

Chapter 10

Networking International Student Collaboration and Experiential Exercise Projects

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes and reflects on an experiential exercise from the points of view of instructor and students attending University Center of Economic and Managerial Sciences at University of Guadalajara and participating in the “X-Culture International Student Collaboration Project” as a professional, inter-personal, and inter-institutional networking platform.

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing trend on an increasing number of international student collaboration agreements among institutions of higher education to promote educative exchange programs, internationalization of teaching, research, curricula, etc. Current literature on internationalization of student cooperation projects and international academic exchange fail to adequately address the local teaching and research dimensions, including the international and global academic activities of local institutions and agents. Institutional efforts to internationalize and play an important academic role at the global competitive dimension go beyond the overcoming the character of multiple local constraints. Global economic, social, political, cultural, and

educational forces driven by information and communication technologies have an impact on higher education institutions and pulling them to become international and even global actors.

Neo-liberal economic policies emphasize the role of educative institutions in the economy by confronting states versus higher education institutions, and states versus markets. These economic policies are intended to reducing subsidization, shifting the costs to the consumers and market and to be accountable for institutional performance (Neave and Van Vught 1991). Neoliberal governments are structuring higher education systems and institutions into a more marketplace under the paradox of “steering from a distance” (Marginson 1997; Meek, Goedegebuure, Kivenen and Rinne, 1996) and increasing demands on ac-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-6198-1.ch010

countability of higher education as “evaluative” states (Neave 1998).

Some local institutional structures may be more resistant to educative, science, technology, cultural, etc., policies dictated by global and international institutions. Institutional structures of education systems differ substantially across nations in several institutional features such as the educational decision-making powers and processes, resource allocation, incentives to different actors and agents, etc., which involve differences on educational student’s performance, etc. Institutional features of the high education system influence the incentives of foreign students to determine the resources the students spend to achieve higher performance.

Differences in the institutional incentive structures determined by estimates of features in education systems at student-level strongly influence student performance (Woßmann, 2003). Differences in institutional incentive mechanisms may explain the international differences in international students’ cognitive skills and thus, in students’ performance. Other local institutional structures may have an influence on the design of international policies, providing local experiences and agency for adjusting structural adjustment policies.

Academic institutions are embedded in national state and marketplace systems. Nation states and institutions focused on the trend towards internationalization of higher education are committing resources and efforts to produce and distribute research and knowledge at the international level. To assess the institutional research and knowledge production capacities, one way is to compare the research infrastructure against national capital wealth. Internationalization of higher education programs is related to the provision of funding to facilitate persons and institutions to engage in international academic and educative activities (Knight, 2004). Internationalization of higher education may reflect the institutional priorities of universities and academic organizations.

International student multidisciplinary collaboration is the key to solving many global problems related with business economics and management. At the international academic institutional level may be more interest in pursue financial purposes by recruiting fee-paying foreign students while at the national sector level the interest may be more emphasis on the cultural and social goals. Traditionally, international student collaboration programs at the inter-personal and inter-institutional levels are considered as strategies and policies designed and implemented either at home institution or at a host or exchange institution abroad.

The international higher education policies integrate and sustain the institutional vision and mission regarding the international orientation of student collaboration projects and exchange academic programs. Institutional vision, mission and cultures may result in aggressively competitive strategies to get better positioned in the global academic market combining international teaching, research and services’ projects. It is assumed that the market is a terrain of natural private freedom functioning according to natural laws prior to the state that have shaped higher education institutions.

Also, traditionally, international student collaboration programs through academic and research projects may be considered as a contribution to the development and technical assistance work framed by nation-building efforts of a developing country. Institutions of higher education for nation-building purposes may be more oriented to receive foreign education programs and student collaboration projects from developed countries and are less interested in export academic programs. Teaching-focused and export-oriented institutions are revenue driven operating in the global market of higher education for business purposes catering at lower quality for lower cost. Quality of higher education is dependent on the overall perceptions on a specific national education

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