

Internationalization of Higher Education: Preparation Policy, Implementation and Recognition

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and democratization of education leads to the idea of internationalization of higher education, especially in developing countries. This paper describes briefly what is meant by internationalization of higher education and the rationales behind implementation of the idea. Players involve in the process are also identified, with the main focus is on the key roles of the institutional leaders. Barriers that may retard the process are also listed for the players to be aware of, and plan effectively. The paper also describes strategies for internationalization within the policies stated by the government. The strategies include steps that may be taken by individual institution to be recognized as international education provider. Finally the general Indian scenario with regard to international higher education is briefly described.

Keywords: International education, barriers, strategies, key players

INTRODUCTION

Internationalization is an ongoing and future-oriented process of integrating various international perspectives into our higher education. The perspectives may be related to the curriculum, programs offered, top managers, faculty members, students, facilities and even the institutional visions, to suit the diverse and ever-changing environment and demands that are more global now. In realizing the transformation process, strategic changes involving all the aspects including financial commitments need to be planned realistically by each institution and their respective stakeholders. Then, the issue of recognition needs to be addressed as well. The reasons or rationales for internationalization should be divided into two categories; the institutional level category and the national level category. The first category rationales will be mainly academic based, whereby among others it may facilitates exchanges and mobility of staff and students, carrying out collaborative research and projects, and enhancement in terms of quality and standard of the institutions. The national level rationales for internationalization generally are more related to the economic, technology, political and social and cultural aspects. The concept of internationalization of higher education is not new. In the more developed countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, Japan, France, the loose concept and definition of international higher education has long been practiced. Traditionally, students from former colonies were sent to universities in these countries to gain tertiary education and to come back and serve their native countries. This was seen as short-term training ground solution to fill the vacant administrative and technical posts in the native countries immediately after independent. Thus, this it looks like a “one-way traffic” of students movements from less developed countries. Although internationalization of higher education can be defined in many ways, but in general the definition should include the key elements such as Academic Program, Students, Academic Staff, Curricula, and Infra-structure and Facilities, that may also be considered as the bench-mark for internationalization.

programs offered, curriculum, services and facilities within the institutions will always be the pulling factor for international students.

Besides the institutional players above support from the government, private sectors and accreditation and recognizing bodies are also important in internationalization of higher education. Although a study by IAU indicated that the idea of internationalization was some-what “bottom-up”, initiated by faculty members and institutional leaders, the role played by government through the related ministries in facilitating the efficient implementation either in the form of policies (for public and private institutions) and financial support (mainly for public institutions) is crucial. The implementation of internationalization policies in terms of student intake, visa requirements, programs available to international students, international academic staff, setting-up private universities or collages, etc are to ensure the smooth internationalization process without denying the tertiary education opportunities to local students.

For private sectors, their contribution will be more on the linkages, collaboration and cooperation in research enhancement, input for curriculum development, training for graduating students and staff, as well as recognition on the graduates. These roles are crucial since they are the one will be the main supply of employment market and job opportunities for the graduates.

Key Roles of Institutional Leaders

The policies laid down by government regarding internationalization of higher education serve as guidelines and pointer to be followed by the individual institution. The roles of private sectors will only appear after the blue print of internationalization has been sturdily laid down by the institution. Therefore, the onset or commencement of internationalization of an institution depends very much on the institutional leaders. Many studies have shown that much are expected out of institutional leaders in leading their institutions to become globally recognized international higher education institutions. **Making case for paradigm change** to stake holders, academic and administrative staff, students and community towards successful internationalization, effectively will be the first and important role of institutional leaders. The leaders have the necessary institutional rank and leadership abilities to engage the symbiotic coalition between the parties to work together towards the goals of internationalization. They should be able to develop the necessary organizational structure in the institutions that could facilitate internationalization smoothly. Setting up some central and visible unit to become the standard bearer for international activities is very much recommended.

The ideas, plans and implementation of successful internationalization need to be made known, especially to those who are not directly involved in the activities. The institutional leaders need to **stay focus and communicating effectively**, by shining the importance of internationalization regularly and at any opportunity available to him. As the journey for internationalization is long and winding, and the destination will keep on changing and improving to suit the local and global policies, demands and situations, staying focus is crucial. They must be focused on their goals, and able to steer the institutions to face all the unexpected challenges in the course of achieving the intended goals. Every information, directive, policies and rules related to internationalization must be able to be communicated effectively through what ever means of communication within the institution.

Internationalization of higher education is attached with recognition for the institutions, both internal and external recognition. **Gaining recognition** is another key role of institutional leaders. Generally, recognition is related to the programs, curricular and co-curricular activities offered and run by the institutions. In India, the UGC, University grant commission and AICTE, is the body that actively monitoring and regulating the higher education institutions especially for recognition purposes. However , the programs, especially the professional programs such as medical, engineering, architecture, law etc., must also be recognized by the regulating bodies of that professional fields. The issue of non-recognition of qualification might affect the prospects of getting international students. To meet this ever-changing requirement, leaders, such as deans and heads of departments

“equivalent time off” form, the individuals may feel unappreciated by the institution in performing their internationalization tasks.

d. Lack of personal knowledge and expertise – The willingness of an academician to engage with internationalization activities depends on his personal capacities and experience with other cultures and languages. Lack of this will likely lead to opposition, unwillingness to participate or indifference towards internationalization movement.

Some of institutional barriers or challenges that may hinder the internationalization of higher education, and applicable to any institutions need to be appreciated as well. Briefly some of them are

- a. **Lack of financial resources** – Finding sufficient fund to bear the initial cost of internationalization especially in providing the physical infrastructure, program development and review, traveling and accommodation for fact finding and promotional work is the main challenge of an institution. As for students, lack of financial support either from government or private sector is the main significant barrier to study abroad.
- b. **Scarce of human resources** – This is related to the provision of international standard programs and curricula, and promotion. Without competent human resources in the related academic fields, the intended program could not be developed. Without competent promoter, the internationalized institution will not be promoted effectively.
- c. **Educational structure** – Each country in this world has their own educational structure starting from pre-school, through primary, secondary, pre-university and terminating tertiary education. Mismatch between educational structure of host institution country to that of prospective international students’ countries would create problem even in the beginning of the study. The challenges will be even greater if the students were inferior in their pre-university preparation in their own country.

CONCLUSIONS

This presentation has loosely discussed the aspects of internationalization of higher education in terms of definition, policies, preparation, implementation and recognition. Roles of leaders in higher education, strategies for implementation, and possible challenges have been listed. These listings are by no means exhaustive. They were listed with the assumption that they are generally applicable to any institution. However it must be appreciated that each institution is an individual of their own right, they may have their own strategies, and facing challenges peculiar to that institution only. In this presentation no specific solutions to the challenges were given. It is hoped that by knowing the roles and the possible barriers that they may faced, the main players would formulate their own solutions, acceptable within the constraints of their institution. As a concluding remark, let us look at the present scenario of higher education in India that may give some ideas to the internationalization movement.

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