



Internationalization of Higher Education Curricula across the World

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ABSTRACT: Today the subject of internationalization of higher education has been accompanied with the issues such as rapid changes, rebuilding of programs, elimination of geographical borders, and access to the new information and technology. Curriculum planners have made plans for the internationalization of the higher education systems in most countries of the world. The objective of this article is to study and compare the efforts which have been made by the universities in different countries for the Internationalization of the higher education. This article is a comparative study which uses a qualitative content analysis with inductive category development, and deals with the studying and comparing of different approaches and plans for the Internationalization of curriculum of the higher education (including strategies, programs, activities and methods of teaching and learning) in countries like the United States America, Finland, and Japan.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher Education, Curriculum Educational Systems, Comparative Study

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

INTRODUCTION

There is currently a widespread belief that internationalization should not be regarded as a goal in it, but rather as a means to improve the quality of education. Many national and institutional policy documents set down quality as one of the major goals of internationalization (Ewell & Paulson, 1997). The perceived need for the internationalization of higher education based on diversity entails conditions, weighs on the running of higher education institutions and is correlated with quality assurance. Both, internationalization as well as quality assurance should be considered as a challenge for higher education institutions. Statements on the relationship between internationalization and quality are usually based on the assumption or expectation that international co-operation and the exchange of individual students, teachers or researchers add to the critical mass, allow for mutual learning, for a comparison and synthesis of best approaches and practices, for cross-cultural understanding, for foreign language acquisition, etc. It is at the individual, the project, the institutional and even the system level that this international co-operation and exchange is expected to contribute to the quality of processes and outcomes (Woodhouse, 1996).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is a comparative study which uses a qualitative content analysis with inductive category development. It includes techniques for analyzing and comparing systematic contexts, organizing the results, the observations, the interviews and the contexts. In the inductive category development the attitudes and

findings are studied at first, and then final conclusion is made (Mayring, 2000). Thus, the data is primarily extracted and gathered through search motors of Google, yahoo, AltaVista, Google scholar, find article, written and electronic library sources sending e-mails, and the data basis for the internationalization of higher education curriculum in the selected countries. After reviewing the literature of the research in the universities of selected countries, the strategies, plans and activities of these countries, including the U.S., Finland and Japan. For the Internationalization of the higher education and learning and teaching methods have been compared and analyzed and finally the each one conclusion has been presented in the tables.

RESULTS

3.1 Internationalization and quality assurance of higher education curriculum in the United States of America: Internationalizing the Curriculum

Internationalization now appears to have become a robust trend both in American higher education and in the higher education systems of other countries (Cornwell & Stoddard, 1999; Altbach, 2002; Green & Barblan, 2004). Qiang (2003) observes that the internationalization of education is necessary for quality assurance in higher education and preparing college graduates who comprehend the globalization of societies, economic and labor markets. He further states that these contingencies demand not only specific types of knowledge but also "multilingualism and social and intercultural skills and attitudes".

Internationalizing the curriculum appeared to present a feasible and logical first step toward internationalization in American higher education, one that would conceivably impact student learning for the largest number of students (Green et al., 2003).

Among all the elements of an internationalized campus, the curriculum stands out as the key part of any internationalization effort if all students are to experience international learning in colleges (Siaya et al., 2003). Internationalization of the curriculum is indeed the 'heart of the matter.' It is the principal mechanism that institutions can use to shape student learning and, ideally, to provide a series of mutually reinforcing learning opportunities. Such opportunities will allow students to develop a nuanced understanding of the place that their own cultures and assumptions occupy in the larger global context. Internationalizing the curriculum is a complex task, requiring attention to general education, the major and pedagogy.

3.2. Internationalization of higher education curriculum in universities Finland: International interaction

The internationalization of education became a central goal of educational policy in Finland, mainly at the end of the 1980s. This was of course affected by the changes that occurred in Finland's international position at that time, in particular its involvement in the European integration process. Participation in the integration process called for a great upsurge in international activity throughout the educational system, and especially in higher education. This was the result of rapid, large-scale changes in the need for expertise because the opening of Finland's rather closed society and economy to international cooperation and competition required a profound transformation of established practices (Ministry of education 2001).

High international quality and increased efficiency are the main goals set out for universities and polytechnics in documents on educational policy. International interaction is seen as an essential factor for the quality of education. Higher education should also provide those who complete degrees with the ability to work on the international labor market. Higher education in Finland is extensive and diverse, and the network covers the entire country. The extent of the network is adequate to ensure regional development and equality (Kwiek, 2001).

Kappler (2008) states "international activities at the University of Helsinki are manifested especially through international cooperation in research; researcher, teacher and student exchanges; the widespread use of English as language of instruction; publishing in international journals and series; and the wide-ranging linguistic abilities of both teachers and students, along with their active participation in international co-operation projects. The mission of the University of Helsinki is defined by law: "The University is charged with promoting independent academic research and scientific knowledge, providing the highest quality instruction based on research, and educating young people to serve their country and humankind."

3-3 The internationalization of curriculum in Japan universities: passing from traditional internationalization

The internationalization of curriculum in Japan's universities has been defined as a process of planning and performing the programs with beyond-nationality approach (Hung, 2007). The internationalization of curriculum in Japan's universities includes all kinds of curriculums which are prepared for the local and foreign students. New forms of internationalization of curriculum in Japan's universities include flexible international programs, flexible international institutes and virtual courses (Takeda, 1999).

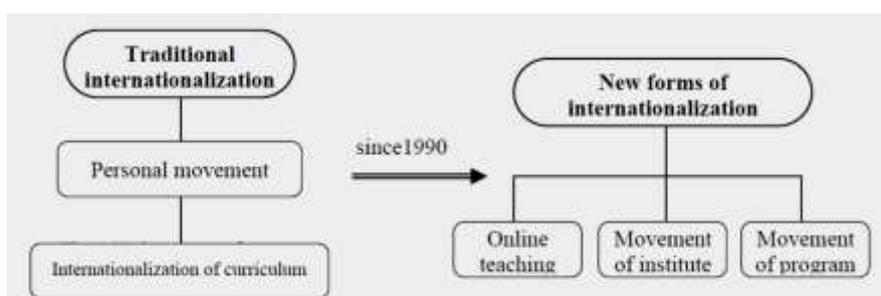
Table 1: internationalization and quality assurance of higher education curriculum in the United States of America

Strategy	Programs	Activity
Improving student learning by internationalization of the curriculum	<p>Creation of new courses focusing on internationalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of honors and independent study courses • Recruitment of international faculty • Universal student reading list on international themes • Adoption of textbooks with international content • Development and implementation of international modules to be incorporated into existing courses. 	<p>Incorporate international learning into the general education curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infuse the disciplines with international perspectives and content • Use comparative educational approaches • Discuss international issues in courses and through interdisciplinary studies

Table 2: Internationalization and quality assurance of higher education curriculum in Finland

Strategy	Program	Activities
International interaction	Promote high quality research and education of researchers. • Develop teaching and its assessment. • Promote international activities through enhancement of interaction and by Taking advantage of international research funds. Increase interdisciplinary co-operation in research and teaching. • Promote the university's impact on the external community.	Student exchange Trainee exchanges Teacher exchange Awarding double degree Postgraduate and research cooperation Quality Degree structure Instruction in foreign languages, teaching Finnish

Figure 1: the process of internationalization of higher education in Japan



DISCUSSION

The Comparison of the strategies in the four countries of the US, Finland and Japan indicates that the most important strategy in these countries is the internationalization of the curriculum and learning, and supplementing international content to the existing curriculums and the geographical movement of teachers and students in exchange plans is less considered. Most of these countries also focus on their own native. Local and national curriculums in order to develop them throughout the world.

An internationalized curriculum can be practical and performable when there is a possibility of expression and planning of various cultures in it. While respecting the rights and values of the nations, it makes the students ready for the global market, encourages active citizens of the world to take part in the international scenes, and promotes effective communicative skills, and ability of problem solving, and the philosophical spirit which is required to make multi cultural harmony. Educationally, it's justifiable that the university doesn't prepare student for life, job, and business in the international tasks. However, it's more important that the university provides a means for the students to gain international literacy.

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