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CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE GLOBALIZED WORLD

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ABSTRACT
Although each higher education system has its own distinctive features, there are also common problems and issues in higher education, such as the funding, quality, coordination, management, etc. In this paper, three challenges facing higher education are discussed: multicultural education, exchange programs, and research and development
Keywords: Higher education, multicultural education, exchange program

KÜRESELLEŞEN DÜNYADA YÜKSEKÖĞRENİMDE KARŞILAŞILAN GÜÇLÜKLER

ÖZET
Her yükseköğrenim sisteminin kendi ayırt edici özellikleri olmasına karşın, yükseköğrenimde finansman, kalite, koordinasyon, yönetim gibi ortak konu ve sorunlar da mevcuttur. Bu çalışmada yükseköğrenimde karşılaşılan üç zorlu konu; çok kültürlü öğrenim, değişim programları ile araştırma ve geliştirme tartışılmaktadır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Yükseköğrenim, çok kültürlü öğrenim, değişim programı

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among individuals, groups, companies, institutions, and governments by increasing interdependencies and interconnections on economic, environmental, social, cultural, political, educational, technological, and scientific issues. Naturally, global developments, which offer opportunities and challenges, bring the items related with reforms, revisions and paradigm shifting into the agenda of higher education (HE). It can be also noted that HE cannot be trapped within the national boundaries.

A university is one of the most complex organization in society. Although each HE system has its own distinctive features, there are also common, challenging and exponentially growing issues, such as funding, investment, better infrastructure, current expenditures, costs, credits; quality, autonomy of universities, access to HE, management, coordination of activities, better collaboration and stronger links with business and industry; transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels etc.

The most important factors in raising the quality of education in HE are considered with respect to the following issues: teaching methodology, usage of modern technologies, co-ordination between universities, curriculum development, and assurance of high quality education. To achieve the high quality education at universities required to survive the new world system, especially intensive efforts should be given to the first two factors (Horn, 2008).

In this paper, three challenges facing HE are discussed: multicultural education, exchange programs, and research and development.

2. MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

"Multicultural education is defined as a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good (Banks & Banks, 1995).

Multicultural education is built on the ideals of equality, equity, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. As such it already subsumes freedom and justice under its ideals. It aims at preparing the students for their responsibilities in a multicultural, global and interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It will prepare the world for a peaceful coexistence of different cultures, religions and civilizations.

During the long history of mankind, multicultural societies came into existence under various circumstances**.** For example, the evolution of great federations and confederations such as the Roman and Ottoman Empires and the former Soviet Union inevitably brought together different races under the same umbrella. Similarly, socio-economic and socio-political inter-communal contacts in both the colonized lands such as India, and several African countries and the colonizing countries like England and France gave rise to the birth of mixed cultures. On a smaller, but by no means negligible scale, labor-induced immigration of people from various African and Asian countries to Europe (Germany, Sweden, and Norway) and Canada resulted in ongoing multicultural interactions.

At present, commercial and educational contacts with countries of growing and wealthy economies such as USA, People's Republic of China and Australia have played a significant role in forging the present- day intercultural relationships.

Today people in pursuit of business or employment using advanced means of communication and transportation are able to contact every corner of the globe, travel to the places of interest, settle there and contribute to cultural diversity in that area .

Today, labor mobility and commercial traffic continue, as they have from time immemorial, to contribute to multiculturalism with an ever increasing rate.

Globalization is becoming more pressing and gaining speed as technology and information systems continue to develop.

It is not altogether out of place to observe that this new situation is creating an environment of integration and a melting pot for cultures. It becomes difficult if not impossible to maintain the distinctive traits of communal cultures vis-à-vis cultural imperialism.

Despite the abundant rhetoric about promoting multicultural societies, in reality rampant cultures of the developed nations threaten to dominate the global scene and ultimately wipe out all other cultures, which are deemed as inferior. Likewise, the suppression and assimilation of minority cultures by the dominant culture under the pretext of multicultural education is frequently encountered. Fukuyama and responding Huntington even stressed the idea that the dominating Western Civilization is the end of human history, wich may witness a violent clash of civilizations (Fukuyama, 1992; Huntington, 1993).

It is ought to be remembered that in genuine democracies, the dominant majority shoulders the responsibility, and moral obligation to uphold the rights of the minorities and protect their respective cultures.

Hence, there are important duties to be assigned to universities in safeguarding minority rights to preserving cultures, promoting tolerance and enhancing meaningful dialogue among civilizations through multicultural education.

3. EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

One solution to this multicultural challenge lies in prudently designed exchange programs and intercultural studies abroad. Exchange programs may be carried out at three levels: Student, faculty, and activity exchange.

2.1. Student Exchange

For effective and lasting student exchange programs the following issues must be resolved:

- Curriculum compatibility,

- Credit compatibility (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), Integrated ECTS),

- Financing mobility in exchange programs

The ECTS, which was introduced in 1989, within the framework of Erasmus, now part of the lifelong learning program, is a student-centered credit system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a program, objectives preferably specified in terms of the learning outcomes and competences to be acquired. The system facilitated the recognition of periods of study abroad and thus enhanced the quality and volume of student mobility in Europe. Recently ECTS is developing into an accumulation system to be implemented at institutional, regional, national and European level. This is one of the key objectives of the Bologna Declaration of June 1999.

ECVET is designed to facilitate the transfer, accumulation and recognition of people's learning outcomes for vocational education and training (VET), (CEC, 2006).

The Copenhagen declaration (November 2002) gives priority to "investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification, and common measures, including a credit transfer system for VET". In order to link policy processes on Bologna and Copenhagen, a framework must combine and integrate the qualifications framework being developed for the HE area, following Berlin, and the common reference levels being established for VET, following the mandate of the Copenhagen declaration.

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) are based on: 1) Quality assurance for the necessary mutual trust; 2) Level descriptors from kindergarten via VET and HE to lifelong learning; 3) Credits linked to learning outcomes. The ECTS and the credit system under development for the VET must be linked together and be developed gradually into an integrated credit system for lifelong learning; 4) A range of

instruments developed from a lifelong learning perspective: the new Europass for transparency of qualifications and competences; the common principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning; and the common principles being developed for lifelong guidance; 5) crucial involvement of sectorial stakeholders (EQF, 2008).

Student exchange programs targeting mobility in EU countries can be seen to be successful from the point of view of compatibility of curricula and credits, and financing mobility; although some studies continue to extend ECTS and ECVET into integrated ECTS under the umbrella of lifelong learning.

An urgent problem, which needs to be addressing, is to increase the human mobility of citizens of the developing world in the developed world to the desired level.

2.2. Faculty Exchange

Lack of willingness and interest in changing cultural environment is a major obstacle on the path to achieving a set of shared views on intercultural and inter-communal issues.

Hence, incentives to increase willingness for mobility and interest in other cultures call for the development of certain measures.

The need for, and the mutual benefits to be gained from faculty exchange programs can hardly be overemphasized. However, lack of willingness and interest on the part of the faculty may be dissipated by creating purposeful exchange programs. Each faculty taking part in an exchange program ought to be given an assignment, a clearly defined mission and well defined research project relevent to the host country. The research budget together with travel and accommodation expenses should be arranged by the institution of the faculty participating in the exchange program. The researching faculty's work should be accredited academically and compensated duly.

2.3. Activity Exchange

To increase the activities between universities the following issues should be improved:

- Lack of adequate communication between faculties of institutions (involved in exchange programs)

- Budgeting joint activities (research, conference, seminar, workshop, field studies, etc.)

Formal visits between institutions should be supplemented in due course by informal meetings between the teaching staff. It is important that institutions should encourage such visits by covering the travel cost of their personnel. Development of activity exchange will facilitate mutual institutional recognition, faculty as well as student exchange.

4. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

To discipline Research and Development (R&D) programs it is strongly recommended to prepare short term (5 year), medium term (5-10 years) and long term joint strategies that define priorities, scopes and target relevent to specific areas of interest. To build a R&D culture, five key elements should be considered: 1) Academic staff; 2) Outputs with measurable impact; 3) University environment including funding, infrastructures, students, academic activities, and facilities;

4) Reputation with esteem indicators including public markers and evaluation;

5) Ethos, values or mind set (Jenks, 2008).

Due to the fierce international competition and conflict of interest regarding know-how sharing and technology transfer, cooperation in the field of R&D tends to be under the desired level.

Contrary to this negative stance, concerted cooperative efforts in undertaking joint research and industrial projects have proved to be particularly rewarding between European Union countries.

Joint R&D projects cut down the financial burden on cost apportioned to each member country, because the total cost is shared between several partners.

In this manner, more R&D topics can be focused on. In addition, last but not least, a group effort is likely to achieve better results and improve competitiveness.

5. CONCLUSION

Multicultural education should be emphasized to foster relations between peoples of diverse cultures.

Rationalized exchange programs should be made attractive by adequate incentives.

Joint R&D programs and development of strategies for joint projects should be assigned top priority.

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