

Internationalization of higher education: Challenges, strategies, policies and programs

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Abstract: In today's changing world, the idea of internationalization of higher education especially in developing countries has been deduced from globalization of education process. The international aspect of higher education is becoming increasingly important, composite, and confusing. The higher education has an effect on the society through policy-making, funding, and planning. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the meaning, definition, importance, necessity, and pre-requisites of internationalization of higher education. This paper also studies the programs and strategies of internationalization of higher education. Key challenges for the future direction of internationalization are identified in this paper.

Key words: internationalization; higher education; globalization

1. Introduction

The lack of necessary specialties, low-education, low-consciences, sciences and technologies are extremely important problems in today's societies. The high percentage of societies' population, especially poor societies, does not have access to education while the first step for society's development is specialty and skills. So, it is necessary for states to plan for education development, consciousness-raising and technical as well as professional skills development (Etaat, 1999; Mahmoodi, 1993; Zolfaghari, 2003). One of education development strategies is higher education development. Due to the significant role of higher education in current societies, higher education came to serve the administrative and economic interests of the governments and became a necessary dimension of the development. The higher education systems around the world have presented a propensity for internationalization. In this direction, higher education has become more international and subject to national culture and government (Marginson, 2006). The new issues facing higher education, both nationally and internationally, are introducing changes, demonstrating new tendencies and displaying different challenges. As Knight (1999) has said, "Today, internationalization of higher education is not limited to a geographical interpretation of the concept". According to her, internationalization is part of the universities' efforts to fulfill their primary functions, namely, the teaching and learning process, research and scholarly activities, and service to society. What does internationalization of higher education mean to render it so important? This question is answered in the following discussion.

2. Meaning of internationalization of higher education

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The term “internationalization” covers different things, and includes different dimensions, with varied stresses at different levels of higher education (YANG, 2002, p. 72). The definition of internationalization of higher education varies and depends on the stakeholder groups, government, private sector, institution, faculty member, academic discipline, and student. These differing perspectives result in several reasons for many program approaches to internationalization of higher education (Trilokekar, 2007). A commonly accepted definition in this study is Knight’s definition.

Internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service elements of an institution (Jane Knight & International Association of Universities, 2006).

This definition is accepted, given its emphasis on process and the three important functional dimensions of universities: teaching, research and service. There are also three key concepts in this definition. The idea of internationalization is that it is a dynamic process and not a set of isolated activities. Integration and infusion are also the keys in this definition to ensure that the international dimension is a central part of programs, policies, and procedures, not marginal, yet an easily expandable element. Both an international and intercultural dimension are included in this definition to emphasize the fact that internationalization is not only oriented to countries or national states but also includes different cultural/ethnic groups within a country (Jane Knight, Wit, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Secretary-General & Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education, 1999). Knight in her later work has refined her definition to include what she refers to as both a bottom-up and top-down approach, where she considers the important influence of the national/sectoral level on the international dimension of higher education through policy, funding, programs and regulatory frameworks. Internationalization at the national/sectoral/institutional levels is defined as: The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post secondary education (Jane Knight, 2004, p. 11).

She has proposed a more generic definition that is generalizable to different national educational contexts—one that does not specify the reasons, benefits, outcomes, actors, activities and stakeholders of internationalization (Jane Knight, 2004, p. 11).

3. The importance and necessity of internationalization of higher education

In the second half of this century, education has become more international. In this period, governments emphasize on internationalization of higher education through international co-operation and exchange. Institutions and universities develop their own strategies to internationalize their researches and their teaching. Why is this happening? What are the reasons behind this revival? Is internationalization the solution to all the present problems of a multicultural and international society? Finally, why does a country or a higher education institution believe that internationalization is fundamental? What determines the nature and extent of its support and action in favor of internationalization? These important questions are related to the importance of internationalization of higher education, which should be answered in the following.

There is not one single answer to those questions, as often thought. There are several and different reasons for internationalization of higher education. Such reasons are changing and closely linked to each other; they are either complementary or contradictory, especially when they vary based upon the interests of diverse stakeholder groups. Furthermore, reasons for the internationalization of higher education vary between and within countries. An examination on the motivation for internationalizing the higher education sector is a fascinating and complex task,

but for brevity's sake, the reasons for internationalization can be categorized into four groups: political, economic, academic, and social-cultural (Knight & de Wit, 1995). The political reason is often considered more important at the national than at the institutional level. The economic reason has increasing importance and relevance in developed countries around the world. An effective way to improve and maintain a competitive edge is to develop a highly skilled and knowledgeable work force and to invest in applied research. The academic reason is linked directly with enhancing the teaching and learning process and achieving excellence in research and scholarly activities. The social-cultural reason for internationalization is changing in light of the potential impact of globalization. Higher education has traditionally been a part of cultural agreements and exchanges. Today's globalized economy, information and communication system suggest another aspect of the social-cultural reason (Jane Knight, 1999, pp. 201-238). Knight (1999) has also added that these four types of reasons are not entirely distinct or exclusive. An individual's, an institution's, or a country's motivation is a complex and multileveled set of reasons evolving over time and in response to changing needs and priorities. In another literature, Knight (1999, pp. 9-10) has listed other reasons for internationalization, which are human resources development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building and socio/cultural development, cultural identity, citizenship development, national security, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, and economic growth and competitiveness. Hayhoe (1989) believes that international cooperative agreements, academic mobility, international scholarships, technical and economic development, international curriculum studies, cultural values, historical and political context are the most important reasons for internationalization of higher education.

In addition to Hayhoe, several reasons have been classified by Wit. From his viewpoint, nation-building and positioning, development cooperation, technical assistance, national and regional cultural identity and national standards improvement are national reasons for internationalization of higher education (Wit, World Bank & ebrary Inc., 2005, pp. 356-358). Overall, the reasons for internationalization of higher education are listed below in descending level of importance: mobility and exchanges for students and teachers, teaching and research collaboration, academic standards and quality, research projects, co-operation and development assistance, curriculum development, international and intercultural understanding, promotion and profile of institution, diversify source of faculty and students, regional issues and integration, international student recruitment, and diversify income generation. As Wit (2002, p. 224) has noted, briefly, it is important to keep in mind that:

- (1) Overall, there are strong reasons within and between different stakeholders' groups;
- (2) Generally, stakeholders do not have one exclusive reason for internationalization;
- (3) Reasons may differ between stakeholders' groups and within stakeholders' groups;
- (4) Priorities in reasons may change over time and may change by country and region;
- (5) And in most cases, reasons have more implicit than explicit motives for internationalization.

4. Prerequisites of internationalization of higher education

Globalization is a basic element to qualify and internationalize higher education. There is a close relationship between internationalization, globalization and qualification of higher education. The prerequisites of internationalization and qualification of higher education are not much different. The prerequisites of quality education are mission, vision, core values, smart objectives, admissions, libraries, laboratories, sports, disabilities, staff, and counseling (Khalid Pervaiz & Azad, 2007). Therefore, the prerequisites of internationalization of higher education can be categorized as mission and vision statements, core values, smart objectives and services

provided by a university. Mission, vision, core values and smart objectives are elaborated with hypothetical statements as below:

(1) Mission statement: The purpose of university is to provide quality education in the arts, and sciences, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

(2) Vision statement: The vision statements may produce discoveries that make the world a better place, open the world to students, provide career-oriented and graduate innovative programs, achieve a higher quality of education and research, learning and teaching excellence, effective engagement with community, enterprise multiculturalism, currency and relevance, increased access to innovative pedagogy, creative use of technology.

(3) Core values: The core values in internationalization of higher education are integrity and respect, honesty and accountability, and intellectual rigor.

(4) Smart objectives: The objectives of internationalization of higher education should be specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic in nature to be achieved within a fixed time frame.

(5) Services: The features of universities are the services they provide (Khalid Pervaiz & Azad, 2007).

Internationalization of higher education requires tolerance and international cooperation in educational activities and plans in order to generate science. In spite of today's issues, it also requires communication skills, rationality, creative thinking, active participation, collective action, tolerance of each other, acceptance of criticisms, and scientific approach for internationalization of higher education. Based on this, pre-requisites of internationalization of higher education are as follows:

- (1) In spite of culture, geography and regional policies, we should pay attention to that: We are human;
- (2) Encourage the knowledge and realization of cultures and affirming on the bilateral respect;
- (3) Achievement of necessary skills, tolerance and learning from others;
- (4) Affirmation and realization of world challenges accompanying the needs;
- (5) Flexibility in facing cultural affairs;
- (6) The necessity of the constructive approach to solve international problems (Sarkarani, 1992);
- (7) Acceptance of responsibility in and effective execution of regional and international projects (Robinson, 1999).

Universities should construct themselves by international cooperation to prepare for the possibility of bilateral knowledge for a better future.

5. Strategies of internationalization of higher education

The overview of prerequisites, definitions, and necessities shows that different elements have different roles in the internationalization of higher education. These elements have been defined in various ways such as mechanisms, facilitators, activities, challenges, factors and strategies. The strategies are applied to describe the activities done by a university to integrate a global aspect into research, teaching, service functions, management policies and systems. Thus, internationalization needs a suitable and operational strategy. The University of Tokyo specified five strategies for the internalization of higher education (The University of Tokyo, 2005). These strategies are global in nature, and may be operational to other universities to complete their plans. In these strategies, individuals at all levels must effectively play their roles and duties. In summary, the five strategies are:

- (1) Provision of an internationally high standard of education;
- (2) Enhancement of research activities through strengthening international research networks;

- (3) Promoting cooperation with international society;
- (4) Improvement of infrastructure to promote “internal internationalization”;
- (5) Formulation of a long-term internationalization plan (The University of Tokyo, 2005).

In addition to these strategies, it is important to note that internationalization of higher education emphasizes on active participation in educational programs, research activities, educational reforms, challenges, opportunities and consequences of international and national changes in higher education. It seems that the most important point of view in internationalization of higher education is the participation in the different educational and research programs. Internationalization with this important specification basically prevents from unification and omission of experiences and regional favors. Internationalization also emphasizes on cooperation, instead of unification. A realization of this important viewpoint is necessary to plan and implement essential programs for internationalization (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi & Taylor, 2001). So, the most important strategies of internationalization of higher education originated from global experience are as follows:

- (1) Revision of textbooks and representation of courses which correspond to the content of global community knowledge and international problems;
- (2) Development of humanistic resources for the realization of social, economic, cultural consequences of universities internationalization;
- (3) Scientific and cultural cooperation by the students unions and scientific boards of universities;
- (4) Use of the comparative studies to present the content of existing educational programs;
- (5) Emphasis on inter-cultural skills for planning in higher education;
- (6) Acquaint students with abilities and skills in the international arena;
- (7) The planning of special textbooks for foreign students;
- (8) Exchange experiences among universities;
- (9) The cause the effective and more international scientific cooperation among the universities;
- (10) Enrichment of university environments for educational and research activities according to the global standards;
- (11) The planning of educational programs according to the time needed through regional and international cooperation among universities;
- (12) The acceptance of more numbers of scientific boards and foreign students in universities;
- (13) The protection of researchers, scientific boards and young managers in higher education;
- (14) The effective cooperation in planning, executing, accessing of the international research projects;
- (15) Preparation of facilities for scientific boards to use new technologies;
- (16) Exercise of scientific cooperation through cooperation at international and regional levels;
- (17) Preparation of public information to save time and spend the existing capitals in other sectors in higher education;
- (18) Necessary preparation at the managerial level to develop an international higher education;
- (19) Necessary preparation at the managerial level to face the challenges of higher education;
- (20) Development of international and regional cooperation to promote the quality of educational programs (Ginkel & Seddoh, 2002; International Association of Universities, 2002).

6. The duties of universities in internationalization of higher education

In today's world, education in universities and higher education institutions have some aspects in common, i.e. communication information, the combinational approach and internationalization and inter-cultural dialogue. The process of globalization renews roles and responsibilities of a university. As a result, universities should revise their duties. They should then pass the internationalization of international scientific cooperation at different educational and research levels using practical and possible programs. Otherwise, the process of globalization will bring problems for universities by serving communicative and informatics technologies (Seddoh, 2002). The universities should pay attention on their roles and duties, such as training experts in international relations, increasing the number of international students, and emphasizing cultural identity through a variety of educational programs to prevent predictable crisis and solve existing difficulties. The main duties and roles of universities in the internationalization of higher education process consist of:

- (1) The presence at the regional and international arena to internationalize the higher education;
- (2) Development of higher education through a number of volunteers;
- (3) The improvement of higher education quality by effective inter-university cooperation (exchange of student researcher, professor, information, educational reforms programs and cooperation in the common research projects, use of the informatics bases, planning of assessment models, the improvement of experiences for measuring the capability, and effectiveness of university education);
- (4) The economization of higher education institutions and universities' scientific cooperation;
- (5) The emphasis on community participation for using and generating science and knowledge;
- (6) The realization of serious vulnerabilities of the economic approaches in higher education, and attention to the humanistic values especially on the internationalization of universities;
- (7) An change in the attitude of the scientific boards in using new technologies (Fielden & Karen, 2001).

The informatics and communication technologies have more effects on the performances and roles of universities and higher education institutions. They help the universities in textbooks planning, content, management and structure for coordinating the time upheavals (Zolfaghari, 2004).

In spite of the preparation of more volunteers to enter the universities and institutions of higher education, these technologies and new tools of education have great effects on the necessity of continuous learning.

7. The regional and national challenges of internationalization of higher education

Globalization poses challenges to higher education systems of the world (Moja, 2004). These challenges should be solved through important strategies. In some literatures, these challenges have been classified into two categorizations: individual and institutional. The individual challenges of higher education in these literatures are a lack of competency, negative attitudes, absence of incentives, lack of personal knowledge and expertise. On contrast, institutional challenges consist of a lack of financial sources, scarcity of human resources, and educational structure (Saat, 2007). It is important to keep in mind that the national challenges of higher education originate from the states' view on education (Sariolghalam, 1993). On the other hand, national challenges are related to the economic, social and cultural problems at the national level.

For example, the lack of financial facilities, the great number of applicants for entering university, limitation of universities in accepting students are the most important challenges of higher education in Sudan. On the other hand, the most important challenges of higher education in Japan consist of a lack of coordination of university programs with community needs, suitability of higher education quality, enough use from the informatics

technologies in learning and teaching process and number of volunteers for entering the universities. Comparing the two countries, it is clear that the challenges of higher education have direct relations with the economic problems and rate of the countries' development. Bangladesh is one of the countries that faces such challenges. The great number of volunteers for entering universities, the lack of suitability in terms of the numbers of students to facilities, financial difficulties and resources safeguarding are the most important challenges of higher education in Bangladesh. Non-coordination of higher education with international standards, the lack of coordination of textbooks with day needs and the lack of financial resources are the most important challenges of Bulgaria. Not only are those, the lack of enough using from the new technologies in universities and the Brain-Drain phenomenon the most important challenges in China. For South Korea, it is the non-adoptability with the global standards, structure inflexibility and the inability for adopting the communicative and informatics needs (Sarkarani, 2007). Lebanon faces challenges like the lack of adaptability of higher education with contemporary society culture, achievement to the new technologies and specialized manpower. In lieu of the above cases, it can be said that, the most important challenges of higher education are: the lack of financial facilities, the great number of applicants entering the universities, limitation of universities in accepting students, problem of students' job, coordination of the textbook programs of universities with the day needs, enough use from the informatics technologies in learning and teaching process, financial problems, resource safeguarding, structure coordination of higher education with international standards, migration of the prepared forces from country, structure inflexibility of higher education and specialized manpower.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

The discussions above help the universities and institutions of higher education adopt themselves with the changes of time and the current needs of society. These conditions change the structures and universities' manpower especially the scientific boards. They also encourage permanent education; promote the quality of higher education and produce active students. In spite of these problems, the challenges guide students toward self-learning, the exercise of learning skills and the use of information. The acceptance of foreign researchers and students, execution of international research projects, acceptance of scientific boards from other universities, dispatch of the scientific boards to the short-term periods, execution of common educational periods with other universities, use of international standards for assessment, emphasis on comparative studies, use of others' experiences, effective and active presence in international spaces, and participation to generate knowledge present important recommendations to promote the quality of the higher education. Based on the statements above, the following recommendations are presented to promote the quality of higher education among the countries.

- (1) Attention to strategic planning to higher education management;
- (2) Revision of textbooks and preparation of educational periods according to society's needs;
- (3) Renewal of universities' manpower;
- (4) Attitude change of scientific boards to use new technologies;
- (5) Digitization of libraries and references with emphasis on preparation of informatics databases;
- (6) Attention to English language as the international language;
- (7) Lack of monopoly of period's possession, textbooks and educational programs;
- (8) Use of new technologies to generate information and scientific stagnations of the world;
- (9) Standardization of educational programs to generate knowledge. In this case, we should pay attention to

research instead of education, through the development of specialized periods, correction of educational content, compilation of content based on some tools regarding to network, change of educational regulations, emphasizing on permanent education and improvement of manpower;

(10) Study of global markets of higher education for establishing conditions and university suitable environment for accepting foreign students, execution of common projects, exchange of experiences and educational, scientific innovations;

(11) Reconstruction of higher education to use the new technologies cheaper and faster than before;

(12) Use of tools and educational models, especially distance education for development of higher education, the shortening of educational periods, applying of thought qualifying of education and use of software in network-based learning;

(13) Progress of programs and educational workshops in order to change the attitude of the scientific board's number of universities for using new and educational tools;

(14) Use of communicative and informatics tools to localize necessary alternatives;

(15) Emphasis on tolerance skills, dialogue, cooperation and relationship internationally;

(16) Considerations on condition changes and regional factors for competing with global higher education by using distance and network-oriented education.

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