brings a foreign point of view into the classroom because books in other languages usually have foreign authors. Especially in Latin America, students, professors and staff members lack in language preparation and are not always aware of their deficiencies in successfully expressing themselves in a second language (de Wit et al., 2005). Offering courses in another language invites students to learn about their limitations, trains linguistics and practices the class context in the specific language of the academic field. The limitation on finding bilingual teaching staff is a challenge.

Visiting professors

Visiting professors provide an excellent opportunity to bring the world to the classroom. Unfortunately the costs of teacher mobility are high and the lack of budget limits this option. Furthermore, the students remain in the same environment, with the same classmates, so the experience is reduced.

Internationally trained professors and the international classroom

You can create a proactive learning environment by combining elements. Teaching in a second language and using an international teaching body together with interculturally aware local professors and a correct use of diversity brought in by international students at the campus, offers a promising mix. The degree of internationalization of the curriculum always comes back to what is delivered by the professors who are directly in touch with the students and deliver their core education. It is therefore disturbing to see the lack of international training of our professors and in many cases the reluctance of the academy to embrace internationalization (Brandenburg & Federkeil, 2007; de Wit et al., 2005). You cannot expect the classroom to get internationally colored and ask teachers who themselves have never received the opportunity to study abroad and are used to a mono cultural teaching style to do otherwise (Teekens, 2000). Additional training is crucial. Investing in teacher training allows for the creation of real international classrooms as Teekens (2000) describes as the final goal. She uses the expression of the international classroom for an active diversity realized between domestic and international students guided by the professor to reflect on the topics from a variety of views. Exchange students from different parts of the world can create this enriching environment inside their universities (compare with Otten, 2000; Gibbs & Maringe, 2008). It must be said that it is not an easy task to nurture and raise students' contributions. A high level of organization and sensibility is needed to offer such a discussion platform. By themselves, students do not participate. This has been shown in a research exercise in German universities, where more than 60% of the students did not show interest in getting together with foreign students even if a high number of foreigners existed. Only those who had previously participated in exchanges and international experiences were keenly interested in intercultural get together (Bargel, 1998). Because the majority of students will not pursue internationalization on their own, budgeting for intercultural teacher training is of great importance.

The Global Classroom

Taking again the idea to create a real intercultural environment within the classroom walls, new technologies can offer creative and sustainable solutions.

On one hand ICT have taken away the barriers between countries and through cell phones, email or videoconference have minimized the cultural shock during an exchange, offering contact and escape to the known environment in any moment just a click away (Teekens, 2006). On the other hand, the same technologies support the internationalization of the curriculum, closing distances through easy, economic and sustainable communication.

Online programs often suffer drop-outs, because studying online is a very lonely experience (Wächter, 2000). However, combining new technologies with traditional courses offers a wide scale of possible projects without boundaries (Gibbs & Maringe, 2008; de Wit et al., 2005). Of course it cannot be entirely the same experience as actually going on traditional mobility. The "touch and the smell" as Teekens (2006) calls it, is lacking, but of all the internationalization tools, the use of different ICT options seems to be the most comprehensive one.

The initial program “Global Understanding” was created by East Carolina University in 2003 and offers education with real time direct personalized intercultural experiences between students who otherwise probably would not have gotten in contact with other cultures during their studies. Students from two or more countries exchange information using videoconference and chat. The videoconferencing program gives the international experience that students otherwise would not get. “Global Understanding” has shown that virtual cooperation between classes is possible with little effort and basic technology available throughout the planet. This initiative is currently followed by more than 50 universities around the world who joined the Global Partners of Education (GPE) organization and work on projects for intercultural cooperation.

“We believe GPE has helped to accomplish our vision of creating a network where students from a wide range of countries have an opportunity to become global citizens and to function successfully in a global community. We believe that the global academic projects carried out among the GPE partners have indeed made progress on achieving our three fold goal of providing global awareness; enhancing positive global attitude; acquiring great global interactional experience through collaborative projects.” declare Chia, Poe and Yang (2011, p. 6), the founders of the project.

While GPE has several Latin American partners, technology here is still used more to exchange information on a national level (Avila, 2007). The next step to fully immerse into the possibilities is yet to be done. The creation of international classrooms (either in the classical local way with on campus international students or using ICT and opening up the boundaries between universities of two or more countries) has to be planned and implemented.

Pacheco (2009b) dreams: “Let’s imagine as well an educational environment that is no longer reduced to the four walls of the classroom, but that goes on to the homes, to the community and to the whole world, in a way that each element of society takes an active part in the decision making process of the academic sector as well as the financial, value-related and service devices to the different geographic regions. All this comes together to a real global village.”

The Future of Internationalization within Universities

Looking into the many internationalization possibilities, it is obvious that a strategy is needed to coordinate efforts. An academic institution must understand the importance of internationalization and implement actions from a higher level.

The change cannot come only from the international offices. A wider vision is needed, including all the aspects and requirements of the information society. The majority of universities understand the need to show students how to work with new technologies, entrepreneurship, today’s labor market and international topics in one way or the other, but through separated points, not as a whole, combining those aspects. It is duty of the universities to plant knowledge of

- Society within a global context
- The use of new technologies
- Speaking several languages

- The international experience (Leiva, as cited in Ramirez, 2011).

How to reach this knowledge for students? It is clear that the questions about internationalization and the impact on the student in facing global challenges in real life are answered through global thinking within institutions of higher education.

The opportunity to get the international message to the students lies within the university, especially in the curriculum.

The primary goal is to improve the intercultural abilities of students and offer them better academic college training (Schröder & Sehl, 2010). In other words, graduates must have the abilities that employers look for: leadership, adaptability, teamwork skills, and efficient communication, to fit in different work environments. The majority (Teichler, 2012; Teekens, 2006; Smithee, 2012; Helemann, 2010; Beelen, 2011; Lauterbach, 2010) agree with the idea of preparing students for a global world through internationalization. That means providing the future leaders with cognitive, emotional, ethical and multicultural skills. Deardoff (2004) analyzes: "Ultimately, though, a key benefit of internationalization is that institutions produce graduates with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to lead and serve effectively in a multinational and multicultural world." (p. 12)

To reach this goal, internationalization has to join forces with new technologies and employment in general. Combining this in practical applied studies, the entrepreneurs of tomorrow learn the use of modern technologies and the interconnection with a variety of people from different cultural backgrounds. Even if some think that virtual education makes it impossible to communicate emotions and harms education (Claes & Preston, 2010), the truth is that students need to get familiar with new technologies and intercultural diversity not only in their free time, but especially in a professional context. Including ICT and internationalization into daily coursework promises a real preparation.

Conclusion

The world today is more connected every day. For students, having an international experience increases professional abilities and intercultural awareness and creates more effective communicators better at working in teams. Above all, it creates a global workforce that is adaptable to different environments and has creative problem solving skills. The importance of internationalizing education is therefore undeniable.

A comprehensive institutionalized strategy for including the entire student community into internationalization efforts has to be found. This international strategy must go further than just traditional mobility because of the limits that cannot be overcome for the majority of students. Finding the correct international tools guarantees that a student trained "at home" has no disadvantages because of exclusion or inequality from the mobility options.

If the interest of the universities is the formation of competent professionals prepared to work in a labor market with cultural diversity, the university should think of the impact of teaching techniques on the student. In other words, universities have to identify the attributes of graduates to look for because companies search for it in

graduates regarding adaptability to today's challenges of globalization. Preparation of students should meet the needs of the employers. This means universities need to focus on modern teaching techniques.

Universities of the future have to include internationalization and new technology use according to the mentioned real life needs. This way the internationalization of the academic world is no longer a theoretic construct and starts contributing to the formation of students.

Research about these topics is still in its beginnings. As internationalization is traditionally understood as the mobility of individuals, most studies follow this line of thought. Reality within universities is different: Only a very insignificant number of students actually participate in mobility programs. It is now the task of the institutions to internationalize the campus, using tools that are able to reach all students without exception. Through the fusion of internationalization and new technology there are many opportunities. The question of its limitations and the outcomes need an answer in order to create international education and form global citizens.

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