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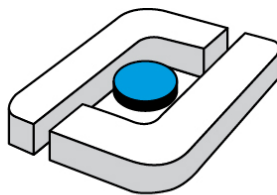
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THE STATE OF ENTREPRENEURIALISM IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN ETHIOPIA: STATUS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Habtamu Diriba

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Driven by the global move to knowledge based economy, the idea of ‘Entrepreneurial University’ has become the recent buzzword in the realm of Higher education (HE). Several attempts have been made to explain the impetus for the shift in ideology and approach amongst Higher education institutions (HEIs). Perhaps one of the most comprehensive illustrations is provided by Clark (1998). In his landmark book, ‘Creating Entrepreneurial Universities’ he, posits that the demand-response imbalance between the environment and universities is the main driver of entrepreneurialism. Four major sources of imbalance have been identified by Clark (1998, p.129-131), i.e., massification, increasing expectation from stakeholders, complex need of the labor market, and unprecedented knowledge expansion.

The first factor has to do with the global move from elite to mass higher education which not only implies a higher number of students but also a more diverse student body (Clark, 1998, p.129). The second factor that is forcing universities to revisit their traditional stance is the increasing expectation of stakeholders such as quality, efficiency, accountability, and regionally engagement. Thirdly, in relation to the global transition to a knowledge-based economy, employers require a continuous training and retraining of their employees, which is piling yet another pressure in universities (Clark, 1998, p.130). Lastly, the unprecedented advancement of knowledge which in some cases is transcending the ability of universities to respond is also another source of demand-response imbalance. The only way to cope up with this multifaceted environmental pressure is therefore to respond entrepreneurially (Clark, 1998, 2004; Gibb et al., 2012; Hannon, 2013, Etzkowitz, 2008, Shattock, 2005).

On top of that, state funding is on the wane globally (Shattock, 2005, 2009; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, 2001; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Marginson & Considine, 2000; and Chan & Fisher, 2008). Lastly, “the rapid growth of money making opportunities” (Bok, 2003, p.10) has also made its fair share of contribution to the emergence of the entrepreneurial university model. Against this background the study inquired the state of entrepreneurialism in a public university in Ethiopia.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is underpinned by three interconnected presumptions: entrepreneurial university transformation is invaluable to Ethiopia; understanding the contextual realities is essential to bring about entrepreneurial transformation; and little is known about entrepreneurial transformations in developing countries.

To start with the first premise, the researcher takes the position that; entrepreneurial university model will positively contribute to address the ‘higher education expansion dilemma’ of Ethiopia. To elaborate, building self sustaining entrepreneurial universities will allow the state to continue higher education expansion without adversely affecting the budget of other underdeveloped and equally relevant sectors of the economy (such as health, transportation, ICT). Additionally, the added financial capacity, entrepreneurial universities are expected to gain by collaborating with external stakeholders, will allow them to upgrade their capacity, thereby contributing to quality enhancement. What’s more entrepreneurial universities with their innovation oriented students and staff could contribute to addressing the unemployment challenge of the country.

The second premise is that; understanding the underlying factors is the prerequisite to building an entrepreneurial university. This is to mean that, the success of any transformation in the realm of academia is dependent on understanding the deep lying norms, ethos, relationships and histories that underpin the system (Doh, 2012).

Third, little is known about entrepreneurial transformations in developing countries in general and Ethiopia in particular. An extensive review of the relevant literature (both peer reviewed international journals such as

‘Research policy’, ‘The journal of technology transfer’, and ‘Technovation’ , as well as journals published by public universities in Ethiopia such as ‘Ethiopian journal of education & sciences’, ‘Ethiopian journal of applied sciences & technology’, ‘Bahirdar journal of education’, and ‘The East African Journal of Sciences’) showed that the vast majority of the studies in relation to entrepreneurial university model are undertaken in the context of North America and Europe. Even in the case of conceptual papers without empirical data the examples often illustrate the realities of developed countries.

As such the study of entrepreneurial university model in the context of a developing country such as Ethiopia is considered to be highly relevant.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

- How do internal and external stakeholders view the state of entrepreneurialism at Addis Ababa University (AAU)?

SUB QUESTIONS

- What is the status of the five entrepreneurial elements identified by Clark (1998) at AAU?
- How is the interrelationship of the five entrepreneurial elements at the case university?

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to help focus the research the five essential elements of an entrepreneurial university identified by Clark (1998), and most importantly, their interplay is used as a conceptual framework.

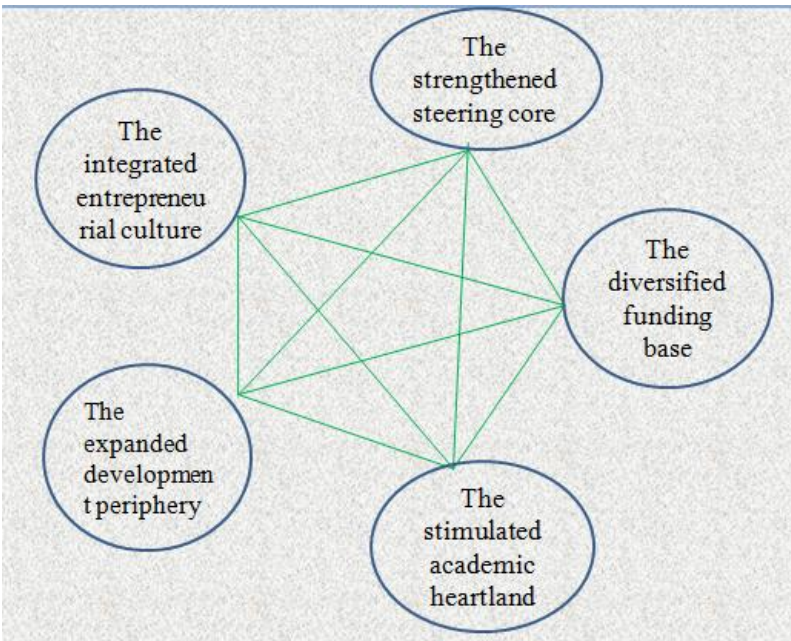


Figure 1, Analytical framework

Source: based on Clark (1998), as customized by Hölttä (2015)

The first essential element of an entrepreneurial university is a strengthened steering core which refers to “[the] administrative backbone stretching from central bodies to major faculties to baseline departments and institutes” Clark (2004, p.175). The steering core of an entrepreneurial university is assumed to be a blend of managerialism and collegiality.

The second element is a stimulated academic heartland. This refers to, motivating the academic staff and students, to embrace the new entrepreneurial values, which among other things, entails providing support (structural, technical and financial) to induce staff and students to engage in more collaborative, transdisciplinary and application oriented research.

The expanded development periphery refers to boundary spanning units that facilitate knowledge production and transfer. The development periphery units may either take the form of an administrative unit (knowledge & technology transfer offices) and/or an academic unit (i.e., research centers) (Clark, 2004, p.84-86).

The fourth essential element is a diversified funding base, which entails moving out of the states control by capitalizing on second and third stream

income sources.

The fifth entrepreneurial element is the integrated entrepreneurial culture. This refers to whether the basic assumptions, values, norms and behaviors support and reflect entrepreneurial characteristics such as, openness to change, risk taking, collaboration and responsiveness.

The aforementioned five elements are assumed to exist in a mutually reinforcing reciprocal relationship, as such, the dynamics of their interaction is assumed to be pivotal.

METHODOLOGY

The form and/or status of entrepreneurialism is assumed to be strongly linked with the context in which it is undertaken. Moreover, attention is paid to multiplicity of meanings; as such the research paradigm followed in this study can be considered as social constructivism (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2003, 2014). As regards research method, qualitative approach was found to be more suitable. This is simply because the topic of investigation i.e., ‘entrepreneurialism’ as well as the specific dimensions (with the exception of diversification of funding), do not lend themselves to quantification. Within the framework of qualitative research, this study specifically adopted a case study design. Accordingly, One public university was selected (i.e., Addis Ababa University) and attempt was made to thoroughly explore the question at hand.

Maximal variation sampling was used as a main sampling strategy. Moreover, in order to have a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation, the principles of snowball sampling and confirming/disconfirming sampling were partly used at different stages of data collection. A total of 44 participants with distinct characteristic (i.e., ministers, city mayor, vice presidents; Directors, Deans, Department heads, Academic staff and Students) took part in the study. Data was collected using one to one interview, focus group discussion, site visits and document review.

The data was analyzed deductively by using, ‘directed content analysis’. Accordingly, the main elements of the analytical framework, individually and in relation to each other served as overarching themes.

In order to enhance the accuracy of the findings a wide range of qualitative data validation techniques i.e., triangulation of methods and data sources, member-check, peer-debriefing, rich & thick description, and identification of the researcher's bias have been implemented.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that ethical consideration was given high prominence throughout the conduct of the study.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

• WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE FIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL ELEMENTS IDENTIFIED BY CLARK (1998) AT AAU?

The study revealed both positive and negative factors working for and against each entrepreneurial element at the case university.

To begin with the steering core, it was generally found to be weak. More specifically, both the substantive and procedural autonomy (i.e., strategic priorities, curriculum design and staff and student selection budgeting) of the university were found to be constrained by the interference of the ministry of education. Similarly, managerial capacity was found to be weak as appointments to various positions in central administration are partly made based on political affiliation and personal ties. This weak steering capacity is also manifested, in the long and excessive procedures, overlapping duties, lack of proper financial management systems, lack of policy and guidelines (for some activities) that prevail in the university. On the positive side, the university has recognized the desirability of entrepreneurial transformation and has undergone internal reorganization that led to the opening of various offices that could facilitate entrepreneurial practices. Moreover, the steering core has formulated a strategy that promotes entrepreneurialism (i.e., thematic research and adaptive problem solving research).

Secondly, the stimulation of the academic heartland was found to be moderate. On a positive side, both staff and students have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship in general, moreover, the staff is developing a culture of cross disciplinary collaboration after the introduction of 'thematic research' (which is multidisciplinary in its very nature) and 'adaptive problem solving research' (which is aimed at specific problems of the

society). On the other hand both students and staff cited a number impediments (i.e., curriculum & internship related problems, low financial & technical support, ill-equipped workshop, bureaucratic procedures, low compensation, lack of space for bottom up initiative, and lack of incentives) inhibiting entrepreneurial behavior within the university.

The third entrepreneurial element, i.e., the expanded development periphery was evaluated in terms of its role in facilitating knowledge production and transfer. Results show that, In terms of facilitating knowledge production within the institution the development periphery is generally weak. In that the academic development periphery units were found to be loosely coupled with each other and other academic units within the university. Similarly, the administrative development periphery units are not promoting interdisciplinary research in any meaningful way. This is notwithstanding, the 'Thematic & adaptive problem' researches introduced by the central administration as a university wide initiative. On other hand a mixed result was found in terms of collaborating with external stakeholders. In that a strong collaboration was witnessed with international partners (such as supranational organizations, universities, business organizations, development partners) and various federal government offices (such as Ministry of science and technology). While the collaboration with city administration, industry and community was found to be relatively weak.

The strongest suit of the case university appears to be the diversification of funding. In that, a wide range of diversification strategies are currently in use. The highest proportion of income comes from national and mainly international partners in a form of research grant. Additionally, the university generates third stream income through training & consultancy; targeted tuition fees; and a wide range of services rendered by its business enterprise.

The fifth entrepreneurial element i.e., integrated entrepreneurial culture, although emerging was found to be underdeveloped. Specifically, a low risk taking propensity, lack of openness to change (from both management and staff), a moderate collaborative culture and a varying level of enterprising behavior (amongst staff and students) was evident.

- **HOW IS THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF THE FIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL ELEMENTS AT THE CASE**

UNIVERSITY?

When it comes to the interrelationship of the five entrepreneurial elements in the case university, they are found to be loosely coupled with each other. To start with, the interrelationship between the steering core and academic heartland was found to be weak. As pointed out previously, leadership follows a strictly top down approach to bring about reforms as a result the academic staff appears to be resistant to the reform ideas of top management. In addition to that, the lack of technical as well as financial support is greatly constraining entrepreneurial behavior within the university setting.

When it comes to the interrelationship between the steering core and the development periphery mixed result was found. On one hand the steering core has opened additional boundary spanning units over the past four years, with an aim of facilitating entrepreneurial transformation. On the other hand, they are deprived of financial autonomy as well as a comprehensive guideline to successfully achieve their purpose of establishment. The aforementioned financial and technical constraints are also preventing the development periphery units from legitimizing their existence alongside academic units within the university as such, the link between the academic heartland and development periphery can be considered, weak.

Another major weakness observed at the case university is on the use of diversified money. In that, rather than using the diversified money to nurture more entrepreneurial activities, the university returns a significant proportion of it to the ministry as surplus income. Consequently, the impact of diversified money on the other entrepreneurial elements is currently insignificant.

Lastly, being the collective outcome of the other four elements, entrepreneurial culture, at the case university, is found at an early stage of development. This is to mean that all the inhibiting factors that were identified in relation to each entrepreneurial element have contributed to the low entrepreneurial culture at the case university.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study showed a number of impediments in the case university that require immediate attention. At the same time, the study also revealed a number of strong points that the university could build up on. The main question is therefore how to capitalize on the positive sides while eradicating the impediments.

The first and most fundamental step is fully understanding, what the entrepreneurial transformation entails with all its requirements. This understanding lays the foundation for creating the enabling environment. As Clark (1998), argues a simple opening of offices here and there would not do the trick. Entrepreneurial university transformation is a cooperative endeavor; as such it requires the full involvement and support of staff and students. Simply put, staff and students lie at the heart of entrepreneurial transformation. And this is precisely, what appears to be missing at the case university.

In line with that, firstly, ‘real‘space needs to be created for both staff and students. The word real should be emphasized, as the university currently involves both staff and students in various committees formed around the central administration. But their impact in influencing decisions is restricted. Secondly, a well organized technical support should be provided to enhance the entrepreneurial competence of staff and students. Third, a thoroughly thought out incentive package for staff and students could help promote enterprising behavior within the university. This could be achieved by incorporating entrepreneurial criteria in the tenure track system (course evaluation criteria in the case of students) of the university.

Fourth, allocating a financial pool to support innovative ideas of staff and students can also be considered. This could be achieved by using the money the university returns as ‘surplus‘, at the end of each fiscal year.

Fifth, the institution should develop intellectual property policy in order to capitalize on the technological innovation of its students and staff. Sixth, the long and bureaucratic procedures which are hampering entrepreneurial behavior within the institution should be broken down and replaced with what Clark frames bureaucracy of change (i.e., the substantial addition of non faculty professionals whose tasks involve promoting change) (Clark, 2004, p.74).

In close connection to the point made above, the overlap and conceptual confusion surrounding some of the development periphery offices (i.e., between community service and industry linkage & technology transfer) should be resolved sooner than later; and ways in which they can complement each other should be envisaged. Moreover, financial autonomy with accountability should be given to the development periphery units. This would allow them to provide real support to the staff and students of the university thereby enhancing their credibility and legitimacy. In addition to the aforementioned remarks the institution needs to develop a well consolidated financial management system and most importantly use the money at its disposal to nurture more entrepreneurial activities and enhance institutional capacity.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study mainly focused on the internal dynamics of entrepreneurialism in a senior public university. It would be interesting to analyze the dynamics in a private and junior HEI as they have a contrasting reality. Secondly, although substantial insight could be gained from Clark's illustration of entrepreneurial elements and their interrelationships, they are loosely defined. Hence, a study that further refines and elaborates each element is beneficial to the existing body of knowledge. Thirdly, evaluating the link between national innovation policy and entrepreneurial university model is an interesting line of enquiry. Lastly, the link between the level of educational development (elite, mass, universal) and entrepreneurial university model is worthy of investigation.

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AN ANALYSIS OF IMPACT OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION-A MEXICAN STUDY

Laura Gutierrez Vite

BACKGROUND

Student engagement has been regarded as a vehicle for success in higher education. Extensive research in the field has revealed the unequivocal effect of student engagement in academic outcomes and persistence (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, & Kinzie, 2008), because “the more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they study — the more likely they are to learn, to stick with their studies, and to attain their academic goals” (McClenney, Marti, & Adkins, n.d., p.1).

In Mexico, the lack of success evidenced by high dropout rates or grade repetition in public universities, depends on both institutional factors (teaching quality, administration issues, etc.) and personal characteristics of students (socioeconomic situation, motivation, etc.) (De Vries, León-Arenas, Romero-Muñoz, & Hernández-Saldaña, 2011). Accordingly, international literature suggests that an effective higher education system depends on a successful link between universities and individual students. Such relationship is precisely conceived as ‘student engagement’ (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

The present study is conducted at the Faculty of Chemistry of a Mexican public university (named as Mexican University). In such unit, three main issues have been identified in terms of student engagement. First, a large body of student engagement practices have been implemented aiming at increasing persistence and retention, as well as improving the student experience. The list of practices ranges from first-year interventions, remedial courses, financial strategies to counselling and well-being events. Unfortunately, little is known the extent of success of such academic and non-academic practices from the student’s perspective.

Second, a weak students' voice on university matters prevails at this institution. De Garay-Sánchez (2013) believes that undergraduates in Mexico remain 'an unexplored territory'. According to the author (2004), Mexican institutions will successfully integrate students to the university system as long as institutions deeply understand students' social, cultural and academic practices. Consequently, the student engagement initiatives offered at this university appear to be underdeveloped or disconnected from students' factual needs.

Third, a strong orientation towards non-regular students or first-year students neglects the attention to the rest of the student body, throughout the whole academic program. On this matter, Cinobau (2013) argues that "supporting and enhancing the student experience (academic, social, welfare and support) from first contact through to becoming alumni is critical to success in higher education today for both the student and the institution" (p.169).

Therefore, as an area worthy to study, the overall purpose of this research is to advance student's perspectives concerning the impact of engagement practices on the undergraduate experience, with a view to identifying successful practices and recommendations for improvement.

Based on the research problems and gaps discussed above, this study attempts to answer the following central research question:

From the student's perspective, to what extent are the student engagement practices successful at the Faculty of Chemistry of the Mexican University?

In order to answer the central research question, four research sub-questions have been formulated:

1. What is the adequate conceptual framework for student engagement and student experience in the context of the Faculty of Chemistry of the Mexican University?
2. How can the proposed conceptual framework be transformed into a measurement instrument of student engagement practices?
3. What does the measurement instrument tell us about the impact of student engagement practices on the student experience at the Faculty of Chemistry of the Mexican University?

4. How can student engagement data be used to enhance the student experience of Chemistry undergraduates at the unit of study?

LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A wide variety of conceptions of student engagement have emerged across the world. Back in time, the conception is rooted in the importance of social and academic integration of students into universities (Tinto 1975; 2009). Today, one of the most influential definitions, originated in the United States, defines student engagement as the time and effort devoted by students to educationally effective practices and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities (Kuh, 2009). Therefore, student engagement involves both student's behaviours and institutional conditions in order to produce multiple and desirable university outcomes, such as retention, attainment, learning and satisfaction (Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J.A., Bridges, B.C., & Hayek, J.C., 2006).

Given the multidimensional nature of student engagement, Zepke & Leach (2010) have proposed a 'holistic' conceptual organizer based on a synthesis of 93 studies on student engagement from ten countries: USA (38), Australia (29), UK (11), New Zealand (7), South Africa (2), China (2), Spain (1), South Korea (1), Israel (1) and France (1).

Furthermore, the conceptual organizer has been refined through student interviews in the same context (Leach, & Zepke, 2011), which has been identified as the most suitable reference to elaborate a conceptual framework for this dissertation. Accordingly, the adapted conceptual framework for the Mexican context consists of four lenses of engagement (Fig. 1):

- Institutional support: It refers to the fact that "institutions provide an environment conducive to learning" (Leach & Zepke, 2011, p. 196), with a strong focus on student success, investment in a variety of support services and continuous institutional improvement. Despite institutional support can take multiple forms, for this study, this lens comprises those engagement practices (academic and non-academic) provided by universities to support student's transition and success throughout the student lifecycle. Some major examples of these programs and practices implemented by the Mexican University are:

initial induction (orientation week), first year-experiences (Tutoring program, Academic advising, remedial courses), financial support, study abroad, counselling, well-being activities, etc.

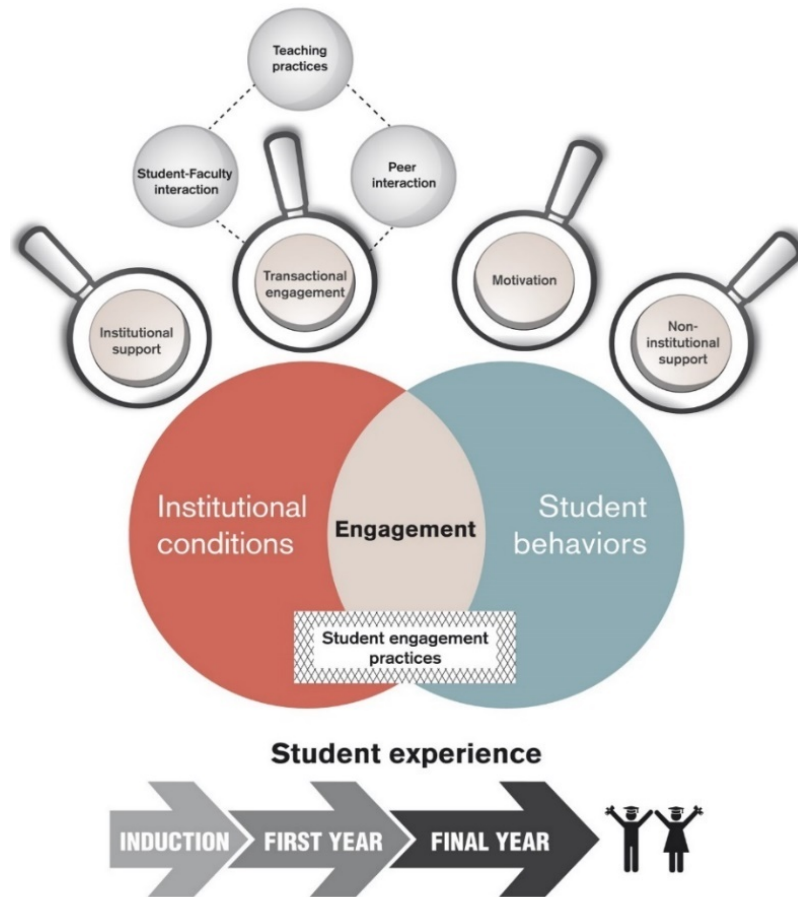


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework (Created by the Author, 2016)

- **Transactional engagement:** This lens refers to students engaging with faculty members or students engaging with each other through fruitful cooperation, and collaborative learning inside and outside the classroom. In addition, transactional engagement implies the recognition that teaching and teachers are fundamental to student engagement (Kuh, et al., 2006; Zepke & Leach, 2010; Zepke, Leach & Butler, 2010). Thus, transactional engagement is composed by three sub-dimensions: teaching practices, student-faculty interactions and peer interactions (See Fig. 1).

- Motivation and agency: Research in the field has identified student motivation as an influential factor on student engagement. Capability for autonomous work, positive relationships with others and self-belief are necessary features for students to be motivated, thus engaged in their studies. According to Brennen (2006) defines motivation as “the level of effort an individual is willing to expend toward the achievement of a certain goal” (p. 4) and affirms that motivation has its origins intrinsically within the students, but institutions also have the responsibility to create the right conditions to augment student motivation.
- Non-institutional support: Family support has been identified as a relevant non-institutional factor that might impact the students’ capacity to engage or not in their studies (Zepke & Leach, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions, two main research paths are undertaken: an in-depth literature review and a data collection allowed by the development of a measurement instrument of student engagement practices. The following elements are considered for the construction of such instrument.

Literature review:

- Conceptual framework (See Fig. 1);
- Items from existing student engagement surveys: Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2005 (Community College Student Report); 2014 University Experience Survey (UES Consortium, 2015); Student Engagement Questionnaire (2011) as part of Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE);
- Student engagement practices currently operating at the unit;

The measurement instrument comprises a quantitative section which collects student’s views through a 5-point Likert scale, followed by three qualitative open-ended questions which explore more in-depth on student experiences. In this respect, data collection involves a transformative mixed methods approach, meaning “those in which the researcher uses a theoretical lens as an overarching perspective within a design that contains both qualitative and

quantitative data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 15) in a single study or a program of interest. This combination allows a comprehensive analysis of the unit from different perspectives rather than using separately either quantitative or qualitative and helps reduce gaps on findings (Bulsara, n.d.).

Data is collected by using a web-based tool provided by Fountain Park Oy from Finland. Such instrument allows a participatory method where students express their experiences in their own words through a virtual brainstorming. Furthermore, respondents can read and evaluate other participant’s responses over a virtual dartboard. It is noteworthy to mention that such tool has been successfully applied for strategic development of higher education in Finland (Fountain Park Oy, 2015).

Concerning the sample selection, a random sampling has been applied. The target population are students from all academic years (1st to 9th semester). The survey has been administered to 683 undergraduates in Spanish language by the Student Affair’s Office.

Since the research design, variables, methods and measurement procedures are developed by the author, validity and reliability tests are performed, using the statistics package IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0. Similarly, Likert-scale data is analysed by using descriptive statistics with SPSS, and summarized by comparing the frequency of responses, as suggested by Hall (n.d.).

In addition, qualitative data is analysed through a Text Miner application. The frequency of themes mentioned by students are enumerated and classified. For the last open-ended question, the web-based tool categorizes the evaluations provided by students on a virtual dartboard; the correspondent results are displayed by the web-based tool comparing responses in terms of relevance vs disagreement.

Finally, quantitative and qualitative data are merged and discussed. One advantage of this approach is that qualitative data might be useful to interpret quantitative responses (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, & Rupert, 2007), as well as to identify signals not anticipated in the survey design. The following figure synthetizes the research methods.

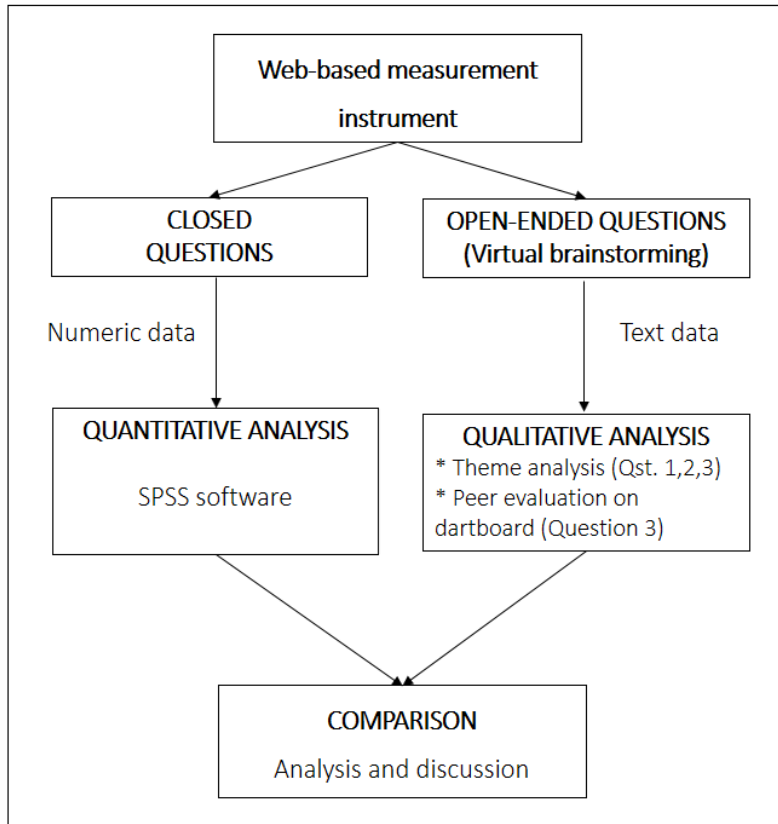


Fig. 2. Research methods (Created by the Author, 2016)

KEY FINDINGS

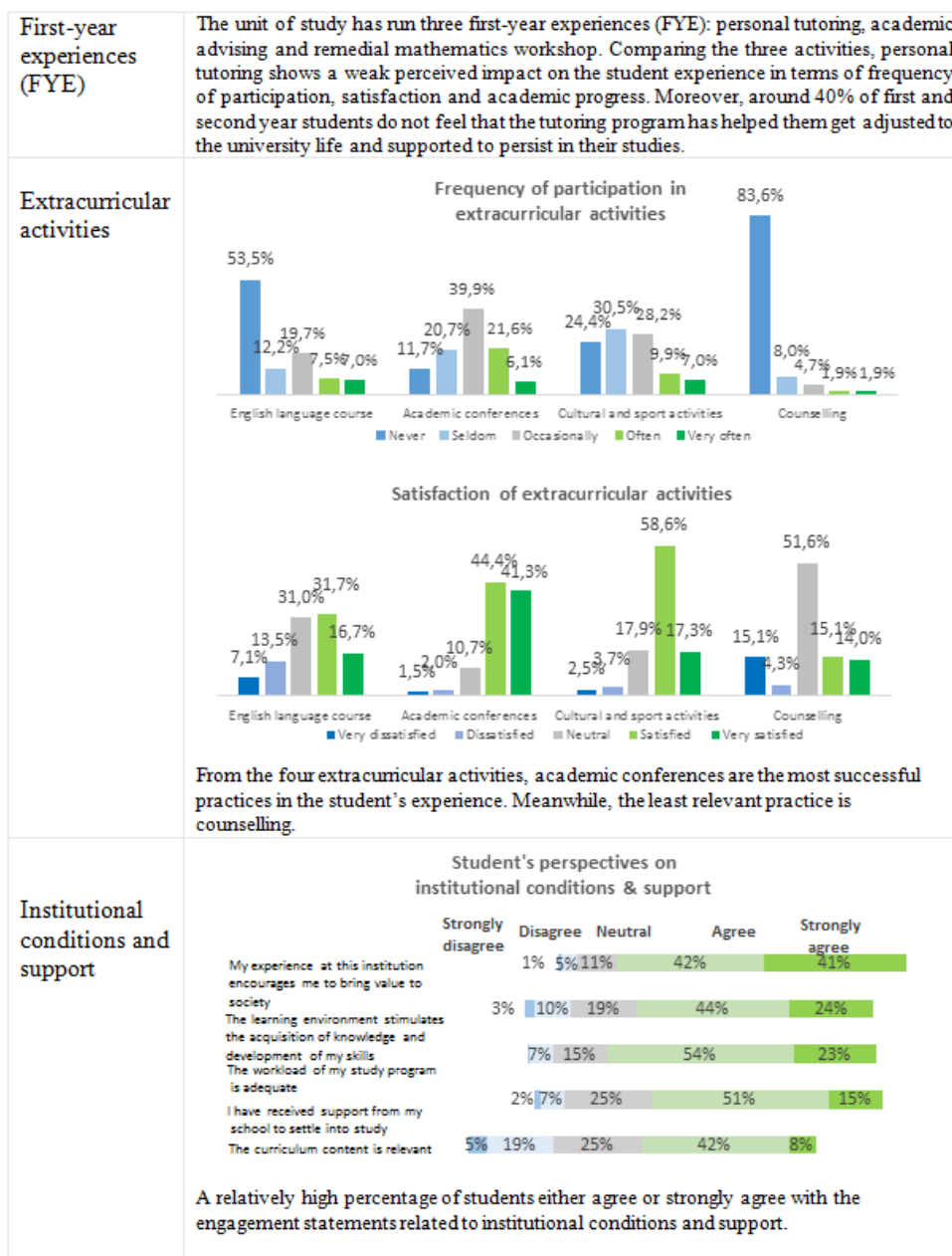
This study has revealed the impact of a wide range of engagement practices on the undergraduate experience. From the students' perspective, successful engagement practices take place both inside and beyond the classroom, in line with engagement literature. Tinto (1997) emphasizes the importance of classrooms or labs as gateways to engage students in curriculum. Moreover, out-of-class practices are purposeful educational experiences (Kuh, et al, 2006). Both aspects foster interactions among students and faculty and provide meaningful learning experiences.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The closed-ended questions have been responded by 213 undergraduates: 55.9% are female and 44.1% male undergraduates, from all academic semesters. Reliability and validity tests have proved to be favourable

allowing the quantitative data analysis. The following section summarizes the most relevant findings based on the conceptual framework.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT



TRANSACTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Teaching practices	Teaching practices		
	Not at all/ Not much	Moderate	Very much/Quite a bit
Engaged you actively in learning	7,0%	26,3%	66,7%
Linked theory with laboratory practical work	6,1%	27,7%	66,2%
Conveyed enthusiasm for their subject	8,9%	25,4%	65,7%
Demonstrated concern for student learning	11,3%	27,7%	61,0%
Used ICT resources for teaching in class	12,7%	31,5%	55,9%
Provided feedback on completed assignments or tests	14,1%	32,4%	53,5%
Used adequate pedagogic methods	14,6%	39,0%	46,5%
Student-faculty interaction	45% undergraduates agree or strongly agree that they discuss ideas or concepts with teachers outside of class. Only 23.4% students agree and strongly agree regarding working on a research project with a faculty member.		
Peer interaction	Concerning the item “My interaction with other students is positive and supportive”, 72.8% agree and strongly agree. For the statement “I take part in study groups”, 42% agree and strongly agree, while 34.4% is neutral and 23.6% disagree and strongly disagree. In an additional survey question, very poor interactions with student representatives has been found: 67.1% never interact with student representatives and 24.4% seldom have done it. Only 1.4% of the sample interact very often with student representatives.		

MOTIVATION AND AGENCY

Motivation towards studies is another key element for engagement in universities. To the statement “I feel motivated towards my studies” almost 30% of Chemistry students strongly agree, plus 44.1% who agree with the statement. The rest of the sample population indicates a neutral perspective (15.0%); a smaller percentage disagree (6.1%) or strongly disagree (5.2%).

NON-INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

77.5% students indicate that family help them continue with their university studies. To the question: What is your main financial support that allows you studying at the university level? 62.7% says family, 18.8% of support comes from scholarships, 9.6% from a job, 8.3% are savings and 0.6% mentioned partners as main financial support.

COMPLEMENTARY FOCUS: OVERALL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

High levels of satisfaction are reported: 21% students are very satisfied and 60% are satisfied; only 11% students are neutral, 7% are dissatisfied and 1%

very dissatisfied with the overall student experience at the Faculty of Chemistry. This study also asked students to evaluate a set of engagement aspects which have provide them with a meaningful experience: the two most important elements determining a meaningful educational experience are quality of teachers and experimental work in laboratories. Interestingly, the less popular factor is the first-year experiences (tutoring program, academic advising and remedial mathematics).

QUALITATIVE RESULTS (N= 167)

Open-ended questions	Findings
<p>1) So far, which student engagement practices promoted by the Faculty of Chemistry have been relevant to your educational experience?</p> <p>2) Explain how they have helped you in your studies</p>	<p>Based on the thematic analysis, the most relevant student engagement practices are:</p> <p>1st Extracurricular activities (Academic conferences) 2nd Laboratory experience 3rd Mentored research 4th Teachers and teaching practices 5th Academic advising (all semesters)</p>
<p>3) What should be improved of your entire educational experience at this school? (inside and outside of classroom)? Write down as many ideas as you want, say what you think it is important.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Virtual dashboard</p> <p>Regarding question 3), please rate! Evaluate other students' <u>opinions</u> on the dashboard.</p>	<p>The most relevant topics discussed by the students:</p> <p>1st Effective teachers and teaching practices 2nd Laboratory experience 3rd Library service 4th Curriculum structure</p> <p>Student's evaluating peers' opinions: Ideas of high-relevance, low-disagreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote short term research with industry • Allow students intervention in the development of innovative laboratory experiences • Formal teacher evaluation • Pedagogical training • Updated books at the library • More access and promotion of mentored research projects • More promotion of international mobility options, among others.

DISCUSSION

Within the lens of institutional support, academic conferences (extracurricular activity) delivered by eminent scholars is one of the most successful engagement practices organized at the Faculty of Chemistry. Students value academic conferences as learning spaces to discover current scientific research and real-life applications of Chemistry “[...] because in class, such specific applications are not taught”. In addition, conferences act

as orientation mechanisms to decide the course of student's careers and future orientations. As a matter of fact, students are learning crucial aspects of the field mainly out of the classroom.

Likewise, mentored research is another successful engagement practice in the sense that undergraduates can collaborate in faculty-initiated research during break periods, gain experimental skills in the laboratory, define career paths and develop motivation towards graduation.

Regarding first-year experiences, personal tutoring shows a weak impact among first and second year students. International literature points out tutoring programs as solid supporters of transition, engagement and academic performance in universities, particularly for first-year students (Rhoden & Dowling, 2006).

On other hand, from student's views, academic advising offered by professors and advanced students inside and out of class, is prominent to their experience, not only during the first year but throughout their whole study program.

In terms of transactional engagement, both quantitative and qualitative data has proved that quality of teachers and teaching practices are fundamental factors for students. Indeed, such aspects has been ranked as factors for a meaningful educational experience. The research has also revealed important deficiencies pedagogy and teacher evaluation.

In addition, the empirical part evidences a low peer interaction, especially with student representatives. In this regard, students claim for "closer interaction with teachers, administration staff and student representatives." Regrettably, the Mexican education system is characterized by a poor student involvement in university development, at least compared to other higher education systems in the world.

As a matter of fact, this study has provided an overview of the impact of student engagement practices at a Mexican university. Despite a vast number of recommendations can be drawn from this research, four practical recommendations are formulated. Primarily, the unit should focus on the revealed strengths: prioritize support and visibility of both academic

conferences and mentored research program. Concerning the areas for improvement, the main priorities should be: a strategic focus on teacher professional development as well as strengthening first-year experiences, particularly the personal tutoring program which has been promoted by the rectorate at institutional level.

In summary, this dissertation has added value to the field of Mexican higher education in multiple ways. First, it has provided a holistic perspective of the student engagement as a strategic focus for university development. Second, it has produced evidence-based information for decision-making and improvement of the undergraduate experience, and third, it emphasizes the value of students' views.

As final words, as long as higher education institutions shift their focus towards strengthening engagement, assessing its impact and understanding deeply the whole undergraduate experience from the student's perspective, it will be possible to focus on those areas worth to invest, enhance or innovate.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This investigation provides various insights for further research. First, the Faculty of Chemistry should measure the impact of student engagement practices over time with a more representative sample population. Second, involvement of other key stakeholders is highly recommended; particularly, collecting academic managers' and teaching staff's perspectives on the findings of this research is indispensable, through qualitative interviews or the use of innovative IT tools (such as Fountain Park's tool). Lastly, the impact of student engagement practices on specific outcomes such as dropout, persistence and graduation rates should be investigated.

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WIDENING ACCESS TO REFUGEES: RESPONSES OF AUSTRIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Isil Gyney

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The year 2015 marked a turning point in migration history of world as violence, persecution, war, poverty, climate change and natural disasters drove millions of people away from their homes and generated prolonged displacements. The UN figures (United Nations, 2016) indicate that the number of international migrants have surged substantially in the last two decades from 173 million in 2000 up to 244 million in 2015. Refugees constituted a significant part of this mass exodus of people. Accordingly, over a million migrants and refugees crossed borders into Europe in the last few years, which sparked a migration crisis unprecedented in scale in Europe since 1950s.

Having caught unprepared for large streams of migration, Europe has had to tackle with an array of policy issues ranging from humanitarian aid, border control, human trafficking, integration, education, European neighborhood policy, disputes between member countries on EU common law relating to asylum, borders and immigration and so on. As the primary concern of hosting countries has been humanitarian aid related to food, shelter, and health in this process, it has taken a while to realize that due to displacement, refugee youth miss out on higher education (HE). In their article in *University World News* titled “The Syrian refugee crisis – What can universities do?”, Altbach and de Wit (2015) called on higher education institutions (HEIs) to respond to the needs of refugee students and opened up discussions for the role that HEIs could play in responding to the crisis and integration of refugees along with challenges they face in accessing HE. Analyzing the current situation from the perspective of human capital, they highlight the potential of refugees in knowledge economy and benefits HEIs could derive from widening access to refugee students. Recognizing the both immediate

and long-term challenges ahead, the authors draw attention to the fact that integration of refugees could yield positive results for integration of refugees, internationalizing the campus and social engagement of academic communities.

Along with the call to academic community and universities, widening access to refugees has started to be more commonly discussed in the context of EHEA and social dimension of Bologna process as it is closely linked with the overall goals of the latter. Yet, increased participation of underrepresented groups still remains a challenge for the Bologna process.

In this context, the focus of this thesis is refugees who constitute just one segment of these underrepresented groups and their access to higher education. Given the vast bulk of literature dealing with immigration and integration, the thesis probes into access of refugees into higher education within the context of Austrian HE and responses of universities in their efforts to integrate them into their systems. Having been the third country that has received the most asylum applications in Europe, Austria has tried both to reconcile between handling the refugee crisis and political debates that come along with it. The Universities Austria (UNIKO) launched an initiative called MORE for refugees solely targeting refugee students in September 2015 with participation of 19 public universities for humanitarian aid, fundraising, language courses and integration based on their infrastructure and capabilities and universities exerted varying degrees of efforts for facilitation of access of refugees.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The overall aim of this research is to expand an understanding of a how a national higher education system in Europe responds to including refugees with emphasis on recent developments upon the case of emergency pursuant to an unexpected mass migration.

Thus, the objectives of this research are to:

- identify the challenges against refugee students' access to HE
- evaluate critically national and institutional policies relevant to facilitation of refugee students' access to HE

- explore stakeholder views and practices related to refugees' access to HE
- formulate recommendations on facilitation of refugee higher education

The research question of the thesis is: “How do public universities in Austria respond to including asylum seekers/refugees to higher education?”

SUB-QUESTIONS

- How do universities position themselves in terms of including asylum seekers/refugees?
- What policies and practical strategies do universities employ to adapt themselves to include refugees/asylum seekers?
- What kind of approaches do universities adopt to include refugees and asylum seekers?
- What obstacles do they face in achieving this objective?

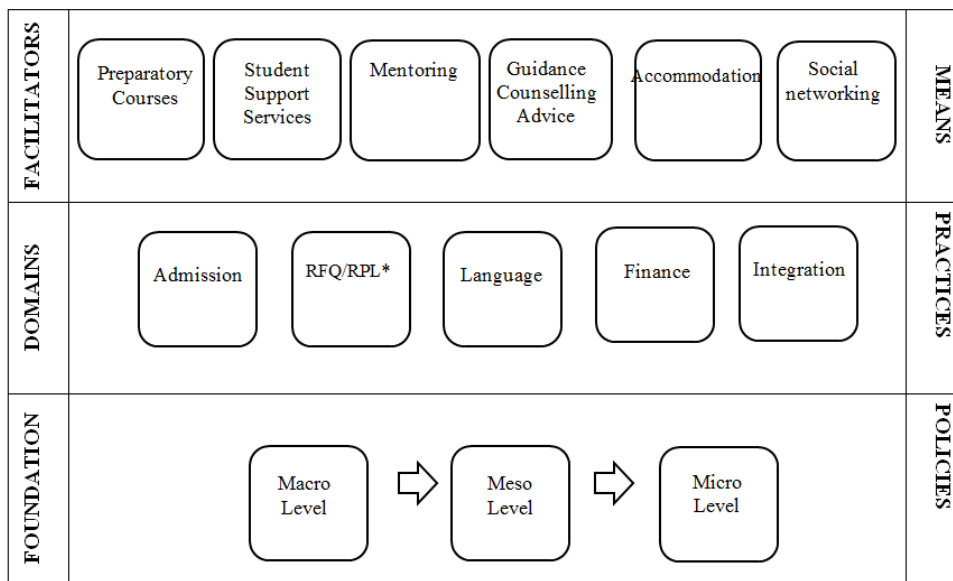
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Three main bodies of literature underpinned the conceptual framework. Concepts and theories from sociology of education, literature on widening participation (WP) & institutional responses to WP, and studies on refugees were reviewed and intertwined to provide the background for the conceptual framework. Given the background on the review of the literature on refugees, WP and institutional responses of universities, a conceptual framework for refugees' integration into higher education was proposed. It was adapted from the conceptual framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) for identifying key domains of integration into the host society.

In this conceptual framework, foundation refers to macro, meso and micro level policy context, which influence refugees' access to higher education. Macro level policies stand for policies, laws, rules, procedures of supranational institutions that affect policy making processes at meso and micro levels such as European Union or any other binding policy context such as common immigration laws, Bologna process, higher education laws, or Lisbon Treaty and so on. While meso-level refers to processes taking at the national level, government policies related to migration or higher education, micro level refers to institutional processes, activities of

individual HE institutions, units, student unions, individual students, researchers or academicians. For the purpose of this thesis, European, national and institutional policies concerning refugees' access to HE will be analyzed. At the national and institutional level, dimensions of admission, recognition of foreign qualifications, language, finance and integration will be utilized.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Refugees' Integration into Higher Education (adapted from Ager&Strang, 2008)



RFQ: Recognition of Foreign Qualifications; RPL: Recognition of Prior Learning

METHODOLOGY

The research delves into integration of refugees into Austrian universities inclusion by adopting qualitative case study as research strategy and by collecting qualitative data from pertinent stakeholders. The study unit of analysis is public universities in Austria. There are four types of universities in Austria; public universities, universities of applied sciences, university colleges of teacher education and private universities. Public universities were chosen as unit of analysis as they participate in the refugee initiative of

the UNIKO. The case study data in this study relies on two data collection techniques: semi-structured interviews and documentary secondary data.

DATA COLLECTION

First source of data was collected through semi-structured interviews from various stakeholders representing Austrian higher education system. 18 semi-structured interviews with members of senior management from the BMFWF, UNIKO, public universities, expert and students were conducted spanning a five-month period between February and June 2016. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. 14 face-to-face interviews were conducted whereas four participants preferred to reply via e-mail. During face-to-face interviews, 13 participants agreed for their interviews to be audio-recorded by a voice recorder of a mobile phone. Notes were taken down during one interview, in which the participant gave no consent for audio-recording. Consent was obtained from all participants. Consent letters including information on the purpose and scope of the thesis and questions, participation terms and confidentiality were sent to participants. In some cases, consent was obtained verbally before the interview.

DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative content analysis was adopted as data analysis strategy for both interviews and documents. For the analysis of performance agreements, seventeen words were determined for keyword search; Diversity (Diversität), Minority (Minorität) Equality (Gleichstellung), Inequality (Ungleichheit), Migration/Migrant/Migration background (Migration/Migrant/Migrationshintergrund), Asylum (Asyl), Asylum-seeker (Asylwerber), Recognised refugee (Anerkannte Flüchtlinge/Asylberechtigte) Refugee (Flüchtlinge), Ethnic (Ethnisch), Social inclusion (Sozial Inklusion) Disadvantaged (Benachteiligt), Underrepresented (Unterrepräsentiert), Integration (Integration), Educationally disadvantaged (Bildungsferne). Then the data were organized into major themes, categories and case examples through content analysis. For interviews, a directed content analysis approach was adopted.

KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings reveal that Austria has been paying more attention to social dimension of HE recently. The Ministry's efforts to lie more emphasis on widening access seems to have gained pace after the Bologna process follow-up requirement that students entering HE should reflect the diversity of the population. This was reflected with the start of the national strategy preparation process for social dimension of HE. From the policy side, for the time being, there is no policy consideration to fund quotas or special places for refugees. Regarding incentivization of HEIs for including more refugees, soft incentives and cooperative approach such as commissioning studies and surveys to analyze the status quo, filling data gaps, identifying access barriers, including recommendations for remedial measures into the performance agreements with the universities are being suggested by the BMWFW in their efforts to help universities.

Almost no financial incentive exists for HEIs to have a strategy for widening access or expand its student body to have more underrepresented groups - except for the prospect of social inclusion to be incentivized through performance agreements- Already full to the brim with the number of students due to open access policy, struggling with retention rates, and funding, and many other societal demands, HEIs expect their efforts be appreciated.

Yet, Austrian universities have been responsive to the refugee crisis through humanitarian aid and educational support based on availability of their sources as much as they could. The MORE initiative is a singular holistic example of this in Europe. Efforts exerted by individual universities demonstrate their goodwill and responsiveness to societal challenges, which yet suffer from lack of funds.

Secondly, one could safely argue that integrating refugees into universities are not the main priorities of universities. The reasons are partly related to lack of funding for endorsing such activities and partly to more pressing problems that HEIs need to tackle with. Analysis of performance agreements of the 22 public universities in Austria reveal that that disadvantaged groups are most often defined by gender or disability. All universities have specific policies and actions pertaining to gender and disabled employees and students. Whilst all universities pay particular attention to gender and disability, a few universities define other cultural and demographic groups.

Concerning institutional discourse in performance agreements, it is marked that few universities make specific mention of projects directed at underrepresented groups aiming to trace their situation across the whole student cycle. Outreach activities from universities to schools is evident. However, not all activities carried out under the title of outreach target underrepresented groups. Widening participation necessitates commitment on part of the institutions and should be embedded into the mission and culture of the institution, which in turn entails an institutional change. Most often such transformation is viewed to be damaging academic excellence. At this point, the key question is how far the institutions are willing to transform their systems.

Thirdly, the issue of widening access should be evaluated within the broader framework political and social agenda. Many issues inherent in refugees' access to higher education are closely related with the overall education policy or immigration policy beyond universities' control such as open access policy, early tracking of students, or asylum law entitling them to certain rights at various stages of asylum processes. Likewise, the issue of refugees per se cannot be considered indispensable of the wider political, social and economic context of the countries. Being a delicate issue across all countries in Europe and elsewhere, immigration of refugees evoked differing responses in the refugee hosting countries, the most common pattern being seen is the surge in support for right-wing parties. The MORE initiative directed at refugees were targeted in Austria by a right-wing political party through parliamentary questions, which in essence questioned the activities in terms of their conformity with the Austrian law and perceived discrimination against Austrian and other third-country and international students. Hence, issues of access for refugees to HE remains intricately linked with political and social dynamics as well.

Regarding the challenges from refugees' side language, funding, lack of documentation and lack of information constitute the major challenges Lack of language proficiency presented obstacles in access to HE, joining social life and the labor market. Waiting period during the asylum procedure and lack of quality courses during this time were reported to have affected language learning unfavorably. In the absence of quality language provision during waiting time, students resorted to self-study, private courses or

courses offered by NGOs. The lack of possibilities to practice German language with native speakers were mentioned as a barrier since they currently have little contact with them. Due to lack of language skills, interaction with society through employment remains lacking as well. Secondly, funding presents another major challenge for both refugees and HEIs. For HEIs, there are no incentives to extend their activities in the field of LLL or WP and indicators for LLL or societal engagement play lesser role in the funding allocations. Lack of sufficient funds for refugees, information on funding opportunities, and entitlement to funding based on legal status of immigration complicate refugees' study chances. Thirdly, although pre-entry guidance was provided by student unions, NGOs and admission offices on admission conditions, funding, study choice and accommodation, there is still need for refugee- and asylum seeker-specific information available on accessing HE, funding, educational opportunities and language courses.

Finally, whilst the refugees having been interviewed within the scope of this study had their official documents for access to HE with them, lack of documents, identity cards and fraud in documentation were reported to have constituted problems for individuals and institutions.

It can be concluded that Austrian HE system has been responsive to the massive immigration of refugees and exerted varying degrees of support to them with humanitarian and altruistic motives, yet more sustainable solutions are required. Amidst the political debates, while efforts are being exerted by individual universities and NGOs to meet immediate challenges, funding and support from the policy side remain scarce. Thus, a national action plan for education of refugees is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKING

Recommendation 1: In-depth research targeting both pre-entry or studying refugee students to identify their challenges and needs could be commissioned to have an insight into their living & learning conditions. Recognizing that refugees may have special needs other than international or non-traditional students, policies to support them need to be formulated accordingly.

Recommendation 2: A concerted national action plan for education of refugees could be devised with involvement of various stakeholders from the field of education, policy-making, local authorities, employment office, NGOs and business&industry sectors backed by policy side of HE. Efforts directed towards refugee HE are fragmented. For the time being, activities are carried out by individual institutions rather than holistic policies stretching across all levels of education and addressing the needs of the labor market. Universities' expertise could be utilized for joint projects.

Recommendation 3: Certain fields of study could be prioritized depending on analysis of both needs of the country and labor market and competences and skills refugees have. Hence, short vocational pathways could be an alternative in order for people to get employability skills.

Recommendation 4: Initiatives of HEIs, student unions, students, NGOs and other education providers could be incentivized in their efforts to assist in refugees. Basic needs such as transportation, stationary, books, accommodation or orientation courses offered by universities could be supported through funding or crowdsourcing campaigns.

Recommendation 5: More information, clear and accessible guidance should be provided on asylum seekers' and refugees' entitlements in relation to further and HE. Refugee and asylum seeker-specific advice and guidance sessions, could be offered covering such topics as careers advice, HE entry processes, study programs, course choices, other learning opportunities and university life. Information packages or HE toolkits comprising essential information for asylum seekers and refugees in various languages could be delivered to newly arrived asylum-seekers.

A single web information portal on HE in Austria in various languages including the native languages of refugees providing both general information and issues that solely concern refugees could be set up or such compact information could be provided on one of the existing websites on HE in Austria. One could find a good deal of information about Austrian HE system online yet information is scattered and there is no single website covering all information that a refugee student needs or providing all links related to funding, student financial aid, language course offerings, university

preparation program, MORE program, recognition of qualifications and so on.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEIS

Recommendation 1: HEIs could prepare WP strategy and agenda and establishing strategic committees such as diversity unit or assigning LLL units with the task so that progress of implementation could be monitored. Measurable targets should be set accordingly.

Recommendation 2: HEIs can collaborate with European and other international initiatives. One prominent example is the Kiron Open Higher Education, which is a social start-up from Germany and a crowdsourcing initiative that established a university for refugee students in 2015.

Recommendation 3: HEIs could align preparatory and bridging classes with the needs of the refugees. On that note, the orientation program for international students offered by the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences could serve as an example. While the program aims to have students reach up to B2 level Dutch language, it offers subject-specific preparatory courses such as Mathematics, Economics, Biology, History, Social Studies and Physics. Aside from preparatory courses for Bachelor education, the program offers workshops or courses such as Bachelor's Level Skills, Knowledge of Dutch Society (KNM), or Orientation into the Dutch Labour Market. The students familiarize themselves with both educational methods used in Dutch HE such as presentations, group work, project-based learning and lectures and culture and labor market of the Dutch society. Such classes could be added to the Vorstudienlehrgang program for refugee students (<http://www.amsterdamuas.com/education/practical-matters/content/studiekiezers/hva-breed/studentenzaken/language-and-preparatory-course/language-and-preparatory-course.html>).

Another example is the Foundation for Refugee Students UAF in the Netherlands which guides refugees on their study choices, during their studies and for job applications. While initially supporting them with language and develop learning skills, the UAF arranges training courses and networking meetings for refugees who are studying and graduates (<https://www.uaf.nl/english>).

Recommendation 4: HEIs could assist refugees' language training by diversifying language learning opportunities through online learning, blended learning, MOOCs, or open educational resources.

Recommendation 5: Through recognition of prior learning or different modes of provision, refugees could have smoother transition to tertiary education.

Recommendation 6: More guidance at the pre-entry level is needed; hence, open days solely for refugees where they would be informed about the Austrian HE system, regulations, language requirements, available degree programs and degree certificates could be beneficial.

Recommendation 7: Professional development or awareness programs for staff could be offered to promote social inclusion. Inclusive teaching in terms of curriculum, content delivery and assessment could be practiced.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCE FACTORS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT- PERSISTENCE AT A PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN WASHINGTON STATE

Jon Maes

BACKGROUND

In the 1930s, scholars began examining the forces behind students' decision to persist or depart from higher education institutions. These explorations initially looked at U.S. four-year university contexts, but research has since spread to other high education systems around the world and has demarcated for diverse institutional types, academic programs, and student demographics. Within this area of study there is a small contingent of researchers in the past 10 years that seek to better understand persistence trends for international students in higher education. Nevertheless, there remains at least three research gaps within this area of study.

For starters, the collection of international student persistence studies displays some disharmony. While researchers seem to be in general agreement that there is a correlation between international students' level of academic achievement and persistence, other variables such as pre-entry characteristics and social engagement have presented findings that are either contradictory or inconclusive. At the same time, there has been little to no consideration of the effects that variables like motivations, study goals, and living situation have.

Additionally, international student persistence research would gain from progressive refinement of the scientific methods that are being employed. To be more precise, because this topic of academic interest is still in its infancy, there are a lack of replication studies that would enhance the research techniques and verify the results being presented. In particular, two elements that would especially benefit from expanded inquiries are conceptual

frameworks and quantitative survey instruments. These essential tools must be tailored for international students' unique traits, perspectives, and learning situations. Thus far, Kwai (2009) appears to be the lone researcher who has attempted to create a conceptual framework designed for international student persistence. The remainder of scholars rely greatly on the theoretical constructions developed for studies of domestic student persistence. The same is true for college and university surveys that are administered broadly, but that are largely formulated for collecting data about domestic students.

Furthermore, research of international student persistence in community college settings is even scarcer. At the time of this study, there appears to be only two researchers (Behroozi-

Bagherpour, 2010; Mamiseishvili, 2012a) who have addressed this topic specifically. Therefore, more research is needed that considers the reasons behind international student persistence and departure at U.S. two-year public higher education institutions.

With these points in mind, the purpose of this study is to explore the effects of institutional experience factors on international student persistence at a public community college in Washington State. There is one overarching research question that steers this study.

How do institutional experience factors relate to international students' decision to persist with their degree studies at a public community college in Washington State for the Spring 2016 Quarter?

From this main research question there are two dimensions, four sub dimensions, five sub research questions, and five hypotheses that were established.

Dimensions	Sub Dimensions	Sub Research Questions	Hypotheses
Academic System	Formal (Academic Performance)	How does academic performance relate to international student persistence?	There is a significant statistical difference between persisters and non-persisters in terms of cumulative GPA, course load, and active participation in class.
	Informal (Interaction with Faculty & Staff)	How do interactions with faculty and staff relate to international student persistence?	There is a significant statistical difference between persisters and non-persisters in terms of their satisfaction and engagement with faculty and staff.
Social System	Formal (Extracurricular Activities)	How does involvement in extracurricular activities and on-campus employment relate to international student persistence?	There is a significant statistical difference between persisters and non-persisters in terms of participating in extracurricular activities and on-campus employment.
	Informal (Peer Group Interactions & Living Situation)	How do interactions with other students relate to international student persistence?	There is a significant statistical difference between persisters and non-persisters in terms of their satisfaction and engagement with other students.
		How do interactions with one's living situation relate to international student persistence?	There is a significant statistical difference between persisters and non-persisters in terms of their engagement and satisfaction with their living situation.

Table: Research Dimensions, Sub Research Questions, and Hypotheses

The conceptual framework for this study was developed out of the literature on higher education student retention. Based on precedent set by previous quantitative studies of international student persistence (Behroozi-Bagherpour, 2010; Mamiseishvili, 2012a, 2012b; Smith, 2015), the investigator heavily referred to Tinto's (1975, 1993) Social Integrationist Model as an initial starting point. Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon's (2004) revised Theory of Student Persistence in Commuter Colleges and Universities (as cited in Braxton, Doyle, & Hartley, 2014) was also considered with its amendments to Tinto's model being applicable for community college contexts. Finally, an expanded version of Kwai's (2009) Model of International Student Persistence provided scaffolding as the only model for international student persistence discovered in the literature. The end product is a customized conceptual framework for the particularities of this study's research site and accessible population delimitations.

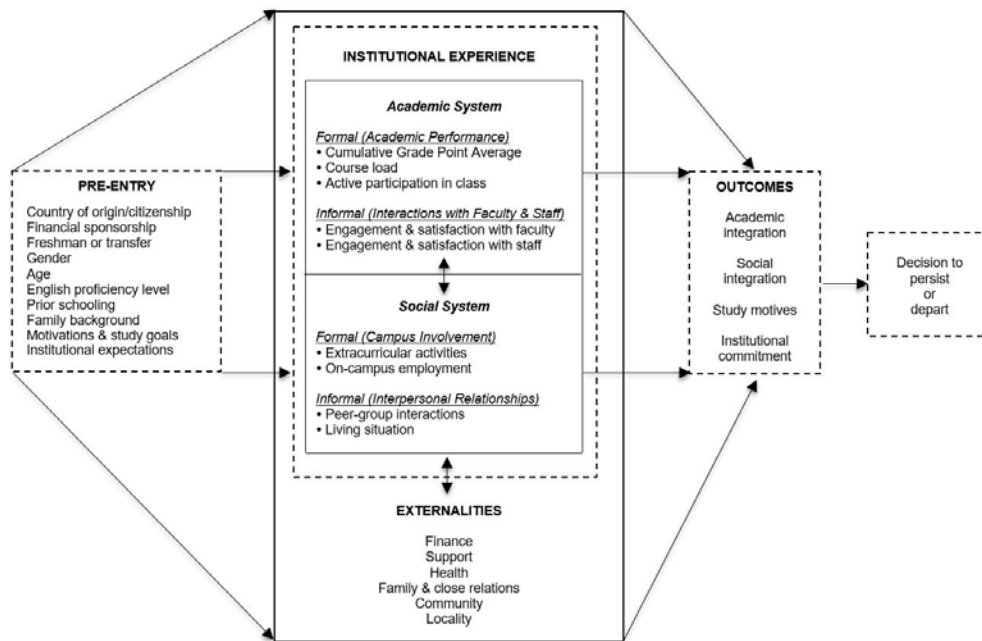


Figure: A Conceptual Framework for International Student Persistence at U.S. Community Colleges

METHODOLOGY

Triangulated data sources were used for collecting information about international student persistence at the community college research site as it pertains to institutional experience factors. First is a self-created International Student Satisfaction & Engagement (ISSE) online survey that was adapted from three other nation-wide U.S. higher education surveys. After reviewing the surveys used in previous international student persistence studies, the investigator decided to customize the ISSE survey for a few reasons. The main rationale was because other U.S. higher education student surveys are designed for general applicability with some questions not pertaining to international students' experiences. The ISSE survey is made up of 25 questions that measured 126 variable items. The vast majority of questions were multiple choice that asked for a single response or on a grid for responses based on a 4-point and 5-point Likert scales. Of the 342 international students eligible to take the ISSE survey, 71 participated equating to response rate of 22%. Nonetheless, closer examination showed that the survey was predominantly taken by international students that can be

classified as “persisters” (n = 46) and “undecideds” (n = 18) with comparatively less participation from “non-persisters” (n = 7).

Second, desk research documenters were analyzed in attempt to gain greater insight about both persisters and non-persisters at the community college research site. Non-enrollment records, transfer out forms, and graduation degree audits were the three types of documents reviewed in cross-reference with seven variables: (a) cumulative grade point average, (b) first quarter of study, (c) total number of quarters of study, (d) number of quarters with high credit course loads, (e) number of quarters with low credit course loads, (f) number of quarters not meeting the minimum 2.0 GPA immigration requirements, and (g) English course placement at initial enrollment. The transfer out forms also provided details about some of the reasons that non-persisters gave for their decision to withdrawal from the community college. In total, the sample size was n=106 out of the total enrollment of 416 fulltime international students on F-1 visas attending class for the Spring 2016 Quarter. 19 of this international student subgroup were included because they were identified as terminated, dropped from classes, or not enrolled. For the other 87 students, 42 of them completed an associate degree and graduated from the community college. This lead to a sample population of persisters as n=42 and non-persisters as n=64.

Third, the investigator relied on his professional experience and site visit meetings with ISS&P office staff as resources for providing more depth to the partial views obtained from the survey instrument and institutional research. The investigator has worked in international education for over 13 years with 8 years in higher education settings and three years for the ISS&P office at the community college research site. While administrating international student services, the investigator has accumulated a wealth of experience and practical knowledge that is applicable for this study. Consultations with other ISS&P office staff also assisted with clarifying some of the information that was found missing from the institutional data documents as well as verifying that data pieces were accurate.

KEY FINDINGS

Analysis of descriptive frequency and inferential statistics laid the groundwork for offering answers to this study's five research questions. The major findings are summarized as follows.

NONPARAMETRIC TESTS (KRUSKAL-WALLIS H TESTS AND MANN-WHITNEY U TESTS):

Data from both the ISSE survey and institutional documents indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between cumulative GPA and international students' decision to persist with their studies at the community college research site.

Data from institutional documents suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between persisters and non-persisters in terms of their course loads and living situation engagement. Specifically, that persisters had more quarters of high credit and low credit course loads as well as greater participation in the college managed homestay program.

There are no statistically significant correlations for the remaining academic system and social system variables of interaction with faculty and staff, extracurricular activities, on-campus employment, peer-group interaction, and living situation.

DESCRIPTIVE AND FREQUENCY STATISTICS:

Undecideds had higher percentages of not knowing their cumulative GPA and not completing homework or assignments for a class. They also had comparatively lower levels of engagement with professors outside of class, interaction with students from different backgrounds, involvement in extracurricular activities, participation in the community college's homestay program, and were less satisfied with other international students as well as their living situation.

Persisters had a higher percentage of working on assignments with other students in class and had a marginally higher number of them participated in extracurricular activities 6 hours or more a week.

Non-persisters skipped class slightly more often, but spent a greater amount of time receiving academic advising/counseling, career assistance, and tutoring other students while also having a noticeably higher level of satisfaction with American students and their living situation.

All three student groups reported high levels of satisfaction with their professors while in class and with staff in both the ISS&P office and other offices.

To summarize, the major findings from this study are largely consistent with the conclusions reached in previous studies of international student persistence. From the literature, there is a general consensus that academic integration is a predictor of student persistence. Evidence for this contention extends to both American domestic students and international students as well as within varying U.S. higher education institution contexts. In short, that progressive academic performance is a strong motivator for students to stay enrolled at their present college or university. Persistence theories have also looked at how social integration on campus could be supportive of retaining students and reducing attrition; however, results from studies for this dimension are not as compelling. To a certain extent, social integration has stronger ties for domestic students at residential universities as opposed to commuter colleges where campus life outside the classroom appears to be less influential. The importance of social integration for international students in any higher education institutional setting may also seem intuitive as a means of support for adapting to their new living and study situation in a foreign country. Nonetheless, the small amount of international student persistence research concerned with social integration factors has not produced a definitive association.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To begin with, international student persistence research would benefit from further refinement of the conceptual framework. Additional clarifications could be pursued for the sub points under the four dimensions (pre-entry, institutional experience, externalities, and outcomes) and perhaps separate conceptual frameworks based on the institutional type with four-year

universities and two-year commuter colleges having unique campus environments and differing student populations.

Moreover, much can be discovered in research projects that comparatively investigate international student persistence at more than one community college or a statewide community college system. Analogously, future studies would profit from a mixed methodology that includes qualitative data collection from interviews and focus groups. Experts (Andrade, 2006; Mamiseishvili, 2012a) also advise the need for longitudinal studies. Research that follows multiple cohorts across their two years of enrollment at the community college would provide diachronic and micro-level analysis for better differentiating between chance occurrences and real trends. Including association tests and regression tests would also furnish persistence causalities and predictors for more reliable generalizations.

Enhancements can be made to the survey instruments with the aim of improving measures of international student engagement, satisfaction, and persistence. One issue is how current U.S. higher education surveys have questions that are inapplicable to international students' experiences. Surveys must also be sensitive to question wording for comprehension and interpretation by non-native English speakers. As such, the ISSE survey used in this study would be enhanced by a longer, more comprehensive pilot survey and greater consultation with the English as a Second Language (ESL) departments. The same holds true for any statewide or nationwide surveys that focus on international student satisfaction, engagement, and persistence.

At the same time, it is important to consider the value of maintaining survey participants' anonymity by not requiring personal information such as their names, school ID numbers, or exact date of birth. Ultimately, this privacy decision was an attempt to solicit honest responses with answers not being able to be traced back to the students that gave them. However, there are disadvantages to this approach in terms of the extra time students have to input certain information that they would not have to otherwise if they gave their school ID number (e.g. nationality, gender, cumulative GPA, course loads). The possibility of students giving incorrect information for these demographics also increases for each personal characteristic they have to insert manually. Correspondingly, school ID linkages could be used to better

identify international students' employment history and hours they worked. Therefore, the prospect of enhancing reliability by requiring students to give their school ID number perhaps outweighs any risks of response inaccuracies.

Lastly, researchers should take a closer look at honing each of the individual variables that are suspected of having an impact on international student persistence. Aside from those related to institutional experience, the wide range of pre-entry characteristics and external factors are particularly lacking scientific investigation thus far. To illustrate, hypotheses for variables that examine prior schooling, financial sponsorship, family background, and community involvement as well as study motivations and expectations before arrival on campus. Meanwhile, variables within the institutional experience dimension could be fine-tuned. For example, looking at peer-group interactions with international students from outside one's home country instead of all international students. The objective here is to see more clearly if engagement levels with international students from diverse cultures and languages has an impact on persistence. Extracurricular activities could also be further distinguished to examine the effects of different roles and commitments that international students have on-campus. All in all, deeper inquiry for these dynamics across the three dimensions could lead to greater insights about the various influences on students' decision to persist or depart.

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DEFINING AND MEASURING THE RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FINLAND: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT THROUGH POLICY LEVERS

Ana Godonoga

ABSTRACT

The study aims to contribute to the body of research on relevance of higher education by examining how state authorities in Finland, through steering instruments, promote the employment of graduates. Through a qualitative approach comprised of desk research and stakeholder interviews, the study explores the aspects of relevance considered important in Finnish higher education, the extent to which relevance as preparation for sustainable employment is reflected in the steering initiatives of the government, and the effectiveness of policy levers in creating relevance for the labour market. Results reveal that the role of higher education in preparing students for employment has gained importance over the years, and this has been positively reflected in education policy. Regulation and funding are regarded as the most effective measures in directing institutions to strengthen links with the working life. Overall, policy levers were found to have enhanced institutions' orientation towards the labour market; however, their effectiveness has been perceived to be limited by lack of systematic evaluation and impact assessment. The study provides an example of how the relevance of higher education can be fostered via means of state steering, illustrates the enabling and inhibiting factors in achieving policy effectiveness, and advances practical recommendations for bolstering the capacity of policy levers to promote relevance for students, employers, and society at large.

BACKGROUND

In light of globalization, marketization and growing competition, higher education is increasingly recognized as a key factor for knowledge development and economic growth. Traditionally serving the interests of the elite, higher education has expanded over time, becoming accessible to a wider audience. At the same time, labour markets across the world became more diverse, shifting from industry and production to more creative sectors, which require innovative capacity to remain competitive. Effective development and use of skills is critical to the development of economies and societies (OECD, 2012). For this reason, higher education is increasingly expected to deliver relevance and good outcomes to its key beneficiaries, including students and families, graduates entering the labour market, employers and labour unions, and other members of society.

Although there are a range of ways to define the concept of ‘relevance’ (UNESCO, 1998), this study conceptualizes it as the extent to which higher education is able to facilitate students’ preparation for sustainable employment, identified by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2007) as one of the four overarching objectives of higher education. During times of shrinking public budgets and transfer of education costs to students and families, higher education is expected to provide good returns by equipping students with knowledge and skills that would allow them to be successful in their jobs (Gibbons, 1998; Harvey, 2000).

The need to align higher education closer to the labour market has been emphasized in a number of European developments. The Bologna Process, for example, has envisaged creating a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by promoting the mobility and employability of its citizens (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The 2020 Europe Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth aims to have at least 75% of the population between 20 and 64 years of age in employment, and 40% of young people with a tertiary education degree (European Commission, 2010b). The Agenda for New Skills and Jobs (European Commission, 2010a), one of the flagship initiatives of the strategy, brings to the attention of member states the need to strengthen efforts to modernize their labour markets, develop job-relevant skills, and harmonize the demand and supply of qualified workforce.

This study uses the case of Finland to show an example of how these developments have influenced higher education policy and practice at a national level. The research investigates how relevance conceptualised as preparation for sustainable employment has been accounted for in the policy levers of the government, and to what extent these measures are perceived effective in delivering relevance to the labour market.

Although figures show that returns to higher education have been far more superior compared to those registered at lower levels of education (Melin et al., 2015), conditions in the Finnish labour market have deteriorated in recent years due to, inter alia, a decline in GDP, a loss of cost competitiveness, and a shrinkage in the export market (European Commission, 2016). In May of 2016, for instance, compared to one year earlier, the unemployment rate for lower-degree level tertiary education (bachelor's) rose by 4%, for higher-degree level tertiary education (master's) – by 3%, and for PhD holders – by 5% (Ministry of Employment and the Economy of Finland, 2016, p. 7). Furthermore, certain sectors in the labour market have registered a mismatch between the demand and the supply of qualified workforce. For example, until recently, fields in culture, tourism, catering and domestic services were oversupplied with specialists, while those in technology, health, and social services were considerably understaffed (Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland, 2012; OECD, 2013).

In light of these conditions and in alignment with Finland's vision for 2025, i.e. to enhance the dialogue between higher education providers and employers, lower the number of dropouts from education and the labour market, and attain an employment rate of 72% (Government of Finland, 2015), this study aims to investigate how public authorities take note of these challenges when designing and implementing policies, and whether higher education stakeholders perceive these measures effective in terms of delivering relevance and good employment outcomes. This study aims to answer the following research question:

How do Finnish authorities promote the relevance of higher education in terms of facilitating students' preparation for sustainable employment?

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

When analysing policy levers, an important step is identifying what aspects of higher education they target. Policies may be set in place to steer change at the system level, within institutions, or to influence the behaviour of individual stakeholders.

Policies may also target the inputs, processes (activities), or outputs of higher education. For example, authorities may regulate the inputs of higher education by setting restrictions on the number of student intakes or specifying eligibility requirements for entry into degree programmes as a way to balance the demand and supply of workforce in the labour market. Measures used to steer the processes (activities) of higher education may refer to e.g., promoting opportunities for lifelong learning to update the knowledge and skills of those who are already working. State authorities may also implement policies to influence the outputs of higher education by regulating the number of degrees, rewarding institutions for the employment success of their graduates, or funding initiatives to strengthen alumni networks or services for career guidance.

Public authorities steer the inputs, processes and outputs of higher education through different types of policy levers, defined as “governing instruments which policy makers have at their disposal to direct, manage and shape change in public services” (OECD, 2015, p. 29). Based on the work of Hood and Margetts (2007), Howlett (2011), and van Vught and de Boer (2015), this study classifies policy levers according to four types of steering mechanisms: regulation, funding, information and organisation.

Steering through regulation refers to government’s capacity to set rules and restrictions on the behaviour of HEIs. These constraints vary largely depending on the country and on the relationship between higher education and the state. For example, in decentralized systems with higher levels of institutional autonomy, the nature of steering is largely procedural and less substantive (Berdahl, 1983). To specify, the government only sets general guidelines and standards for institutions to follow, without having a direct influence on the content of education. State authorities regulate their higher education systems by e.g., enacting and changing legislation, adopting decrees, centralising admissions, or making external stakeholder representation on governing and disciplinary boards a legislative

requirement.

Funding refers to steering behaviour through incentives. The government, for example, may use performance agreements and performance-based funding to reward institutions for the number of employed graduates, or may allocate project-based funding to implement a nationwide alumni career survey. Likewise, state authorities may introduce or reform financial aid models to incentivize students to graduate within normative time and enter the labour market faster.

Steering through information refers to the role of the government in collecting and disseminating employment-related information to relevant stakeholders. For instance, the government may share results of labour market forecasts with higher education institutions, conduct studies on employability, or fund marketing initiatives to advertise study programmes that are in demand on the labour market.

The fourth category of policy instruments pertains to organisation. This category includes measures directed at different organisational aspects of institutions, including teaching and learning. State authorities may, for example, establish centres for career guidance inside HEIs to strengthen students' preparation for employment. Likewise, it may diversify the education provision to allow students to work during studies, or may set specifications to ease the transfer within and between institutions and programmes.

Hence, by directing different categories of steering tools towards particular aspects of higher education, state authorities aim to achieve certain desired outcomes, which, in this study is to promote relevance by facilitating students' preparation for employment. The conceptual model for delivering relevance through steering of higher education is illustrated in Figure 1.

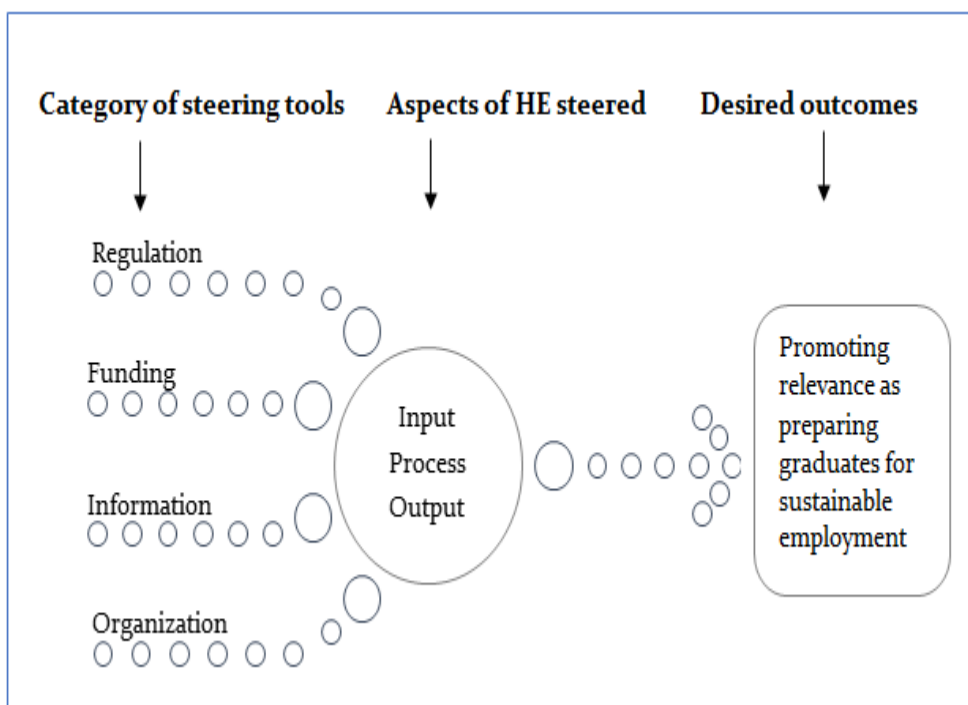


Figure 1: Conceptual model for promoting relevance of higher education through state steering

METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology of this study follow a qualitative approach, which uses “an interpretive paradigm” to attribute meaning to the phenomenon under interest (Starman, 2013, p. 30). The study is exploratory and is concerned with investigating a determinant-outcome relationship (policy effectiveness), which is both complex and difficult to measure (Patton, 2002). The use of qualitative research is most appropriate as it provides a structure that is compatible with the topic, the research question, and the analytical framework. This work uses desk research and stakeholder interviews as research methods. It consults policy-related and scientific literature and invokes interviews with stakeholders with knowledge and experience in higher education.

DESK RESEARCH

Desk research has been employed to collect written evidence of the phenomenon under study. This data collection tool has been used throughout

all stages of the research process, from the initial literature review on relevance of Finnish higher education, to mapping and reflecting on the effectiveness of policy levers. Policy-related literature was compiled with the help of web-search engines and bibliographic databases, namely Google, Google Scholar, ERIC and EBSCO Host. Academic literature, higher education legislation, policy documents, national studies, and reports produced by international organisations such as the OECD, Eurostat, Eurostudent, Eurydice, and the like, were used as primary sources of written data.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

To identify the effectiveness of policy levers, stakeholder interviews were conducted with a number of experts with experience and knowledge of Finnish higher education. Interviews are known to complement and enrich the information collected from desk research, serving as “means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

A total of 12 experts were interviewed from the following 9 organisations: (1) the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC); (2) the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (MoEE); (3) the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL); (4) the Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK); (5) the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK); (6) the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland (AKAVA); (7) The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK), (8) The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC); and (9) the Career Services of the University of Tampere. These stakeholders were selected purposefully, to incorporate the perspective of those who elaborate policies (the government and government-related agencies), and those who are influenced by them (students, graduates, employers, unions, etc.). Each organisation was represented by one and in some cases by two experts (SAMOK, FINEEC, and the Career Services of the University of Tampere). A total of 8 interviews were conducted face-to-face, one via Skype and one via email. The data were collected between April and May, 2016, and the average duration of one interview was one hour. Of the total number of interviewed participants (n=12), 58.3% (n=7) were male and

41.7% (n=5) were female. The work experience of the participants in their organisations ranged from 3 months to 20 years.

The interview questionnaire was comprised of 13 questions, grouped thematically under 3 categories: (1) general questions related to the concept of relevance in higher education (n=3); (2) policy levers targeted towards graduate employability (n=8); and (3) participants' demographic information (n=2). Among other aspects, interviewees were asked to provide their perspectives on the relevance of Finnish higher education, reflect on practices that policymakers use to measure relevance, and share their perceptions regarding the role of state steering in driving relevance in higher education and preparing students for the labour market.

The interview data were collected with the help of a recording device and via means of note-taking. Responses were then transcribed, summarized and stored in an Excel database. Further, the data underwent a coding process – the step of “organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 171). After organizing and categorizing the data into themes, deductive content analysis was applied to identify “recurring words” and “core consistencies and meanings” among responses (Patton, 2002, p. 452). Using a deductive approach is most appropriate in this case, since the data analysis has been guided by a predetermined analytical framework and research questions (Patton, 2002).

VALIDITY

Validation of the study was carried out through the following procedures. Firstly, the interview questionnaire was designed in close consideration of the research questions and the analytical framework. Secondly, the data were checked for accuracy through a triangulation process – by comparing participants' responses to the findings collected from the desk research. Thirdly, the instrument was validated through an external review of academic staff from the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, who have knowledge in the field and extensive experience with research methods. Lastly, a part of the findings was checked for validity and completeness by three experts who have worked in Finnish higher education for more than 10 years.

RELIABILITY

As far as reliability is concerned, a well-designed protocol was followed during data collection and data analysis (Yin, 2003). As regards the interviews, to reduce the risk of participant misfit, the majority of interviewees were contacted upon the recommendation of a professor from the University of Tampere, who had been familiar with their work and expertise. In addition, the topic and aims of the research were shared with the prospective participants prior to the interview, which gave them the option to opt out or if necessary, recommend someone else with more relevant knowledge and experience in the field. The data were organized in a database and coded according to predetermined themes, which were based on the interview questionnaire. Finally, responses were checked for accuracy, consistency and completeness by comparing the hand-written notes with the audio recordings.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The major findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

RELEVANCE, CONCEPTUALISED AS PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT, HAS GROWN IN IMPORTANCE IN FINLAND

In the Finnish higher education context, promoting relevance in terms of preparing graduates for sustainable employment has gained importance and visibility over the years. The need to strengthen links between higher education and employment and facilitate students' transition to the labour market has been emphasized in the current government programme and in the policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture. In Finland, education is believed to deliver relevance when it succeeds in harmonizing the needs and expectations of all its stakeholders. Higher education needs to be relevant for students – by equipping them with knowledge, competences and skills for personal and professional growth; to employers – by responding to the needs of diverse and creative industries; and to society – by building and sustaining knowledge capacity.

THE CONCERN FOR GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY HAS BEEN REFLECTED IN THE POLICY LEVERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

The extent to which higher education contributes to preparing graduates for sustainable employment can and has been measured and accounted for in the Finnish policy agenda, yet with some reservations. Authorities use institutional, national and international data sources to evaluate the domestic and international performance of Finnish higher education on various aspects of employment (e.g., skills development, transition to working life, etc.), and the benefits higher education creates for students, graduates, employers, and other members of society. Some of these measures have been considered in the steering approaches of the government (e.g., graduates in employment, relevance of degrees to working life, degrees attained), while others are still in the proposal stage (e.g., qualitative aspects of employment) and are expected to be included in the future.

State authorities use a mix of regulatory, financial, information, and organisation levers to steer the inputs, processes (activities) and outputs of higher education towards enhancing graduate employability.

Steering through regulation takes place by means of introducing entry rules in favour of first-time applicants, requiring institutions to include external stakeholders on their governing boards, and accounting for cooperation with employers when auditing the quality management systems of institutions. These measures are in place to reduce multiple education, incentivise students to enter the labour market faster, and strengthen links between institutions and employers.

Steering through funding is done through performance agreements, performance-based funding and student financial aid. By providing sticks and carrots, i.e. monetary incentives to institutions and students, the government aims to reduce student time-to-graduation, accelerate graduates' entry into employment, and encourage institutions to follow more closely the career progression of their alumni.

Measures to influence behaviour by sharing information relevant to employability involves the use of educational foresights, graduate career surveys, statistical portals with education and labour market data, websites for career guidance, and studies on employability. Education foresights

appear to be particularly useful for policy development – they are used to set targets for the education supply and to identify the future skills needs of the labour market.

Steering through organisation takes place by means of influencing different organisational aspects, including those that relate to learning and teaching. Finnish state authorities set provisions on the aims of university degrees to enable institutions to focus on skills development and embed professional practice into the learning process. In addition, the government introduced a normative duration of studies to accelerate graduation and the transition to employment, set forth professional specialization studies to further the knowledge and skills of the working population, developed a national qualifications framework to integrate the needs of employers into qualifications requirements, and funded initiatives to strengthen study and career guidance inside institutions.

REGULATION AND FUNDING ARE PERCEIVED AS MOST EFFECTIVE IN STEERING HEIS TO DELIVER RELEVANCE

From the perspective of the interviewed stakeholders, of the four categories of policy levers, regulation and funding have been most effective in their capacity to steer higher education institutions to promote relevance. These instruments have led to improvements in institutions' processes and outcomes. Institutions were identified to offer more opportunities for practice-based learning and more support for study and career guidance. Improvements were also identified with respect to shortening study time and accelerating graduation rates. Owing to the high level of institutional autonomy, regulatory measures have served mainly to guide institutions, without directly influencing the content of education. Funding was identified to be particularly effective as it has the capacity to operationalize relevance through measurable indicators and link them to the outcomes of institutions.

MECHANISMS USED TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE OUTCOMES OF POLICIES COULD BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE

Finnish education policies are monitored and evaluated by the government and government-affiliated agencies through implementation and evaluation plans, policy reviews, audit reports, commissioned studies, and international

reviews. The interviewed stakeholders appeared to have some reservations regarding the effectiveness of these tools, noting in particular their limited capacity to assess the impact of policy instruments.

Policy levers are perceived to be somewhat limited in their effectiveness to promote relevance and facilitate students' preparation for sustainable employment. They are believed to focus too much on the quantitative and too little on the qualitative aspects of employment, to rely highly on political factors, to overlook important areas in need of development (adult education), and to incentivise competition rather than cooperation between institutions. In addition, stakeholders believe that policies change too rapidly, which makes it challenging to evaluate their outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the effectiveness of policy levers so they can promote relevance and foster closer linkages between higher education institutions and employers, the interviewed participants recommended devising more transparent mechanisms to plan and implement policies and also to evaluate their outcomes. They emphasised that policies, to be effective, must be devised in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. Participants also recognised that the development of new policies must be informed by a careful assessment of former ones, and they must involve both ex-ante and ex-post assessment procedures. Lastly, participants emphasized the need to develop indicators that account for qualitative aspects of employment and incorporate them into the steering levers of the government.

Furthermore, to improve the reliability and completeness of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Consulting the academic and policy-related literature available in Finnish and Swedish to identify whether explicit definitions for relevance of higher education exist in the national context. Accordingly, the list of dimensions that refer to relevance as sustainable employment, as illustrated in this study, could be supplemented further.
- Conducting a more profound investigation on the processes and stakeholders involved in the development of higher education policy.

- Developing and testing alternative typologies to categorize and analyse policy levers. For example, policies could be classified and analysed in reference to e.g., their rationales and goals (e.g., enhancing the employability of certain groups), the stakeholders they target (e.g., institutions, students, employers, society), or the challenges that they aim to overcome (e.g., accelerating entry into the labour market).
- Conducting an investigation on the links between policy levers, institutional strategies/practices and outcomes. This would provide insight into the indirect effects of steering – i.e. how policy affects institutional practices and how these practices influence the outcomes of higher education.
- Finally, within the scope of this study, the effectiveness of policy levers was determined only based on the perceptions of the interviewed stakeholders. Thus, a valuable addition would be to consult the literature and/or to interview parties that are actually involved in the evaluation of education policy (e.g., the National Audit Office of Finland). This information could explain better the factors that enable or inhibit policy effectiveness.

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DEVELOPING GOVERNMENT-INITIATED CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM: THE EXAMPLE OF VIETNAMESE-GERMAN UNIVERSITY

Thanh Binh Ha

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Systems of higher education (HE) across the globe are going through a decade of significant transformations. Under the influence of globalization, competition and isomorphic forces, policies and practices in HE are increasingly adopting an international dimension. As higher education institutions (HEIs) across the globe are competing to become leaders in the global knowledge economy, the need for internationalization has become paramount. International activities in HE systems across the world have augmented considerably in recent years. Manifested either through international curricula, mobility programs, joint degrees, or capacity building projects, institutions of HE worldwide are growing to be more internationalized. From the drive to become more competitive, to the moral responsibility to respond to societal challenges, HE is expanding beyond the limits of national borders.

As a result of rapid economic growth, the Asia Pacific region nowadays attracts a great span of attention, since it has the fastest growing HE market on an international scale (Shin & Harman, 2009). Vietnam is an emerging center of initiatives for internationalization of HE (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Under the growing demand for higher education from the middle class, Vietnam's leaders reviewed the experience of other countries in the Southeast Asian region and decided to open up the education sector to foreign providers (Dang, 2011). More recently, the government has announced an initiative to establish a series of new institutions with international partners and has expressed a willingness to commit funds

borrowed from multilateral lenders like the WB. In 2006, MoET announced the establishment of New Model University (NMU) Project, stating to open four state-of-the-art public universities by 2020 with the support from the Vietnamese government and an overseas government. Aiming at creating world-class universities, Vietnamese – German University was established in 2008 in Ho Chi Minh City, and University of Science and Technology in Hanoi in 2009, as a result of a partnership with the French government (Clark, 2013). Most recently, Vietnam – Japan University has been established in 2014 in Hanoi.

NMU Project's universities are facing multiple challenges. Being very young universities with almost no dyed-in-the-wool history, not only are there no best practices to learn from, but also the availability of channels to share knowledge and experiences is relatively rare. Moreover, these universities have not been able to map themselves in the Vietnamese HE system, or introduce their institutions as an attractive destination for prospective students, researchers, and sponsors. Most importantly, there has been no research to show the main characteristics of this model of university, acting as a strategic collaboration between Vietnam and a partner country, rather than solely being an example of educational export from a developed country to developing country, which is similar to the model of branch campus.

Utilizing the Collaboration Theory which comprises of general principles derived from observing the development of intentional, inter-organizational collaborative by Gajda (2004), the thesis scrutinizes the why, the what and the how of cross-border collaboration in the case of the Vietnamese – German University (VGU), the first pioneer of NMU Project. Moreover, it is intriguing to answer the question whether VGU is truly an innovative type of institution, or merely a practice of German offshore education in Vietnam. Therefore, central to this thesis is the endeavor to answer the main question:

How to conceptualize and foster cross-border collaboration in higher education in Vietnam from a stakeholder perspective?

Within the specific context of New Model University Project, the research targets to answer the following sub questions:

- Why is there a need to establish cross-border collaboration?

- What forms of cross-border collaboration are being implemented?
- How can the level of integration and relationship among stakeholders in the collaboration be assessed?
- What stages does the cross-border collaboration go through?
- How to foster cross-border collaboration in the future?

This research will contribute to the discipline of theory to explore the reality of CBC in HE. Existing researches prove that collaboration is often examined through the perspective of resource dependency theory, corporate social performance/institutional economics theory, strategic management/social ecology theory, microeconomics theory, institutional/negotiated order theory, and political theory (Gray & Wood, 1991). Some theories identify preconditions for collaboration and predict its outcome, others place the paramount concerns on the process and relationships between stakeholders and the environment. As a result, none of the theories offers a comprehensive model of collaboration, or is able to capture all general aspects of collaboration (Elliott, 2016). More importantly, CBC in tertiary education is prevalent in practice, not yet in theoretical framework. For this reason, the literature review of this research reflects on various practices to provide a typology of CBC in HE.

Accordingly, the empirical research provides a comparison between theory and practice by utilizing the Collaboration Theory to analyze CBC at VGU. Examples from the establishment and management of VGU as a result of CBC between Vietnam and Germany in HE will shed lights to improve understanding of the phenomenon of CBC with a comprehensive approach that considers perspectives of all key stakeholders involved in the collaborative efforts. The compare and contrast will suggest adjustment of the typology of CBC in HE resulted from the literature review. For the HE field of research in Vietnam, the research can be served as a preliminary reflection with individual feedbacks from stakeholders on their participation and engagement in the collaboration endeavors.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In tertiary education, both demand for and delivery of HE activities are crossing borders more and more frequently. Affected by globalization and

internationalization, people, provider and services are moving across countries to enroll in or deliver HE services. Scholars have been paying a great attempt to describe the dramatic development of cross-border HE, or transnational education under various potential forms and benefits (Knight, 2005, 2008; de Wit, 2011). Cross-border education is defined as the second dimension of internationalization, besides internationalization at home, referring to “situations where the teacher, student, program, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders” (OECD, 2004, p.19). Knight (2008) categorizes four forms of cross-border education based on who or what crosses the border: people mobility – a person can go abroad for educational purposes; program mobility – an educational program can go abroad; provider mobility – an institution, organization or company can go or invest abroad for educational purposes; and project mobility – academic projects and services can cross border for educational linkages. This research focuses on the cross-border characteristic of HE; however, instead of exploring the broad realm of cross-border HE in general, central to this thesis is the collaboration that makes these cross-border educational forms mentioned above happen, by presenting a case study.

Taking into account the cross-border nature of HE in recent years, along with the purpose of understand the multidimensional meanings of collaboration that would be investigated throughout this research, a preliminary definition of cross-border collaboration guiding this research is presented below:

Cross-border collaboration is an innovative, interactive process among internal and external stakeholders that transverses national jurisdictions. The parties involved support the achievement of mutual goals by working together to communicate their knowledge, resources and competences throughout all stages of the collaboration activities. In the context of higher education, cross-border collaboration supports the enhancement of teaching, learning and research experiences for the university community.

Academic interest in developing a systematic, deep understanding of the theoretical issues involved in forming and maintain collaboration has been growing for the last three decades. A comprehensive approach, the Collaboration Theory, is introduced by (Gajda, 2004) to enhance the

development and assessment of international and inter-organizational collaborative. Gajda's experiences show that collaboration, despite being "a catchall to signify any type of inter-organizational or inter-personal relationship" (p.66), can be examined and understood as an intervention and as an outcome. Major functions of Collaboration Theory are to demystify the meanings underlying collaboration, to describe and assess level of collaboration, and to engage stakeholders in a dialogical process of formative evaluation, which should result in powerful information regarding the goals, strategies, and structures most appropriate for decision making by leaders, members, and stakeholders. Through observing the phenomenon of multiple individuals or entities working together to develop a strategic alliance, Gajda (2004) generates the Collaboration Theory comprised of the following five generally accepted principles:

PRINCIPLE 1: COLLABORATION IS IMPERATIVE

Individuals, educational authorities, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, community networks, and business groups are increasingly required to come together to address complex issues that the society today is facing. By working together, individual entities can pool scarce resources and activity duplication can be minimized in order to achieve a vision that would not otherwise be possible to obtain as separate actors working independently. This principle describes the preliminary stage in which the needs and rationales that encourages parties to participate in the collaboration are strongly emphasized.

PRINCIPLE 2: COLLABORATION IS KNOWN BY MANY NAMES

Its meaning is described as "working together," "a joint venture," "working jointly with others," "joining forces," "working in partnership," "pooling resources," "acting as a team," and "cooperating with one another". The terminology used to describe collaboration is extensive: consolidation, network, partnership, coalition, alliance, consortium, association, councils, task forces, and groups. With this principle, it is possible to have multiple types of collaboration within one endeavor, depending on stakeholders' needs and their actual capability.

PRINCIPLE 3: COLLABORATION IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

There are varying degrees and types of linkages that develop between agencies that seek to work together in some capacity. Most collaboration theorists contend that collaborative efforts fall across a continuum of low to high integration. The level of integration is determined by the intensity of the alliance's process, structure, and purpose.

PRINCIPLE 4: WITH COLLABORATION, THE PERSONAL IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE PROCEDURAL

Collaboration depends upon positive personal relations and effective emotional connections between partners. Trust is developed between partners only when there is time, effort, and energy put into the development of an accessible and functioning system for communication. Interpersonal conflict needs to be recognized as normal and even expected as the level of integration and personal involvement increases.

PRINCIPLE 5: COLLABORATION DEVELOPS IN STAGES

The literature on organizational change describes the development of a strategic alliance as a process as the journey of “assemble, order, perform, and transform”, before achieving effective collaborative performance developed by Bailey and Koney (2000). “Assemble” stage implies the relationship at cooperation level, move to “order” at coordination, “perform” in coalition and collaboration, and finally “transform” and reach coadunation (Frey et al., 2006).

In order to understand the phenomenon of CBC in HE in Vietnam, this study attempts to apply the Collaboration Theory as a conceptual framework to review the current system of collaboration, evaluate its performance and suggests future improvement. It mainly analyses five topics: the increasing needs to establish collaboration, forms of CBC, level of integration, connection between stakeholders, and collaboration stages. Figure 1 below illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.

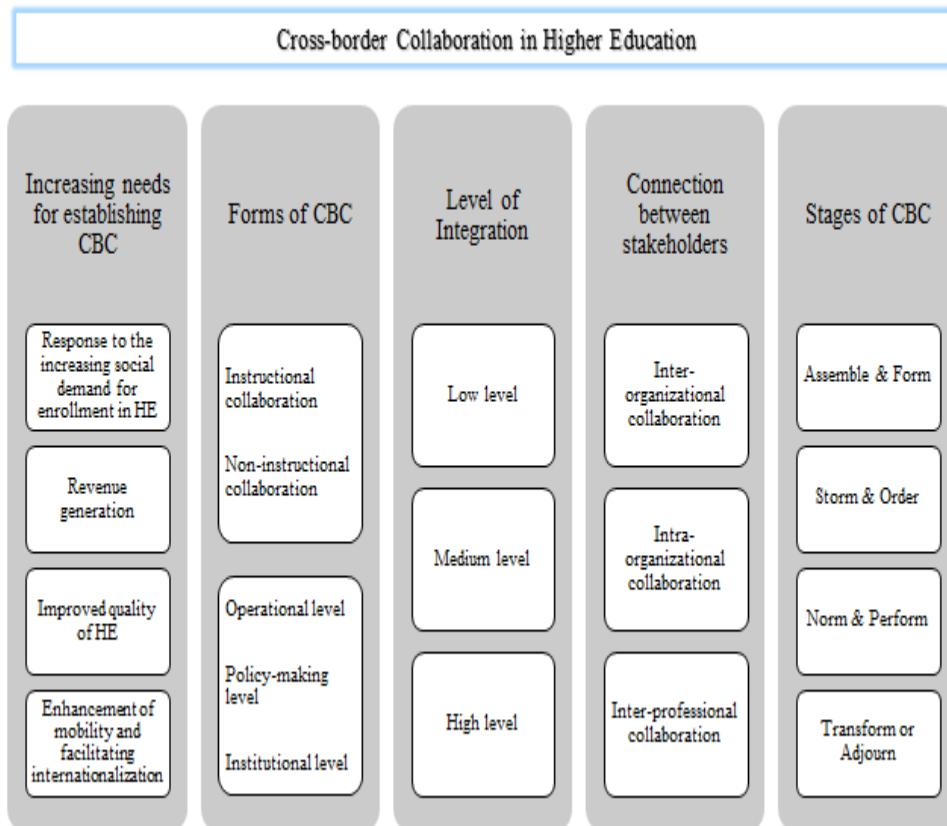


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative strategy of inquiry is adopted in this study, because the objective of this study is to pursue an in-depth investigation of the contemporary CBC phenomenon in a complex environment – institutions of higher education, which requires multiple perspectives from a variety of stakeholders. The quantitative strategy is not suitable for this research purpose, as strategy of inquiry such as survey can only provide a numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of population, or experiment research serves the purpose of determining if a specific treatment influences an outcome (Creswell, 2013).

Among various qualitative strategies of inquiry, case study is chosen because this empirical inquiry investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). Case study research can be a single case study or multiple case studies, both having a primary justification of exploring some contemporary issue in depth (Biggam, 2011). Preliminary research of the NMU Project suggests that the study can be conducted with multiple case studies, considering the fact that this project is a representative case of government-initiated CBC in HE with multiple initiatives. The case of VGU perfectly meets Yin's criteria (2009) with the following justifications:

1. The case is unique in Vietnamese's HE system: It is the only public university established and supported by the Vietnamese and German government.
2. The case is representative: Being a 'product' of collaboration between Vietnam and Germany, VGU provides numerous types of collaboration in tertiary education. It is also the pioneer project of NMU.
3. The case is revelatory: there have been several researches discussing CBC in terms of people mobility (student, faculty, and/or researcher exchange), program mobility (twinning, dual degree, franchised, etc.), and branch campus as representative of provider mobility. However, no previous research which observes and analyzes the phenomenon of collaboration between governments to establish a university serving all the mentioned purposes.
4. The case can represent the critical test of a significant theory: The Collaboration Theory has been commonly applied in research fields such as business, organizational management, health care, environmental studies, tourism, and the like. HE is also a field which encounters and practices a great scale of collaboration, therefore the single case can test whether this theory is useful in understanding CBC in the field.
5. Finally, the case is not yet a longitudinal case, considering that VGU is only in its 8th year after establishment. However, future research at different points of time can provide approaches to see how specific conditions change over time, and answer the questions whether this university model can, and should sustain.

Due to the main purpose of collecting qualitative data, interview is the primary method of data collection to be used in this study. Interviews are carried out one-on-one, and face-to-face, because the researcher lives and

studies in Germany, while having the convenience to travel to Vietnam, her country of origin. Firstly, the network of stakeholders involved in the CBC in the case of VGU is drawn to identify key participants for interview. VGU is the pioneer project of NMU, initiated by the Vietnamese and German governments. While on the Vietnam side, the main supports and guidance come from MoET, the German side includes a much more diverse combination of stakeholders. In 2010, the World Bank (WB) approved a loan for a new campus to be constructed in Binh Duong province. The negotiated volume of loan is approximately 200 million USD, of which Vietnam finances 20 million USD. Accordingly, MoET formed a Project Management Unit of VGU Development (PMU). Therefore, WB and PMU are also considered two main stakeholders in the venture.

Next, participants were identified using criterion sampling method. Criteria to select participants include managers with decision-making power, leaders with high involvement in the collaboration process, and members with major influences and responsibilities during the collaboration process. Convenient sampling is also in place, due to time and geography issues, as well as the access available to approach prospective participants. In total, eight key representatives from organizations and institutions within the network who engaged actively in setting up and running VGU voluntarily accepted to participate in the data collection process. They are interviewed in March, 2016 in Germany and in April, 2016 in Vietnam, addressed as listed in Table 1.

No.	Participant	Institution/Organization	Interview date (2016)	Code
Interview in Germany				
1	Head of Board	VGU Consortium	Mar. 14	GE1
2	Chairman	World University Service (WUS)	Mar. 22	GE2
3	Head of Division Transnational Education and Cooperation Program	German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)	Mar. 23	GE3
Interview on VGU Campus, Binh Duong, Vietnam				
4	Vice President	VGU	Apr. 6	VN1
5	Vice President for Administration		Apr. 13 (via Skype)	GE4
6	Deputy Head of Academic Affairs		Apr. 6	VN2
Interview in Hanoi, Vietnam				
7	Director	Project Management Unit of VGU Development (PMU-MoET)	Apr. 15	VN3
8	Education Specialist	World Bank	Apr. 15	VN4

Table 1: List of key participants

All interviews use semi-structured questions, through which the respondent is not confined to a limited number of responses, thus can provide historical information, and at the same time, researchers have the control over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2013). There are two sets of interview questions tailored to VGU staffs and VGU supporters – stakeholders in the network. During the interview, memos are taken to ensure important messages are noted down. Eight interviews were voice-recorded in agreement with each interviewee. Secondary data, in the form of university documents and statistics, assist and compliment the data extracted from interviews, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of CBC. Secondary data are collected from various sources, such as VGU Master Plan 2015, VGU Website, and VMU Procurement Plan 2016.

The data analysis is proceeded hand-in-hand with data collection and write-up of findings, summarized in the following steps:

DATA TRANSCRIPTION

With the interview schedules divided separately into two periods, one in Germany and one in Vietnam, I could finish transcribing three interviews taken place in Germany thus accomplishing a data set of the German side before carrying out the remaining interviews in Vietnam. Interviews in Germany were carried out in English, while four out of five interviews in Vietnam were proceeded in Vietnamese, and later on the transcript data were translated into English.

Data reduction and grouping. In the first round of data reduction and arrangement, the raw data were first filtered into five topics based on the conceptual framework of the study. In the next round, in order not to limit the inductive approach when exploring a phenomenon and not let my thinking become too driven by the framework, I revisited all the data which did not fit into the conceptual framework to and found a common topic arose by the majority of participant. This will be discussed in detail in finding section.

DATA CODING

Together in the process of data grouping, useful data are hand-coded based on identified topics and themes. Secondary data collected from documentations are also coded accordingly. The coding strategy follows categories suggested by Creswell (2003): codes on expected topics based on literature review, codes that are surprising and not anticipated at the beginning of the study, and codes that are unusual and of conceptual interest. This process allows comparison of findings in the next section.

Data interpretation. Finally, data will be interpreted, firstly though a comparison among data sources, namely between the Vietnam side and Germany side, and between stakeholders from the same side. The next approach is a comparison of the findings with information gleaned from the literature and theory (Creswell, 2003). In other words, it answers the question how to conceptualize CBC in Vietnamese HE, and how the Collaboration Theory is useful in understanding the phenomenon of CBC in HE. By using this theoretical lens, the study will also call for action agendas

for future improvement of the framework itself, and related collaborative activities.

KEY FINDINGS

The nutrients supporting the roots of collaboration in the case of VGU are response to social demand, knowledge sharing and transfer, strategic relationship enhancement, and a pathway to in the internationalization. Although motivations to collaborate is different from stakeholders, the major rationale behind is the political drive that urge Vietnam to build a strategic relationship with Germany through the establishment of VGU. On the other hand, the university first started with a ranking-driven motivation, which is a very challenging objective to be accomplished. However, upon establishing collaboration, partners agreed on a mutual goal of building a research public university in Vietnam utilizing the German HE model.

In term of collaboration forms, VGU is the center of a comprehensive network of collaboration with stakeholders from Vietnam, Germany and the World Bank. The Vietnamese governments support the university mostly through the Project Management Unit of VGU. On the German side, DAAD and WUS act as representative of the Federal Government and State of Hesse. The World Bank joined the network since 2010 to financially support VGU. Collaboration have been existing mostly in the form of instructional approach, somewhat in the form of non-instructional effort, both at operational, policy-making, and institutional level. Slowly but steadily, VGU is making positive and substantial contributions to stakeholders from three sides while working towards realization of the agreed mutual goal.

The study can be served as a preliminary assessment of level of integration and relationship among stakeholder. Three circles of network with different levels of integration and relationship can be seen in the case of VGU. With the university in the center, the inside circle of parties with the highest level of integration with VGU is the University Council and German universities within the VGU Consortium. Meanwhile, the outside circle with medium level of integration includes the DAAD, WUS and World Bank. Simultaneously, the whole project receives support and steering from the Vietnamese MoET, German Federal Government and the State of Hesse.

Stakeholders in the same circle of networking with similar tasks and responsibilities in the collaboration have high level of integration. However, integration between three circles are not yet effective. Some issues to be considered are lack of communication leads to decision-making solely from one side at some points, and low response from the other partner while one partner requests to have better information sharing. However, compared with the continuum of integration suggested by (Gajda, 2004), it is clear that the collaborative efforts moved from “cooperation” where partners agreed on a mutual goal set, to “coordination” where specific tasks are aligned to parties with compatible goals, and now approaching “collaboration” stage. The notion that whether parties give up certain of independence in collaborating with each other was not observed.

One advantage of VGU is that the collaboration first started thank to a good relationship between individuals, Dr. Udo Corts – Former Minister of HE, Research and the Arts of Hessen State and Prof. Dr. Nguyen Thien Nhan - Former Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam in 2006. Moreover, the longstanding good relationship between two countries built up trust from stakeholders and opened the pathway to invite them into the collaboration. However, similar to level of integration, the relationship between partners of different circles except having VGU at the center is rather loose. Communication between these groups, or inter-professional collaboration remains a question, which makes it challenging to develop a close relationship between them.

Conclusively, a high level of integration and tight relationship among stakeholders working in the same circles around VGU is obvious. On the other hand, stakeholders do not have a high level of integration and close relationship with ones from the other two circles. However, it is important to note that rather than being three separate networking, these groups are concentric circles with VGU at the center. Hence, better interaction mechanisms to enhance the level of integration and relationship should be implemented to tackle the issues of not functioning as one united comprehensive network of stakeholders.

Stages of establishing and maintaining collaboration in the case of VGU were depicted in four stages described in the Collaboration Theory. Although

developing accordingly to stages of the theory, the collaboration in the case of VGU is presently at the end of “perform” stage and the beginning of “transform” stage. With this current development, moving towards these transformation is challenging and clearly requires more time than scheduled. Clearly, the university is in need of developing strategic plan to receive support from the German “flying faculty” in adjusting the curriculum as well as providing training to Vietnamese professors in order to accelerate the “Vietnamization” process, rather than merely delivering the study programs in Vietnam.

Moreover, CBC at VGU has shown that intense communication is the sixth principle to develop a successful initiative. Frequent communication maximize both information-sharing and joint problem-solving arrangements and improve transparency in decision-making process, which has not been very effective in the case of VGU. Especially in a collaboration involving partners from multiple countries, intercultural communication competence is of importance with consideration of difference in partners’ languages and cultures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed above, the study suggests adding intercultural communication as an additional principle of the CBC theory in the context of HE. Moreover, the model suggests future research to testify and generalize a framework to understand CBC in HE with a more comprehensive approach in consideration of multiple stakeholder’s perspectives. Collaboration in HE examples are plentiful as witnessed in practice. It is a significant strategy institutions use to cope with the turbulence and complexity of their environments, yet “remains underdeveloped as a field of study to inspire creative conceptual contribution” (Gray & Wood, 1991). The need to construct an overall theoretical perspective to a more comprehensive collaboration theory is emphasized, especially in this era of globalization in which multi-national cooperation occurs daily.

Future research can start with applying similar research design for a multiple case study methodology. For Vietnam, it is of importance to conduct a research on four available universities established in the NMU Project to

review and assess their impact. The study would contribute to government's decision whether to further develop more universities under the same project. Moreover, an implication to the country's HE system here lies in the fact that these international model should share useful lesson learnt to other institutions.

On the other hand, mapping universities in the world which were established under similar initiatives is also interesting to see a worldwide trend and its influences on the HE system. Germany is leading the process with the growth of "German-backed" universities, with at least 6 institutions with German-backed all over the world, both public and private, such as German – Jordanian University in Amman, Jordan; Turkish – German University in Istanbul, Turkey; German-Kazakh University in Almaty, Kazakhstan; German University Cairo in Cairo, Egypt and so on. Inclusive research of this spreading phenomenon would strengthen German HE's internationalization profile, as well as evaluating and foreseeing a future possibility of this bi-national university's expansion similar to branch campus model.

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EXPLORING THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE OF MASTER STUDENTS OF DHAKA UNIVERSITY

Nowreen Yasmin

ABSTRACT

By tradition, it was the prolonged institutional (as well as individual academic) prioritization on the teaching mission over the research mission in all universities of Bangladesh, which becomes crucial and consequently results in a long term knowledge production-based isolation from the international research community. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve the overall research practice and for this purpose universities can play a crucial role. With a view to exploring the research experience of master student of one public university of Bangladesh, a quantitative approach has been followed in this study. The model of research experience of postgraduate students proposed by Keith Trigwell and Harriet Dunbar- in 2005, has been adopted and slightly modified as a theoretical framework for this study. The main objective is to investigate the extent to which the graduates perceive that Dhaka University provides a supportive research environment in which they can gain a positive research experience. Data has been collected through Qualtrics online platform by employing a 5 point Likert scale survey questionnaire which has two different sections. After filtering 96 completed responses have been recorded. Reliability and validity test of the instrument has been performed and the value of Cronbach Alpha for those scales are: Research experience scale (0.908) and self-assessment of the research skills (0.899 for the achieved level scale and 0.837 for the desired level scale). Findings of the research reveal that graduates possess positive perception of their research experience however, the extent varies for different aspects of research experience. For instance, graduates are most satisfied with the quality of supervision they received during their thesis. On the other hand they showed low level of agreement for the availability of general and departmental infrastructure. The result of their self-assessment of research skills also demonstrated a high achieved level

for most of the skills with one exception of the independent management of study skill. Finally, this study provides some recommendation regarding faculty wise investigation, and more explicit integration of research skill development through academic research activities.

INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, by tradition, it was the prolonged institutional (as well as individual academic) prioritization on the teaching mission over the research mission in all universities, which becomes crucial and consequently results in a long term knowledge production-based isolation from the international research community (Kabir, 2011). Concern has been raised identifying the little to no visibility of research works from Bangladesh in the bigger world of research all over the world (Ahmmed, 2013). Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve the overall research practice and for this purpose universities can play a crucial role. Primarily, it is the responsibilities of higher education institutions to prepare graduates with research training along with knowledge production. It is a matter of hope that, with response to this situation, an increase attention has been observed to enhance the quality of higher education institutions of this country since the year of 2000 (HEQEP, 2010). In line with this, the national education policy has stated one of the major aims as below:

To ensure quality of the higher education in all disciplines and motivate students in research and to create a congenial and necessary environment of research within the country through the cultivation of knowledge and sciences (National Education Policy, 2010, pp. 8).

No such research has been done to evaluate or explore the research practice of universities of Bangladesh. In order to improve the present practice of research it is crucial to identify and investigate the ongoing status. In developed countries e.g. United Kingdom and Australia, there is a long practice of exploring students' perspective for the development of the services given by higher education institutions. However, in public universities of Bangladesh no such practice is prevailed presently. Therefore the objective of this study is to explore the research experience of the students of one public university during their master thesis from the

perspective of the graduates who carried out thesis while pursuing master degree in this university. This study aims at filling the gap in the literature by answering the following research question: To what extent graduates perceive that Dhaka University provide a supportive research environment in which students can gain a positive research experience?

With a view to answering the above central research question, this report is structured as follows: section one introduces the study and provide background information on the rationales of the study. Section two describes the research design and methodology followed for this research. In section three, the findings of the study are discussed regarding graduates' perception of their research experience and self-assessment of the research skill due to pursuing research work for thesis. Finally, section four provides discussion on major findings derived from this study with reference to the relevant literatures along with limitation and recommendations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With regard to the central research question stated above following sub questions have been devised for this study:

- What factors do actually compose research experience?
- What are the exiting factors of research experience that influence student's research experience at Dhaka University?
- What are the exiting factors of research experience that influence student's perception of research experience at Dhaka University?
- To what extent graduate students perceive that the research experience of students at master level is a facilitative one?
- What could be done further to improve the research experience of master student in Dhaka University?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The council for undergraduate research (CUR) which was established in 1978 has provided the Definition of Undergraduate Research as "an investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original

intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline"(CRU website, 2016). They described undergraduate research is a collaborative enterprise between student and faculty member or group of faculty members which triggers following four step learning process:

- The identification of and acquisition of a disciplinary or interdisciplinary methodology;
- The setting out of a concrete investigative problem;
- The carrying out of the actual project;
- Finally, the dispersing/sharing of a new scholar's discoveries with his or her peers- a step traditionally missing in most undergraduate educational programs (NCUR);

This steps shows that essentially the concept of undergraduate research covers the same steps as research done by professionals. In this study this overarching concept of research experience has been considered to define authentic and original research activities conducted by the master level students. In terms of conceptualizing the term research experience, there is no such exact universal definition of Research experience however various studies have identified different aspects and the presence of those aspects make the experience an ideal one. The definitions of authentic research experience differ among faculty members and tend to emphasize either the scientific process or the discovery of previously unknown data (Spell, Guinan, Miller and Beck, 2007). Expanding support for the Development of research experience was one of the recommendations of this study in order to overcome the barriers of attracting more students to research track. In line with this, Hakim (1998) has characterized undergraduate research experience by following four features: Mentorship, Originality, Acceptability and Dissemination. Referring to those four features, the author also discussed four assumptions which enlightened the fact of prioritizing students' learning as the main purpose of such an experience, producing an original outcome through the study following a well excepted research methodology and finally it is expected that the research findings will be shared and discussed by others members of the disciplines. According to another study through the process of enculturation Research experience is such a process that provides students the opportunity to observe and replicate research skills, to modify skills on the basis of feedback from the supervisors and peers, to receive

support for successful acquisition of skills and to learn to perform in accord with the norms that govern the practice of scientific research (Brown et al., 1989 as cited in Kardash, 2000).

Following is the list of aspects which are explained in different literature under the concept of research experience. In some literature these are discussed as components to create a positive research experience and in some of the literature these are discussed to explain research experience:

- Supervision of research (Janassen, 2005)
- Intellectual climate of the department (Bailie, 2004)
- Research environment (Bland & Raffin, 1992)
- Clarity of goal and expectations of research (Triggwell & Goddett, 2005)
- Skill development through graduate research (Ravid and Leon, 1995)
- Infrastructural facility provided by university and departments
- Student's self-efficacy and personal involvement to research (Biesche, Bishop & Garcia, 1993)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As a theoretical framework this study has adapted the model of research experience proposed by Trigwell and Dunbar-Goddet (2005) which encompasses various dimensions of research experience under one platform.

In the following figure the model of post graduate research experience has been illustrated by Trigwell and Dunbar-Goddet (2005). In this model, the factor are assumed to be interlinked in ways that help to explain the variation in outcome of postgraduate students' research at Oxford University. All these factors are discussed by categorizing under three broad areas and those are corresponding to Presage, Process and Product (3P) elements of the research experience. The three broad categories of factors are explained below with reference to the modification has been done for this study.

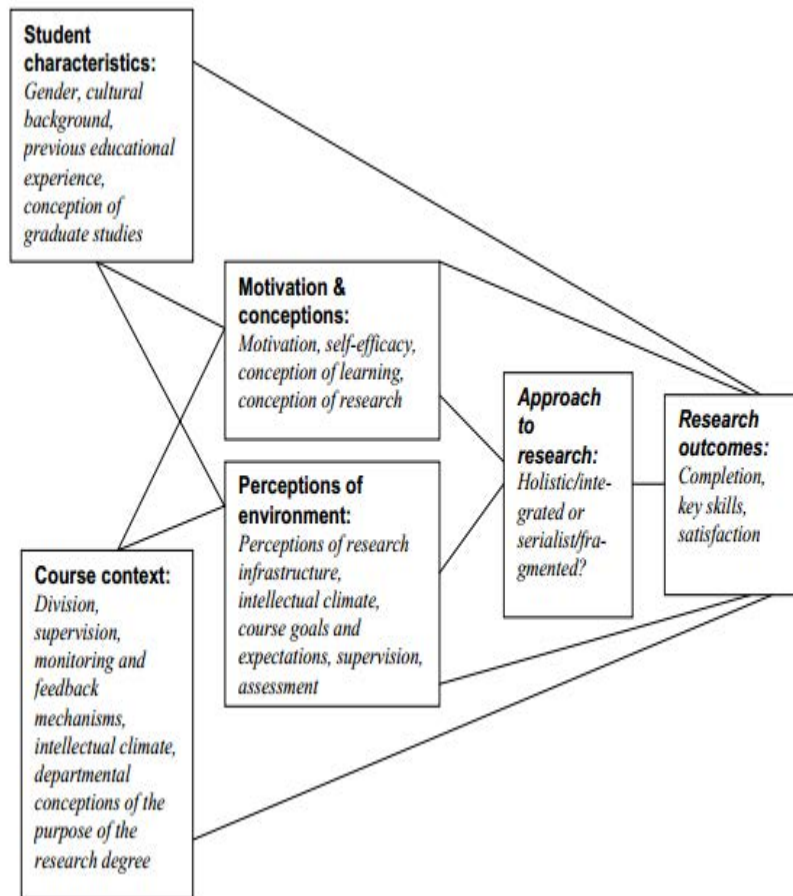


Figure 1. Adapted 3P (presage-process-product) model of student learning for postgraduate research programmes. Illustration by *Trigwell and Dunbar Harriet* (2005). p. 20.

PRESAGE: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS AND THE CONTEXT AS ESTABLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY

In the presage steps, the model included students characteristics: age, sex, mode of study, origin, funding, previous educational experiences, discipline of studies etc. Students' personal motivation, reason for undertaking a research degree and conception of research were also discussed under this platform. The second dimension is the research context created by the university. In case of Oxford university, the research context is maintained by the Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education of UK (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2004). According to this document there is specific

definition of all necessary components of an ideal research environment for postgraduate students which includes aspects like effective supervision, equality in terms of admission.

PROCESS: PROCESSES OF RESEARCH

Students' intrinsic aspects that influence them to pursue research degree program has been included in this process dimension. This covers three factors: motivation and conception, research environment and approaches to research. The environment factor entails four sub factors. With respect to this the definition of those sub factors are given below:

- students perception of infrastructure of the environment

This refers to the extent to which students feel that they had access to an environment that would support their learning in terms of physical and financial resources.

- students perception of intellectual climate in which they are studying

This concept refers to the opportunity available for social contact with other students, the extent to which they felt they were integrated into the departmental community, the opportunities to become connected in a broader research network, the extent to which students perceived that there was a stimulating research ambience and their perceptions of the quality of the seminars that was arranged for them (Trigwell & Dunbar-Harriet, 2005). This aspect is more applicable for the post graduate students than master level students.

- Students' perceptions of the goals and expectations of their courses

There is hardly any literature explaining how students comprehend the goals and expectations of their research degrees that influence on their experience.

- Students' experiences of supervision

It refers to the students' perception about the support, guidance and feedback provided by their supervisors, including guidance relating to the literature

review.

- Students' perceptions of their thesis examination

According to GCCA and ACER (2002), it covers the idea of students' perceptions of the fairness of, and satisfaction with the examination process as well as whether the examination was completed in reasonable time.

- Approaches to research

Approaches to research are likely to be focused more on the students' personal search for meaning than on attempts to satisfy the supervisor (Trigwell & Dunbar-Harriet, 2005).

PRODUCT: OUTCOME OF RESEARCH

The outcome of the research experiences for the students has been defined as product variables. Three factors have been included under product aspects: completion time, key skills and satisfaction. For this study, key skills and satisfaction has been considered in the framework because the completion time does not vary much for the graduate students as much as it influences postgraduate students work and perception. At master level, majority of the students complete their work within the given period by the program.

This model explained the research experience of postgraduate students who are in general more concerned and aware of their choice of study. However, in case of undergraduate or graduate students who are receiving their first research experience some of the personal intrinsic dimensions like perception of research or course goals and expectations, approaches to research or completion time have not been considered as flourished as the postgraduate students. Therefore, for this study some of those aspects were not added in the theoretical framework. The adapted framework has been illustrated below.

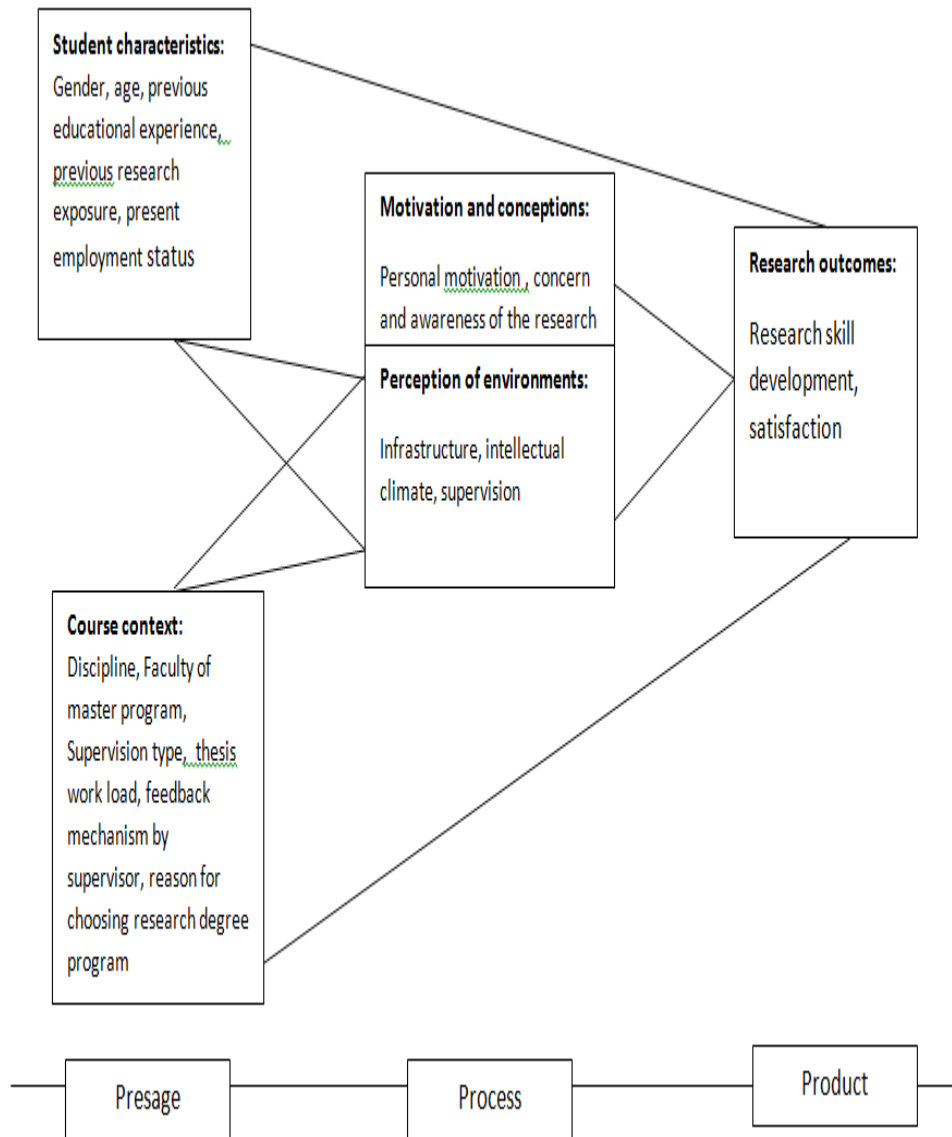


Figure 2. Adapted model of student learning for graduate students' research experience. Illustration by *Trigwell and Dunbar Harriet* (2005). p. 20.

For the personal motivation and self efficacy factors, a separate subscale has been created. Considering the fact the personal motivation of individual student is crucial to consider while exploring their perception. In this aspect, self efficacy has also been discussed as because it has been argued that Self-efficacy is believed to be a relevant factor in one's career choice and persistence in a career field (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). On the basis of Bandura's definition of self efficacy (1977), the research self efficacy has

been conceptualized as " the degree to which an individual believes she/he has the ability to complete various research tasks (e.g., conceptualization, analysis, writing)" (Bishop, Rosean et al., 1993, p.4). Thus by identifying the level of self efficacy, students can be involved more effectively for research activities (Biesche, Bishop, & Garcia, 1993). It is also argued that the more students are involved and aware about their research activities the higher self efficacy they possess and this involvement covers students' personal motivation, awareness, concern of personal challenges (Bard, Biesche, Herbert, & Ebertz, 2000). This outcome of investigating research self efficacy pertains the importance of including the research self efficacy aspect while exploring students' perception of research experience.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The above theoretical framework has been followed while designing the research. With response to all the dimensions of research experience mentioned in the theoretical framework, the survey instrument was created. Within the survey, a self assessment instrument has been added in order to explore the 'product' or outcome phase more effectively. At first, literature review was done to explore the existing studies on research experience of master level students. Under the broad concept of research experience there are several dimensions, therefore, while designing the survey following two major approaches have been implemented to collect data for each of the dimensions: survey method and self assessment method. However, it can be said that self assessment method is part of the survey method and this method was employed only for the skill development dimension of the research experience. Several criticisms prevail for the application of self assessment method. However, this method can explore the outcome aspect of research experience more effectively while exploring students' perspective.

This study is designed to explore the research experience of students who has completed thesis while pursuing their master degree from Dhaka University (DU). Therefore, aim of the survey is to gather information about research experience of master level students at DU and to further inform the decisions made about the research activities/environment in this university. The questionnaire has been designed to collect data from masters level students who have completed thesis work for in 2014 or 2015 regardless of the

faculty or particular subjects. There is hardly any study on research experience of university students of Bangladesh, therefore the researcher needs to include a range of questions and that made this questionnaire an extensive one. For the year of 2014 and 2015, 800-900 students are the population for this study and a sample size of around 100-105 with 95% confidence level and 10 point confidence interval has been calculated initially. However, at the end of data collection, 96 completed responses have been received.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

- The overall experience of research at Dhaka University, as reported by most of the graduates, was facilitative for their research work (Section 3.2.1) with more than 50% of respondents describing their high level of agreement (either strongly agree or agree) for 21 out of 30 aspects of the research experience scale.
- More than 70% graduates agreed that range of skill development, continuous feedback from supervisor, career planning, skill of managing independent study and sharing new ideas are valuable parts of their respective master program (Figure 5).
- Among the three major faculties, business studies graduates demonstrate higher level of agreement for most of the aspects than other two faculties (figure 7).
- The group of graduates who did not have any exposure to research work before the thesis, demonstrates a more facilitative general infrastructure, departmental infrastructure and more supportive supervisory, and intellectual climate (table 11).
- When students have higher frequency of meeting with supervisor, they tend to describe higher level of skill achievement.
- Students without any prior experience are more likely to describe satisfaction with service and facilities but when students with some sort of prior experience are more inclined to describe their dissatisfaction for the quality of supervision and overall experience (table 11).
- Prior research exposure and research relevant responsibilities at present work place, graduates with these factor tend to be more critical while demonstrating their agreement level on the availability of different facilities (Figure 8 & 9) than their counterpart.

- The results of Pearson Chi-square, Fisher's Exact and likelihood ratio tests, it appears that statically significant differences between respondents generally refer to factors pertaining to graduates' research relevant experience prior to master thesis, the type of supervision they received during their thesis work, their faculty of master studies (3.2.2).
- Significance mean difference of the perception has been identified only for the factor of employment status, prior research exposure, and having research course in either bachelor or master levels (3.2.2).
- The results of one way ANOVA has also identified mean difference among the group referring to the faculty type.
- There are 71.9% graduates who are highly satisfied with the quality of supervision at Dhaka University. On the other hand 45.8% of graduates showed their dissatisfaction with the service and facilities of this university for research (3.3).
- When the frequency of meeting with supervisor is highest, graduates describe a more supportive supervisory, intellectual climate and higher level of overall satisfaction (table 11). Similarly, students without any prior exposure to research are more satisfied with the quality of research experience than the other group.
- The majority of participants (more than 50% of the respondents) have rated the achieved level of research skills as 'good' or 'excellent'.
- The faculty of science and the faculty of social science have assessed their insufficient level of skill acquisition higher than the faculty of business studies.
- Eight out of ten skills have been reported insufficiently achieved, more by the graduate of faculty of science than the other two faculties. These skills are: Critical thinking, problem solving, updated knowledge of discipline, Ethical value, time management skill, communication skill, Independent learning skill.
- The least achieved skills has been identified and these are: data analysis skill, critical thinking, update knowledge and discipline, management of independent study, and independent learning skill. On the contrary, the most achieved are: ethical value for human and animal research, team work skill, independent learning skill, communication skill and up-to-date knowledge and skill of respective discipline (Figure 21).

- Significantly positive association has been identified between graduates' perception and the self-assessment of achieved level of skill (table 9). Similarly, positive association has been observed for the satisfaction level and all the indexes of research experience.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of graduates' perception, it can be inferred that among the various aspects of an effective research experience, some aspects are seemed to be very explicit in this university and some aspects need more concentration. In this section, findings are discussed with reference to the sub research questions mentioned earlier. Based on the major findings, it is evident that the graduates of Dhaka university possess a positive perception about their overall research experience with some reservation of few aspects. Among all the aspects of research experience described in the theoretical framework, graduates have the highest level of agreement upon the prevalence of facilitative supervision. GroupWise comparison also illustrates similar level of agreement for the supervision aspect. Furthermore, when the frequency of meeting with supervisor is highest, graduates describe a more supportive supervisory, intellectual climate and higher level of overall satisfaction. It is worth mentioning here that, this finding replicate the study done in the University of Oxford using the same tool (Triggwell & Goddett, 2005). In addition, the findings also suggests that in Dhaka University, the supervision of the research experience is significantly more favorable than any other aspects of research experience according to the respondents. Supervision is one of the few aspects, for which students with prior research experience have expressed significantly higher level of agreement than their counterparts. Additionally, faculty wise comparison also reveals the prevalence of supervision facilities according to the respondents. As the "frequency of meeting with supervisor" variables have significant association with the overall supervision aspect, it demonstrates the importance of this factor in order to enhance the overall supervision quality.

The findings of association of the perception of research experience with the satisfaction level also reveals the importance of improving the service and facilities of the university. Similar positive association has been identified between their perception and their rating of self assessment of research

skills. Both of these findings suggest the inter-linkage between the input and outcome aspect of research experience at graduate level. In order to ensure better outcome e.g. higher satisfaction level of the students or better acquisition of research skills, the importance of an effective research experience has been emphasized by this study.

RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATION

RECOMMENDATION

The objective of this study was to explore to what extent the concept of a solid research experience exists in the context of public universities of Bangladesh. Along with this study also explore the research skill development aspects which illustrates the importance of research experience more firmly. Therefore, The findings of this study can be considered to initiate more rigorous application of student evaluation method for the development of service and facilities by the university.

This study also explores the need of further studies to explore the faculties perspective of research experience, more detailed investigation each of all the dimensions separately and also faculty wise investigation and need assessment of service, facilities and research skills. Though in this study graduates have confidently reported their higher level of skill achievement, the skill development aspect needs more investigation with reference to the employment sector.

LIMITATIONS

The implication of self assessment method may have the criticism of responses with lack of accuracy and reliability. However, further study exploring faculty's' evaluation of students' skill development can compensate the gap.

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THE ROAD TO SUCCESSFUL MENTORING FOR UNIVERSITY STARTUPS: AN INVESTIGATION OF PRACTICES IN FINLAND

Hwa-hyun MIN

BACKGROUND

In line with the governmental efforts to establish an entrepreneurship ecosystem (Oh, Ko, & Kang, 2015), higher education institutions in South Korea have proliferated mentoring programs, infrastructure, and service for their startups since the late 1990s.

Nevertheless, the satisfaction of South Korean students who have been involved in entrepreneurial mentoring has been low thus far; for example, due to low availability of mentors, mismatch (Institute for International Trade [IIT], 2014), redundancy of learning contents (Kang, 2015). They are connected to systematic problems such as a shortage of professional mentors (IIT, 2014), absence of incentives for mentors (KRIVET, 2014), and unverified effectiveness and efficiency of the mentoring program (STEPI, 2012; Jung, 2011).

What obstructs handling these weaknesses is a dramatic gap between the mentoring participants and the administrative staff in perceptions of the current status of entrepreneurial mentoring in domestic higher education. Young entrepreneurs felt that they have rarely been exposed to mentoring opportunities whereas the program managers and professors deemed that their students have lots of chances (KRIVET, 2014). It implies that either there have not been comprehensive follow-ups on the mentoring experiences from the standpoint of the participants, or their views have not been taken into consideration when the decision is made.

The fundamental issue herein is the missing discourse as to desired standard of entrepreneurial mentoring for South Korean higher education (Bang & Jeon, 2015). This dialogue must encompass what it means by mentoring for university startups, what determines the success of entrepreneurial mentoring,

how to ensure the quality of mentoring programs, how to measure the impacts of mentoring, how to foster good practices, and if necessary, how to localize foreign cases.

On the point of diffusing the practices, it is required for South Korean higher education to address challenges to avoid side effects and to take advantage of entrepreneurial mentoring at last (Hansford, Tennent, & Ehrich, 2002).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question which penetrates the paper is: How to successfully foster entrepreneurial mentoring practices in higher education? Accordingly, the secondary research questions are prepared as following.

- How has mentoring been understood in general and in the context of entrepreneurial education?
- How does entrepreneurial mentoring work in practice in Finnish higher education?
- How have entrepreneurial mentoring practices been developed in Finnish higher education?
- What are the conditions for successful entrepreneurial mentoring based on the perspectives of mentors, mentees, and managers in Finland?
- What are the key characteristics of Finnish entrepreneurial mentoring?
- How can South Korean higher education reflect the lessons from Finland?

The study looks into best entrepreneurial mentoring practices from Finland. It contains the angles of mentors, mentees, and program managers who play essential roles in Finnish entrepreneurial mentoring. Finland is chosen as an exemplary instance for a good reputation of its startup ecosystem, consistency between the testimonies of mentoring participants and that of managerial staff, and similarities between Finland and South Korea in terms of national position, resource feasibility, and cultural background. The resemblances of two countries hint that Finland and South Korea have comparable national capacities. It defies South Korea to exert more forces to bring the equivalent advantages of mentoring to fruition.

DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK

Best practices are divided into boost-up, earlier, and implementation phases according to target audience of the mentoring program (KRIVET, 2014). Boost-up stage packages are to stimulate students' interests in entrepreneurship. They take the form of entrepreneurship courses or events that contain mentoring activities as minor parts. Earlier stage activities are to train would-be-entrepreneurs with startup experiences. They host contests or boot camps where startups can test their business ideas and prototypes. Implementation stage programs are to initiate a business or to optimize a startup's profitability. They are conventionally arranged in business incubating or accelerating platforms. In sequence, best practices are illustrated in information tables as to the regional base, profile, terminology, activities, program goal, scale as well as composition of mentors, and contents. Thereafter, common features of best practices are depicted altogether. The first half are pertaining to their mentors such as their background, recruitment, training, and compensation. The rest are matchmaking, evaluation, quality assurance, and connection with higher education institutions.

THE PRELIMINARY MODEL OF CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTORING

Based on the literature review, a preliminary model of conditions for successful mentoring had been proposed as the table below.

Individual context	Relational context	Program context
Positive personal traits	Matching and quality mentorship	Outcomes
A high level of motivation	Shared goal orientation	Quality check
Appropriate attitudes		
Competencies and skills		

METHODOLOGY

Desk research in this study is twofold. One is literature review to explore what challenges to entrepreneurial mentoring in South Korea are, which issues have been discussed in mentoring and coaching studies, why the case

of Finland is reasonable to be inspected, and what suggestions have been made for a better mentoring practice and the rest. Secondary sources were searched primarily through the academic databases and the providers. The other is website analysis. The official homepages of the best practice institutions were probed to gather information on their working principles, development history, terminology between mentoring and coaching, and other important features.

In company with desk research, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted throughout seven Finnish mentoring programs in Espoo, Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku. In total, 23 stakeholder views have contributed to the interviews that are composed of the perspectives of seven mentors, eight mentees, and eight managers. Best practices are spread throughout in Finland. According to the confidentiality agreement with the respondents, the paper exhibits best practices and the conversations anonymously (Corti, Day, & Backhouse, 2000).

KEY FINDINGS

Entrepreneurial mentoring can be understood as a spectrum of activities that aim to assist the success of startups by enhancing their capabilities. Mentorship has evolved from a hierarchical teaching relationship to a mutual learning partnership among mentors and mentees. In spite of ongoing arguments on the distinction, the organizations have used two terms, mentoring and coaching, in a mixed manner.

Best practices from Finland have shown a variety of mentoring in terms of program targets, level of formality in relationships, communication tools, and activities. They have shared similar features in regard to mentors such as their backgrounds, recruitment routes and compensation, as well as in some aspects like a matchmaking rule, quality assurance mechanisms, and connection with tertiary institutions. Since the late 2000s, Finnish higher education has cultivated pro bono mentoring culture in its startup ecosystem through strategic benchmarking and bottom-up initiatives.

The interviews with the Finnish mentoring stakeholders have contributed to finalize the model of conditions for successful entrepreneurial mentoring. Compared to the preliminary framework, individual context has remained

unchanged. Relational context introduces mutual benefits and program context newly incorporates refinement, preparatory education, and optimal administration. Cultural context has been fully created including atmosphere, startup ecosystem, and culture of sharing.

Individual Context	Relational context	Program context	Cultural context
Positive personal traits	Matching and quality mentorship	Outcomes	Atmosphere
A high level of motivation	Shared goal orientation	Quality check	Startup ecosystem
Appropriate attitudes	Mutual benefits	Refinement	Culture of sharing
Competencies and skills		Preparatory education	
		Optimal administration	

The success of Finnish entrepreneurial mentoring is attributable to motivated mentors, symmetrical mentorship, engaged management from the lowest levels, and startup ecosystem with culture of sharing. Applying these implications, South Korean higher education is recommended to upgrade its entrepreneurial mentoring by offering incentives for mentors, increasing reciprocity and informality in mentorship, embracing voice of the mentees in quality check, obliging the preparatory education to the participants, developing an operation protocol, and creating a virtuous cycle of collaborative culture.

It is important to alert that aforementioned conditions are necessary but insufficient. There must be other ethos to be considered in a particular context for the reason that only if it is with respect to circumstances, can every single situation be comprehended properly. Therefore, alongside the reflection on accomplishments of best practices, South Korean higher education should thoroughly diagnose its individual and relational contexts at micro level and its program and cultural contexts at macro level.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Allowing for the research gap, it is required to shed more light on the topic itself to consolidate understanding of entrepreneurial mentoring particularly in the context of higher education. Researchers are encouraged to keep broadening the approaches to the theme with the perspectives of the stakeholders and a cross-national exploration. It would be more animated if a study handles original data from different countries and equivalently compares them, preferably concentrated on sociocultural forces. As such, diversified research is also expected to complement the model of the conditions for successful mentoring with additional dimensions and details. A step forward, mixed methods could enrich the findings by combined advantages of both quantitative and qualitative researches. Quantifiable surveys with measurable indicators could lead the present study to further find out, for instance, of the determinants of successful mentoring, to what extent each element affects the success. On the other hand, a longitudinal observation of the practices may authenticate the interviews by evidence.

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HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN EUROPE AND SERBIA- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Aleksandar Avramović

BACKGROUND

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Higher Education (HE) reforms are happening in Europe since the beginning of the 1980s as part of broader transformation of the public sector (Enders et al., 2006). The first wave of reforms occurred after the decline of the welfare state, which was a dominant economic model throughout 1960s and 1970s characterized by state planning in public services. The welfare state was accused of being unaffordable and ineffective, and already by the beginning of the 1980s was in some cases replaced by more business-like public service (Broucker, Wit, & Leisyte, 2015). New Public Management (NPM), a term covering a broad range of different reforms, became a dominant model in running the public sector at that time in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom. NPM doctrine is famous for emphasizing a private sector style of management, explicit standards, and measures of performance, output control, greater competition, disaggregation of units and hands-on professional management (Hood, 1991; Sporn, 2003).

The next wave of public sector reforms happened during the late 1990s and beginning of 2000s with new, post-NPM models emerging. These models have not replaced NPM, but rather added some new layers on its foundations. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) described this phenomenon as similar to “geological sedimentation, where new layers overlie but do not replace or completely wash away the previous layer.” (p. 8). Unlike NPM, there is no single umbrella term for describing these reforms. Among many different post-NPM models and traditions, two have been very popular and widely discussed – the role of networks and new forms of governance (M.

Bevir & Rhodes, 2011; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Networks in HE will not be extensively researched in this thesis, but the concept of governance and NPM as a theoretical model will be given full attention.

As part of the public sector, HE also faced significant changes in Europe since the 1980s (Maassen & Jungblut, 2014; Middlehurst & Teixeira, 2012). As it was the case with the rest of public sector, HE was also accused at that time for inefficiency and low quality of service. However, when the reform process started, HE was even considered to be the frontrunner in public sector transformation (Magalhães & Amaral, 2009). Today, this process is not yet complete, and the scope and outcome of reforms are not yet clear. Some scholars argue that changes in HE sector have been fundamental and fast. Others claim that universities in Europe are going through slow evolutionary change while handling internal and external pressures from the environment (Maassen, 2008). Whatever the truth is, there are some common elements of the HE reforms in Europe. To name a few: (1) more autonomy for higher education institutions (HEIs) with less direct governmental interventions; (2) more reliance on private instead of public funding; (3) highlighting quality and performance (Magalhães & Amaral, 2009; OECD, 2008; Paradeise, 2012). As in the other public sectors, De Boer and Jongbloed (2012) noticed that NPM, networks and governance are the most important narratives when it comes to HE change. In order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of HEIs and improves the quality of their service, policy makers had to change the rules of the game and reduce the roles of hierarchies and collegial self-governance. In the new system of governance, the roles of networks and markets increased (p. 533).

Levi-Faur (2012) believes that the reason behind increased attention given to governance is that this very term carries the idea and the meaning of change. According to this author, this is happening in a time of turbulence, when scholars become more open for new ideas and concepts. Rhodes (2012) followed the same line of thought, arguing that governance represents a change in the definition of government, implying new processes, methods or conditions in which societies are governed. Governing HE became an important issue for both state and HEIs across Europe, at least according to the available literature. Kohler (2006) confirms this by saying that much of the discussion about HE today is related to the issues of university autonomy,

quality assurance, different ways of steering, increasing efficiency and effectiveness of HE service and social responsibility of HEIs. HE governance became important on both stages (institutional and system) (p. 17). Due to increased importance of HE governance, reforms happening around this concept will be in the focus of this thesis.

RESEARCH FOCUS, QUESTION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This thesis will focus on one on hand on HE governance reforms in five European Union (EU) member states - Austria, Finland, Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia), Netherlands and Slovenia. It will look at changes in both external and internal governance structures and policies. On the other hand, the thesis will also focus on Serbia, a country in the Western Balkan's (WB) region. The most recent Law on Higher Education was adopted in 2005 (Branković, 2010; Vujacic, Djordjevic, Kovacevic, & Sunderic, 2013) and at that time this Act was considered to be a major reform document. The point of interest will again be the recent internal and external governance changes, but also the recommendations for the future HE reform, based on EU countries experience. At the moment, Serbia is heading towards the new HE reform (Andrić, 2015). The process is currently on hold due to the most recent elections. However, it is very likely that the process will continue as soon as a new government is elected. When it comes to the type of HE institutions, the main focus will be placed on public universities since they represent the majority of the HE sector in most of EU case studies. Universities of applied sciences (UASs) would get much less attention, because of the thesis limitations and fact that Serbia do not have strongly developed vocational HE sector. Private universities and other types of HEIs will gain almost no attention, except in the case of Serbia, where they represent significant part of the HE system.

When it comes to research question, the thesis will have only one main research question: What can higher education policy makers in Serbia learn from recent and ongoing reforms of higher education governance in European countries, and how can this experience be used for higher education reform in Serbia?

Answering this question will help policy makers in Serbia to understand better developments at the European level regarding HE governance and to discuss the possible solutions that may be useful for the future HE reform.

Finally, in terms of research aim, its purpose is to better clarify the main research question. Thesis will have one overall research aim and four individual research objectives. The overall research aim of this research will be to explore possible options for HE governance reform in Serbia, based on examples from five selected EU countries. However, in order to understand changes in these countries, further investigation is needed on the contents and the very rationales behind governance transformations. What are the drivers of governance reform, and what kind of changes are introduced is the main issue here. Furthermore, the additional problems are related to negotiation processes between different stakeholders, and its later implementation. In other words, do new HE governance arrangements in selected European countries function in the same way in practice as it was described in HE research literature, and where was the idea for the reforms taken from?

Based on the overall research aim, the individual research objectives of the thesis will be to:

1. Analyze the origin, meaning and importance of governance in higher education;
2. Identify the theoretical explanations of HE governance reforms in the EU case studies;
3. Explore different stakeholder views on current HE governance arrangements and possible future reforms in the EU case studies and Serbia;
4. Formulate recommendations for Serbian HE policy makers based on EU case studies experience with HE governance reforms;

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Two main theories have been used in the thesis for explanation of HE governance reforms in Europe. The first one is the Resource Dependency Theory (RDT). It appeared in 1978 for the first time as complete theoretical framework in the book developed book *The External Control of*

Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective. Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik, authors of the book worked at the University of Stanford at the time when researchers from this institution produced many new theories in the field of organizational science. Among these new paradigms RDT is considered to be the most complete and all-inclusive in dealing with organizations (Davis & Cobb, 2009, p. 3) or as Hillman, Withers, and Collins (2009) stressed, RDT became one of the most important theories in the organizational science (p. 1404). In the following lines, main premises of this theory will be critically evaluated.

RDT is built around three main themes. First, social context is important for one organization. Second, there are different strategies on organizational disposal for managing its environment, and enhancing autonomy. Finally, the concept of power is crucial for understanding organizational actions, both external and internal (Davis & Cobb, 2009, p. 5). The first theme relates to social context or environment. Each organization depends on its environment for survival. It means that all the necessary resources crucial for organizational survival have to be acquired from the environment (Bess & Dee, 2008). The environment is a very broad concept. According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) environment represent any event which has influence on organizational actions and behavior (p. 12). However, this definition is way too broad. For RDT, organizational environment/social context represents only those events that affect one organization and force it to recognize them and make a response. The second concept is interdependence. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) argue that interdependence refers to any happening in the environment which depends on causal relationship between the two agents (p. 40). Interdependence is important because organization usually do not possess all the necessary resources to survive. This creates interdependence between the organization and its environment, leading to uncertainty. Finally, to reduce uncertainty, the organization is trying to create new strategies and adapt to the situation (Lipincka & Verhoeven, 2014).

There are three main types of tactics offered by the RDT for managing environment: reduction of dependency, creating external relations and enactment of a completely new environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). In the HE context the usage of some of these strategies can be considered, but of some others cannot. The main reason for this lies in the fact that Pfeffer and

Salancik mostly observed the behavior of companies, while HEIs have some unique characteristics making them different from the business sector. For example, the enactment of a completely new environment is not very likely in HE contest. Other tactics were used by HEIs in Europe during the HE governance reforms.

The final theme in RDT relates to importance of power. Some organization in the environment have more power than others, for various reasons. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) also noticed the same phenomenon. According to them some organization are more powerful thanks to their position in the environment and because of the nature of their relationships with other organizations (p. xiii). For example, the government is usually one of the most powerful players in the environment. It was already mentioned that HEIs in Europe are still heavily reliant on public funding. However, since there is usually more than one provider of HE services in one country, the government is less dependent on one single supplier of HE services, making it less dependent on certain HEI than the other way around.

Second theoretical approach used in the thesis is New Public Management (NPM). As it was already mentioned, NPM is an umbrella term (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011) describing different managerial practices applied in public services. In the literature, NPM ideas are scattered and there are only a few sources trying to summarize what these ideas stand for. Hood (1991) article was quite successful in a way that it described main NPM ideas, their meaning and justification. All of them have in its essence the introduction of business management style in the organizations of public sector. The main idea was to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations by introducing some elements which proved to be successful in private companies (Ziegele, 2008). Because of its emphasis on marketization, managerialism, and privatization (Sporn, 2003) NPM is often regarded as a neo-liberal doctrine (Lorenz, 2012). It is undeniable that there are some elements of neoliberalism in NPM. However, the difference between neoliberalism and NPM is clear. While neo-liberal doctrines

are trying to reduce the size of the public sector and use privatization to substitute for public services, NPM main idea is to improve public sector by

borrowing some ideas and techniques of private sector (Hénard & Mitterle, 2010). In that respect NPM should be regarded as ideologically neutral doctrine (Vabø, 2009), applicable to any sort of socio-political and economic environment. If this is not the case, it would be hard to understand how some countries in Europe with strong socio-democratic cultures (such as Nordic countries or Germany) are using NPM to reform their public sector.

In terms of HE in Europe, NPM influence was strong on recent governance changes. Broucker et al. (2015) identified four essential aspects of HE reform in Europe influenced by NPM: (1) reforms related to introduction of market mechanism; (2) funding reforms; (3) increased focus on autonomy, performance and accountability; and finally (4) introduction of new styles and techniques in university management. The first sub-chapter already stated some NPM characteristics, and because of that there is no need for further explanations of NPM doctrine. Thesis will focus more on whether governance changes in Europe were in line with NPM or not, and what NPM elements were used for HEIs transformation.

METHODOLOGY

OPERATIONALIZATION FRAMEWORK

Thesis will use two tools for explaining HE governance changes in Europe and Serbia. First, when it comes to Serbian HE reform, it will be explained by using slightly adopted Austin's (2009) multi-faceted model of organizational change. Its main purpose is to find out the answers on three questions: why governance changes happened (and why are they needed), what the content of the reform is/should be, and how the reforms were/should be implemented? The second tool used for analyzing five EU case studies is governance equalizer. It measures progress of five governance dimensions (state regulation, stakeholder guidance, academic self-governance, managerial self-governance and competition) towards NPM suggested positions in the equalizer (Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007).

RESEARCH STRATEGY, AND DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Research strategy chosen for the purpose of this thesis is multiple case study. According to Creswell (2009) case study is:

'...a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time'. (p. 13).

There are three main types of case study research strategies: explanatory (trying to explain why something happens), descriptive (producing a full description of a phenomenon, without explain why it happens) and exploratory (trying to determine hypothesis or research questions for future studies) (Biggam, 2012). Taking into account that this thesis is trying to both describe and explain HE governance changes (as described in Operational Framework), the combination of explanatory and descriptive case study strategies will be used. To achieve both overall research aim and individual research objectives, the thesis has first to look at a certain number of EU countries and describe and explain their reform processes. Time restriction does not allow pan-European research, and for that reason, only five countries are selected as case studies – Austria, Finland, Germany (NRW), the Netherlands, and Slovenia.

When it comes to data collection, it was done by using a combination of convenience and stakeholder sampling. The convenience sampling means that, as the name suggests, it was convenient for the researcher to collect data in a certain way. In reality, it includes, for example, interviewing colleagues from work or people author already know (Biggam, 2012). This sampling was used for data collection in EU case studies. Stakeholder sampling was used for data collection in Serbia, where the main actors from the government, public and private universities, students, EU representative body, expert organizations and individuals were interviewed. In many cases research subjects could be placed in at least into two of these categories - for instance, in expert and government official category. To ensure anonymity of the research subjects, interviewee's names and names of their institutions are not displayed.

However, their role (for example dean, rector, HE expert) and type of institution they are coming from (public university, the ministry of education)

are available. Overall five HE experts have been interviewed from EU case study countries and seven from Serbia.

All the interviews were recorded by using a mobile phone and later transcribed. The transcribed raw data were then coded in the NVivo program by using the thematic coding technique. Thematic coding, according to Better Evaluation (2016):

'...is a form of qualitative analysis which involves recording or identifying passages of text or images that are linked by a common theme or idea allowing you to index the text into categories and therefore establish a framework of thematic ideas about it.'

As it was already mentioned, all the interviews were divided into four themes: external and internal HE governance, NPM influence on reforms and finally a funding system of HE in the particular case study. Division into themes was there to help the interview process and to assist in the data analysis. In practice, it means that each topic can be analyzed separately. However, it is important to notice that themes are not entirely independent from each other's.

In fact, they are interrelated and once the once the interview data from one theme is analyzed, it is compared with other themes. Also, interview findings are compared with data gathered through literature review process. Biggam (2012) described the complete qualitative data analysis process. It involves collecting the data, describing it and finally interpreting the data (analyzing) (Biggam, 2012, p. 162). Applied to this thesis, it means that data is collected by using semi-structured interviews. Then data is then described and grouped around themes mentioned above. Finally, data analysis process took place, where findings from different themes are cross-referenced with other themes and findings from the literature review. In that way, as Biggam (2012) mentioned, this will: "help produce a more meaningful analysis of your empirical data" (p. 165).

FINDINGS: DESCRIPTION, ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

PART I: EU CASE STUDIES

Looking at the reforms in the five case studies summarized in five governance dimensions and presented graphically in the equalizer, the pattern is clear – all HE systems are going in direction of NPM. At this place, the thesis will try only to find major similarities and differences between different cases.

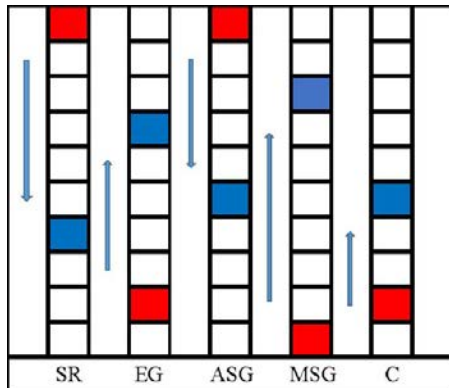


Figure 1: Governance Equalizer Austria
Equalizer Finland

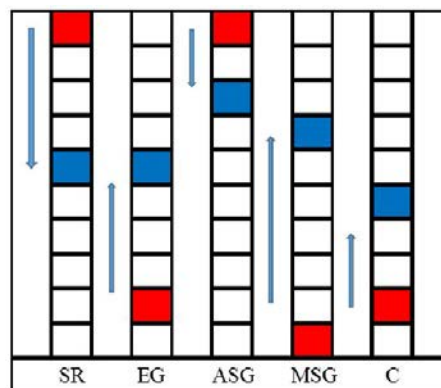


Figure 2: Governance

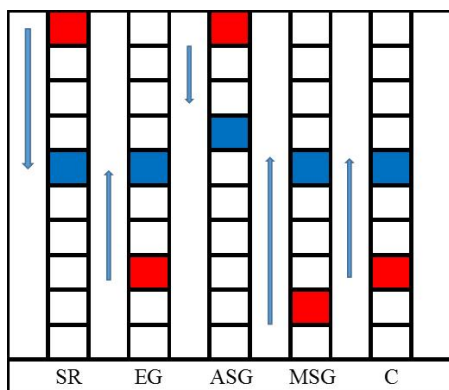


Figure 3: Governance Equalizer NRW
Equalizer, Netherlands

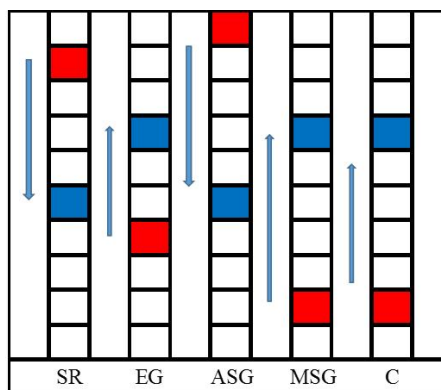


Figure 4: Governance

Position at the beginning of 1980s

Today's position

Values as suggested by NPM:

SR State Regulation

EG External Guidance

ASG Academic Self-Governance

MSG Managerial Self-Governance

C Competition

— Direction of changes

The first governance dimension – State Regulation – decreased in all countries. According to NPM, this governance should be low in the equalizer and all countries are moving in that direction. The shift from government to governance started in all countries by the

adoption of a new legal framework. All case study countries adopted or changed laws regulating HE and new legislation introduced major changes in HE governance. First, in all case studies universities became separate legal entities. This means that universities lost the status of public agencies and by doing so they became effectively separated from the state. In the case of Slovenia, its faculties had the status of separate legal entities even before the new legislation was passed. However, this status was after the reforms granted to universities during the process of integration.

Then, institutional autonomy also increased in all countries and universities in all countries are generally freer to manage their own affairs. The funding autonomy increased the most in all cases. All five countries abandoned line-item budgeting and introduced lump-sum funding. This allowed universities to distribute funds according to their needs. Also, at least one small proportion of state funds for HE is distributed by using performance indicators. In NRW, this started already at the beginning of 1990s, while in Netherlands few years ago. By introducing performance based funding, governments are hoping to force universities to achieve certain goals before getting more money from the state. This is a practical example of steering from a distance concept, where the policy makers are more interested in

outputs than inputs. However, the major problem with this funding model is how to create good indicators

– and this issue appeared in all cases. Organizational, staffing and academic autonomy also increased. Finally, by using accreditation and quality assurance procedures, national governments are able to control emergence of new study programs. Austria, the Netherlands and Slovenia have national accreditation agencies (Netherlands have this agency together with Flanders in Belgium, and Slovenia has the agency since 2010, after a decade of legal changes). NRW does not have its state agency, and accreditation is done by many independent agencies. Finally, Finland does not have accreditation system but universities are required by the law to take external evaluation (most of them use the services of The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre – FINEEC).

External guidance, originally positioned high in the equalizer increased in all respective cases. First, in all countries the government is the main stakeholder who regulate HE system directly through setting the legal framework and indirectly through the mechanism described above. It is also the main financier of HEIs. The proportion of state funding in the total sum for HE goes to 50% to 80%. The most noticeable change in most of countries in the thesis is the involvement of other external stakeholders (from industry, culture and society in general) in HE governance. In all countries, external stakeholder are included in internal governance of

universities. In Austria, NRW and Netherlands new bodies were created (called – University or Supervisory Board or Council) with the same mission – to supervise and approve the development and actions of HEIs' management. In Austria and Netherlands only external stakeholders can sit in these bodies, while NRW has a system where at least 50% of the seats must be taken by external stakeholders. Finish universities included external stakeholders in collegial body – University Board. Finally, Slovenia only have external stakeholders in National Council for HE, but this body is not part of the universities. All these bodies can direct university development and oversee the actions of the management.

The situation with Academic Self-Governance is mixed across the observed cases. In Netherlands and Austria this governance dimension decreased significantly, and this was in line with NPM values, since that this governance dimension should be positioned low in the equalizer. The collegial decision making bodies were losing power. In Netherlands their role became only advisory, while in Austria its power was reduced significantly. In the NRW, after the reform in 2007, the collegial bodies also lost influence. However, after the most recent reforms, government restored some of their power. This was the only case of the reverse trends in this respect. However, collegial decision making in general terms lost ground in NRW as well. Situation in Finland and Slovenia was rather different. Academic Self-Governance was always strong in these two countries. In both countries even some new collegial bodies emerged—in Finland so called Collegial Body with supervisory role and in Slovenia Academic Assembly in faculties which elects faculty Senate and propose candidate for a Dean. On the other hand, in both countries collegial decision making decreased slightly due to increase in power of managerial bodies.

The fourth governance dimension, Managerial Self-Governance increased in all observed HE systems. NPM logic urges for stronger leadership and managerial positions in universities, who can make use of increased autonomy and manage the university more efficiently and effectively. For that reason, new legislation empowered university rectors and deans and created new bodies to oversee the university management work. They now have more CEO-type role, with the ability to lead day-to-day operations of the university. In addition, university management got the ability to recruit university staff. This happened in all case studies and made universities more like companies. In Netherlands, the role of deans also increased significantly after the abolition of powerful university departments. Finally, in the case of Slovenia the role of the Rectors increased thanks to the university integration. In the previous system, they had no power.

Finally, the Competition increased also in all case studies. In those countries without significant private sector (like the Netherlands and Finland) the main competition is between public HEIs themselves for best students, staff and research funding. On the other hand, in Slovenia, Germany and Austria, there is also competition between public and private HEIs. In general terms,

private HE is not largely present in any of the case study countries, compared to the some Eastern European countries and for that reason this governance dimension does not have huge increase in that area (although it should be high in the equalizer according to NPM).. Another dimension, where competition is becoming more serious is international arena. Universities from selected case studies are more concerned about their reputation and trying to attract international students. Also, universities are competing for international funding and projects, especially coming from the EU level.

NPM as theoretical approach was used quite successfully to explain the changes in Europe. Looking at the content of HE transformations, it is easy to conclude that policy makers had in mind NPM logic when they reformed their own systems. The RDT on the other hand, was not so useful for understanding the content of the reforms. However, some of its concepts and tactics proved to be true in the above case studies. First, the concepts of dependency and power can be used for explaining why European governments were able to impose changes in the first place. RDT argues that the more focal organization is dependent on one provider for resources, the more power over the focal organization that provider has. Of course, it may be the case that the resource supplier is also to some extent dependent on focal organization products and services. HEIs in all case studies are highly dependent on public funding, and for that reason governments have power over HEIs and can impose reforms. Also, the state is dependent on public HEIs for providing education and research, and thus helping society and economy in general. However, the state dependency on public HEIs has reduced in recent decades with emergence of new HE providers. The public funding for HE in recent decades remained stable in most case studies, while the costs increased. The public officials were not able to follow that cost and secure enough resources. For that reason, in order to compensate they decided to give up some of its power over HEIs by granting them autonomy and steer from a distance instead. This happened in all case studies and can be seen as a general trend.

The RDT tactics for dependency reduction and managing the environment were also used by HEIs. For example, mergers as one of the tactics were used in Austria, Netherlands and Finland. The main idea was to reorganize the HE sector and make it more efficient and effective. In Finland, for

instance, the mergers are happening systematically, because the government want to reduce the number of HEIs, consolidate the system and use the economy of scale and cooperation to empower universities. This led to changes in both internal and external governance levels. Another widely used tactic was the creation of consortiums and partnerships between the universities. The universities are creating consortiums and partnerships with other universities so that they can compete together on HE markets and apply for research projects and funding. For that reason, university leaders and managers are eager to use this tactic because they understand the potential benefits from it.

PART II: SERBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

The first topic in the interviews with Serbian stakeholders was the Law on Higher Education from 2005. Interviewees were asked to state their opinion on the solutions presented in the Law. Out of seven interviews, six claimed that the Law had some positive effects on the HE system and governance, but bad solutions prevail in this legal act. Only one respondent stated that the Law had no single positive effect, and that it has actually downgraded the entire system. Concerning the major problems with the Law, interviewees named bad implementation; the fact that the Law is too descriptive in some sections and on the other hand some problems have not been tackled at all (HE funding, university integration and social dimension of HE are just few examples); and finally that the Law was drafted by the academic community and because of that it favors this group too much, while the state influence is completely marginalized.

The Law introduced Bologna structure and the system of quality assurance and accreditation. It was also the first reform Law to introduce some major changes in HE since the country's independence in 1991. On the other hand, the analysis of interviews, available literature and the Law itself proved that all the major issues in HE, such as university integration or the funding system have not been tackled. In the case of integration, the Law provided very confusing solution, and it was clear that it cannot be implemented as such. On the other hand, the level of academic community's influence on HE is high, taking into account that majority of places in Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) and National Council for Higher Education - NCHE are occupied by the academics. Even in those bodies where the state has its own representatives, they usually occupy less than 1/3rd of the places.

Recommendation I: The Government should draft a new Law on Higher Education in the near future. The working group for drafting the law should be composed of representatives of all major stakeholders in the society, and their work should be transparent. The policy makers should also take serious part in this process and try to create an outcome which would balance the

interests of all stakeholders, and not to favor one group, since HE is a public good and it should be treated as such.

All respondents in the thesis agreed that top-down reform strategy is needed for a successful outcome. In almost all EU case studies, at the time of the HE reform, the government was composed of conservative parties, with the strong majority in the parliament or a stable coalition. Today's situation in Serbia is similar to that. After the election earlier this year, the conservative Serbian Progressive Party won the absolute majority of seats in the Parliament, and now can exploit this success and use wide support it has to push the reform process forward. Government can expect the huge resistance from the academic community, but this was the case in all EU case studies, and the reforms were more or less successful. The major resistance can be expected from the flagship university in the capital city, as the biggest and the most influential public university in the country. However, as one of the interviewee from the HE expert group suggested, government could build a coalition with private universities, other public universities in the country which are more reform oriented, and even with some faculties within the flagship university who are not satisfied with the current situation. In addition, policy makers can attract students to their side by meeting some of their demands, and thus try to avoid large protests in the country.

The second question to Serbian HE stakeholders was related to their opinion on the relationship between the state and HEIs and the level of autonomy HEIs have. All interviewees agreed that the government was not willing to pay much attention to HE sector, and that this can even be considered equal to a complete negligence. Reduced role of the state is also a result of some new solutions in the Law. All of the respondents also consider that the policy makers see HE only as a necessary cost, and not as something which can be used for creating economic growth. Finally, when it comes to academic freedom and institutional autonomy, all of the interviewed stakeholders believe that it is too high as a result of the state negligence.

Indeed, the analysis of all the data showed that the state withdrew from the HE system more than it should, compared to the situation in other EU countries. However, Serbia is not unique when it comes to this problem. For example, in the case of NRW, thesis research showed that both the Ministry

and expert taught that the state gave up more responsibilities than it should, and in the most recent Law this was changed (again causing some negative reactions from academics). Interviewees from Serbia complained that even those places in the University/Faculty councils belonging to the state (always less than 50%, usually 1/3rd of the seats) are sometimes not occupied or this is done only because the Law prescribes it - without any state intentions to affect the decision of these Councils.

The issue of autonomy was also significantly present in the interviews. All seven stakeholders from Serbia agreed that autonomy is too high, not because of the new Legal Act, but only because the state lacks the interest to manage the HE sector properly.

Recommendation II: The government should pay more attention to HE and take the full responsibility coming from the fact that the state is the main financier of the HEIs. Since HEIs should also fulfill its public mission, the state should monitor this process. In terms of university autonomy, it should be increased but only after public universities are integrated, and its management is strengthened. In addition to autonomy, state should increase accountability requirements.

As in the previous question, the experience of EU case study countries can be used in Serbian context. In the beginning, state should be more agile in filling those places in the NCHE and University/Faculty Councils. Then, the new Law can introduce a new body composed of at least 50% of external stakeholders. Members of this body should be appointed by the government, and their main task would be to monitor and approve university actions and development, as it is done in Austria, Netherlands and NRW. In addition, the system of quality assurance and accreditation should be improved. Finally, the Ministry should fulfil its obligation from the Law and start paying more attention to HE development and planning. By doing all these things, government can show that it really cares about HE and has a plan for the future. In addition, all four types of institutional autonomy should be increased, but only after the university integration and clear division of responsibilities between the HEIs and the state, as it was done in Slovenia.

The final question concerning external governance relates to funding system and the role of the markets in HE. All seven interviewees agreed that the

current funding system is not good and that it should be changed. As the major shortcomings they see (1) the outdated regulation for HE finance; (2) the line item budgeting not being flexible enough; (3) the input nature of the funding; (4) the fact that the state is transferring money directly to faculties and not to university; (5) the huge differences in terms of public funding for different faculties within the same university; (6) still weak role of the markets in HE; and finally (7) the fact that

HE is largely underfunded in Serbia. Six out of the seven respondents believe that HE reform should start with the introduction of a new funding model. However, there are different views on how it should be done and what kind of model is needed. Five out of the seven interviewees believe that under certain conditions (in most of the cases, this condition is university integration) lump-sum model can be applicable in Serbian context. Also, they believe that performance-based budgeting is possible, but that there is a problem with performance indicators. Finally, the huge resistance of the academics who would not be willing to accept the output-oriented funding system can be expected. Rector of the private university argue that the system of voucher would be the best solution, and that HE market should play decisive role. However, two other respondents raised their concerns that the voucher system would mean complete reliance on the market and that can create problems in the future. They gave examples of countries where the voucher model failed, because of not well developed quality assurance and accountability mechanisms, like Georgia and compared the situation with Serbia.

Recommendation III: The government should create funding system which would be based on both input and output criteria's. It can be formula based, lump-sum funding. Some percentage can be distributed by using performance indicators (5-10%). Then, the funding has to be distributed to universities directly. Finally, the state should increase its investment in HE and emphasizes diversification of funding streams, so that HE markets can play a greater role.

All countries in the EU case studies introduced some combination of lump-sum and performance based funding, and Serbian policy makers can consider these options after the university integration. The positive thing at the moment

is that faculties have autonomy in using funds earned on the HE market from tuition fees and other sources. Serbia should follow Slovenian example, and allow faculties to keep their own income after integration. Also, Slovenia tested the lump-sum and performance based funding first and this is something that Serbian policy makers should also consider before rushing into fast, untested solutions.

In terms of internal governance changes, two important topics are discussed with Serbian interviewees. The first one is the integration of public universities, identified both in the literature and interviews as the most serious issue of Serbian HE. The second topic is the collegial decision making and how it can be reformed. Six out of seven interview respondents perceive fragmented university in Serbia as a major obstacle for the reform of HE system. They believe that it is the reason why the universities cannot have long term planning and why the state cannot implement any reforms systematically.

From the literature, interviews and the Law, but also from some other documents (Strategy for Education Development 2020) it can be noticed that there is a tendency towards the integration of the university. However, all these sources pointed at the academic community and faculties as the major opponents of university integration. One of the reason for this is the potential loss of substantial freedoms faculties have at the moment. For example, faculties are separate legal entities, and the government transfers funds directly to them. Then faculties give one small share of that money for the university administration. Also, faculties can keep all the money they earn on the market (from tuition fees and third party funding) and have substantial freedom to use these funds as they desire. In the case of integration, faculties are afraid that they will lose all those benefits. However, all the other stakeholders are in favor of integration, and they perceive it as the first step towards increased autonomy, better planning and accountability.

Recommendation IV: Government should integrate universities by Law, and give them a status of separate legal entities. At the same time, this status should be taken from faculties. Administration in public universities should be strengthened and all internal functions should be integrated. Then, the reform of the funding system can be done, and the Ministry can start

transferring money directly to universities in the form of lump-sum budgeting. This funds then can be divided internally according to university needs. However, faculties should be allowed to keep the money they earned on the market.

Slovenian and Dutch experience can be very useful for Serbia. Slovenia also had fragmented universities and had huge opposition from the faculties towards the integration. However, after the decision of Constitutional Court, universities finally became separate legal entities. After that the question of integration has not been raised again and all stakeholders realized the benefits of this reform. Universities became much more efficient and effective in their actions, and had much stronger voice in the negotiations with the Ministry. The Netherlands also had powerful departments at universities, but after the recent reforms these were abolished and Deans got much stronger roles instead.

The final topic discussed with Serbian policy makers is the role of collegial governance. Most of the interviewees focused on external governance and did not talk much about this issue. Only two important topics came up. The first one is that academic community is not as strong as it used to be. The other one is the current collegial governance structures are not very efficient when it comes to decision making. All respondents agree that collegial governance should be reformed. However, they see this happening only after the university is integrated and central bodies such as the Rector and Deans are strengthened.

Respondents main message was that academic community is not ready to take the full responsibility for managing integrated universities, and neither are Rectors and Deans who are also elected from that same community. That is why Serbian policy makers can use the experience of the five EU case studies and create a balanced system between complete collegial decision making and complete centralization of power in the hands of professional managers. In all EU case studies, the power of university management increased, but the voice of academics can still be heard. They still take part in decision making process either on a formal level (Finland and Slovenia) or more informally (in Austria, Netherlands and NRW). The Rectors of public universities should be appointed by the new Supervisory Board

composed of external stakeholders (at least 50%) and his/her function should be empowered. Rector then can appoint Deans, as it is done in Netherlands. Rectors can be selected outside of the academia. At the same time, some important functions should stay in the hands of the academics (University Councils), because they sometimes have the best knowledge on what is happening on the ground. This system of checks-and-balances can be used to satisfy all sides, and to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the HEIs decision making.

Recommendation V: The function of Rectors and Deans should be strengthened, as it was done in five EU case study countries. This can be done only after university integration is complete. There should be a chain of command from the new Supervisory Board who would appoint Rectors, to Deans who would be appointed by the Rectors. At the same time, some important decision making functions should remain in the hand of University Council, even though it should have a predominately advisory role. This would create a stem of checks-and-balances and satisfy all the parties.

CONCLUSION - RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES REVISITED

The thesis main research question was presented in the introductory chapter of the thesis. However, it will be useful to revisit both the research question and the research aim and objectives. The main research question of the thesis was:

What can higher education policy makers in Serbia learn from recent and ongoing reforms of higher education governance in European countries, and how can this experience be used for higher education reform in Serbia?

Main research question also contained the main research aim, and it was fulfilled completely by achieving four individual research objectives:

1. Explore the origin, meaning and importance of governance in higher education;
2. Identify the theoretical foundations of governance reforms in EU case studies;

3. Analyze different stakeholder's views on current HE governance arrangements and possible future reforms in the EU case studies and Serbia;
4. Formulate recommendations for Serbian HE policy makers based on EU case studies experience with HE governance reforms.

The first individual research aim was completed in the first and second chapter of the thesis, where the HE governance and other related terms were defined and their origin explained and analyzed. Then the Literature Review section managed to identify NPM and RDT as theoretical explanations of HE governance reforms in five EU case studies. These theories have also been used in the chapter four, where they were applied in five EU case studies context. When it comes to third individual research objective, it was achieved in the fourth chapter. HE governance reforms in five EU case studies were presented, by analyzing interviews with HE experts, official government documents and legal acts, and other literature. The data was triangulated and presented by using governance equalizer tool. Finally, the chapter five answered the main research question and accomplished the overall research objective by using multi-faceted model of organizational change. In this chapter five recommendations were proposed for the future HE reform in Serbia based on the experiences of five EU case study countries.

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TURKISH-GERMAN JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMS: INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABILITY

Hacer Tercanli

BACKGROUND

This thesis study seeks to identify factors that might have influence on the performance and sustainability of the Turkish-German Joint and Double Degree Programs (JDDPs) through the lenses of Joint Degree Program Sustainability Framework. The ultimate purpose of the study is to provide a guideline to the Turkish and German HEIs for a sustainable JDDP development.

This particular research topic was chosen for investigation after a preliminary research on the status of the Turkish-German JDDPs registered in the Turkish Council of Higher Education (YOK) database . The findings revealed that 16 out of 27 joint programs accredited by YOK between the years 2007-2015 have ended their activities. The first question came to mind was: ‘What caused 16 programs to end their activities immediately, or after a few years of implementation?’ The second question followed: ‘What features of the active programs distinguished them from those of the discontinued programs?’ Given the fact that establishment of JDDPs is not an easy task, especially when the amount of time, finances, and human resources invested in such cooperations are considered, the research was set to target sustainability and performance dimension of selected joint programs.

The following research question is formulated to guide the study: How can the sustainability of Turkish-German joint degree programs be ensured? This main research question is subdivided by 6 questions:

Q1. What collaborative higher education programs are offered by joint German and Turkish partners and how do these programs look like?

Q2. What are the German and Turkish partner perspectives on their collaborative JDDP establishment context and rationales?

Q3. What are the German and Turkish partner perspectives on their active collaborative JDDP benefits and success factors?

Q4. What are the factors that pose challenge during the implementation of the JDDP program? What kind of mechanisms are in place to address these challenges?

Q5. What are the perspectives of German and Turkish partners in regards to sustainability of their collaborative JDDP?

Q6. What are the German and Turkish partner perspectives on the major factors that led to termination of their collaborative JDDP?

Each research question is linked to address five dimensions of the Joint Degree Program Sustainability Framework: Compatibility, Complementarity, Coping Mechanisms, Finances, and Institutionalization. The first sub-question serves to outline an overall profile of currently active Turkish-German JDDPs selected for the study. The findings will aim to provide information on seventeen JDDP features, including length of mobility, scholarships, mode of partner selection, language of instruction, student selection, recruitment strategies, and accreditation. The following five sub-questions, Q2 to Q6, seek to present an in-depth understanding on the possible factors that might have influence on the sustainability of Turkish-German JDDPs. Answers to the research questions are sought utilizing the qualitative method of interviews with the active and discontinued program coordinators, supported with the information accessed through document analysis.

The hypothesis is that there exists certain common features shared by the active Turkish-German JDDPs that influence the performance of program activities. During implementation compatibility is ensured, complementarity of the resources are maintained, challenges are addressed by coping mechanisms, financial support is secured, and program activities are embedded into the institutional structures, in other words, values and practices are adopted towards institutionalization. If the institutional

practices associated with these five lenses of the framework are known, conclusions can be drawn on the factors that might influence JDDP performance and sustainability. To support this hypothesis, interview data will be collected from active and discontinued program coordinators in the Turkish and German HEIs. Interview data will be further supported by document analysis obtained from program websites, brochures, and other relevant digital resources.

Significance of the study primarily lies in its attempt to develop a better understanding of the JDDP implementation in the Turkish and German higher education context. Shared first-hand experiences of the program coordinators might provide input for the improvement of institutional practices for the sustainable development of JDDPs. As it is argued by one of the recent survey reports, implementation of JDDPs are complex in comparison to the traditional degrees due to the number of stakeholders involved in two different cultural and legal, and administrative contexts (Kuder&Obst, 2009). In this regard, the findings might serve as a point of reference for Turkish and German professionals who intend to embark on long-lasting joint study projects in the future. Last but not the least, the findings might contribute to the body of research in the literature, as well as leading to further studies on the sustainability of the Turkish-German joint degree programs.

While there is plethora of reports and regional surveys investigating the implementation of JDDPs – with the most comprehensive ones published by European University Association (EUA), Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), Institute of International Education (IIE), Freie Universität Berlin, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst , (DAAD), EP Nuffic, Joint Degree Management and Administration Network (JOIMAN) - empirical research on the performance and sustainability of these programs are rather limited in the national context. One empirical study by the German Institute for International Education Research (DIPF) was conducted in 2012, in the context of sustainability of JDDPs with German participation. The findings have shown that commitment, trust and financial security were the most influential elements of the JDDP sustainability (Tarazona, 2013). From an alternative perspective, the survey report by the American Council of Education (ACE) shed light to the difficulties American institutions experience in their joint program cooperations with Turkish and German

institutions (Helms, 2014). According to the findings, low commitment level of the partners, rigid regulations for the preparations of program proposals, and language barrier are the factors that influence American JDDP cooperations with Turkey. On the other hand, the same programs with German partners overall reported low challenge rates. Existing issues were reported to be administrative, commitment, and funding related.

METHODOLOGY

The research employs a qualitative research method to gain an “in-depth and interpreted understanding of the experiences” of the research participants (Ritchie et al., 2003, p.3). The choice of the research approach was made based on the interpretive nature of the research questions, each aiming at exploring the perceptions and experiences of the JDDP program coordinators in their own country context. This empirical study adopts a post-positivist approach in its knowledge inquiry, in which the researcher starts with a set of ideas or a theory to test, collects data that either supports or refutes the theory, and after analysis of data verifies or refines the ideas posed at the beginning (Creswell, 2003). Perspectives of the participants categorized in five dimensions is defined as the unit of analysis. Despite the fact that the research collects data on ten joint programs, it doesn’t analyze them as individual programs, but rather aggregates the input from interview participants to test the potential factors. To address the research questions the study utilizes two sources of evidence; semi structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interview is the primary instrument, supported by the document analysis conducted to answer the first research question, as well as to fill in information gaps while answering the remaining research questions.

Participant selection for the study was administered in two steps. First, joint programs were selected that served as case programs, and second, within each case program individual respondents were identified. Programs selected for the study are five active and five inactive Turkish-German JDDPs. Sampling of the cases was purposeful, in that three criteria were aimed to be met for the variety of case units: the level of JDDP study programs (Masters vs. Bachelor), the type of Turkish partner institution (Public vs. Foundation), and geographical representation of JDDP host

institutions. As for the inactive programs, selections were made on the basis of the participant willingness to collaborate in this research. Participants are identified as program coordinators, directors, and administrative assistants of partner universities who are involved in the JDDP establishment and implementation. The sampling of the participants was purposeful; key informants with special expertise were invited to provide insight on the topic of investigation.

Four face to face interviews were recorded via data recorder which later were transcribed for analysis. Remaining interviews were recorded through note-taking, and after the input was transferred to the Excel database where the transcribed interviews were stored. Active program interviewees were contacted via e-mail or phone a month prior to the suggested interview date to introduce the study and the content of the interview. Majority of the participants were shared with the Consent Form (Appendix C) and Interview Questions (Appendix A) before the meetings.

Eleven participants from the Turkish institutions represented nine universities. The interviews with the group were conducted between December 2015 and May 2016. Nine participants from the German institutions represented seven universities. The interviews took place during the months April and May 2016. Of nine meetings, one interview took place via e-mail, two via Skype, three via phone, and one in person with a program director who administer two joint programs in two different Turkish HEIs. Two sets of interview questions were designed. One set targeted the participants representing active programs (Set A), and the other the participants of inactive programs (Set B). Both sets were prepared in Turkish and English languages for Turkish and German participants, respectively. Set A included a total of 24 interview questions addressing five dimensions of the conceptual framework through the interview themes of context and motives, benefits and challenges, coping mechanisms, and institutional integration of the JDDPs. Set B contained six questions, mainly covering the areas of the nature of initial JDDP establishment, the challenges leading to termination, and future perspectives of the participants in regards to the re-establishment of their inactive programs. Qualitative data analysis took place in two cycles. First, Structural Coding method was applied since this method allows organizing data around the interview and research questions. This

step was followed by Elaborate Coding. Structural Coding means to apply content-based phrases that represent the topic of inquiry to the part of interview data that relates to the research question (Saldana, 2009). In the data analysis stage of this study, structural coding resulted in large segments of codes on broad topics, grouped in accordance with each interview question that stood as a “theme”. In addition, each research question that guided the set of interview questions were referred as “structural codes”. To identify the major trends, the codes as “topics” were counted to create a frequency report (See Appendix E). To further analyze and reorganize data, Elaborate Coding method was applied in order to build on previous research and investigations (Saldana, 2009). This method fit the purpose of this research, in the sense it aimed at modifying or strengthening the proposed framework upon the findings of the data analysis.

KEY FINDINGS

When asked about the objectives of their JDDP establishment, respondents from Turkish and German institutions shared two common goals: (1) offering students a rich educational experience and (2) contributing to the development of relationships between the two countries. Majority of participants agreed that the specialized JDDP training prepares students for an international work environment by equipping them with the necessary skills and competences. Pointing out to the increasing number of economic investments and the cultural exchange among the Turkish and German population, respondents suggested that the outcomes of the JDDP programs would contribute to a better understanding between the two cultures and facilitate further collaborations.

Inactive programs: In line with the responses provided by the active program coordinators, discontinued program representatives listed their goals and objectives in starting a JDDP with their partners. Coordinators in Turkish institutions emphasized their goals as (1) responding to particular market demands - addressing the employment needs of Turkish students in Germany, training experts that could facilitate Turkish accession into EU, (2) offering students a rich educational experience, (3) advancing internationalization by attracting students from Central Asian countries, and (4) adopting the educational model of the German partner university. Important characteristics

participants from Turkey and Germany valued in each other were rich institutional resources; for the Turkish partners this meant industry links to the German institutions, while for the German partner it was the laboratory and academic field strengths of the Turkish institutions, except for one coordinator emphasized the diverse student source they would access through their Turkish partner.

There was a consensus among most participants in response to the question how the resources they offer for the JDDP complement the resources provided by their partner institution. Acknowledging the contextual strengths each institution possess, such as course subjects, facilities, and networks, the respondents stated they have equal resources they invest in the JDDP with their partners.

As the participant of A5 from Germany put it: “Rather than complementarity, there is duplication of resources. Therefore we are able provide students closer attention, and provide better services.” Similarly, the course director of A1 from Turkey explained “Both institutions channel their resources to the joint program. We believe we have equal resources. Human resources is equal, so as academic quality and structure.” In the same direction, the director of A1 from Germany added, “Professors are qualified in both institutions, same quality in their own context. We might have a bigger library, but for the success of the program this does not matter.”

Upon the question whether they perceive any challenges exist, respondents from both groups referred to four major obstacles: (1) Turkish HE regulations, (2) student recruitment, (3) the lack of finances to recruit JDDP staff, and (4) incompatible academic structures. Concerning the measures taken for the obstacles, responses revealed that from the very start of their JDDP establishment partners have employed a number of coping mechanisms to improve their performance: (1) organizing regular meetings, (2) making adjustments in the course structures, (3) agreeing on mutual exemption of tuition fees, (4) preparing student orientations, (5) developing a transparent program administration framework, and (6) lobbying to overcome regulatory constraints.

In regards to the resources required for sustainability, majority of participants cited financial resources as one of the requisites for the

sustainable development of their JDDP. These resources were suggested to be spent in the recruitment of JDDP administrative staff, scholarships for more number of students, and hiring academics who can teach growing number of students. On the other hand, two respondents from German institutions emphasized that the sustainability of their JDDP is not under any risk of due to the embedded nature of the program in their regular course curriculum.

Nine coordinators from 5 discontinued JDDPs were asked about the challenges that led to the termination of their programs. It should be noted that three out of the five programs ended their activities within their first year, in the pre-implementation phase. The answers varied across institutions, however, (1) lack of student interest, (2) lack of institutional ownership, and (3) lack of financial support were cited by both Turkish and German partners as the most common reasons for JDDP termination.

Overall, findings included the perceived impact of contextual factors, such as political and economic developments, and the add-on nature of the programs to the long-term sustainability of Turkish-German JDDPs. Four factors posing threat to the sustainable development of the programs were found to be linked to the challenges with financial support, student recruitment, national regulations, and institutional ownership. The features facilitated cooperation emerged as trust, motivation, and common and regionally motivated goals. The type of measures taken as coping mechanisms considerably reduced the risk of program termination, as well as the financial support of national funding bodies, such as DAAD. Finally, the results showed marketing and alumni network aspects of the cooperations need special attention, along with the anchoring of the programs into the institutional strategy documents for the start.

RECOMENDATIONS

POLICY LEVEL

- In the German context recent strategies introduced by HRK (2013) aim for improvements in the regulatory fields to dismantle legal obstacles against JDDP establishment. As a corresponding measure, higher

education internationalization policies in Turkey needs similar reforms to allow more room for sustainable JDDP development.

- A Turkish government funding scheme is necessary for the expansion of this internationalization strategy in the Turkish universities. Despite the existing national strategies that foster internationalization of higher education, industrial productivity, and social development, incentive mechanisms are not in place that could steer the institutions.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

- In the establishment preparation phase, external factors - political, economic, and social circumstances of the partner country - should be well evaluated, and demand for the particular degree should be well explored.
- Before the launch of joint programs initiating partners should thoroughly evaluate legal environment in the host country and identify genuine interest of stakeholders. Institutional support and commitment is of utmost importance for the sustainable development of JDDPs, considering the fact that termination of the most joint programs was directly linked to the absence of these two components. German partners should be prepared for the fragmented higher education policy environment in Turkey.
- Turkish and German HEIs expanding their joint or double degree program portfolios or making their first foray into the world of collaborative study programs should create a clear and comprehensive strategy and guidelines for the development of such programs. Among others, this guideline should include standards and procedures regarding marketing and recruitment strategies. Partners should also lobby for the explicit mention of the JDDPs in their university policy and strategies.

PRACTICAL LEVEL

- Stakeholders of the GDDPs, including Turkish-German joint programs, should organize workshops, trainings, or conferences to share best practices and explore solutions to common challenges. Such bottom-up organization of activities could be led by DAAD, Goethe Institute, YOK, or any other institution involved in international education. Such platforms would be useful to the current practitioners as well as those

who intend to start new collaborative programs with international partners.

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ASSESSING STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS ON GAINING COMPETENCES IN INNOVATIVE INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

Ying Zhang

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Innovative interdisciplinary education (IIE) has evidently become an emerging and fascinating topic in higher education area. Within rapidly changing global markets, it is necessary for graduates to engage with multidisciplinary and innovation skills and competences with latest subject-specific knowledge in society (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012). Practically, IIE is growing in popularity as an essential approach to train students and to equip them with sufficient competences and capabilities to meet dynamic needs of the knowledge-based society (Jacob, 2015). There is a keen recognition of the need to develop appropriate training and capacity building for innovative and interdisciplinary activities (Parker, 2010). IIE has successfully created a new flexible and practical educational setting involving various stakeholders to facilitate higher education curricula.

The image of IIE comes with strong characteristics of innovativeness, diverseness and adaptiveness. There is no clear-cut single definition for IIE in higher education. The most common explanation related to IIE is to solve complex real-life problems by integrating different domains of knowledge (Allmendinger, 2015; Suvi & Harriet, 2006). This definition places emphasis on finding solutions for practical issues by the combination of various disciplinary knowledge, scientific methods and theories, and transversal skills and competences. It is worthwhile to notify that, in this study, IIE explicitly refers to provide the real-life problem-based learning experience by way of innovative curricula under the context of disciplinary integration.

At institutional level, there is a significant development of innovative interdisciplinary programmes and degrees, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Meanwhile, new technologies and business management skills

considerably facilitate innovative curricula in universities today (Loewer, 2012). Innovative curriculum has successfully attracted attention in interdisciplinary higher education. Jacob (2015) describes the most notable way of interdisciplinary education on university campuses occurs within traditional and/or online classrooms. It is a commonplace that students, from different backgrounds, participate innovative interdisciplinary courses in teams and get instructions offered by faculty members from various departments (Weinberg & Harding, 2004).

One of the most representative IIE initiative is Demola Project Course (DPC). It is an entrepreneurship-oriented study programme in Finnish higher education by doing company-initiated projects in student teams. DPC is initiated among Demola Tampere¹ and three partner universities in Tampere region, Finland: Tampere University of Applied Science (TAMK), Tampere University of Technology (TUT), and University of Tampere (UTA). The City of Tampere and partner companies are the other two primary actors in this collaboration. In the curriculum of DPC, students enrol to this course at their home university and get equivalent credits for their participation (Pippola, Poranen, Vuori, Kairamo, & Tuominiemi, 2012). Students can be either domestic or international in the university and might study different disciplines. Up to now, it already includes a wide range in terms of the participants' study background, such as computer science, interactive technology, and so on. DPC is held twice in every academic year. There are four main stakeholders with different roles in the course: 1) students from different backgrounds work for projects in teams, 2) teachers from universities provide academic knowledge and give credits after participation evaluation, 3) industrial representatives from different companies come as clients along with basic requirements and necessary data, and 4) facilitators from Demola Tampere centre act like the bridge to connect students and industrial representatives.

Compared with traditional curriculum, the process of DPC is innovative and particular (see Figure 1). To begin with, a course instruction is given by the corresponding teachers and a Demola facilitator. Afterwards, students apply a specific project in consideration of their own interests on Demola Tampere website. The topics of projects range from nature science to social science, and from engineering to arts. Then, Demola staff is responsible for forming

project groups by selecting applicants with suitable knowledge and skills. The work period starts with a kick-off meeting with relevant stakeholders, including project plan design and milestones setting. In most cases, student teams work on the projects in collaboration with their clients through regular discussion meetings. In the end, in addition to a final report written by the team, there is a possibility to get project outputs licensed and a corresponding rewards, which is decided by the company partner. In terms of outcomes, normally, students create new solutions to company-initiated real-world problems. It can be a concrete product, a demo, a prototype or just a concept or idea.

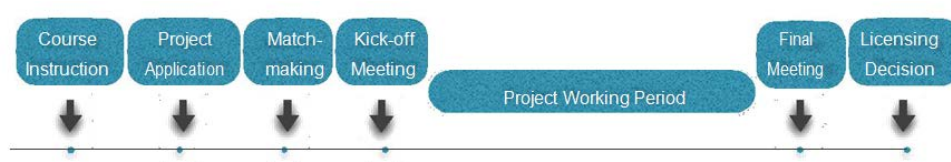


Figure 1: The process of Demola Project Course

After drawing a comprehensive picture of DPC, it is undoubted that different study programmes in IIE have distinct characteristics and learning objectives. The complexity and uniqueness come from the engagement of different stakeholders not only in higher education but also outside the institutions. Therefore, DPC is selected as the study case in order to conduct the research properly. As a representative in IIE under the context of Finnish higher education, it has been proved to be a very successful innovative interdisciplinary course to link industrial area to higher education (Einarson, 2014). Meanwhile, it is an emerging course concept to integrate innovative activities into university curricula with an aim to solve complex real-life problems and challenges (Pippola et al., 2012). Furthermore, DPC creates a multicultural and multidisciplinary learning environment and provides an opportunity for students to gain transversal knowledge, skills and competences.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Students are expected to gain adequate competences from their participation in innovative interdisciplinary courses so as to meet dynamic needs of the

knowledge-based society and adapt themselves to the labour market. However, there is no sufficient evidence to prove that students acquire competences and benefit from the flourishing innovative curricula in IIE. Competence acquisition is a vital indicator for educational achievements in higher education, which has been emphasised in many programme studies (Allen, Ramaekers, & Velden, 2005; Blömeke, Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, Kuhn, & Fege, 2013; Cuenca et al., 2015; Remington-Doucette, Hiller Connell, Armstrong, & Musgrove, 2013). Educational assessment can get direct insights into students progresses and outcomes, as well as provide an opportunity to help students to reflect and improve their learning (Cuenca et al., 2015; Mansilla & Duraising, 2007; Parker, 2010). Thus, it is necessary to assess the competence of students who participated in innovative interdisciplinary course and then to examine the educational achievement of IIE. Furthermore, as DPC was already selected as the study case, it is worth mentioning that student is the most engaged stakeholders in the course activities because lectures are hardly given in the curriculum. The students' perceptions are relatively direct and sufficient as indicators to understand the course circumstance.

Certain studies have particularly addressed the need to investigate competence acquisition throughout interdisciplinary study for evaluating interdisciplinary education and its direct influence on student teaching and learning (Ivanitskaya, Clark, Montgomery, & Primeau, 2002; Parker, 2010; Rhoten, Mansilla, Chun, & Klein, 2006; Spelt, Biemans, Tobi, Luning, & Mulder, 2009). The issue was pointed out that, it is difficult to deal with competence assessment in innovative interdisciplinary curricula context because of a couple of related problem, such as the "lack of clarity" about learning outcomes and "indicators of quality" (Mansilla, 2005, p. 16). Especially at course level, very few studies have been done in terms of competence assessment in IIE. Apparently, competence assessment is less advanced and rarely investigated in the context of innovative curricula of university.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the perceptions of students concerning the competence acquisition in an innovative interdisciplinary course - Demola Project Course. It aims to enable the competence assessment of students who participated in DPC, which originally derived

from the author's work experience related to innovation and education in Research Centre for Knowledge, Science, Technology and Innovation Studies (TaSTI)². The study initiated with a personal interest from the author. Later on, it was found out that innovative curriculum has been very favoured by students and encouraged by universities, because the practical training can offer students a kind of "working experience" and also can help them to gain cross-disciplinary competences. However, the actual achievement is under-investigated.

In order to achieve the research goal, the main research question is formed:

What are the students' perceptions on gaining competences from their participation in innovative interdisciplinary course?

Particularly, the main research question can break down into four sub-questions:

1. What are the competences related to Demola Project Course?
2. Which competences have students gained from their participation in Demola Project Course?
3. How has the competence been gained?
4. What can be improved in Demola Project Course with regard to better enhancement on students' competences from students' perspectives?

METHODOLOGY

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to answer the research question, a preliminary conceptual framework was developed to define the competence which is to be assessed. It is a synthesis that draws from both the interdisciplinary competences literature and current empirical studies and course descriptions in DPC. It includes 13 components under 3 categories of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (see Table 1).

	Competence	Formulated meaning
K	1 Business model	The knowledge of business and relevant models
	2 Successful start-ups	The knowledge of successful start-ups and associated characteristics
	3 Entrepreneurship	The understanding of entrepreneurship
S	4 Idea generation	Generate and develop ideas into products and services by using various design, practices and methods
	5 Teamwork	Work in teams with multicultural students from different disciplines
	6 Problem-solving	Find solutions for company-initiated real-life problems
	7 Creativity and innovation	Do project work with creative and innovative approaches
	8 Communication	Communicate effectively and network with relevant stakeholders
A	9 Financial and resource management	Manage and mobilise financial issues and resources for project development
	10 Interaction	Interact with a range of audiences
	11 Motivation	Engage in the project with proactive attitude
	12 Ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance	Deal with situations of ambiguity and uncertainty
	13 Risk-taking	Be willing to undertake risks during the project work

Table 1: Conceptual framework for competence assessment in DPC

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The study employs an explanatory sequential mixed methods strategy to answer the research question. The research procedure involves a first phase of quantitative data collection and analysis by using a small-scale online survey, followed by the second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis by using a semi-structured interview. The visual model of research design is illustrated as follows (see Figure 2).

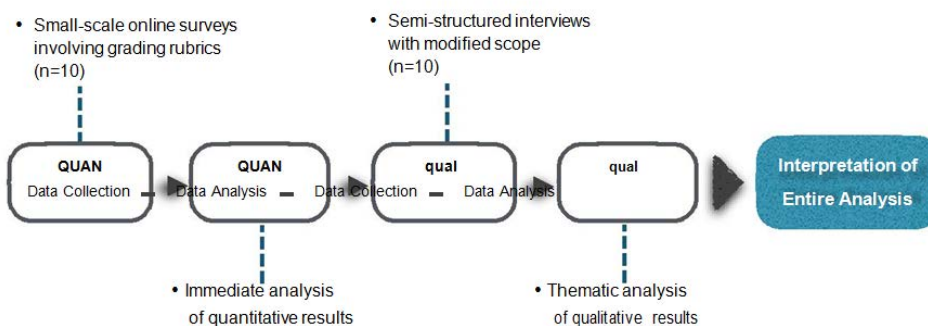


Figure 2: The research procedure of sequential explanatory design

The assessment instruments consist of a small-scale online survey and a semi-structured interview. The design of survey and interview are both based on the conceptual framework. The texts of survey and interview questions can be found in Appendix 1 and 2.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A convenience sample of 10 students who participated voluntarily in the study. They are 6 male and 4 female students who participated DPC in spring 2015. The 10 students are the sample for both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Convenience sampling strategy is used for this study as randomisation is impossible due to unavailable data access. Data was collected from April to May in 2016. The individual data collection process took around 30 minutes, and included two nonstop phases. In detail, participants first took around five minutes to finish the online survey. Right after it, the author took another five minutes to look into the survey results and then selected the necessary interview questions. After identifying the scope of interview questions, the author called the participant via Skype. The interview procedures were recorded. It took around 20 minutes individually.

A thematic analysis is carried out with a coding process aided by the use of a qualitative data analysis software called Nvivo. The initial themes are predetermined by the 13 components in competence conceptual framework. They are business model, successful start-ups, entrepreneurship, idea generation, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and innovation, communication, financial and resource management, interaction, motivation, ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance, and risk-taking. The meaningful statements from interview transcripts are categorised by these themes.

KEY FINDINGS

In order to answer the research question, a solid analysis has been provided from both qualitative and qualitative data. It presents detailed information from the results of surveys and interviews. The completed analysis and interpretation of data are represented to understand the multiple perspectives from research participants.

The first sub-question was answered through literature review. A conceptual framework was developed to identify relevant competence in DPC. In order

to form the preliminary conceptual framework, the author synthesised the competence elements which were drawn from literature review on IIE, empirical studies and course descriptions of DPC. It includes 13 components under 3 categories of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Specifically, they are business model, successful start-ups, entrepreneurship, idea generation, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and innovation, communication, financial and resource management, interaction, motivation, ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance, and risk-taking. These components clearly defined the competence related to DPC. In addition, the 13 components were employed as predetermined themes for later analysis of interview results.

The results of rubrics sketch out the potential competence that students gained from their participation in DPC. For example, under the category of knowledge, most of participants ticked “Partially developed” for all three statements, which implies that students do not think they gain sufficient knowledge about business model, successful start-ups and entrepreneurship. Likewise, quite a few components under the skills category got approval from students. More specifically, participants believe that they fully develop the skills of teamwork, problem-solving and interaction, while adequately develop the skills of idea generation, creativity and innovation, communication, and resource management. The exception is competence of financial management which most of the participants consider as “Not observed”. The rest three components under the attitudes category are marked as “Fully developed” for motivation and “Adequately developed” for ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance and risk-taking. In a nutshell, students reflected themselves as gaining a set of skills and proper attitudes with less inputs of knowledge from their participation in DPC.

Next, the analysis of interviews results showed multiple perspectives of students regarding the competence acquisition. Specifically, on one hand, participants did not consider that they gained sufficient knowledge about business model, successful start-ups, and entrepreneurship. Instead, they believed they were still in the shallow page regarding the knowledge components. On the other hand, participants were more agreed with the enhancement of skills and attitudes. From their point of view, the skills of teamwork, interaction and motivative attitude have been fully developed, while the rest of skills and attitudes, idea generation, problem-solving,

creativity and innovation, communication, resource management, ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance and risk-taking, were developed adequately. Later, the analysis of interview results has approved their perceptions. However, from the descriptions and demonstrations of interviewees, there were plenty of evidence to support the great advancement with regard to skills of idea generation, problem-solving, and attitude of ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance, which were only satisfied moderately on students' opinions. Exceptionally, a single dimension has to be mentioned is the financial management skill. It was failed by the 10 participants completely. They considered it "Not observed" mostly, which means underdeveloped in the course. As a matter of fact, from the responses, the students did met the occasion which requires them to deal with financial issue. In particular, they need to give proposals and negotiate about final rewards in team if the partner company approved their project and got it licensed. Till now, the second and third sub-questions have been explained.

Furthermore, the results indicate that, on one hand, there is a greater need of theoretical understanding of knowledge related to business model, successful start-ups, and entrepreneurship. Obviously, DPC places great emphasis on practical training, which expects that students can learn from doing. Nevertheless, the findings proved that it neglected appropriate knowledge attainment in the curriculum. On the other hand, finance-related training activities were hardly found throughout the course. It is important for students to build the capability of financial literacy in an innovative learning environment, where they do projects in collaboration with companies. As a result, DPC has taken the knowledge attainment and relevant financial activities into account for curriculum development regarding better enhancement on students' competence.

To conclude, the main research question is solved by answering the four sub-questions step by step. Students have considered relevant skills and attitudes were advanced through various activities and practices. However, there is a greater need for theoretical understanding of knowledge and for practices dealing with financial issues in DPC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendation are suggested for curriculum development of DPC:

1. The easiest way to improve the theoretical understanding of knowledge, is to provide reading materials associated with domain-specific disciplines. In the beginning of the course, students get the access to relevant literature related to business model, start-ups and entrepreneurship. It is useful for students to construct a knowledge base before doing the practical assignments.
2. In addition to primary teamwork, the facilitators in DPC can organise workshops and seminars for students. The topics can be a wide range, such as, networking with successful start-ups, and experience sharing from graduate entrepreneurs.
3. The teachers can also contribute to the improvement of knowledge attainment as a main stakeholders. The lecturers from business faculty can give introductions about business model, entrepreneurship and related lectures to those students who do not have previous knowledge.
4. Open speeches is another strategy that DPC can consider to invite well-known entrepreneurs to give speeches to students in a way. Finland has fostered quite a few entrepreneurs and innovators, for instance, the co-founder of Rovio Entertainment Oy which develops the popular video game “Angry Birds”, Peter Vesterbacka.
5. In terms of finance-related training activities, it is much needed to involve partner companies. Ideally, students can practice financial literacy skills when the clients provide certain requirements for the projects, such as making marketing strategy and business plan.

The following recommendation are suggested for future research:

1. According to Alsobrook (2010), competence assessment is a joint effort involving various stakeholders, such as students, faculties, administrators and staff in the institution. It is significant to explore good practices of competence assessment for innovative curricula in university, which includes different stakeholders. It can help to provide a comprehensive picture of educational achievement in IIE.
2. The study developed the measure instruments for competence assessment in DPC. It turns out that student’s perceptions have been

examined properly in the end. A deeper and further investigation targeted on a large population would contribute to a more fair outcome, which is less exposed to personal bias.

3. Considering the diversified and adaptive nature of innovative interdisciplinary course, a series of longitudinal studies would be advantageous to understand the trends and current circumstance.
4. This study provides a specific conceptual framework to construct the relevant competence in DPC. Such an effort would enable educational assessment towards construction associated with related course content.^[P]_[SEP]

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“WE’RE GETTING ENGAGED!”-HOW UNIVERSITIES ARE IMPROVING THEIR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Damaris Clark

BACKGROUND

The notion that universities have a responsibility to provide a “service” to students, arises from the changes which higher education have been undergoing for some time. A significant outcome of which is to provide opportunities for scholarly engagement and personal development within a supportive and inclusive environment. Such expectations re-position the role of the university in society, as not just education providers but institutions of life-long learning which sculpt our future labour force. This research utilises the Deming quality cycle (also known as the PIRI cycle) to analyse to what extent universities are improving their policies and practices relating to student engagement. The research is carried out in the context of the United Kingdom (UK).

DEFINING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Prior to embarking on any discussion about student engagement, it is important to define what is meant by this concept through review of the various definitions available in the literature. The body of research around student engagement largely makes use of two key terms, often used interchangeably - ‘student involvement’ and ‘student engagement’. Whilst generally taken to be similar constructs, the use of these different terms can create some challenges in consistency, reach and interpretation of research (Foubert & Grainger, 2006). There are a number of definitions for student engagement cited in the literature, several of which will be explored shortly.

The term “student involvement” was first coined by Astin (1984) and is defined as “the amount of physical energy and psychological effort that students put into their student experience” (p. 297). A more recent interpretation is given by Krause and Coates (2008) as “the extent to which students are engaging in activities that higher education research has shown to be linked with high-quality learning outcomes” (pg. 493) which further defines the type and result of activities engaged in. These definitions focus on involvement or engagement from the student standpoint; however other definitions place emphasis on the institution’s input; for example the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2008) defines student engagement as “the process whereby institutions and sector bodies make deliberate attempts to involve and empower students in the process of shaping the learning experience”. Providing a more holistic definition, Kuh (2009) combines these two perspectives, creating the following; “the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (pg. 683).

EXISTING RESEARCH

Whilst Trowler’s (2010) literature review revealed many grey areas in student engagement research, she noted the one irrefutable conclusion in all these studies is the value that engagement brings to individual students. Specifically, national, cross-institutional student engagement analyses such as the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) reveal that satisfaction, support and learning outcomes are the most important factors in preventing premature institutional departure (Coates, 2009). Moreover, it seems that cultivating an enriching environment for students is requisite for institutions retaining their students and achieving positive student outcomes (Tinto, 1997). By using specific indicators for measuring the above parameters, institutions can monitor student engagement more effectively, and enhance educational success.

There is considerable variation in the nature and type of research conducted in the student engagement literature (Trowler, 2010). Those conducted in the UK (with the exception of the United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKES)) tend to be small scale, single case studies. Whilst there is a wealth of

empirical research on student engagement interventions globally, there is very little evidence of the nature, function and quality of these, without which, very limited information about effectivity can be inferred.

GLOBAL IMPORTANCE

From a national perspective, there is an expectation from the quality monitoring body that institutions should provide an engaging environment as part of a high quality education. Coates (2005) emphasises the importance of data collection on student engagement and argues that it can be used to improve student learning and productivity. As engagement is a proxy for learning, and learning is a good indicator of quality, engagement data can be a useful indicator of quality. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) strongly advocates that “higher education providers should take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience”. (QAA, 2012). This is reiterated by Buckley (2013) who also emphasises the duty of institutions to effectively engage their students; “It is the institution's responsibility to facilitate and improve engagement, by creating environments and opportunities that allow and encourage students to work hard, to invest emotionally and intellectually in their studies and to interact with their teachers, their course and each other in ways that will benefit their learning.” (pg. 8)

Generally speaking, institutions are very successful in the process of data collection through formal assessment and student satisfaction surveys, but what is less apparent, is what the institutions are doing with this data, and specifically how they are using it to enhance student engagement. Understandably, institutions may be overwhelmed by the data collected but they have not been left unsupported, as reports such as “Engagement for Enhancement” (Buckley, 2013) are available to assist them in understanding their data. It is one of the aims of this thesis to establish where the bottleneck is on using student engagement data for improvement purposes.

As previously alluded to, student engagement has positive implications for both institutions and students on multiple levels. For institutions, from an economic perspective, it prevents students from leaving their studies

prematurely, and therefore continuing to pay tuition fees to the university; from a social perspective, higher engagement means a higher level of commitment to the institution which is likely to mean a more positive reputation is communicated to the wider society. Finally, from a political perspective, it reflects effective governance of the higher education system as a whole. For students, it provides a richer educational experience and generally speaking, a higher level of engagement is also a strong predictor of success (Berger and Milem, 1999; Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1997; Bonwell and Eisen, 1991; Bean, 1980, Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In North America and Australasia, the term “student engagement” is well understood as a result of large scale national annual surveys; the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and AUSSE and is largely related to “student involvement” literature. The term student engagement in the UK literature however links more to research around student feedback, student representation and approaches to learning making it somewhat difficult to yield relevant and substantial research using the term “student engagement” and creating a bias for research in the US and Australasia (Trowler, 2010).

Another issue related to the existing literature on student engagement is the limited amount of research carried out with any confidence on specific and local engagement interventions, resulting in recommendations for practice which are general and non-specific. On the other hand, there are researchers making recommendations which are free of context or situation, assuming that what works for one institution, also works for another (Trowler and Trowler, 2010).

In their research on assessment of student outcomes, Kinzie (2011) found that whilst institutions were going through the motions of assessment, they had not moved beyond assessment as an end in itself towards assessment as a stepping stone in the wider quality improvement process. Whilst this study refers explicitly to student outcomes, the same story can be told for student engagement. Moreover, Kinzie (2011) suggests that more needs to be done in order to “close the assessment loop” and subsequently understand the effect of improvements on, in this case, student learning. In other words, to use the

data collected in assessment not only to improve practices, but to continually assess the impact of these improvements.

RESEARCH GAP

Research on student engagement in the UK is far behind other Western countries, as can be seen in the relatively recent carrying out of a national student engagement survey. The NSSE started in the United States in 2000, but it was over a decade before the first pilot survey of student engagement was conducted in the UK in 2011. Whilst there was evidence that a few were undertaking their own assessments of student engagement, this was not commonplace (Buckley, 2014). Alex Buckley, taking the lead on developing the UKES, suggested that the latency of a UK student engagement survey could be explained by the dominance of other surveys related to student experience and quality enhancement (Buckley, 2013). However, whilst such surveys did include elements related to student engagement, none focused exclusively on this. Moreover, whilst student satisfaction is undoubtedly important, engagement is a better measure of education quality (Gibbs, 2014).

This research builds on the existing research on student engagement in three ways. Firstly, it makes use of a well-established quality improvement framework and applies it to an under-researched, yet highly important topic. Secondly, the research undertaken has direct implications not only for the case-study institutions but may also be used as guidance/benchmarking for other institutions in the UK. Thirdly, it highlights some of the existing issues in higher education quality improvement and suggests possible solutions. These objectives will be explored through a singular research question which is;

To what extent are universities planning, implementing, reviewing and improving student engagement practices and policies?

METHODOLOGY

This study makes use of a mixed methodology; semi-structured interviews and website analysis were selected as data collection tools because of the different perspectives they bring to the research. Semi-structured interviews

with university personnel provide an insider perspective of student engagement, which is useful for two reasons; firstly, it provides insight into institutional attitudes towards student engagement and secondly, it gives an indication of how knowledgeable staff are about student engagement practices and policies, and what is being done “on the ground”. The website analyses provide an external perspective and in some cases, an idealistic perspective of student engagement. Together, the combined approaches serve to create a richer sense of the effectiveness of institutional practices than either method could alone (Pace, 1984), and to highlight discrepancies, if any, between what is publicised and what is practiced.

INSTRUMENTATION

PIRI structured inventory

Both the website analysis and interviews were conducted using the same inventory which is an adapted version of an inventory created to benchmark student engagement policies and practices in Australia. In the original version, a distinction was made between institution-wide practices and individual departmental practices; this distinction has been removed for the purposes of this study, due to the smaller sample size, and all items refer to institution-wide practices and policies, unless otherwise stated. The inventory consists of 26 items and is divided into four sections which follow the Plan Implement Review Improve (PIRI) quality cycle. The items of the inventory were formulated based on the research conducted on assessment of learning outcomes by Kuh and Ikenberry (2009).

DATA COLLECTION

Website analysis

Website analyses took place prior to conducting the staff interviews, in order to gain an understanding of the prevalence of student engagement in universities mission statements, strategies, policies and practices. Indicators of student engagement were measured against the aforementioned PIRI inventory. The first document to be analysed was the mission statement and overall strategies of the university. Following this, keywords were used on

the individual website search engines; for example “student engagement”, “orientation”, and “involvement”. The remainder of the analysis took a more fluid form. Whilst every attempt was made to extensively analyse the website, it was not an exhaustive search given the large quantity of information available on university websites.

Structured interviews

12 universities were contacted to conduct interviews with members of staff. Initially the Office of the Vice-chancellor was contacted to nominate a suitability positioned member of staff. Of the 12 universities, 3 responded positively, with which interviews were subsequently arranged. Interviews were conducted between 3rd - 19th February 2016 and took approximately 1 hour per member of staff. 2 members of staff were interviewed from each university, except for one. This helped to create both a richer picture of student engagement practices and also to identify biases and inconsistencies. The benefit of face-to-face interviews was the opportunity to view the university facilities which also added to an overall understanding of the specific institution environment.

RESULTS

TRENDS

The interviews and website analyses yielded some commonalities among the three institutions in terms of their governance of student engagement. To an extent the similarities are dictated by the regulatory requirements of the QAA, the Department of Education and the HEAs interest in student involvement in programme design and curriculum development (Trowler, 2010). In addition, institutional comparison is likely to lead to convergence, for example benchmarking exercises and sharing of well-established, effective practices. Below, four trends are discussed which were drawn from the data collected; these are not the only trends which arose but they represent the most prominent and interesting ones. Following this, a number of “recommendations” are given for each of the four quality cycle stages; these are areas identified as good practices or aspects that had worked

particularly well for the specific institution in question, and as such should be considered with that context in mind.

Competition

When asked about which factors influence student engagement strategies, it became apparent that for all three institutions, the actions that have been taken have arisen from external pressures rather than internal aspirations. However, this is not to say that the latter is not happening, just that the former is the driving force. For example, during interviews, multiple references were made to QAA requirements and NSS ratings as forming the basis for action, and that is also visible in the websites to a degree. Whilst anything that instigates a desire to improve is positive, does this mean that student engagement practices will be less genuine than if they were a result of internal dissatisfaction with the status quo? As Kuh et al. (2008) note, it is not enough for universities to simply offer engaging programmes or practices, as this does not necessarily guarantee success, but rather the practices must be high quality and rooted in a student-oriented culture embraced by the whole institution.

In the same vein as the drivers for change, all institutions had a firm understanding of the necessity for improvement. Interviewees acknowledged that it is not enough to keep doing the same thing, or even to improve incrementally, but that they are in direct competition with other institutions and therefore must be at all times. They are acutely aware that if they want to receive positive feedback in the National Student Survey (NSS), attract more students and be considered a high quality institution, they must improve in every domain of the learning experience. It is encouraging that institutions are at least realising (and in some cases are implementing) the need for constant review and improvement.

The most commonly cited catalyst for change by interviewees, as anticipated, was the NSS results. With students now providing the largest proportion of funding for institutions, they have substantial sway over the financial success of their university, and therefore student satisfaction has become pivotal to universities. Statements such as “At least 90% overall satisfaction in NSS for every school” indicate that this particular national survey is having a

large influence over universities' strategy design. Hopefully, with the improvement and widespread use of the UKES in years to come, this will have a similar but more specific impact on student engagement, not just satisfaction.

Student Partnership

Universities are recognising the importance of students as stakeholders more and more and consequently are making efforts to include them in the governance of the institution. This was identified in all three institutions, and was usually manifest in the form of a partnership agreement, depicting students as equal partners in the future of their education. The agreement is a publicly available document, created in collaboration with students and outlines the responsibilities and expectations of both parties. This represents a shift from previous university governance and coincides with the increase of tuition fees and government ideals to make universities more accountable. From the students perspective, it gives them the opportunity to become more involved in their own learning experience and the power to influence decisions.

There is very little in the way of evidence for student engagement in institutional governance in the literature, but the data collected in this study suggests that every institution has at least attempted to include students in a significant proportion of university governance and is a current hot topic in UKES research. However Magolda (2005) postulates that student governance is not always beneficial or a positive experience; for example student committees can get caught up in trivial issues (this was also referred to in the interviews) and in some senses, they do not represent the diversity of a university, serve the needs of those who most need support and in some cases even limit active, meaningful engagement.

Threshold activities

Whilst the nature and regularity of student engagement efforts vary greatly among institutions a base level of activity can be identified at all universities. For example, each institution has an induction week at the

beginning of the academic year with an extensive range of organised talks, tours and welcome events. Pittaway and Moss (2006) postulate that orientation is an important event which allows students to connect with their peers, mentors and staff, gain familiarity with the campus, settle into academic life and clarify expectations. For the most part the itinerary of events are the same and focus on welcoming the students and offering practical support, but the level of engagement is likely to vary between institutions depending on factors such as communication of events, promotion efforts, demographic of students etc. Naturally, universities will channel a lot of effort into the first few weeks of the semester but after this, the number of events decreases dramatically. Unfortunately, this is when students are likely to be most vulnerable and therefore need a higher level of support. It is possible that this drastic contrast in activity could be a trigger for students to disengage, after which point it might be difficult to re-engage them.

Another basic service that all universities offer is academic/pastoral support through the assignment of a personal tutor. Again, the nature of the mentorship mechanism differs among institutions as does the engagement levels of students, and several interviewees reflected on the effectiveness of these systems. In one case, low engagement of tutors and student was due to the recent reconfiguration of the tutor role and subsequent confusion among both tutors and students about the function and expectations of the role. This highlights at least one area in which improvement is required and that could have a huge impact on students learning experience.

Consistency and Co-ordination

The above discussions clearly show that institutions are making some efforts to enhance student engagement. However, a noticeable theme is that these processes are not well co-ordinated, not the result of institution-wide strategy, or even if they are, they have not been communicated successfully across all departments. To provide a couple of examples, the Student Voice Framework of one university identifies that only a small number of initiatives are implemented across all departments. There was also some discrepancies between the level of activity publicised on the website and the knowledge of projects from interviewees, which suggests that either projects are still at a

conceptual phase or they are not being communicated/embedded across the whole institution or a combination of the two.

This leads to the next observation that pockets of activities are taking place. The majority of initiatives are developed and implemented at individual department level. Effectiveness of these depends on both staff commitment and student desire to be more engaged. Some departments have many extracurricular activities, which tends to be more prevalent in social sciences/vocational programmes, whilst others have very little.

Review of student engagement practices and mechanisms, if existent at all, seems to be only sporadically carried out, and at best, occurs once a year. The same is apparent of improvement, it appears to be piecemeal and whilst changes are informed by student feedback, this does not appear to be in a structured manner, or a continuous loop.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research identified a range of practices being undertaken by universities, in some cases applied more consistently or with greater depth than others but nonetheless, to some extent universities are involved in student engagement activities. They are also developing quality improvement protocols, but they are not necessarily integrating the two, that is, quality improvement of student engagement practices. As can be seen from the examples below, institutions excel at making plans, do well at implementing them, sometimes reviewing them but overall there is inconsistency and further improvement is required.

Here a compilation of the good practices adopted by universities are presented to fulfil several aims; firstly, to provide both a guide and benchmark for universities considering student engagement, secondly, to highlight the current progression made in quality enhancement of student engagement and thirdly, to inspire and motivate institutions to start using quality cycles to analyse and improve their current practices.

Planning

One university stood out in terms of the detail provided in their overall university strategy. Not only did it state what they wished to achieve, but also how they were planning to go about achieving these aims. Whilst there was no explicit mention of student engagement as a central strategy objective, it had been integrated in the nature of the actions put forward by the institution, for example “We will develop space to enable our research activities to grow and in particular to facilitate interdisciplinary and interdepartmental research.” (University A Strategy 2020)

All institutions have now established at least one position, if not a committee dedicated to student engagement. One institution formed a student engagement team as a result of student feedback and meets as regularly as twice a semester. Unfortunately, it is difficult at this stage to gauge the specific work of this position/committee and their effectiveness due to the recent formation of this team. On a positive note, it does suggest a plan to dedicate time, effort and resources to enhancing student engagement.

University C has a specific three level student engagement strategy. Of note, this was the only university-wide strategy identified which referred specifically to student engagement and outlined how this would be achieved. The three levels of engagement are involvement by providing multiple platforms for feedback, participation through the student university representative system which allows students to give their opinion, and partnership with the student union on development and implementation of plans. This represents the most progressive of planning strategies among the three case studies with regards to student engagement.

Implementation

Two of the three institutions offer additional, non-core interdisciplinary courses which focus on exploration of social issues. Students can benefit from being in small classes and an interactive environment, and it also encourages academic engagement with fellow students and faculty. In principle this is a good practice, but interviewees were not sure about the extent of participation and the effectiveness of engaging students, so this highlights the need for review.

University A's LifeCentre offers a one-stop-shop for students to ask questions about any aspect of their life. The idea behind this recent development is that it will build a sense of community for students and will also reduce confusion about who to contact, about what. It also increases efficiency in university administration, so the benefits are twofold.

The Higher Education Achievement Report is a national level initiative which has been adopted by some universities. This is a place where students can document their non-academic/co-curricular activities and have them formally recognised, and it is hoped that this will encourage engagement. However, like the interdisciplinary courses, this is a fairly new initiative its success and has not yet been reviewed.

Review

By far the best example of a student engagement review method is the Student Voice Framework, developed to identify different levels of implementation of projects (e.g. department level/institution wide) as well as gaps in service provision. Use of this framework by one university suggests a proactive attitude to student engagement improvement and concrete efforts towards reviewing practices.

At least two of the three institutions showed involvement in multi-institution research, which suggests a collective effort to review practices related to student engagement. For example, a publication titled "Understanding student attendance: Informing teaching and learning practice with evidence based decisions" suggests an active interest in improving student retention. However, what is not evident, is whether this research is linked back to practice and improvement. Further, is such research seen by the right people in order to have an impact? In other words, is research connected to practice, if not why not? And what can be done to ensure that there is a strong connection between the two?

Another positive review mechanism mentioned earlier in "planning" is the use of a student engagement team. In one university it was established as a result of student feedback which suggests that the review process had already commenced. A diverse selection of staff attend these meetings and practical

issues are discussed during these, such as student attendance, access to resources and other issues as they arise. This demonstrates a proactive and practical approach to reviewing student engagement.

The annual review and enhancement process conducted by one university, in addition to other formal structures which collect feedback from students such as the annual satisfaction survey are a fundamental but unfortunately under-utilised mechanism. The review focuses on quality assurance, enhancement and engagement, although no further details were given about what this specifically entails. However, importantly, it has equal representations of staff and students, and the university emphasises the value of student participation in this review process.

Improvement

Involvement in national level research and initiatives surrounding student engagement, for example the HEFCE Learning Gain projects and the UKES research coincides with a more pronounced effort of review and improvement of the individual institutions. Presumably, institutions have chosen to be involved in these projects because they are interested in review and improvement of practice. Alternatively their involvement in these national level projects may have fuelled their enthusiasm for change. Regardless of their motivation, it shows positive steps forward.

A recurrent theme throughout the interviews and identifiable in the university strategies is investment in campus infrastructure to create a more inclusive and attractive environment for students to study in. For example, one university has an Estates Strategy which aims to “develop functional and innovative teaching and study space that improves the student experience”; progress already made in this area includes 24/7 access to libraries, more campus cafes, and a student union renovation. Another university also cited that to embed a deeper sense of community, making the campus buildings more connected would be on their list of priorities.

University C has developed an increased number of staff development programmes and is encouraging staff to take advantage of this opportunity. According to interviewees this was stimulated by NSS feedback and it is

hoped that this will be facilitated through the development of a “Learning Enhancement Unit”. Also the university has also recently created the Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (PCUTL) programme which is available for staff as a continuing professional development course to critically reflect on their teaching practice. One aspect of this is student engagement, and a number of reflective essays on this topic have been written, which indicates desire for each faculty to facilitate a more engagement-centred learning experience.

On a general note, no institution could remark, nor showed evidence of indicators which explicitly measured or marked success in student engagement. Rather, reference was made to indicators assumed to be related to student engagement, for example measurements of satisfaction, student retention or number of projects completed. Could this suggest that institutions have not created indicators for student engagement and therefore are not seeking to review and improve their practices? This could be a significant barrier for students to move forward, if important aspects of the planning stage are not well formulated as indicated in the conceptual framework.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The field of research on improvement of student engagement is young, and there is much that can be done to add to it. A number of suggestions are made below, most of which relate to improvement in indicators and methodology. Naturally, this is not an exhaustive list of developments, but addresses the most pressing issues.

As discussed in the previous chapter, better indicators for student engagement i.e. more direct measurements, would allow researchers to make better inferences and allow institutions to make more accurate evaluations of their initiatives. Pike and Kuh (2005) note that the most engaging institutions are those that are “marked by an unshakeable focus on student learning emphasized in their missions and operating philosophies. They also adapted their physical campus properties and took advantage of the surrounding environment in ways that enriched students’ learning opportunities.” (pg. 187). The latter is something that all case studies make reference to, and were taking actions towards developing, but the former is something more

difficult to define and measure, as it requires a more in depth study of the institution.

A longitudinal study adopting the PIRI cycle for student engagement would be greatly valuable as it would provide a clearer picture of progress made over time instead of just a snapshot. A more dynamic approach is required as the nature of the cycle is that improvement should not be static, but continuous.

More studies are needed which give specific recommendations which are practicable within the social, economic and political climate, whilst not ignoring that recommendations are highly contextual, and they should be used as guidelines by institutions instead of imperatives.

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PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDONESIA: A PARADOX OF AUTONOMY?

Marsela Giovani Husen

BACKGROUND

Institutional autonomy, without a doubt, is one of the most significant attempts to reform the higher education system. According to CHEPS report (2008), institutional autonomy has rising in almost all countries. The only differences were their starting point and the degree of such changes in each countries. Furthermore, institutional autonomy is persistently argued as the most significant governance trend in higher education (CHEPS 2008; Eurydice, 2008; 2000; OECD, 2008).

This trend also occurs in Indonesia and autonomy has becoming the most controversial issue in higher education sectors (ADB, 2012). Obviously, it is difficult to manage the multifaceted system and extensive numbers of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Indonesia. As Moeliodihardjo & Basaruddin (2013) confirm, there has been an awareness amongst policy makers that Indonesian higher education system is too large to be managed in a centralized way. Many people believe that ‘decentralizing authority and providing more autonomy’ to HEIs seems to be the most appropriate approach for managing such complexity (ADB, 2012, p.1). In that, major initiatives in the last two decades have been revolving around increasing institutional autonomy in Indonesian HEIs. Some of the most controversial initiatives were the initiation of legal entity universities, restructuring of public funding mechanisms, academic and personnel regulations (ADB, 2012).

Even so, there is a very limited numbers of research seeking to address this issue. Publications about institutional autonomy in Indonesia are very scarce.

Most studies discuss the topic indirectly, frequently under the governance reform studies or other related topics, such as: legal entity universities, institutional restructuring, funding mechanism, academic freedom, commercialization of higher education, etc. (Kusumadewi & Cahyadi, 2013; Koning & Maassen, 2012; Achwan, 2010; Susanti, 2010; Varghese, 2009; Fahmi, 2007a; 2007b; Sulistiyono, 2007; Wicaksono & Friawan, 2007; Nizam 2006). Moreover, the past studies have

not been sufficiently mapping the institutional autonomy in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Indonesia. Furthermore, in those limited numbers of research that exist, most of them only concentrates on the positive trend and successfulness of the enhancement of institutional autonomy in Indonesian HEIs, but only use the autonomous legal entity university as a case study. It almost to the point of exaggerating the changes and success. In reality, no one knows the real degree of such autonomy, especially public HEIs in general. Thus, this study has been designed, with the aspiration, to fill in this gap, as well as to offer an analysis of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy in Indonesia public higher education institutions.

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the real degree of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy in public higher education institutions in Indonesia. According to that, the main research question is as follows:

What is the real degree of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy in public higher education institutions in Indonesia?

This study will contribute to the development of the study of institutional autonomy in several ways. First, by providing an overview of institutional autonomy reform in Indonesia (what is driving institutional autonomy, policy initiatives, the resistance and the reform towards it). Second, by obtaining the input and explanation from the stakeholders and experts, mapping a detailed picture of the real degree of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy in Indonesian public higher education institutions. Third, offering a recommendations to enhance the institutional autonomy policy initiatives in the future. Last, acting as a reference for further studies on institutional autonomy.

INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

Estermann and Nokkala (2009) defined institutional autonomy as “the constantly changing relations between the state and higher education institutions and the degree of control exerted by the state, depending on the national context and circumstance” (p1). According to this definition, the freedom which government gives to higher education institutions would qualify as institutional autonomy. This definition provides a broader perspective because it implies that institutional autonomy is a dynamic concept. First, it emphasizes the relation between the state and higher education institutions that is always changing. Second, the term ‘degree of control’

accentuates that institutional autonomy is not a fixed notion, yet, there is a stage in a scale or series. Third, it also highlights the important of context and circumstance. To underline this point, Estermann and Nokkala (2009) accentuated that “analysis of autonomy should not be done in isolation and requires that the broader context to be taken into account” (p.8).

Therefore, it requires a consideration on when and where the term institutional autonomy is being used. In other words, this definition underlines the dynamic and multidimensional notion of institutional autonomy, while at the same time emphasizes the importance of context to explain them.

As the purposes of this study are to investigate the real degree of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy in public higher education institutions in Indonesia, thus, the definition from Estermann & Nokkala (2009) is appropriate for this study. First, to explore the institutional autonomy reform means there is a need to grasp the context of the reform, which includes the higher education in Indonesia, the rationales behind the reform, and the institutional autonomy reform in Indonesian higher education institutions. Second, to investigate the ‘real degree’ of institutional autonomy means there is an understanding that the concept itself is not a fix notion. There is an awareness of a gap between formal autonomy and the reality. Actually, this is not a surprise, as talking about institutional autonomy is not only about the freedom that university will acquire, but also the freedom that

government willing to give to the university (ADB, 2012). Indeed, this definition is well-suited for this study.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyze the real degree of institutional autonomy in Indonesian public higher education institutions, this study will adapt the four dimensions of institutional autonomy from the European University Association (EUA) (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009), which are: organizational, financial, staffing, and academic autonomy. One thing to bear in mind is that these four dimensions do not explained all aspects of autonomy. Nevertheless, it will provide an idea on certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy that can be used to answer the research question of this study.

Organizational autonomy refers to a university's ability to determine its internal organization and decision-making process (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). It includes the governing bodies, external stakeholders, procedure and requirement for the executive body at the university. First indicator is that university has the capacity to decide their own internal governing bodies or structures, which usually consist of a board or council, a senate, or both of them. The inclusion and selection of external members in governing bodies become another important indicators of organizational autonomy. The important matter is whether the university has the capacity to select its member themselves or there is another external party that decide it for them. Moreover, the external representation in the governing bodies could also provide a mechanism for an accountability, which is an important component for institutional autonomy. Another crucial indicators are related to the selection procedures and criteria, dismissal and terms of office of the leaders of the university, which consist of rector and vice-rector.

Financial autonomy refers to a university's capacity to manage its internal financial matters and allocate its budget independently (Jongbloed, 2010; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). In particular, it related to the type of public funding, and the ability to keep surplus, borrow money, own buildings and generate self-revenues. There are two types of funding which will be used in this study, which are: block grants and line-item budget. Estermann & Nokkala (2009) defined block grant as "financial grants which cover several

categories of expenditure” (p.19). University that receives a block grant funding has the capacity to distribute and manage their internal allocation as they see fit, although some restriction may exist. Whilst, line-item budget defined as “financial grants which are pre-allocated to specific cost items and/or activities” (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). Generally, the university has to propose and allocate their budget to several specific posts or items, then the government will provide the money according to it. Hence, university is not able to make changes to the decision regarding the allocation of the money, or under some strict regulations.

As a matter of fact, financial is a complex issues in regards to the institutional autonomy, as this dimension has a very strong relation to other dimensions. As an example, university’s ability to decide their staff’s salaries also depends on their capacity to manage their financial matters. In that, as CHEPS (2008) emphasizes, financial autonomy generally perceived as an important characteristic of autonomous universities.

Staffing autonomy refers to a university’s capacity to recruit and manage its human resources independently (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). Specifically, the capacity to decide on recruitment procedures, staff salaries, dismissals and promotions. One important element on this dimension is the status of the employees. If the status of the university’s employee is civil servants then it shows that university only has a very limited capacity to manage their human resources. The reason is because the complexity of civil servant status that affiliated with various parties, such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Labour and Employment. Most of the time, there are strict regulations and framework regarding civil servants status, thus, leaving a very small room for university to recruit and manage their human resources freely.

Academic autonomy refers to a university’s ability to manage its internal academic affairs without interference (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). It includes the capacity to decide on overall student numbers and student’s selection, introduction and termination of study programs, as well as the design content of degree programs. First indicator is the capacity to decide on overall students numbers without any interference. In fact, this indicator has a relation with other dimensions as well. As an example, the overall

numbers of students will have an implications to a university's finances. Next, the ability to select their own students is another important indicator. According to CHPES (2008), this is another complicated issues, as most of the time, there are exist some policies and procedures regarding the selection of the new students that historically rooted in many countries and it is difficult to change them. Another important indicators are the capacity to open and terminate a study programs. It is important because it usually related to a university's specific mission. Whilst the ability to design content of degree programs is the basis of the academic freedom and makes it another substantial indicator of academic autonomy.

According to the explanation of the four dimensions of institutional autonomy, it is obvious that all of them are interrelated in some ways. Moreover, it is important to be aware that not all indicators have the same degree of importance. Take the ability to charge tuition fees as an example, for some countries like United Kingdom (UK), it is a very crucial element. However, this is not the case for the Nordic countries, who subsidize their education and provides free tuition fees. Again, it accentuates the importance of context to analyze the situation. As this dimensions will be used to analyze the real degree of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy in Indonesian public higher education institutions, hence, it is important to take the broader context of Indonesian situation and higher education system into account.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The strategy that will be used for this research is a multiple case study. As explained above, the aim of this study is to investigate the real degree of the institutional autonomy, within the context of public higher education institutions in Indonesia. Nevertheless, there are three models of public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Indonesia: State-Owned Legal Entity (SOLE) institutions or autonomous universities, Public Service Institutions (PSIs) and Public Government Institutions (PGIs). Thus, this research will focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the real degree of institutional autonomy in those three cases of public higher education institutions in Indonesia.

State-owned legal entity (SOLE) is the most famous model of all the university. They always become an example and subject in many case-studies about the successful governance reform in Indonesia. Currently, there are 11 universities are under this status. The second model is Public Service Institution (PSI). PSI is a new concept for HEIs and rarely known in public. Nevertheless, this status has been given to 21 public universities. One fact about this model is that PSI is not a legal entity, in that, PSI is still part of the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE). Even so, they have a certain degree of autonomy. The last model, Public Government Institution (PGI) is basically the rest of HEIs in Indonesia. There are about 113 public universities, in that, majority of public HEIs are still under this status. Similar with the previous model, PGIs are still legally under the DGHE.

The in-depth semi-structure interview with an open-ended questions were used as the primary data for this study. Meanwhile, the secondary data consist of literature in Indonesian higher education reforms, official policy reports and documents, as well as previous studies on institutional autonomy in Indonesian higher education institutions.

Purposive sampling approach were used for this study. In purposive sampling, researcher select a several numbers of interviewees according to their expertise of the topic. The researcher use a heterogeneous samplings technique. The aim of this techniques is to gain a greater insight into the phenomenon. In that, a sample of six interviewees that consist of policy makers, higher education experts, and academics were selected. The interviewees were two former Director of Directorate General of Higher Education in Indonesia, two higher education expert, particularly related to institutional autonomy in higher education institutions, one former Rector of State-Owned Legal Entity university, and one Vice Rector of Academic Affairs at public service institution.

Interviewing different stakeholders will allow the researcher to do the cross-comparisons of responses. Thus, provides a different perspective of the same phenomenon, institutional autonomy, to emerge. All of the interview took place from March 17 to 31, 2016 at Jakarta and Bandung, Indonesia. It conducted by a face-to-face interview. All of the interview will be recorded

to ensure that the data analysis is based upon an accurate evidence. Then it will be transcribed and translated by the researcher.

In terms of analysis, qualitative data analysis process that proposed by Creswell (2007) was used for this study. The process consists of six steps for conducting analysis. The first step asserts the importance of organizing and preparing the data. The second step of the analysis process suggests the researcher to read through all the data and become familiar with it. The third step involved coding the data. The fourth step involved organizing all of answers and codes according to the dimensions. The next step in the analysis process is reviewing dimensions and generating the idea on how it will be presented in the finding section. As the last step in the data analysis process, the data will be interpreted to generate findings and results.

KEY FINDINGS

Again, this study investigated the real degree of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy at three model of public higher education institutions in Indonesia. A brief summary of the results is presented as follows:

ORGANIZATIONAL AUTONOMY

Out of five indicators, autonomous universities only have full autonomy in two of them: capacity to decide governance structure and selection procedure of the executive head. Whereas, they still do not have autonomy in another two indicators. Meanwhile, both PSIs and PGIs are still considered as part of the Ministry. In that, they do not have any autonomy related to the organizational matters. Organizational autonomy in Indonesian public HEIs is illustrated in Table 2.

	Autonomous Universities (SOLE HEIs)	PSIs	PGIs
Capacity to decide governance structure	●	○	○
Inclusion and selection of external members in governing bodies	●	○	○
Selection procedures of the executive head	●	○	○
Qualifications of the executive head	○	○	○
Term of office of the executive head	○	○	○
● : Full autonomy ● : Autonomy with some restriction (partial autonomy) ○ : No autonomy			

Table 2. Organizational autonomy in Indonesian public HEIs

FINANCIAL AUTONOMY

Table 3 exposed a lack of financial autonomy in in three models of public HEIs in Indonesia. There are restrictions and limitation in almost all indicators of financial autonomy. Despite receiving a block grant budget, autonomous universities only have full autonomy in 1 out of 4 other indicators (not include the type of funding), which is the capacity to keep surplus. Whereas, they still have no ability to own buildings. Further, both PSIs and PGIs have limited autonomy to generate self-revenues, however, only PSIs have some restricted ability to manage them.

	Autonomous Universities (SOLE HEIs)	PSIs	PGIs
Type of public funding	Block grant	Line-item	Line-item
Internal allocation	●	●	○
Ability to keep surplus	●	○	○
Ability to borrow money	●	○	○
Ability to own buildings	○	○	○
Capacity to generate self-revenues	●	●	●
● : Full autonomy ● : Autonomy with some restriction (partial autonomy) ○ : No autonomy			

Table 3. Financial autonomy in Indonesian public HEIs

STAFFING AUTONOMY

Staffing autonomy is the dimension with the lowest autonomy. There is an inadequacy of autonomy in three models of public HEIs. Both PSIs and PGIs do not have any autonomy related to the staffing matters. Whilst, autonomous universities only have a partial autonomy. They only have the capacity to manage their staff under the university employee track, but no authority at all to manage their staffs under the civil servant track. Unfortunately, most of their staffs are under the civil servant track. Table 4 illustrates the staffing autonomy in public HEIs.

	Autonomous Universities (SOLE HEIs)	PSIs	PGIs
Capacity to decide on recruitment process	●	○	○
Capacity to decide on salaries (senior academic/senior administrative staff)	●	○	○
Capacity to decide on dismissals (senior academic/senior administrative staff)	●	○	○
Capacity to decide on promotions (senior academic/senior administrative staff)	●	○	○
● : Full autonomy ● : Autonomy with some restriction (partial autonomy) ○ : No autonomy			

Table 4. Staffing autonomy in Indonesian public HEIs

ACADEMIC AUTONOMY

Academic autonomy, on the other hand, is the dimension with the highest autonomy compare to the other dimensions. Autonomous universities have full autonomy in 3 out 5 indicators, with only some restriction in other two indicators. Meanwhile, both PSIs and PGIs already have autonomy in at least three of the indicators, although some restriction may exist. Academic autonomy in Indonesian public HEIs is illustrated in Table 5.

	Autonomous Universities (SOLE HEIs)	PSIs	PGIs
Capacity to decide on overall student numbers	●	◐	◐
Capacity to select students	◐	◐	◐
Capacity to introduce programs	◐	○	○
Capacity to terminate programs	●	○	○
Capacity to design content of degree programs	●	◐	◐
● : Full autonomy ◐ : Autonomy with some restriction (partial autonomy) ○ : No autonomy			

Table 1. Academic autonomy in Indonesian public HEIs

CONCLUSION

Looking back at the findings of four dimensions of institutional autonomy, the real degree of certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy in public higher education institutions in Indonesia as follow:

Levels of organizational autonomy is very low
Levels of financial autonomy is low

Levels of staffing autonomy is very low.
Levels of academic autonomy is medium.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In regards to the limited availability of studies on institutional autonomy in Indonesia. This topic should be more researched to obtain a more in-depth knowledge related to it. As previously mentioned, this study only focused on certain crucial aspects of institutional autonomy, in that, future studies should expand in other directions or examine from different angles. Several feasible opportunities to advance this study are from the angles of the institutions, particularly a case study from the Public Service Institutions (PSIs) and Public Government Institutions (PGIs) that are basically non-exist at the moment; the barriers of institutional autonomy from both government and institutions perspectives; institutional autonomy at the private institutions that unfortunately are also insufficient; and the use of a more broad quantitative

research could also be employed to quantify the changes of institutional autonomy across HEIs, nationally and internationally.

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INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS IN UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY FROM MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE: CASE STUDIES IN THE EHEA

Ruixue Chen

BACKGROUND

University autonomy has long been conceived as the crucial factor to aid achieve the basic goals of the universities, which normally refer to the creation and preach of knowledge, the impartation of human civilization and the promotion of social development (Zhang, 2012). Therefore, since Medieval era, the academics have started fighting against the public authority for higher degree of university autonomy (Yuan, 2006). Brubacher (1967) described the fight in early time as the tug-of-war between the layman (external stakeholders, such as government, society) and the experts (academics, professors, etc.) for the power in determining the HE policies. Gradually, more players (industries, etc.) joined this game, leading to the intensification of the fight. Intermediary organizations emerged and their roles were developed, during the intangible fight in the HE systems, as the decentralising mechanisms between the educational authorities and the HE systems, concurrently, as the extra buffer to safeguard academic freedom or/and institutional autonomy of the HE institutions to be free of political control (Temple, 2002).

In 1993, F. van Vught (1993) asserted that the relationship between the government and the universities have been changing a lot since the 1980s, partly because the quality of higher education is taking a more decisive role in the economic growth as well as the global competitiveness of the country. As such, the government tends to put the higher education provider, primarily the universities, under their control to assist achieving its political and economic goals (Luanna, 2007). However, the concept of university

autonomy has already been growing in the higher education community, and has also gained a common cognition that university autonomy is inevitable for the quality enhancement of the higher education services (Trick, 2015). Thus, tension between the government needs and the university's proposition of autonomy is sustained.

Since universities depended on state funding, it became not easy for them to retain a complete say in either academic rights or institutional issues such as the ratio of the research to teaching, the formulation of institutional development policies, the management of the fund, and the appointment and promotion of the staff (Clark, 1983). Thus buffer body was created to help coordinate between the government and the universities to establish friendly dialogues for negotiation for the larger jurisdiction of the universities particularly over the issues regarding university governance, as the intrinsic characteristics of the buffers were “understand the institutions” and “sympathetic to their needs” (Clark, 1983, p. 141).

Responding to the reforms introduced by the higher education systems, the intermediary body also transformed in terms of reorienting their tasks (Trick, 2015), extending their existing models from national level to international, or multinational level. During the process, certain flaws of this body become more visible, along with the reality that some intermediary organizations are considered to be the tool of the government control over the higher education institutions (Neave, 1992) although it is understandable in view of their inferior power to the mighty authority of the government (El-Khawas, 1992).

In this respect, it makes great sense to scientifically contrast the performing practices of certain well-known intermediary organizations, discuss their coordinating schemes while facing the underlying tensions which may influence their effectiveness and vulnerability (El-Khawas, 1992), as well as identify key features which make some intermediary organization successful while some do not.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Responding to this issue, the research questions are formulated as follows.

- What is the role of the Intermediary Higher Education Organizations (IHEOs) in different systematic levels in terms of university autonomy in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)?
- In what kind of political, economic and social context do IHEOs function at different levels in the EHEA?
- How do IHEOs identify their roles and impact on university autonomy at different levels?
- What are the challenges and problems that IHEOs face in relation to university autonomy at different levels?
- How do IHEOs at different levels tackle the challenges?
- What are the similarities and differences between different levels in relation to the impact of IHEOs on university autonomy in EHEA?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study examined two European IHEOs which function in differing levels of higher education systems to explore the possible external pressures that European IHEOs receive in the process of advocating university autonomy, and how they respond to these influences. Two dominant theories - triangle of coordination and institutional isomorphism - were employed to understand and analyse the issues embedded in the research questions.

Higher education system is a combination of several participants, as what described by Burton Clark (1983), basically including three players which are the state authority, the academic oligarchy (mostly refers to the university nowadays) and the market. These three players interact with each other, thus generates forces to impact on each other's activities. Clark concluded the performance of this sort within the higher education system in a diagram of triangle (Figure 1). This diagram sufficiently substantiated that Triangle of Coordination theory is useful in presenting the fundamental external environment in which IHEOs emerged and function, as well as in underlying the tangible and intangible interrelationships between the intermediary bodies and other players.

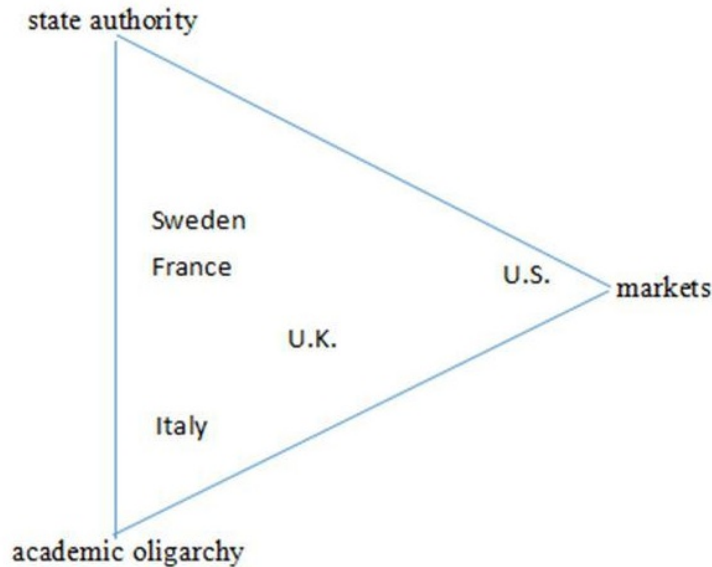


Figure 1: Clark's Triangle of Coordination

In sociology, an isomorphism refers to “the similarity of the process or structure of one organization to those of another, be it the result of imitation or independent development under similar constraints (Bolman & Deal, 2016)”. Powell and Di Maggio (1983) noted this unique processing of institutional similarity and proposed two concepts out of it: competitive isomorphism and institutional isomorphism. The former originated from “population ecology” (p. 157), emphasizing the causation between isomorphism and the market competition, while the latter focuses on the importance of legitimacy and the logic of appropriateness in the homogenous process (Chen, 2009) which conforms to providing insights on how IHEOs should prepare themselves for confronting the external pressures.

As the concept of institutional isomorphism is considered to be the useful analytic tool in investigating organizational behaviours (Powell & DiMaggio, 1983), studies on regional integration have the preference of utilizing this theory to understand the fields like politics, education, economics, etc. A paradigm of this is the research conducted by Radaelli (1997) on supranational public policy transfer in the EU. He examined and compared the transfer of monetary policy, tax policy and media ownership policy among the EU member states. When assessing the potential of isomorphism, he found out that the institutions of the EU level are capable of

overcoming the problems existing in selective nations by catalysing the isomorphism process which means stimulating the policy transfer of diffusing the EU policy solutions into national political systems. At the end, the author concluded that in the EU, institutional isomorphism serves as a source of legitimacy in certain circumstances. This study is a good example of presenting the application of institutional theory - institutional isomorphism to explain specific issue in the field of the EU public policy implementation.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts qualitative methodology with two case studies, and data were collected via the combination of website analytics, document review and semi-structured interviews. The cases chosen for this research are two intermediary organizations, European University Association (EUA) and Universities Austria (UNIKO). These two organizations are picked for their consistent promotion of the concept of university autonomy and their constant independence from the government authorities. Additionally, they are the typical examples of the intermediary organizations respectively function in the two currently popular contexts which are the regional/multi-governmental level of higher education system, and the traditional/common model of national higher education system.

Thematic analysis was picked. The same analysis procedure was applied to both the cases, while the analysis was primarily done separately in a way that sorting the data into two different folders beforehand. For either case, the initial step was the completion of transcribing all the interviews, then use the themes extracted from the research questions to categorize the data after carefully read over all the written transcriptions, as well as the notes made during the reviewing of the website and documents. Then O'Connor and Gibson's (2003) step-by-step guide to qualitative data analysis was employed to analyse the data obtained from the interviews. Following the model, four major themes were sorted out from the massive data, which are social, economic and political contexts, views on university autonomy and its importance, interplay with the stakeholders and actions towards the problems.

KEY FINDINGS

For the purpose of this study, the paper showcased how the two well-recognized IHEOs in different European systematic levels advocate university autonomy by exploring the possible challenges they meet in delivering this mission as well as how they combat them. Furthermore, this study examined the evolutionary concepts of the university autonomy and the various definitions of intermediary organizations in higher education. Still, there is a need to recapitulate the findings presented in the previous chapters, so as to ensure that all the research questions listed in Chapter One have been adequately answered.

Firstly, the political context was emphasized by all the respondents from both organizations because any change in the higher education legislation plays powerful impact on the intermediary organizations as the universities have to comply with the state regulations. The responses also generally indicated a high consciousness of the significance of a greater autonomy to the HE quality in the European higher education environment, meanwhile, the collaborations between the HE institutions and the industry were increased. Regional variations of the political contexts between the European level and Austrian level organizations were also shown in the responses, that EUA is exposed in the powerful and intense political atmosphere where the EU power games from the political arena are vibrant and influential to other fields such as education and economy while the Austrian ministry maintains relatively harmonious and regular interactions with UNIKO.

Secondly, the respondents from both organizations showed that they have similar perception of university autonomy, moreover, the mission of advocating university autonomy had been embedded in the foundation of the organizations. Though the interview participants are from different units of either organization, they all appointed out that their notion of university autonomy stresses the strengthening of the overall university leadership rather than academic freedom or any autonomy of the individuals in the university. The perception of this notion is compatible with the simple fact that UNIKO is the national Rectors' conference in Austria and EUA is the association of the European universities aiming at strengthening the universities in Europe.

With regards to the organization's impact on university autonomy, a conclusion could be easily reached from the responses from the interviews, that both organizations have been playing positive effect on university autonomy in their functioning systems though with distinctive approaches. While some intermediary bodies such as the Higher Education Council in Turkey, are criticized by either being an subordinate of the government or performing excessive interference with the autonomy of the universities (Visakorpi, Stankovic, Pedrosa & Rozsnyai, 2008), one respondent from UNIKO made explicitly that they have been keeping away from the universities' internal affairs, and the organization's remit has been mainly limited to facilitating the collective view of the 21 member universities.

Thirdly, difficulties exist with respect to the advocacy of university autonomy to both EUA and UNIKO. Some of them are derived from the HE stakeholders such as the education authorities, the member universities, some are brought about by the political turbulences and austerity which sometimes also appear as weighty impediments to the advocacy. However, neither of the two organizations see the difficulties strong enough to hinder what they aim to achieve, though they could be disturbing at certain period such as the situation of austerity in overall Europe these years. Regarding these, both organizations actively react to all the problems emerged and strive to surmount them with the peaceful approaches of communication and cooperation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Bearing the nature of exploratory and interpretative, it is apparent that this study allows opportunities for future research. In another word, more research could definitely dedicate to improving the methodological construct of this research and further elaborating the study findings. First of all, this research falls short of bringing forward a concrete figure of the impact that the external stakeholders brought to EUA and UNIKO, as well as the influences of the two intermediary organizations play on university autonomy in EHEA and Austrian higher education. Hence, further studies could extend to statistical exploration with the help of quantitative research method or mixed methods, on the basis of the qualitative findings of this study. On the other hand, researchers interested in this topic could maximize the practical

value of the study by applying the findings to specific issues that HE stakeholders are concerning about, namely, carrying out practical solutions or suggestions to each stakeholder notably the policy makers, HE institutions, and the IHEOs. Admittedly, given that the angle of this study is the excellent practices of the positive examples among the IHEOs, the research does not include any defective parts or the futile actions of the two organizations have done in terms of advocating university autonomy. Thus, more research could be conducted in this direction. Apart from these, future studies could also attempt to define university autonomy suitable for the HE scenario nowadays, as well as to categorize the IHEOs covering all the notable types in the current higher education globally.

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