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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

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RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

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APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COLLABORATION AND EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE PROJECTS AS A PROFESSIONAL, INTER-PERSONAL AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKING PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT

This paper has the aim to analyze and to reflect on the experiential exercise from the point of views 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.

KEYWORDS

Experiential exercise projects, international student collaboration program, inter-institutional, networking, professional development, inter-personal.

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 accountability 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

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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 system rather than specific academic institutions (OECD 2004, p. 266).

International education takes place in not single and unified global market but in several markets largely lying on local and regional boundaries around the world. International higher education and international student collaboration initiatives implemented in most national and even international universities and institutions provide students limited basic levels of international knowledge, skills and competencies. Higher education institutions play an important role in the production and distribution of scientific, technological and cultural knowledge.

Academic capitalism as a metaphor used to describe a trend towards standardization and normalization of global academic and educative institutions, faculty, professionals, programs, curricula, knowledge, internal management and governance, etc., while ignoring the local contributions. The management and control of universities and institutions of higher education regarding their function of training and developing professionals requires flexibility, high level of autonomy and institutional independence. This ideal status of academic and research institutions is in contradiction to global and international agencies´ recommendations regarding the dominant patterns on global accreditation and certification of international student collaboration projects and academic exchange programs.

INSTITUTIONAL CATEGORIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COLLABORATION PROJECTS

Global and international agencies' are influential spheres with capacities to establish some recommended patterns to guide the international advanced training and development of professionals. Institutional academic institutions of higher education and universities are categorized between elite-high status world class such as the Ivy League, intermediate level such as the Western European Universities and mass institutions such as more of the Asian Universities. Academic institutions located in the intermediate segments of higher education global market find some entry barriers to move upwards to higher segments.

Intermediate institutions hardly receive full recognition for the quality of their teaching and research. Some intermediate academic institutions are entrepreneurially oriented whether non-profit or for-profit, struggle to secure income by filling the available places, dedicating their efforts to teaching as the core business. Some international entrepreneurial academic institutions specialize in high levels of fee-paying foreign students based on massive hyper-marketing programs abroad to maximize institutional revenues and profits that are reinvested into more foreign business. The revenue driven international institutions of higher education are more mass and commercially oriented, teaching focused and less prestigious in research.

Teaching-oriented institutions as intermediate are perceived as low social status in their market position with low value access places. Some of the intermediate institutions do not have enough resources to get committed to research. Some intermediate teaching-focused institutions are for profit or public sector with strong commercial orientations and practices characterized by high value and resource scarcity. The high value position of any institutional higher education program is subject to limitations constraining the growth of institutions producing high value positional goods and services.

High status, world class and elite universities focused on status maximization while mass institutions are characterized by expansive place-filling. Elite English-speaking institutions are fully engaged and well positioned in the dominant dynamics of global competition to attract affluent and fee-paying students from emerging economies. Institutional academic and intellectual leadership at international and global levels follows from expensive faculty and researchers concentrated in scientific and technological areas of strength and well-funded infrastructure. International high value elite academic institutions are few and very limited in size and most of them are not interested in expanding enrollment of fee-paying students and optimizing research funding.

International institutions compete for international research funding targeting public and private projects, philanthropy, services, consultancy, patents, etc. Although there is not consistent relation between research and the quality of teaching (Terenzini and Pascarella, 1994) teaching-research nexus shapes the institutional culture of comprehensive research universities. Institutions of higher education are influenced by the national institutional culture and identities and economic, social and political structures. Institutional culture of more internationalized universities tends to be more autonomous and entrepreneurial oriented corporations driven by the global business systems. Changes in the institutional cultures are related to changes in economic globalization processes and global commercial competition.

In very competitive times signaled by an aggressive hyper-marketing of high quality international exchange academic and professional development programs and marked by cost-cutting and public funding reductions, it seems that only elite world class universities can be competitive in delivering educative, academic and research services. Marketing and media exposition of institutional international programs of higher education affects consumer awareness and creates a positional market (Geiger, 2004), high status, branding reputation and prestige rankings as measures of selectivity and costs. International institutions exercising branding reputation as a symbolic power limit the access to foreign students.

International elite universities and institutions of higher education compete for tuition revenues from undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate exchange academic, educative and professional development programs designed to meet the needs of international students. The tuition paid by international students may have an impact on institutional resource allocation and costs of services provided and influencing the educational processes. Academic institutions after gaining branding reputation and prestige increase their tuitions revenues to complement public funding for research and to be able to pay high-cost faculty.

To the rest universities around the world and internationally oriented, it is required to combine institutional and professional efforts to provide a competitive teaching and research. High research and teaching performing universities are the magnet to attract bright students, confirming the positive links between the quality of teaching and research is enhanced more by the status that by the professional performance en each domain. Status relationships between students, intimacy and pleasantness of intergroup interactions and working on common goals for the group as a whole are important elements (Amir, 1969).

However, it is not necessarily the case supported by the "X-Culture International Student Collaboration Project", an international business academic program lead by University of North Caroline, Greensboro. The Instructor's Handbook describes and details the project stating that "The purpose of the X-Culture project is two-fold: first, to enhance learning in International Business/Management and related courses; second, to provide a platform for high quality International Business research." (Taras, 2011, 5). According to this Handbook, the last term October – December 2011 semester, there were participating 145 student teams with a total number of 1,150 students from 26 universities and 22 countries.

Nevertheless, for universities participating in high value international education exchange and student collaboration programs are required to maintain professional leadership. This paper has the aim to analyze and to reflect on the experiential exercise from the point of views 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.

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ANALYTICAL MODEL FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COLLABORATION

International student collaborations projects which implies studying, learning and training at universities other than the academic institution at which the student originally enrolled, has been for a long time an important element in academic professional education and development. Internationalization of higher education in general and international student collaboration programs have different interpretations depending of national and institutional culture, values, priorities, resources, policies, actions, etc. Internationalization process of higher education and academic exchange programs are characterized and categorized in relation of the approach taken to this interpretation.

To analyze in some detail the dynamic relationships involved in international student collaboration projects, the elements of the analytical model used are depicted ion the following figure 1.

FIGURE 1: ANALYTICAL MODEL TO SHOW THE ELEMENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COLLABORATION PROJECTS
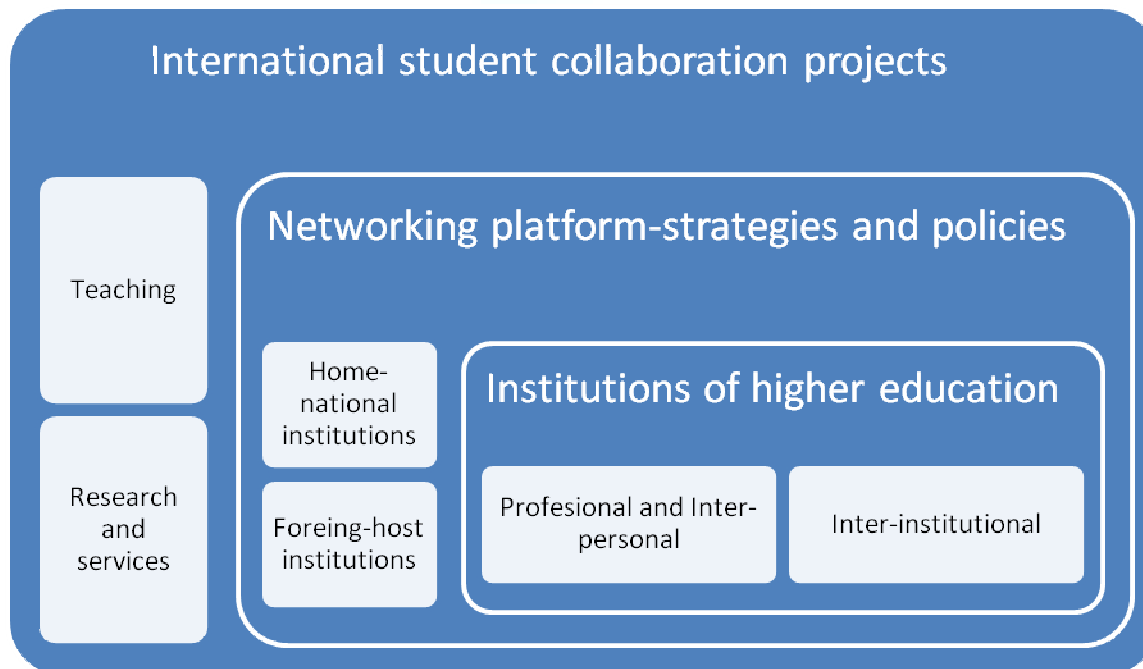
The process of internationalization is the institutional integration of an international dimension into teaching, learning, and service functions (Knight, 2004). Academic institutions in early stage of internationalization process may assess the opportunities, challenges and benefits to commit to different purposes of an international educative orientation and to establish international inter-institutional liaisons. The international orientation of an institutional academic level may be influenced by some important factors such as international policies orientation in higher education, organizational vision and mission, availability of resources, funding sources, faculty profile, etc.

Academic institutions may be motivated to become more international in order to achieve international recognition of high-quality branding reputation, as well as to generate more financial resources and sources of income by recruiting foreign fee-paying students. Institutional reputation of higher education programs is a positioned good (Hirsch, 1976) placed as a social status and better opportunities for students while teaching quality receives indifference. The motives to establish international inter-institutional linkages have different purposes for different academic institutions such as international student collaboration programs, joint teaching and research initiatives, academic mobility, curriculum development, publishing agreements, faculty training and development, etc.

One of the motives to internationalize university academic and research activities is an effort to enhance institutional revenues or high status position within the local higher education system. Motivations and forces driving internationalization of higher education programs vary from institution to institution and from country to country although the primary rationale may be the internationalization of research and knowledge production (Knight, 2004). Public non-profit educative institutions may have some income available to fund other activities, although Knight (2004) argues that the economic rationale is dependent on the commercialization and commoditization of cross-border delivery of education programs and services.

Academic institutions and countries may conceptualize and implement several approaches international student collaboration projects at the same time (Knight & de Wit, 1999). Some countries as well as some universities partially close the doors to international student collaboration, in part because of possible concerns about low academic level and the lack of adequate international supervision from the sponsoring institutions or simply by an ethnocentric orientation. Liu (1998) emphasizes de common ethnocentrism arguing that educational do not take account of the different contexts and traditions, adopting ideas and practices that maybe not be useful in their home environment (Liu 1998: 4).

Liu's contribution is to recognize the importance to develop appropriate pedagogies for the specific educational contexts and traditions rather than assuming that the Western pedagogies must be right for all (Holliday 1994; Kramsch and Sullivan 1996). The student's perceptions on nationality and ethnic status and his or her attitudes toward host country is referred as the "status-deprivation" hypothesis (Mishler, 1965), the "perceptual-reciprocity" hypothesis (Ibrahim, 1970) and "two way mirror" hypothesis (Davis 1971). Foreign student needs to attain adjustment as a national representative sensitive about his or her nationality and ethnic background (Bochner, 1972). Research on foreign student adjustment have been developed on a limited methods based mainly on questionnaires and checklists.

Evaluative perceptions, ethnocentric attitudes and stereotypes, status differentials, fear of rejection and the high level of anxiety and threat to self-esteem associated with intercultural interactions and encounters, among other factors, may inhibit social interactions with host cultures (Porter, 1972; Wedge, 1972). Cultures may differ in their level of stressful demands and psychological differentiation (Berry, 1975; Witkin & Berry, 1975) thus, can be hypothesized that students may better adjust when their interactions are with other individuals in cultures characterized by similar level of differentiation. Multiple host cultures (Klineberg & Hull, 1979) compare the adjustment of students from more than one host culture.

An international exchange program might have as outcomes the development of favorable and appreciation attitudes toward the host culture, although this goal may be simple, because the students may develop some differentiated images and not necessarily all positive attitudes (Heath, 1970). There is a reciprocal relationship between the nature of social interaction and a positive adjustment relationship whereby "social relations and adjustment reinforce each other, with social relations easing adjustment, and greater adjustment freeing the student to enter more fully into social relations" (Selltiz et al., 1963, p. 159). Increased social interaction relates to more favorable attitudes and better personal adjustments, supporting the modified culture contact hypothesis and the association hypothesis (Klineberg and Hull, 1979).

Empirical studies found support for the association hypothesis proving that increased social interactions among students with host nationals lead to improved adjustment and with more favorable attitudes toward the hosts (Chang, 1973). More superficial personal changes than changes in cultural values may be more

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consistent outcomes of student adaptation (Klineberg & Hull, 1979). The amount of contacts and interactions between students are not very extensive (Klineberg & Hull, 1979) many students report wishing to have more interactions with host national (Hull, 1978) some students tend to wait for host cultures to initiate contact and interaction (Gezi, 1961).

Objective personal self-reliance and self-confidence, appreciation and more favorable attitudes toward the host country, a broader international mindedness, personal self-awareness, ethnocentrism reduced, etc., are some of the outcomes of successful student adaptation (Adler, 1975). Changes in personal self-reliance and self-awareness are more likely to be student outcomes than changes cultural value-based. Adaptation to the psychological and cultural interactions generally involves gradual adaptations to social interaction patterns, acceptance of individual differences and changes in personal culture identities. Empirical studies strongly support the relationship between accorded national status and attitudes toward host country for students from low status countries.

Studies aimed at determining the difficulties among students coming from different cultures with different levels of differentiation and autonomy to interact with each other. A student who would have less difficulties in adapting to other foreign participants is profiled as playing a role of universal communicator (Gardner, 1962) and multi-cultural (Adler, 1977) described and characterized as the student that has cultural sensitivity, pattern of identity and resiliency, that may help the participant to adjust and adapt to multiple cultures. Academic institutions may concentrate only at home their international programs on the cross-cultural and intercultural dimension and concentrating on teaching, research and services without getting involved on cross-border and mobility programs. An ethical concern for the cross-cultural student exchange programs should be how much the participant should be encouraged to assimilate the new culture. Higginbotham (1979), Vontress (1976) and Wintrob (1976) argue that contacts with other cultures are one important qualification for cross-cultural interactions that may be able to develop strategies for adjustment to other new cultural environments. Cross-cultural experiences are more likely to increase interest and abilities in international issues and activities, to focus decision making and problem solving situations from multiple international perspectives. Sharing the distribution of teaching and research capacities underpinning personal and professional academic development programs among the participant universities and institutions of higher education, is the basic principle of this international student collaboration programs.

There are international professional associations and groups working and operating at global level and across national boundaries in international student collaboration projects in the field of international business-higher education programs. These international professional associations are supported by local professional associations and collectivities influencing professional practices and initiatives in higher education activities and competing in international student collaboration projects and academic programs. Belonging to a network or consortium of international universities, local institutions of higher education may develop academic relationships and agreements regarding the international student collaboration projects based on professional advanced training and development and the exchange of faculty, researchers and students.

Global flows of interactions and relationships for international exchange educative programs and international student collaboration projects between different individuals, institutions and nations may be sometimes two-way and other times uni-directional. An important function of international student collaboration projects supported by different types of organizational configurations of universities and institutions of higher education is to prepare the professionals, academics, scholars, scientists and teachers capable to transfer technological capabilities and scientific knowledge from developed countries to developing countries. However, international private higher education institutions either may have research capacity but others are mostly low performers teaching institutions.

Leading universities in developed nations are global players in their own right but in emerging countries are weak institutions that often lack the resources and the research capacity and technological infrastructure to move forward. A starting approach is the triangle heuristic model developed by Clark (1983), Becher and Kogan (1992), and Kogan and Hanney (2000), connects the actions of professional/collegial related to institutions of higher education systems, governmental and managerial related to national states and markets including the global market, are the factors framing the international student collaboration projects intersecting and emphasizing the simultaneity of local, national and global dimensions (Marginson and Rhoades, 2000).

Beyond the model of the triangle heuristic based on the interactions of the nation state and national markets regarding the national systems/institutions of higher education. To focus on an analysis on the collective action of specific organizations (Marginson and Rhoades, 2000:290) developed the hexagon agency heuristic model represented by the interrelationships among six variables, named as "global government and non-governmental agencies, human agency in global polities, global economic agencies and markets, human agency in global economies, global educational and professional agencies, and human agency in higher education". Nation states, markets, and institutions of higher education can be characterized in terms of global, international, national, regional, and local agency.

The Glonacal Agency Heuristic model provides an analytic mechanism to understand the interrelationships between polities, markets and professionals operating at local, national and global domains. Higher education institutions as agency coordinate relationships with markets and national governments. Global agency exercises influence on shaping national higher education strategies, policies and practices. National and institutional strategies and policies are designed to emphasize the priorities established in the strategic planning and to implement resources and efforts to achieve the goals of internationalization. Academic institutions entering into international and global competition require to design and implement strategic options for a development and growth more in line with the new self identities.

Policy analyses lack "very fine grained analyses" (Kogan, 1996, p. 397) of institutional change in the current academic practices (Teichler, 1993). Policy analysis in higher education turns on in favor of institutional autonomy and against regulation. Institutional policymakers require the development of frameworks to policy analysis of the different issues and features involves any international student collaboration project in order to design a consistent approach to the strategic planning efforts. A framework of economic and political rationales combines national and institutional levels as the driving forces of international programs in student collaboration and academic exchange.

The strategies at inter-institutional level of international student collaboration and exchange projects are referred to the orientation of institutional resources to promote and develop initiatives and programs. Night (2004) argues that the notion of organizational strategies needs to be broadening beyond the inter-institutional level to the higher education sector level by introducing policies and programs. National and international policies in education affect both the public and private education institutions, the commercially oriented new providers and should be addressed using a conceptual framework at the inter-institutional level. Policies are statements and directives that refer to priorities and plans related to the international dimension, including the institution's mission statement, purpose, values, and functions.

Any institution of higher education has a mission or a purpose, functions and tasks including the delivery of teaching, research and services (Knight, 2004). Institutional policies may address specific issues of international student exchange programs and collaboration projects to be sustained and integrated into the organizational vision and mission. International education policies have implications for all types of academic and educative institutions, public and private, new providers for-profit, or nonprofit institutions, foundations, international agencies, etc. At the inter-institutional level, policies include statements, directives, and planning addressing the international implications on higher education. According to these concepts, international student collaborations policies may include a wide range of implications going from international linkages and partnerships, policies on study abroad, student support, curriculum, research, faculty development, etc.

In turn, higher education policies shape the core functions of universities and educative institutions regarding the academic and scientific training and development of professionals. The source of influence of international and global agencies and organizations lies in the exercise of different political and cultural capacities through several financial resources and control mechanisms to invest in certain international student collaboration projects and academic exchange mechanisms. Efficient institutional and organizational arrangements involving the right external control mechanisms might be designed to enhance international student performance and to inhibit moral hazard and opportunistic behaviors.

Support to this projects and programs aimed to enhance professional training and development is always subject to certain hegemonic conditions and policies in international higher education. International professional associations and international accrediting and certification bodies in professional education wield considerable influence on Mexican universities and institutions of higher education motivated by the desire to enable professionals to compete in international

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labor markets dominated by foreign multinational firms. On a competitive international market of higher education, national systems and institutional programs are ranked by employers and students on the basis of branding reputation and field of study.

A constructivist approach to analyze the role of interaction-collaboration learning processes should consider that the tutor gradually must hand over control to the group of students (Rosenshine and Meister, 1994). Kneser, Pilkington and Treasure-Jones (2001) found that a tutor model some learning supportive roles and encourage students to take these roles. If the aim of the tutor is to devolve active roles to students but require feedback to facilitate learning strategies according to the profiles of the students and monitor balance of participation and advances. Students report an increased international understanding as a result of their participation, introducing international issues and considerations into their thinking.

Some aspects of the learning international environment consider that engaging students in active experimentation, interactive tasks and reflecting discussion lead to the development of independent thinking and reasoning (Cole and Wertsch, 1996). Factor affecting the interactions for learning are associated with class management. Students that take more roles and activities are more likely to succeed (Rosenshine and Meister, 1994). Some forms of productive interactions beneficial to collaborative learning experiences include: Articulation or self-explanation (Van Lehn, Jones & Chi 1992), transactive reasoning (Kruger, 1993), co-construction or negotiation (Baker, 1994), question asking (Graesser & Person, 1994), inquiring and explaining behavior from students (Pilkington & Parker-Jones, 1996), constructive conflict or argumentation (Kuhn, Shaw & Felton, 1997).

Joint problem-solving activities may be more adequate for small group peer collaboration and interactions. Small-group interactions for collaboration involve pre-training (Crook, 1994) to increase the frequency and quality of question asking (Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999). The smaller is the group greater problems may experience in co-ordinating group collaborations.

There are several empirical analyses conducted to investigate the impact, effects, challenges and consequences that international student collaboration projects and educative exchange programs may have on the professional and personal development. Using exchange structure analysis, Kneser, Pilkington and Treasure-Jones (2001) found that some active and passive patterns of exchange roles amongst participants are more frequently used in some students' protocols associated with the role of tutor. Messer and Wolter (2007) investigated the extent of an exchange semester affecting the professional career of university graduates finding a positive correlation based on the assumption that students participating in international educative exchange programs enhance quality of human capital and consequently better prospects in the labor market.

Students from English-language nations may benefit from the dominance of English. Most of the faculty, academic, research and scholar activities of institutions and universities are globally networked, although the weight of the international realm is more charged to those networks that use of English-language as the first language. This trend is significant for local and global professional development. However, despite it can be considered there is a global hierarchy, some experiential student exchange programs demonstrate that there is necessary to foster scholar and research collaboration and to non-commercial student exchange.

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE PROJECTS AS A PROFESSIONAL, INTER-PERSONAL AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKING PLATFORM

Participants in the course of International Business promoted by "X-Culture International Student Collaboration Project" consider the experience is relevant to their personal and professional development and value the benefits received from the academic exchange program and the challenges faced. Given the global increase in demand for international good quality higher education, there are new institutional providers of international academic and student collaboration projects with new types of instruction materials and delivery methods of education programs.

The process of internationalization of higher education in general and student collaboration projects in particular, are taking place at inter-personal and inter-institutional level more than a national level. National and inter-institutional levels may have linked and complementary rational purposes in the internationalization academic and educative processes. However, when this process is bottom-up it may be more possible that an institution pursue its own goals differing from the other institutions. The emphasis on a bottom-up inter-individuals and inter-institutional approach has some funding and policy implications for the internationalization process of any academic exchange program.

Arum and van de Water (1992) defined internationalization of higher education in relatively clear terms as a set of activities executed at inter-institutional level proposing that "the multiple activities, programs and services that fall within international studies, international educational exchange and technical cooperation" (Arum & van de Water, 1992, p. 202). Internationalization of higher education as an organizational approach is a process integrated and sustainable at inter-institutional level, defined by Knight (1994) as the "process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution" (Knight, 1994, p. 7).

Soderqvist (2002) focuses on a holistic approach of the education change process from national to international institutions of higher education and management at the institutional level but leading to an international dimension in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning desired competencies (Soderqvist, 2002, p. 29). However, Van derWende (1997) argues that the bottom-up approach based on inter-institutional interrelationships has several limitations without taking into consideration the globalization process and other external environmental variables of higher education. Internationalization of higher education is defined as "any systematic effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets" (Van derWende, 1997: p. 18).

International student collaboration projects may have limited applicability to individuals and institutions, although it is a process that has been taking place from bottom-up approach instead of a top-down approach, besides there is a dynamic interrelationship between both approaches (Knight, 2004). Internationalization of higher education at the national/sector/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. (Knight, 2003, p. 2). The inter-institutional level approach focuses to the purpose, function and delivery of international and cross-cultural higher education dimensions in general and student collaboration projects in particular.

Singh, Huang, & Thompson (1962) found differences between host and foreign students participating in international student collaboration projects. Foreign students when studying abroad have to face important problems, although financial problems appear to predominate (Klineberg & Hull, 1979). Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005) report on decisions made by participants in student exchange programs on issues such as selection of institutions and programs, comparing options in home institutions and partner institutions abroad, relevance in studying in foreign academic institutions, etc. Foreign students selecting international institutional brands consider some key choice factors according to their perceptions on quality of education and the tendency to assimilate foreign institutions.

The main reasons students select a partner institution to study abroad reported by Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005) is the availability of foreign academic institution as a partner, the country and the known people that attended. The academic interest in studying abroad was less important than the location of host institution and traveling around. The research conducted by Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005) found that 59 percent felt that the level of difficulty of the academic program in a foreign host institution was the same or easier as compared to their home institution. Only 26.4% of the respondent students rated the exchange institution as better when compared the overall level of structure and organization with their home institution.

However, is very significant that 42.6% rated the host institution as worse than the home institution. Incoming students emphasized more the academic program and were impressed with the housing arrangements of their exchange institution. Regarding how relevant was the international experience, 58.1% of the students rated it as very relevant to their future job opportunities. Female students rated higher the level of personal care for their needs as a student at the exchange institution than males.

In the long term international student collaboration could change the terms of academic and research competition, given the strength of the professional, inter-personal and inter-institutional networking platform formed by the participating universities, scholars and students. Universities, institutions of research and higher education, international agencies, governmental agencies, foundations, professional associations and other academic organizations form networks aimed to deliver cross-border academic and educative services, international student collaboration projects, academic and educative exchange programs, etc.

A new type of international institutions have emerged as a commercial providers focusing on delivering education, teaching, training and other services across borders complementing with institutions of higher education. These providers vary among the different institutions and different nations. Types of local and

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foreign academic and research partnerships and networks among institutions of higher education, research centers, scientific academies and bodies, local and foreign governmental agencies, foundations, etc. slightly differ in aims, resources, etc., thereby illustrating the creativity, innovation and diversity of new international student collaborations. The process of internationalization and globalization of higher education may reflect also the institutional diversity.

Networks of universities, institutions of research and higher education and other academic organizations may be self-accredited and self-appointing their faculty and academic members interested in improving international academic quality standards and achieving accreditation. International and governmental agencies related to higher education and universities network with each other at inter-institutional level, to policing and strategizing reforms to the global educative system in a more dynamic environment. Policy makers in higher education, who enact, design and implement higher education policies should have a clear nation's project and the role that universities and academic institutions play in training and developing professionals in a more global economy.

The international position of the role of national universities in academic training and development of professionals entering the global market signals the importance that nation states gives to higher education policies. Academic and research institutions of higher education are interested in engaging in cross-border academic markets. Research and academic collaboration programs at institutional-level involve organization strategies centered on scholars and students exchange programs. Policies and strategies focused on international student collaboration projects are designed and implemented by networks of institutions of higher education and agencies to meet their needs and strengths and to map their spheres, such as the academic freedom that according to Altbach (2001, p. 206) is not important issue in the international agenda.

Global and international academic agencies may exercise different spheres of influence, pressure and capacities of professional academic associations and groups in the global arena on the design and implementation of national higher education policies. However, it should be considered that there are some national professional academic associations and groups that although they accept the trend towards internationalization of education resist the imposition of international policies in higher education and define and advance academic freedom in the issue of international education agenda. An institutional network may advance initiatives on the global agenda as suggested by Altbach (2001) to promote and enhance international academic freedom among all the members at professional, inter-personal and inter-institutional levels and at the local, national and global spheres.

Tracking the resources, professional spheres and capabilities of universities' networks may be possible to identify the higher education strategies and policies that have more impact in successful professionals. Networks operating in several spheres, locally, nationally and globally may strategize the use of resources, capabilities, brand reputation, etc. Institutions of higher education with a strong international profile and orientation are more completive in achieving higher academic standards and outcomes. Mature institutions approach internationalization of higher education programs and projects develop strategic alliances to achieve specific outcomes and not as inactive paper-based arrangements (Knight, 2004).

Strategic alliances among institutions of higher education can be developed at both the national and inter-institutional as a means to achieving higher standards on academic, scientific research, technological, cultural, economic and financial objectives. Academic institutions are seeking out branding reputation by achieving international accreditation. Institution building combining both, national and institutional levels of higher education as well as institutional international branding and profile are driving forces to enhance internationalization of student collaboration projects and academic exchange programs. Institutional academic strong reputation and status are capable to develop a global branding and to be internationally accredited and certified as the competitive advantage in a more competitive international environment.

Institutions that have achieved already this status compete for a global market share. Foreign academic institutions and new providers are competing for a larger share in the global market for-profit education by recruiting the most brilliant and fee-paying international students. Individuals making choices to enter an international student collaboration program see higher education as a competitive market focusing more on institutional reputation (James, Baldwin, and McInnis, 1999. p.xvi). Students from different cultures may have different impacts on the degree to which they experience some problems (Hull, 1978).

A national culture centered on a more internal control and responsibility for choice and decision making (Sundberg, 1976; Vontress, 1976) may be less appropriate for more group-centered cultures where the external orientation is more valued and accepted as good personal adjustment (Sue, 1978). Cross-cultural research on international student collaboration projects indicates the importance of some aspects of descriptions of culture shocks and student maladjustment which not necessarily is conceptually and experientially equivalent cross-culturally (Marsella, 1980). Foreign students may suffer from culture-based adjustment problems (Klein et al., 1971) aggravated by the stress of new psychological and cultural experience (Zurin &Rubin, 1967).

Differences in adjustment of students from different nationalities are referred as cultural distance, assuming that adjustment is more difficult for students from cultures that are very from host culture (David, 1971). Also favorability of attitudes toward the host culture may be highly differentiated (Mishler, 1965). Students from the host culture may perceive foreign students in terms of cultural and ethnic identity in cross-national interactions (Bochner and Perks, 1971). Instructors abroad may also share some elements considered conducive to adjustment including academic status, values and goals, performance of common tasks (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1960).

International differences in educational student's performance encompass the institutional resource endowments and structure system. International differences in student-level estimations on performance may be more attributed to institutional differences than to resource differences. International differences in both family background and academic institutions are related to international differences in student performance more than institutional resource endowment (Woßmann, 2003). There is scarce evidence of institutional effects on educational performance although the institutional system may have substantial effects on schooling systems. Institutions and institutional structures are viewed as exogenous variables to justify estimations in students' educational performance levels.

Differences on institutional variables have effects are substantial individually and have an impact on student performance. The institutional and organizational arrangements of the different higher education schooling systems are part of these international differences are related to student performance. Institutional and organizational arrangements may be related to national culture characteristics. National schooling systems have different institutional variables affecting the student performance. The analysis of a student's performance is determined by individual influences that are restrained to the institutional system determinants and not controlled by the macro education production functions (Bishop, 1997).

Participants of international student collaborations projects are always concerned about how to adjust to a new culture, institution, language and subjects (Clyne & Rizvi, 1998). A strong stream of research questions preconceptions and explore the nature and extent of cultural influences on learning at the international dimension. There are some common preconceptions about foreign students that do not reflect what they really want and their differences in cultural learning attitudes (Littewood, 2000). The international academic experience has personal and professional consequences for participants, students and teachers placing the experiential exercise projects in a broader perspective.

It is encouraging to witness the increased use being given to academic internationalization programs and projects, meaning the international research, academic and scholar activities for the knowledge, experiences, skills and abilities exchange between students, teachers and researchers. International student collaboration projects include the growing tendency toward global cross-border and cross-cultural development projects involving training and exchange of teaching learning materials and processes, curriculum, etc.

There has been a steady growth of international students seeking to participate in exchange programs and study abroad. When deciding on an exchange program to study abroad are influenced by some important factors which include reputation of universities, affordability for paying for the cost of tuition fees, the marketing of academic programs abroad, psychological and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students to host cultures, the impact on professional development, etc. The literature on the impact on professional development is far less extensive than the impact on choosing study destination. A qualified university academic program is directly related to professional development and career opportunities. The reputation of an academic program includes recognition of the awarded degree.

Internationalization of academic activities at institutional level involves the strategic use of networks and institutional linkages to implement academic development projects. The aim of these international academic programs and projects usually is to obtain desired outcomes on the participants such as developing a more professional profile and competencies, more in accordance with the internationalization and globalization processes. Academic

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internationalization also is related to the cross-borders delivery and exchange of education programs and projects through a variety of institutional arrangements and using several information and communication technologies, pedagogy and educative resources, etc.

Public and private national academic institutions are moving forward internationally beyond traditional approaches to strategize more entrepreneurial and business oriented approaches by implementing new organizational configurations and arrangements to recruit fee-paying foreign students. High value global entrepreneurial education is provided by academic competitive institutions positioned in the global market of higher education and in international business. Some of these new organizational configurations are the formation of networks, consortiums, franchises, strategic alliances, satellite campuses abroad, etc. Some other academic internationalization projects are the outcome of international linkages, strategic alliances, partnerships, research initiatives and projects, branch campuses, franchises, etc.

Universities, institutions of higher education and other providers of international student collaboration programs may establish a network of partners abroad to share and complement educative resources, to undertake common efforts and make them more efficient, and create international academic reputation for their own programs and for the network consortium. One immediate outcome of the academic network is to place and give position for competitive advantage to all the members sharing the international student collaboration project.

The development of networks structured by universities, research centers, institutions of higher education, academic organizations, etc., is a trend in internationalization of student collaboration projects. Development of strategic alliances to create a network for international student collaboration projects is a mean to achieving academic, research, educative, scientific and technological exchange programs. Networks, as an organizational form, may design and implement strategic objectives and policies despite the difficulties emerging from complexities and difficulties of managing educative and academic international agreements among so diversity of cultures and education systems.

In a global academic competition environment, more open networks of universities and institutions offering international student collaboration projects have facilitated the emergence of a rapid development of an academic and educative world-wide market. The emergence of this international educative market has facilitated the positioning of some programs more focused on research capabilities than in teaching capabilities. International academic institutional vertical segmentation is the outcome of positioning a market share in a competitive oligopoly market. The market-oriented universities and institutions of higher education operating as a network in market-based economic systems, the most competitive winner-take-all markets may contribute to broaden their network and spread across the global market.

International higher education programs facing the challenges of global competition should be designed as a more complex world-wide organizational arrangement to facilitate and provide support for global flows of scientific, technological and cultural knowledge, cross-borders encounters among scholars, researchers and students in an open academic information and communication environment. Publishing in academic and scientific reviews and journals enable scholars to establish inter-personal and inter-institutional contacts and relationships through international research networks.

The networking arrangement should be designed in such a way that may avoid uneven patterns characterized by uneven patterns of hierarchical or autonomous relationships and communicative interactions. International high student scores compete for entry to prestigious academic institutions driving the reproduction of hierarchical relationships that match the dynamics of global competitiveness. Student competition is intense for entry to elite academic institutions and if prestige and branding reputation is sustained, more potential students will try to be admitted.

Any exchange network analysis to study international student collaboration projects may identify the agencies and institutions that are the core and those at the periphery or semi-periphery yielding universities' place and position in an international network's stratification system (Chen and Barnett, 2000). Inter-institutional networking may be dominated by structural uneven information and communications flows and linkages established by global competition and global business communication systems originated in American universities (Castells 2001).

Also, the network as an organizational form allows the members to share resources among them operating at the same time globally and locally, to have more inter-personal and inter-institutional dealings to adapt higher education projects to specific variables shaping the local environment. Students who have taken courses designed for international students have revealed that they faced initial difficulties in adapting to the program, such as the language and difference in expectations, stereotypes, etc.

Leading universities and institutions of higher education structured in a network arrangement are more visible delivering high quality educative services with highly qualified academic and scientific staff from across the global market. This academic institutions and universities exercise their academic status by limiting the access of foreign students to the educative programs and by establishing entry barriers to the international academic and student collaboration network.

LESSONS TO BE LEARN

There is increasing tendency to recognize the need for further development of international student collaboration projects introducing new types of different institutional arrangements to form global networks of corporate universities, professional associations, foundations and organizations. The recognition of this need is demanding for a better understanding of the skills and competences needed for personal and professional development in a global environment. Also, this need is demanding further development of cross-border and cross-cultural exchange of academic and educative programs.

Students taking the international educative and academic exchange program promoted by "X-Culture International Student Collaboration Project" and after they have already completed professional education, they have more probabilities to raise professional and personal development expectations. In this sense the international student collaboration project represents a plus added value to their career development and performance. An analysis of the impact of international student collaboration program conducted with the aim to get a broader perspective of the potential professional benefits after graduation, confirms the research findings of Teichler (1996) Teichler & Maiworm (1994) and Teichler & Jahr (2001).

Any academic institution motivated to play internationally in the great leagues should design strategic planning and articulate explicitly the rationales in its vision, mission, motives, values, strategies, policies, projects, programs and outcomes. There are also some implications to be considered with the increasing of academic and student mobility for personal, professional and institutional recognition of academic credentials. Also it is important to assess the role other institutions besides the academic play to support internationalization of higher education such as the accreditation and certification agencies, quality assurance organizations, etc.

There are some arguments to explain why prestigious high valued universities cannot meet the potential demand for educative services for professional development without killing their raison d'etre. One of these arguments sustains that to create and maintain high status profession it should be kept limited the number of new entries into a limited number of high valued academic institutions within international organizational configurations, networks and partnerships. Our position is just the opposite.

There is an increasing demand for high quality professional training and development that cannot be meeting by local universities due to the scarcity of resources. Hard-to-enter institutions reproduce scarcity and hierarchy in an unequal distribution of professional and social opportunities framed by the already legitimized dynamics of global competitiveness (Teese 2000). This situation leads to advanced students who are more capable and have more resources to queue jump by accessing international programs managed by different organizational arrangements. It seems very clear from this experiential international student collaboration that it is legitimate for the participants to have an advantage in their personal and professional career when compared to other non participant students.

Individuals, inter-personal, professional, and inter-institutional academic relationships and exchanges may be integrated and engaged on collective action to fashion the academic discourses, to design and pursue the agendas, to formulate and implement the policy analysis, to develop the strategic planning, to legitimate decisions and governance mechanisms, to manage and control resources and outcomes regarding the international student collaboration projects and academic exchange programs.

Educative and academic institutions are facing specific challenges and opportunities regarding the internationalization of academic programs and international student collaboration projects. Still remain some challenges of facing the form to establish equity and an equitable balance between national students

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participating in such a dynamic international student collaboration project by having access to professional development programs offshore and high demand institutions and courses.

Operating and managing international students' collaboration projects in the organizational forms of international partnerships and networks require many agreements on arrangements, such as who is going to charge the tuition fees and what mechanisms, which is going to test and award qualifications and what mechanisms for accrediting and recognizing degrees, etc. The entry to international market of higher education of new providers of education programs and services are changing the rules of the game from traditional academic exchange programs to more customized delivery international projects teaching, research, learning and services.

One risk local universities in emerging nations face when participating in these international exchange academic programs and international student collaboration projects is that may be neo-colonized by the 'brain drain' of brilliant faculty and advanced students engaged in foreign research agendas of leading international institutions (Marginson and Sawir 2005). As the economic globalization processes and the model of integral competition advances, educative and academic institutions as nations face international inequalities and unevenness. Some lower level academic institutions in economic competition environment and their struggle for budget and revenues for survival are experiencing a race to the bottom.

A larger network platform of personal, professional and institutional contacts in the specialized academic field may foster more extensive experiential projects enhancing human capital development. As an increasing number of educative and academic institutions mandate an international experience in international student collaboration and exchange programs to students, it is required more qualitative and quantitative research to improve qualifications and validation of academic programs.

Future research may involve the study of factors influencing the individual, institutional and national decisions to participate in international student collaboration projects. It is also important to understand the motivations that the different stakeholders of higher education institutions have to influence national policy aiming to internationalize the academic programs, student collaboration projects and other educative exchanges. To address the long-term perspective, both the institutional and sector levels of international higher education exchange programs and international student collaboration projects have implications, challenges, impacts and consequences that require more research, assessments, evaluation, policy analysis, etc. It is required further research on realities, practices and responses of local academic institutions and the need to become more internationalized.

Further research needs to be conducted to explore of local demands and different variations within national contexts, and the ways in which local institutions of higher education extend to international and global markets their academic and research activities beyond national boundaries. It is also necessary to study local academic institutions and actors extending their activities across the borders to the international and global stages.

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