Strategic Thinking in Internationalization of Higher Education

Amirhossein Takian, MD PhD FHEA
Vice-Dean for International Affairs
Chair & Associate Professor
Department of Global Health and Public Policy
What is Internationalization of Higher Education

Defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education.”

• A result of global interdependence and an effort for reposing to its challenges/using its opportunities.

• Considered important by the majority of educational institutions worldwide.

• Variations in the scope of internationalization and different from globalization.

• Encouraged in medical education due to a lot of factors.

References:
1. Updating the Definition of Internationalization, 2003, Jane Knight
3. International Medical Education and Future Directions: A Global Perspective, 2006, Ronald Harden
International Medical Education and Future Directions: A Global Perspective
Ronald M. Harden, MD

Abstract

Internationalization, one of the most important forces in higher education today, presents a powerful challenge and an opportunity for medical schools. Factors encouraging internationalization include (1) globalization of health care delivery, (2) governmental pressures, (3) improved communication channels, (4) development of a common vocabulary, (5) outcome-based education and standards, (6) staff development initiatives, and (7) competitiveness and commercialization.

A three-dimensional model—based on the student (local or international), the teacher (local or international), and the curriculum (local, imported, or international)—offers a range of perspectives for international medical education. In the traditional approach to teaching and learning medicine, local students and local teachers use a local curriculum. In the international medical graduate or overseas student model, students from one country pursue in another country a curriculum taught and developed by teachers in the latter. In the branch-campus model, students, usually local, have an imported curriculum taught jointly by international and local teachers.

The future of medical education, facilitated by the new learning technologies and pedagogies, lies in a move from such international interconnected approaches, which emphasize the mobility of students, teachers, and curriculum across the boundaries of two countries, to a transnational approach in which internationalization is integrated and embedded within a curriculum and involves collaboration between a number of schools in different countries. In this approach, the study of medicine is exemplified in the global context rather than the context of a single country. The International Virtual Medical School serves as an example in this regard.


References:
1. International Medical Education and Future Directions: A Global Perspective, 2006, Ronald Harden
## Pros and Cons of Internationalization of Higher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved academic quality</td>
<td>Low quality education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversifying and enhancing the learning environment</td>
<td>Commercialization with profits mostly for institutions in developed nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationally oriented students and staff</td>
<td>The loss of cultural or national identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable and cross-culturally sensitive graduates</td>
<td>Homogenization of international curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and international citizenship for students and staff</td>
<td>Widening the gap between socioeconomic classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue generation</td>
<td>Inhibiting the developing countries of using their students’ potential for their own homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain gain</td>
<td>Brain drain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**References:**
2. Internationalization of Higher Education: Potential Benefits and Costs, 2015, Tahira Jibeen, Masha Asad Khan
A New approach to Internationalization of Higher Education

• Due to the multi-aspect nature and countless pros and cons stated for internationalization of higher education, the ongoing evaluation of its essence, impacts and tools is surely a priority.

• Such evaluation can be beneficial, if and only if equipped with a systematic approach, i.e.:

Strategic Thinking
What is Strategic Thinking?

Strategic thinking is defined as one’s capacity for thinking conceptually, imaginatively, systematically, and opportunistically with regard to the attainment of success in the future.

A requirement for all organizations and individuals working in today’s World of uncertainty

A comprehensive and action-oriented analysis of all opportunities and challenges

Different from strategic planning

References:
2. https://strategicthinkingcoach.com/2013/01/28/strategic-thinking-defined
Strategic Thinking – Step 1
Look for the Big Picture!

To get aware of the general strategies, objectives, concerns and perspectives of the whole institute, the community, and the internal or external stakeholders.

• For Lino Guzzella, president of ETH Zurich, “being international in itself is not the goal”. Rather, universities become international to be “excellent in science, in teaching and excellent in knowledge transfer”.

• This, he confirms, is particularly true in a small nation such as Switzerland because there are not “sufficient numbers of talented people within Switzerland” to recruit as scholars and students.

Reference of interview:
REASONS FOR DIFFICULTY FILLING JOBS
Top 5 reasons employers are having difficulty filling jobs in Switzerland

- Lack of technical competencies (hard skills) 50%
- Lack of available applicants/no applicants 45%
- Lack of soft skills 13%
- Lack of experience 12%
- Looking for higher salary than is offered 7%

References:
1. Talent Shortage Survey, 2015, ManpowerGroup
Strategic Thinking – Step 1
Look for the Big Picture!

Practical Recommendations

1. Try to understand the main strategies of your institute and discuss its details with other colleagues.

2. Critically evaluate the customers, competitors and the higher education industry (needs, values, etc.)

3. Critically evaluate the demands, concerns and perspectives of internal stakeholders.

4. DESIGN A VISION!
Strategic Thinking – Step 2
Define Strategic Goals.

To understand and clarify what you need to do, why you need to do it and how it get fit in the big picture of your institute.

• Peter Mathieson, vice-chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, says that his institution recently established a new “10-year vision” to become “Asia’s global university”. One goal is for 50 per cent of its undergraduates to be given two opportunities to study outside Hong Kong during their degree by 2019, and for all students to have this opportunity by 2022.

Reference of interview:
Strategic Thinking – Step 2
Define Strategic Goals.

Practical Recommendations

1. Talk to your superior managers; clarify what they expect from your unit and why they do it. Advocate for new ideas.

2. Define long term goals for your unit. Consider your strengths and weaknesses and forecast about the possible opportunities and challenges of tomorrow.

3. Never accept a new project before analyzing its congruency with your own goals and thinking out its different impacts on other units and the whole institute.
Strategic Thinking – Step 3
Collect data and Look for critical Trends.

To systematically collect data, figure out what critical patterns or trends are present within the system and how one can address them appropriately.

Sense of crisis within Japan’s university administration:
• Before 2014, Only 2.9% of students enrolled at Japanese universities were from overseas and in Japan only 5.1% of teaching staff are from abroad, compared with 29.5% at Harvard University (U.S.) and 41.4% at Cambridge University (U.K.).

• Only approximately 57,500 Japanese students went abroad in 2011, compared with around 83,000 in 2004.
The consensus amongst Japan’s academia to explain this trend is that:

1. There is **no real need for Japanese students to go overseas** because they can find everything they need for their studies and careers in Japan.

2. Such inward-looking students will not readily become part of the global network of scientists, **thus further isolating Japan in terms of research and education in the future.**
Strategic Thinking – Step 3
Collect data and Look for critical Trends.

Practical Recommendations

1. Establish a system for internal and external evaluation of your performance. Ask others for their feedback and perspectives.

2. When collecting data, do not focus on unnecessary details.

3. Pay attention to the 20/80 rule; Most of the time, there is no balance between inputs and outputs.

4. Try to think critically about what is happening and why. Is there any similarities or linkages between some apparently unrelated challenges?
Strategic Thinking – Step 4
Be Creative!

Try to form new ideas and provide innovative solutions by welcoming the fact that challenging assumptions or traditions may lead to unpredicted success.

- Internationalizing higher education is officially considered to be a major goal for German universities.

- Some believe that the integration of three core elements of internationalization (international mobility, global health and cultural competences) within the medical curriculum of Germany is still rather weak.

References:
1. Preparing Medical Graduates for an Interconnected World, 2014, Alexander Stütz, Wendy Green, Lindy McAllister, Diann Eley
Internationalizing Medical Education: The Special Track Curriculum 'Global Health' at Justus Liebig University Giessen

Michael Knipper,*, 1 Adrian Baumann, 2 Christine Hofstetter, 2 Rolf Korte, 3 and Michael Krawinkel 4

1 Justus Liebig University Giessen, Institute for History of Medicine, Giessen, Germany
2 Justus Liebig University Giessen, Medical Students, Giessen, Germany
3 Justus Liebig University Giessen, Institute of Hygiene and Environmental Medicine, Giessen, Germany
4 Justus Liebig University Giessen, Institute of Nutritional Science, Giessen, Germany

*To whom correspondence should be addressed: Michael Knipper, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Institute for History of Medicine, Jheringstraße 6, D-35392 Giessen, Germany, E-mail: michael.knipper@histor.med.uni-giessen.de

Received 2013 Mar 18; Revised 2015 Jun 29; Accepted 2015 Jul 15.

Copyright © 2015 Knipper et al.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.
A voluntary course run for 3rd to 6th year medical students about the subject of global health, almost covering about 10% of students.

Consisting of lecture talks, seminars, clinical electives, portfolio activities and a compulsory stay abroad program.

The SPC Global Health is one project for the internationalization of medical education, adapted to the particular local conditions.
Practical Recommendations

1. Challenge your assumptions! Think twice about the traditional routines and established processes. Is there no better way rather than coping with the current situation?

2. Never rule out new and apparently irrelevant ideas. At least consider some time to think about them in your leisure time. Many perfect ideas of today came from the foolish and irrelevant ideas of yesterday!

3. Share your vision and ask for help. Promote creativity and idea generation in your work environment.
Strategic Thinking – Step 5
Choose your actions!

Analyze the different alternatives, prioritize based on the big picture and deadlines; then make your decision.

• TUMS is the 1st and only member of M8 Alliance from the MENA region.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences

WMIU Rank: -
TWUR Rank: 501 - 600

Seminar on Internationalization of Higher Education
Our mission is to educate students at all levels and disciplines of the medical sciences in accordance with the highest educational standards. We educate future medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and health scientists to work in diverse communities.

Our vision is to become an internationally recognized university that will draw international students, fellows and researchers from all around the world. **Our commitment to the advancement of education in medical sciences is evident through our ever-expanding interactions with professors, researchers and students present in international academic landscapes.**
Strategic Thinking – Step 5
Choose your actions!

Practical Recommendations

1. Focus on important activities that fit the most in your big picture. Don’t sacrifice important/strategic activities for urgent/routine tasks.

2. Analyze each alternative thoroughly. Make a balance between short term and long term needs, consequences, benefits and challenges.

3. Invest in those areas that you have an added value.

4. Learn to say “NO”!
A Few Final Questions...

Are we considering internationalization of higher education, i.e. medical field within the context of big picture(s)?

What do we aim to achieve by internationalization? Are we used to perform strategic and SMART goal setting?

Do we have a plan for detecting and addressing the critical patterns or trends regarding the internationalization?

What predefined assumptions are driving our decision making? Are we ready to challenge or even change them?

How do we choose our next actions for internationalization? Do we enrich our strategic plans with strategic thinking?
THANK YOU!

takian@tums.ac.ir

With special thanks to Dr. Pouria Rouzrokh MD MPH for his contribution to this talk.