

Three Effective Strategies of Internationalization in American Universities

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In higher education research internationalization is described as strategies by which colleges and universities respond to globalization. The objective of this paper was to review some of the current literature on internationalization in Higher Education. It sought to identify some of the effective educational strategies that are being implemented by American universities. After conducting an exhaustive review of current literature three recurrent themes emerged: study abroad programs, recruiting international students and the internationalization of faculty. The three strategies are described addressing barriers to internationalization along with some possible solutions for effective implementation.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher Education, American Universities.

In higher education there is a strong literature base which continues to capture the attention of scholars and researchers on the topics of internationalization in American Colleges and Universities (Altbach, 2004; Knight, 2004; Scott, 2000; Van Der Wende, 2001).

Scott, (2000) a prominent researcher stated: "Today, rapid globalization and postmodern society point toward a future internationalization mission for the university as a service to the worldwide nation-states" (p. 2).

In higher education research there is a marked differentiation between globalization and internationalization. Globalization is seen as a social and economic process; internationalization by contrast is described as strategies by which colleges and universities respond to globalization. This basic conceptual difference constitutes the essence of university administration worldwide (Cantwell and Maldonado, 2009)

Internationalization: First Visions

One of the first pioneers of international education was Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore, (O'Connell, 2007). He was born in Calcutta, colonial India in 1861. Tagore strongly believed that the goal of education was to bring a synthesis between the individual and society and to become aware of the unity between the individual and the rest of human kind (Cenker, 1976).

Tagore felt that only through international education would it be possible and feasible to develop mutual understanding among the peoples and their cultures (Periaswamy, 1976). Tagore's vision promotes peace, fosters multiculturalism, connects human beings and celebrates their diversity and cultural heritage (Samuel 2010).

Internationalization arose as a response to diversity and multiculturalism in an effort to create global competencies. In a world that is becoming more economically, socially and culturally interdependent, issues

of diversity have gained a lot of interest (Banks, 2004 and Friedman, 2005). Student diversity can be defined as “the existence of students’ diverse social identities-which include race, ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, social class, language, citizenship, and so on” (Miksch, Bruch, Higbee, Jahangir & Lundell, 2003 p. 49).

Multiculturalism is used to refer as the way educational professionals respond to diversity through different cultural perspectives (Miksch, Bruch, Higbee, Jahangir & Lundell, 2003).

Culturally responsive teaching involves a continual process of reflection and learning. Cultural responsive instructors learn about the customs and heritage of their students and incorporate those perspectives into their teaching practices, modeling appreciation for diversity (Bloom, 2009).

In a society that is not just diverse but characterized by inequalities and conflict among its many groups; institutional commitments by American colleges and universities have been proposed to educate diverse student bodies (Banks, 2004 and Friedman, 2005). The goals covered by these initiatives included the development of cognitive and personal skills which would allow college graduates to accept social and economic differences while enabling them to find various solutions to social problems around the globe (Enberg and Hurtado, 2011).

These global competencies were identified by Hovland (as cited in Bresciani, 2008):

The successful preparation of students to live responsible, productive, and creative lives in a dramatically changing world, and

The shaping of students’ identities by the currents of power and privilege, both within a U.S. democracy and within an

interconnected and unequal world. (p.108)

Numerous articles on strategies within Higher Education to improve racial/ethnic diversity and their findings are connected to the creation of global competencies (Hurtado, Millem, Clayton and Allen as stated in Bresciani, 2008). In terms of knowledge, it requires that institutions of Higher Education integrate these strategies for effective communication and collaboration across different cultures. In terms of skills American colleges and universities need to design programs that interconnect students and faculty from various countries. This process may require the formation of coalitions within the colleges and universities around the world (Bresciani, 2008).

The objective of this paper was to review the current literature on internationalization in the field of Higher Education to identify the effective educational strategies that are being implemented by American universities and their faculty. Although exploratory in nature it revealed very specific and repetitive trends in effective practices.

Possible applications of this literature review include: designing and implementing strategies, curricula, and practices, to improve the experiences of American students who participate in study abroad programs, and of International students who choose America as their main destination for educational purposes. It may also be beneficial in the training of faculty and staff who will work with the American students who prepare for or study abroad and with international students. These practices and recommendations may be instrumental in educating American students and the community to help the international students feel welcome.

Review of Related Literature

After conducting an exhaustive review of current literature three recurrent themes emerged: study abroad programs, recruiting international students and the

internationalization of faculty. See table 1 for the literature that informed each effective strategy.

Table 1. *Three Effective Strategies of Internationalization in American Universities*

Effective Strategy for Internationalization in American Universities	Literature That Informed this Strategy
<u>Study Abroad Programs</u> Link to Internationalization	American Council on Education, (1995)
Earning Credit for Courses Taken Abroad Statistics and Demographics	Hoffa, (2007) Institute for International Education, (2002) “Open Doors Report”
Undergraduate and Graduate Majors Impact on Global Engagement Effect on Creativity	Bhandari and Chow, (2008) Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic and Jon, (2009) Maddux and Galinsky, (2009)
<u>International Students</u> Recruitment and Marketing Strategies International University Rankings	Knight, (2004) and Margison, (2006) Knight, (2004); Margison, (2006); and Van der Wende (2001)
Factors that Prompt International Students to Study Abroad	Andrade, (2006) and McClure, (2007)
Factors that influence Choice of Host Country Barriers to Participation	Mazzarol and Soutar, (2002) Sherry, Thomas and Chui, (2009)
<u>Internationalizing The Faculty</u> As a Way to Internationalize Curricula To Change Their Research Methods	Brewer, (2010) Stohl, (2007)
Obstacles to Faculty’s Internationalization	Dewey and Duff, 2010

Study Abroad Programs

For American institutions of Higher Education partnerships with universities in other countries may be an effective way to achieve internationalization. Today most researchers of international education see study abroad as just one factor on the internationalization strategy, even though

study abroad has long been linked with internationalization (American Council on Education, 1995).

Many colleges and universities had sent students, faculty and alumni abroad to expand their culture and learn foreign languages. But it is the now called University of Delaware which gets credit for starting the undergraduate study abroad

program with the possibility for earning credit towards a degree in the US institution. The University of Delaware claims this initiative for having sent eight junior students of the then Delaware College in 1923, to get credit courses in France. Earning credit for courses taken abroad still the norm in most study abroad programs in the United States (Hoffa, 2007).

The Institute for International Education, (2011) "Open Doors" reported an increase in US students studying abroad; 270,604 U.S. students studied abroad for credit during the academic year 2009/10. Study abroad by students enrolled in U.S. higher education has more than tripled over the past two decades. The United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and China, remained the top host destinations.

Study abroad now includes all undergraduate and many graduate majors. In addition it now includes historically underrepresented fields of study including business administration, health sciences, engineering, and life and physical sciences (Bhandari and Chow, 2008).

A research project on the long term impact of study abroad on 6391 participants conducted by Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic and Jon, (2009) revealed that study abroad had an impact on five dimensions of global engagement: civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity of life as well as on subsequent educational and career choices (p. 29). Furthermore, Maddux and Galinsky, (2009) found empirical evidence of how living and studying abroad enhanced creativity.

Assessment

In a country like the United States where only 20 percent of the population has a valid passport and only 14% of university students get to study abroad the need for

internationalizing institutions of higher education study abroad programs are not just about promoting diversity and cultural practices. But to meet the quota of severe national deficiencies such as filling national security positions and having competent people in international relations and policy makes (Chin & Bhandr, 2007). There is a lack of accurate assessments on the specific learning outcomes of American students who study abroad. One study revised the students' views of their own process of change (Hadis, 2005). Another study explored improvements on language acquisitions skills (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, Kazuaki & Kazuake, 2004). Because the concept of global views is based on ideology, it is very difficult to grasp and accurately measure its changes (Barkhuisen & Ferok, 2006).

Recruiting International Students

Another effective strategy to internationalize American colleges and universities is by recruiting international students. International fee-paying students provide an increasing source of revenue for many universities. This requires various recruitment and marketing strategies (Knight, 2004 and Margison, 2006). Furthermore, internationalization policies have specific geographical prioritizations such as wanting to diversify by including more Latin American, Asian and African student populations. Of increasing interest is the concern with international university rankings (both in education and research, competitiveness and benchmarking (Knight, (2004); Margison, (2006); and Van der Wende (2001).

Reasons that “push” international students to study abroad

There are many factors that prompt international students to study abroad. These factors include: wanting to visit a foreign country, learn a foreign language, explore the culture, connect with people across the world, establish new friendships, learn about other ways of life, expand their thinking and behavior processes and improve their content-specific and cross-cultural knowledge and skills (Andrade, 2006 and McClure, 2007). A significant amount of research on the reasons why students study abroad conducted by Mazzarol and Soutar, (2002) revealed that two factors were important regardless of the country of origin. First, the students felt that the education abroad was of better quality than the one in the student’s home country. Second, they felt they would gain a greater awareness of the chosen culture by living and studying in a foreign country. Factors which play a significant role in the choice of host country included:

- Having access to accurate information on the host country
- Having a positive image of the host country
- Having a perception of superior education in the host country
- Having certainty in the recognition of the foreign degree upon returning to their home country and possibilities of applying their knowledge in their country of origin.

Reasons that “pull” international students to come to America

Other relevant contributing factors in the selection of the host country included recommendations from professors, family and friends, cost, financial aid and scholarships, social implications, availability and possibility to work part-time, a low crime-rate and the presence of a good percentage of the student’s home country population in the total number of international students in the host country. For all these reasons thousands of students come to America to study every year from all the countries in the world. The number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States increased by five percent to 723,277 during the 2010/11 academic year, according to the Open Doors report, which is published annually by the Institute of International Education (2011) in partnership with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. America is the number one destination for international students.

While there are many benefits for international students who come to America- to increase their knowledge, to obtain a coveted degree, to mature and become more independent thorough new life experiences in this country, to master a the English language- they are also a very vulnerable population (Sherry, Thomas and Chui, 2009).

Barriers

The many obstacles encountered by the international students in the United States have been extensively documented. These obstacles include lack of proficiency in the English language, financial problems, facing different educational systems, academic challenges, and the lack of technological skills, problems establishing meaningful

personal relationships, lack of social networks, alienation, discrimination, and homesickness (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Other challenges deal with coping with developments in their home country like war, national disasters, a poor economy, or the death of family members or friends (Hsu, 2003). International students may also be subjects of exploitation. Several forms of exploitation may occur when the educational institution considers internationalization strictly as a business, a way of selling services to “aliens”. There may not be equal opportunity in the host institution, or they may not be highly committed to the international students, provide them with low quality of education or deny them a degree based on misunderstandings on the international student’s academic transcript from their foreign institutions (Altbach & Teicher, 2001). In addition the foreign students feel tremendous loneliness and isolation being away from family and friends, far removed from support systems and in an unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environment (McClure, 2007). A welcoming University that promotes and encourages friendship and social connectedness among American students and international students, and provides a system of support for the many challenges faced by the international students plays an important role in the mental health of international students (Sumer and Grahame, 2008).

Internationalization of Faculty

Partnerships with other countries offer great opportunities to internationalize college or University. The exchange of students: sending American students to study abroad and recruiting international students will remain the first priority for most institutional alliances. Shifting the focus on internationalizing the faculty, and

through them the curriculum, can have many positive connotations (Brewer, 2010). International education paves the way for transformative learning, but for this learning to occur, the faculty and their research needs to change as well (Stohl, 2007). Other authors state that if an institution has money for only one strategy in internationalization, that money should be invested in the faculty, because their involvement is essential for internationalization to occur. Faculty development will be based in “faculty ownership, choice and support” along with “other internationalization strategies” (Green, 2003).

Higher education scholars and practitioners have recommended that internationalization plans include allocating resources like specific budgets for international curricular development and research grants; academic exchanges, and faculty development (Olson, 2003; Green & Hill, 2006; Paige, 2005; Siaya & Hayward, 2003). However a continuous frequently cited impediment to faculty internationalization is lack of funding (Bond, 2003; Green 2007; Olson, 2003).

Childress, (2009) explains how Duke and Richmond Universities support faculty in internationalization plans through investments from diverse external and internal sources including federal, private and institutional, which are distributed at various institutional levels (p.44). Short term faculty exchange programs between two countries such as the Fulbright commission programs may prove beneficial. Involving faculty in student abroad programs as advisors and program directors could help internationalize both students and faculty. Creating research partnerships between two different countries may prove beneficial. The European nations are ahead in internationalization by blending curriculum and courses for which students get credit in multiple countries (Stier, 2010).

Discussion

Study Abroad Programs

The Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, (2005) as part of its report *Global Competence and National Needs* stated: “Moving overseas to study does not produce experts but it does begin a process of inculcating awareness of international and intercultural issues, a process that, multiplied many millions of times over, promises to vastly increase American global literacy”. Despite the increases in the number of U.S. students studying abroad, these students still represent a small proportion of total enrollment in U.S. higher education, estimated at close to 20 million students. Just over one percent of all U.S. students enrolled in U.S. higher education at any academic level typically study abroad during any single academic year. Among students pursuing Bachelor’s degrees, only about 14 percent study abroad at some point during their undergraduate programs (The Institute for International Education, 2011). “Through innovative programs including Fulbright, critical language awards and the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, American students have the opportunity to study abroad” said Ann Stock, Assistant Secretary (R) (The Institute for International Education, 2011 p.1).

International Students

Universities cannot only focus on the academic needs of international students ignoring important factors which are vital for their success (Tidwell and Hanassab, 2007). A special support system for international students can be set in place in the host American Universities. Universities with large numbers of international students should have an office that offers services specially designed for them and a Dean for

foreign students who can oversee these services. Services may include counseling, financial aid, work-study programs, legal aid especially with student visas and immigration requirements, referral for housing, transportation services, health services and international health insurance. Partnerships with community agencies, local Churches, and family volunteers, can offer these students support and a nurturing atmosphere that makes them feel welcome and makes the transition and cultural immersion easier. Peer coaching, assigning an “American friend” to the international student will be very beneficial for both the American host student and the international student.

Internationalization of Faculty

Faculty international research and teaching activities range from personal and professional experience, participation in international conferences and networks, short-term and long-term appointments as visiting scholars or instructors. However many obstacles for internationalization of faculty have been reported as well. These obstacles include: lack of coordination and information related to available international opportunities, limited funding, administrative policies and procedures, difficulties appointing faculty to temporarily replace those that leave to do research or teach abroad, inability to secure their jobs upon return, conflicting academic schedules with the hosting institution, lack of support staff. Research conducted by Dewey and Duff, (2010) seems to support these views.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Altbach and Knight, (2006) conclusively stated: “Now Academe has regained its international scope and direction. The information technology; the knowledge economy, increased mobility for students,

faculty, programs and providers; and an integrated global economy propel internationalization. Internationalization will remain a central force in higher education, though its contours are unclear” (p. 10).

In this paper a broad review of current literature in internationalization as a response to globalization was conducted. Three effective strategies taking place in American institutions were identified: study abroad programs, recruiting international students and the internationalization of faculty. These strategies were described along with their strengths and weaknesses. Recommendations to improve these strategies include: the improvement of accurate assessments on the specific learning outcomes of American students who study abroad. When the author of this article participated in a graduate Fulbright study program, the Fulbright commission assessed our learning not just in the specific discipline we studied abroad, but also our broad knowledge and cultural understanding of the host country before departing and after returning. Similar and accurate assessments will prove beneficial to measure learning outcomes of study abroad programs.

The creation of an office that offers services specially designed for international students with a Dean for foreign students who can oversee these services will help improve services for international students. Additional recommendations to improve the conditions for international students include promoting cross-cultural understanding, increasing involvement by providing more opportunities to join the local community, increasing the profile of the international students and their cultures on campus through “International Student Week” and by writing articles about them and their country of origin in the University and local newspapers. Other recommendations target

specific needs expressed by the international students like increasing financial aid assistance, creating scholarships, lowering tuition, helping them get work permits and part-time jobs, providing them with resources for options about affordable health insurance.

To improve the English skills of international students the creation of conversational groups were suggested as well as encouraging them to seek help at the writing center. To improve their socialization it was suggested they create a club to promote friendships between International and American students.

The recommendation of involving faculty in student abroad programs as advisors and program directors to internationalize the faculty was proposed. Making it a requirement for faculty to become tenured will force faculty to be more open to study and working abroad even for short terms. So will stipulating it in a working contract during hiring procedures; provided off course that the faculty receive the financial and administrative support or other incentives to engage in international collaboration and the cross-cultural academic endeavors of their choice.

There is optimism in the creation of future partnerships with foreign institutions which promote internationalization. However, we cannot disregard the many barriers in the implementation of these efforts.

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