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International Cooperation and Mentoring: An Academic Obligation?

The Latin American Perspective: Argentina

Cristina Arranz

Dean Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry

University of Buenos Aires

Argentina

E-mail: decanato@ffyba.uba.ar

Globalization

Globalization is the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas across borders. Globalization affects each country in a different way due to nation's individual history, traditions, culture and priorities. (Knight 1996)

Globalization is defined as the reality shaped by a global economy increasingly more integrated, new information technologies and communication, the emergence of a network of international knowledge, the role of the English language and other forces beyond the control of institutions academic. Internationalization is the range of policies and programs of universities and governments implemented to respond to globalization. (Philip Altbach, Liz Reisberg y Laura Rumbley (2009))

Internationalization of higher education is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization, at the same time respects the individuality of the nation. Thus, globalization can be seen as the catalyst but internationalization as a response. (Knight 1996). It is a comprehensive institutional transformation process, which aims to incorporate international and intercultural dimension in the mission and in the basic functions of the institutions of higher education, so that they are inseparable from their identity and culture.

There are two types of arguments to promote internalization of high education institutions: economic and political arguments and cultural and educational arguments. How to promote the internationalization process? By two key strategies: organizational and programmatic strategies.

Today, Argentina's universities are placing a growing emphasis on internationalization and global engagement, creating a relatively positive context for student and scholar mobility going forward. According to official statistics, the number of foreign students studying in Argentina doubled between 2006 and 2013. About 70 percent are from other Latin American countries, with the remainder coming mostly from the United States and Europe. The most popular destination countries for Argentine students (in order of preference) are Spain, France, Brazil, the United States, Italy, Germany, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Chile.

In line with global trends, the Argentine government has begun implementing new policies and programs designed to increase outward student mobility (Garcia Fannelli, ACE, 2014).

Experience of the University of Buenos Aires

Of particular importance is the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), the largest and most prestigious national university in Argentina. With an enrollment of about 260,000 undergraduate students and 15,000 graduate students, the UBA consists of 13 faculties, which are located throughout the city. UBA alone captures around 18 percent of the country's undergraduate and graduate enrollment (Reisberg, ACE, 2014).

In 2010, UBA created an office of the Secretary of International Affairs which mission is to increase the international perception towards the University of Buenos Aires as an institution of excellence in higher education, in all fields of knowledge; help to promote worldwide the universal values underlying the University of Buenos Aires, promoting, disseminating and creating culture through humanistic studies, scientific and technological research and artistic creation; to improve, through international cooperation, the exchange of knowledge and culture, and this way contribute to the advancement of universal knowledge and to encourage the exchange and integration on social and cultural levels, in the University of Buenos Aires community with its international peers to contribute to the mutual integral formation.

The objective of the Strengthening the International affairs area was the launch of a skilled and dynamic structure that would allow an effective Programs management, and at the same time, to plan and project international cooperation actions facing the future in accordance with UBA tradition in this area and the new institutional objectives.

The UBA centers of bilateral cooperation in the same building streamlined work and the interaction between the area and its dependencies. These are:

the German-Argentine Center of the University of Buenos Aires is the result of intense scientific cooperation and academic exchange between the two countries since 2004; the French –Argentinean Center product of an agreement between the French Embassy in Argentina and the University of Buenos Aires, aims to promote scientific cooperation and intellectual exchange between the two countries in the social sciences and humanities since 1996 and the Korean – Argentinean Center to the work of teaching and research carried out in both academic communities since 2002.

International affairs area increased its participation in mobility programs of undergraduate and graduate students, teachers and researchers, as well as improved the management. It also optimized the advice and systematized institutional guarantees management for the presentation of International Projects and students, teachers and researchers to international scholarships.

The objective of this stage is to propose actions in the mid and long term strategy of the University internationalization in its main functions. To encourage the University participation in regional and international Higher Education spaces to position the University as a Latin American leader in education matters. UBA focuses on international actions with relevant strategic regions: MERCOSUR and Latin America (priority), Europe, North America and Asia.

To keep on growing and promoting the internationalization process, the difficulties to overcome are: irregular Faculties involvement in the different Programs; difficulty recognizing UBA subjects made by students through UBA promoted programs; need for regulations for international students; relatively low number of students, teachers and researchers who are mobilized annually; little commitment from teachers, heads of department or academic authorities in students mobility activities.

Overcoming difficulties requires: Political determination to establish substantive changes; resources to implement changes; coordination, complementarily and cooperation of work between the Central Administration and the Academic Units; the conviction of UBA community about the importance of internationalization.