7th QS-APPLE

SEVENTH QS ASIA PACIFIC PROFESSIONAL LEADERS IN EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Proceedings of the 7th QS-APPLE Conference Manila, 16th -18th November, 2011. Proceedings published June, 2012.

Editor:

Professor Neil Anderson, James Cook University, Australia

This volume is a post-conference publication containing the refereed papers from the QS-APPLE Conference held in Manila from 16th-18th November, 2011. You will note some variation in referencing styles since the conference draws from academics who work in all discipline areas across tertiary institutions.

Refereeing of papers

All refereed papers were subject to a blind refereeing process by at least two reviewers. Successful authors were asked to make changes according to the reviewers' recommendations prior to final acceptance. Refereeing meets the standard for research publications.

Published June 2012 at James Cook University

PO Box 6811 Cairns
Australia

Additional copies of the conference proceedings can be obtained from the conference website at:

http://www.qsapple.org

ISBN: 978-0-9775642-4-8

Contents

Refereed Papers

SOARing for Employability – Can this serve as a transferable pedagogy and process for developing 'global graduates'? Arti Kumar ……..page 4

Communication and soft skills – A stepping stone for a better career. Akkara Sherine ……..page 16

Achieving higher education graduate attributes in the area of creativity, innovation and problem solving through the use of design thinking. Neil Anderson ……... page 29

Online learning – Enhancing educational experience and interaction. Dennis Berino …… page 34

GATS and the higher education sector in India with particular reference to impending legislations. R. Grewal, Sangeet Jaura, Shobha Mishra ……. page 46

Higher education in Saudi Arabia: Toward building the knowledge economy. Abdulkader Alfantookh & Saad Haj Bakry ……. page 58

Making sense of international experience through guided, critical reflection. Jane Jackson …….. page 67

Pre-sojourn decision-making: The case of Hong Kong exchange students. Jane Jackson …. …….page 86

Measuring academic reading anxiety among English as a second language (ESOL) university students: Scale development and validation. Catherine Cordova ……... page 103

Where the rubber hits the road in internationalising universities: A summary of track one 'Internationalising the student body: International student recruitment, support and exchange'. Robin Buckham …….. page 112

From CSR to USR: A strategic USR management framework. Teay Shawyun, Awad Al-Karni, Mansour Al-Shehri, Rashid Al-Hamali …….. page 115

The need to measure – Behind the creation of the Isan cultural exchange schooling (ICES) program. Micael Talbot ……. page 130

Critical challenges of Vietnam building world-class universities. Truong Quang Duoc ……...page 140

SOARing for Employability – can this serve as a transferable pedagogy and process for developing 'global graduates'?

Abstract

*SOARing for Employability approaches have been developed and authored in the context of UK higher education, to enable staff to integrate the personal, social, academic and career development of all students within their curriculum. The **SOAR** model animates the universal-personal dynamic inter-relationships between **S**elf, **O**pportunity, **A**spirations and **R**esults. The main 'Result' intended through SOAR pedagogy is to facilitate students through a reflective-active, structured and supported process intended to give them a greater sense of personal agency, direction and destination – empowering them to deal effectively with life, work and lifelong learning in today's competitive global economy.*

SOAR is theoretically sound and empirically evidenced (including evaluations with international students) but its implementation in different cultures and contexts is relatively under-researched. This paper documents a study on SOAR as it was applied to the design and delivery of a newly-introduced Personal and Professional Development unit for MBA students at the University of Bedfordshire in 2010-11. Since 99% of this cohort was from India it is interesting to analyse the impact of SOAR reported by students at this postgraduate level in this cultural context. The findings broadly confirm SOAR can be a transferable meta-model that develops portable graduate attributes, applicable in 'a borderless workplace'.

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Introduction: Conceptualisations of *SOARing for Employability*

SOARing for Employability is a phrase used in this paper on the back of the original *SOARing to Success* sub-title of a book (Kumar, 2007) which comprehensively describes the process and pedagogy, tools and techniques that incrementally develop a range of generic graduate attributes for application to current study and transfer to future effectiveness in the world of work. The **SOAR** model animates the universal-personal dynamic inter-relationships between **S**elf, **O**pportunity, **A**spirations and **R**esults (hereafter referred to simply as SOAR). Each is inter-connected and part of a wider picture. Individuals need to explore how the dynamic interactions and relationships between the inner world of Self with the outer world of Opportunity can generate, clarify or modify Aspirations and produce Results. It is the combinations, permutations and constructive alignment of these SOAR elements that create synergy in self-development.

The tools and techniques that flow from SOAR enable students to identify and critically appreciate their interests, values, abilities and natural styles, and explore how these interact developmentally with various options and opportunities. This dynamic can lead to realistic **A**spirations (soundly informed decisions and actionable plans) and effective **R**esults (e.g. better engagement in learning, job satisfaction, winning CVs/ resumes/ applications, interviews, etc.) The process of making personal connections between these elements in the minds and hearts of students needs to be prompted by raising relevant awareness of tutor and employer requirements: what do students need to do and develop in order to articulate and demonstrate effective behavioural competencies in both learning and in work? How is 'learnability' linked with 'employability' – especially in today's learning and work environments? The SOAR process needs to be facilitated by active-reflective learning, context and person-specific information, guidance and support.

SOAR is underpinned by theories but primarily evolved in a UK context through empirical evidence gleaned from the experience of designing and delivering career development units within higher education curricula, refined continuously through evaluations with students from different subject disciplines and cohorts (including international students), teaching teams, external examiners and graduate employers. It is also based on the long experience of responding to a series of UK reports and recommendations, the most significant of which are:

- the PDP agenda, which requires all HEIs to offer "*a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development*" (QAA, 2000, revised and reinforced 2008);
- the Burgess Report (2007), which requires all HEIs to provide a Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) detailing and validating each student's skills and experiences in addition to the degree certificate at graduation;
- the skill needs of graduate recruiters, which show considerable similarity and consistency in what employers generically seek (e.g. annual AGR Surveys; CIHE and UKCES Reports, 2008, 2009; CBI & UUK, 2009; CBI & NUS, 2011. Also see AGCAS & NASES visits to China in 2009, and India in 2010).

SOAR was also informed by the Blueprint for Career Development project in Canada and Australia, published at the time of researching and writing the book (Kumar, 2007). Accordingly the model updates and reframes 'career' as 'lifelong and life-wide learning', defining it not so much as occupational titles but as an individual's portable personal skills and values (Straby, 2002).

The background and context of this study

The University of Bedfordshire in the UK, where the current study was undertaken, recruits a culturally and educationally diverse range of students from within and outside the UK, to a range of disciplines across four faculties: Education and Sports Sciences; Business; Health and Social Studies; Creative Arts, Technology and Science. 94% of its students are from state schools; more than 48% of its undergraduates are mature students. 43% of its young full-time students are from National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification (NS-SEC) groups 4–7 and approximately 35% are ethnic minority students. Many therefore suffer multiple disadvantage in entering and participating in education and employment.

The University has long been aware that education for its diversity of students' needs must change in line with the changing world. Its vision and provision has centred on vocational education, so graduate employability has been an important end goal driving curriculum revisions and innovations. The University has also made a commitment to internationalisation, defining it as "*The process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service function of the institution*" (Knight, 1994). It recognises that broadening all students' cultural and global perspectives will enrich their learning, prepare them to operate professionally in multinational career opportunities and develop a sense of responsibility to deal with socio-economic and environmental issues that increasingly cross national boundaries.

Since 2008-9 SOAR is in principle embedded as an effective and productive learner-centred pedagogy within its revised institutional curriculum (Atlay et al, 2008). The new teaching, learning and assessment methods can be adopted or adapted to connect personal and career development with good learning in all subject curricula, and with generic graduate attributes and employability. Faculty and careers staff have variably used some of the theories,

activities, reflective aids and techniques to move students incrementally to graduate and professional identity, aligned with the requirements of a competitive and changing global economy.

There is convincing evidence from student evaluations that SOAR has produced its intended benefits for the majority of students who engage with its tools and techniques for personalised development, regardless of their background, age, subject and level of study (Kumar, 2007). It has the potential for widespread impact and benefits – not only across UK HE institutions but also overseas. However this claim is relatively under-researched and the potential still needs to be realised by implementing SOAR in different curricula and analysing its suitability for and impact on students. Sharing good practice can help to clarify 'what works well', and what needs to be done or developed to make it effective and productive in different contexts and cultures.

Current MBA research

The research aim and question

The research reported on in this paper was designed to develop evidence that speaks to – to confirm, challenge or redefine – previous literature (Kumar 2008, 2009, 2010) and broadly compare findings with data from previous evaluations conducted with undergraduate students on a range of different subject areas, from Accountancy to Business Marketing to Computing, Psychology and Tourism. The need to do this research was also prompted to some extent by a dearth of available theory and literature on the impact of SOARing as a PDP-related set of concepts and practices – as PDP is a relatively recent and under-researched pedagogy for the UK Higher Education sector. The importance of the PDP agenda has been reinforced by the revised *Progress File Guidelines* (QAA, 2008), several Government White Papers, the *Leitch Review of Skills* (2006) and *Beyond the honours degree classification*: The *Burgess* Group final *report* (2007).

In the University of Bedfordshire's academic year 2010-11 a newly introduced unit for the *Personal and Professional Development* of students in the Business MBA in Intercultural Communications provided fertile ground for evaluating the impact of SOAR-related activities when they are applied in this context. It was of particular interest to analyse how SOAR impacts this particular intake of postgraduate students as they were predominantly from various parts of India. The research question was: Does SOAR act as an agent of development for these students? What benefits and issues do they report?

Participants: MBA staff and students

As an Honorary Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Bedfordshire, and as the author of the SOAR framework, the researcher designed this study with MBA tutors, declaring her interest in exploring the model's suitability for and impact on this cohort of postgraduate students. She was looking for clearly-reported links between cause-and-effect types of student development. However, as an external objective visitor, and with an awareness of the many variables that influence students' learning, she designed the research to be an open-minded, exploratory and evaluative study on the nature and extent of possibilities in further developing pedagogy and practice to suit the specific learning needs of students from other cultural backgrounds.

The two MBA tutor participants in this research were the academic course leader and the careers adviser responsible for the Business faculty. They were jointly responsible for designing the new PPD unit and delivering the suite of workshops. They used SOAR to provide a linear structured and supported process for students, but perceived that SOAR can also be cyclical as a recurrent process that takes Personal Development Planning spiralling into future Continuous Professional Development. It sets foundational habits and attitudes that connect personal strengths and self-development needs with lifelong and life-wide learning, enabling individuals to perceive their skills and experiences as relevant and inter-linked for the purposes of current learning that transfers to future (or concurrent) careers in a high-tech, rapidly changing world.

Students were given to understand that they could re-visit and reflect on **SOAR** inter-relationships even beyond the MBA, as **S**elf matures, **O**pportunities change, **A**spirations are modified and **R**esults achieved. Several active-reflective SOAR cycles at different levels and transition stages in an individual's life-career can form a dynamic spiral of development.

The staff participants in this research found these concepts relevant, meaningful and useful for their students and for their own needs. For example, the research design enabled them to:

- share, explore and develop concepts; incorporate or adapt existing SOAR practices and resources;
- evaluate SOAR pedagogy from different perspectives and experiences;
- support students in replicating a personal development planning (PDP) process in their own continuous professional development (CPD), as they reflected and recorded their personal learning journeys;
- fulfil the University's expectations in respect of evidence-based practice, and its requirements as written into its Education Strategy, Research-informed Strategy and Employability Strategy.

All students on the course were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Informed, ethical consent was obtained from 26 of the total cohort. This was an opportunistic sample and no attempt was made to choose or control a representative sample, so the outcomes cannot claim to be generalisable across 'the Indian culture'. Indeed arguably there is no such thing, as India is renowned for its diversity, multilingual and multicultural features. However anecdotally in general, and specifically from interviews with the MBA tutors, postgraduate international students in general were perceived to present particular challenges. Tutors felt that the prior Indian education these students had experienced would lead to expectations of more classroom contact time with tutors and passive absorption of knowledge from them rather than actively co-constructing knowledge in partnership with them. They said that Indian students have not developed skills in independent critical thinking, problem solving, self-management, reflective practice and communication in the same way as UK home students.

While the demand for MBA education has increased in recent years its prestige has fluctuated. It has been criticised for producing graduates who are unable to apply the academic content of their programmes to a fast-paced global economy. Students want (and justifiably need) to articulate and demonstrate the value of the MBA qualification – not only in monetary terms but in terms of the personal, professional and career prospects it adds to their repertoire of existing knowledge, skills and attributes. Such needs have led to various studies to measure the added value MBA graduates can bring to an organisation (e.g. Ainin & Mohezar, 2009).

Against the background of such studies and conflicting perceptions, the research questions which were agreed to by staff were: to what extent does self-assessment and SOAR, underpinned by the values of PDP, act as an agent of change in the personal and career development of MBA Indian students? What benefits and issues are reported? What circumstances and learning environments work well? 'Student development' was here defined as any type of personal learning and change that students might perceive (conceptual, practical, creative) whether it raises awareness, creates understanding, embeds practice or changes behaviours. Change may occur as a result of participating in the PPD and the SOAR process, and in the light of reflecting and personalizing through the assignments students undertake. The researcher was aware however that there are many variables influencing student engagement and development and outcomes must be interpreted tentatively in relation to 'creating global graduates'.

Methodology

The importance of pedagogic action research is rising as a useful methodology for putting research outcomes into improved practice and further cycles of research and was therefore chosen as the most appropriate methodology of exploring the proposed questions (Norton, L. 2009) The researcher wished to deploy an analytical Appreciative Inquiry approach (Watkins, J. & Cooperrider, D. 2000) where the focus is on empirical evidence of 'what works and why', with a view to replicating 'what works well' in future delivery and disseminating good practice and positive results in other contexts as well. The approach is non-threatening and consistent with the needs and interests of staff in evidencing and improving their own practice. Appreciative Inquiry also meets the needs of both staff and students for collaborative personal and professional development.

An outline workplan was produced at an initial meeting with the tutors, which included separate cycles and stages of planning, delivering, evaluating, analyzing and writing up the research, with a timeline determined by students' assignment deadlines, progress points and milestones for the academic year 2010-11.

A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods were combined in 3 research stages:
1) Baseline data gathered at the start (Oct. 2010) to determine the starting point of students, through awareness-raising activity linked with diagnostic questionnaires, against which their development could be measured towards the end of the course (May 2011). This also acts as formative and ipsative assessment, enabling students to self-assess 'the distance travelled' in their development.
2) Ethnographic participant research via the researcher observing a PPD session on 22/2/11.
3) Updates with staff; 3 discussions were held at the start, middle and end of the course.
4) Qualitative data analysis and synthesis from students' questionnaire ratings and reflective portfolio assignments in July 2011.

Semi-structured focus groups were to be organised to clarify students' comments and extend findings in July/August 2011. This did not happen eventually due to time constraints on the part of the course leader, a job move on the part of the other, and logistical difficulties in organising a suitable date and venue. However the students were a relatively small group with whom to discuss emergent findings as the study evolved, and the researcher was able to share and develop ideas and capture 'the learning journey' as a narrative through the stages of the action research process. The qualitative data gathered was more meaningful in this context than quantitative findings (see next section).

Outcomes

The research started in Sept. 2010 by obtaining informed and ethical consent from the two staff tutors and 26 student participants on the Business MBA. The Personal and Professional Development (PPD) Unit was designed as a SOAR-structured, tailored suite of five workshops, to be delivered from Sept. 2010 to April 2011. These workshops were optional but attendance was strongly encouraged by coordinating the content, learning outcomes and assessments with the mainstream MBA course. The PPD content included Intercultural communications, Academic development, Presentation skills, Career development / management and Business protocol. Its learning objectives and outcomes were entirely compatible with the Results expected and enabled by SOAR. These were expressed in the Unit Handbook and shared with students.

Several educators make the point that whatever is assessed assumes greatest importance in students' eyes and directs the amount of effort they put in. Apart from some traditional assessments in the mainstream MBA, certain essential PPD assessments were designed around SOAR, such that students had to attend the workshops in order to complete them. SOAR suggests briefs and marking criteria appropriate for personal development and reflective writing. Students were briefed to record their reflections at least once every ten days in a personal journal or blog, and build these up incrementally for the main portfolio that was tutor-marked at the end. Students' anonymous comments cited below are taken from these personal written reflections, as they had consented these would provide qualitative data for research purposes.

Self-awareness linked with opportunity-awareness also alerts students to make the most of life-wide learning opportunities (e.g. in volunteering, part-time or holiday jobs, placements and work experience, co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement in student union societies, etc.). Students were briefed to use and draw upon these for examples to demonstrate requisite skills and experience when producing their CVs, MBA Yearbook and Linked-In profiles. Linked-In did double duty: it was promoted as an online, flexible CV-related medium that could be shared selectively with employers, and also a means of social and business networking. Many students' comments indicated that they valued the contacts and friendships they had formed through groupwork and interactive learning on the PPD – contacts they intended to maintain through future e-networking. This was a valuable **R**esult of SOA**R**ing – one which has both a social and economic value, as networking to maintain and increase business contacts is increasingly important in securing and enhancing employment.

Despite promoting the advantages of PPD, the following comment is a salutary reminder that not all students perceive PPD learning outcomes as immediately relevant. Educators know that students are often instrumental and tend to weigh up perceived benefits against perceived sacrifices in their engagement with teaching and learning, especially when it requires learning and assessment methods that are unfamiliar:

> *At the beginning of the MBA course I took this specific PPD unit as something which will not add as much value as it will add stress - something that will distract from studies and add more burdens. I was not very much interested in attending lectures and workshops related to this unit, but in the 2nd week after I got positive comments from my classmates about this unit I decided to give it a go. I had several issues about studies in the UK, culture shock which was affecting my studies, being homesick, depressed, feeling isolated and unsettled. While attending PPD workshops I was greatly motivated as well as encouraged to manage and solve these issues through various exercises and tasks that gave me exposure and getting over the language barrier. I am a shy/isolated persona, but some of the sharing*

experiences worked really well – e.g. CV building and Impressions Management workshops... all this has made the MBA a lifetime learning experience.

Figure 1: *Career development planning in a global world*

The questions in Figure 1 were introduced to students through the concept of a journey in which reflecting on aspects of Self was personally useful but also a hard-edged business need, useful for such things as articulating and demonstrating one's strengths (and limitations) during selection processes, in career or performance appraisals and situations that require self-presentation, self-management and appropriate interactions with others. Identifying one's unique mix of interests, abilities and attitudes would help to begin with the end in mind (Where do I want / need to be?), set goals and take stock of the current position (Where am I now?).

The language of SOAR encourages students to think of 'Self as Hero' and offers practical ways for each individual to be(come) positive, pro-active and productive in finding and navigating life-career directions and destinations. This SOAR ethos of 'self as hero' builds a positive self-image and self-efficacy beliefs, generating the personal agency that is needed for life, work and study in a competitive global world.

The researcher attended and observed Workshop 4, the topic of which was 'Career development and planning in a global world'. Prior to and during this workshop (as with every other workshop) students completed tasks and experienced a variety of methods in self-assessment, group discussion, tutor input and feedback, etc. The researcher – as the author of SOAR – and the tutor explained why and how SOARing for employability was beneficial. One student in her final assignment wrote that she had found this brief input most enlightening: the set of skills related to self-awareness, self-motivation and self-management became significant and linked with 'other-awareness' – understanding, motivating, leading and managing others – and that these attributes were inter-linked and essential in be(com)ing employable.

The workshop provided interactive opportunities for international students to contribute from their experiences and perspectives on business practice in their respective cities and country of origin, to clarify the following additional questions to the ones given in Figure 1:

- Where will I suitably fit in the world out there?
- Do I understand how life and work are changing (e.g. Labour Market Conditions in the context of the contemporary global knowledge economy)?
- Do I match up to the requirements? (e.g. personal implications for employment in the UK and also back in my country of origin)?

While the SOAR focus is on identifying, applying, developing and evidencing *strengths* it does not ignore the need to also address *development needs* and offers supportive learning environments while requiring students to select and engage developmentally with opportunities in learning, work and life. In this workshop students were engaged effectively with *reflection* and *planning* for the inter-linked purposes of personal, educational and career development. Additionally SOAR requires students to act upon, articulate and evaluate their strengths and development needs, proactively enhance their interests, skills and experiences in relation to tutor and employer requirements, and record their achievements as evidence for selectors as and when needed.

> *SOAR has helped me to identify how and where I stand in my career management and plan what are the various aspects which I have to target to reach the milestones in a smooth way. I now have clear future plans which will help me reach my targets.*

> *In the PPD sessions we underwent a series of tests which helped me a lot to realise my weakness and strong points in terms of shaping my career. The career development plan is based on the results of self-assessment, which was very helpful in identifying gaps in the personality of an individual to fulfil their prospective goals. I need to improve my crisis management and negotiation skills and can plan required improvements in these areas.*

The 'tests' referred to in this student's comment are not tests as such but often in the form of self-audits, which can be used as mini-maps to prompt and punctuate the journey through the MBA and beyond. Since every journey benefits from having appropriate **maps**, students are enabled to identify, critically appreciate and promote strengths that arise from their Self-**MAP**s (in this instance **MAP** stands for a composite unique profile that includes the essential dimensions of **M**otivation, **A**bility and **P**ersonality). The intersection and combination of Motivation (type and level of interests and values), Abilities (skills, knowledge, 'multiple intelligences') and Personal styles can be very complex and dynamic. Critically appreciating and building one's composite and unique Self-MAP requires complex learning, corresponding to analysis and synthesis in Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, S.B. 1994).

> *Aspiration for the long term: To be a top notch executive in a well known financial service company. Then later go on to start my own firm of consulting. My personal MAP is aligned with my aspirations, as I am motivated which is why I have undertaken this MBA program. My abilities are such that they can be developed to hold the position I seek, and my personality is very forward.*

> *My Personal MAP has helped me to understand the key important areas which I need to concentrate to improve my career path in the industry. I will pursue these.*

SOAR provides many self-audits related to developing employability, all of which ask the overarching question *How am I (and how can I be) effective in …* (for e.g. learning and improving, demonstrating a drive for results, planning and managing my time and work,

decision making, action planning, making presentations, team effectiveness, using my 'multiple intelligences' etc.) A significantly helpful feature of these is that they are expressed in terms of the behavioural competencies generically sought by graduate employers (informed by many employer surveys and reports, including interviews in India and China with graduate recruiters). These competencies are very similar to those needed in effective learning. Students are asked to rate themselves honestly and realistically against each item in the self-audit, alerting them to what they currently do (and can develop) in relation to effective behaviours that are important in current learning as well as future employment.

In this way the pedagogy, tools and suggestions for the process of Self-MAPping are informed and prompted by external frames of reference that encapsulate the requirements of tutors *and* employers. Some short and medium-term **R**esults of engaging in SOA**R** are therefore expressed and structured within curricula as Learning Outcomes, not by what students want but what they personally and collectively need in order to be(come) effective and productive, particularly in relation to one major Result at graduation: getting and maintaining employment aligned as far as possible with their MAP attributes and needs. This enables students to start with clear end-results or goals in mind and travel optimistically towards achieving them.

Students cannot claim they have skills 'in a vacuum' or as a tick-box paper exercise – they are further challenged to give real-life evidence to demonstrate behavioural competencies in different contexts. They can both identify their strengths where they always or frequently act in effective ways and also formulate their development plans around those behaviours that are important but seldom or never part of their repertoire. Such ratings are 'psychologically safe' as they do not lower self-esteem and can actually enhance self-efficacy by alerting students to actions they can take in available skills-development opportunities, with support if necessary.

> *After analysing the true facts about myself I have accepted the fact that reflection analysis has given a real picture about myself, it has given me an opportunity to explore myself as to what type of person I am, what are my current goals and where I am heading to. Now I have a strong will to achieve my goals and I have necessary action plan to attain that goals. There was a lot of learning from my feedback and also psychometric tests. This has helped me to develop my strengths, to convert my weaknesses into strengths and also to use my opportunities wisely to achieve my future goals and overcome my threats.*

When students reach transition points (e.g. when they apply for jobs), a vague and intuitive idea of their MAP profile encapsulated in a general CV is usually insufficient. Applicants will need to articulate and evidence the extent to which their personal MAP aligns with that required in the role to which they aspire. During interviews, assessment centre activities and performance appraisals, the MAP is an essential conceptual tool for self-promotion and demonstration of requisite knowledge and attributes.

One particular self-audit entitled *It's My Journey through Life – am I in the Driving Seat?* (Kumar, 2007: 37-40) was used to gather baseline data for this research and establish the starting points of MBA students in their career management skills (in Oct. 2010), against which progress was again assessed (in May 2011). The questionnaire corresponds with the SOAR elements, and alerts students to the skills and actions they need in order to take control of their life-career. The researcher attempted to make this self-audit do double duty as a research tool: it served in the first instance as a diagnostic aid for students' personalized and realistic learning, and later as an evaluative tool to measure change quantitatively. It appears to have achieved its aim for students:

I personally felt SOAR is one of most effective self-assessment forms. It actually helped to realise where I stand and where I am heading towards. It also clearly helped me to identify what are my weaknesses and potential threats that could halt my career progress. It was important to know as an individual weaknesses within you and external factors. It helped me to make long terms plans that align with my aspirations and analyse constraints in achieving the aspirations.

I felt that SOAR benefited me in identifying where I am now and what are my aims for the future, where my career is heading and how to be focused on the things I want and need to do. It helped me in identifying my long term goal and look out for options that will implement my aspirations.

As a research tool it did not yield any significant insights. A comparison between Time 1 and Time 2 self-ratings showed mostly small gains on most items rather than big jumps in development. The exception was with two students who initially rated many items 'poorly' and finally rated them 'optimally' – attributing vast improvements to the PPD experience.

Tutors built into PPD curricula opportunities for students to discuss and practise some of the effective behavioural competencies almost universally required by employers. There was a good deal of evidence from student assignments that they had appreciated and benefited from opportunities to develop their verbal presentation skills (e.g. through an 'elevator pitch' exercise). Groupwork was however described by some as affecting personal performance negatively and impacting on producing quality work in time for the deadline, especially because there were different ability levels and communication skills in the group. At the same time the importance of learning to motivate and value others when working in groups was recognised as an important business and leadership need.

New developments and different approaches

Student feedback to their tutor at the end of the course indicated they realised there was more potential in SOARing activity than they had had time to experience. They wanted more of it, and suggested it should be integral to the course as a fully accredited and assessed unit. This has resulted in upscaling and upgrading the SOAR/PPD components within the entire suite of Executive MBM courses, and these will be delivered to more than 500 students recruited in the new academic year. The expanded Unit is fully integral to the new MBM, carrying 30 credits as opposed to being optional. A new Handbook will be expressed more faithfully in SOAR terminology than previously. Self-assessment of career maturity will start even before students arrive: the self-audit *It's my Journey through Life* will be sent to them electronically, requiring completion as baseline information against which they will be able to later assess their development. The MBA will also be delivered in Singapore, so SOAR is soaring globally!

Notably in terms of international impact, the author has disseminated SOAR in many UK HEIs and in invited presentations overseas. She is soon to work collaboratively on a project in India, to develop a culturally specific and activity-led employability course framed by SOAR, in order to address the skills gap that has been identified there between academia and employment. The development is supported by prominent graduate recruiters in India and will benefit large cohorts of students from a range of HEIs there.

SOAR has largely proven its potential to amplify and translate modern perspectives on career and employability into design and delivery mechanisms that can be used by staff to enable students to develop a broad range of inter-linked generic graduate attributes, as a foundation for lifelong and life-wide learning. It has proved itself also as an overarching, transferable meta-model that can motivate and enable individuals to achieve more of their potential, and to do this with a greater sense of

personal intention, direction and destination. From the outcomes of this research it would appear to be effective in this way at the postgraduate level too, for students from other cultures – provided it is facilitated in context and linked with subject and/or occupation-specific relevant information.

It is hoped that these published findings will help other educators to:

- work towards common goals in developing 'global graduates', but in flexible and creative ways suited to their different disciplines and types of students;
- work in productive partnerships between academic and learning support staff;
- make best use of existing opportunities and resources;
- deliver SOAR effectively and further measure its suitability for and impact on their students, from their own experiences and perspectives;
- realise their own potential and life-career aspirations!

Acknowledgements:

My thanks are due to staff members Tricia Smart and Ajaz Hussain, and the 2010-11 cohort of MBA students at the University of Bedfordshire who consented to participate in this research.

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COMMUNICATION AND SOFT SKILLS - A STEPPING STONE FOR A BETTER CAREER

Abstract

Today's curriculum is embracing stimulating means of integrating language and communication skills with innovative technologies. These technologies help us teach new curriculum in a reciprocate manner. The Undergraduate Engineering students at Hindustan University undergo three levels of language teaching. They are Basic English Course for students of foreign origin, Remedial Course for students of Indian origin and Technical English Course and Communication Skills Course for both Indian and overseas students. With the emerging trends, the University has introduced technology based instruction methods through the computers, Internet, teleconferencing and soft skills training to produce industry-ready students.

Prior to introduction of the above tools, in the first year only 87% have qualified. The same batch of students in the III year have performed exceedingly well with no failures after the University has implemented technology driven teaching practices and online examination methods. The outcome of these measures was palpable. The paper presents a statistical analysis of learner achievements of 1200 students of the first batch (2008-09). To internationalise the curriculum and improve the learning process, periodic surveys are carried out and results obtained from the Likert Scale Analysis of a typical survey are also discussed in this paper.

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Introduction

English has emerged as a global language and the demand for the language is universal and youngsters from around the globe have realized that mastery in English would result in world wide recognition and better job prospects. Many students from overseas join the universities in India so as to attain mastery over the language. These overseas students are exposed to three types of English language class rooms. They are Basic English Course, Technical English Course and Communication Skills Course.

The University offers programmes to improve communication skills, guided by qualified and experienced faculty, with the help of state-of-the-art computer-interfaced language lab (listen-records, compare, monitor and intercommunication type). The labs enable the students to communicate better in presentation, interview, listening, reading, vocabulary, grammar, and conversation skills.

The paper discusses the wide-ranging methods including technological tools to develop communication skills in three distinct language classrooms employed by the language teacher. The dire need for the implementation of soft skills program as part of the curriculum also forms a part of the discussion in this paper. The main focus of this study is to analyse and evaluate the oral communication and soft skills needs of the engineering graduates so as to enhance their career prospects and frame a curriculum incorporating the aspects identifying the needs of the learners. The paper highlights the importance of soft skills and has identified five important skills to be implemented in all institutions of higher learning across the globe. They are:

- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Thinking skills
- Positive attitude
- Leadership skills

Theoretical Background

The theoretical background for the present study is discussed in this paper. The concepts of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), soft skills and needs analysis are briefly discussed here. Though the study looks at the broader perspective of soft skills, it also advocates that without oral proficiency in English language it is impossible for the engineering graduates to demonstrate any of the soft skills demanded by the their prospective recruiters. So it is appropriate to highlight the concepts of ESP, soft skills, needs analysis and the inter-relationship between them.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Munby (1978) argues that the most crucial problem for the syllabus designers in the field of language for specific purposes is to specify validly the target communication competence. He adds that the heart of the problem is the reluctance to begin with the learner rather than the text and the lack of a rigorous system for finding out the communicative needs that are prerequisite to the appropriate specification of what is to be taught.

It is very obvious from the above paragraph that Munby is advocating a learner-centered approach beginning with the setting of objectives and the actual process of implementation of the programme. It is also very evident from Munby's point of view that the learner should be the starting point of ESP syllabus design and the syllabus should begin with the identification of learner's needs.

Palmer (1964:129) says, "We cannot design a language course until we know something about the students for whom the course is intended, for a programme of study depends on the aim of the students". But most importantly the learners should be identified first in order to ascertain their needs. The present study, therefore, has given a lot of emphasis to needs analysis.

Communication skills and Soft Skills

The role of communication skills cannot be undermined when studying the corporate soft skills needs of the engineering graduates. It is important to note that the major language of corporate world is English and graduates all over the world who aspire to make it big in their career need to improve their English language proficiency. But one's language skills alone cannot make him / her successful in one's career as there are other soft skills like assertiveness, team management, presentation skills etc. too which are equally important. Soft skills are a set of skills that influence how we interact with each other. It includes personal and social skills like effective communication, creativity, analytical thinking, diplomacy, flexibility, change-readiness, problem-solving and listening skills. It also includes a lot of business skills like communication and presentation, leadership and management, human resources, sales and marketing, team building, professional development, project management, time management, customer service, administration and personal development. Wikipedia defines soft skills in the following way:

"Soft skills is a sociological term relating to a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), (Harms & Credé (2010)) the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities."

The importance of soft skills as distinct from hard skills is increasingly being recognized in several sectors of today's highly competitive world. Soft skills play a vital role in one's professional success. They help a professional to excel in the workplace and their importance cannot be denied in this age of information technology. Soft skills complement the hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job, and are essential for success in the challenging work place environment.

Role of English among learners:

Roe (1986) suggests three levels of motivation to learn English. 'Level One', the highest level, when English is required to obtain a degree or a desirable job or to get promotion. 'Level Two', is to improve exam grades or influence positively career prospects of the participants and 'Level Three' is where English could increase the student's chances of going abroad or widen his knowledge and interests. This system of levels assumes instrumental motivation (where English is seen as a means to achieving some practical or professional purpose) to be more important to success than integrative motivation (where the learner identifies with the social or cultural aspects of learning English). It is

generally assumed that ESP programmes, by their nature, tend to emphasize the instrumental aspect of a student's motivation.

According to this definition ESP should be seen as a device through which a learner could perform or play a role in a given context. In other words, the significance of ESP lies in its 'utility value'. However, Robinson (1980:13) gives primacy to the role of needs analysis in her definition to ESP. She adds a different dimension to the definition of ESP. She says that "We may say that an ESP course is purposeful and is aimed at the successful performance of occupational or educational roles. It is based on a rigorous analysis of needs and should be tailor-made."

Information about the learners' current language skills and their language use form a major data for needs analysis. It presents the proficiency of English of the participants in the present situation and will allow the researcher to assess their lacks. The next important criterion taken into account is the proficiency gap. It is all about the gap between the learners' current proficiency in English and the level of English proficiency demanded by their profession.

Two major approaches of Language Learning

Cognitive approaches to communicative language teaching are based on the view that learning a language is an individual psycholinguistic act. Technologies which support a cognitive approach to language learning are those which allow learners maximum opportunity to learn the language in meaningful context. Examples of these types of technologies include text-reconstruction software, concordance software, and multimedia simulation software. A cognitivist would be interested in grades but would also examine the effects of the computer program on student attitudes to computers or to the course material or would investigate the knowledge acquired about the subject matter (Thompson, Ann D., Simonson, Michael, R. & Hargrave, Constance, P. 1992)

At present, most of the language teachers in India encourage students to do online communication exercises and listen to audio files found on the net relating to their topics The Internet also serves as a powerful tool for assisting a sociocognitive approach to language teaching, which largely accounts for the new-found enthusiasm for using computers in the language classroom. Internet as well as the Web is used as tools in the design of Creative learning activities.

Language Classrooms

In India most of the engineering colleges and universities still follow the traditional methods of language teaching and the teacher student relationship plays a vital role. The teacher still utilizes the basic teaching tools such as blackboard, chalk and flipcharts. The teaching material used is the textbook prescribed that contains language-learning tasks meant for developing the four language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also contains tasks for learning grammar and improving vocabulary.

There is a transition in the teaching methodology and the focus is on communicative methodology. This entails students in Group Discussions, Role plays, Presentations and Debates and ensures participation of learners whereby they do not remain mere passive listeners in classrooms. Role of the language teachers are more of a facilitator and mentor. A language classroom serves as a good platform to provide ample scope for personal interaction with the students and teachers. However the teacher also faces several challenges in a classroom, as they have to handle students exhibiting fear and anxiety to use the language.

The language teachers have a specific responsibility to develop soft skills. Apart from developing communication skills steps should be taken by the language teacher to shed the anxiety and fear among the students to use the language.

Language Labs

The Language lab sessions are gradually forming part of the English syllabus in many engineering colleges in the country. The need for introduction of language lab sessions had risen to fulfil the goals of language teaching using technology in order to meet the demands of the recruiters. The primary objective of the language lab sessions is to develop effective speaking and listening skills, soft skills and people skills, which will make the transition from college to workplace smoother and help them to excel in their careers. The computer assisted language learning in the language labs provides ample opportunities for the students to develop their study skills. The underlying role of the language lab has not changed dramatically over time. The role is to help students to master their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in the target language. While the traditional role of the lab has not

changed significantly, both the technology of language labs and the teaching methodologies employed in language labs have changed dramatically. It is more supportive of communicative learning and student interactivity.

Three levels of English language teaching

Broadly the students are exposed to three levels of English language teaching at the Hindustan University. They are:

Basic English Course for overseas students from China, Korea, Nigeria, Liberia, Afghanistan, Oman, Libya, Nepal and Thailand. These students undergo language course before getting enrolled in the regular stream of engineering, management, arts and science course offered by the institution.

Technical English Course for the first year engineering undergraduates from various parts of India with different cultural and vernacular background

Communication Skills Course for the students of higher semester engineering graduates.

I. Basic English Course for overseas students

The University provides Basic English Course for the students from overseas. The primary goal is to make the students comfortable with the environment and help the students to cope up with the cultural dissimilarity. A course co-coordinator caters to the needs of the overseas students and interacts with the subject teachers so that a receptive environment is first established.

Features of the Course

The Basic course in English is for six months. It was designed for students from Non-English speaking countries and is offered as a Bridge Course. This is to upgrade their level of proficiency to take up higher studies with confidence.

Course Structure

The main objectives of the English course are to impart the four language skills. The course focuses on Grammar, language, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The lab sessions includes learning correct pronunciation, listening to BBC News, Internet News and Video clips and Phonetic lessons.

Learners Profile

The participants who enrolled in the Basic English course (Batch 2008-2012) were 17-19 years of age. They were educated in schools of their respective nation. The goal to enrol in the course is to acquire proficiency in the target language and pursue the regular engineering programmes offered by the University.

Data gathering: Informal discussions

The researcher conducted an informal discussion with a random group of 40 students (comprising Omanis, Chinese, Africans and Middle East students) after the completion of the Basic English Course. The questions were based on the reasons for enrolling in the Basic English course and it also focussed on the specific areas that the course should concentrate according to the needs of the target learners. The students responses were recorded, quantified and analysed for better interpretation and understanding.

The important findings of the informal discussion are presented briefly here. The students opined that they joined the course to be more confident in the use of English language before joining the graduate course. Their goal was to improve the fluency in spoken English, develop vocabulary and learn to frame grammatically correct sentences. Enhance their career prospects and build on personal knowledge base.

A majority of the students expressed their views that the Course apart from developing the four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing should include specific areas of development of the personality of the students such as motivation, assertiveness, stress management, time management, thinking skills and creativity

The above data clearly indicates that the students have given prime importance for developing communication skills before joining the graduate programme. It is interesting to note that the students have emphasised the importance of soft skills such as developing the personality prior to enhancing their career prospects and developing personal knowledge base.

II Technical English Course for the first year engineering undergraduates

The students from a regional medium background every year join various engineering disciplines in several colleges and deemed universities in Tamil Nadu. In addition, the intake of engineering

students from other parts of the country has also increased several fold. The majority of these young engineering graduates find it as a complex task to cope with the demands of English language. The cultural conundrum is a common feature in every classroom. The students have a varied degree of English language proficiency, and the language teachers have an onerous task of coaching this diverse group of students. As a consequence, the environment in a classroom has become a challenging one for the teacher to handle multinational, multi lingual and multi cultural background of students. A remedial course in English is administered before the commencement of the regular course. The general objectives of the course are designed to help the students to learn grammar components and express themselves effectively in English. The aim is also to enable the students to develop effective reading, speaking and listening skills. The activities such as conversational practice in different situations, role plays, presentation and description forms a part of the course.

About the Technical English Course

The Technical English Course is conducted for the first year engineering students. The objectives of the course are to improve practice in realizing the meaning potential of a text and to make the learners become familiar with different reading strategies and to develop their communication skills. To help the learners acquire study skills and train them on academic and professional writing.

Course Structure

The main objectives of the Technical English course are to impart the four language skills. The theory classes are conducted in the classrooms and the lab sessions in the language lab.

The following components form part of the syllabus of the Technical English Course it comprises vocabulary development, listening comprehension, grammar and exercises related to reading skills and writing skills. The classroom activities also includes role plays, group discussions, mock interviews, brain storming sessions etc.,

Language lab sessions

The lab sessions includes learning correct pronunciation listening to native speakers of English listening to video cd's and answering the questions after viewing the video lessons that tests the listening skills. The teachers act as facilitators and encourage the students to repeat the words with correct pronunciation.

The students are not administered examinations pertaining to the sessions conducted in the language lab. The students performance is based on the periodical tests, assignments and final theory examination conducted at the end of the course.

Learners Profile

The 1200 students (Batch 2008-2012) of various batches such as Mechanical, Aeronautical, Automobile, Civil, Information Technology, Electronics and Communication Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Electronics and instrumentation engineering and Computer Science Engineering enrolled in the first year of Technical English course.

III Communication skills Course for the fifth semester

The Language lab sessions are gradually forming part of the English syllabus in many engineering colleges in the country. The need for introduction of language lab sessions had risen to fulfil the goals of language teaching using technology in order to meet the demands of the recruiters. The primary objective of the language lab sessions is to develop effective speaking and listening skills, soft skills and people skills, which will make the transition from college to workplace smoother and help them to excel in their careers. The computer assisted language learning in the language labs provides ample opportunities for the students to develop their study skills.

About the Course:

The objectives of the Communication Skills lab course are to equip students of engineering and technology with effective speaking and listening skills in English. Help them develop their soft skills and people skills, which will make the transition from University to workplace smoother and help them excel in their jobs. The course also focuses on enhancing the students' performance at placement interviews, Group Discussions and other recruitment exercises.

Learners Profile

The 1200 students (Batch 2008-2012) of various batches such as Mechanical, Aeronautical, Automobile, Civil, Information Technology, Electronics and Communication Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Electronics and instrumentation engineering and Computer Science

Engineering enrolled in the 5th semester Communication Skills Lab Course in the year 2011.The same batch of students completed the Technical English Course in the year 2009.

Data gathering

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered to 1200 students (Batch 2008-12) enrolled in various engineering programmes offered by the University after the completion of the first year Technical English Course. A questionnaire (Appendix B) was administered to 1200 students of the same batch of students (Batch 2008-12) after the completion of the Communication Skills course offered during the Vth Semester.

Learning Effectiveness

The criteria to assess the learning effectiveness included test scores, student satisfaction, student motivation and faculty satisfaction. Test scores, questionnaires and focus groups were the primary data sources for analysis.

Table: 1

Subject Name	Branch	Total No: of students	Total No: of Students registered (NR)	No: of students passed (NP)	No: of students failed	Pass Percentage PP=NP/NR*100	Overall pass percentage
Technical English	Mechanical	229	229	195	34	85.17	87.2
	Aeronautical	209	209	199	10	92.52	
	Automobile	60	60	46	14	77.59	
	Civil	74	74	66	8	89.47	
	I.T.	154	154	129	25	83.77	
	ECE	224	224	205	19	91.96	
	EEE	65	65	54	11	83.78	
	EIE	65	65	60	5	92.96	
	CSE	129	129	113	16	88.32	

Table 1. Provides the test score analysis of the academic year 2008-09(Batch 2008-2012) students of the first year in the Technical English Course

87% of students passed in the Technical English course during the first year as shown in the Table 1.

Table 2.

Subject Name	Branch	Total No: of students	Total No: of Students registered (NR)	No: of students passed (NP)	No: of students failed	Pass Percentage PP=NP/NR*100	Overall pass percentage
Communication Skills Course	Mechanical	229	229	229	NIL	100%	100%
	Aeronautical	209	209	209			
	Automobile	60	60	60			
	Civil	74	74	74			
	I.T.	154	154	154			
	ECE	224	224	224			
	EEE	65	65	65			
	EIE	65	65	65			
	CSE	129	129	129			

Table 2. Provides the test score analysis of the academic year 2010-11(Batch 2008-2012) students of the Vth Semester in Communication Skills Course.

Statistical analysis of the performance in the online examinations and career lab (testing presentation skills and group discussions) conducted for the same batch of students in their fifth semester. 100% passed in the Communication skills course.

Student Satisfaction: The students in both groups completed a questionnaire after their course. The questionnaire used a Likert type scale from 1to 4 where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 4 represents "strongly agree". Researchers consider a score between 2.5 and 4 as positive. Scores below 2.5 are considered negative.

Both the groups of students were given a 10-item section (identical on both questionnaires) to gather data on attitudes in five categories: learning, environment, interaction, satisfaction and technology.

1200 students were administered questionnaire. In the data set for the first questionnaire, three categories received a positive rating (2.5 to 4 on the scale) the learning and satisfaction categories showed negative ratings (< 2.5 on the scale)

Appendix A: Questionnaire was administered to First year engineering graduates of Hindustan University (Batch 2008-2012)

The data showed positive overall mean scores for each of the categories. There were five items in the learning and satisfaction categories that received less favourable ratings.

Item 2: The course gives ample space and time for building personal knowledge base

Item 6: The course provides opportunities to develop communication skills using technology.

Item 7: The course provides exercises related to experiential learning

Item 8: The course caters to the skills set requirement of the recruiters

Item 9: I am content with the written examinations at the end of the course

The online group had a 10-item section to gather data on attitudes in five categories: learning, environment, interaction, satisfaction and technology.

Appendix B: Questionnaire administered to Vth Semester engineering graduates of Hindustan University (Batch 2008-2012)

In the data set for the questionnaire(Appendix B) for the online group after the completion of the course, the data revealed positive overall mean scores for each of the categories.

However few items in the learners satisfaction category had (<2.5 score) ratings.

Item 2: The course gives ample space and time for building personal knowledge base

Item 7: The course provides exercises related to experiential learning

Item 8: The course caters to the skills set requirement of the recruiters

When comparing the data in both categories on the criteria of satisfaction, it is clear that student satisfaction was high in the online group. The test scores of both the groups validates this aspect. There are few common elements of comment from both the groups that there was lack of time for reflection on their learning, lack of experiential exercises and training in skills as demanded by the prospective recruiters.

The majority of the students are of the opinion that the first year Technical English Course should incorporate soft skills and meet the expectations of the employers. The students have given prime importance to incorporate online examination methods using technology to enhance their performance. The survey results indicate that both the online group and the classroom group demonstrated positive ratings regarding both mediums of delivery. The survey results also substantiate the fact that the students have realised the importance of soft skills training in order to get a good placement. The students have opined that the communication skills lab course has been useful and the relation between the teacher, taught and the technology is appropriate. The students are confident that this course would help to get good placement and the students are of the opinion that online examinations and soft skills training should be introduced in the first year of the engineering course. However the data also shows that there are limitations in the communication skills course as the students observed that there is no specific modules in the course that teaches how the learnt skills can be utilised in real life situations. The experiential exercises are not included in the course.

Pre-placement Training Programme

Two weeks pre-placement training programme was implemented for the students of the Batch 2008-12.Pre-Training test was administered testing the aptitude and soft skills before the training programme the test scores indicated the limitation of specific skill sets related to the soft skills. The students had good scores in presentation skills and group discussions. The students were trained by soft skill trainers for a short period and then the post training test was administered. The performance

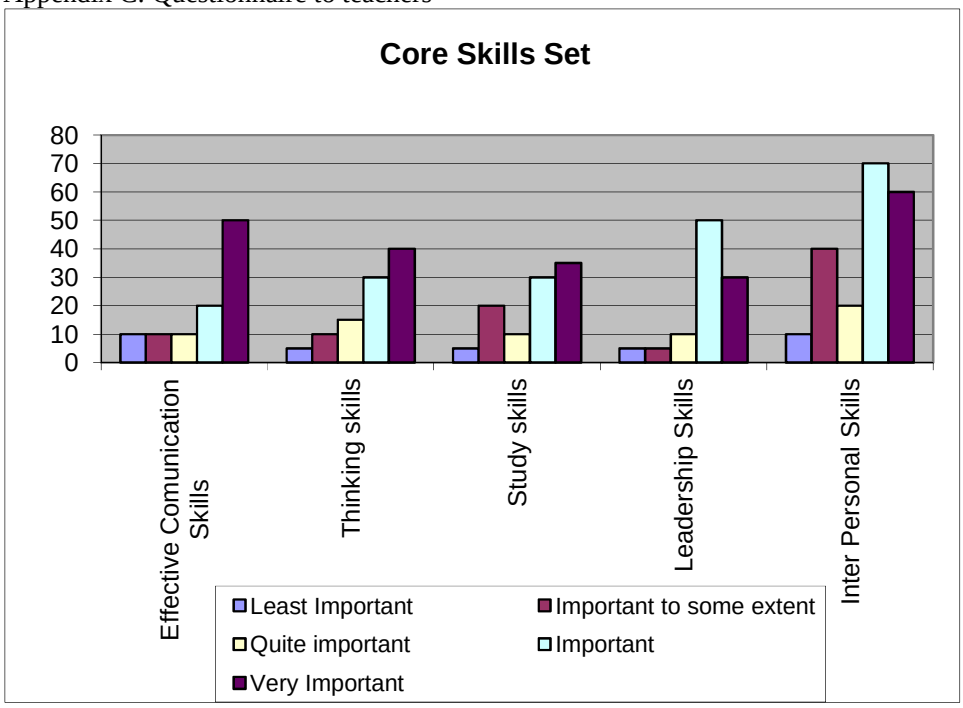
of the students in the test scores indicated improvement in specific soft skills. The researcher collected the data required for analysing the training effectiveness. The participants proficiency in oral communication and soft skills was measured by Kirkpatrick's needs (2006) four levels of training effectiveness. They are reaction , learning, behaviour and result. The reaction level was based on the satisfaction of the learners about the training programme; the learning level was basically about how much the participants have increased their proficiency in a particular skill after the training programme; the behaviour level is all about the change in attitude and behaviour with respect to their interpersonal skills after the training programme. The feedback from the students after informal discussions indicated that the students were of the opinion that pre-placement training programmes should be implemented in the first year of the engineering course.

Teachers feedback

The interpretations of the data of the questionnaire administered to the teachers handling the engineering courses indicate that 60% of the teachers agree that interpersonal skills are very important for the target learners. 50% are of the opinion that effective communication skills are very important. This is followed by the rest of skills namely thinking skills, study skills and leadership skills. The analysis indicates the importance of interpersonal skills.

It has been demonstrated that people learn better when they watch other people learn and can also hear the feedback given by instructor to the performer (McCullagh, P. & Caird, J. K. 1990).

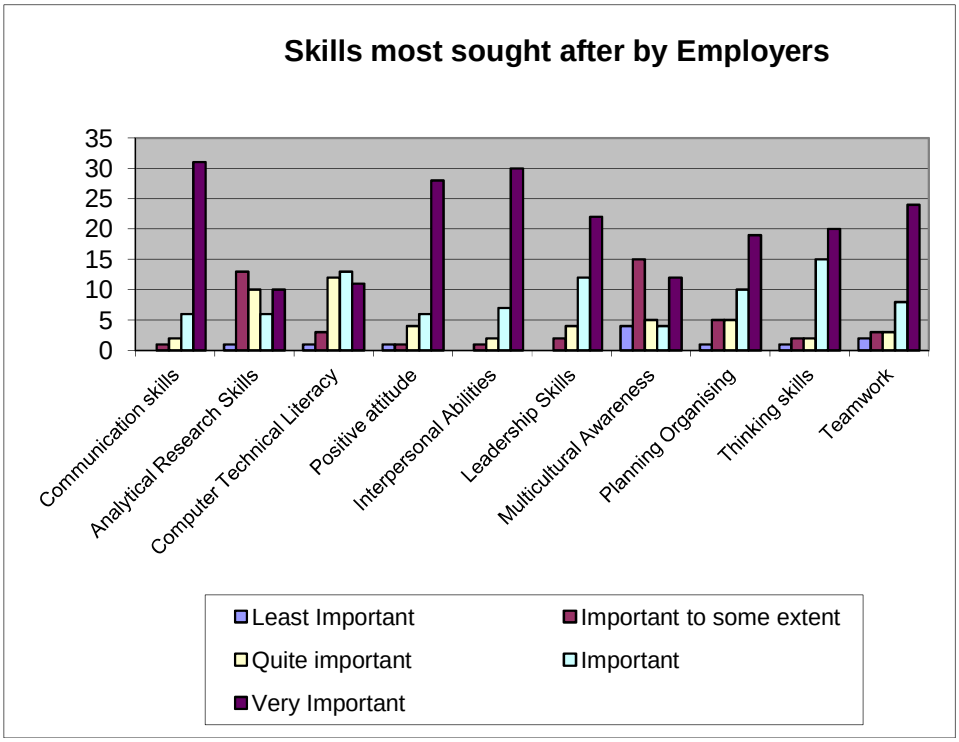
Appendix C: Questionnaire to teachers



Appendix: D Questionnaire administered to the employers during the recruitment drive at Hindustan University.

Interpretation of the Data:

It is observed that the employers rank effective communication skills as the core skills. This is followed by interpersonal skills, thinking skills, leadership skills and study skills.



Analysis of the above data:

The most sought after skills by the employers are communication skills, interpersonal abilities, positive attitude, team work, leadership skills , planning and organising skills.

Based on the feedback survey, obtained from the students, staff and recruiters it has been observed that communication skills and soft skills need to be implemented in all institutions of higher learning. Modules of learning that is most appropriate to incorporate in the curriculum of the engineering course should focus on aspects that enhance the personality traits, challenge the students to think out of the box, help to be successful in interview and also overcome the challenges in workplace.

The feedback from the employers indicated that though the test scores in the communication skills course showed 100% results compared to the pass percentage of 87% in the Technical English course, there were limitations as the students faced difficulties during the recruitment process as they exhibited lack of specific skill sets sought by the recruiters. The curriculum designers of the University have realized that the communication skills training module and the soft skills training are not a single step process and it is best started in the freshmen year and is also taught in the entire degree programme, this gives ample time and scope to put into practice the skills learnt. The communication and soft skills is an essential tool for achieving sustainability and success in career worldwide. An effective communication skill helps to deliver the idea clearly, effectively and with confidence either orally or in writing. Critical thinking and problem solving skills helps to think beyond and also it helps to have the ability to understand and accommodate oneself to the varied working environment. Interpersonal skills help to build a good rapport, interact and work effectively as a team. Leadership skills pertain to the ability to understand and take the responsibility of a leader. Many research studies have shown that to be successful in the workplace, technical skills alone are not enough. Soft skills are also needed to deal with the external world. In the highly competitive corporate world, it is one's soft skills that give one an edge over others. Many studies have shown that long term job success for any professional is mainly due to one's soft skills rather than one's technical skills.

Arunsimha (2008) classifies soft skills as core soft skills and corporate soft skills. The core soft skills are the skills related to personal qualities such as responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management and integrity. These skills define the human side of doing business and are very

critical in building the mental resilience required to handle the dynamic dimensions of the corporate world. The corporate soft skills are interpersonal skills such as effective communication, delegation, negotiation, decision making and team building. The core soft skills form the premise to develop corporate soft skills.

Soft skills are increasingly sought out in the business world in addition to standard qualifications. Vijay Sai (2008) says that the core soft skills are those that are required for 'life' and that the corporate soft skills are for a 'living'.

Well-documented studies conducted by Harvard University and Stanford Research Institute report that technical skills and knowledge contribute to only 15 per cent of one's success while soft skills make up the remaining 85 per cent (Ratan ,2005). People who rank highly with good soft skills, are generally the people that most employers want to hire, retain and promote. Technical and job-related skills are a must, but they are NOT sufficient when it comes to progressing up the ladder. Superior performance depends on how well an individual handles himself / herself and others around the workspace. Soft skills therefore complement the hard skills.

Conclusion:

The paper discusses at length the wide-ranging methods that are employed by the language teacher in three distinct language classrooms. The techniques used in the three language classrooms had some common features. These common features are introduced deliberately, but with increasing degree of complexity considering the employability requirements. The feedback survey brought out that use of technological tools to develop communication skills in all three categories was found to be an excellent strategy. The soft skills and life skills such as positive attitude, team spirit, confidence, motivation, time and stress management, critical thinking etc. were recognized as imperative requirements of the hour. These skills have to be taught throughout the undergraduate programme to make them industry ready and employable at a global level. Communication and soft skills modules should find a place in the Language course of all higher institutions around the globe. Innovative classroom exercises should find a place in the international curriculum specifically designed to meet the learners' needs of the engineering graduates at a global level. The curriculum that is most ideal to suit the learners' needs should incorporate experiential exercises and develops specific soft skills through the medium of English language. English language is the global and universal language most sought after by recruiters all over the world. In spite of changes in the curriculum, the proper strategy will be to constantly update the needs analysis of the target learners by carrying out surveys and feedback sessions for more effective and efficient learning, thereby enhancing the career prospects of the engineering graduates in all higher institutions.

Appendix A

Questionnaire for first year engineering students at the end of the Technical English Course

Using the following scale, please circle the number that best expresses your opinion of the course.

Item.No.	Opinions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I am comfortable with face-to-face instruction	1	2	3	4
2.	The course gives ample space and time for building personal knowledge base	1	2	3	4
3.	I am able to express my opinion freely	1	2	3	4
4.	I feel the content in this programme is relevant	1	2	3	4
5.	The interactions between myself and instructors are useful	1	2	3	4
6.	The course provides opportunities to develop communication skills using technology	1	2	3	4
7.	The course provides exercises related to experiential learning	1	2	3	4
8.	The course caters to the skills set requirement of the recruiters	1	2	3	4
9.	I am content with written examinations at the end of the course	1	2	3	4
10.	I am achieving the objectives of the programme through face –to-face instruction	1	2	3	4

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Vth Semester engineering students at the end of the Communication Skills Course.

Using the following scale , please circle the number that best expresses your opinion of the course .

Item.No.	Opinion	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I am comfortable with face-to-face instruction and Computer Assisted Learning Technology	1	2	3	4
2.	The course gives ample space and time for building personal knowledge base	1	2	3	4
3.	I am able to express my opinion freely	1	2	3	4
4.	I feel the content in this programme is relevant	1	2	3	4
5.	The interactions between myself and instructors are useful	1	2	3	4
6.	The course provides opportunities to develop communication skills using technology	1	2	3	4
7.	The course provides exercises related to experiential learning	1	2	3	4
8.	The course caters to the skills set requirement of the recruiters	1	2	3	4
9.	I am content with the online examinations at the end of the course	1	2	3	4
10.	I am achieving the objectives of the programme through computer assisted learning and face –to-face instruction	1	2	3	4

Appendix- C Questionnaire for Teachers

This questionnaire is designed to obtain background information regarding the skill sets expected from the engineering graduates by the teachers after the completion of the English Course.

Name of the teacher:
Professional Qualification:
Professional Experience:
Presently working:
Others:
Membership of professional bodies / organizations:

Kindly rate the skills under each category according to the assessment of importance on a Likert Scale
1-least important
2-important to some extent
3-quite important
4-important
5-very important

Core Skills set sought by the teachers

S. No	**Skills Description**	**Likert Scale Frequency**				
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	Effective Communication Skills					
2	Thinking skills					
3	Study skills					
4	Leadership Skills					
5	Inter personal skills					

Appendix D

Questionnaire for Employers

This questionnaire is designed to obtain background information regarding the skill sets expected from the engineering graduates by the employers when they recruit the students.

Name of the Company:
Nature of Business:

Kindly rate the skills under each category according to the assessment of importance on a Likert Scale
Least important
Important to some extent
Quite important
Important
Very important

Skills most sought after by employers

S.No	**Sub Skills Description**	**Likert Scale Frequency**				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Communication skills / Presentation skills					
2	Analytical / Research Skills					

3	Computer / Technical Literacy					
4	Flexibility / Adaptability / Managing Multiple Priorities.					
5	Interpersonal Abilities					
6	Leadership / Management Skills.					
7	Multicultural Sensitivity / Awareness					
8	Planning / Organizing					
9	Problem-Solving / Reasoning / Creativity					
10	Teamwork					

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ACHIEVING HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATE ATRIBUTES IN THE AREA OF CREATIVITY, INNOVATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING THROUGH THE USE OF DESIGN THINKING

Abstract

The paper examines issues related to achieving generic graduate attributes at the discipline subject level in the areas of innovation, creativity and problem solving through the application of design thinking frameworks. The paper explores the literature in the field of graduate attributes and then outlines important aspects of design thinking theory and finally provides a glimpse of how elite universities are implementing design thinking strategies. This approach does not involve the application of a specific design thinking framework – instead it advocates the selection of design thinking frameworks to suit particular contexts.

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A major focus of presentations in the QSAPPLE conference stream of 'Internationalising the Curriculum' has concerned generic graduate attributes that universities or employers value in relation to graduates' ability to enter the workforce equipped with skills that enable them to work globally and effectively. Graduate attributes have been defined by Barrie (2007) as the "skills, knowledge and abilities of university graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable in a range of contexts and are acquired as a result of completing any undergraduate degree" (p.440). Bath, Smith, Stein and Swann (2004) pointed out that these attributes or qualities include critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, problem-solving, logical and independent thought, communication and information management skills, intellectual rigour, creativity and imagination, ethical practice, integrity and tolerance" (pp. 313-314). This paper will examine some important aspects of the push to embed graduate qualities in the higher education curriculum and how design thinking frameworks may provide an effective means of achieving skills in areas where a creative and innovative mindset are required. While it is a relatively easy matter for universities to include explicit graduate qualities as an intended outcome of their courses, it may be a lot more difficult to achieve anything substantial beyond a surface acknowledgement of their importance and a presence in policy documents. To achieve the development of such attributes, learning tasks that strongly contribute to the desired skill and mindset development must be embedded in discipline specific subjects.

Undoubtedly, some pressure has emanated from international employers keen to recruit graduates who possess more than subject knowledge and professional skills. They also require employees who possess the kind of attributes outlined by Bath et al (2004). Harvey (2000) argues that graduate qualities are linked to the 'employability agenda'. Hesketh (2000, p.246) argues "while not all of the problems can be placed at the door of higher education, employer dissatisfaction with the attributes of the individuals they recruit from our universities cannot be ignored". A consistent theme in the literature concerning graduate attributes has been the emphasis placed on fostering innovative and creative mindsets in students and providing them with strategies that enable them to achieve outcomes that involve different paths and solutions to new problems. Barrie (2007, p.440) claims that innovation and creativity "lie at the heart of all scholarly learning and knowledge, with the potential to transform the knowledge they are part of and to support the creation of new knowledge and transform the individual". Bath et al (2004, p.314) determined that four main factors have contributed to the growing importance of generic attributes in higher education and concluded that "this emerging importance of generic skills, or graduate attributes, in higher education has been influenced by at least the following three factors: the popular perspective that education is a lifelong process; a greater focus

on the relationship between education and the employment of graduates; and the development of outcome measures as a part of the quality movement".

Policy makers and higher education researchers have agreed about the importance of graduate qualities and these aspirations have been accepted and implemented on the surface but confusion occurs about the concept and how to embed graduate qualities in courses – and therefore the reality is not as it seems on the surface. Green, W., Hammer, S. & Star (2009) maintain that governments, business and universities have all underestimated the profound changes that would be necessary within universities to really make this happen. Policies can exist at the university wide level but ensuring that these policies are enacted at the discipline subject level is another matter. Practical means of achieving student development in these graduate attributes such as innovation and creativity include the design of learning experiences that directly impact on student learning in particular areas. One learning framework for solving problems or designing products in creative and innovative ways is design thinking. The following section will define and provide information on design thinking and then outline examples where design thinking has been embedded successfully in the curricula of world leading universities.

Nigel Cross (2011, p.3) contends that design thinking is an integral part of the human condition and expands on this in his book by pointing out that "everyone can – and does – design. We all design when we plan for something new to happen, whether that might be a new version of a recipe, a new arrangement of living room furniture, or a new layout of a personal web page. The evidence from different cultures around the world … suggests that everyone is capable of designing. So design thinking is something inherent within human cognition; it is a key part of what makes us human." Dunn and Martin (2006, p.517) define design thinking "as the way designers think: the mental processes they use to design objects, services or systems, as distinct from the end result of elegant and useful products. Design thinking results from the nature of design work: a project based work flow around 'wicked' problems." This takes design thinking out of the realm of merely creating a product to using the process as a means to solve complex problems such as climate change or social problems. Dunn and Martin present a cycle of stages of design thinking including: Abduction, Deduction, Testing and Induction.

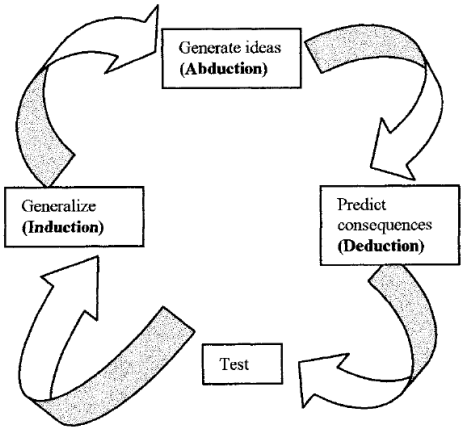

FIGURE 1
The Cycle of Design Thinking

From Dunn and Martin (2006, p.518)
Explicit steps are typically used as guides in design thinking frameworks, such as: understand (the user and the system); observe, point of view; ideate; prototype and test (Carroll, et al., 2010). More complex and nuanced explicit steps such as those developed by Beckman and Barry (2007) have been designed for specific industry applications but the simpler steps used by Carroll and colleagues in school-based education and Bell (2008) in library and library services design are more appropriate as a way of introducing design thinking to tertiary students. Design thinking differs from previous approaches to developing innovative mindsets due to its emphasis on focusing the learner on empathy

and understanding the systems and users at the beginning of the process. Although explicit steps such as those outlined by Bell (2008) and Carroll et al (2010) have great potential as a means of introducing design thinking to undergraduate students at the subject level, it must be kept in mind that such steps are useful in early phases and that as designers they will go beyond such simplistic steps. Rowe (p.4) warned of this back in 1987 when he argued that "there is no such thing as the *design* process in the restricted sense of an ideal step-by-step technique. Rather, there are many different styles of decision making, each with individual quirks as well as manifestations of common characteristics." Although explicit steps may not be the ideal design process, they do provide a scaffold for students to start applying a designerly way of thinking in order to solve complex problems – often referred to in the design thinking literature as 'wicked problems'.

In recent design thinking models, the design approach is applied more broadly than producing a product, leading proponents to claim that the approach is useful in solving a wide range of problems (Brown, 2008). Design thinking has been used in expected areas such as art, engineering and business but also in climate change, medicine, library services and sustainability (Dunne & Martin, 2006; Dym, Agogino, Eris, Frey & Leifer, 2005; Senturer & Istek, 2000; Uehira & Kay, 2009). To illustrate this use of design thinking, some examples will be now briefly presented to illustrate examples where design thinking has been implemented in the higher education environment.

Dym, C., Agogino, A., Eris, O., Frey, D. & Leifer, L. (2005, p.103) from University of California at Berkeley, Stanford University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the area of engineering believe that that "the purpose of engineering education is to graduate engineers who can design, and that design thinking is complex." They outline how design thinking is integrated in their engineering programs in ways that scaffold students undertaking complex processes of inquiry, including working collaboratively in teams using a PBL (problem-based learning) approach. Martin and Dunn (2006) discuss the use of design thinking in business management courses at the University of Toronto. Martin (p.513) claims that "today's business people don't need to understand designers better, they need to become designers". Roger Martin, who was dean of the Joseph Rotman School of Management at the time of writing, maintained that business education needed to become more like design education and implemented curriculum reform in the MBA program to ensure that students used facets of design thinking such as 'abductive' reasoning to solve complex problems.

Oxman (2004, p.63) outlined a design framework he termed 'think maps' as a means of scaffolding students' design processes in undergraduate architecture. He described this as a "pedagogical framework for design learning and design teaching." Beckman and Barry (2007) use what they call 'second generation' design theory to enhance learning in the business school at the University of California, Berkeley. Second generation design theories emphasise the social nature of the design process. They contend that "this social process accommodated a less top-down view of the design process and relied less on experts to provide the solutions, instead engaging a broader range of players. Design then shifted from a clear-cut problem-solving process to a problem-formulating process in which getting to a collectively acceptable starting point (so that appropriate resources could be committed to solving the problem) was the core of the effort (p.26)." This 'starting point' in design theory involves gaining a comprehensive understanding of the user or potential user and the systems that they work/live in.

The subject 'Design Thinking and Innovation' is part of the Harvard Business School, MBA program. Harvard is consistently ranked 1st in various university ranking schemes and their MBA ranks as one of the world's premier MBA programs. Datar (2012, n.p.) writes that "the core objective of the course is to help students develop design thinking skills including problem finding and problem framing, gaining customer insights, design thinking and innovative problem solving methods and approaches, identifying innovative individuals, forming innovative teams and building innovative cultures." A follow-up subject is available where students undertake a project and use design thinking approaches in order to scaffold their completion of planning and conducting the project. Datar explains that "the key is to develop an actionable point of view that addresses the following questions: Who should be the target users? What do they need? How do you know? The module will then explore various techniques of brainstorming and idea generation such as mind mapping, nominal group techniques, reversal techniques, rotating attention, lateral thinking, forced relationships, use of analogies, and attribute analysis, used by design firms such as IDEO, Design Continuum, and Systematic Inventive

Thinking." Many other examples of embedding design thinking in graduate and undergraduate subjects can be found, albeit in world leading, innovative universities, however this small sample serves as an illustration.

This paper has discussed the growing importance of graduate attributes in higher education, including the demands from employees that graduates should possess skills that transcend basic subject content. It has been established that developing innovative and creative mindsets is a graduate attribute that is particularly important for sustainable and productive future global development. A clear definition of design thinking has been presented along with several specific frameworks that can scaffold beginner's use of design thinking processes. These same frameworks have been successful in more complex situations such as designing new types of libraries and library services (Bell) or to foster innovation in companies such as IDEO and Apple. Although the paper has taken a positive view on the potential of design thinking it has not been entirely uncritical and has acknowledged the concern from some leading design theorists that complexity of design processes cannot be reduced to simple, explicit steps. Although this critique has obvious validity, the frameworks presented in this paper have been successfully used as an introduction in school-based education (Anderson & Courtney 2011, Anderson 2012, Carroll et al 2010), in tertiary education (Datar 2012), in business (Brown 2008) and library services (Bell 2008) and as a scaffold for solving complex industry based problems. This critique should remind us that many different frameworks are possible that have particular value in different contexts and that experienced designers may not need or use particular frameworks as they could regard such scaffolds as overly restrictive. In addition, explicit frameworks or steps may prove to be especially useful as a means of scaffolding students' creative processes in the earlier stages of courses. Another critique is that design thinking definitions are unclear, confusing and under-developed (Kimbell, 2009). The definitions provided earlier in this paper are quite suitable for the purposes of integrating design thinking in graduate and undergraduate programs but as the design thinking concept evolves through practical applications and academic research, no doubt, definitions and practice will improve and be supported by an expanding empirical body of evidence. If differences or lack of clarity in definitions was a serious impediment to implementing innovative concepts, then many areas would be subject to paralysis. Finally, the paper presents a short and non-exhaustive review of how design thinking has been embedded in the curricula of world leading universities. Future research should focus on determining if these relatively new programs are successful in producing outstanding student outcomes.

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ONLINE LEARNING – ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND INTERACTION

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Abstract

Information and communication technology (ICT) has touched education in a significant and meaningful way. The availability of computers, the Internet and hand-held cell phones with Internet capabilities are pushing the envelope further in its application and use. The student group and the younger generation have embraced ICT as an entertainment, information and socialization tool. This offers a great potential for the educational community to harness to push the frontiers of education into cyberspace. This has resulted to an evolving online learning paradigm which offers a lot of promise and potential of enhancing the frontiers of learning. Teachers are obligated to carry the banner for quality and good practice in the adoption of ICT thru online learning which may result in challenging current trends and practices. The paper discusses the journey that the author has undertaken in adopting online learning in the subjects he handles in DLSU's MBA program. The author is convinced that online learning has enhanced not only his but his students' educational experience and created greater awareness and appreciation of ICT's role in effecting the meaningful change.

Introduction/Background

"Technology has brought people closer and bridged the geographic gap. The Internet has allowed us access to a tremendous amount of information at our fingertips. It has also made us connect to a lot of people thru the e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, among others by just being in front of a work station. And the access frontier is being pushed further with powerful handheld cell phones that can do most of the functions that desktops and laptops perform." (Berino, 2006).

Internet users. According to Internet World Statistics, there are over 2B internet users (IU) worldwide as of Mar. 2011 (Internet World Statistics, 2011a). That represents 30.2% of the total world population estimated at 6.9B. Internet use grew by 480% in the period 2000-2011. Asia had the highest number of IU at 922M but with a penetration rate of only 23.8%. North America posted the highest penetration at 78% with 272M IU.

In the Philippines, IU in 2010 was placed at 29M (Internet World Statistics, 2011b) for a penetration rate of 29.7%. This is a marked increase from 2000's 2M IU and 2% penetration rate. Digital Filipino.com projects IU users for the country to be 41M by 2014, a 10% per annum growth rate for the period 2010-2014 (Toral, 2007). A study revealed that almost 30% of the highest income decile own a computer (Tuano, 2009). Although ownership is almost non-existent among the poorest class (Tuano, 2009), access is not a particular concern since people can access computers and the internet thru internet cafes which has mushroomed all over, as well as in schools and offices.

In a non-random sampling method, an AC Nielsen survey reveals how Filipinos use the internet (Reyes, 2003). Of the 8,000 respondents surveyed online, 95% access the internet to send and read email; 64% use it to read the news; 60% access it to download software; 50% search for jobs; and 49% to surf and experiment. The results show Filipinos use the internet mainly to communicate rather than for educational purposes. Hence, the internet's potential as an empowering educational tool remains largely untapped (Trinidad, 2003). Academic and research-related activities in the Web were in the 8th rank at 46% while self-education came in 12th at 36% (Reyes, 2003).

It has been asserted that the internet is an empowering tool that promises to "school the illiterate, bring job training to the unskilled, open a universe of wondrous images and knowledge to all students, and enrich the understanding of the learner (Ho, 2001). Trinidad (2003) adds the following:

> "It offers the wide public an unparalleled access to a vast store of information and knowledge. It is considered as a harbinger of social change. The empowerment and enfranchisement of individuals through knowledge and information could spur social change that can break barriers that divide societies and nations. These processes allow people, particularly the poor and disenfranchised, to have the same access to education as everyone else."

Cell phone statistics. Ownership and use of cell phones are much more pronounced compared to computer ownership and use. Estimates as of 2007 show users over 3.8B (Infoplease, 2007). This represents a penetration ratio in excess of 60%. The Philippines is the 17th biggest country in terms of users with 51M, a 60% penetration of its 85M population (Infoplease, 2007). Even with about 40% not owning a cell phone, access among Filipinos is not a problem since a study revealed that non-owners, in the true Filipino *bayanihan* spirit, can borrow from another family member, neighbor or a friend (Olchondra, 2007).

"Given the advancement in cell phone technology where the direction is towards hand-held computing, the cell phone has been transformed from just being a communications tool (calling, texting) to that of an entertainment gadget (music and video downloads), camera features and internet capabilities. The technology convergence has created a truly versatile and highly effective gadget." (Berino, 2007b)

A big contributing factor to the advent and acceptance both of the computer and cell phone is the decreasing cost in acquiring units. Both the desktop and the laptop have decreased not only in price but also in size and functionality. And those who cannot buy can always go to the neighborhood internet café which has proliferated like the proverbial mushroom. Currently, the touch screen computers as well as cell phones, which are more portable and as powerful with their features and functionalities, are elevating ICT ownership and usage.

In a survey the author conducted among De La Salle University MBA students (Berino, 2007b), responses reveal high cell phone and desktop/laptop ownership. There was high usage daily of the gadgets. The majority have computer access in their offices, all surveyed have email address, and most are knowledgeable in the use of traditional applications like Microsoft office, Yahoo, Google, Friendster, chatting, blogging, among others. This is a market which offers a great opportunity for online learning applications.

In a survey conducted among participants of the Philippine eLearning Society 2009 & 2010 Annual National Conference on eLearning, it was also revealed that there is a high incidence and use of ICT gadgets among the surveyed participants in the students and teacher ranks. (Berino, 2010; Berino, 2011). The majority of surveyed students and teachers use their cell phones and computers for studies, not only for their traditional uses of communicating, gaming and entertainment.

Philippine response to the digitized environment challenge. Toral (2007) reports that "the government had various initiatives in relation to the digital developments. It passed an E-Commerce Law in 2000 (RA 8792) which defined the country's policy on electronic transactions to enable consumers to actively participate in electronic trade. Various e-government initiatives were undertaken in the areas of e-filing (government websites that create, accept and retain electronic documents) and e-payment (acceptance of payment and issuance of receipt in electronic form like the SSSNet, NSO's E-Census and SEC-iRegister)."

More important are the activities the government is initiating in terms of technology in education (CICT, 2006). The Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) is in the

forefront of establishing a National Information and Communications Technology Standards (NICS) for teachers to help enhance the adoption of technology in the teaching discipline. The NICS define the competency outcomes, and the supporting knowledge and skills that are needed to utilize ICT in performing the job roles related to teaching.

It also provides the performance indicators to evaluate the knowledge and competence of a teacher to apply ICT in the educational setting. It builds up from the knowledge and skills derived from the National ICT Literacy Standards.

The key areas of competency identified by CICT in its NICS are: (1) technology operations and concepts; (2) educational technology skills; (3) software selection and implementation; and (4) values, ethics and legal issues.

Teacher competency is a paramount issue to address for the teachers to be in step not only with the advancement in technology but for them to be in step, even ahead, with the comfort and competency of the younger generation of their students. "Teachers first and foremost need to work on a paradigm shift in the way they think. The traditional learning environment within the four corners of the classroom could be enhanced due to the presence of resources like the Internet, free softwares and networks, learning which can happen outside the classroom" (Fabian, 2006).

Concerned government agencies like Dep Ed, DOST, NTC, among others, have been working on their own, and more significantly partnering with the private sector for expertise and more importantly, funding to push information and programs on technology and e-learning.

Both Smart and Globe, the country's leading telecommunications companies, have lined up major community partnerships, specifically in promoting computer and internet literacy in public schools among students and teachers. Both not only donate computers with internet connections, they also help train teachers acquire ICT competencies and content generation for the schools (Smart, 2011; Globe, 2011).

Another government collaboration was with Coca-Cola Export Corporation and Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development (FIT-ED) for the former's *ed.venture Program* which allowed for the donation of computers, internet connectivity, training teachers, and post-training support services to piloted high schools all over the country (Trinidad, 2003).

"A lot more needs to be done to address the digital evolution the country is going through. There is a need for more collective and sustaining effort between and among the government, the private sector and others concerned to help the country move forward in developing its human capital thru management of information and technology" (Berino, 2007b).

Technology in education and training. Inglis et al (1999, p.2) observed that the education and training community has been quick to grasp the significance of the Web's development. The most remarkable development has been the way in which education and training providers have rushed to exploit the potential of the knowledge media (Inglis et al, 1999, p.2).

The enthusiasm for online learning however is not universal, whether locally or internationally. Fabian (2006) states that "ICT as an area seems to polarize the main education stakeholders into two main groups. Some sectors in the government representing the traditionalists, do not consider it as an important education aspect."

Crowley et al (2008) offers a refreshing perspective when they offered that

> "investment in technology alone will not improve student learning. Doing old things with new technologies will not transform educational practice or outcomes. It is imperative that investment in technology not be about the technology itself, but about

enabling students to learn more dynamically, enabling teachers to teach more creatively, while simultaneously improving the links between home and school."

Definition of e-learning. From the country's 1st National Conference on E-learning (2002), we pick up the following: E-learning is defined as the delivery of learning through electronic media such as phone bridging, television, video teleconferencing, and satellite broadcast. However, with the internet, the definition of e-learning has evolved to mean the use of tools such as electronic mail, video-conferencing, electronic bulletin board systems and chat channels, in combination with Web pages and sites.

Trinidad (2003) adds the following on e-learning: "With e-learning, students are no longer bounded by the four walls of the classroom. Learning can be done in the comfort of one's own home. People no longer have to rely solely on teachers for education." With the wide array of information available from the World Wide Web, people can school themselves and learn from other people from the world over (Mason, 1998).

In addition, a transformation in the role of school-bound teachers can be seen, from being transmitters of learning to facilitators of learning (Trinidad, 2003). People need not be fettered by the school-imposed calendar and curriculum because education can be received whenever and wherever people want to learn.

E-learning terms (Berino, 2007b). Various terms have been coined to computer-enabled learning such as e-learning, online learning, computer-assisted instruction, computer-managed learning, among others. For purposes of this paper, we have adopted the following definitions in our discussions of online learning in DLSU's Graduate Programs in Business (GPB).

Blended learning: full face-to-face classroom meetings supplemented by the use of computers – the gadget itself (laptop/desktop, projector); applicable software such as Powerpoint, Excel, Adobe Photoshop among others; the Internet whether thru email, discussion/chat groups, web research and the like.

Hybrid learning has been defined as blended learning with a certain percentage of class meetings done fully online, mostly through discussion/chat groups (also called mixed mode).

Fully online learning: fully online based class meetings.

We surmise many of the online learning examples happening now in Philippine schools and DLSU among them, is blended learning. The hybrid learning is not as common while the fully online learning is still very limited but both are continuing their growth, development and acceptance.

Technology as a change factor. Inglis et al (1999, p.24) states the following:

"Technology has been a key factor for change. It is breaking down borders and increasing globalization. As society changes, education and training providers are required to change. In both education and training, there is a shift to offering greater flexibility – in relation to place, time, pace, entry and exit."

Inglis et al (1999, p.25) contend further that

"the digital age requires change at the institutional and system level if the current providers of education and training are to survive. Accountability considerations and market expectations demand responses to the needs and preferences of learners and quality assurance mechanisms. A focus on flexibility in provisions needs to be accompanied by a determination to employ sound educational principles in the design and development of learning resources."

Regulation. In recognition of the growing impact and influence of technology in education in the country, CHED came out with CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 27 Series of 2005 on the subject: Policies and Guidelines on Distance Education.

As a statement of policy, CHED affirms the need for greater access to quality higher education and recognizes that distance education (DE) is a viable strategy to achieve this goal. The basic objective of the CMO is to ensure that the quality of education delivery thru distance education is maintained for the benefit and protection of the students and the schools as the major stakeholders. Annex I details highlights from the CMO.

Online Learning Principles/Frameworks

New Approaches/Skills. Palloff et al (1999, pp. 17-18) shares the following about online learning application:

> "What, then, leads to successful outcomes in online classes and seminars? Is it the mode of teaching or facilitation? Is it the norms established or the guidelines for participation? Is it the level of education of the group? Is it the relative absence of faculty-facilitator input during the process? We believe all these factors come together to create success in the medium. When teaching and learning leave the classroom, it is up to the instructor to create a container within which the course proceeds by posting goals, objectives, and expected outcomes for the course, initial guidelines for participation, thoughts and questions to kick off discussion, and assignments to be completed collaboratively. Then it is time to take a back seat and gently guide the learners in their process by monitoring the discussions and entering it to prod participants to look at the materials in another way or gently steer the conversation back on course if it should stray."

Palloff et al (1999, p.5) say the following are the definitional elements on online education:

- Separation of instructor and learner in time and place for a majority of the instructional process;
- Connection through educational media; and
- Volitional control of the learning process resting with the learner.

Given these elements, Palloff et al (1999, p. 18) propose a new paradigm for online learning...one that is free-flowing and interactive...where participants generate bibliography of readings, negotiate guidelines...where the work students create may be shared online with peer feedback encouraged. It opens up to a mutual learning experience where students are allowed to immerse themselves in content...following the paths where they may lead.

Palloff et al (1999, pp. 18-19) offer the following as components of what a successful online learning should contain:

- Access to technology;
- Guidelines and procedures;
- Participation;
- Collaborative learning;
- Transformative learning or learning about learning, technology and oneself;
- Evaluation of the process.

Lockwood (2007) proposes several issues which schools planning to implement online learning can look at to have a more effective application of their online program for all stakeholders, i.e. the learners, the teachers and the support staff. Among others, the school has to be conscious of the costs involved with the eye to having a cost-beneficial approach in implementing it.

Issues on course evaluation and assessment need to be handled effectively to

determine learners' experiences as inputs to decision making for program development.

The school should have rewards and incentives for faculty to acknowledge excellence in learning and teaching under this mode. Workload requirements have to be addressed to be neither light nor heavy and should not suffer in comparison with regular classroom workload. There is a need to have quality assurance system to effectively control the delivery of online education, achieve objectives and bring the school to where it wants

as far as online learning is concerned.

Online Learning Application/Experience

DLSU GPB's online learning journey. The GPB under the then Graduate School of Business (GSB) formally launched its online learning initiative in 2000 by coming up with "Quality standards of MBA online" (DLSPS GSB, 2000). The standards were meant to encourage faculty and students to explore and apply online learning and at the same time specify certain rules and procedures for everyone's guidance. The educational media used was the Web CT. It did not generate a lot of adherents though since the policy adopted was of encouragement and not of requirement.

In a survey of online course experience (Berino, 2007a), majority of the faculty were into blended learning: use of egroups for - class management, posting of lectures, reminders, feedback; use of applicable softwares like Microsoft office, PhStat, QM for Windows, MS Project and the like.

From the survey, not much hybrid or mixed mode were being done and a lot less fully online courses. The reasons cited were, in order of frequency:

o face-to-face is still better than online;
o online takes more time and effort;
o not required by GSB;
o subject cannot be taught online; and
o inadequate training and structure.

Despite these results, one third of the faculty respondents were of the opinion that GSB should have a more cogent online learning program, even consider offering fully online courses and the whole program itself. Reasons cited: tap working students/OFW who cannot go to campus; the market wants it; other schools have it; convenience; signs of the times.

From the same survey, the students were more positive about going through online learning. Although only a small percentage of respondents have attended hybrid and/or fully online courses, half of those who did, say it was as informative and educational as classroom discussions and they enjoyed the experience. About a third of the attendees said the level of discussion is not as much compared to classroom while a little over half said it takes more time and effort.

The majority of the respondents (60%) however said they are interested to enroll in either hybrid or fully online course in GSB. Most prevalent reasons cited were:

o convenience;

o expectation of less time;
o accessibility;
o expectation of less cost; and
o want to go through experience to see if it works.

A quarter were interested in a fully online MBA program. Preference for online learning correlates well with the high technology ownership, use and literacy among GSB students (Berino, 2007b).

Digital natives and migrants. Palloff et al (1999, p.8) shared findings on successful students in distance education and suggests that students who are attracted to this form of education share certain characteristics:

o Are voluntarily seeking further education;
o Are motivated, have higher expectations, and are more self-disciplined;
o Tend to be older than the average student; and
o Tend to possess a more serious attitude toward their courses.

These characteristics can be generally attributed to MBA students. They made the choice of going back to school to learn new competencies and help improve their career. Hence, they are motivated, have more self-discipline and with higher expectations. They are generally older than the average college students and are more focused and serious about their life and career objectives.

The survey of Berino (2007a) showed that more than 80% of the faculty respondents were aged 40 and above, 53% of whom were 50 and above. This is good and ideal from the viewpoint of experience and knowledge but not from technology use and preference. They are thus labeled as digital migrants. Contrast this with the student respondents, 75% of whom were 30 years old and below. As mentioned, their generation have greater affinity for technology which leads to their greater openness to online learning, highly driven by technology (digital natives).

The challenge for GSB is to bridge this gap in order for the school to have a better ability to develop, deliver and maintain a quality-oriented online learning program.

Online learning roadmap. GSB came up with a "Proposed roadmap for the deployment of distance education" (DLSPS GSB, 2007) to acquire distance education capability...and increase the reach of the school. The roadmap hopes to systematize and prioritize the efforts of GSB toward acquiring distance education capability. The development of a full distance (or fully online) learning capability shall be the immediate objective...with at least half of the courses in a full distance course mode.

This move can address the issues as raised in the Berino survey (Berino, 2007b) in relation to the students' high technology ownership, use and literacy and their good preference for online learning (for courses as well as for the whole program). This will also address the dissonance from the faculty side in terms of facility, competence and inclination for online learning.

The author's online learning journey. I started teaching in 2000 as a part-time lecturer in management science and business ethics at the Asia Pacific College, teaching graduate students in IT. My part-time stint in GSB commenced in 2002, also handling the same courses for MBA students. I started with the traditional set up – whiteboard and marker, acetate, lecture, class discussion, case study, examinations.

Management science is quantitative applications in business and I was doing

the computations manually, the same way I was taught 20 years ago. Except for the white board, marker, acetate and air conditioned rooms, I was using the same classroom environment and facilities in sharing knowledge as I experienced in college.

I started to get requests for softcopy of my lecture notes which lead me to forming a yahoogroup for the class. And student feedback said I should use powerpoint as platform for my lecture notes to be updated, look more professional, and generally have more attractive visuals. Another feedback said I should use available management science software support to facilitate computational portions of the course so that more time may be focused on reflections/introspection about applications.

I took these signs as signal for me to learn and immerse myself with available IT tools to enhance my teaching skills and help enrich the competencies of my students. Since I cannot teach what I do not have, I had to unlearn traditional methods of teaching and relearn new techniques and facilities in an ICT environment.

Annex II details the timeline of my adoption of online learning while Annex III discusses advantages and challenges that I have encountered in online learning. Suffice it to say that I have grown as a teacher due to online learning and I have contributed more to the learning and growth of my students due to online learning.

Education, among other things, is about broadening intellectual horizons, relying on facts and reason when confronting life issues and learning to listen to others and defend ideas by the force of argument (Kriger, 2007). Kriger (2007) further asserts that because distance education is ubiquitous and offers so much promise, faculty are obligated to carry the banner for quality and good practice while recognizing that this will sometimes require challenging current trends and practices.

A Final Word

Eleven years of teaching, eight years in online learning starting with blended then mixed-mode learning. It has been a journey of discovery for me as a teacher in embracing the applications of technology and the world-wide web in furthering my experience as a faculty. But the more important aspect is how I have creatively and positively affected the learning experience of my students through their exposure in online learning. It is a journey which I will continue to undertake for the obvious benefits even with the challenges that need to be addressed since I believe that ICT is meant to open new possibilities and excitement for the teachers, the students, the academe at large.

Annex I

Excerpts from CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 27 Series of 2005

on the subject: Policies and Guidelines on Distance Education

1..Section 4 of the CMO defines distance education as a mode of educational delivery whereby teacher and learner are separated in time and space, and instruction is delivered through specially designed materials and methods using appropriate technologies, and supported by organizational and administrative structures and arrangements.

2. Article 3 of the CMO further enunciates the guiding principles that all subjects/courses offered in distance education shall adhere to, as follows:
   a. Learner centeredness: focus on needs of learner and facilitate independent learning;
   b. Rigorous and sound instructional design: DE programs shall be equivalent in

challenge and depth to conventional programs;

c. Transparency and peer review to guide informed choice: DE implementers shall make information about their programs available to accrediting bodies, academic peers, regulators and students;
d. Public responsibility and accountability: DE implementers shall take heed of public impact of their DE programs with due diligence for consumer protection given the high value that Filipinos put in higher education;
e. Quality and continuous improvement: framework in identifying student and stakeholder needs, monitoring satisfaction and continuous improvement of development and delivery.

3. Other relevant provisions of the CMO are:
   a. On Scope and Coverage (Article IV):
      (i) Section 11 - An academic degree program shall be classified as a distance education subject to the provision of the CMO if at least 25% of total courses in the program are offered via the distance mode.
      (ii) Section 12 – Graduate programs. Degree programs at the post-Baccalaureate Level including Diploma, Masters and Doctoral programs may be offered fully by distance mode.
      (iii) Section 13 – Undergraduate programs. Degree programs at the Undergraduate level shall not be offered fully by distance mode because undergraduate students need face-to face interaction with mentors and peers as part of the academic environment for optimal learning.
   b. On Implementing Guidelines (Article V):
      (i) Only HEIs with the following status are qualified to offer a program by distance education:
         - with Level III Accreditation in the degree program applied for;
         - CHED Center of Excellence (COE) status in the degree program applied for; or
         - with certification of compliance with the CHED Quality Assurance System for Distance Education.
      (ii) Components of DE (Section 17):
         (1) Curriculum and delivery system;
         (2) Instructional materials development;
         (3) Delivery mode/strategies;
         (4) Student support services.

Annex II
Timeline in Adoption of Online Learning

2000-2002	Traditional classroom: lecture (acetate lecture materials), class discussion, white board and marker, case discussion, examination (paper-based), manual computations (covered only 70% of textbook)
2003	Blended learning: lecture in powerpoint, formed yahoogroup for the class for posting of syllabus, lecture, updates, reminders
2004-06	Blended learning: software support for management science (covered 100% of textbook), web research; membership in Phil. eLearning Society
2007	Hybrid learning (mixed mode): one session fully online, make-up sessions online, submission of assignments fully online (paperless set-up), case discussion online, feedback from students on online learning experience; submitted two research papers on online learning
2008-2011	Hybrid learning (mixed mode): three sessions fully online; make-up sessions online; submission of assignments /examinations fully online

(paperless); case discussions online; student feedback on online learning experience; eight (8) research papers in online learning – 2 online journal papers, 6 conference papers

Annex III
Advantages/Challenges in Online Learning

Advantages:
1. Contributes to the teacher's knowledge, competence, professionalism. Encourages teacher to learn and acquire necessary skills since a teacher cannot teach what he does not have.
2. Wider coverage of educational materials.
3. More resources and references available through the Web.
4. Better chance for class participation since those who are averse to recitation can post in online discussion fora. Online fora encourages reflection versus thinking on one's feet in class recitation.
5. Appreciated by the students as a new experience and new skills to learn. Many are first timers in online learning.
6. Contributes to paperless set-up, a small effort towards helping the environment.
7. Not affected by exigencies (class cancellation due to typhoons, other calamities) and holidays.
8. Accommodates OFWs/time- and place-challenged students.

Challenges:
1. Spends more time, facilitation demand may border on 24/7. How to handle: define engagement in time with the students for the various online activities.
2. A big class will be difficult to facilitate. GSB limit enrollment in fully online courses to a maximum of 20 students.
3. Majority of students still prefer face-to-face classroom interaction.
4. Feedback/evaluation on online activities should be available in a timely and constructive manner.
5. Computer downtime may affect rhythm and enthusiasm of participants.
6. Buy-in from other faculty to build a community of online facilitators/learners.

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GATS AND THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO IMPENDING LEGISLATIONS

Abstract

General Agreement on Trade in services (GATS) came in to being in 1995 under the aegis of WTO. Apart from other services, it was agreed that education is a service that can be traded. Member countries were given a choice to make commitments regarding the services they would like to include under the Agreement. GATS is still an untested Agreement and there are many issues especially those related to education that are still to be resolved. Due to lack of requisite regulatory measures, capacity constraints and other reasons, India has not yet committed its education sector to GATS but has autonomously allowed 100% FDI and other collaborations with foreign education providers for higher education. It has embarked upon a path to enact legislations to strengthen its regulatory regime and is also making efforts to improve its higher education sector. India has the largest higher education market in the world and once the regulatory mechanism is in place it would an important player in the sector. The paper highlights various options available to the foreign education providers in the higher education sector in India.

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The process of globalization that has engulfed the world for the past three decades has brought home the need for a regulated framework within which different countries could trade with each other. The changing dynamics has resulted in new concepts being ushered in to regulate the economic transactions between countries. From time immemorial the term 'trade' was restricted to commodities. However, the ever increasing reliance on services and the advent of knowledge economy has resulted in emergence of the concept of GATS in 1995 under the aegis of WTO. The central idea of GATS is that progressive liberalization of trade in commercial services would add to the growth in the WTO member countries. The term 'commercial services' has a wide connotation and apart from traditional services like transport, telecommunication, banking, insurance etc now also includes entertainment, e-commerce and education. This is a significant development because earlier education was believed to have been bypassed by the market and was considered to be a market-excluding arrangement[1]. However, the process of globalization and technological advancements has resulted in education services being considered as market-complimentary arrangement especially in the developed world. Consequently, apart from active state intervention private sector has come to play an increasingly important role in bringing about high literacy levels in the developed countries. Thus, the concept that education is a service that can be traded has taken roots.

Even though since ancient times India has had a strong tradition of higher education, it missed the Industrial revolution and to an extent the Silicon Revolution. Even the colonial period failed to usher in the western and secular education with an emphasis on scientific enquiry. The second half of the twentieth century, after India attained independence, witnessed expansion of the education sector but the results desired to catapult the nation to a leadership position in a globalised knowledge economy could not be achieved. The gigantic size of the higher education sector, paucity of funds, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of political will to push through radical reforms, poor intellectual capital in the higher education institutions and the inadequacy of the quality assurance mechanism are some of the reasons that could be cited for the present state of affairs. The exponential growth in the higher

[1] Dreze J & Amartya Sen, "India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity", Oxford University Press, 1998.

education sector and the large scale entry of the private players has added another dimension to the scenario.

The 5th World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris in 2003 highlighted that the demographic estimations point to a world population of 7 to 8 billion by the year 2025. The threshold of 100 million students worldwide has already been crossed and it was estimated that by 2020 there would be approximately 125 million students in the higher education segment. Today, five countries (China, USA, India, Russia, and Japan) account for 53.1 million students, which is more than half the total number of students in the world[2]. In 2005-06 India had 11 million students in the higher education sector and this figure is increasing at the rate of about 2.5 million per year[3] . With 50% of population being between the ages of 15-64 and the median age lying between 20-30 India presents an attractive market for higher education. India's household incomes are rising and the number of households with the ability to pay high sums for higher education is also increasing[4]. The size of Indian higher education market is huge and much beyond the capacity of the domestic sector to meet the demand. It offers an attractive opportunity for foreign education providers. Therefore, Indian policy planners have to study the implications of GATS very carefully.

Part I - Implications of the GATS on Higher Education in India

What is GATS?

At the outset it would not be out of place to reiterate some essential features of GATS. It is the first legal trade agreement that focuses exclusively on trade in services and came into effect in 1995 after the Uruguay Round of talks. So far the progress made in commitments by various member states of WTO are less than expected. However, GATS is a legally enforceable set of rules having been ratified by the parliaments of each of the 149 members of the WTO. It aims to progressively and systematically promote freer trade in services by removing barriers to trade and to ensure increased transparency of trade regulations. The Agreement has three parts. The first part is the framework that contains the general principles and rules for 'National Treatment' and 'Most Favoured Nation'. The second part consists of the National Schedules wherein various countries enlist their specific commitments on access to certain services-sectors in their domestic markets to foreign service providers. The third part consists of annexures that detail specific limitations laid down by each country to their commitments. GATS recognises four modes of supply as follows: -

(a) **Mode 1**: Cross Border Supply wherein the service crosses the borders. Distance education, e-learning and virtual universities are some of the examples of this mode.

(b) **Mode 2**: Consumption Abroad implying that the consumer moves to the country of the supplier *e.g.* students who go abroad to study.

(c) **Mode 3**: Commercial Presence that involves physical presence of the service provider in another country to render service. Local branches, satellite campuses, franchising arrangements and twinning programmes are some of the examples of this mode of supply.

(d) **Mode 4**: Presence of Natural Persons implying the move of people to another country to render service like professors or researchers working abroad.

The education services have been classified as Primary Education, Secondary Education, Higher education, Adult Education and Other Education services. GATS does not make it mandatory for member countries to open up all education categories. Based on a country's assessment about prospective gains, specific categories can be opened up.

Some Controversial Issues

GATS is still an untested Agreement and certain amount of confusion exists on how to interpret the rules and obligations. Though each country's legal experts would be studying these provisions the

[2] Jane Knight, "Higher Education Crossing Borders: A Guide to the Implications of the GATS for Cross-border Education", 2006, pp 7.

[3] ERNST & Young – EDGE Report "Globalising Higher Education in India", March 2008, pp 19.

[4] Ibid

educators need to study the implications of GATS on education services. There are some controversial issues pertaining to the education sector that still need to be debated. These are summarized as follows[5]: -

(a) **Which Education Services are Covered or Exempted in GATS?** The most controversial issue involves the interpretation of Article 1.3 that defines which services are covered or exempted. The Agreement is applicable to all services except "those services that are supplied in the exercise of governmental authority". There is a point of view that the clause "exercise of governmental authority" applies to education provided and funded by government. But the term "funded by government" also is unclear because there are many countries where both public and private institutions receive finances from the government. The Agreement also states that "the exercise of governmental authority" implies service provided on a "non commercial basis" and "not in competition" with other service providers. The issue gets complicated because in many countries at least some funding for public institutions comes from private sector. Moreover, a public institution that receives government funding, and also charges fees may not be considered as "non-commercial". Another complication is that a public institution when providing service in a foreign country is considered as a private/commercial service provider in the importing country. Further, if public institutions are competing with private institutions for admissions of students or funds from private donors/international agencies they could be considered as "in competition" with non-government providers. WTO official emphasise that education is largely a government function and GATS does not seek to displace the public education systems and the right of governments to regulate and meet domestic policy objectives. But the critics of GATS say that the protection of public service is very uncertain and potentially at risk because of differing interpretations of "not in competition" and "non-commercial" clauses.

(b) **Ability of a Country to Make its Own National Regulation for Education.** The ambiguity in Article 6.4 of the Agreement which requires a country to ensure that qualifications, requirements and procedures, technical standards and licensing are not more burdensome that necessary to ensure quality of the service raises concerns about quality assurance and accreditation procedures. The Article, which is also referred to as the "necessity test" needs to be monitored closely because it could have significant bearing on a country's policy.

(c) **Principle of Progressive Liberalisation.** It is said that GATS is not a neutral Agreement because it aims to usher in liberalization of trade in services. It expects countries to progressively add sectors and sub-sectors to their national schedule of commitments and to lower the barriers to trade. Thus, countries that are not keen to include education services in their commitments are likely to experience great pressure.

(d) **Negotiating Across Sectors.** The bilateral negotiations on market access and national Treatment are expected to be based on cross sectoral principle. Thus, a country not wishing to open up its education sector may experience pressure when it makes a request to another country for market access in any other sector. The country receiving the request may respond by demanding access in education sector.

Higher Education Policy and Practice and Issues Related to GATS

Commercialisation, privatization, 'marketisation', liberalization and globalization are some of the factors that have significant impact on cross-border education. These have major bearing on the

[5] Jane Knight, *op. cit.,* pp 36

policies and the role of the government, cultural values and institutional level issues. A brief summary of these is given below[6]: -

(a) **Registration, Quality Assurance and Recognition of Qualifications of Cross-border Education**

(i) **Registration and Recognition**. It is a known fact that either due to lack of capacity or political will or a variety of other reasons, many countries do not have a regulatory system to register foreign education providers. Thus, apart from bonafide foreign providers some rogue elements also join the system. Moreover, the multiplicity of the type of providers – for-profit, not-for-profit, an institution, or a company, partnership between local and foreign providers – adds to the complications. Countries would have to enact legislations for licensing and also would have to ensure that these are not considered as barriers to trade.

(ii) **Quality Assurance and Accreditation**. With the trend for cross-border education increasing the challenges faced by quality assurance agencies of the countries gain importance. GATS does not claim to be establishing rules for quality assurance or accreditation. Thus, member countries would have to embed cross-border education providers in to their quality assurance and accreditation systems to prevent rogue providers or fraudulent qualifications becoming closely linked to cross-border education. Moreover, negotiations would have to be held at the international levels to encourage cooperation and to enhance the understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education. Similarly, countries would have to guard against bogus accreditation agencies.

(iii) **Recognition of Qualifications**. It is critical that the qualifications awarded by cross-border providers be legitimate and recognized for employment or further studies both at home and abroad. National policy makers would have to address this issue to facilitate academic and labour force mobility.

(b) **Role of Government, Access and Financing**

(i) **Role of Government.** In the majority of the countries, education is considered as a function of the government that it performs for common good. Thus, there are publicly funded or private-government-aided institutions. As brought out earlier the ambiguities in Article 1.3 leave considerable room for legal experts to argue that government funded or private-aided institutions are not exempted from the purview of GATS.

(ii) **Student Access.** In developing countries there is a huge unmet demand for post-secondary education and training. Supporters of GATS argue that trade liberalization in higher education can result in increased student access. But the critics of GATS maintain that increased access would be available only to those who can afford to pay high fees.

(iii) **Financing of Education.** It is a known fact that public funding is not keeping pace with expansion in higher education sector. Thus, private partnership in higher education is increasing though only in niche markets. Increased liberalization in trade in higher education is likely to give further boost to development of international education markets. It could force many countries, especially those that cannot invest

[6] Jane Knight, *op.cit.,* pp47

in physical and soft infrastructure, to rely more on foreign investors and cross-border education providers. That in turn may indirectly influence national policies of such countries and dilute their own policy objectives.

(iv) **Programme Offer.** Critics of GATS maintain that a market approach to higher education can lead to a situation where commercial for-profit providers would focus on offering programmes that are high in market demand and, thus, the less popular and costly programmes would have to be taken up by public or not for profit institutions. Moreover, foreign providers may offer a programme only as long as it is profitable. This could have serious repercussions for national policy planners.

(c) **Values and Cultural Diversity**

(i) **Values.** The commoditization of education that may result due to market forces could adversely affect the purpose, role and values of higher education that a country may wish to nurture. It is a well known fact that even without the GATS being in operation the main efforts of cross-border education providers has been on teaching and not on research. On the other hand teaching/learning, research and service guide the evolution of university system and to their contribution to social, cultural, human, scientific and economic development of a country. This aspect would have to be kept in mind by the policy planners while defining their approach to cross-border education.

(ii) **Cultural Diversity.** The phenomenon involving flow of culture across borders has been there for centuries. It is only that modern ICT technologies and movement of people has accelerated the speed for exchange of ideas and for fusion of cultures. But the critics of GATS maintain that it may result in homogenization of cultures where the western values would prevail. The impact of cross-border programmes on cultural diversity demands that policy-makers should be alert and sensitive to these issues and develop a suitable approach conducive to their respective environments.

GATS and Higher Education in India

India has not scheduled education services in its commitments under the GATS. Thus, India has no multilateral obligation under the WTO to open up higher education services for cross-border trade. However, India has taken steps to usher in liberalization in this sector and has allowed 100% FDI on automatic route and has permitted twinning arrangements, collaborations, franchising and subsidiaries to operate autonomously. The impact of opening up higher education services is driven more by domestic compulsions such as state of the higher education system in the country, the accessibility, quality of education being provided, costs involved and availability of finance. The main problem today is the inability of the university system to provide higher education to all who aspire to it. The poor quality of most of the Indian universities and the unregulated influx of the private sector has had an adverse affect on the system. Considering the state of Indian higher education sector the concerns being aired by some quarters are justified. There is a wide spread perception that, if and when, India opens up its higher education sector to foreign providers it would have an adverse impact resulting in ending of public subsidies which may further result in affecting the quality and affordability of higher education.

Steps taken to liberalise the higher education sector have also resulted in influx of foreign education providers, mostly less reputed – second and third tier – entering the market. They charge exorbitant fees for programmes of dubious quality. Poor capacity constraints and lack of effective regulatory framework has allowed operators with dubious credentials to operate with impunity. There is a plethora of regulatory bodies trying to govern the higher education system without any mutual coordination. There is a multitude of service providers who promise all sorts of benefits to the students and the latter do not have a forum to verify the claims made. The pressing need is to have an

effective registration and certification system to protect and inform the students and to enable good quality foreign institutions to operate alongside their Indian counterparts on a level playing field. With an enabling and effective regulatory framework India would be able to compete in the world market more effectively and would also be able to protect the interests of its consumers. As it is, many Indian universities and institutions have opened campuses abroad and there are also a large number Indian teachers teaching in institutions not only in developing countries but also in the developed world. Thus, India needs to adopt a pro-active approach towards the GATS.

It would not be out of place to study the implications of GATS on the four modes of supply on the higher education system in India.

(a) **Mode 1 – Cross Border Supply:** It mostly pertains to distance education either through the print or electronic media. But the All India Council of Technical Education has put a number of disciplines under the negative list *e.g.* engineering, medical, architecture etc that it feels cannot be taught through the distance learning mode. Thus, Mode 1 could be permitted discipline wise. There is also a school of thought that this mode should not be permitted through private or for-profit channels[7]. This apprehension arises from the poor quality of some of the service providers operating in the market.

(b) **Mode 2- Consumption Abroad**: At present Indian educational institutions do not have international curricula, world class infrastructure, hostels and research facilities that could attract foreign students. As it is, the number of international students coming to India has been steadily declining. Till the conditions improve, opening up this mode would result only in one-way flow of Indian students abroad. However, in the absence of any regulation at present many countries are employing vigorous advertising methods and sales campaigns to attract Indian students abroad[8]. In some cases the students have been cheated by unscrupulous operators.

(c) **Mode 3 – Commercial Presence**: While permitting opening up of branch campuses, collaborative arrangements or franchisee set ups in India the main areas of concern are the credentials of the foreign education providers, their accreditation status in home countries, mutual recognition of degrees and creation of a level playing field in India. Interestingly, the principal opposition to FDI (though not under GATS) in higher education sector in India has come from the private sector[9]. There is also a school of thought that FDI could be desegregated in to components of equity capital, invested earnings and intra-firm loans[10]. It is argued that in the current wave of liberalization there has been a worldwide shift in the forms of foreign capital. On the other hand many Indian universities and institutions have opened campuses abroad. Thus, an enabling regulatory environment could be beneficial to both Indian and foreign service providers.

(d) **Persons Mode 4** – **Presence of Natural:** India stands to gain from this mode because a large number of Indian nationals are working abroad in educational institutions. It would have to insist on developed countries to remove trade barriers like visa rules, quantitative restrictions, wage parity, financial remittances, and measures like Economic Needs Test. As far as import of qualified faculty is concerned there are a number of institutions where foreign faculty

[7] . Sudhanshu Bhushan, Trade in Education Services under GATS: Implications for Higher Education in India, *Economic and Political Weekly*, New Delhi, June 5, 2004, pp 2396

[8] . Ibid

[9] . Manoj Pant, The Financial Express, New Delhi, May 28, 2005.

[10] . Rajnish Arora, Foreign Universities will not Drive Reforms, Times of India, Chandigarh, August 18, 2011

teaches on tenure basis. Such measures would help in improving standards of Indian institutions.

One of the main issues in making a national commitment under GATS for higher education in India is that of domestic regulation. The issue is complicated by the fact that education in India falls under the joint domains of the federal and state governments. Further, Indian higher education system is based on the premise that education is a public good. There is considerable emphasis on access and equity. Discriminating protection in the form of reservations (a sort of affirmative action) is provided to certain segments of society. Similar reservations are applicable to the posts faculty and administration in academic institutions. The degrees and their nomenclature is recognised by the regulatory bodies. The mechanism to ensure quality assurance and accreditation is weak. Thus, before making any commitments to GATS the government needs to institute relevant reforms in the sector. Keeping the above in mind the government has introduced legislations in the Parliament which are under consideration and would be debated soon.

Part II – Impending Legislations

There is serious debate going on to bring in reforms in the higher education sector in the country. The Government had appointed a National Knowledge Commission under the chairmanship of Mr Sam Pitroda to recommend measures that could be adopted. In addition another committee known as the Yashpal Committee, also constituted by the Government, had suggested revamp of the university system. Based on the recommendations of the two advisory groups the government plans to bring forward a bill in the Parliament known as National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) Bill 2010 with the aim of creating a single regulatory authority for higher education in India. The Bill once enacted would subsume the University Grants Commission and also take on the roles of other existing regulatory bodies. The existing regulatory bodies would be given the authority to license the professionals in their respective fields.

In addition to the above, the Government has tabled in the Parliament the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill 2010, the National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill 2010 and the Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010.

The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010

Higher Educational Institutions in India have shown a tremendous growth in the last few years resulting in collaborations and partnerships with international institutions and universities. In 2008, around 140 Indian institutions and 156 foreign education providers were involved in academic collaborations. Of the foreign providers, 90 have university status and 20 have college status. Other institutions are those for training or further education. The total number of collaborations was 225 and with a number of these collaborations having more than one programme of delivery, the total number such programmes is 635[11].

It is estimated that the highest number of collaborations are in the fields of management and business administration, 168 of the total of 635, or 26 per cent. The next most offered disciplines for collaboration are engineering and technology, computer applications, and information technology, having 144 or over 22 per cent of such programmes, followed by hotel management and housekeeping, with 132 or over 20 per cent[12].

Of the 225 existing collaborations, 83 are with educational institutions from Britain, followed by 79 from the US. Industry experts believe 53 institutions from Britain have their presence in India, followed by the US having 46 institutions, through various collaborative arrangements like twinning (exchange of expertise and students), franchisee, joint provisions and link programmes[13].

[11] . URL: http://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/the-foreign-educational-institutions-regulation-of-entry-and-operations-bill-2010-1139/

[12] Ibid

[13] . Ibid

In such a scenario the Government felt that there was an urgent need for having a centralized policy and regulatory regime for Foreign Educational Institutions operating in the country. In fact, effective regulation of these collaborations is the primary motivation for the legislation, which acknowledges that "due to lack of policy or regulatory regime it has been very difficult to make meaningful assessment of the operations of the foreign educational institutions and absence of such meaningful assessment has given rise to chances of adoption of various unfair practices besides commercialisation".

Objective of the Bill. The objective of the bill is to regulate the entry and operations of foreign educational institutions imparting or intending to impart higher education or technical education or practice of any profession in India (including award of degrees, diplomas and equivalent qualifications by such institutions) for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It provides for the recognition and notification of institutions and specifies standards for operations. The Bill explicitly relates to both international universities operating independently and those working in collaboration with Indian institutions or other local partners.

Salient Features of the Bill. The Bill seeks to regulate the entry and operations of foreign educational institutions seeking to impart higher education and its salient features are as given below: -

(a) Every foreign educational institution intending to operate in India has to be notified as a foreign educational provider by the central government on the recommendation of the Registrar (Secretary of the University Grants Commission). Those foreign institutions which are already operating in the country would have to apply within six months of the enactment of the Bill.

(b) The concerned institution should have been offering educational services in the home country for at least twenty years under a law of the country and should have been accredited with the concerned accrediting agency in its home country.

(c) The institution should have adequate funds and other resources to conduct courses of study in India.

(d) The concerned foreign educational providers have to maintain a corpus fund of a minimum of Rs 50 crore (approx US$ 11 million). Up to 75% of any income generated from the corpus fund shall be utilized for developing the institution in India and rest should be put back in the fund. According to the proposed legislation, the requirement for a corpus fund applies to twinning programmes as well as branch campuses.

(e) No part of the surplus in revenue generated in India by such foreign education provider, after meeting all expenditure in regard to its operations in India, shall be invested for any purpose other than for the growth and development of the educational institutions established by it in India.

(f) The programmes of study offered should be in conformity with the standards laid down by the statutory authority and should be of comparable quality as compared to its main campus in home country.

Apart from the above the foreign education provider is expected to abide by all the regulations of the governments (federal and provincial) as applicable. It may include fixation of fees for various programmes and reservations of seats for certain segments of society as per the law of the land.

Implications. The Bill when enacted would provide a framework within which foreign education providers would be able to work. It incorporates penalties for violations of the provisions of the Bill. The implications of the proposed legislations are as follows: -

(a) Any person who is associated with an educational institution or a foreign educational institution that has not been registered as a foreign education provider and admits students to any course provided by a foreign education institution will have to pay a penalty of US $ 22,000 to US $ 1222,000. This will act as a strong deterrent for local partners to work with unapproved international universities.

(b) Any university found to be in contravention of the rules risks the forfeiture of the corpus in whole or part. That is a strong deterrence for the institutions to desist from indulging in any unethical practice.
(c) Many universities would be affected the moment this legislation comes in to effect. Universities that wish to continue with their foreign collaborations will need to become foreign education providers.
(d) There is considerable opposition to the Bill because many feel that the foreign universities would come in only for commercial purposes and would not contribute to improvement in standards of education. It is also felt that influx these universities may result in brain-drain from Indian universities.

India represents a great opportunity in the world for higher education institutions. The government is therefore making all out efforts to protect the interests of Indian students from a gold rush of commercially aggressive institutions.

The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010

Having realized the importance of accreditation in the light of cross-border education and also indirectly accepting the inadequate capacity of the present accreditation mechanism the Government has brought forward the National Accreditation for Higher Educational Institutions Bill.

Objective of the Bill. The objective of the Bill is to establish a regulatory authority to register accrediting agencies, monitor and audit the functioning of these agencies. These agencies would be invested with the responsibility of accrediting higher educational institutions including universities, colleges, institutions of national importance and programmes conducted therein.

Regulatory Authority would approve and appoint accreditation agencies. Norms for accreditation would be laid down and policies for assessment of academic quality and periodical review of institutions would be formulated. The Authority would inform all the stake holders about the status of various institutions. It would also endeavour to promote research and innovation in assessment and accreditation. In case of any infringement the Accreditation Authority would have the power to cancel certificate of registration awarded to an institution.

The Bill when passed as an Act would facilitate the operations of the regulators in an international environment and would also help in quality assurance. By and large the Bill has received support of the academic community in the country.

The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill 2010

The higher education sector in India has experienced exponential growth during the past two decades. The current national policy is against commercialization of higher education, though the policy encourages private 'not-for-profit' participation with surplus revenues to be ploughed back for growth and development of institutions. There is a public concern that professional institutions and universities should not resort to unfair practices like charging capitation fees, demanding donations, resorting to questionable admission processes, low quality delivery of education services and false claims of quality of such services through misleading advertisements etc.

Objective of the Bill. The Bill aims to prohibit professional educational institutions from indulging in any unfair trade practice either in charging of tuition fees, admission fees, adopting irregular admission procedures, demanding or charging capitation fee or donations in consideration for admission or issuing of misleading advertisements. The bill also requires all institutions and universities to publish a prospectus with mandatory disclosures and to abide by those.

Though there have been protests from certain education providers in the private sector but, by and large, it has received approval from the general public and the academia. The Bill has provisions for stiff penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment for various acts of infringement.

It is hoped that once passed the three Acts mentioned above would strengthen the hands of the Regulators and facilitate India's Commitment to GATS.

Part III – Business Opportunities in India

Sector Potential

India's higher education sector is the largest in terms of number of institutions and third largest in terms of enrolment of students. It is an attractive market for global players as it is projected to grow almost three fold in the next 10 years to US$ 115 billion and has around 144 million young population in the age bracket of 18 -23 years who are the potential customers of higher education[14].

Expenditure on higher education in India is projected to go up from US$ 10.3 billion to US$ 30 billion in the next 10 years. The private sector plays a significant role and contributes 92 per cent of the higher education spending, whereas public expenditure on higher education in India is at 0.37% of GDP which is significantly lower than that of many developed or developing countries. USA spends 3.1% of its GDP and Canada spends 2.6% of its GDP on higher education. Indian parents spend out of pocket on academic quality, employability-linked education as well as foreign education. Inability of education infrastructure in the country to meet growing demand for higher education makes India the second largest source of international students after China[15].

The sustained 8-9% economic growth over the past few years and availability of disposable income with the ever expanding middle class has made India attractive for trade and investment across sectors. Recognising education as one of the key factors in building social, economic and cultural ties, foreign higher education providers have moved from just sourcing of Indian students to developing institutional linkages that are more sustainable and engaging.

Over the last decade or so, India has become a favourite destination for research with multinational companies and world class universities owing to low-cost infrastructure and skilled human resource. The rapid economic growth and technological advancement has created a need to develop new education programmes in emerging sectors and constant updating and revision of existing curriculums. There is an acute shortage of quality faculty and administrators in the Indian higher education sector. IITs, the premier institutes of higher learning in India, are facing faculty shortage to the tune of 40%. This has created a need for Indian higher education institutions to collaborate with foreign universities for programme collaboration, joint award of degrees, faculty exchange and development programmes, etc. At the same time the Indian industry and higher education institutions have developed their core competency and expertise in certain areas like Biotechnology, Pharmaceuticals, Health care etc. that can be offered to the foreign providers.

During the past decade the multinationals have increased their allocations for R&D by 6% and 83% of the new sites were established in China and India. The R&D staff has been increased by 22% and again 91% of that increase has been in China and India. Between 2002 and 2007 the spending on R&D in India by multinationals grew by 25.4%. It has also been proved that companies that make more R&D investment in low income countries outperform those (25% better on 3-year sales growth) that do not[16]. Thus, there is a scope for corporate universities also to be established with a major bias towards research.

The Existing Regulatory Mechanism for Foreign Education Providers

The Indian Higher Education sector is on the verge of implementation of progressive reforms with the proposed Bills introduced in the Parliament. However, till the time these Bills are enacted the provisions as outlined in 2005 by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) would apply[17]. Salient features of the Notification are: -

(a) The Regulations apply to all foreign universities/institutions interested to impart technical education in India. These also apply to Indian universities/institutions who would like to impart technical education of a foreign university through collaborative, including twinning, arrangement. Franchisee system is not allowed under these Regulations.

[14] . FICCI – Ernst and Young Survey of Indian Higher Education, 2010

[15] . Ibid

[16] . Behr FJ, Key Note Address in a Conference 2009 "Globalisation and Internationalisation: European and German Perspectives on Higher Education under GATS" at Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences, Germany

[17] . AICTE Notification No. F. 37 – 3/Legal/2005 dated May 16, 2005

(b) The foreign education provider should be accredited in its home country by an authorized agency.
(c) Education programmes conducted in India leading to the award of degrees/diplomas shall have the same nomenclature as it exists in the parent country and also should have recognition at par with equivalent Indian degrees.
(d) All foreign education providers have to register with AICTE. They are required to obtain a No Objection Certificate by their embassy in India and submit a Detailed Project Report along with a fee of approx US $ 1,000.
(e) Institutions whose applications are selected for further processing are required to submit a processing fee of approx US $ 10,000 and a Refundable Performance Guarantee for an amount specified by the AICTE from time to time.
(f) Fee to be charge for various programmes has to be approved by the AICTE.
(g) Educational innovations and experimentation would be allowed only if such a system is already well established in the parent country or in India.
(h) The programmes of study are required to be accredited by National board of accreditation after two batches have passed out.

Punitive measures have been incorporated in the Regulations for various acts of violation. However, so far AICTE has only "informed the public" of infringements by displaying on its website the names of more than 100 such international partnerships. AICTE has never taken steps to initiate action under the Indian Penal Code although the show cause notices recently issued could be the first step[18] .

Possible Areas of Partnerships or Independent Operations

Considering the size of Indian market and Indian capacity constraints there is tremendous scope for foreign education providers to set up base in the country either for independent operations or through collaborative ventures. Some of the avenues that could be explored are:-

(a) Setting up Branch or satellite campuses by foreign universities.
(b) Setting up campuses in collaboration with Indian universities or partners.
(c) Twinning programmes
(d) Double degree or Joint degree programmes
(e) Articulation arrangements like semester abroad programmes
(f) Validation arrangements
(g) Distance learning programmes
(h) Faculty exchange programmes

It may also be noticed that almost all the collaborative arrangements so far entered in to by foreign universities are aimed at teaching with hardly any emphasis on research. This gives an impression, perhaps rightly, that the foreign education providers are in it only for commercial purposes. Foreign universities entering the Indian market both for teaching and research are likely to gain respect of various stake holders.

Conclusion

[18] Nick Booker, India: Implications of Foreign Education Bill, University World news, Issue 187, September 4, 2011

There is tremendous scope for foreign education providers to operate in India in the field of higher education. Different models for operations could be worked out. Due to its domestic constraints and certain inadequacies in its regulatory mechanism India has not made any commitments to the GATS as far as higher education sector is concerned. However, it is moving in the right direction. Introduction of various bills in the Parliament aims to strengthen its regulatory framework that would enable it to operate in the international arena meaningfully. India is also making efforts to usher in reforms in its university system to address the quality assurance issues. Foreign education providers would do well to take notice of these.

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HIGHER EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA:

TOWARD BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

Abstract

This paper is concerned with exploring higher education as a mean for the development of the knowledge-based economy in general, and with regards to Saudi Arabia in particular. The paper presents a framework for the target development that emphasizes the integration of the knowledge activities, which are the concern of higher education. The framework also considers the scope of issues associated with these activities; the assessment measures of their state; and the process that needs to be applied for development and response to change. The knowledge assessment method KAM of the World Bank has been considered as an assessment reference to measure the development of the knowledge-based economy. Saudi Arabia according to KAM is then addressed, and the past development of its higher education has been explored. In this respect, special attention is given to the period since the year 2005, which has seen the start of the country's great leap forward in higher education. Subsequently, the paper discusses future development of higher education in the country, considering the various issues of the proposed knowledge-based economy framework. Finally, the paper hopes to provide some contributions that support higher education in its role of building the knowledge-based economy, not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in other parts of the world.

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Introduction

Higher education (HE) has been considered as an important catalyst for the development of modern societies [1]. It generates knowledge and prepares human skills necessary for the development and well-being of the society. In its declaration on HE for the 21st century, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasized its importance for "socio, cultural and economic development [2]. The European Union (EU) Lisbon strategy considered the university as an important moving force for achieving the central European role of establishing the "knowledge-based society" [3].

A survey in the USA found that 92 % of registered voters agree with the statement that "decisions we make about HE today will help shape America's economic competitiveness 25 years from now" [4]. In addition, the Association of American Universities (AAU) expressed the impact of HE on society in eight main benefits [5]:

- increased innovation;
- stronger economy;
- higher employment;
- better health;
- enhanced rule of law and lower crime rate;
- encouraged voluntarism;
- enriched cultural life; and
- supported global understanding.

In order to emphasize these benefits, they are illustrated in Figure 1.

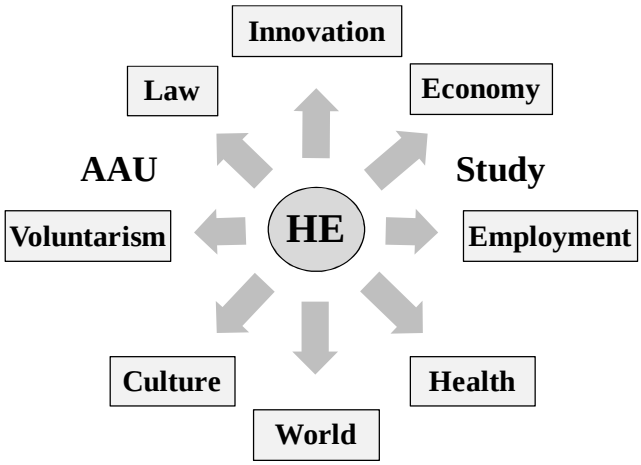

Figure 1: Impact of HE on society [5]

Recognizing the important role of HE in development, in general, and in building a knowledge based society in particular, Saudi Arabia is increasingly enhancing its support of HE for better future to its own society, and to the world at large. This paper is concerned with exploring the role of HE in moving the country toward the knowledge-based economy. It addresses the issue through the following four main steps:

- introducing a framework concerned with the development of the knowledge-based economy, and emphasizing the role of HE in this development;
- elaborating on the assessment of the this development, and its association with HE;
- addressing current HE directions in Saudi Arabia; and
- providing discussions and comments on future development.

It is hoped that the development views and the practical information presented in the paper would be useful to the interested audience.

Knowledge-Based Economy Framework

The basic knowledge activities include the following:

- knowledge production or generation through research and innovation;
- knowledge diffusion through education and training and through the Internet and the media; and
- knowledge utilization that provides development value through manufacturing products, delivering services, and exploring opportunities.

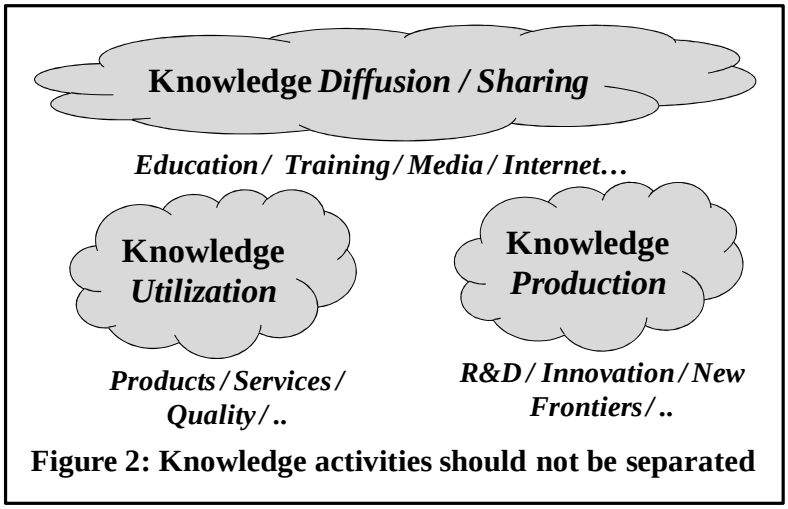

Figure 2: Knowledge activities should not be separated

These activities should not be left isolated from each other, as illustrated Figure 2, since this would lead to unnecessary loss of useful knowledge that could have provided developmental benefits to the society. They should be integrated in a knowledge circle (KC), as shown in Figure 3, so that knowledge can efficiently support development. In addition, the KC should also be activated through enhancing HE and supporting further its cooperation and harmony with the sectors concerned with the utilization of knowledge and the employment of qualified human skills [6].

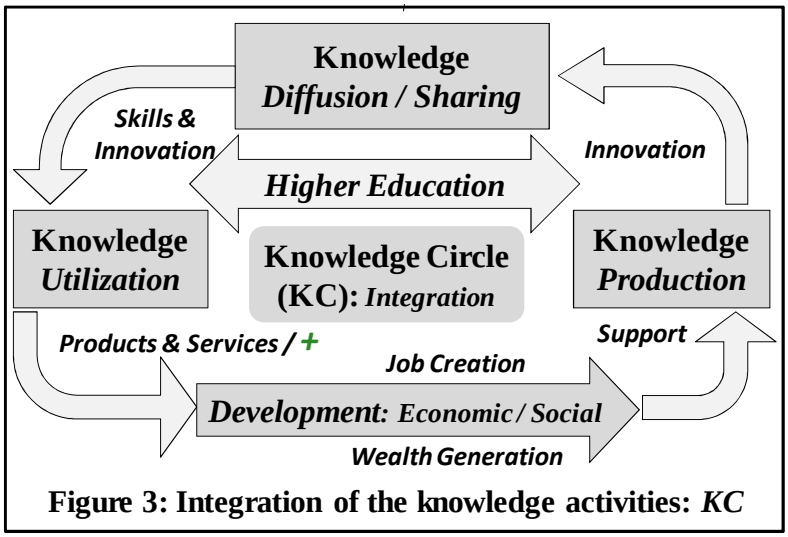

Figure 3: Integration of the knowledge activities: *KC*

It has been viewed that the KC is at the heart of the development of the knowledge-based economy; and it has also been considered that the development of this economy is associated with human and social development, which is also based on the KC. In order to support and activate the KC, the following three main questions need to be addressed:

- the first is concerned with the scope of issues associated with the KC;
- the second is related to the process of continuously monitoring and supporting the KC and responding to its requirements and change affecting it ; while
- the third is associated with the assessment method that need to be used for understanding the current state of the KC and directing its future development.

Figure 4 provides a paradigm that answers these questions and introduces a framework for the target knowledge-based economy.

- For the scope, the Figure considers the five-domain Bakry's view: Strategy, Technology, Organization, People and Environment (STOPE) that has been previously considered in various studies requiring the consideration of comprehensive scope of issues [7].

- For the development process, the widely used six-sigma cyclic phases of: Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control (DMAIC) has been adopted [8].

- For the assessment method, the Knowledge Assessment Method (KAM) of the World Bank (WB) has been taken into account [9].

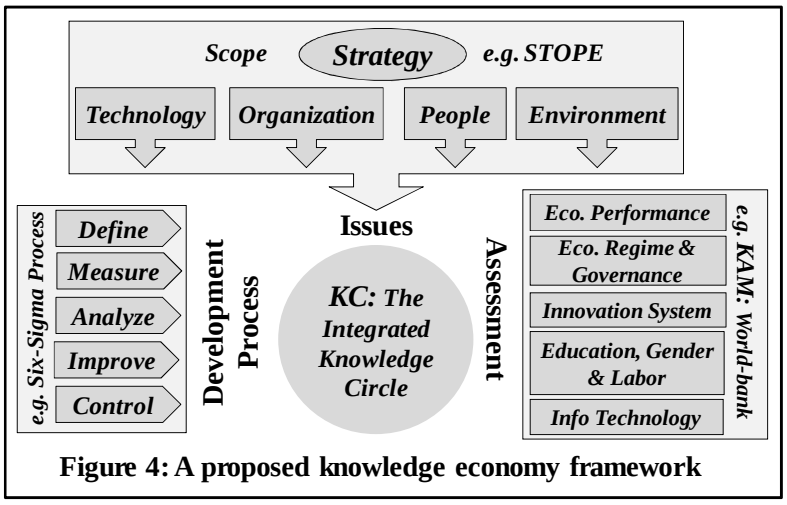

Figure 4: A proposed knowledge economy framework

Assessment of Knowledge

Periodic assessments are usually needed for understanding the current state of the case considered, and for setting-up development directions. With regards to the state of the knowledge-based economy in various countries, KAM is widely used for this purpose. It divides its assessment indicators into the following five main divisions (Table 1 gives more details):

- economic performance division;

- economic incentives and institutional regime division, including issues concerned with the economic regime and with governance;

- innovation system division; and

- education and human resources division, including issues concerned with education, labour and gender; and

- information technology.

As given in Table 1, KAM has "109" indicators distributed over the above divisions. Fourteen of these indicators are considered to be essential. Knowledge economy ranking of countries by the WB is based on these essential indicators. Each assessed value of an indicator is normalized to a reference having the value "10". This reference value is assigned to the country which obtains the top score in that indicator, with the rest given relative values, depending on their rank among assessed countries [9].

Table 1: Divisions and indicators of the Knowledge Assessment Method (KAM).			
Divisions		Essential Indicators	Total Indicators
Economic Performance		Average annual growth of the "Gross Domestic Product: GDP".	6
		"Human Development Index: HDI": combines three main indicators: life expectancy at birth; educational attainment; and standard of living.	
Economic Incentives & Institutional Regime	Economic Regime	Trade barriers: trade freedom score.	12
	Governance	Regulatory quality: market policies.	7
		Rule of law: crimes; judiciary; enforceability of contracts.	
Innovation System		Royalty payments and receipts.	28
		Science and engineering articles.	
		Patents granted by "US Patent Office: USPO".	
Education & Human Resources	Education	Adult literacy rate.	15
		Gross secondary enrolment rate.	
		Gross tertiary rate.	
	Labour	(None).	24
	Gender	(None).	5
Information Technology		Telephones.	12
		Computers.	
		Internet use.	
TOTAL		14	109

HE can contribute to the development of various indicators associated with all the divisions of KAM, either directly or indirectly. This can be explained by looking at the main points of the impact of HE on society given by the AAU study [5], and illustrated in Figure 1.

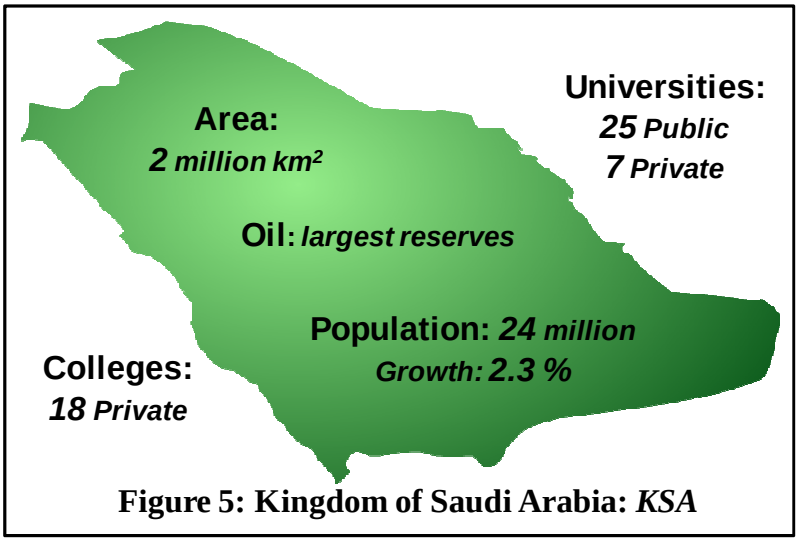

Figure 5: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: *KSA*

HE in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia enjoys a wide area of over "2 million km^2; and it has the largest oil reserves in the whole world as illustrated in Figure 5 [10]. The population of the country is around 25 million, with an annual growth of around 2.3 %. Based on KAM, the past assessments of Saudi Arabia, by the WB, for the years 1995 and 2009, considering the fourteen essential indicators of Table 1, are shown in Figure 6 [9]. Although improvements are clear in most indicators, they are still below the ambitions of the country. In addition, the impact of recent development in HE on the country has not been seen yet; it is expected to do so in the coming few years.

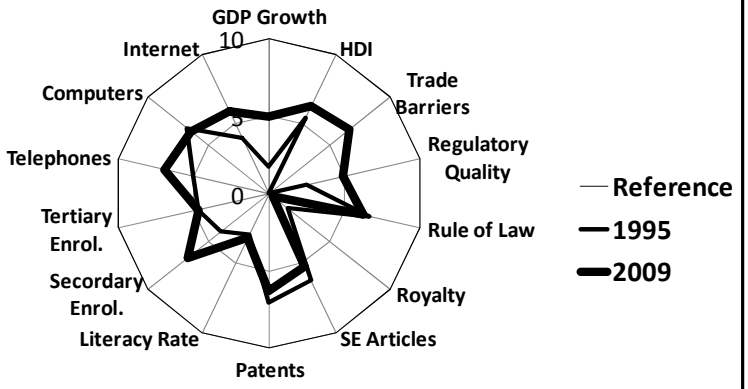

Figure 6: KAM essential indicators for Saudi Arabia

The current development of HE in the country emphasizes expansion, especially in the fields that respond to the job market. In this respect, the development is associated with three main dimensions:

- establishing new Public Universities in the various regions of the country;
- encouraging the establishment of new Private Universities and HE Colleges; and
- supporting HE abroad for Saudi students through King Abdullah Scholarship Program.

Each of these dimensions is addressed in the following.

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The history of the Public Universities in Saudi Arabia is given in Table 2. At present there are "25 Public Universities" in the country, "13" of which have been established in the year 2005 and after. Private Universities in the country started in 1999, and at present there are "7" of them, "3" of which were established after the year 2005, as shown in Table 3. HE colleges also started in 1999, reaching "18" now. Among these colleges "11" have been established in 2005 and after, as given in Table 4. Since many of the HE institutions in the country are recent, their impact on the society and KAM indicators is yet to be seen [11].

King Abdullah Scholarship Program for Saudi students to study abroad was established in 2005. The students are sent to more than 21 different countries to pursue their undergraduate and graduate studies in a variety of academic fields. They include countries: in Asia, such as China, India, Japan and Malaysia; in Africa, such as Egypt and Tunisia; in Europe, such as UK, France and Germany; in

America, including the USA and Canada; in addition to Australia. While no exact number of Saudi students currently studying abroad is available, it is estimated that they are tens of thousands [11].

Table 2: History of Public Universities in Saudi Arabia	
Date of Establishment	University
1949	Umm Al-Qura University
1953	Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University
1957	King Saud University
1961	Islamic University in Madinah
1963	King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals
1967	King Abdulaziz University
1970	Princess Nora bint Abdulaziz University *(Girls Only)*
1974	King Faisal University
1999	King Khalid University
2003	Qassim University
	Taibah University
	Taif University
2005	Ha'il University
	Jazan University
	Al-Jouf University
	King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences
2006	Al-Baha University
	Tabouk University
	Najran University
2007	Northern Border University
2009	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
	Dammam University
	Kharj University
	Shaqrah University in Shaqrah
	Majmaah University

Table 3: History of Private Universities in Saudi Arabia	
Date of Establishment	University
1999	Prince Sultan University
	Effat University *(Girls Only)*
2002	Arab Open University
2004	Al Yamamah University
2006	Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University
2007	Alfaisal University
2008	Dar Al Uloom University

Table 4: History of HE Colleges in Saudi Arabia	
Date of Establishment	**HE College**
1999	Dar Al Hekma College *(Girls Only)*
	Prince Sultan College for Tourism and Business
2001	Al-Baha Private College
2003	College of Business Administration
	Dr. Soliman Fakeeh College for Nursing and Medical Sciences
	Riyadh Colleges of Dentistry and Pharmacy
2004	Ibn Sina National College for Medical Studies

2005	Qassim Private Colleges
	Prince Fahd bin Sultan College
2006	Prince Sultan College for Tourism and Business
	Batterjee Medical College
	Saad College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences
	Reyadah College of Health Sciences
2008	Almaarefa College for Science and Technology
	Buraydah Colleges
	Mohammad Al-Manei Private College for Medical Sciences
	Private International Colleges
	Farabi College of Dentistry

Future development

According to the above, the year 2005 has seen the start of a great leap in HE in Saudi Arabia. This leap is represented by the establishment of many new HE institutions, both public and private; and by enabling a large number of Saudi students to study abroad. What is needed now is for this leap to deliver the right impact on the Saudi society that provides the benefits of the study given in [5] and illustrated in Figure 1. This impact should also lead, directly or indirectly, to moving KAM indicators of Table 1 up for Saudi Arabia, and consequently lead the country toward building the knowledge-based economy. Further elaborations will be given, in the following, on what HE in the country is currently considering for future development. This is done according to Figure 7 which is based on the KC, the STOPE scope and KAM requirements of the proposed knowledge economy framework of Figure 4.

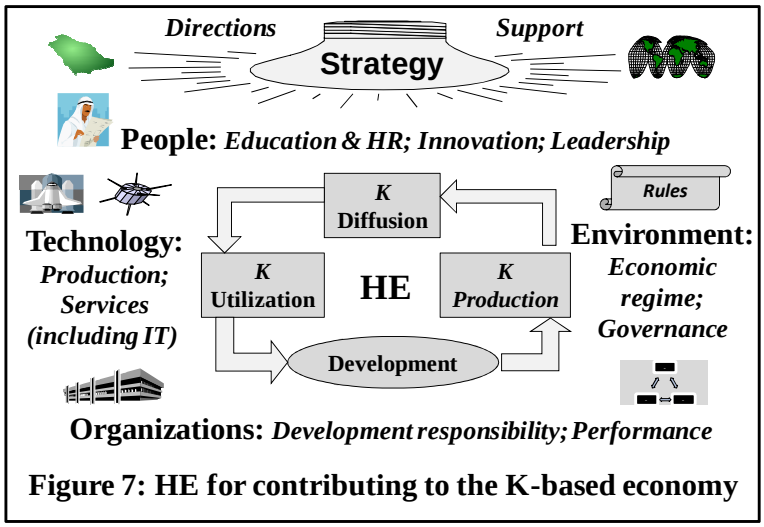

Figure 7: HE for contributing to the K-based economy

- The strategy of HE supports the move forward in the direction of activating the KC toward building the knowledge-based economy, with the KAM, and may be other indicators, being the reference of measuring continuous development, required by the six-sigma development process of the framework of Figure 4. The strategy would take into account: local, national and international issues.

- With regards to technology, HE is considering research and development, and education programs in advanced technologies, especially these suitable for Saudi Arabia; and in the economy and management of such technologies. In addition, HE emphasizes the use of IT in

both academic and administrative activities.

- The organizations, or institutions, of HE are bearing the responsibility of cooperating and competing with other peer institutions both locally and globally, in order to achieve best performance and impact on society. They are also attracting external support through research chairs, endowment programs and investment projects. In addition, they are supporting the utilization of knowledge and human skills through technology incubators, and science parks, and through cooperation with other related organizations.

- Considering people, HE is keen to attract the best staff, and to deliver the best programs to students. With the suitable technology and the right facilities provided by institutions, HE staff and students would be more capable in both innovation and leadership and the qualities needed to promote the knowledge-based economy.

- Concerning the environment, HE emphasizes the need for best governance and economic regime within itself on the one hand, and in the society on the other. Through its activities, it builds the seeds for the development of future sustainable environment.

The paper finally hopes to have provided some contributions that support higher education in its role of building the knowledge-based economy, not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in other parts of the world.

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Making sense of international experience through guided, critical reflection

Abstract

This paper focuses on the design and delivery of a web-enhanced, credit-bearing course at a Hong Kong university, which follows an outcomes-based approach to curriculum design, development, and assessment. 'Intercultural Transitions' is intended to enrich and extend the learning (e.g., cultural, second language, academic, personal) of students with recent or current international experience. In a supportive environment, the participants explore theories and models of intercultural (communicative) competence and intercultural transitions, following a practice-to-theory-to-practice pedagogy. In relation to their own (and others') international experience, they explore such topics as language/culture shock, intercultural (re)adjustment, global citizenship, and intercultural competence in a second language. Through structured reflection, reading, discussion, and writing (e.g., chat forums, blogs, essays), they develop a more critical understanding of their international experience and discover ways to incorporate it into their campus life and post-graduation plans. They also share their insights with peers who are planning to venture abroad. This paper evaluates the first offering and discusses the implications for course revision and pre-departure programming. This project was supported by a Teaching Development Grant (#4170338) and a General Research Fund (#444709) study that is investigating the developmental trajectories of outgoing yearlong and semester-long exchange students from Hong Kong.

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Introduction

In the past thirty years, the internationalization of higher education has intensified and students are increasingly taking part in some form of education outside their home country (e.g., semester-long exchange programs, micro-term sojourns, intensive summer programs, service-learning). Many administrators and educators assume that immersion in the host environment leads to dramatic growth in intercultural competence and host language proficiency; however, education abroad researchers are discovering that the learning situation is complex and variable (e.g., Coleman, 2009; Jackson 2008, 2010; Kinginger, 2009). Left to their own devices, students may limit their social networks to home nationals, and experience little or no gains in intercultural/second language development (Lou, Andresen, and Myers, 2011; Sutton and Rubin, 2010; Vande Berg, 2007).

Recognizing the crucial role that intervention can play in determining sojourn outcomes, innovative pre-sojourn programs are now being developed in some contexts to prepare students for education abroad. This is a welcome development; however, the learning of returnees and incoming

international exchange students also merits our attention. To enhance and extend sojourn learning, it is important to design and document curricula with their needs in mind.

This paper begins with a brief overview of the tenets and core elements in outcomes-based assessment (OBA), the approach to curriculum design that guided the present project. Discussion then centers on the *Intercultural transitions* course that I designed to optimize and extend the intercultural learning and 'whole person' development of students with recent or current international experience. The remainder of the paper focuses on the evaluation of the first offering and the implications for course revision and pre-sojourn programming. While Hong Kong is the context for this project, this approach should be relevant to international educators in other parts of Asia and beyond.

Outcomes-based assessment

Across the globe, many institutions of higher education are now employing an outcomes-based assessment (OBA) approach to guide the design, implementation, and assessment of student learning (Driscoll and Wood, 2007). OBA is advocated by the American Council on Education (ACE) (Olson, Green and Hill, 2006), the Forum on Education Abroad (Bolen, 2007; http://www.forumea.org/outcomes.html), NAFSA: Association of International Educators (NAFSA, 2010), and other bodies concerned with the enhancement of international education. While not without critics, OBA has been adopted by Hong Kong universities to bring about closer ties between teaching and learning outcomes, and improve the quality of the learning experience for students (Kember, 2005). At the course level, the outcomes assessment cycle entails a process of defining student learning needs, articulating expected/desired student learning outcomes, determining the content/fundamental concepts, deciding on the most appropriate and effective means to achieve course aims (e.g., teaching approach, learning activities), identifying and implementing appropriate means to evaluate student achievement of course goals, collecting data to evaluate the extent to which students' achieve those outcomes, and, finally, using that information to revise the curriculum.

The Intercultural Transitions course

Groundwork

The development of the *Intercultural Transitions* course was inspired by an awareness of the difficulties returnees and incoming exchange students may encounter, the limited sharing of their

international experience, and a strong desire to make a difference. Much has been written about the challenges facing students who opt to study in an unfamiliar context, and the strategies that can help them cope with the natural ups and downs of adjustment (e.g., Bennett, 1998; Cushner and Karim, 2004; Kim 2001, 2012; Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Numerous international educators and interculturalists have drawn our attention to the need for pre-sojourn preparation (e.g., Bennett, 2008; Jackson 2006, 2010; Lou and Bosley, 2008; Thebodo and Marx, 2005) and ongoing support during sojourns (Jackson, 2008, 2010; Weber-Bosley, 2010, Vandeberg and Paige, 2009).

Much less attention has been devoted to re-entry. This is changing, however, as international education researchers and practitioners increasingly recognize the potential benefits of attending to the needs of returnees (e.g., Martin and Harrell, 2004; Mendelson and Citron, 2006; Pisano, Flores, Gandhi, Kasravi and Yngve, 2011; Szkudlarek, 2010), and the importance of connecting pre-departure and re-entry experiences (Anderson, Eyler and Ison, 2011; La Brack, 1993; Smith, 2002; Thebodo and Marx, 2005). In the innovative website, 'What's up with culture', Bruce La Brack identifies challenges that students may experience when returning to their home country after a stay abroad including: boredom, reverse homesickness, feelings of alienation, difficulty explaining ideas and feelings, lack of interest in their international stories, change in relationships with friends and family, inability to apply new knowledge and skills, and the compartmentalization of their international experience. Without guided, critical reflection, returnees may become frustrated and overwhelmed by re-entry culture shock and identity misalignments; they may 'shoe-box' their international learning as they become re-immersed in campus life, and miss opportunities to deepen, extend, and share their second language/international learning with others (Johnson, 2002, 2005; LaBrack 1993; Meyer-Lee, 2005; Vande Berg and Paige, 2009).

As well as relevant literature, the *Intercultural Transitions* course draws on my own education abroad research. From 2001-9, I conducted ethnographic investigations of short-term sojourners from Hong Kong (English majors) who participated in faculty-led sojourns in England (Jackson 2008, 2010) following a semester of preparation. While abroad, they engaged in literary and cultural studies, and conducted small-scale research projects in the host environment. On return to the home campus, the participants reflected on their international experience and, over the course of a semester,

developed a dissertation linked to the sojourn. Experiential learning and critical reflection were key elements in all phases of the program: pre-sojourn, sojourn, and post-sojourn. In 2009, I shifted my attention to longer-term sojourners and began conducting large-scale, mixed-method, experimental design studies of the 'whole person development' of outgoing exchange students from Hong Kong (Jackson, 2011). Thus, when developing the *Intercultural Transitions* course, I was able to draw on a rich databank (e.g., focus group/interview transcripts, surveys, diaries, journals, participant observation of Hong Kong sojourners, my field notes) and, as cited above, the innovative work of international educators and interculturalists in other contexts.

This course is both research-driven and theory-based. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993) helped guide the preparation and sequencing of course materials and activities, and facilitated the tracking of the intercultural development of the first cohort. This theory centers on the constructs of ethnocentricism and ethnorelativism (Bennett 1993; Bennett and Bennett, 2004; Hammer, 2009a, 2009b). If one has an ethnocentric mindset, 'the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality' (Bennett, 1993: 30); an intercultural/global (ethnorelative) orientation, on the other hand, is associated with 'being comfortable with many standards and customs' and 'an ability to adapt behaviour and judgments to a variety of interpersonal settings' (p. 26). Bennett (1993) maintains that the way individuals perceive and react to cultural difference impacts on developmental intercultural competence, that is, the 'ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts' (Bennett and Bennett, 2004: 149). Ethnorelative worldviews are deemed more effective in nurturing the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour that facilitate successful intercultural communication and adjustment in unfamiliar cultural settings (Jackson, 2010; Kim, 2001, 2012).

The DMIS theorizes that people move from ethnocentric stages (Denial, Defense) through Minimization (a transitional orientation) to more ethnorelative stages of development (Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration) as they acquire intercultural competence (Hammer 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). Not all individuals continuously advance from one stage to the next in sequence. Disturbing intercultural experiences or acute culture shock, for example, may strengthen ethnocentric tendencies and individuals may retreat to a lower level of sensitivity.

To propel students to higher levels of intercultural competence, Bennett (2008), Guilherme (2002, 2012), and other interculturalists advocate intercultural education and experiential learning, with critical reflection as a core ingredient (Kolb, 1983; Moon, 2000, 2004). These modes of education have the potential to bring about transformative learning (Brewer and Cunningham, 2009; Hoff, 2008; Mezirow, 1991, 2000, 2009; Savicki, 2008), which Cranton (2006) defines as 'the process by which people examine problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change… Discourse is central to the process' (p. 36). When designing the *Intercultural Transitions* course, it would be essential to build in elements to nurture the students' capacity to be critically self-reflective.

Desired learning outcomes

In the OBA approach to course design, educators must methodically identify desired learning outcomes for students. The groundwork (literature review, education abroad research, needs analysis) helped me to complete this step. By the end of the course, I expected that the participants should be able to:

- articulate how their international/intercultural experiences have affected their sense of self and worldview;
- describe theories and models of culture shock, transitions, re-entry, identity (re)construction, intercultural (communicative) competence, and global citizenship;
- test these theories and models, using their own international/intercultural experiences, and narratives found in the literature, media, interviews, and research reports;
- assess their cultural self-awareness and communication style, and set realistic goals for further enhancement of their intercultural (communicative) competence and global competencies;
- integrate their international/intercultural experiences into their academic/daily life and future plans.
- express their ideas more clearly in English in both written and oral form.

Fundamental concepts

Another key element in curriculum planning is the identification of the core concepts and content that will help the students achieve the learning outcomes. In this course, the students would address the following topics/concepts: intercultural contact and identity reconstruction, intercultural adjustment and adaptation, differing cultures of learning, intercultural competence in interpersonal relationships, reentry, cultural marginality,

intercultural (communicative) competence, global citizenship, and the marketing of international experience/ intercultural/L2 communication skills.

Approach to learning and learning activities

Following 'practice-to-theory-to-practice' pedagogy, the students would begin by recounting their international stories before being introduced to theoretical understandings of transitions. Through structured reflection, they would gradually be prompted to take a more critical look at their personal narratives (oral and written), and draw on relevant theories (e.g., adjustment, identity transformation) when they revisit critical incidents. As well as sojourner accounts (student narratives, published essays), they would also be exposed to research publications, which are less personal in nature. This experiential approach uses theory to illuminate student experience, draws on data to challenge and build on existing understandings of international experience, and encourages students to apply what they have learned in future intercultural encounters.

Learning activities

After settling on the aims and content of the course, I turned my attention to the learning activities that I believed would help students achieve the outcomes: discussions, analysis of readings, brief interactive lectures, weekly online reflective postings/blogging guided by prompts, and a reflective writing portfolio, which would consist of (increasingly) reflective essays and peer reviews. A group presentation at the end of the semester would be open to all students interested in education abroad.

ELearning would be a key element. Moodle, a web-based course management system, would facilitate: course announcements, the dissemination of course materials (e.g., powerpoint files; readings; links to websites, You Tube excerpts, weblogs and photos), online discussion (Forum), blogging, student work submission, and the administration of surveys/feedback forms.

Assessment scheme

In an OBA approach, all forms of assessment should resonate with the aims and philosophy of the course, as well as the activities. For *Intercultural Transitions*, 10% of the grade would be for participation, a requirement for all courses in my Department. 35% would be devoted to online reflection (Forum postings and blog entries), while 40% would be reserved for the reflective writing

portfolio, which would consist of 3 reflective essays and peer reviews (using specially-designed forms). Finally, 15% would be for the end-of-term oral presentation (sharing session). For most of the elements (e.g., blog entries/Forum contributions, reflective essays, oral presentations) I developed detailed rubrics that were posted on Moodle at the beginning of the course.

Feedback from students

In the course design process, it is vital to build in procedures for continuously gathering feedback from students so that changes can be made while the course is underway as well as in subsequent offerings. For the *Intercultural Transitions* course, the students were encouraged to offer their views throughout the semester by way of email or in person. Midway through the course they were given a brief survey, which they could complete in class or online. At the end of the semester, they filled in the standard Faculty of Arts course evaluation form as well as a course-specific survey.

Evaluation of the first offering

The remainder of the paper is devoted to the evaluation of the first offering of the *Intercultural Transitions* course and implications for revision. After presenting profiles of the participants, attention shifts to the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data that offered insight into their developmental trajectories and course outcomes.

Participants

This 3-credit course was offered for the first time in September 2010 and open to all students who had some form of current or recent international experience. 18 undergraduates opted to join this 14-week (42-hr) elective course, including 13 (72.2%) females and 5 (27.8%) males. All were of Chinese ethnicity and born in Hong Kong. One male student had immigrated to Canada as an adolescent and returned to Hong Kong as an exchange student; he considered both Cantonese and English as a first language. 16 spoke Cantonese as a first language and 1 grew up speaking Putonghua (Mandarin) as the primary language at home. Their level of proficiency in English ranged from high intermediate to advanced.

In terms of their year of study, 1 (5.6%) was in her second year, 9 (50.0%) in their third, and 8 (44.4%) in their fourth. While open to students in all Faculties, the majority (15, 83.3%) of students were from the Faculty of Arts. 2 (11.1%) were from the Faculty of Business Administration, and 1

(5.6%) from the Faculty of Social Science. Their majors varied: English, history, hotel and tourism management, integrated business, and social work. On entry, half of the students had a GPA (Grade Point Average) above 3.30; the GPAs of the rest ranged from 3.00 to 3.29.

Their international experience varied in terms of length, location(s), and degree of intercultural contact. 8 (44.4%) had participated in a micro- or short-term sojourn, which typically consisted of a summer language immersion program or a cultural studies tour organized by their department or secondary school. 2 (11.1%) had taken part in a semester-long sojourn in Europe or North America, and 8 (44.4%) a yearlong sojourn (or longer) in Canada, Germany, Sweden, or the U.S.

Informed consent

On entry, in keeping with the ethics guidelines for my university, the students were asked in writing if they would be willing for me to analyze their work/surveys and be interviewed after the course ended. They were assured that their participation (or nonparticipation) would not affect their grades and pseudonyms would be used in subsequent reports. All agreed to allow their written work to be evaluated; only one declined to be interviewed. The students were offered the option of withdrawing their consent at any time. None did.

Measurable outcomes

Data gathered throughout the semester was uploaded to NVivo 9, a software program that facilitates the organization and analysis of mixed-method data. Instrumentation consisted of both quantitative and qualitative measures (e.g. surveys, blog entries, Forum comments, essays, post-course interview transcripts, my field notes). As most of the reflective coursework was evaluated by specially-designed rubrics, the annotated forms were also incorporated into the NVivo database. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a cross-culturally validated, psychometric instrument linked to the DMIS (Hammer 2009b, 2009c; Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman, 2003), was administered to all participants before and after the course to measure changes in their actual and perceived levels of intercultural sensitivity. Due to space limitations, this paper largely focuses on the IDI results, with reference to qualitative data that shed light on the participants' intercultural development and depth of critical reflection.

IDI results on entry

The IDI indicates where the respondents as a whole place themselves along the intercultural development continuum (either Denial, Polarization (Defense/Reversal), Minimization, Acceptance,

or Adaptation) (Hammer, 2009b, 2009c). When the course got underway, the Perceived Orientation (PO) of this group was 121.71 in Acceptance, which indicates that they believed that they possessed a high level of intercultural competence.

Another measure calculated by this 50-item survey is the Development Orientation (DO), which provides an indication of 'the group's primary orientation toward cultural differences and commonalities along the continuum *as assessed by the IDI'* (Hammer, 2009c: 5). This is the perspective that the group is most apt to draw on in intercultural encounters. Similar to the Perceived Orientation (PO), the Development Orientation (DO) can be Denial, Polarization (Defense/Reversal), Minimization, Acceptance, or Adaptation (Hammer, 2009c: 5). The group's Developmental Orientation (DO) on entry was 92.42, in the low end of Minimization; while ethnocentric, this is a transitional stage of development, in which, individuals may 'recognize some patterns of cultural difference' but respond to 'these identified differences through a commonality lens that can mask underlying differences' (Hammer 2009a: 208).

On entry, the Orientation Gap (OG), the difference between the group's Perceived Orientation (PO) and Developmental Orientation (DO), was 29.29. According to Hammer (2009c), a gap score of 7 points or higher indicates a meaningful difference. The group and individual IDI profiles also provide an indication of what Hammer (2009a) refers to as Trailing Orientations (TO), 'orientations that are 'in back of' the group's Developmental Orientation (DO) on the intercultural continuum that are not 'resolved'' (p. 5). In times of intercultural stress or conflict these trailing issues have a tendency to pull individuals back from their Developmental Orientation (DO) for coping with cultural difference. On entry, this group's Denial worldview was not fully resolved.

The IDI also reveals the Leading Orientations (LO) for the respondents; that is, the 'next step to take in the enhancement of intercultural competence, in relation to the intercultural continuum. As the group's Developmental Orientation (DO) on entry was Minimization, their Leading Orientations (LO) were Acceptance, and Adaptation, ethnorelative stages of development.

At the end of the semester, the participants were readministered the IDI. This time, their Perceived Orientation (PO) was 126.22, in Acceptance, while their Developmental Orientation (DO) was 102.00, in the second half of Minimization. This meant that the Orientation Gap (OG) was 24.22.

As for Trailing Orientations (TO), all worldviews were resolved except for Minimization. The Leading Orientations (LO) for the group were Acceptance, and Adaptation, as in the pre-test.

A comparison of their pre- and post-course IDI results revealed that the students still greatly overestimated their level of intercultural sensitivity, although there was a slight reduction of 4.51 points. Their actual level of intercultural sensitivity had increased from 92.42 in the low end of Minimization to 102.00, the second half of Minimization, the transitional stage. This gain of 9.58 points, which Hammer (2009c) refers to as a 'meaningful difference', suggests that guided critical reflection had a positive impact on their 'intercultural worldview'. As there was no control group it is not possible to definitively attribute this gain to the work done in the *Intercultural Transitions* course; however, the qualitative data does provide compelling evidence of the positive effect of ongoing, structured reflection. The analysis also revealed that the oral and written narratives were generally in accord with the individual pre- and post-course IDI results.

Qualitative data

To better understand the impact of the *Intercultural Transitions* course on the participants' intercultural development, the qualitative data (e.g., blog entries, Forum comments, reflective essays, post-course interview transcripts) was subjected to content analysis (Grbich, 2007) and linked to their pre- and post- IDI scores and other surveys they completed. The analysis revealed that, overall, the participants demonstrated more intercultural awareness and sensitivity by the end of the course. On entry, most tended to judge rather than analyze behavior in intercultural interactions; few demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of cultural difference. In blog entries, many were initially quite negative about intercultural encounters; their narratives were characterized by 'us' vs. 'them' discourse, with negative stereotyping of host nationals. By the time they penned their third and final reflective essay, the participants were noticeably more aware of themselves as cultural beings and more sensitive to the impact of their own behavior in intercultural interactions. When revisiting critical incidents, most demonstrated more awareness of possible reasons for misunderstandings and, significantly, were more knowledgeable about strategies to employ to enhance future intercultural

encounters whether at home or abroad.

While the group as a whole moved in the direction of greater intercultural competence, I observed differences in their individual trajectories. The analysis of the oral and written narratives revealed that those who made the least gains in intercultural sensitivity according to the IDI, still oversimplified cultural difference and remained less critical of any role they might have played in unsatisfactory intercultural encounters. In contrast, individuals who developed a more ethnorelative mindset were more active in both face-to-face and online discussions and, by the end of the semester, their oral and written contributions were more lengthy and substantive, and contained more critical elements (Jackson, in press). These individuals were also more mindful of concrete ways to enhance intercultural relations. These observations are in accord with the DMIS, which posits that 'as one's *experience of cultural difference* becomes more sophisticated, one's competence in intercultural relations increases' (Bennett and Bennett, 2004: 152).

Lessons learned

Of the numerous lessons gleaned from the first offering of the *Intercultural Transitions* course, many will be relevant to international educators in other contexts who may consider adopting a similar approach. First, it is important to devote sufficient attention to the preparation of students (and yourself) for new roles and responsibilities. Practice-to-theory-to practice pedagogy was unfamiliar to all of the participants and many were not used to introspection or personal writing in academic courses. Those who had only been abroad for a short time were more accustomed to traditional, transmission-modes of teaching with the lecturer as the 'sage on the stage' (King 1993). When implementing an unfamiliar pedagogy, the facilitator must clearly identify and provide ample opportunity to discuss the format and aims of the course. It is also essential to create a supportive climate in which participants feel sufficiently at ease to share intercultural experiences and the emotions attached to them. The pace for a course of this nature is necessarily more intense and personal; ideally, the class size for this learner-centered course should not be more than twenty.

Second, educators must be sensitive to the intercultural sensitivity level of the students and their readiness to make the transition to more learner-centered teaching. Qualified IDI administrators

may administer the IDI at the beginning of the course to determine the students' intercultural development level and then sequence activities accordingly (Bennett, 2004; Bennett and Bennett, 2004). With or without IDI data, educators can review the stages of the DMIS, and analyze the dialogue and narratives of the participants to gauge their readiness to engage in more challenging, critical reflection.

Third, educators should be aware of the amount of time, energy, and skills needed for a course of this nature to be successful. Much of the work is done before the students arrive (e.g., the preparation of rubrics for multiple assignments, the development of prompts for Forum discussions and reflective essays, the selection of published sojourner accounts, the development of in-class tasks). Throughout the course, the dynamic facilitator must keep students engaged and heading in the direction of higher levels of intercultural competence and global citizenship. While extensive use of eLearning is not apt to pose a problem for electronic-saavy students, educators should be mindful of the technical knowledge and time required to upload materials and interact with students on line. The latter is vital as the students' participation and interest level will surely wane without the facilitator's input and feedback.

Finally, one of the aims of the course was for students to share their international experience with others. The first-offering included group presentations at the end of the semester, that were open to students in all faculties and staff in the Office of Academic Links (OAL). As the sessions took place during a very busy time of year, only a small number of 'guests' attended so in the second offering the participants are being encouraged to submit their essays to a new Education Abroad writing contest that I am organizing. The winning essays will then be available for everyone to read on line.

Implications for pre-sojourn programming

This project also has implications for pre-sojourn preparation. Prior to going abroad, most of the participants in the *Intercultural Transitions* course had had limited or no preparation to be systematic language and culture learners in an international environment, and they had not received guidance on setting goals for their sojourn. The local participants who had returned from a semester or year abroad had attended a brief pre-departure orientation session organized by the OAL. It included a powerpoint

presentation that focused on logistics (e.g., procedures for transferring credits, security issues), a Q & A session, and small-group meetings with local students who had studied in the host institution or international exchange students from that institution. While very helpful and necessary, these sessions cannot address intercultural communication issues in depth or adequately prepare students for study and daily life in another culture. More intensive, credit-bearing intercultural communication courses or online support are needed to help students develop a framework to make sense of cultural difference and raise their awareness of effective second language/culture-learning strategies.

The evaluation of the *Intercultural Transitions* course and my investigations of faculty-led study abroad programs (Jackson, 2008, 2010) suggest that students benefit from guided, structured analysis of intercultural interaction. Critical reflection can help students optimize their international experience and extend their learning once they are back home. To ensure a broader impact on international education, pedagogical interventions like this should be evaluated and shared at conferences and in publications. Much more work is needed in a variety of contexts to better understand the impact of curricular intervention on student sojourners and returnees.

Acknowledgements

The curriculum project described in this paper is being funded by a Teaching Development Grant (#4170338) from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK); it draws on data from a study of international exchange programs supported by the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (General Research Fund #444709). This paper would not have been possible without the participation of the students in the first offering of the *Intercultural Transitions* course.

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PRE-SOJOURN DECISION-MAKING: THE CASE OF HONG KONG EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Abstract

To best prepare students for their international exchange experience, educators and program administrators need to understand the motives, expectations, and concerns of participants prior to departure. This paper reports on the first phase of an experimental design study that investigated the 'whole person' development of Hong Kong university students who joined a semester-long exchange program. Before and after the sojourn, 94 completed surveys and a sampling (23) participated in an in-depth, semi-structured interview. This paper explores their motives for studying abroad, the reasons for selecting a particular destination/institution, their expectations and aims for their semester-long sojourn, and their worries prior to departing for the host country. Understanding the factors that influence students' decision to go on exchange can help the home institution increase participation rates and design more effective pre-departure orientation sessions and courses (e.g., intercultural communication).
This research was generously supported by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (General Research Fund # 444709).

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Introduction

The number of tertiary-level students who are gaining some form of international experience is on the rise (e.g., micro-sojourns, short-term sojourns, semester- or year-long exchanges, service-learning, internships) and by 2025, more than seven million are expected to spend at least part of their undergraduate degree outside their home country (Institute of International Education, 2011; OECD, 2011). With the push for internationalization, institutions of higher education, including those in Asia, are signing more agreements to facilitate student and faculty exchange. In this era of accountability, more attention is being paid to sojourn outcomes (Bolen, 2007; NAFSA, 2010); however, not enough is known about the decision and motivations to study abroad, and the aims and expectations of participants.

In 2006, the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) published *Our View: A Research Agenda for Study Abroad,* which highlights gaps in education abroad research, including 'the participant decision-making process and how various factors influence that process' (p. 3). The authors maintain that 'we don't know the extent to which students are aware of their own goals when they decide to study abroad, and to what extent their decision *to go* abroad is linked to their choice about *where to go'* (p. 3). Allen and Spielmann (2009); Krzaklewska (2008); Mendelson (2006); Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen and Pascarella (2009) echoed the concerns of the CIEE, and recommended that more attention be directed toward the pre-sojourn phase to optimize education

abroad programming. Other researchers in various contexts have also heeded the call (e.g., Bodycott, 2009; Caudery, Petersen and Shaw, 2008; Chambers and Chambers, 2006, 2008; Chirkov, Safdar, deGuzman and Playford, 2008; De Grosbois, Kaethler and Young, 2010), but we still know relatively little about the decision-making of students who join exchange programs, especially those from Asia.

This paper reports on the first phase of an experimental-design study that investigated the impact of a semester-long exchange program on undergraduates from a Hong Kong university; their 'whole person' development/intercultural sensitivity was compared with students who remained on the home campus for a semester prior to going on exchange (a convenience sample) (Jackson, 2011). While the study tracked the experimental cohort from the application process until their return from a semester abroad, as recommended by the CIEE (2006), this paper focuses on an often neglected element, that is, pre-sojourn decision-making, aims, and concerns.

After providing a profile of the home institution, including its internationalization efforts, attention shifts to the pre-departure phase of the study. While the participants are from a Hong Kong university, their perceptions and experiences are apt to resonate with students in other parts of the world who are about to live and study in a second language in a foreign country. The findings also have implications for education abroad professionals/administrators in Asia and beyond.

Background to study

Before focusing on the participants, it is helpful to have an understanding of the home institution's history and internationalization aims. The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), which was founded in 1963, is a comprehensive research university with 'a global vision and a mission to combine tradition with modernity, and to bring together China and the West'. Presently, it has more than 20,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, including 3,000 who come from regions outside Hong Kong. While the institution does not have an explicit internationalization policy, the 2006 Strategic Plan provides an indication of the attributes and skills expected of graduates. As the following table illustrates, several are linked to intercultural competency, second language skills, and global dimensions of learning:

Table 1: Expectations for CUHK Graduates

Students who graduate from CUHK are expected to have acquired:

- intellectual depth in a specialty (at least one subject);
- breadth in general knowledge (in a broad range of disciplines);
- bilingual proficiency and effective communication skills;
- intercultural sensitivity and appreciation of other cultures;
- learning skills appropriate to the modern age (e.g., analytic skills, IT capability, the ability to think critically and independently, the ability to make sound judgments,
- creativity, problem-solving skills, the ability to work in a team, the ability to continue with life-long learning/ professional development, leadership skills);
- personal attributes/ ethical values (e.g., honesty, integrity, compassion, interpersonal skills, civic and global responsibility);
- a deep understanding of Chinese culture/ sense of national identity and pride;
- a global perspective (a broader perspective and deeper understanding of the realities of the interconnectedness of world systems). (Extracts from the 2006 Strategic Plan, CUHK)

In recent years, the percentage of CUHK students gaining some form of international experience has increased significantly and the University now has more than 200 exchange partners in 28 countries/regions, which is providing more opportunities for forays abroad (Office of Academic Links, CUHK, 2010). In 2009-10, the year of the present study, 1,304 students participated in some form of credit-bearing, international education: 709 joined an exchange program (534 went abroad for a semester and 175 for a year); 595 took part in a short-term, credit-bearing program (e.g., a faculty-led summer program, an internship, service-learning). In addition, 1,800 students participated in other experiential learning opportunities outside Hong Kong (e.g., community service, fieldwork).

From 2001-9, I conducted a series of ethnographic investigations of undergraduates from CUHK who participated in a short-term sojourn in England (Jackson, 2008, 2010). Despite the considerable time and resources the University is investing in international exchange programs, until the present study, no research had ever been conducted with longer-term sojourners. In the spring of 2009, with the support of the Office of Academic Links (OAL) at my institution, I began to investigate the developmental trajectories of semester-and year-long exchange students, paying attention to (inter)cultural, linguistic, academic, personal, and professional dimensions. For the semester-long sojourners, I have been employing an experimental-design approach with pre- and post-tests, and a control group consisting of students on campus for a semester prior to going on exchange. This paper focuses on the pre-sojourn perceptions, aspirations, and anxieties of the students who went on exchange in the first semester of the 2009-10 academic year. Discussion centers on the following

research questions:

1. When and why did the students decide to study abroad?
2. What factors influenced their preference for a particular destination/institution/program?
3. What were their aims, expectations and concerns prior to going on exchange?
4. What are the implications for education abroad programming (e.g., pre-sojourn preparation, sojourn support)?

Method

Participants

94 students took part in a semester-long exchange program in the first half of the 2009-10 academic year. 10 (10.6%) were in their second year, 66 (70.2%) in their third, and 18 (19.1%) in their fourth year of studies. They came from a range of Faculties: 64 (68.1%) from the Faculty of Business Administration, 9 (9.5%) from Science, 8 (8.5%) from Social Science, 7 (7.4%) from Arts, 4 (4.3%) from Engineering, 1 (1.1%) from Education (1.1%), and 1 (1.1%) from Medicine. Their mean grade point average (GPA) was 3.4.

In this cohort, there were 51 females (54.3%) and 43 (45.7%) males, with a mean age of 22.1 years. All were of Chinese ethnicity; 69 (72.6%) spoke Cantonese as a first language and 24 (25.3%) Putonghua. 38 (39.6%) of the fathers (or male guardians) were born in Hong Kong and 58 (60.4%) in Mainland China. 37 (38.5%) of the mothers (or female guardians) were born in Hong Kong and the rest (58, 61.5%) in the Mainland. As for their highest level of formal education, 42 (43.8%) of the fathers had graduated from secondary school, 22 (22.9%) had not completed their secondary-level education, 15 (15.6%) were college graduates, 7 (7.3%) had a postgraduate degree, 6 (6.3%) had attended graduate school, and 4 (4.2%) had some college experience. 39 (40.6) of the mothers had graduated from secondary school, 29 (30.2%) had not completed their secondary schooling, 14 (14.6%) were college graduates, 7 (7.3%) had taken some college courses, 4 (4.2%) had attended graduate school, and 3 (3.1%) had a postgraduate degree.

Of the 94 students, only 11 (11.7%) indicated that a family member had studied abroad; in the majority of cases, this was a sibling not a parent. 27 (28.7%) of the students had never ventured

outside Hong Kong; 67 (71.3%) had some travel experience, which typically consisted of a few days or weeks in Asia. 69 (73.4%) had no previous education abroad experience, while 25 (26.6%) had studied abroad. For most, their international education consisted of a short-term sojourn in an English-speaking country (e.g., an English language summer immersion program).

For the semester-long sojourn, the majority was bound for North America: 52 (55.3%) to the U.S., 11 (11.7%) to Canada, 6 (6.4%) to Singapore, 4 (4.3%) to South Korea, 4 (4.3%) to Finland, 2 (2.1%) Czechoslovakia, 2 (2.1%) to Switzerland, 2 (2.1%) to Spain, and 11 (11.7%) to 'other' destinations (Australia, China, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the U.K.). In the host country, the coursework of all participants would be in a second language, with most studying in English. Most of the students were required to take either the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or the IELTs (International English Language Testing System). The average score for the former was 102.85 and 7.08 for the latter.

Instrumentation

For this phase of the study, I was able to draw on: the participants' international educational exchange application, the *Pre-International Exchange Survey* (Jackson, 2011), and the pre-sojourn interview protocol that I developed for the in-depth, semi-structured interviews that would take place with a sampling of students. In their application form, the students were required to provide a study plan, that is, a short essay explaining why they wished to go on exchange and what they hoped to accomplish. This afforded me insight into their decision-making processes, motives, and degree of focus prior to attending the pre-departure orientation.

The *Pre-International Exchange Survey* consisted of 93 closed questions and several open-ended questions (Jackson, 2011). Topics included: their decision to go on exchange; their aims, expectations and level of preparedness for the sojourn; concerns about living and studying abroad; previous international/education abroad experience/intercultural contact; perceptions of intercultural competence; second language proficiency and use; identity; and family background (e.g., parents' level of education and international experience).

The *Pre-Sojourn Interview Protocol* addressed the following issues: the interviewees' decision to go on exchange; the reasons for choosing a particular destination/university; their aims

and expectations for the sojourn; intercultural contact/social network; intercultural communication skills; perceptions of intercultural competence; identity; previous international experience and education abroad; level of preparedness for life/study abroad; self-assessment of second language proficiency; and language use.

Procedures

In April 2009, in the orientation sessions organized by the OAL, the 2009-10 outgoing exchange students were invited to participate in this study. Following the ethics guidelines of my institution, those who were interested completed a consent form, in which they also indicated their willingness to be interviewed before and after the sojourn. 94 students who would take part in a semester-long sojourn from September to December 2009 completed the *Pre-Sojourn International Exchange Survey* and 23 agreed to be interviewed. During the summer the semi-structured interviews were conducted in Cantonese, English, or Putonghua, depending of the preference of the interviewee. The average length of the interviews was 80 minutes. The interviews were transcribed and translated into English, if necessary, while the survey data was inputted into SPSS.

Data analysis

As soon as the study got underway, a project database was set up in NVivo, a qualitative software program. The qualitative data collected in this phase of the study (excerpts from the application form including the study plan, pre-sojourn interview transcript, open-ended survey responses) were analyzed in NVivo using an 'open coding' approach (Grbich, 2007). Basically, I devised codes to reflect what I saw in the material rather than restrict myself to preconceived categories (Berg, 2007). The *Pre-sojourn International Exchange Survey* results that had been processed by SPSS were then linked to the qualitative data. By triangulating data types and sources, I gained deeper insight into the participants' decision-making processes, perceptions, and emotional state prior to going on exchange.

Results

The following section presents the findings related to the research questions, drawing on both the quantitative (survey) and qualitative data (e.g., application essay, interview transcript, open-ended survey questions). Following each qualitative excerpt, the gender, year of study, major, and destination of the participant are provided. The application essays were written in English and extracts

are presented in their original form. As nearly all interviews were conducted in Chinese, most interview excerpts are translations.

Decision to study abroad

Most of the students began to contemplate studying abroad quite early: 38 (40.4%) before entering university, 35 (37.2%) in their first year of university studies, and 17 (18.1%) during their second year. 4 (4.3%) did not respond to this question. In the pre-sojourn survey, the students were also asked who encouraged them to study abroad. They were provided with a list of possibilities and could choose more than one or add a different response.

Table 2 Influence on the decision to study abroad

42 (44.7%) Friends with study abroad experience
40 (42.6%) Parents/family
30 (31.9%) No one in particular
22 (23.4%) Professors
10 (10.6%) Relatives/contacts in the host culture
6 (6.4%) International students
1 (1.1%) Other (friends who had not studied abroad)

As Table 2 shows, friends with study abroad experience and parents/family were most influential. The majority of the respondents were also encouraged by more than one source (e.g., family, professors, friends with study abroad experience). Interestingly, nearly one third (30, 31.9%) indicated that no one had compelled them to consider studying abroad.

Preference for a particular destination/institution/program

Participants who were obliged to participate in an exchange program as a degree requirement (e.g., majors in Japanese studies) sometimes had little or no choice about their destination. Some exchange programs that were sponsored by departments or colleges also had partnerships with only one or a few institutions. The majority of students, however, were able to indicate their preference for a particular country and, from a list of partner institutions, identify their top choices, bearing in mind admission requirements (e.g., GPA, TOEFL score).

As part of the application process, in the fall of 2008, students were required to submit a study plan for the sojourn. While many were quite vague about their destination and aims, some disclosed their motives for selecting a particular nation, institution or program. These individuals were influenced by multiple factors when preparing their wish list. As the following excerpts illustrate,

some considered the international reputation of the university/country, the research profiles of professors or departments, and the multicultural dimension of the host destination:

> As a science student, I would like to take courses related to my studies, such as neurology and virology. The United States has well-known, prominent researching leaders in the science fields. I believe that experiencing and adopting approaches employed by the foreign universities could give me a lot of inspirations on scientific research. This can definitely prepare me as a researcher in science in the future. (male, year 2, molecular biotechnology, USA)

> Some of the business schools in America rank top in the world. It would be a chance of lifetime to study in there… America is a place with a great diversity of races and cultures. What would be more amazing to have an opportunity to communicate and understand with people in different nationalities? (female, year 2, business administration, Singapore)

> Since U.S.A. takes a leading role in the media industry over the world and is famous for its freedom of press, I would like to explore the journalistic culture there. Moreover, the class sizes in the U.S.A. are generally small, which encourages active participation and contribution to the class discussion. I would definitely benefit from this. Also, as the U.S.A. is a multi-racial society, there is a great diversity of people. I believe it would be a very dynamic and exciting experience to study there." (female, year 2, English, USA)

Some applicants chose institutions based on the courses offered in their area of specialization and the potential for graduate studies or internships. Others were attracted by the possibility of taking courses that were not on offer at their home institution in a different education system:

> The main reason I would like to study in the U.S.A. is to experience a totally different education system. Public examination has been a main element of Hong Kong education, whereby it somehow restricts students to imagine, innovate and adore new ideas. Experiencing a different education system, I believe I will have deeper thought and understanding about my current study and future career plan. (female, year 3, biochemistry, Czechoslovakia)

The language used in the host environment and the medium-of-instruction were also important to the applicants. Significantly, many wrote about linguistic/cultural aspects that attracted them to particular destinations:

> Fluent speaking English is vital for effective communication with people around the globe. It is a well-known fact that the exchange programs in English speaking countries like US and Canada offer a chance for us to study and live with foreigners, leading to a better learning English environment. Immersion into an English speaking culture can also deepen my understanding of the language and strengthen my language ability. (male, year 3, professional accountancy, USA)

> I chose mostly European programs as I am particularly interested in the culture of Europe. The living style and culture of European countries really fascinates me, as they have long histories and entirely different culture compared to Hong Kong. (male, year 1, psychology, Norway)

Perhaps reflecting a lack of confidence, several revealed that the proximity to friends and extended family members impacted on their preference for a particular destination/institution:

> I wanted to go to Europe in the first place but I finally chose the USA because I have friends there. If I have any problem, they can help me. (male, year 2, marketing, USA)

By the time the pre-sojourn interviews got underway in May 2009, all of the successful applicants knew the identity of their host university. As one might expect, some were not accepted by institutions at the top of their wish list and ended up going elsewhere or remained on the home campus.

When I reviewed the interview transcripts, I discovered that nearly all of the interviewees had scanned the website of their host institution but most had done little else. Their knowledge about the host country/institution was quite superficial and, for many, their aims and aspirations remained vague.

Reasons for joining an exchange program

In April 2009, in the *Pre-sojourn International Exchange Survey*, the respondents revealed their motives for joining the semester-long exchange program. From a list of possible reasons, they indicated the importance of each, using a scale ranging from 1= not at all important to 5 = very important. They also had the option of including another motive. The mean score for each statement (M), in descending order of frequency, is shown in Table 3, along with the corresponding standard deviation (SD).

Table 3 Motivations to join a semester-long exchange program

	Motives	M	SD
77	to experience life in another culture	4.59	0.59
4	to travel and see new places	4.57	0.71
15	to have experiences that I could not have at CUHK	4.56	0.63
3	to become more mature, independent and self-confident.	4.43	0.70
11	to develop my interpersonal skills (ability to relate to others)	4.35	0.70
5	to enhance my proficiency in a second language	4.34	0.85
12	to make friends from other cultures	4.32	0.75
6	to have fun	4.29	0.80
19	to increase my level of comfort with people different from myself	4.25	0.73
16	to enhance my ability to communicate in the host language	4.24	0.90

14	to enhance my ability to interact effectively with people from different backgrounds	4.23	0.69
18	to gain valuable experience for my future career	4.20	0.81
17	to increase my understanding of other peoples and cultures	4.18	0.76
8	to enhance my resume and increase job opportunities	4.12	0.81
2	to add diversity to my academic program	4.10	0.79
10	to challenge myself intellectually	3.96	0.91
9	to develop more understanding of international issues and events	3.88	0.91
13	to increase my understanding of my own culture, identity and values	3.67	1.12
1	to enhance my knowledge and skills in my discipline (major)	3.41	1.03

As Table 3 shows, the reasons deemed most important related to personal dimensions (e.g., cultural enrichment, travel and exploration, personal growth) and the desire to have experiences that they did not believe would be possible at the home institution. As well as enhancing their second language and intercultural communication skills, most wished to make friends with people from other cultures and enjoy their time abroad. The potential social, cultural, and linguistic benefits of an exchange experience piqued their interest as did the prospect of becoming more mature and independent. Interestingly, academic/intellectual dimensions were not a priority. In fact, the least popular item related to the enhancement of knowledge and skills in their discipline.

When comparing the study plans with the survey responses related to motives, I discovered some interesting differences. In the former, many applicants cited academic aims for going on exchange as well as potential benefits for their future career. When preparing their study plans, they knew they would be read by ‘gate keepers’ who would determine their admission to the institutions of their choice. By contrast, their surveys were to remain anonymous and had no impact on their future. This finding cautions us not to rely on a single source of data and to be sensitive to the context of the data collection.

Most looking forward to

In an open-ended question, in the *Pre-Sojourn International Exchange Survey* the respondents were also asked what they were most looking forward to in their exchange program. The following were the most common responses, in order of frequency:

- Travelling and visiting different places
- Making new friends with people from different backgrounds
- Experiencing a different culture
- Gaining more life experience
- Learning in a different academic environment

- Having fun (e.g., attending parties, going to the beach, attending NBA games)
- Improving second language proficiency
- Learning more about a foreign culture
- Becoming more independent.

The same question was posed to the interviewees. Similar to the surveys, most were excited about travelling, trying new things, and gaining exposure to another way of life.

> Experiencing a different lifestyle, one that is different from Hong Kong. (female, year 3, English, USA)

> Traveling alone and meeting new friends. This is the first time to plan a trip by myself. I think it will be very exciting. (male, year one, psychology, Norway)

> I am looking forward to trying different things so naturally I feel happy. This is like going travelling. You will always be happy about that! I will be able to play everywhere. I am looking forward to the sunshine and going to the beach. (female, year 3, professional accountancy, USA)

Some expected their studies to be far less demanding than at the home institution. The following interviewee, for example, referred to her impending sojourn as a 'holiday':

> Freedom. I won't have to read and write as many papers and hand in homework everyday. I think the workload will be a lot lighter there. I will be released from many burdens and will enjoy a holiday after three years of continuous work. (female, government and public administration, year three, Czechoslovakia)

Not all of the interviewees were euphoric about what lay ahead, however. For some, their enthusiasm was overshadowed by anxiety about the unknown.

> I am a bit excited and quite worried too as I will be going to a place with a different culture. I'll be able to try new things. I hope that I can get used to the life there as soon as possible so that I can enjoy the learning environment there. I also hope to play around and meet more friends. (female, year three, cultural and religious studies, South Korea)

Concerns

In an open-ended question in the *Pre-sojourn International Exchange Survey*, the students were prompted to reveal what worried them most about the impending sojourn. The following, in order of frequency, were their most commonly cited concerns:

- Security and personal safety
- Managing finances
- Language barrier (inadequate communication skills in the host language)
- Living conditions
- Cultural differences
- Health and psychological well-being
- Making friends
- Homesickness/loneliness

- Time management
- Ability to adapt to the new environment

The interviewees offered additional insight into their level of anxiety prior to departure. As well as concerns about safety and mananging money, many were worried about making friends with people from other cultures, coping in a second language in daily life, and competing with native speakers in courses. The following comments were typical:

> I am a little bit nervous as this is my first trip to another country. I am not familiar with the environment in America. I am worried about the security problem there. I don't quite know how it is like in America. Therefore, I feel worried. (female, year 2, mathematics, USA)

> Money and security. I also still worry that there will be some communicating problem and will I get along with the local people. (male, hotel and tourism management, year 2, USA)

Many interviewees were nervous about their ability to cope on their own and some appeared to be affected by the anxiety level of their parents, as in the following excerpt:

> The greatest challenge will be handling everything on my own. No one will be there to back you up. If something happens, no one can help you…. I am also worried that my family will be worried about me. My mom is so worried about me now that she keeps telling me to take a rice cooker with me. (male, year one, psychology, Norway)

Naturally, nearly all of the interviewees had some concerns and fears about the impending sojourn; the following excerpts, however, indicate that some were plagued with considerable worry and self-doubts.

> I've never been really confident, to be honest. The closer the departure date is, the more you are forced to think about it and I get scared. It's becoming a bit more of an urgent matter now that the date is close. (female, year 3, English, USA)

> I am worried that I will waste my time in America and, at this moment, I have not done enough preparation for the exchange program. I am always worried that I will forget something important in the process of preparing to go abroad. I want to be well prepared before I depart Hong Kong for America. I think I am worried instead of being excited. I am also worried about the medical expense I will need to pay once I fall sick or go into hospital in America. I do not have enough confidence at this moment….. I think the biggest challenge will be the adaptation problem. I may have difficulties adapting to life in America. Because I will be in a foreign country for such a long time, there will be lots of problems. I am afraid of getting lost and am worried that I won't be able to get along well with the local students. I really doubt my ability to adapt and I think I'll be homesick. Also, whenever there is a problem in my family I will not be able to lend a hand as I will be on exchange. Maybe I will call them or email them on a constant basis. (male, year 2, professional accountancy, USA)

Even after attending the pre-departure sessions organized by the OAL, these individuals possessed a very elevated level of stress; instead of being filled with excitement about what lay ahead, they were envelopped by feelings of dread.

Conclusions

This phase of my study has implications for education abroad students, researchers, and professionals, including program administrators. Surveys and semi-structured interviews, such as the ones employed in this research, can help us to better understand the pre-sojourn decision-making of outgoing international exchange students and offer valuable insight into their motives, aspirations, and concerns. The data generated by mixed-method studies can facilitate the design of more effective, context-sensitive marketing plans, which are apt to enhance participation rates.

The findings can also provide direction for the pre-sojourn preparation of outgoing exchange students. This study, for example, revealed that many did not have specific, concrete aims for their semester-long sojourn and had done very little research on the host institution/country prior to departure. While hoping to 'broaden their horizons', many were not able to articulate how they would actually achieve this. Further, while excited about the sojourn, many were quite anxious about what lay ahead, especially those who had never ventured outside their home country or travelled on their own. These individuals, in particular, did not feel sufficiently prepared and were unsure of their ability to cope in the host environment. In some cases, their concerns were mirrored in the faces of their anxious parents. This lack of confidence in their children's ability to live on their own and adapt to a new cultural environment likely exacerbated the stress level of some.

The pre-departure orientation sessions that the outgoing exchange students currently attend consist of powerpoint presentations, which largely focus on logistics (e.g., procedures for transferring credits, security issues), a question and answer session, and small-group sharing sessions with international exchange students and local students who have recently returned from an exchange program. While helpful and essential, brief sessions cannot adequately address the pre-sojourn concerns of the most anxious students or prepare them for life in another culture. More intensive, credit-bearing intercultural communication courses (e.g., general education/college offerings) could help students develop a framework to make sense of cultural difference and acquire strategies for

more effective language and culture learning. In some contexts, institutions have designed websites to prepare students for their international exchange experience. The University of the Pacific, for example, hosts *What's up with culture?* This online cultural training resource consists of modules that are designed to assist the pre-sojourn preparation, sojourn learning, and re-entry of American students who study abroad (*see* http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/).This innovative site could serve as a model for initiatives in other parts of the world.

Whatever the format, pre-departure sessions should encourage students to think more deeply about what they hope to gain from their stay abroad. Ideally, they should be encouraged to set specific goals for multiple dimensions (e.g., personal, academic, linguistic, social, professional) and carefully consider how they might accomplish them. Participants should also be prepared to modify their goals once they are at the host institution and have more understanding of the affordances and constraints in their new environment.

As well as providing useful data for program administrators and international educators, the act of filling in surveys (and participating in interviews) similar to the ones in the present study can spur reflection and encourage students to pay more attention to goal-setting. These activities may also raise their awarenees of their anxiety level and gaps in their preparation. It may motivate them to learn more about the host institution and country prior to departure. If students are more focused and better prepared, their experience in the host environment is apt to be more rewarding and their sojourn outcomes more positive (Chirkov *et al.* 2008; Cushner and Karim, 2004; Martin, Bradford, and Rohrlich, 1995).

Much more work needs to be done, however, to more fully comprehend the individual and environmental factors impacting on students' pre-sojourn decisions, aims, and expectations in various contexts. It is also important to compare these findings with post-sojourn perspectives and outcomes to gain more insight into the actual impact of pre-sojourn elements (motives, anxiety level) on the developmental trajectories of student sojourners.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by a Direct Grant from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (#2010312) and a General Research Fund (#444709) from the Research Grants Council of Hong

Kong. It would not have been possible without the participation of the exchange students and the assistance of the Office of Academic Links (OAL).

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MEASURING ACADEMIC READING ANXIETY AMONG ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESOL) UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

Abstract

When many undergraduates read college textbooks, they experience reading anxiety due to the academic discourse's complex structure. Reading anxiety levels further increase when textbooks are published in English and students are non-native users of English. This is a global scenario, given that non-native speakers (NNS) far-outnumber native speakers (NS) of English and that a large proportion of extant academic publications are in English.

This paper looks at the case of English as Second Language (ESL) learners in the Philippines. The construct of reading anxiety is used as the basis for developing the Academic Reading Anxiety Scale (AcadRAS), intended to be a reliable and valid tool for language educators that will help them isolate, define, and measure factors which increase the learners' reading anxiety. The 40-item scale was fielded to 125 college students. The internal consistency of the scale items had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.898, with the scale items accounting for 51% variation of the latent variable, reading anxiety.

The scale's 40 items loaded on 5 factors: text form (21.58% of variance), conducive reading conditions (11.90% of variance) , text content (6.02% of variance), conditions (5.23% of variance), and focus (4.43% of variance).

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Introduction

In the field of second language learning, literature on reading anxiety has been rather scant. Because speaking in the target language is considered as the most stressful aspect in language learning (Horowitz, et. al. 1986 : 23 in Chen 2007 : 26), the large body of research done on language learning anxiety has been mostly related to developing oral skills in the target language, i.e. the language being learned by the student.

> *" . . . the database of research concerning anxiety and L2 reading is not complete and therefore no generalizations specific to reading can be formulated." (Brantmeier 2005 : 69 in Chen 2007 : 27)*

The construct of reading anxiety has been introduced by Zbornik and Wallbrown (1991). They suggested that although foreign language (FL) reading anxiety positively correlates with general FL anxiety (r=0.46), it is clearly distinguishable from the latter (Chen 2007 : 28).

The construct of foreign language (FL) reading anxiety is distinct from general FL anxiety (Saito et. al. 1999 in Chen 2007 : 28) because it represents a specific aspect of general anxiety that has been invested in the reading process (Chen 2007 : 27).

Extant literature specifically defines foreign language reading anxiety as the level of anxiety or uncomfortable feelings felt by the student when reading in the foreign language (Chen 2007 : 28,32).

In the field of language education, there is a general consensus among curriculum designers and classroom teachers that affective factors are critical to effective learning. There is a widely held view

among language educators that affective factors are difficult to define and measure, thus making it virtually impossible to specify their contribution to the learning process (Nunan 1996 : 208).

Against such a backdrop, it is crucial for language educators to address the issue face to face by developing instruments which will enable them to isolate, define, and measure affective factors that affect the language learning process of the students, specifically reading anxiety experienced while reading in a second or foreign language.

There have been relatively little investigation that's been done on reading anxiety, because the greater bulk of research on language learning anxiety has been focused on the productive language skills, speaking and writing.

In Brantmeier (2005), it was established that reading anxiety in the target or second language (L2) at the advanced stages of language learning is a separate phenomenon from the anxieties felt from the other language skills, namely listening, speaking, and writing, with students most anxious about speaking in the second language (L2) or target language (TL).

Brantmeier (2005) looked into the role of affect in L2 reading. The results indicated that advanced learners (generally) do not feel anxious when reading in the L2, per se. They were more anxious about the oral and written tasks that came after the L2 reading task.

In Chen (2007), it was found out that there was a moderate correlation between test anxiety and reading anxiety (r=0.455), and a weak relationship between reading performance and test anxiety (r=0.118), and a weak correlation, as well, between reading performance and reading anxiety (r=0.282) among college freshman students in a Chinese university.

Farouk (2001) looked into the effect of the Jigsaw Reading technique on the English language reading anxiety and comprehension among EFL pre-service teachers in a university in Cairo. The study found out that use of the Jigsaw Reading technique reduced foreign language reading anxiety of the treatment group and that they outperformed the control group in reading comprehension; something which can be considered as an outcome of reading anxiety reduction.

But it was Zbornik and Wallbrown (1991) who paved the way for a careful examination of the reading anxiety as a distinct form of anxiety experienced by students learning to read, specifically in English as a foreign language. To validate their work, they developed a 45-item self-report scale, the Reading Anxiety Scale (RAS), which had an estimated coefficient alpha for reliability score of 0.88. They worked with 436 students in the fourth, fifth, and, sixth grades (Chen 2007: 27)

Whereas the RAS developed by Zbornik and Wallbrown (1991) measured the level of reading among elementary students, this present study aims to develop a similar reading anxiety scale, but this time, intended for university students.

Aside from directing the reading scale to be developed in this study for the purposes of higher education, it also differs from existing reading anxiety scales because it is focused primarily on anxiety experienced by the students when reading for academic purposes, i.e. when they read texts that are related to their coursework in the university.

These are the research questions pertaining to the development of the academic reading scale for university level students :

1. What is the reliability of the academic reading anxiety scale?
2. What are the underlying factors of academic reading anxiety?

To answer these questions, the initial pool of scale items was drawn from college students' responses to a sentence completion exercise. Based on a table of specifications for a 25 item scale, a preliminary reading anxiety scale with 40 items was assembled and fielded to 125 college students for pilot

testing. The initial scale was subject to reliability analysis and factor analysis using SPSS v.17.

Method

Instrument

The study intended to develop a 25 item academic reading anxiety scale. Based on the table of specifications for the scale (see Table 1), the items were distributed across the following sub-components: physiological limitations of the readers (3), text form-related difficulties (5), text content-related difficulties (6), vocabulary-related difficulties (4), distractions within reader (4) and external distractions from people and environment (3).

Generating the Reading Anxiety Scale's Initial Item Pool

To make sure that the items comprising the academic reading anxiety scale being developed was grounded on the L2 readers' experiences, 93 students from two intact college freshman classes were asked to do a sentence completion exercise.

To draw out the students' reading anxiety experiences when they read texts related to their coursework, they were asked to complete the phrase "When I am reading for academic purposes (school-related reading tasks), I feel anxious when …"

The sentence completion exercise yielded a total of 206 statements from the students. Statements that contained similar or related ideas were grouped together. Six groups of ideas emerged from this sentence clustering. Each of the 6 sentence clusters was given a label, and in turn, served as the basis for the six sub-components of reading anxiety listed in the scale's table of specifications (see Table 1)

Table 1 : Table of Specifications for Academic Reading Anxiety Scale

When I am reading for academic purposes (school-related reading tasks), I feel anxious when . . .	
Sub-components of Reading Anxiety	**TOTAL**
1. Physiological Limitations of readers	3
2. Text Form - Related Difficulties	5
3. Text Content - Related Difficulties	6
4. Vocabulary – Related Difficulties	4
5. Internal Distractions : Emotions/Mental States/Attitude	4
6. External Distractions from People and Environment	3
TOTAL	**25**

Based on the scale's table of specifications, an initial pool of scale items (N = 40) was drawn from the 206 students' responses in the sentence completion activity. The scale followed a 6-point Likert scale from strongly agree (1), moderately disagree (2), mildly disagree (3), mildly agree (4), moderately agree (5) to strongly agree (6). This preliminary scale contained 40 items and was pilot-tested on 125

students.

Below is a sample of items from the preliminary scale

1.	I don't get enough rest or sleep.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	the text is too long.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	the topic is unfamiliar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	I am not in an appropriate place to read.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Participants

There were 125 participants (89 female, 32 male, and 4 did not specify their gender). The students' ages ranged from 15 years old to 19 years old. Eighty percent of the participants belonged to the 16-17 year old age range. The average age was 17 years old. See Table 2 below.
All of the participants were undergraduate nursing students, enrolled in Reading and Thinking Skills for Academic Study, a general education language course required for all freshman students of the university. The University is private sectarian, located in an urban setting.

Table 2 : Age and Gender of Participants (N=125)

demographic data		%age
male	32	25.6
female	89	71.2
did not indicate gender	4	3.2
average age	**17**	
minimum age	15	
maximum age	19	
15 yrs old	1	0.8
16 yrs old	33	26.4
17 yrs old	67	53.6
18 yrs old	19	15.2
19 yrs old	5	4

Results

Data processing and analysis was done using SPSS v.17. Factor analysis (FA) was used to determine whether the items of the scale measured reading anxiety. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency of items in the reduced scale.

Research Question 1
What is the reliability of the academic reading anxiety scale?

The Cronbach's alpha of the 40 item scale was 0.898. Based on the initial run for internal consistency, there were only two items that would yield a higher value of Cronbach's alpha when deleted, specifically Items 6 and 9 (see Table 3). After removal of items 6 and 9, Cronbach's alpha increased from 0.898 (N=40) to 0.900 (N=38). Removal of any of the remaining items would either just yield the same Cronbach's alpha value of 0.898 or lower it.

Table 3 : Internal Consistency of 40 Item Scale

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item 1	182.91	442.553	.227	.898
Item 2	183.03	431.966	.429	.895
Item 3	183.58	430.522	.454	.895
Item 4	183.30	431.268	.500	.895
Item 5	183.29	436.273	.329	.897
Item 6	183.11	441.776	.212	.899
Item 7	183.97	430.292	.416	.896
Item 8	183.35	437.694	.278	.898
Item 9	183.52	444.544	.174	.899
Item 10	183.09	431.805	.431	.895
Item 11	182.92	435.441	.370	.896
Item 12	184.35	430.296	.404	.896
Item 13	184.66	432.340	.380	.896
Item 14	182.81	435.556	.386	.896
Item 15	182.93	432.214	.452	.895
Item 16	182.90	434.153	.440	.895
Item 17	183.29	434.598	.327	.897
Item 18	183.14	434.363	.357	.897
Item 19	183.65	422.423	.675	.892
Item 20	183.65	422.228	.583	.893
Item 21	183.69	421.095	.619	.892
Item 22	183.75	420.709	.615	.893
Item 23	184.15	425.968	.449	.895
Item 24	183.66	427.429	.509	.894
Item 25	183.99	420.333	.626	.892
Item 26	183.77	427.396	.460	.895
Item 27	183.13	435.918	.328	.897
Item 28	183.75	428.482	.456	.895
Item 29	183.12	427.457	.420	.896
Item 30	182.35	439.776	.311	.897
Item 31	182.56	437.419	.341	.897
Item 32	182.45	437.762	.393	.896
Item 33	182.19	445.762	.295	.897
Item 34	182.88	432.205	.465	.895
Item 35	182.27	442.819	.359	.897
Item 36	183.04	431.779	.440	.895
Item 37	182.41	443.138	.280	.897
Item 38	182.39	440.467	.357	.897
Item 39	182.58	439.871	.337	.897
Item 40	182.61	443.426	.252	.898

Research Question 2
What are the underlying factors of academic reading anxiety?

In order to answer the second research question, factor analysis using SPSS v.17 was performed on the data set for 125 respondents for the 40 item initial scale.

Using Varimax rotation, the 40 items of the scale loaded on 6 principal factors, which accounted for 53.113% of total variance of the construct reading anxiety. Factor 1 explains 21.58% of the total variance while the subsequent factors (factors 2 to 6) only explained small amounts of variance (see Table 4).Table 4 : Total Variance of 40 item

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.634	21.585	21.585	8.634	21.585	21.585	5.600	14.001	14.001
2	4.761	11.903	33.488	4.761	11.903	33.488	5.570	13.924	27.925
3	2.407	6.017	39.505	2.407	6.017	39.505	3.055	7.639	35.563
4	2.087	5.218	44.722	2.087	5.218	44.722	2.848	7.121	42.684
5	1.774	4.434	49.156	1.774	4.434	49.156	2.185	5.463	48.147
6	1.583	3.956	53.113	1.583	3.956	53.113	1.986	4.966	53.113

Listed below are the 11 items which loaded heavily on Factor 1 (text form). These accounted for 21.585% of the variance. See Table 5 for the factor loading of the scale items.

1. the text is too long.
2. the topic is unfamiliar to me.
3. I encounter a lot of technical terms
4. I can't understand difficult words.
5. I encounter scientific terms or technical terms.
6. the topic involves scientific terms
7. I encounter words I don't understand.
8. there are no pictures, diagrams, flowcharts, or any visual materials in the text.
9. I encounter complicated sentence structures
10. I can't absorb what I'm reading immediately
11. I don't agree with what is stated in the text

On Factor 2 (conducive reading conditions), there were also 11 items that loaded on it, namely :
1. I have adequate sleep or rest
2. the environment is quiet.

3. I see that the text is short.
4. I am familiar with the topic
5. there are no technical, scientific terms and mathematical formulas.
6. I am physically well.
7. there are only few concepts and ideas found in the text.
8. the room is sufficiently lit.
9. I can connect the text to previous lessons.
10. I am not hungry.
11. there are pictures and diagrams found in the text

Seven items loaded on Factor 3 (text content):
1. I know that I couldn't finish reading according to my time frame.
2. I can't get the main idea for a specific topic
3. I can't figure out the main idea of the selection.
4. it is connected to past lessons that I haven't understood
5. I'm stuck on a page for an hour.
6. I can not relate to the topic.
7. I have to memorize what I am reading.

Factor 4 (conditions) had six scale items loaded on it, which were related to physiological conditions or external conditions that affected the reader's level of anxiety.
1. I don't get enough rest or sleep.
2. I am feeling hungry
3. the environment is noisy.
4. someone is talking to me when I am reading
5. I am not seated in a reading position.
6. I am not in an appropriate place to read.

Factor 5 (focus) had 4 items, which pertained to situations that cause the readers to lose their focus.
1. my mind is drifting off or daydreaming.
2. I find the topic irrelevant or uninteresting.
3. a lot needs to be read within a certain amount of time
4. I am not feeling well or when I am sick

There was only one item that loaded on factor 6 : I don't seem to progress because my mind feels saturated. There might be a need to reclassify this item under another factor, or it can be just a redundant item, and thus can be deleted from the scale.

Table 5 : Factor Loading of the 40 items

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Item 22	.800	.139	.110	.052	-.004	.171
Item 19	.774	.164	.085	.140	.112	.247
Item 20	.755	.037	.029	.110	.179	.255
Item 25	.714	.127	.311	.188	-.046	-.224
Item 3	.704	-.102	.038	.080	.110	.181
Item 4	.635	.005	.241	.054	.179	-.207
Item 2	.622	.213	.078	-.213	.050	.019
Item 7	.543	-.093	.305	.201	-.071	-.190
Item 15	.495	.012	.136	.279	-.229	.490
Item 23	.460	.137	.245	-.115	.386	-.084
Item 13	.440	-.055	.208	.276	-.021	-.052
Item 38	-.002	.800	.056	-.019	-.029	.139
Item 37	-.070	.771	-.060	.130	-.047	-.009
Item 39	.063	.740	-.138	-.001	.089	.226
Item 35	.002	.681	.137	.082	.050	-.072
Item 30	.067	.679	-.026	.141	.122	-.397
Item 34	.100	.672	.213	.174	-.006	-.086
Item 36	.199	.669	.134	-.078	-.104	.326
Item 33	.015	.650	.109	-.078	.034	-.022
Item 32	.090	.610	.133	-.037	.052	.293
Item 40	.151	.585	-.170	-.101	.130	-.028
Item 31	.015	.563	-.076	.485	.094	-.265
Item 24	.202	.298	.675	.035	.006	-.020
Item 27	.001	-.020	.654	-.053	.444	.161
Item 21	.471	.176	.587	.025	.120	-.002
Item 17	.198	-.137	.532	.143	.023	.163
Item 26	.387	.000	.522	.023	.138	.000
Item 29	.211	.038	.368	.328	.023	.275
Item 28	.271	.121	.352	.051	.285	.297
Item 8	.060	-.028	.157	.731	-.106	.015
Item 18	.111	.049	.042	.728	.151	.047
Item 12	.222	.086	-.015	.560	.130	.326
Item 6	-.018	-.117	.213	.458	.346	-.089
Item 1	.276	.108	-.014	.403	-.181	-.383
Item 9	-.076	.193	-.169	.401	.355	.088
Item 5	.117	-.018	.172	.151	.724	.040
Item 11	.201	.139	.040	.199	.469	.148
Item 10	.336	.185	.231	-.050	.444	.020
Item 14	.239	.197	.410	.220	-.434	.225
Item 16	.113	.193	.298	.155	.209	.594

Discussion

To sum up, the 40 item-reading anxiety scale's internal consistency had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.898. The scale item accounts for 51% variation of the latent variable, reading anxiety.

The 40 items of the scale loaded on 5 factors: text form (21.58% of variance), conducive reading conditions (11.90% of variance) , text content (6.02% of variance), conditions (5.23% of variance), and focus (4.43% of variance).

In order to further develop the reading anxiety scale's reliability and validity, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Increase the number of items of the scale to at least 30 items.
2. Make the initial item pool at least twice as many as the desired or final scale.
3. Field the scale to a larger group of participants from different year levels in the university.
4. Include participants from local college or state university.

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WHERE 'THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD' IN INTERNATIONALISING UNIVERSITIES: A SUMMARY OF TRACK ONE, 'INTERNATIONALISING THE STUDENT BODY: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT, SUPPORT AND EXCHANGE'

Abstract

This paper presents an overview of the Track One conference presentations organised under four main themes that emerged in the discussion. Theme One: The use of new media is increasing, but remains not well understood; Theme Two: The need for global models of international partnership to help unsophisticated universities get into the global market; Theme Three: The importance of managing through data and Theme Four: The differing levels of international engagement across Asian universities.

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There were a total of fifteen presentations in Track One at this year's Conference. While presentations in the topic area varied widely, some interesting themes emerged.

Theme One: The use of new media is increasing, but remains not well understood.

Tim Winkler from Australia presented a very detailed paper based on research about the use of various forms of mobile technology and the different trends and habita across Asia: for example while the rate of growth in fixed phone use is slowing everywhere, and the rate of mobile device use is climbing, these rates are not similar in every country. Recommendations from the research include embracing the use of Apps, and mobile technology, and responding very precisely to the needs of universities' own student cohorts.
The rise of smart phones was described - there are predicted to be more of them by 2012 than PCs, and by 2015 the majority of internet and email traffic will be via smart phone.
An example of mobile phone use as a pedagogical tool in Japanese universities is evident in the recently published study by Gromik (2012) and it is expected that more research will be forthcoming in the emerging field of mobile phone use for higher education.

Josef Schedler from Thailand gave a case study of the use of social media and technology in reinventing internationalisation for Gen Ys.

Many questions greeted these presenters and it was clear that not all conference attendees, or indeed their universities were technically savvy! Hrastinski and Dennen's (2012, p.1) review of the special issue of Internet and Higher Education reports on the growing importance of social networking in higher education. In discussing the special issue, the authors report that "papers in this special issue represent a broad view of social media use in higher education. The authors explore both how social media can be integrated in classes to support both formal and informal learning, and how social media might serve other needs in higher education institutions, such as community building and information sharing."

Theme Two: The need for global models of international partnership to help unsophisticated universities get into the global market.

Many universities new to internationalisation find developing partnerships a daunting task. A presentation on UMAP by Albert Wei-min Tang from Taiwan set out the advantages of using an

established global network as a vehicle for universities new to internationalisation to engage across the region.

Tamoaki Wada from Japan continued this theme by describing the advantages of sending post doctoral students off shore for a period. The detailed research he outlined showed that while students were concerned that leaving Japan would prejudice their career aspirations, in fact those that did leave produced more publications, and with international authors, than those who did not take up the opportunities presented to them. Likewise, a recent study by Brooks, Waters and Pimlott-Wilson (2012) confirmed the importance of students studying abroad to improved educational outcomes.

Theme Three: The importance of managing through data.

Many papers spoke to the need to convince internal and external audiences, ranging from the University President, to governments and other funding bodies, about the value of international education; and many saw data as the best way to do this.

Jeremy Breadon from Australia spoke about the importance of language policy settings in operationalising internationalisation in universities, and of the need to measure success (or otherwise) with data.

Maria Victoria Calabrese from The Netherlands described the use of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the development of culturally competent staff in universities, an area of key importance for successful internationalisation.

Kim Kyo-seong form South Korea detailed a very comprehensive plan for recruiting highly talented international students for graduate programs; a process that involved measuring outcomes to achieve internal buy in.

Theme Four: The differing levels of international engagement across Asian universities.

While there were many similarities in university internationalisation described during the Conference, there were also significant differences, both in the goals outlined and their implementation. Comparative papers such as from Mohd Tajudin Ninggal from Malaysia outlined approaches to international mobility program implementation across two universities.

Comparative papers emphasised the importance of the devising programs that met local needs, being creative to achieve outcomes, and measuring what is achieved.

Theme Five: The increasingly outcomes driven and pragmatic nature of internationalisation in universities.

Many presentations were pragmatic; academics realise that successful internationalisation has to move from the theoretical, to the development of solid relationships, and programs operationalised in the real world.

Nigel Healey spoke movingly about his experiences in the New Zealand Earthquake and the opportunities it presented to foster international student involvement locally.
Neelam Ramaiah from Japan described similar experiences during the tsunami. A recent study by Dabner (2012) from the University of Canterbury outlines the important role the social media and smartphones played in university and student responses to these events.

Jane Jackson from Hong Kong detailed her program around pre sojourn decision making for exchange students.

Lucila Bance from The Philippines described student services that promote academic excellence and success, and Micael Talbot from Thailand outlined his program for transferring ownership of English conversation from classroom to community.

All of these presentations (and many others) told stories about where 'the rubber hits the road' in internationalising universities: real people working to foster a culture of a wider world view, and implementing programs that deliver graduates better prepared for a modern Asia.

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FROM CSR TO USR: A STRATEGIC USR MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Abstract

CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) while widely defined and researched, has evaded a holistic agreement on what CSR is. But CSR has slowly been argued and accepted over the last decades as"legitimately what organizations should do towards a successful organization in a healthy society that adheres to the triple bottom-line of profit, people and planet for sustainability". While widely applied to business, it can also be argued that universities as organizations should also be socially responsible to society. Universities as pillars for human development that produce graduates for society should be "socially responsible" towards their human product and their potential stakeholders who affect the future of business and society. University as derived from its Latin "universitas magistrorum et scholarium" means "community of teachers and scholars" designate a key university role as the hub of human development through teaching and learning. A key research issue is what and how CSR can be adapted to universities and how the universities can strategically manage its social responsibilities. This paper will review the CSR conceptual foundations and propose a strategic management framework of USR that is anticipated to balance the management of its internal and external stakeholders' social responsibilities through its value creation processes.

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Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been widely discussed, argued (Friedman, 1962 and 1970; Caroll, 1974 and 1991; Davis, 1973; Epstein and Roy, 2001) and researched (Dahlsrud, 2006; Heslin and Ochoa, 2008) over the last decades, but it has eluded a definitive and standardized concept as accepted by all (COM 2001, 6; Ethos Institute, 2007). It has also been discussed from the Corporate Social Performance perspectives (Hocevar & Bhambri, 1989; Sethi, 1979; Preston, 1978; Ullmann; 1985; Wartick and Cochran, 1985; Wood, 1991) and its impact on the financial bottom line (Margolis and Walsh, 2003; Orlitzky, Schmidt and Rynes, 2003) and the firm's competitiveness (Kong et.al., 2002; Burke and Logsdon, 1996; Porter and Kramer, 2002 and 2006; and Weber, 2008). Though there are multifarious and diverse perspectives, approaches and frameworks, most of this literature on CSR are converging into some widely accepted aspects that underpin the CSR directions for the future of CSR. This key convergence is the generally acknowledgement and acceptance of CSR with respect to 1) the basic triple bottom line of "people, planet and profit" or the economic, social and environmental aspects that most firms should aim to achieve; 2) there is an "ethical" and a "moral" dimension of the firm towards its stakeholders, both internal and external; 3) that a successful organization strives and succeed in a healthy society that is sustainable.

Cases and arguments for CSR (Caroll, 1974; Davis, 1973; Epstein and Roy, 2001) centers around: 1) long range self-interest of firms through increased market share (Epstein and Roy, 2001 and long-term survival (Kong et.al., 2002); 2) public image through improved image and reputation (Epstein and Roy, 2001), 3) viability of business through employees motivations, risk management, cost reductions, differentiations, efficiency gains (Turban and

Greening, 1997, Schaltegger and Buritt, 2005), resource preservations (Rondinelli and London, 2002) as CSR can improve competitiveness of a company (Burke and Logsdon, 1996 and Weber, 2008) through process and product benefits (Porter and van der Linde, 1998) and positively related to financial performance (Margolis and Walsh, 2003; Orlitzky, Schmidt and Rynes, 2003) like tax advantage, financial advantages and better capital access (Schaltegger and Frigge, 1998); 4) avoidance of government interventions and regulations; 5) responsibility toward social and cultural norms; and 6) stockholders interest.

Theoretical foundations of CSR

Caroll's Pyramid of CSR (1991), argues that there are 4 main components of CSR: 1) Economic responsibilities as business organizations are created as economic entities to provide goods and services that consumers needed and wanted at an acceptable profit in the process; 2) Legal responsibilities as a "social contract" to pursue economics missions within the framework of law; 3) Ethical responsibilities that embodies standards, norms or expectations that reflects a concern for what the stakeholders want and with respect to protection of their moral rights and obligations to do what is right, just and fair and 4) Philanthropic responsibilities as a good corporate citizen that contributes resources to the community and improve quality of life. Heslin and Ochoa (2008) used the term CSR and corporate sustainability synonymously as: environmental sustainability that uses scientific insights to reduce the environmental footprint of an organization's operation and product and human sustainability that involves creating an equitable, developmental and healthy workplace that creates and delivers value to stakeholders who include suppliers, customers, and community at large. CSR is also defined as "a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment" (COM 2001, 4) and by "integrating social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders" (COM 2001, 6).

Dahlsrud, A., (2006), conducted an analysis of 37 Definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility and surmised that there are 5 main dimensions of environmental, social, economic, stakeholder and voluntariness which are in line with most of the fundamental research directions into CSR, which is also in support of Caroll's Pyramid (Caroll, 1991) and the main Stakeholder's theory (Freeman, 1984; Evan and Freeman, 1988). Another alternative of CSR is the CSP (Corporate Social Performance) (Hocevar & Bhambri, 1989; Sethi, 1979; Preston, 1978; Ullmann; 1985; Wartick and Cochran, 1985) that culminated in Wood's (1991) revisit to CSP Model of its principles of legitimacy, responsibility and managerial discretion; processes of environmental, stakeholder and issues assessment and management, and outcomes of social impacts, programs and policies, and the 4 CSR's economic, legal, ethical and discretionary domains.

The stakeholder theory of Freeman (Freeman, 1984; Evan and Freeman, 1988) defined stakeholders as members of groups whose existence was necessary for the survival of the firm – stockholders, employees, customers, suppliers, local community and the managers themselves. This is a re-argument of Friedman's stance that "the main purpose of the corporation is to make profits for the stockholders (Friedman, 1962 and 1970). Bowle (1991) supported the Freeman's theory of the manager's task was to promote the rights of the various stakeholders. This is in support of the human sustainability as the stakeholders are the basic human capital assets which require the firm to honor a moral minimum, of which the quality of the workforce is a paramount issue (Bowle, 1991). The end-outcome of CSR (Knox and Maklan, 2004; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004) that affects the stakeholders in terms of benefits to company, consumer and cause are: (1) Revenue – Customer preference (Willmott, 2001 and Mitchell, 2001), customer retention (Know and Walker 2001 and 2003) in its behavior and modifications (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004), employee productivity

(Reicjfield, 1996) in terms of its awareness, attributions, attitude, attachment (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004), (2) Cost (Kong, et.al, 2002)– Employee retention, waste and energy, (3) Risk – Permission to operate, revenue volatility, disaster (sustainability). The ethical and moral duty of the organization that cuts across the business and society interdependence is best defined within the strategic and CSR dimensions of the Ethos Institute (2007, pg. 78) as: "CSR is a form of management that is defined by the ethical relationship and transparency of the company with all the stakeholders with whom it has a relationship as well as with the establishment of corporate goals that are compatible with the sustainable development of society, preserving environmental and cultural resources for future generations, respecting diversity and promoting reduction of social problems".

In addition to the Agency theory (Friedman, 1970) and the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Jones, 1995), there are also the theory of firm approach that looks at the supply – demand perspectives, its cost – benefit analysis and the use of CSR to attract stakeholders (Baron, 2001; Feddersen and Gilligan, 2001; Williams and Siegel, 2001 and Waldman, et. Al., 2004). Freeman (1984) stated that the managers' policies and actions which is a self-serving behavior (Friedman, 1970) should not only look at the stockholders, but enlarge its constituents to stakeholders to include workers, customers, suppliers and community organizations. All these should be conducted with a basis of trust and cooperation (Jones, 1995) that have an incentive to be honest, ethical and has a moral and ethical dimension (Donaldson and Preston, 1991) since such behavior would be beneficial to the organization. The stakeholders' theory is supported by the theory of the firm model of CSR as the manager are agents of the firm, and their behavior towards the stakeholders use of CSR strategically to attract socially conscious consumers in conjunction with the market/business strategy (Baron, 2001). The level of the firm's adequacy to support CSR can be determined through the cost-benefit analysis (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001) and through the reduction of information asymmetry to the customers (Feddersen and Gilligan, 2001).

In addition to the above, the resources-based view (Hart, 1995) asserts the view that social responsibility can constitute a resource or a capability that can lead to a sustained competitive advantage through the "social attribute" of the product which is valued by the customer (Hart, 1995; McWilliams et. al., 2002; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). Both the resource-based view and theory of firms have strategic implications (McWilliams, Siegel ad Wright, 2006) in the following areas of:

- Being an integral element of the differentiation strategies of the organization at the strategic or the business level and as such, should be considered as a strategic investment in the value to the customers. These would affect more of the vertical differentiation whereby the consumers would prefer one product to another, other things being equal for specific reasons, as opposed to horizontal differentiation whereby the consumers select a product based on taste rather than rationalized quality aspects.
- Being viewed as an "image or reputation builder" whereby the firm can generate a set of predictions of its investment pattern in CSR. As the consumers do not know the internalized moral applications within the firm, organizations will publicize their CSR activities through annual reports of their CSR activities to make it transparent to the consumers which constitute advertizing or public relations activities.

Issues pertaining to Corporate Social Responsibilities

Though there are many studies and frameworks on CSR, there are still unresolved theoretical and empirical issues (McWilliams, Siegel ad Wright, 2006) relating to the strategic implications of CSR. The theoretical issues cover the consensus of the definition and constituents of CSR that can range from business ethics, environmental policies, and triple bottom line responsibilities to corporate social performance to corporate philanthropy to corporate citizenship. This is compounded by the fact of different countries' orientations that

can range from individualist ideologies (that values short-term betterment of individual which is more characteristics of the US) to communitarian ideologies (that emphasizes the needs of the community and benefits of consensus which is more common of the Eastern world and European Union) (Lodge, 1990). This was confirmed in Maignan and Ferrell's (2003) research into the perspectives of American, French and German consumers towards CSR based on Caroll's model. Key findings showed that respondents do not judge economic duties to be CSR to the same extent as legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities whereas corporate responsibilities toward employees, customers and communities were significantly correlated. In terms of ranking, American's individualistic ideologies ranked economic and legal responsibilities first followed by ethical and philanthropic responsibilities whereas communitarian ideologies ranked legal and ethical responsibilities first followed by philanthropic responsibilities with economic responsibilities last. These are also hampered by cross country and cross cultural differences in how the organization and its activities is regulated, organizational differences and expectations due to cultural and traditional values systems and differences. This could lead to specific CSR strategies that could be strategic CSR, altruistic CSR or even coerced CSR (Husted and De Jesus Salzar, 2006).

A second main issue is the empirical issues. Depending how the researchers define their version of CSR, this would affect thematically and empirically the research focus. This affects the measurement aspects of the cost and benefits of CSR which is affected by the definition used, the definitive approach based on the definition which can range from event studies to regression analysis based on the nature of the CSR event or action which can range from human resources decisions (Abowd et.al., 1990) and layoff (Worrell et.al., 1991), divestments (Posnikoff, 1997; Wright and Ferris. 1997; and Teoh et. al., 1999), plant closures (Clinebell and Clinebell, 1994), overall firm index of CSR (McWilliams and Siegel, 2000; Waddock and Graves, 1997; McGuire et. al., 1988), social issues (Hillman and Keim, 2001).

A key question is that with the very diverse and multifarious approaches and understanding of CSR, the issue of what and how the firm or organization can strategically manage CSR is still elusive. While the CSR fundamentals and principles of CSR are still widely debated in the business communities, some of the same issues can also be questioned of the operations of a university as an organization. With public funding becoming scare, university being more corporatized, commercialized and competitive through student mobility and wider access, and the education for all principle, greater and ease of information access and availability to diverse information in the knowledge society, a university is in the public limelight of its social responsibility and is under the microscopic lens in the newer social order and knowledge society.

University Social Responsibility

Much has been written on the CSR from the business organization perspectives. Though universities have been in existence for centuries as the foundations of education for all and the development of human sustainability, a key question is the relevance of social responsibility of the university which can be termed as "USR – University Social Responsibility". What is the context of USR within the university and what are the mechanisms that are in place to manage USR responsibly toward the society at large. Changes and challenges facing universities that affect the universities' operating scenario were discussed by Vukasovic (2008) and Felt, (2003) in terms of mass expansion of higher education, internationalization, student access and student mobility, decrease in public expenditure, diversification of higher education, commercialization of higher education, and impact of ICT. All these have impacted on the quality of the education value delivery in the notions of autonomy, and academic freedom, its changing focus and responsibilities towards society (Vasilescu, et. al., 2010). Nagy and Robb (2008) highlighted the fact of the

corporatization of the universities and the increased call as a good corporate citizen. While not explicit, universities had been practicing USR on a piece-meal basis as envisioned through their visions and missions statements. A cross sectional analysis of the ranked Asian universities' visions and missions discerned these USR stated implicitly and explicitly as:

- **Envisioned outcomes desired of university**
  - community of learners and scholars who value the pursuit of new knowledge in a society of learning and are valued members and leaders of society, and global citizens effective in diverse settings
  - graduates who are well-balanced in knowledge and wisdom and are of good character, intelligent, able to think rationally, behave morally and ethically, possess life and leadership skills, conscious of public and common good, practice good governance and are socially responsible, world view competency and competent to compete in international job markets, and are socially responsible global leaders

- **Envisioned contribution of university**

  - betterment and benefit of potential of locality, society and mankind through raising, strengthening and transforming community and national potential, services to community for social, community engagement and outreach, economic and national development, preservation and enhancement of national heritage in arts, religious, cultural and socio-cultural, socio-economic building that increase and achieve sustainable development and negotiating power competitiveness of country in the world community and ensuring the well-being, welfare, justice, security and sovereignty of the country and the world by upholding social and humanity values and in realizing peace.
  - develop local human resources, nurture creative and entrepreneurial leaders with quality and virtue for society in a society of learning and wisdom through accessibility for acquisition of knowledge, in a variety of dimensions, formats and platforms through wealth creation, nation building and universal human advancement
  - development of a dynamic, learned and morally strong society through contributions for the greater good of society while generating science, technologies and arts beneficial to and advances society with quality, beneficial and sustainable research, creativity and innovation and accountability for national and international society
  - advancement of the world civilization by producing its graduates who have global insight, tolerance, sense of love for peace and high academic achievement with commitment to National Development and Social Responsibility and pursue universal principles that relate activities to the needs of the people and their aspirations for social progress and transformation
  - generate, advance and disseminate knowledge and learning, expand human knowledge through quality research and education for the nation and for humanitywith deep sense of social responsibilityin improving the quality of life in society and harmonious development of moral and intellectual virtues in the implementation of university social responsibility

It is noted that these dimensions are discussed and included variously in the Ethos Institute definition of strategy and CSR (2007) as management defined by the ethical relationship and transparency of the company with all the stakeholders, its relationships as well as the establishment of corporate goals that are compatible with the sustainable development of society, preserving environmental and cultural resources for future generations, respecting diversity and promoting reduction of social problems. In reality a key question is what and how these envisioned outcomes and contributions have been systematically applied and implemented as USR in the university's prioritization for sustainability.

Status of USR practices

What is actually being believed and practiced by universities in their USR is still open to debate and these are practiced within their own interpretations and understanding of what USR is and what constitutes USR to be achieved. Since it is still an open field and open for discussions and debates, most of what the universities practices as USR are within the requirements of quality management and accreditation requirements. Directly or indirectly, the accreditation standards and quality management standards in most countries have a “community” or “social engagement” criteria. These can range from small community services or academic services that are rendered free of charge to the larger community to hosting a community or involvement of the community in its university life. A review of the main accreditation systems that includes a “community relation” or “social engagement” or “academic services” criteria shows that most of the universities will work within the confines of these standards and criteria to fulfill or meet the minimum criteria.

These community and academic practices which the universities consider as social responsibility or responses to the community loosely define and cover the practices of USR as it is understood. Academic service to society is a key mission of higher education institutes. Academic servicing refers to the fact that the educational institution is in the position on which the communities could rely, or is an academic reference point, or performs any functions which impact the development of learning and knowledge of the communities, as well as improving the strength of the community, the nation, and other countries. Academic service projects which impact the development and strengthening of the community refer to those being organized or operated by the institution and result in the improvement of the community in various aspects and make it self-reliant according to its potential. These could include recognized services which are nationally or internationally recognized under the responsibility of the institution. Being an academic service center means the institution or a program has a center, or regularly organizes academic activities or the institution functions as an academic reference point, on which the communities could rely for academic services, or it functions in any ways that impact the academic and knowledge development of the communities, and is nationally or internationally recognized.Areas of community support appropriate for inclusion might include efforts to strengthen local community services; community education; the environment, including collaborative activities to conserve the environment or natural resources; and practices of professional associations.

Based on these quality criteria, there are processes and mechanisms in the delivery of academic service that are tangible in forms and formats. The objectives of academic services are determined by the operations plans and frameworks to provide academic service by the faculty and department. There are follow-ups, evaluation and control mechanisms and support systems in its performance based on the mission of academic service provided to society by the school human resources which is consistent with the school and institute objectives. School's support of key communities, include the contributions of their senior leaders, workforce, and students.

In retrospect, these school and institute's leaders stress responsibilities to the public, ethical behavior, and the need to practice good citizenship. Leaders should be role models for the school and institute in focusing on ethics and protection of public health, safety, and the environment. Protection of health, safety, and the environment includes the school and institute's operations. Practicing good citizenship refers to leadership and support within the limits of a school and institute's resources of publicly important purposes. Such purposes might include improving education in the community, pursuing environmental excellence, practicing resource conservation, performing community service, and sharing quality-related information. Leadership also entails influencing other school and institutes, private and public, to partner for these purposes. Planning for these social responsibilities entails anticipating adverse impacts that might arise in facilities management, laboratory operations, and transportation. Effective planning should prevent problems, provide for a forthright response if problems occur, and make available information and support needed to maintain public awareness, safety, and confidence.

Issues pertaining to USR

In a wider sense of social responsibility, school and institutes should not only meet all local, state, and federal laws and regulatory requirements, but they should treat these and related requirements as opportunities for improvement "beyond mere compliance." Schools and institutes should stress ethical behavior in all stakeholder transactions and interactions. Highly ethical conduct should be a requirement of and should be monitored by the school and institute's governance body.

Managing social responsibility requires the use of appropriate maangement approaches and measures and leadership responsibility for these approaches and measures. The schools or universities need to addresses their current and future impacts on society in a proactive manner and how they accomplish ethical practices in all student and stakeholder interactions. University administrators need to identify, support, and strengthen their key communities as part of good citizenship practices. They will need to define performance indicators to ensure that the social conciousness and responsibility meet the basic requirements and expectations of the stakeholders.

As such, some of the issues pertaining to CSR in the business can be relevant to the universities in terms of:

- What is the role of social responsibility within the context of the university and what would it mean to the university as a definitive part of the university mission?
- What is the generic social responsibility or moral duty of the university to the society at large in order to define the “university social responsibility” (USR) of an education institution?
- What existing CSR fundamentals, principles, models or frameworks can be adapted for the USR of the education institution?
- What strategic models can be developed for the USR of the education institution?

Based on these academic issues that will need to be addressed, issues on USR that need to be addressed should aim to achieve the following:

- Review the role of the universities in a knowledge society within the context of the existing CSR literature and determine the relevance and applicability of the CSR to the universities.
- Determine what would constitute the USR (University Social Responsibility) of the university.
- Determine the operational variables that the university should envisage and manage as a fully socially responsible university.
- Develop a strategic USR management model that can be used to manage the context of a socially responsible university in a knowledge society.

Strategic perspectives of CSR as applied for USR

In developing a CSR strategic model, some strategic recommendations (Heslin and Ochoa, 2008) are: 1) Focus on CSR initiatives through structural accommodations (Carroll. 1974); 2) Identify and engage relevant stakeholders and societal groups (Shocker and Sethi, 1973); 3) Grapple with inevitable ethical dilemmas; 4) Develop appropriate metrics like CSR KPI of Brand Value, Customer attraction and retention, Reputation, Employee attractiveness and Employee motivations and retentions through its drivers of CSR benefits and costs (Weber, 2008) and 5) Embed in Senior Leadership with policies formulations (Christensen, Andrews and Bower, 1973) and rewards.

Organization sustainability involves meeting the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental performance (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Porter and Kramer claim that existing CSR approach focus on the tensions between business and society rather than on their interdependency as they argue that there should be an integration of business and society as

successful corporations need a healthy society while a healthy society needs successful corporations. They suggested a strategic approach by looking from the inside out by mapping out the social opportunities on the internal value chain of its primary and support activities and from outside in by identifying the social influences on competitiveness. This would help the organization to identify and prioritize social issues into: 1) generic social issues – those that are not significantly affected by an organization's operations nor materially affect its long-term competitiveness; 2) value chain social impacts – those that are significantly affected by an organization's activities in the course of business; and 3) social dimensions of competitive context – those external environment that significantly affect the drivers of an organization's competitiveness in its locality of operations. These would lead to two approaches of a responsive CSR based on these inside out and outside integrations of its generic social impacts, its value chain impacts and its social dimensions of competitive context. These are believed to bring about a social benefit and economic benefit convergence (Porter and Kramer, 2002) that can start from selecting the best grantees, signaling other funders, improving the performance of grant recipients, advancing knowledge and finally social and economic value creation on the maximal philanthropy value dimensions which are context focused. This is supported by Zadek's (2004) civil-learning which is mapped on the matrix of organizational learning (defensive, compliance, managerial, strategic and civil) and issue maturity (latent, emerging, consolidating and institutionalized.

Strategic Management models have included social responsibility as a main element of strategy (Husted and Allen, 2000; Pearce and Doh, 2005)) whereby social responsibility has become indispensable (Mintzberg, 1983). These were shown to have a cause effect relationship of the social responsibility process on the customer and financial perspective based on a strong foundation of the learning and growth perspective of the human, information and organization capital assets in the Balanced Scorecard of Kaplan and Norton (2001, 2004 and 2006). Simon (1995) used the traditional strategic management framework of strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation as a step-wise approach to manage global corporate philanthropy.

Based on the rationale of approaching and managing CSR strategically as discussed above, it is proposed that the same rationale can be applied to managing strategically the USR of an institution. The key arguments are that the institution also behaves like a business entity that subscribes to the triple bottom as many papers have discussed the challenges in the scarcity of funds, increased competition through internationalization and globalization. Another key premise is that the business-academia linkage is a key to sustained success in the production of graduates by the academia to meet the requirements of the employment market which is the business users. The past decades had uncovered the specter of the graduates who had created and caused the financial crisis and worldwide economic crisis created by man's greed and excesses. As such, the society has called for the academia to be more societal responsible in their academic outcomes which come in the form of ethically and morally conscious graduates who are citizens in this global and networked society. The bottom line is that the academia must develop and create graduates who are healthy and open-minded persons characterized by personal integrity with an independent mind and creative thinking. In fulfilling these ethical and moralistic aspirations of globally responsible graduates, an institution must always be identified by its emphasis on Ethics as part of the mandatory "total graduate" requirement. As such, the basic philosophy of a graduate is embodied in "a sound mind in a healthy body". To be intellectually competent graduates, the globally responsible graduates should be morally sound, committed to acting justly, and open to further growth. The globally responsible graduates, through their moral and ethical stance, appreciate freedom of expression, and are imbued with attitudes and ideologies through a carefully integrated curriculum of ethics, science, languages and business management.

The arguments above have highlighted the immediate prioritization of the societal responsibility of an institution towards its community and society. As such, the premise is that USR should be strategically managed as a key foundation for the sustainability of the institution, its societal responsibility towards society and in contributing to a healthy society.

Strategic USR Management Framework

Based on the strategic perspectives of CSR as discussed in the previous section, a similar approach can also be developed for the management of USR strategically within an institution. As proposed earlier, managing USR strategically within the institution is an imperative of the future sustainability of the institution and as requirements in meeting the needs of stakeholders and societal needs. As such, this paper aims at developing a comprehensive strategic USR management framework to ensure that the management of USR is prioritized as part of the university management based on its vision and mission. It also introduces the processes that lead to the development and incorporation of USR in its annual planning processes and as part of the university strategic plan based on the inside-out and outside-in strategic approach of Porter and Kramer (2002). The basic premise is that the university's final output is a set of "socially and ethically conscious group of knowledgeable and competent graduates in a community of scholars" of which knowledge is interpreted and exercised by the human scholars that affects society. As such, the production of a socially and ethically knowledgeable graduate passes through both an internal process component (which is the value chain of Porter and Kramer, 2006) within the institution, and that conforms to the external societal requirements of a morally and ethically responsible member of society that cares for the overall wellbeing of society as opposed to one who is self-centered and self-destructive.

Since the graduate undergoes two main components of the internal institutional and external societal requirements, it is deemed necessary to fully understand the SWOT of the institution from the perspective of societal responsibilities (Porter and Kramer, 2006). It will need to identify its internal strengths and weaknesses of its organizational systems, human, information and values systems capacities and capabilities that constitute its capacities and capabilities that is inherent in the institution towards societal responsibilities. On the external environmental and social responsibilities elements, it would also need to determine its competitive, stakeholders' and societal requirements that constitute its opportunities and threats that represents a "position that it seek to achieve in its societal responsibilities". This will result in the strategic SWOT of the institution's societal responsibilities that leads to a better understanding of the strategic issue facing the institution's societal responsibility. Based on the strategic SWOT and the strategic issue pertaining to the institution's societal responsibility, an appropriate set of institution's societal responsibility strategies can be developed. The development of the strategies for societal responsibilities lies in matching its "internal societal responsibilities capacities and capabilities" to the "positional societal responsibilities that it seeks to achieve". The strategic process of the strategic analysis of identifying its internal societal capabilities and capacities and the development of the strategy in achieving its envisioned societal responsibility is shown in Fig. 1.

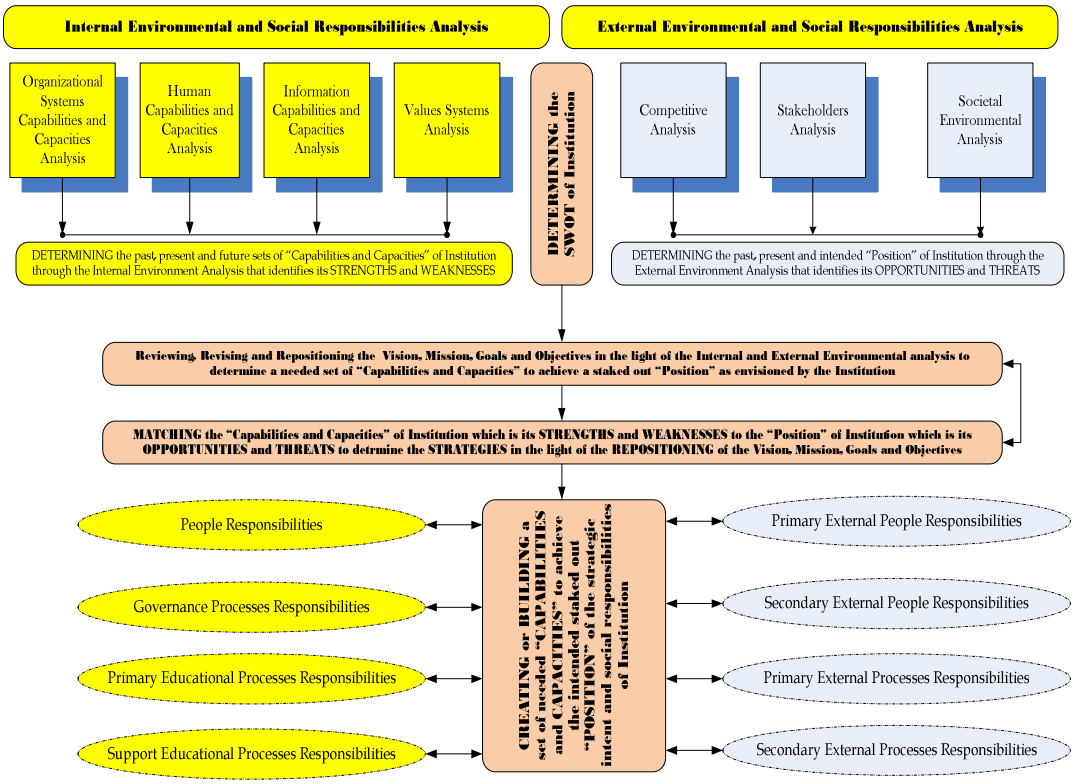

Figure 1 Strategic USR Management Framework

In the implementation of the institution societal responsibility strategies that have been selected based on its internal institutional societal responsibilities analysis and its external environmental societal responsibilities, this calls for the "creation or building" of the institutional societal responsibilities capabilities and capacities and to achieve its external societal responsibilities.

The 4 main internal societal capacities and capabilities dimensions (Fig. 2) that the institution needs to create are proposed to be:

i. **People responsibilities –** the basic premise is that it is people who are responsible in using the knowledge and skills or its competencies sets that interpret and utilize knowledge within their ethical and moral domain to bring about actions and they should be developed with a conscience. As such, these 3 main groups of students, faculty and staff should be conscientious of the moral well-being of their actions that contributes to the furthering of society's well-being and these are developed through the education that builds and develops.

ii. **Governance processes responsibilities –** this broadly covers the governance processes, the management and administration of its societal responsibilities, its appending systems and mechanisms developed to ensure societal responsibilities are in place, executed and monitored and that is assured through quality systems and mechanisms of managing societal responsibilities. It is what we do and not just what we talk. Actions of societal responsibilities are ethical pragmatisms.

iii. **Primary educational processes –** this comprehensively enshrines the societal responsibilities within the teaching and learning, the research and the external engagement educational processes, systems and mechanisms. These educational components are the ultimate mechanisms that should instill and imbues societal

responsibilities of a "morally and ethically sound mind in a healthy body" in the students' development process (education value creation and addition activities).

iv. **Support educational processes –** this covers the supporting processes, systems and mechanisms that aims at valuing people whereby the institution values its people and building a strong conducive societal responsible environment in support of the primary education and people's accomplishment and achievements processes. These systems cover the student support services, learning resources, human engagement and valuing human resources, facilities and equipment, and information resources management as an integrated whole to add not basic but ethical and moral value and social conscience to the primary education processes.

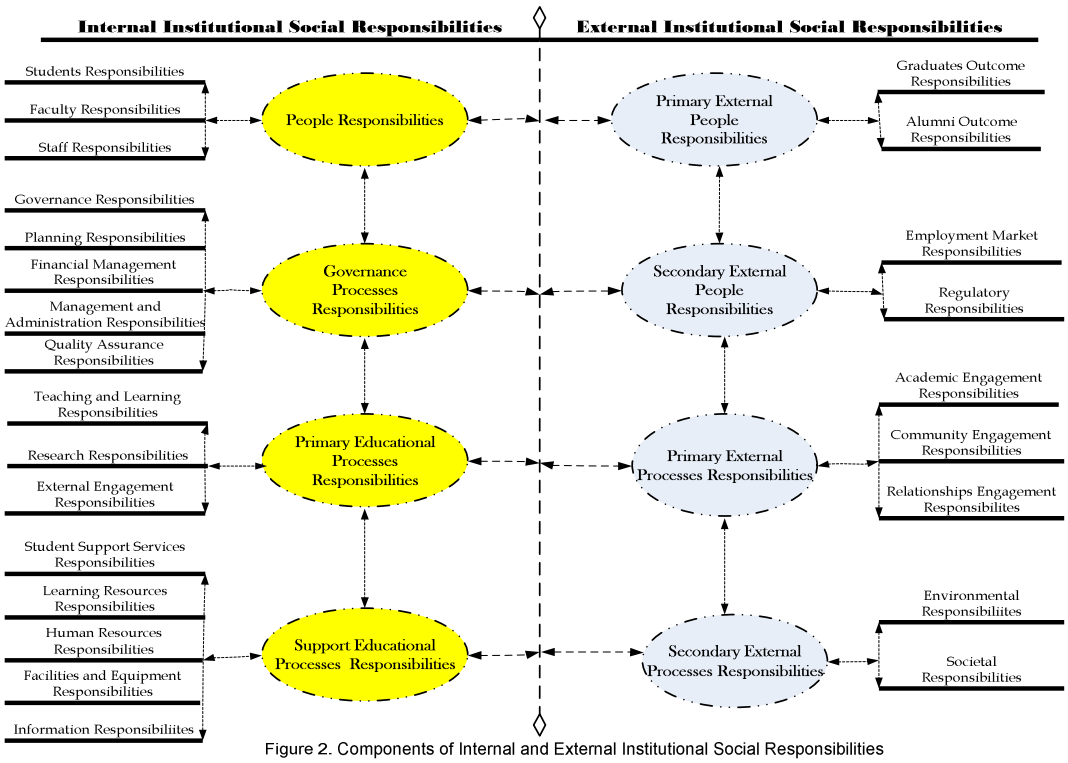

Figure 2. Components of Internal and External Institutional Social Responsibilities

The external societal responsibilities dimensions (Fig. 2) can be classified as:

i. **Primary external people responsibilities –** this will basically cover the main institutional output of its graduates and alumni who had undergone the internal institutional societal focused processes to be "ethically and morally sound graduates and alumni" who can contribute positively and proactively to the societal development and its well-being.

ii. **Secondary external people responsibilities –** as the graduates and alumni are employed, their basic societal responsibilities and conscience should contribute to the employment market and the total society and all its stakeholders that work within the framework of regulatory requirements. This in essence provides them with a societal conscience that their actions can either enhance or destruct the society at large, of which there are ample evidence in the downfalls of companies, destruction of natural resources and bettering others through "greed" and one's self well-being rather than the well-being of the society as a whole.

iii. **Primary external processes responsibilities –** this comprehensively covers the systems and mechanisms of the "what and how" that the institution set up to relate and to engage their immediate communities and society at large. Traditionally it means academic services but the enlarged societal responsibilities goes beyond this covering the commitment and positive engagement with the community and society to bring about a better and healthier and more prosperous society built on a more moralistic and ethical foundation.

iv. **Secondary external processes responsibilities –** this covers the moral well-being of the individual's contributions of what and how s/he do for the benefit of society through its environmental and societal conscience that had been instilled and imbued in the "responsible citizen of society". This emphasizes that every small contribution of an individual towards environmental and societal protection and conservation will add up to a better and more livable society.

Discussion and Conclusion

Though USR is still in a very early stage, with academics still debating the role and scope of the constituents of USR, one should basically be forward looking and proactively incorporate USR as part of the institution's management. This paper argues for the institution's societal responsibility to be embedded in its internal systems and mechanisms capacities and capabilities that should incorporate the "societal responsibilities" mind set in its operating realms that underlies its internal processes capacities and capabilities. It also argues that the internal processes capacities and capabilities ultimately will result in a societally conscious and responsible graduate who carries on and champion the cause of societal responsibility for the well-being and health of a productive society.
Based on this premise, the paper recommended a strategic USR management framework with two main components of:

- Analyzing the internal and external societal environmental (Fig. 1) which is its "internal societal responsibilities capacities and capabilities" and the "positional societal responsibilities" it intends to stake out and in the formulating of its societal responsibilities strategies.
- Implementing its societal responsibilities strategies by creating or building the internal societal responsibilities capacities and capabilities in order to achieve its positional societal responsibilities based on the key internal and external factors as discussed above (Fig.2).

In conclusion, this paper attempts to develop a strategic USR management framework by strategically managing its societal responsibilities focused components. This paper borrows heavily from the CSR researches and the strategic management literature and practices to develop this strategic USR management framework. It is believed that this paper can provide a framework to concretize the approach in developing and managing the societal responsibilities of the universities based on the basic premise that the universities' main output is a socially responsible graduate who is ethically and morally sound and can contribute to a better society.This call for the managing of its internal capacities and capabilities conscientiously to achieve its strategic intent of the external positional societal responsibilities that it intends to stake out.

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THE NEED TO MEASURE – BEHIND THE CREATION OF THE ISAN CULTURAL EXCHANGE SCHOOLING (ICES) PROGRAM

Abstract

There are many cultural obstacles facing teachers of English to Thai students which may not be apparent to the casual observer. Thai students recording low levels of English conversational skills in comparison to other Asian countries has been a subject of debate and concern for many educators in Thailand for many years.

This paper explores English language skills of Thai students from the perspective of ownership and discusses whether or not the need to measure (examinations) has unwittingly contributed to these results. An analogy is made between teaching Thai children English conversation skills and riding a motorcycle.

As a result of these investigations the Isan Cultural Exchange Schooling (ICES) program has been set up by the International Relations Office of Mahasarakham University (MSU) in north eastern Thailand.

Besides offering the workings of the ICES program this paper attempts to provide a little insight into the cultural aspects investigated during the research done by the author previous to the proposal and setting up of the ICES program.

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Introduction

This paper is written in explanation of the reasoning behind the setting up of the ICES program from the International Relations Office of Mahasarakham University (MSU) in north eastern Thailand. Besides offering the workings of the ICES program it will attempt to provide a little insight into the cultural aspects investigated during the research done by the author previous to the proposal and setting up of the ICES program. Many examples contained in this paper are anecdotal and therefore are not referenced.

The experience of the author lies in having visited Thailand since 2004 and assisted Thai teachers teach English to students aged ten to sixteen in rural 'lab' or government schools. Then coming to MSU as an exchange student in 2009 and deciding to stay with currently two and a half years living in Mahasarakham. Part of this time has been as an MSU student and part under an internship in the Foreign Affairs Section of the MSU Department of Planning and Foreign Affairs as an International Relations Officer. A background in sociology and digital communication hopefully permit the author to retain objectivity without imposing too much of a western ideological viewpoint.

The point of view of analyses in this paper may best be described as an undertaking to understand why we do what we do. This is the question the author has asked himself when trying to gain an understanding of the teaching of the English language in Isan and to provide an objective sociological analysis as an offering for reasoning behind the creation of the ICES program.

Location and Background of Mahasarakham

The geographical setting of Maharasarakham is in the very centre of the Isan region of northeast Thailand which may be described as mostly rural. Mahasarakham can be literally translated as 'City of Great Education'. Isan is the word commonly describing the language, people and geographical location of the north east area of Thailand shown on the map at left. According to Wikipedia the population of Isan in 2010 was @21.3 million with 50% living in urban areas and 50% rural. It is the poorest economic area in Thailand with rice taking up approximately sixty percent of all cultivated land. Other rural products include fish and prawn farming, silk production, rubber trees, sugar cane, cassava and various tropical fruits and vegetables. Mahasarakham

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City may be described as an educational city in the province of Maha Sarakham and has seven well known and highly respected centers of education. Mahasarakham University is a government university and has approximately forty thousand students drawn from every one of the twenty Isan Provinces (see Appendix I). Mahasarakham University is actively undertaking a process of internationalisation in an effort to renegotiate its past demographic of being a tertiary institution simply educating Thai students to becoming an internationally recognised educational institution. It is therefore obvious the need to communicate in English is a necessity if the university is to compete on the international stage with western tertiary institutions.
This 'need' to be able to communicate in English now begs investigation into the background of the ability of Thai students to communicate in English.

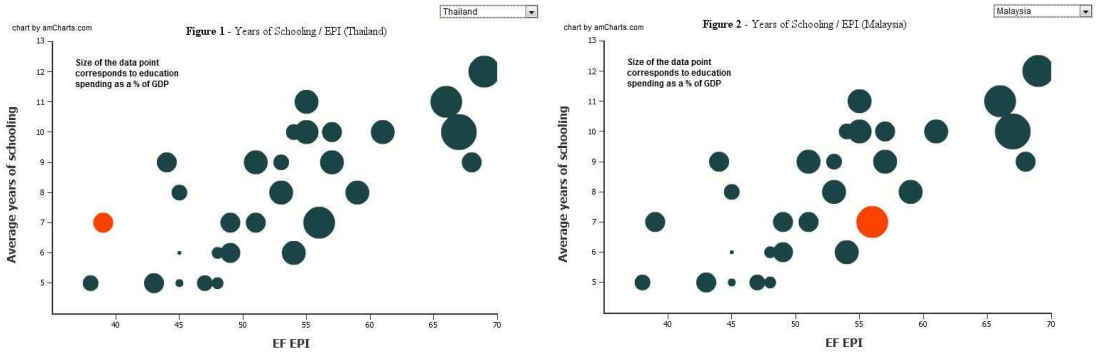
The One Way Flow of Information

To provide a better understanding of what is happening today it is necessary to look back into relatively recent Thai history regarding education. In 1916, under the reign of King Rama V, Chulalongkorn (Chula) University became the first university to be established in Thailand. The function of the university was to produce graduates to function as government officials and followed the British style of tertiary education (Sinlarat, 2005). In his paper *Changing the Culture of Education in Thai Universities* Sinlarat argues this was the beginning of a one way flow of information from the West to the East. In his abstract he says 'Thai students have become consumers...' He further argues the trend of a one way flow of information continues, even with Thai educators travelling overseas to gain degrees returning to teach in the same one way flow of information manner and '*exchanges of knowledge – between Thai and Western academics have yet to materialise.'*
Sinlarat's (2005) description of Thai tertiary students as consumers fits the context of current English language teaching/learning in Thai schools. This description of students as consumers of English language as opposed to being seekers or producers of English language is applicable to students learning English language in primary and secondary schools. Sinlarat's paper exemplifies what may be described as a rote system of English language education in Thai schools.

The Adoption of English As Thailand's Second Language

Wiriyachitra (2002) focuses on the problems of English teaching in Thailand. Thailand has always been a single language country and there have been multiple efforts to make Thailand a two language country. The idea is quite often trotted out at government levels but perennially meets opposition.
"We are proud that we have never been colonized. Another reason for having been a country with one language is the concept of national stability. .... English can, therefore, be at most the first foreign language that students must study in schools. Hence, Thais' level of English proficiency is low in comparison with many countries in Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore)." Wiriyachitra (2002, p.1)

Although lip service is paid, the two language concept has in reality never been officially politically popular. Another reason for this is the Thai cultural concept of face. To be seen to adopt another language in Thailand could infer a 'foreign takeover' of some kind, creating a possible loss of face for the person(s) responsible for the official approval. This ideology is difficult for westerners to understand but it is an important and relevant cultural factor in why English has not been officially adopted as Thailand's second language.
Wiriyachitra's assertion of a low level of English proficiency is borne out in the 2011 publication of The Education First English Proficiency Index (http://www.ef.com/sitecore/ __/~/media/efcom/epi/ pdf/EF-EPI-2011.pdf). On page five of the publication Thailand's English Proficiency Index (EPI) is ranked at 39.41- described as Very Low Proficiency. In comparison Vietnam is 44.32, Indonesia 44.78, South Korea 54.19 and Malaysia 55.54. This point is further illustrated through an interactive on-line graph comparing average number of years schoolchildren spend in learning English.



The red dots on Figures 1 and 2 illustrate respectively the average number of years of schooling for Thai and Malaysian schoolchildren relative to the English Proficiency Index. These graphs were accessed from the EF English Proficiency Index web site (http://www.ef.co.th/epi/ef-epi-ranking/number-of-years-of-schooling/).
As can be seen from the graphs above, both Thai and Malaysian school children spend the same estimated average seven years being schooled in English with a marked difference apparent in their respective EPI's; Thailand scoring 39.41 and Malaysia 55.54.
It would be easy to 'blame' the Thai education system for the poor ratings. However, this is not the intention of this paper. The intention is to provide an understanding of possible causes in a kingdom having a unique cultural identity with suggested unique factors affecting the successful teaching of English.

Difficulties Associated in Teaching English

English is taught in the majority of Isan government schools by native Thai teachers. Depending on the school these teachers may or may not have been trained in teaching English (i.e. their degree may not have been a Major in English). Very few schools have the luxury of employing native English speaking teachers of English. These native English speaking teachers tend to want to teach in larger cities such as Bangkok for reasons of income, lifestyle, convenience etc. The northeast of Thailand in comparison is not a very popular destination for native speaking English teachers although this is on the increase as more foreigners discover the lesser known and minimally advertised Isan alternative. Native English speaking teachers tend to move around from one area to another. Anecdotally, and for many and varied reasons, it is uncommon for one teacher to stay with the same school for any great period of time. Native English speaking teachers face similar difficulties to their native Thai counterparts although to a slightly lesser degree as they tend not to be asked to participate in the 'official' report making process due to most of them not speaking/reading/writing fluent Thai. Although published almost ten years ago Wiriyachitra (2002) has relevance today. Difficulties faced by both teachers and students in producing effective communicators in the English language still prevail. Teachers have heavy teaching loads, too many students per class, insufficient (English) language skills and native speaker cultural understanding. Students face a lack of opportunity to use English in their everyday lives, are passive learners (as opposed to critical thinkers), shy to practise English with classmates and, importantly, do not feel a need to take responsibility for their learning (Biyaem, 1997 in Wiriyachitra, 2002). Anecdotal evidence from discussions with Thai students reveals difficulties arising from other aspects of a cultural nature not noted by Wiriyachitra. Many students are keen to engage in English conversation with foreigners but in many instances do not take the opportunity. The two things holding them back is their natural shyness to engage with a non-Thai person and the fear they will make a conversational error, thinking they will lose face in front of the foreigner. It is this combination of fear of 'the other' and keeping face which impedes the conversational improvement of many Thai students. Keeping face is a very important part of Thai culture and many westerners have little understanding of the subtleties of this important aspect of Thai culture. These two factors (fear and face) can easily result in the student having feelings of lowered self esteem, something which needs to be addressed and overcome if the student is to be successful in learning English.

From the above it can be seen there are varied difficulties associated with the successful teaching of English to Thai schoolchildren. The perception of a one way flow of information, passive learning, cultural shyness and limited or no access to using English in a context outside the classroom, with or without a native English speaker, are hurdles facing Isan students (and teachers) today.
The words "outside the classroom" are significant when considering how students can successfully learn to communicate with other people using English language.
The following contains discourse in three sections. First, how the seemingly necessary 'need to measure' (or quantify Thai English language students progress for comparative analysis) may impact negatively on the desired outcome of producing English speaking Thai students.
Second, concentrating on "ownership'' of the English language taught in schools and third, a proposed methodology to transfer ownership of English from the classroom to the students.

The Need to Measure – A Bureaucratic Necessity

As mentioned above Chulalongkorn University was the first university to be established in Thailand with the basic function of producing bureaucrats to supply government with officials; a system arguably endorsed and followed by most universities within Thailand. There is an abundance of government departments in Thailand. A simple explanation for this is there is a large population which cannot be fully employed in the private sector. Securing work in a government department, albeit relatively low paid, can be a guarantee of work for life. It can be argued Thailand is extremely top heavy regarding government departments (or the bureaucracy) but in defence of this it keeps a large number of the population employed and provides a place for many university graduates to find a career.
Bangkok is the centre of all government departments and many decisions made from decentralised government departments must be processed through the head offices located in Bangkok. It can be argued Thailand has adopted a system similar to the British bureaucratic system and over the last hundred years developed it into a system adjusted to suit the kingdom's needs. The Ministry of Education, Religion and Culture of Education is no exception.
The Ministry of Education, Religion and Culture is a bureaucracy in charge of overseeing the successful educational needs of Thai children. Any bureaucracy needs to produce reports and show results for the work performed. Measurement is a useful and valuable tool and serves many purposes within a bureaucracy. There is no need within the scope of this paper to justify the need to measure in a bureaucracy.
The 1999 Thai Education Act provides for a minimum of nine years education for every Thai child. Wiriyachitra (2002, p.2) states that under the Act English is to be a compulsory subject for all students commencing at level one (six years old) in primary school. The English language curriculum is divided into four levels; preparatory, beginning and expanding levels three and four completed in upper secondary school.
It is expected by the end of level four students should have a good grasp on the English language; good enough if they intend to go to University to succeed in the English Proficiency Test of the Ministry of University Affairs. Through all of these levels there is a need to measure. Students need to be graded for measurement purposes.
The bottom line of educating Thai students through primary and secondary school is to have an outcome where the student can communicate with another person using the English language. It is difficult to test students on English conversational skills. It is far easier to examine students on the written side of English which includes things such as grammar and vocabulary. From these written examinations measurements can be taken to measure student's progress against each other or other schools.
It can be argued the need to measure may be working against the bottom line. Teachers know the measurements will be done through written examinations and therefore set curriculums to reach the end of term or year goal of students passing English examinations. Therefore the curriculum concentrates on written English (perhaps at the expense of conversational English skills) and the use of English as a tool of communication through conversation seems to take a back seat.
An analogy may be drawn using the following example. Students are to undertake a course, the subject matter being how to ride a motorcycle. The students are young and have never ridden a

motorcycle. They are taught in a classroom situation about motorcycles. In the classroom they learn about the engine, the carburettor, brakes and how power is transferred from the motor to the wheels. Students are taught about correct tyre pressures, how to adjust the brakes, the road rules, etc. etc. They are examined at the end of each of term in a written examination on how a motor cycle works. All students pass the written examination. At the end of this learning they are then asked to go outside and ride the motorcycle for the first time. The students all know the mechanics of the motorcycle but many of them fall off because they have not had any practice in actually 'riding' the motorcycle. This is where the argument of the need to measure may work against Thai students learning to communicate in English. After all, the desired result is to produce students who can successfully communicate using the English language. Students are taught all about the nuts and bolts of English but do not get the opportunity to go out and 'ride' it practically.

Conversations with many students at secondary and university level reveal many of them have developed a very good understanding and comprehension of reading and writing English but their conversational skills do not match. Further conversations with students whose spoken English is proficient reveal they have learnt conversational English through practising outside the classroom either amongst friends and/or proactively seeking out and conversing with English speaking people. In other words they have taken what they learned in the classroom outside the four walls and practised. Many Thai students in tertiary education have excellent abilities in understanding written English. However, for a great percentage their English conversational skills are next to non-existent. The gap between students levels of reading, understanding and writing English compared to speaking English is too large to be ignored.

Ownership of English

This analysis is not intended to be critical of the way English is taught. It is argued here the need to measure may be a relevant factor in the lack of conversational English skills in Thai students. The students possessing good English conversational skills have seemingly taken their English outside the context of the classroom. In other words they have taken ownership of their English skills. Students taking ownership of any skills taught in the classroom is an important aim of education.

From the ownership viewpoint it is pertinent to ask who owns the English language skills. It is feasible to argue many students leave their English skills in the classroom when they walk out of the door after class. In other words, the classroom owns the English. A majority of students attend the compulsory classes to satisfy requirements of passing examinations at the end of the year; to satisfy the need to measure. The classroom owns the English language and from the quote below the students 'wait' for knowledge.

Passive learning strategies to teach vocabulary may not be sufficient to teach vocabulary to students. Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf Jr. and Moni (2006), and Wiriyachitra (2002) argued that the traditional Thai education system, which focuses on passive strategies, requires that students must "wait" for knowledge. Manchak and Manchak (2006) indicated that this may be one of the reasons why only half of Thai students' English proficiency scores meet the entrance criteria into English-speaking universities. (Khuvasanond, Sildus, et al., LSCAC Proceedings, 2010, p. 176)

The purpose of teaching English is to provide students with abilities to communicate in a foreign language. Even though English is not recognised officially as the second language of Thailand it is recognised as the world language in business and academia. Whether Thai or English, language can be described as a tool of communication, nothing more. The purpose of this tool called language is to communicate a message from one person to another. As noted, English is a compulsory subject and is subject to examination to satisfy the need to measure. Therefore it is classified in the same box as typical school subjects such as mathematics, science, history, geography etc. However, language is a tool of communication and perhaps it is possible to consider English in a different light i.e. put it in a different box, altering but not removing the need measure. This would open up possibilities of treating the teaching of English as a practical life skill instead of an examinable subject. Students could be taught in a manner which needs less measurement. The context of ownership of the English could hopefully be transferred from the classroom to the student.

If the context of speaking English can be incorporated as a normal part of everyday life for the student then the student gains ownership of their own conversational English. The concept of the student owning their conversational English is often thwarted because the only time they use it is when they are 'forced' to speak or read in a classroom situation or when meeting an English speaking person. In many situations control of the context in which students use conversational English is not with the student. A student will be more comfortable if they are encouraged to 'talk English' as opposed to 'learn' English. This concept fits very well with popular Thai ideologies 'self sufficiency economy' and 'lifelong learning'. This quote from Education First English Proficiency Index (2011, p.10) has relevance to the need to measure argument: "Most English tests do not evaluate a learner's true goal: successful communication."

Transferring Ownership of English – Altering the Context

If the student feels ownership and control of their English conversation their interest in self-learning and self-development of this skill should greatly increase. Altering the context in this way should overcome shyness, improve self confidence and overall create an environment of capable young people able to communicate their thoughts and ideas using conversational English to a much greater degree than is currently the case.

The concept is to move the context of the English language from the classroom out into general society. Ownership is transferred from the classroom to the student.

There are other subjects in a school's curriculum which are suitable for measurement. If the English language is taught as a purely practical subject concentrating on the practical with the aim of being a means of communication perhaps many more students may be able to 'speak' English better. Many practical subjects are taught which are graded as a whole of class pass or fail.

The argument behind this is quite simple. Any baby is taught their native language from rote learning and repetition. They learn slowly but all are firstly taught conversational language. The identification of things such as verbs, nouns etc and the structure of putting meaningful sentences together comes after. The ability to understand, recognise and correctly use tenses, sentence structure etc. is achieved only after a good grasp of using the language in everyday conversation is achieved. There is a possibility the concentration on teaching vocabulary, grammar etc. in the context of achieving pass marks in examinations causes stress and confusion for a young person. This in turn defeats the whole purpose of the exercise which is to teach the student how to communicate using English conversation.

Taking the impetus of teaching/learning English away from the classification of compulsory examinable subject towards compulsory life skill training may successfully transfer ownership of the English language from the classroom to the student. If ownership of English can be taken up by more students, theoretically transferring ownership of English conversation out of the classroom into everyday life situations and the general community, benefit to the students will naturally flow on.

It is realistic to assume the need to measure makes reclassification of the compulsory English courses as life skills very difficult and the status quo of the examination process will remain in place. It is also realistic to assume there is little hope of any notice being taken of the analogy between the motorcycle lessons and the teaching of English so they shall probably remain as only words on a piece of paper.

One way to try to address the problem is to work from the bottom up and to assist Thai schoolchildren to learn conversational English. It is from these thoughts the idea of creating the ICES program developed.

The Isan Cultural Exchange Schooling Program

The concept of the Isan Cultural Exchange Schooling (ICES) was conceived with three objectives in mind:

1. To address the large gap between students reading and writing skills and their ability to communicate effectively using English conversation.
2. To help students overcome their fear of speaking with native English speakers.
3. To transfer ownership of English language from the classroom to the students.

The ICES program has been designed to attract native English speaking people who have just graduated from university to assist and teach young Thai students in improving their conversational English. The plan is quite simple in concept, is not expensive to run and quite easy in its execution. The program is designed to incorporate features to attract young people who have just finished their degrees to teach English language in schools in Isan. In turn students (and Thai teachers) will benefit through learning conversational English from a native speaker.

The concept is to teach the students CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH and not grammar. The end result is to cultivate an interest in the students to continue with the use and exploration of conversational English. The emphasis is on engagement with the students so they overcome their shyness in use of English language, to raise the self esteem of the students and to make them feel comfortable enough to want to take their English language skills out of the classroom into general society.

There are many students from native English speaking countries who have just completed their university degrees. These students can be assumed to be in their early twenties. They have just completed three, four or five years of study and would be ideally suitable to target for involvement in the program. It is customary in many countries for students to take a break for what is commonly termed a gap year after completing their degrees.

The attractions of Thailand as a tourist destination are well known in English speaking countries so there is no need to promote this aspect. The salience of Thailand already exists so there is an available market of new graduates intending to travel to Thailand during their gap year. They are not going to want to be part of the ICES program unless they can very quickly see benefit for themselves. In order to make the program attractive it is necessary to provide benefits which can work in tandem with tourism.

What is required is to add a vivid perspective. i.e. Something new and exciting which the prospective teacher may not have considered in relation to Thailand. There is a need to concentrate on desires of the new graduate. They come from a very different culture to that in which they will teach so the need is the consideration of what they want from the context of their current situation. They have just graduated and will be looking for employment. Adding enjoyment to employment increases interest. It is pointless using the word ‘volunteer’; it would not work.

The four month ICES program has addressed mixing tourism with an internship by incorporating a three weeks on, one week off schedule in effect giving the participant (classified as an intern) nine days of free time every month. This gives the intern a generous time frame to explore the tourist options.

For those wanting to have a truly immersive experience the ICES program offers a home stay option where the intern resides with a Thai host family.

Therefore the intern may think of ICES as employment, a cultural experience and also as a stepping stone in their current career path which can be of benefit to them now and in the future.

The intern is tasked to assist Thai teachers in teaching English conversational skills to Thai schoolchildren. The intern is not asked to take classes on their own. At all times in the classroom they will be working in tandem with a Thai teacher. This tandem arrangement crates an opportunity to recruit interns who do not necessarily have degrees in teaching. The only pre-requisites are having a degree and being a native English speaker, broadening the range of prospective interns.

The offer and issuing of a certificate at the end of their tenure promotes good publicity. Even though the certificate has no ‘official’ standing it has value in the eyes of the target market in terms of status and in the eyes of the intern would be valued to show to future employers.

The time span of four months is set to coincide with school semesters. Ideally, interns start at the commencement of the school semester and have completed their tenure just before schools prepare for their end of semester examinations.

Budgeting for the ICES program has been a major consideration. There are many programs in which people wishing to teach in Thailand can enrol. Some are volunteer and some are profit making enterprises. Most, if not all are provided at a cost to the person wanting to make use of them. Organisations or other similar programs (including volunteer programs) will not be referred to or referenced here. Suffice it to say research has shown there are not many one could join without initially paying out close to a thousand dollars US for orientation, program expenses etc. The ICES

program has been developed to provide a benefit for as little cost to both the intern and the school involved.
Therefore the intern is paid an internship which is enough to cover accommodation and living expenses. The host family is also paid if the intern takes up this option. There is also a component in the ICES program whereby local business can sponsor an intern, possibly providing an intern to a school at no cost to the school.
Mahasarakham University International Relations Office acts as liaison between the intern and the school providing necessary support for the intern before and just after arriving in Mahasarakham. This support continues for the duration of the internship.
The ICES program has now had two interns over two consecutive semesters who have successfully completed the program. The first was a young man from New Zealand who had completed a degree and was currently in Thailand looking for teaching work. He spent two months of the program living with a Thai family before making the move to an apartment. He commented the ICES program was ideally suited to his needs as it gave him a good grounding in how English is taught at his particular school. The fact he was assisting a Thai teacher of English also helped greatly. While undertaking the program he was able to make enquiries about continuing his teaching career in Thailand. He is now teaching full time in the neighbouring province of Roi Et.
The second was a young English woman who came to the ICES program after a teaching stint in China. Although her situation was very different from the first intern, she also gained invaluable experience due to the fact she was paired with a native Thai teacher. She has now returned to England and is currently continuing her teaching career in her home country. There is currently another intern from the United States scheduled to start next semester.
It was felt necessary to start slowly with the program and not to commence advertising on a large scale. This decision was made to ensure the program works smoothly in all aspects from start to finish before attempting to increase numbers of interns.
In hindsight it has proved to be correct as there have been some minor adjustments required. The only issue which is currently being addressed is the fitting in of the internship to suit the paperwork required. This is not a large problem, simply a matter of the satisfactory creation of English/Thai paperwork which fits the Thai system.
Overall the program has been well received by all parties concerned. The interns have been very happy with their experience and have expressed their feelings it has been well worthwhile experience. More importantly, they have also expressed their opinion that they have made a difference. The schools involved are very pleased and are happy to have more interns in the future. The Thai teachers of English are pleased and the schoolchildren have also enjoyed the experience.

Conclusion

This monologue has attempted to create an objective analysis of the teaching of English to Thai students from a slightly different viewpoint. It has attempted to put forward a constructive argument for the gap between Thai students reading and writing skills and their English conversational skills. There is no criticism toward any part of the Thai education system intended, rather to explain in simple terms how this has occurred.
The author understands the importance of keeping face in Thai culture. This paper has been written hoping to have it read as an objective analysis.
As an aside the term critical analysis is somewhat foreign to the Thai education system and one cannot lay blame for this. Many people when they hear the words critical analysis concentrate on the word critical, linking it with criticism. It would be better served to change this terminology to objective analysis thereby taking away the implication of criticism. The Thai Ministry of Education, Religion and Culture are aware of the need to alter the mindset of the modern day student towards a more objective analytic train of thought both in teaching and student learning and are seen to be taking positive steps in working towards reform in this area.
Thai students overall are experiencing improvements in the teaching of English. It must be pointed out it is unreasonable to expect Thai schoolchildren to have perfect English language skills. Many Thai teachers of English were taught through the system described above. Educational reform is a slow process and it may take another generation for results to be shown.

There are still barriers to overcome. Thai people are justifiably very proud of their kingdom. The concept of English becoming Thailand's second language meets cultural resistance with many thinking of it as invasive policy. Perhaps in the future Thais may be able to turn this thinking upside down. Hopefully the day will soon come when an Isan student is asked, "Why do you learn English?" and for the confident reply to be, "I learn English because I would like to tell English speaking people about our wonderful culture and how much they can learn from us."
The ICES program hopes to play a small part in turning this reply into a reality.

APPENDIX

Appendix I.

A Map Showing the Twenty Provinces of Isan.
Mahasarakham (#7)is located in the very centre of Isan.

Source: 'Isan', Wikipedia, URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isan, accessed September 5, 2011

1. Amnat Charoen
2. Buriram
3. Chaiyaphum
4. Kalasin
5. Khon Kaen
6. Loei
7. Maha Sarakham
8. Mukdahan
9. Nakhon Phanom
10. Nakhon Ratchasima
11. Nongbua Lamphu
12. Nong Khai
13. Roi Et
14. Sakon Nakhon
15. Sisaket
16. Surin
17. Ubon Ratchathani
18. Udon Thani
19. Yasothon
20. Bueng Kan

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CRITICAL CHALLENGES OF VIETNAM IN BUILDING WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

In recent years, there is a growing need to establish world-class universities that can compete at a global level. However, the path towards becoming world-class universities is quite rough for Vietnamese higher education institutions. This paper will explain the reasons by exploring challenges that the Vietnamese tertiary education is currently facing. In-depth analysis of various published findings will be done in combination of the author's observations. Examples will be taken from the case of Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City where the author is now working and from other institutions in Vietnam. By understanding the impacts of such challenges, it is hoped that feasible strategies to build world-class universities can be identified for Vietnamese organizations as well as for those within the Asia Pacific region whose context is kind of similar to Vietnam.

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The need of establishing world-class universities in Vietnam

The term "world-class university" has become increasing popular, and without any doubt, it is the goal of many tertiary institutions in the globalized context. So what is a world-class university? According to a recent report of World Bank, it should have three major characteristics: (i) high concentration of talents, both academic staff and students; (ii) adequate resources; and (iii) good governance.

Vietnam has recently experienced rapid socio-economic changes, and in 2009, it was endorsed by the World Bank to attain the middle income status. In order to embrace this status and increase its competitiveness, there is an urgent need for qualified human resources deployable in a professional practice. And such a need has really put pressures on education, especially higher education, to build up quality institutions.

Vietnam now has more than 400 universities and colleges. Sadly, none of them has been placed in the world league table. Moreover, the university graduates normally do not meet employers' requirements and must be retrained for 6-12 months before job placement. It means that Vietnamese tertiary institutions have failed to meet the demands of learners, employers and society; and if the situation is not improved, Vietnam will not be able to escape the middle-income trap.

In such a context, world-class universities as defined by World Bank are becoming increasingly important, and their establishment should be given the top priority for the institutions themselves and the system in general.

Challenges faced by Vietnamese higher education

In the Higher Education Reform Agenda 2006-2020, Vietnam's goal is to have at least one institution ranked in the world's Top 200 Universities by 2020. To make this happen, the government allocated considerable financial resources and participated in developing international standards universities with loans from the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank. However, there exists some big challenges which may hinder the process. According to the final report of Vietnam Education Task Force (2009), Vietnam's higher education should make significant reforms including "fundamental changes in governance, institutional autonomy, financing and administration, faculty hiring, promotion and salary structure, as well as in curricula and the modalities of teaching, evaluation and research" (p.3). This proposal, at the same time, has almost fully revealed major challenges faced by Vietnamese educational institutions. In the development of suitable strategies to build up world-class universities, I

believe that the awareness and serious analysis of the weaknesses will be an integral part. Let's review some major challenges and the responsive actions of several universities in Vietnam.

Governance and Institutional Autonomy

Currently Vietnam has maintained a centralized control system where the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) monitors and provides directions for various aspects such as admissions policy, curriculum framing, personnel management and student assessment. This, indeed, "limits the possibility for improvements in the organization and governance of higher education institutions" (Education and Training Working Group 2007, p.3) and becomes an obstacle for their full development. As a solution, the Education and Training Working Group (2007) pointed out that "MOET should grant more freedoms to educational institutions, particularly in the areas such as enrolment quotas, curriculum development and international cooperation to increase institutional autonomy and accountability" (p.3).

Aware of that issue, in 1995, the government established two national universities namely Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) and Vietnam National University-Hanoi (VNU Hanoi). In comparison to other universities, these two ones are granted more autonomy. Particularly, they are entitled to decide administrative and academic areas, and required to report to the central government. Such a freedom gives both VNUs flexibility and responsibility for their activities, thereby resulting in their great strides in improving the system and enhancing the position in the international arena.

Financing

Another challenge which Vietnamese universities are facing lies in its limited budget and expenditure on training and research activities. According to World Bank Report on Higher Education and Skills for Growth (2008), "no properly calculated expenditure to GDP ratio for higher education in Vietnam is available", but with the ratio in 2009 of about 0.6% public funding per student, the budget for the system as a whole remains low.

Undoubtedly, the limitation of expenditure has resulted in insufficient investment in facilities, services and personnel. Without good resources, a university cannot be developed as a world-class one. In response to this obstacle, many big universities in the nation have tried to diversify their income sources. Commercialization of research and donors from alumni and businesses are parts of the diversification strategy. Take VNU-HCM for example. In recent years, the linkage between businesses and VNU-HCM has been strongly facilitated. A lot of strategic partnership agreements have been concluded and implemented. Late in 2010, VNU-HCM and Viettel Group entered into cooperation, under which both parties will work together to promote joint research projects, technology transfer activities, VNU-HCM's development cavities and student scholarships, etc. Moreover, in 2011, VNU-HCM signed an agreement with Hung A Company so that a VNU-HCM Hospital will be built up under the company's sponsorship. Similarly, VNU-HCM has recently reached an agreement with Thanh Nghia Corporation to establish VNU-HCM Plaza and contribute to the Investment and Development Fund of VNU-HCM.

Personnel

Human resource is a big challenge for Vietnamese universities. The report of Nuffic Neso Vietnam (2009) showed that "the number of teachers for higher education only satisfies 60% of the demand. Faculty qualifications are generally low… Currently only 13.86% of Vietnamese university professors hold PhDs" (p.4). Similarly, the leaders and the administrators in universities are not well trained in terms of leadership and management since most of them are normally teachers.

Therefore, the development of human resources has become increasingly important to the institutions and the system as well. Transparent recruitment process, good incentive scheme and especially professional development opportunities must be in place to ensure that the universities are really a hub for talented staff. It must be acknowledged that recently, these actions have been strongly conducted in

Vietnamese tertiary institutions. At VNU-HCM, the staff development project in conjunction with the USA universities has been highly evaluated when Rectors, Vice Rectors and senior managers are sent to the USA and trained about higher education leadership and management. At International University (IU), an affiliate of VNU-HCM, administrative staff has much chance to take part in exchange programs.

Curricula

The curricula used in Vietnamese universities are mostly outdated, which emphasize repetition and memorization. As a result, the quality of graduates "is seen to be low when measured against the needs of industry and society for skills and capabilities that meet continually changing needs, especially for well-rounded graduates who have skills in critical thinking, and adaptability to fit into new environments and apply their skills to needs of the workplace" (Sheridan 2010, p. 31).

Again, in order to become a hub for talents, Vietnamese universities are expected to reform their curricula, ensuring that they will be updated and enhance the learners' innovation and skills. To that end, IU has learnt from the curricula of renowned universities around the world and has developed its own curriculum given that the framework as required by MOET and VNU-HCM is observed. So far, its programs are well recognized by many international universities such as Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (USA), State University of New York-Binghamton, University of Houston (USA) and University of New South Wales (Australia). The fact that credits recognized by international universities will open up more opportunities for the universities to integrate into the world education.

Research

Research is quite weak in Vietnamese universities, relative to other regional ones. The Science Citation Index published by Thomson Reuters indicated that publications in peer-review journals of both VNUs were, in 2007, just 52 as compared to 822 of Chulalongkorn University (Thailand) and 5,060 of Seoul National University (Korea). The 2008 Statistical Review of World Intellectual Property Organization also revealed that Vietnam had no patents awarded in 2006, while Thailand had 158 and Korea 102,633. This problem was caused not only by inadequate funding but also by the overloaded teaching time of faculty members. However, it is overlooked that R&D activities are the force to enhance the quality and position of an institution, and at the same time, effectively respond to the social needs.

On the road to develop a quality university, VNU-HCM has implemented long-term research programs which gather excellent researchers to establish specialized centers of research. It has also actively participated in joint research projects with foreign institutes such as University of California-Los Angeles (USA), Waseda University (Tokyo) and Orsay University (Paris), etc. As a result, many projects have brought positive impacts on the community, which included, but not limited to, 32-bit processing chip launched, biochip produced, Phu An Bamboo Village awarded UNDP's Equator Prize for biodiversity.

Quality assurance

Covering all aspects of an organization from planning to executing and monitoring, quality assurance is very essential to maintain its effective operation and continuous improvement. As such, at national level, the National Accreditation Council was established in 2008 within MOET. At the institutional level, at each VNU, there is a Quality Assurance Center which establishes a documentary system including procedures, regulations and personnel organization for the whole system from top VNU to member universities. With such a system, the universities can well implement their international higher education integration through credit transfer policies. Particularly, VNU-HCM has set up output standards for each faculty / major / program at both undergraduate and graduate levels based on the standards of CIDO, AUN-QA and ABET. These standards have been also established in line with the policy of MOET and VNU-HCM. Thanks to that, many programs here have successfully passed the external assessment and gain recognition from foreign partners.

In particular, VNU-HCM has joined the AUN-ACTS Credit Transfer System, in which 12 programs of VNU-HCM affiliates have been recognized as transfer equivalencies by member universities of ASEAN University Network. Moreover, VNU-HCM has been recently become the 56th member of CDIO, an innovative educational framework for two key issues: what should be taught to students (knowledge, skills and attitude) and how students can obtain the knowledge. VNU-HCM has launched the pilot CDIO for two areas Manufacturing Technology and Information Technology. The application of CDIO has enabled it to renovate the management mode and educational programs for the society's sake.

Conclusion

The establishment of world-class universities has been an ultimate goal for any country, especially such middle-income ones as Vietnam. To that end, each individual university and the system as a whole should seriously identify their weaknesses and challenges; thereby develop proper strategies for their own institutions. Lessons and experience should be exchanged from other success stories, thus requiring an open mind and the readiness to change.

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