# "The Importance of Student Mobility, Academic Exchange and Internationalization of Higher Education for College Students in a Globalized World: The Mexican and Latin American Case"

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Abstract. Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies and governments of different countries and regions. It is a process that was initially thought would be based solely or exclusively commercial and business sector as well as investment in the international arena, which has the support of information technology. This process has effects on the environment, culture, political systems, development and economic prosperity, as well as on the welfare of human beings that make societies around the world. Policies and technological development of the last decades have resulted in such a large increase in trade, investment and cross-border migration, which many observers believe that the world has entered a new phase, in qualitative terms; they're both economic and social development and culture. Technology has been the catalyst that has propelled other globalization. The progresses made especially in the field of information technology have dramatically transformed economic activity. Information technologies have offered all sorts of individual economic actors-consumers, investors and businesses-valuable new tools to identify and realize economic opportunities, including faster and better documented analysis on trends worldwide, a transfer easier to goods and services and collaboration people from different cultures. In the same context we can say that we live in a globalized world in which the internationalization of the education sector refers to a comprehensive institutional transformation process that aims to integrate international and intercultural dimension in the mission and the substantive functions of higher education institutions. In regard to the mobility of students, this involves the idea that instead of studying outside their home institution. However refers more to cooperation between institutions is established as a basic and essential to achieve the internationalization of education.

**Keywords.** Globalization, Student Mobility, Academic Exchange, College Students, International Education, Economic Integration, Educational Integration.

#### Introduction

The internationalization of higher education is an answer to the challenges posed by globalization. The phenomenon of globalization which now characterizes the economic and social activities has also significantly influenced higher education in recent decades. Its importance is reflected in the place it occupies in the institutions and the national agendas in all countries of the world. At first the construction of the European Union and the Erasmus contributed decisively to the Europeanization of higher education that later became a broader and more inclusive globalization.

The internationalization is part of the strategic plans of universities. It has contributed to this many factors, including the challenge of competing in the global arena. Crespo MacLennan (2011) points out some of the main objectives we face to do: prepare for the knowledge society, to live up to the requirements of the Bologna Process, and work internationally.

#### The internationalization and academic mobility today

We are in a globalized world, where through technology and informatics, knowledge has become a factor of production. We walked towards the knowledge society, towards a planned society. So we live in a world that is in constant change, in all respects, a competitive world where preparation becomes our best tool.

There are two terms: globalization and internationalization, used to describe the trends of global relations intensification of interaction and exchange, global networking in the fields of social communication, and transnational harmonization models and social structures. Both terms refer to a social context, which extends more and more in different parts of the world.

The first of the terms, globalization is the result of the internationalization of the economy first, through the formation of economic blocs and the establishment of new business relationships, which with the use of information technologies in specific case Internet, allows buy-sell transactions with countries far away or better yet, with everyone.

It is important to understand that globalization is multidimensional, encompassing economic, political, social, cultural and educational course. The great advances in science and technology have led globalization through information flow. Internationalization refers to integrate the international dimension in education, i.e. globalization serves as a catalyst for the internationalization of education. It is for this reason that the educational models are increasingly adapting to the demands brought about by globalization such as trade and economic openness, which makes the educational landscape is in a process of permanent change.

The internationalization of higher education is a response to the challenges and needs that globalization brings more specifically the globalization of education, is one of the ways in which a university or country face the repercussions of that, without neglecting the principles of the institution or, what is more important the idiosyncrasies of the nation. All this is achieved through academic programs such as student exchange; study a foreign language, mobility of academic and administrative staff. Educational programs of masters and doctoral sets, international students, lecturers and visiting professors. Distance education programs, also are important research activities, including joint projects and seminars, international research agreements, articles and essays published in journals and international journals.

Internationalization refers to a comprehensive institutional transformation process, which aims to integrate international and intercultural dimension in the mission and the substantive functions of higher education institutions, so that they are inseparable from their identity and culture (Gacel -Avila, 1999).

### What is the implication?

The internationalization of higher education has been a reality since the late twentieth century has been emphasized and prioritized in this century, in this context, consider the academics and students as the most visible and important elements of internationalization, becoming the quintessential protagonists of this process, because not only are recipients of knowledge, but also producers of it (Felix Corral, 2003), forming what Altbach considered as the personification of a global network made the internationalization of knowledge and research in an economy but especially in an integrated global society.

Is that the reason why struggle in undeveloped countries to achieve the developed country model, gives the formation of high-level resources in the field of technology, a strategic area important for any nation and therefore also the effort to send their top students to study in abroad.

What really means the internationalization of education?

- $\partial$  Internationalizing the curriculum, i.e. international elements add to the content of the courses.
- $\partial$  Proficiency in foreign languages, allowing the approach to other cultures.
- $\partial$  Internationalization of research through cooperation between different national and foreign institutions.
- $\partial$  Internationalization extension, i.e. administrative and academic links all the events and projects of the university.

## Mobility

In regard to the mobility of students, this conveys the idea that instead of studying outside the home institution. In an international context, the use of the terms study abroad, international students and scholars and flows of international students (Altbach, 1989). These terms evoke the idea of migration of students and academic staff to another country, in order to obtain a degree or training in a specific discipline. This participation is an aspect that is perhaps the oldest and general internationalization of higher education.

Mobility has been a phenomenon that has its origin in the very beginning of the first universities. European universities have an international character and Christian, the most prestigious teachers attending these centers, and imparted his teachings on topics of interest. They used a common language, Latin, curriculum and standardized tests systems, which allowed students to begin their studies traveling on a stadium and continue after another and ensured the recognition of studies in all countries of Christendom. In addition to completing his studies, returned to their home countries with a large number of new experiences, ideas, opinions and political principles, which came to occupy important positions so they could apply and disseminate the knowledge acquired (Gacel-Avila, 2000)

Mobility has evolved and taken new forms in the world, there is currently a large number of programs such as ERASMUS, which promote mobility in Latin America and specifically in countries like Mexico that has shown very positive results in the past because mobility academic looked like something designed mostly only to members of certain elites.

Nowadays mobility has taken an important role due to new circumstances and a demand of a globalized world has become a country strategy for human resources training. It is also a challenge, because it is an activity that has not been recognized as a tool to improve higher education but also is a potential, since it allows taking advantage and opportunities to strengthen the higher education system and thus have a better place internationally. By that, college students and future professionals can compete in the international market both as trade ideas.

The European Communication "Progress towards the common European Objectives in education and training? Indicators and Benchmarks 2010/2011", recognizes that, overall, the academic mobility of young people has increased by over 50% since 2000. For example, increased 2.0% in 2007/08 and 3% in 2008/2009 to undergraduate level, reaffirming the importance of international academic experiences acquired in the last decade and the trend indicates will strengthen in the coming years.

#### The internationalization of Mexican universities

In Mexico, the reporting institutions as the main rationale for internationalization, improving educational quality. Although it should be noted that the question of how internationalization specifically allows this improvement, almost no one can answer accurately. Reasoning is repeatedly mentioned academic and institutional prestige that entails having a large number of international relations. In this sense, we see that some institutions consider internationalization as marketing element. It also refers to the need to increase the level of competitiveness in global trade markets, with the internationalization of human resources to achieve a strategic element. However, it is rare mention of internationalization as an opportunity to achieve extraordinary financial income through the sale and export of educational services, as is the case with some of the IES of North America, European, Asia and Oceania. This situation is consistent with the fact that the region, in general, is more import than export of educational services.



Figura 11. Movilidad de alumnos internacionales por regiones



Figura 3. Movilidad de alumnos internacionales por tipo de institución

In terms of national policy, as mentioned, the internationalization of Mexican higher education began in the seventies with the establishment of CONACYT, organization which aims to promote a national policy formation of high-level human resources. CONACYT grants allowed thousands of Mexicans and members of the university community to pursue postgraduate studies in the best universities in the world, which gives in principle the international competition and intercultural sensitivity. The favorite destination of Mexican study is today, the United States, followed by Britain, Spain, France, but lately it seems that the European Union is surpassing our northern neighbor. These significant numbers of Mexicans who study abroad are important to the process of internationalization of higher education in the country, since 68% of them are integrated into the education sector. These academics, back to your country, thanks to the relations and contacts with colleagues in the institutions where they performed their studies, they become ideal leaders of the initiatives and international collaboration. Unfortunately, there were no national or institutional policies that can harness these resources for internationalization of the curriculum, for example.

	MEXICANOS EN EUA	ESTADOUNIDENSES EN MEXICO
1996/97	8,975	6,685
1997/98	9,559	7,574
1998/99	8,975	7,363
1999/00	10,607	7,374
2000/01	10,670	8,360
2001/02	12,518	8,078
2002/03	12,801	8,775
2003/04	13,329	9,293
2004/05	13,063	9,247
2005/06	13,931	10,022
2006/07	13,826	9,461
2007/08	14,837	9,963
2008/09	14,850	7,320
2009/10	13,450	7,157
2010/11	13,713	

Comparación de estudiantes mexicanos en los Estados Unidos y estadounidenses en México de acuerdo a *Open Doors* 

As for international programs and activities, in Mexico, we see a different behavior between public and private universities. Generally, public universities are the largest number of agreements signed with foreign institutions hold, and in a wider range of activities and programs, such as collaborative research, mobility of scholars and students, cooperation projects for development, participation in research networks and international teaching, international update academic and administrative staff, to name a few items. However, private universities are more active in the field of student mobility undergraduate, probably by the socio-economic family background of their students, but also because, admittedly, they have been able to develop strategies to promote more successful and a greater professionalization of international management and staff dedicated to her.



Figura 5. Movilidad de alumnos internacionales por tipo de institución

In general, mobility undergraduate student in Mexico is recent (started in the late nineties), and only moved to a very small number of students (less than 1%). However it is a constantly growing mode, and is appreciated by Latin American universities as the highest priority for future years (International Association of Universities, 2004). Mexico, and southern country sends more students abroad than it receives, but it is noticeable growing interest from students in North America, Europe, Oceania and Asia come to study in Mexico, mainly for short periods or to take Spanish language courses. However, the recruitment of foreign students comes to be seen, especially by the public sector universities, as a form of internationalization of the campus, as well as local students, as well as being a means to cleave non-negligible financial resources. The private sector universities are much more active in this area, and have developed specific strategies to capture this market, which is good; no doubt, his students, and they are thus more exposed to intercultural contacts in your institution.



Género de alumnos mexicanos en situación de movilidad internacional

#### The OECD Education at a Glance Report and the Mexican Case

In the case of the data reported by the OECD only possible to know the percentage of international students are enrolled in tertiary education in some countries that report such information. Given that the OECD does not report absolute numbers of student enrollment, it is possible to convert the reported percentage figure, the figure for numbers of students. However, according to this report, it is known that in OECD countries reporting data about Mexican students in 2009 represent 1% of all international students. Mexico does not report data to the OECD international students enrolled in colleges Mexican or Mexican students going abroad, but based on the information provided by other countries is possible to infer some trends in Mexican students enrolled in tertiary institutions in these countries.

In this sense the distribution of Mexican students abroad found that nearly half (47.6%) of these students are enrolled in U.S. institutions. The five countries in order of importance in which most students had Mexicans in 2009 were consecutively United States, Spain, Canada, France and Germany. Regarding the proportion of Mexican students in total foreign students by country of destination, Spain is the country in which Mexican students represent a larger proportion of total international students enrolled in tertiary institutions in that country (5.9%), followed by Chile (2.6%) and the United States (2.2%). In the other countries the presence of Mexican students is not significant. In general, in OECD countries, Mexican students represent 1% of all international students.

País	% de estudiantes mexicanos en situación de movilidad internacional respecto al total de estudiantes mexicanos en algún país extranjero	% de estudiantes mexicanos en situación de movilidad internacional respecto al total de estudiantes internacionales por país
Estados Unidos	47.6	2.2
spaña	15.2	5.9
Canadá	6.3	1.2
Francia	6.0	0.7
Alemania	5.2	0.8
nglaterra	4.3	0.4
Australia	1.6	0.2
Italia	1.0	0.5
Suiza	0.7	0.6
lolanda	0.6	0.2
Chile	0.5	2.6
Suecia	0.5	0.6
apón	0.5	0.1
inlandia	0.3	0.7
lueva Zelanda	0.3	0.2
Austria	0.3	0.2
Sélgica	0.3	0.1
Dinamarca	0.2	0.4
loruega	0.2	0.3
rlanda	0.1	0.2
Portugal	0.1	0.2
Polonia	0.1	0.1
Otros países de OCDE	0.2	0.7
TOTAL OCDE	92.1	1.0

#### Then what should be the student profile with international vision?

As previously discussed in this paper the world is changing at a rapid rate. As each day passes are lower trade barriers that divide countries. This means that students who aspire to work in multinational companies must develop a number of features among which a mindset receptive and understanding of the values of multiculturalism which are pivotal to success. Within this profile of a student with international vision highlight certain points that I list below:

The student with international vision must have:

- $\partial$  A freehold defining tools of the information society and new communication technologies. Ability to drive in advance those ideas that are introduced on the internet (e.g. contextual advertising and specialized social networks, etc.).
- $\partial$  A creative capacity, generating internationally competitive ideas and knowledge to efficiently carry out projects arrangements of ideas and strategies, among others.
- $\partial$  A receptive mind and understanding of the values of multiculturalism. Specific knowledge (languages and cultures of countries, among others), other Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon world, to operate in two countries that are hegemonic China and India.
- $\partial$  Attitudes to teamwork, negotiation and relevant potential geographic mobility.
- $\partial$  Professional Adaptability to learn new skills and knowledge. Understanding the knowledge society and innovation variants.
- $\partial$  Awareness of business ethics and credibility as stronger international values within the corporate governance efforts of big business.
- $\partial$  An open awareness to adapt to strong changes and a very competitive environment where global thinking is an essential requirement.
- $\partial$  An awareness and ability to prospective in terms of international economic scenarios and foreknowledge of future waves of technology (biotechnology and nanotechnology, among others).
- $\partial$  Think globally, act locally.
- $\partial$  Ability to negotiate, establishes partnerships, share and exploit knowledge.

# The governments challenges to the internationalization of higher education in Mexico and Latin America

Most educational research universities agree that Mexico and Latin America in general is facing at the beginning of XXI century, to a complex reality in a situation of delay. The lags have higher education systems in Latin America at the beginning of this new century prevent them from responding optimally to the challenges and demands of a knowledge society and globalized. Tünnermann(1998) notes that the Latin American university enters the XXI century with nineteenth century problems.

Indeed, the Mexican and Latin American higher education has inherited nineteenth century Napoleonic model, which tries to still come out in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This model is characterized by very professionalizing, by a rigid curriculum, which

makes the transfer and recognition of studies, being focused on local and nationalistic perspectives, with little connection and collaboration with business and civil society in general, slowly response to market demands, with little development of research, with emphasis on careers as area economic and administrative sciences and humanities, with a high school dropout and inefficiency terminal, with an infrastructure of laboratories and libraries insufficient. These features can be added to the Higher Education Institutions Mexican and Latin American are slow to adapt to the changes required, due in part to the political profile of its authorities, which makes decision making a priority respond to political criteria that scholars. These features can be added to the students, limited foreign language skills and little knowledge of other cultures. Moreover, it also highlights the lack of professionalization of teaching, the vast majority being part-time, and insufficient preparation level (about 80% degree level), according Tünnermann (1998) only 10 % could be considered as upper-level teachers according to international standards. All these aspects limit, among other things, the ability of educational innovation, developing new courses, interaction and teamwork between teachers and students.

In this situation, show the main challenges facing higher education institutions in Mexico, and Latin America in general at the beginning of the 21st century. The aforementioned features are common in most Latin American HEIs, and must be overcome to enable the sub-continent companies can respond adequately to the demands of the new global context. In this sense, if put in parallel the guidelines of the new educational proposals, as described in the UNESCO Delors Report (1997), indicates a significant gap with the traits described above. For educational guidelines for the new century and present recommended among other things, increase general education courses, specialization leaving only a small number of subjects, the flexibility of the curriculum, the promotion of research, education centered learning, prioritizing work between the teacher and student to the construction of learning and knowledge, knowledge of foreign cultures and intercultural communication.

These same characteristics are also required for the implementation of an international dimension, global and intercultural curriculum (Mestenhauser, 1998, Gacel, 2003). Indeed, the greatest challenge of internationalization is to achieve the institutionalization of that process in the daily work of higher education. More than the number of international programs, the biggest challenge of international education is the degree of internationalization of the discipline and the curriculum. But for this it is essential to have a flexible curriculum structure, of humanist, favoring general education, the study of other cultures and other languages, and the development of critical thinking in students. These features curricular internationalization required to have a faculty with international experience, who

has the time for innovation in their courses, for teamwork with their students and to get involved in organizing exchange programs and international cooperation hospitalization benefit and most importantly for the benefit of students. Should also be encouraged in the student interest in cross-cultural experiences, and the valuation of international experience to their social and professional success, which is more difficult with a part-time student, as is in Latin America.

In other words, given these peculiarities, for Mexican and Latin American universities can be even more difficult to implement comprehensive internationalization strategies. It is necessary that these lags are substantially improved in order to achieve an internationalization process that allows decisively support the modernization and transformation of higher education systems in Latin America.

The difficulty inherent in which education systems are not also lose sight of the difficult and precarious economic, political and social spanning most Latin American countries. Well they are constantly under pressure of social inequality, poverty, increasing crime, unstable economies and financial devaluations, fragile democracies, to name some of the biggest problems. This particular context makes it even more difficult for states to devote the attention and financial resources required by the educational demands.

# The case of Mexico and Latin America in the global perspective of the internationalization of higher education

Another concern for Mexico and Latin America is its place in their educational development in relation to the other countries of the world and with other emerging countries, as Asian countries in particular. In the 21st century, to continue participating and competing on the world stage, nations requires a great capacity for knowledge; I understand this as the stock of human capital, scientific and technological society. In the knowledge society, the conditions of stability and economic progress depend on strategic factors such as academic preparedness of its population.

While between 1985 and 2002, Asia showed an increase in its global commercial share 23.7%, Latin America grew only 5.5% (Andere, 2004). According to a sample of five Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru, in a list of 39 countries they have occupied the last places in terms of their competitiveness, for example in 2004 Mexico occupied the place 32; Argentina 33, Brazil 29, Chile 22 (as the best brand in Latin America), and Peru 31, (Andere, 2004).

Indicators developed by different international organizations to measure the readiness of human resources, the factors of strength and quality of education, creativity and innovation, and production and dissemination of knowledge, seem not to favor the relative position of Latin America on the rest of the world. As for the quality of the educated population, according to criteria of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while the first places are occupied by countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Finland and Canada, five of the mentioned countries in Latin America are located in five of the last eight places.

The countries with the largest number of high-level human resources abroad are being trained in Ireland, Hong Kong, China, Greece, Macedonia and Israel. Mexico and the four Latin American countries occupy last seven locations studied a sample of 25 countries. As for investment in science and technology, these Latin American countries, despite being the countries that invest less in these areas, there has been no increase in this regard in recent years. Mexico and Peru occupy the last two places with Mexico as the country invests less in research and development. While investing in the education sector and the ratio of GDP in Latin America is on average 0.58%, the OECD is 2.21%. Regarding dissemination of technological knowledge, Mexico and other Latin American countries are in the last 7 places from a list of 29.

In summary, according Andere (2004), "If in a globalized world access and participation in foreign trade markets and foreign direct investment are defined by the ability to compete in value-added goods that require the preparation of those who occurring is high, Latin America and Mexico has a sober future. If on the other hand, this same situation depends on factors such as low wages or huge government subsidies, Mexico is also overtaken by other countries such as China for example. However, the recommendation for public policy is better to forget about the low wages and benefits as factors of competitiveness and focus on factors that generate competitiveness by raising the educational level of its citizens ".

Finally it should be noted that the developed European countries as well as emerging Asia and Eastern Europe, are to the internationalization of higher education as a strategic priority in its educational agenda to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and become more competitive on the world stage. The fact that Mexico is trying to get out of their educational backwardness without a real comprehensive strategy include internationalization of education as a fundamental, could cause the country incurs other late. For it is not enough to have a higher quality education is essential to have an education that is relevant to the times. And in a globalized, multicultural and competitive, it seems that one of the ways is to have an international education, intercultural and global levels which inevitably will result in better prepared and trained students and of course a developed country.

### Conclusions

The immediate prospects and future of the internationalization process in Mexico and Latin America depend largely on the progress of development of higher education system itself. While there are positive signs towards an improvement, since markedly increased coverage rates, the level of academic preparation, the number of researchers, the place of evaluation in all levels of education, infrastructure, etc.., The Mexico delay accumulated in the eighties, has not yet been passed to close the gap with developed countries. According to the World Bank for Latin America is not going to keep pace with developed countries, if not go twice faster to catch up to them. Well, in the knowledge society these differences could worsen. It is therefore crucial that decision maker's Mexican educational policy, besides trying to overcome delay levels of their education systems, is also aware of the major trends in education in the world. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the OECD countries and emerging countries from Asia and Oceania have been placed at the center of their educational priorities internationalization, new curricula, and new ways of teaching and producing knowledge. Failure to follow these new trends could mean for Mexico to have an education that is competitive and consistent with the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This is why the internationalization of higher education rather than being an option is a must for Mexico, as it is a key strategy to give graduates the opportunity to compete and succeed in the new global context.

Certainly it is worrying that not preparing students for these challenges Mexicans, unlike other countries. In other words, Mexico is making a new type of educational backwardness. For it is not enough to achieve a higher quality education, it is imperative that this is in keeping with the big trends of the world and the internationalization of education, mobility and academic exchange are ultimately the most important of these trends.

In conclusion, adopting comprehensive internationalization strategies, integrated core development policies can be the fastest way to get to quickly improve the quality levels of the education system through interagency strategic alliances, in addition to adequately prepare graduates with the international profile and global intercultural requires the new century. The truth is that Mexico's definitely already requires innovative and creative approaches to overcome the current state of its higher education system and deal with more chance of success the challenges that lie ahead. It is time that decision makers of educational policy to realize the internationalization of education may well be the best option.

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