

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
FOREIGN TRADE UNIVERSITY



FIHE 2020 Proceedings

In celebration of the 60th anniversary of Foreign Trade University

FORUM ON INTERNATIONALIZATION
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

SUSTAINING AND ENHANCING CROSS-BORDER PARTNERSHIP OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE NEW NORMAL CONTEXT



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INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME – A SOLUTION FOR SUSTAINING AND ENHANCING THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

In the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the trend of deep globalization, internationalization of higher education has become a necessary path and a great development motivation for universities around the world, especially universities in the developing countries like Vietnam. Internationalization of higher education often focuses primarily on the mobility of staff and students in order to improve their professional and intercultural capabilities. However, within just a few months of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult or impossible to implement such mobility. Most scholars certain that the traditional face-to-face contact method, in which cross-border movement and exchanges were prevalent in the past, will soon disappear as “untact” and social distancing spread due to COVID-19. This paper aims to address the difficulty of sustaining and enhancing the internationalization of higher education in the Coronavirus era, then propose “Internationalization at Home” - a solution for this, especially offering some recommendations to implement the Internationalization at Home.

Keywords: *internationalization, higher education, internationalization at home, Covid-19*

Introduction

Globalization affects different sectors of society including higher education as it has intensified the mobility of ideas and people in this sector (Whitaker, 2004). All over the world, universities respond to globalization in various ways. One response most universities implement is the internationalization of the university campuses. In the recent years, Internationalization of Higher Education (HE) has become one of the main priorities in the development strategy of many higher education institutions in the world and in Vietnam. Internationalization activities can generally categorized as

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exchange mobility of staff and students between institutions, implementation of international courses with globally recognized curriculum, co-hosting events, researches and courses within an international network. Among these activities, the international exchange mobility of staff and students have been often prioritized. At the institutional level, the exchange mobility of staff and students is an effective and simple way to connect with other institutions and develop partnership in a variety of education fields such as joint research, double / joint degree, joint organization of events,...At the individual level, the international exchange programs provide students and lecturers with an opportunity to study in a different country and environment experiencing the history and culture of another country, as well as meeting new friends to enrich their personal skills (Hai Vu, 2019). International exchange programs are also effective to challenge students to develop a global perspective. At the same time, the exchange mobility also allows receiving institutions to diversify their academic environment as their own lecturers and students have the opportunity to interact and coordinate with lecturers and students from other countries.

The appearance of coronavirus COVID-19 by the end of 2019 in China has seriously impacted all aspects of the socio-economy, especially education. Even now, coronavirus pandemic worldwide continues to put universities in a difficult situation. In many places, the threat of the virus is still serious. Classes have been changed to online or combination of online and offline and travel restrictions or even bans have been imposed. Traditional destinations for international education, particularly Western countries or U.S with a lot of universities and colleges which constantly dominate the top-ranking list, are losing their international students. As the whole world is facing the non-traditional challenges of pandemics such as Covid-19, the demand for internationalization and enhancement of the competitiveness of higher education to meet the needs of continuous learning in the new context is becoming more urgent than ever.

Overview of Internationalization of Higher Education

There are various related concepts to Internationalization of Higher Education, used as synonyms such as intercultural education, international education, or globalization (Knight and de Wit, 1997). Although there are various approaches to internationalization, the term is not clearly defined and does not appear to be generally accepted among leading scholars in the field of international higher education (Knight, 2004).

The Internationalization of Higher Education at national and institutional level in any country must be understood as the process of integrating an international intercultural or global dimension within the main functions of education system

(Crisan-Mitra and Borza, 2015). This concept is close to the definition of Knight (Knight, J., 2002) which describes the internationalization of HE as the integration of international, intercultural and global dimensions within the functions of education. It is seen as one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization, yet at the same time respects the individuality of the nation. It is also considered as the top stage of international relations among universities and it is no longer regarded as a goal in itself, but as a means to improve the quality of education.

The internationalization of HE can be beneficial in sustaining and growing science and scholarship through dynamic academic exchanges; and building social and economic capacity in developing countries (Jibeen and Khan, 2015). In Vietnam, the internationalization of HE is an inevitable and developing trend, addressed in the Party and Government documents on fundamental and comprehensive innovation of education and training. The internationalization of HE supports the national education reform process in Vietnam and introduces an international dimension into the teaching and learning curriculum in universities and colleges. The internationalization of HE will contribute to building high-quality economic, social and human resources through promoting and improving the quality of education , improving global ranking positions, and helping research meet international standards. Academic exchange programs will provide learners with global learning experiences, promote the integration of Vietnamese higher education in the region and the world, thereby increasing the opportunities of career for students. At the Conference on Promoting Opportunities for Studying International Education Programs in Vietnam held on July 21, 2020, Minister of Education Phung Xuan Nha affirmed that in the past years, the Vietnamese Government has given special attention to the internationalization of higher education. Over recent decades, the internationalization of Vietnamese higher education has been marked by increasing outbound student mobility. Vietnam currently has about 200,000 students studying in many foreign countries, of which focusing on many countries with leading developed education such as the US, UK, Australia...

According to Knight (2008), there are two main streams of internationalization including Internationalization Abroad (IA) and Internationalization at Home (IaH). Internationalization Abroad consists of all forms of education across borders, mobility of students, teachers, scholars, programs, courses, curriculum and projects. Internationalization at Home, on the other hand contains many campus-based dimensions such as: cultural diversity of the classroom, international case studies, extra-curricular activities, intercultural and international elements in the process of teaching and learning (Knight, 2008).

Although the disadvantage of Internationalization Abroad is that it is not for the majority of students due to problems related to the cost of studying and traveling, universities in general and students/lecturers in particular seem to prefer Internationalization Abroad. In other words, they prefer face-to-face communication to non-face-to-face communication, prefer mobility to non-mobility. Therefore, in the past years, almost all universities try to improve the staff/student exchange mobility. However, coronavirus pandemic has impacted the international mobility severely. This situation has opened up opportunities and forced the universities to change the way of implementing the internationalization process. Instead of focusing on the Internationalization Abroad as usual, the Internationalization at Home may be an appropriate solution for sustaining and enhancing the Internationalization of Higher Education.

Internationalization at Home

Internationalization at Home in Theory

The Internationalization at Home is of course not new in an academic context and becomes of great concern for higher education at many universities in the world. The term of Internationalization at Home was first used in 1999 at Malmö University, Sweden and conceptualized by Bengt Nilsson. Nilsson (2003) stated “concept of Internationalization at home is just a way to bring all ideas and measures to all students in an international dimension during the period of their study at the university”. According to Tekeens (2007), Internationalization at home is an approach to internationalization beyond student mobility relating to international activities on campus. It is not a coherent theory, but internationalization in action. Regarding to the origins of internationalization at home, Teekens (2013) argued that “the main concern of internationalization at home remains just as relevant today: what do we do with vast majority of students who are not exposed to intercultural learning and international experience”. To some extent, however, internationalization at home and student mobility are connected in the sense because the international experience from internationalization at home can help students and staffs with skills and awareness in international experience and further they might exchange abroad (Beelen, 2009). Internationalization at home promotes outwards mobility and improve its quality, but it focuses on what students and lecturers do in the local classrooms and programs rather than on only sending students abroad to improve their international perspectives (Beelen & Leask, 2011). According to Nuffic (2015), “IaH is a concept that refers to a range of activities such as internationalization of the curriculum, the international classroom and online internationalization. Essentially, they are activities that enable students to gain international experience without necessarily going abroad”.

In terms of definition of Internationalization at Home, there have been several definitions. Wachter (2003) described IaH as “internationalization happening on campus, through teaching-learning process, co-curricular programs, initiatives with local community groups and international student and scholar activities”. Nilsson (2003) defined IaH as “any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student mobility”. In Knight’s words (2008), IaH reflects “those aspects of internationalization which would happen on a home campus”. According to Beelen and Leask (2011), “internationalization at home is not an aim or a didactic concept in itself, but rather a set of instruments and activities ‘at home’ that aim to develop international and intercultural competences in all students”. Beelen and Jones (2015) defined Internationalization at Home as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environment”. This definition stresses intentional inclusion of international and intercultural aspects into curricula in a purposeful way. It also emphasises the role of internationalisation for all students in all programmes and does not simply rely on mobility to offer international and intercultural perspectives. New definition focuses on guidance and stresses that all students should gain international and intercultural competences through the domestic curriculum (EAIE, 2015).

What are the IaH activities? While Nilsson (2003) only emphasized on the internationalization of the curriculum and teaching/learning processes, Knight (2008) believed that IaH should be involved in other fields as well. IaH activities could be included in “curriculum and programs, teaching/learning processes, extra-curricular activities, liaison with local cultural/ethnic groups, and research and student activity”. Table 1 lists the IaH activities in each area proposed by Knight.

TABLE 1. IaH activities under five categories (Knight, 2008)

Category	Activities
Curriculum and programs	New programs with international themes; the infusion of international, cultural, global, or comparative dimensions into existing courses; foreign language study; area or regional studies; and joint or double degrees.
Teaching/learning processes	The active involvement of international students, returned study-abroad students, and cultural diversity in the classroom in teaching/learning processes; virtual student mobility for joint courses and research projects; the use of international students and teachers and local international/intercultural experts; and the integration of international materials, international materials, intercultural case studies, role-plays, and reference materials.

Category	Activities
Extra-curricular activities	Student clubs and associations; international and intercultural campus events; liaison with community-based cultural and ethnic groups; and peer support groups and programs.
Liaison with local cultural/ethnic groups	The involvement of students in local cultural and ethnic organizations through internships, placements, and applied research; and the involvement of representatives from local cultural and ethnic groups in teaching/learning activities, research initiatives, and extracurricular events and projects.
Research and student activity	Area and theme centers; joint research projects; international conferences and seminars; published articles and papers; international research agreements; research exchange programs; international research partners in academic and other sectors; and the integration of visiting researchers and students into academic activities on campus.

According to Knight, global, international, intercultural dimensions must be involved in higher education activities (Knight, 2003). Global, international and intercultural competencies are also competencies many higher education institutions provide students as a response to globalization. It is said that people who possess GII dimensions are likely to have both easy personal life and effective working life, as well as they are likely to have strong leadership in a global context (Soria and Troisi, 2014; Earnest, 2003). Internationalization at home and internationalization abroad both share the same goal that is to help students develop these competencies (Beelen, 2011; Hayle, 2008). However, in terms of internationally developing students, IaH is found to have better effects than internationalization (Soria and Troisi 2014). In fact, not many students are able to participate in the international exchanges programs where they can spend a period abroad while many students can achieve global, international, intercultural competencies through internationalized curriculum and international extra-curricular activities which are two main aspects of IaH (Hayle, 2008).

According to Nilsson (2003), an internationalized curriculum is defined as “a curriculum which gives international and intercultural knowledge and abilities, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally, socially, and emotionally) in an international and multicultural context”. The internationalized curriculum aims to “engage students with internationally informed research and cultural and linguistic diversity and purposefully develop the international and intercultural perspectives as global professionals and citizens.” (Leask, 2009).

Addition to internationalized curriculum, extra-curricular activities play an important role in benefiting students’ global, international and intercultural

competencies. The research of Soria and Troisi (2014) suggests that IaH is an alternative to studying abroad because students can enhance the above competencies at home by taking part in international extra-curricular activities on campus in which there are also participation of students from different cultures. Hence, it is necessary to evaluate the IaH of a HEI, and to exploit the benefits that IaH could bring.

Internationalization at Home in practice

In fact, common IaH activities many institutions offer include parts of the study programmes in English or another foreign language; incorporation of international subjects into their curriculum and participation in international projects. Some IaH activities are so integral to the current higher education system that are simply a matter of course for study programmes and institutions. Generally speaking, institutions could do more with regard to internationalization at home. They could make more use of internships at international organizations. Or they could engage more in joint curriculum development. Virtual mobility also offers great opportunities.

For instance, in Netherlands, some activities such as arranging more work placements at international organizations in the home country, joint curriculum development and virtual mobility have been implemented in Netherlands. At University of Hamburg in Germany, Internationalization at Home aims primarily to give the large majority of students who do not spend time abroad international contacts and to create an international environment in order to strengthen their intercultural skills. It covers all activities of an international nature, whether in research, teaching, administration or daily student life. Some activities University of Hamburg is offering include International welcome week, PIASTA-Intercultural living and learning, Certificate Intercultural Competence, Buddy Program, increasing number of courses taught in English, promoting international exchange,...

In Vietnam, the issuance of the 2019 Law on Education and the Law on Amendments and Supplements to some articles of the Law on Higher Education has promoted the autonomy model in local universities, enhanced the education quality verification, and opened opportunities to attract more renowned foreign universities to Vietnam. According to the direction of the Ministry of Education and Training, many Vietnamese higher education institutions have developed high quality training programmes with international standards, providing training courses in English and other foreign languages. There are currently 452 international programmes of various forms offered by 70 universities in Vietnam. Among these programmes, 50 belong to institutions which receive foreign investment, 50 are enabled by collaborations between the Vietnamese government and other nations and 352 are transnational

programmes managed by domestic universities. With the development of the international programmes, Vietnamese students can “study abroad on the spot”. In addition, various admissions options and procedures have been proposed by Ministry of Education and Training and institutions in Vietnam. School transfer and credit transfer will be based on conditions such as prior admission to well-recognized overseas universities, especially those in the top 1,000 universities or rated 5-star by QS, and the quota for each target programme in respective Vietnamese universities.

The admissions committee at each institution will evaluate the credits the applicants have accumulated to decide whether to make them transferrable. Overseas (Vietnamese) students could also be admitted on the basis of their SAT or A-Level scores. The International School at Vietnam National University Hanoi, for example, asks for a minimum of 5.5 IELTS (or equivalent) and a satisfactory interview result. Applications to take courses for just one semester or one academic year are being encouraged. Universities with more established English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes and courses, such as Vietnam National University Hanoi, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Ton Duc Thang University, FPT University, Duy Tan University and Hoa Sen University, have been spearheading the internationalisation of higher education.

At the same time, collaboration between Vietnamese and foreign institutions will bring about opportunities for student exchange. For example, the Foreign Trade University (FTU) participates in a network of approximately 200 partner universities in the world. Students from these partner universities can attend equivalent courses at FTU without having to pay any additional tuition fees.

Building on its strong collaboration with Cornell University, VinUniversity (VinUni) – the newest player in Vietnam’s higher education sector – announced on 1 July that its Study Away programme presents an opportunity for the over 5,000 international students at Cornell, students who cannot return to their home campus in Ithaca, New York, to experience residential and campus life at VinUni’s world-class campus in Hanoi. Visiting students will continue to take online courses from their Cornell faculty.

The University of Transport and Communications (UTC) provides exchange students with online internship, in which students will do the research project under the supervision of a professor. Besides, the UTC also focuses on developing the Joint International Programs with foreign partners such as University of Normandie, University of Bedfordshire. Joining these programs, students can study both online and offline for 1-2 years at UTC, after that they will study abroad to get the degree by these above universities.

From the above things, it can be said that the Internationalization at Home seems to be very appropriate for higher education institutions to sustain and improve the internationalization process in the context of coronavirus pandemic, especially for Vietnamese universities.

Due to the pandemic, many international students studying in Vietnam find themselves unable to return to the country to continue their studies. Moreover, a number of Vietnamese students studying abroad have been unable to go back to their overseas institutions as the pandemic has escalated. Many of them have been forced to change their study plans. For those who had been planning to study abroad before the pandemic, they are also reconsidering their options. Indeed, many of them and their parents are hesitant to pay high tuition fees for online delivery provided by overseas institutions. After all, international education appears rather unattractive without actual day-to-day social and on-campus interactions.

Meanwhile, Vietnam has been controlling well the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Vietnam's universities are still open to students and carry out training activities normally. In addition, according to many Vietnamese administrators and commentators, credits, certificates and degrees from many leading Vietnamese universities should be equivalent to those issued by institutions of similar rankings in the world. This is a good opportunity for higher education institutions to receive Vietnamese students studying abroad to continue their studies, and at the same time, it is also a good opportunity to receive foreign students to study in Vietnam. In the midst of all the above, however, it is important that Vietnamese universities should offer appropriate measures to implement IaH in the context of COVID-19 pandemic soon.

Internationalization at Home: Recommendations

Based on references to scholars, the current situation of Vietnamese universities in the coronavirus pandemic, and within the scope of our knowledge and experience, the authors would like to propose some following recommendations:

At national level:

1. Offering internationalization policies with a framework that offers institutions the necessary direction, means and methods.
2. Creating favorable conditions and procedures for institutions to receive international students and Vietnamese international students.
3. Supporting the development of high-quality lecturer training programmes focusing on internationalization at home.

At institutional level:

1. The institution policy should explicitly explain the concept of internationalization at home, and international and intercultural competence and emphasize that all students should have an international experience to meet the demand of globalized society.

2. The institutions should offer all students global perspectives within their programme of study, whether or not they spend time abroad.

3. More and more students get benefit from internationalization at home activities. Intercultural workshops/seminars should be organized for all students with different cultural topics. At the same time, institutions should motivate students to participate in these internationalization at home activities.

4. **Virtual mobility** through online working with international partners, joint curriculum development should be implemented. These activities require the intensive supervision by the lecturers who are equipped with specific and necessary competences. Virtual mobility is specially appropriate for universities in the context of Covid-19. Virtual mobility enables teachers and students to visit and study in another institutions outside their home country for a limited time without physically leaving their country.

5. The professional development of lecturers is very important for the success of internationalization at home. Thus, institutions and study programmes can formulate objectives for the internationalization of their lecturers.

6. All staff of the institutions, not only academic staff and international officers, should involve in the internationalization at home activities.

7. International and intercultural dimensions should be integrated into learning outcomes within the discipline.

Conclusion

Until now, the COVID-19 pandemic has come with a lot of uncertainties for the social economy in general as well as the higher education sector and internationalization in particular. In one way or another, higher education institutions should prepare and give solutions to deal with the impact of COVID-19 on their activities including the internationalization process. Internationalization at Home should probably be a good solution for institutions to both sustain and enhance the internationalization.

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