

Article title:

"Internationalization at home: new challenges and opportunities in times of Covid"

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1. SUMMARY

The incidence of globalization, the opening of the world and the development of technology in recent times, have had an impact on Higher Education. With this, internationalization has opened as a prevailing dimension in today's world. Confronted with new challenges for the internationalization of Higher Education post COVID-19, we are faced with the opportunity to increase the internationalization processes "at home" and with it the democratization of the higher internationalization processes of universities, giving more people access to an experience abroad.

The experience of the Technological University of Uruguay can be an example of the new opportunities for internationalization in today's world, with actions that seek to replace the lack of international mobility in the restrictive conditions of international mobility; focusing on internationalization "at home" or of the "curriculum".

2. INTRODUCTION

This article addresses the main challenges that the internationalization of Higher Education (HE) has faced after the COVID-19 pandemic in the world.

The first chapter presents a brief conceptual framework to contextualize the HE internationalization processes and learn about their characteristics and main actions, where finally an approach will be made on the processes of the so-called internationalization "at home".

The second chapter will address the actions carried out by the International Relations Unit of the Technological University (UTEC), to continue with the internationalization processes of the institution after the arrival of the pandemic in the country.

3. DEVELOPMENT**1. Internationalization of Higher Education**

The last decades of the 20th century marked a great and accelerated evolution of society. The interconnections and socio-cultural consequences of communications characterized this era, giving it the name of the global village.

Faced with the great challenges of globalization, the university proposes new changes that accompany these processes, achieving a greater impact at the international level.

It is necessary to understand that, throughout history, the value of knowledge has been transformed. The changes that have arisen in the last century have strongly marked the future of education. Knowledge has taken a predominant role in the development of countries and therefore of humanity.

Today it is indisputable that education plays a fundamental role in the development of the future construction of societies, as the internationalization of HE in their academic stage is also essential in the training of professionals.

The concept of internationalization of HE, creates a process of transformation in the way of learning and imparting knowledge. Currently it can be understood as the development and implementation of policies and programs with international and intercultural dimensions, which aims to improve the quality of HE.

The international dimension has gained importance in educational institutions that aim to train and build a global citizenship by following the internationalization strategies necessary to respond to the different needs and challenges posed today.

Some academics consider that the internationalization of education is not a new concept, nor are the processes of globalization.

Historically, it can be mentioned as one of the first internationalization phenomena of HE: the arrival of the European university in America. The university field, as it is known today, emerged more than ten centuries ago in Europe in postwar times and religious struggles with the aim of building and protecting the nation.

The arrival of HE in America together with the spread of Western culture, can be seen as a transcendent fact in the internationalization of HE.

It is interesting to observe beyond the historical, that not only was knowledge internationalized, but the way of imparting knowledge was also standardized, through the creation of universities in both the West and the East.

That is why it can be said that the internationalization of education is an issue that is implicitly in the analysis of the processes of regional and global integration.

In this way, cultural and economic globalization begins a new stage in HE, since it has always been a sector that has been open to the international world.

Regarding the term of Internationalization as it is known today, it emerged in the 90's as a form of interaction of modern societies in response to globalization.

Internationalization is beginning to be implemented in educational institutions because education is not alien to the process of interconnections and interdependencies that the world raises, requiring changes in the strategies and policies of HE.

Internationalization actions have been changing over the last few years. Before it was classified as an extra "activity", today it is and seeks to be a transversal dimension, training professionals who know how to face the challenges that arise in a globalized and demanding world.

Thus, universities aim at a greater exchange of knowledge, perspectives and visions that contemplate the world in general, opening the gaze beyond the national.

Paradoxically, internationalization was not what was sought in the early days of the university, on the contrary, they guided activities in pursuit of national, public and civil functions.

It is interesting to take this journey to understand that the internationalization of HE is the result of the birth of the university influenced by context and time.

From the beginning of the 21st century to the present, HE has sought to continually challenge and improve its quality, knowing that institutions have a leading role in the development of society, that a university needs to cross geographical and political borders.

This is how universities throughout this time have been implementing different processes and functions to achieve the internationalization of HE.

Some of the paths traveled, go towards cooperation between different institutions, through resources, collaboration in the teaching of classes, research and academic mobility, favoring intercultural exchange and generating connections that enhance the development of a professional open to the challenges that the world presents them.

Internationalization "at home"

In 1999, the concept of internationalization at home was implemented, by the Swede Bengt Nilsson, due to the lack of a working group specialized in international networks during the emergence of the University of Malmö. As a consequence of this lack, they looked to the alternative of living the experience of cultural exchange "at home".

The objective was that the student, without having the need to leave their country of residence, would have an intercultural and international experience.

After this specific event, this idea began to be implemented and promoted, considering that only a small percentage of the European student population could afford the costs of international mobility.

Due to the great interest in this dynamic, a research group was created within the European Association for International Education (EAIE) with the aim of defining a concept of internationalization at home and gathering ideas among academics to create a document that would allow the sharing of knowledge and experiences helping institutions to continue promoting best practices.

Internationalization at home has evolved since its inception. The concept is very broad and varies depending on the country. Many use the term internationalization at home, to refer to the internationalization of the curriculum, as a transversal strategy in educational training to acquire international and intercultural skills.

Beyond the challenges it entails, such as ensuring quality education and recognition, internationalization at home has many benefits and has been the solution to the question, how to promote internationalization in times of a pandemic?

In these times of uncertainty and changes that are being experienced at a global level, internationalization at home was an effective tool for students to continue developing and

training as future professionals. Among all the inconveniences that the health emergency brought with it, internationalization at home was a very positive factor. Many institutions were forced to use this resource, creating programs from scratch that would make this concept effective. Others promoted it, allowing many teaching and non-teaching officials to access it. Therefore, it can be said that internationalization at home is essential for the context in which HE institutions find themselves.

The pandemic helped to break with traditional schemes and mental maps that explain the existence of internationalization through student mobility, returning to the essence of the internationalization of HE.

Internationalization "at home" can be understood as virtual mobility, where from tools such as telephones and the internet, for example, experiences can be had from the home with outside institutions.

2. The case of the Technological University (Uruguay)

The Technological University (UTEC) of Uruguay, in accordance with its internationalization policy (2018), has two fundamental pillars in its internationalization process: 1) abroad: mobility of people, projects and programs abroad; 2) "at home": focused on the internationalization of curricula and educational paths, on the activities carried out in UTEC centers, the understanding of the international or global, as well as on intercultural skills.

In the context of the pandemic that the world is experiencing due to the virus, technically known as COVID-19, the first pillar of internationalization of our institution has been strongly affected, mainly the "International Mobility Calls". This program is opened twice a year and represents the framework for the greatest mobility of students, teachers and collaborators of the institution.

For the first semester of 2020, the mobility of 9 students, 10 teachers and 1 collaborator was planned to the following destinations: Brazil, Costa Rica, Spain, USA, Finland, Holland and the United Kingdom. Only those who had activities planned for January and February were able to travel, resulting in a total of 3 students, 1 teacher and 1 collaborator (25% of what was planned). The second pillar of internationalization was fundamentally affected by the suspension of one of its main programs: "International Visiting Fellows", which involved the visit of different professors from foreign universities to the institution. For the first semester of 2020, planning envisaged the visit of 6 teachers from the following origins: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark and the USA; remaining without effect in its entirety.

UTEC's response to post-pandemic internationalization

Given the global pandemic situation, the role of UTEC's International Relations Unit (URI) has focused on seeking financing from different international funds; as well as partners abroad, who contribute to the development of an institutional project that emerged after the health emergency in the country was announced. Reference is made to the "CO INNOVATION COVID 19" project, whose main objective is to generate innovative solutions and make products and tools available to prevent and treat the COVID-19 virus at different health levels. Thanks to these actions, foreign funds were obtained to support this project; which allowed the generation of

an innovation platform with more than 300 volunteers throughout Uruguay, where actions such as the creation of masks and protective elements were carried out to combat the pandemic in the country.

In addition to the above, the efforts of the University, as in many parts of the world, followed a rapid and exponential process of virtualization of all its academic activities, so as not to interrupt the planned calendar, which occurred successfully, accompanied by an increase in the connection capacity of virtual platforms; and giving access to computers to students who did not have their own equipment.

On the other hand, the pandemic situation opened new paths and opportunities, using computer tools in a more agile and active way to hold meetings and activities that were previously pending some displacements, not only within the institution, but also with the other partner institutions abroad. This made it possible to advance in different institutional agreements and to work in cooperation in the face of the situation.

Some of the answers that were sought to continue with the internationalization process of the institution were the alliance with educational institutions and platforms (as already mentioned above), which would allow students, teachers and collaborators to take advantage of training opportunities abroad, from home. Thus, the actions followed by the URI contributed not only to increasing internationalization "at home" or of the "curriculum", but the process itself contributed to democratizing access to training opportunities abroad, reaching a greater number of beneficiaries than a traditional international mobility process (transfer of people to other countries or to one's own)

The alliances that were established with the educational platforms COURSERA and EDX were important, mainly, where quotas were obtained in the courses that these platforms offer, which allowed students, teachers and collaborators of the institution to access hundreds of virtual trainings for free. In numbers, more than 300 registrations were made for online courses through COURSERA, totaling more than 1000 hours in courses and / or trainings, and more than 500 registrations through the EDX platform.

On the other hand, the realization of Webinars was promoted with educational institutions from abroad that were freely accessible not only to the educational community but also to the general public. In this sense, a Webinar was held in conjunction with the Canadian Embassy in Uruguay, where more than 200 participants attended in an exchange on forestry and wooden constructions, between leaders from Canada and Uruguay. This last alliance, given the important response of the participants, led to the planning of other activities of this nature for 2021 with said Embassy, where 7 speakers were already confirmed from abroad, to begin the academic activities of 2021, within the framework of the Logistics Engineering of the Northern Regional Technological Institute of the city of Rivera.

Another of the actions carried out by the institution was the offer of a diploma in "Educational Innovation" in conjunction with the University of Mondragón, Spain; thanks to an agreement between both institutions, which allowed more than 40 teachers and collaborators of the institution to carry out training in an international program, which under traditional conditions of mobility would have been very limited, due to the cost involved in moving the end users to the country offering the course. It is another example of the potential of establishing alliances with institutions abroad to offer within the institution training possibilities that in other circumstances could not be offered or would be more limited.

Another of the activities that was affected in its format was the scholarships and opportunities fair organized by the URI every year called MOVETE, which is an opportunity for students mainly, to learn about scholarship options abroad offered by Embassies and other international cooperation institutions. The III MOVETE, not only went to a virtual format, but also added new activities to its agenda, with a greater number of internationalization opportunities for students and teachers. The activities that were added in addition to the classic scholarship offer were talks on different topics: Sustainable Development Goals in Uruguay; College education in the COVID-19 era; University extension in science, technology and innovation in the Southern Cone; University internationalization: trends and challenges.

Generally, the MOVETE was carried out during the course of a day and with the new activities it lasted a whole week. Students, teachers, authorities, foreign institutions, international cooperation agencies, among others, participated in it.

Finally, from the URI, the calls for international mobility that are opened twice a year were reformed, where in the traditional modality (pre-pandemic) partial and total scholarships are offered to students, teachers and collaborators for short stays of training / courses abroad, participation in international seminars and congresses, among other activities. Taking into account the closure of the border, these calls were redesigned, offering the possibility of applying for courses and / or trainings of a maximum duration of 6 months in foreign institutions, as well as in platforms that offer distance training opportunities linked to institutions of the Exterior. This action allowed 10 students, 13 teachers and 2 collaborators to have the opportunity to take courses and / or virtual training in foreign institutions.

This modality, where the person is in a different country from the institution that offers the course or training, can be called "transnational education", which has been a trend in recent years thanks to the development of virtual connection platforms and the high costs required for the transfer and installation of people in the same place where the offering institution resides.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The current global pandemic situation brings great challenges for the internationalization of universities in the world. The traditional model of transferring people from one institution to another is not possible in the face of a health emergency or is extremely limited. This places those of us who work in internationalization processes in a completely new and challenging scenario, as it has been precisely the area most affected within the universities.

But like any crisis or process of profound change like the one we are going through in the world, doors are always opened to new opportunities that come as in the case presented here to add internationalization experiences.

Although virtuality was a tool that was available before the pandemic, many times it was not used properly in international institutionalization processes of the institutions. This tool has to collaborate with the democratization process of the internationalization of universities, that is, give greater opportunities of access to people who previously in a "traditional" international mobility process would not have opportunities to interact with institutions or peers from abroad, due to the limitation of resources that educational institutions have mainly in this area.

Finally, the pandemic leaves room to continue deepening internationalization "at home" and to improve institutional strategies that promote the exchange of knowledge at a global level supported by the use of technology.

But it is important for internationalization at home to be effective, not only an accompaniment of the entire educational community, namely students, teachers, collaborators, but that the unit or office that is in charge of carrying out the international relations of the institution work in raising awareness and support in a planned way and operating through directed and interlinked actions.

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