

Internationalization of Higher Education after COVID-19: Reflections and New Practices for Different Times

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INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER COVID-19: REFLECTIONS AND NEW PRACTICES FOR DIFFERENT TIMES

Santiago Castiello-Gutiérrez, Martín P. Pantoja Aguilar & César Eduardo Gutiérrez Jurado (Editors)

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Dedication

To the more than six million persons that to date have lost their lives due to COVID-19. Especially to all those who dedicated their lives to transform the world through higher education. May their footprints and legacy be fertile ground for a future marked by a more inclusive and intercultural education.

Contents

Prologue	8
<i>César Eduardo Gutiérrez Jurado</i>	
Introduction	10
<i>Martín P. Pantoja Aguilar and Santiago Castiello-Gutiérrez</i>	
FIRST PART	
Internationalization and the pandemic in the world	16
The Loneliness of the Pandemic	17
<i>Javier Horacio Contreras Orozco</i>	
Impacts and Challenges of COVID-19 on Student Mobility	31
<i>América M. Lizárraga González</i>	
The Internationalization of Higher Education from a Student Mobility Perspective: Before and After COVID-19	47
<i>José Antonio Quinteiro Goris</i>	
Universidad Iberoamérica 2030: The Organization of Ibero-American States' Commitment to Post-pandemic Higher Education	62
<i>Ana Capilla Casco</i>	
Higher Education's Response to the Challenges Imposed by COVID-19. A Latin American Overview	71
<i>Genoveva Amador-Fierro</i>	
Multilateral Perspectives on International Academic Cooperation post-COVID-19	98
<i>JUDr. Slavomir Rudenko, Ph.D. and Prof. István Tarrósy, Ph.D.</i>	

AIEA: Successfully Supporting International Education Leaders through the Pandemic	108
<i>Darla K. Deardorff, Ph.D.</i>	

The Challenge of Internationalization in Peruvian Universities	116
<i>Sheyla Salazar Fernández</i>	

Internationalization of Higher Education in Mexico: A Step Behind Global Trends?	129
<i>Jocelyne Gacel-Ávila and Guadalupe Vázquez-Niño</i>	

PART TWO:

Case Studies on the Internationalization of Higher Education in Mexico During the Pandemic: Challenges, Successes and Lessons Learned	147
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The Reconfiguration of University Processes for International Education Following COVID-19: The case of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico	148
<i>Maria del Pilar Ampudia García and Christian Karel Salgado Vargas</i>	

Responsiveness and Resilience in University Faculty and Students: Teaching-Learning Experience Online through International Collaboration	161
<i>Aideé C. Arellano Ceballos, Alicia Cuevas Muñiz, and Genoveva Amador Fierros</i>	

E-Mobility as a Tool to Support Students' International Experience during the Pandemic: The case of CETYS University	177
<i>Scott Venezia Corral and Diana E. Woolfolk R.</i>	

PIC US-MX: Bilateral Initiative to Boost Internationalization of Curriculum in Times of Pandemic	188
<i>Ofelia Cervantes Villagómez</i>	

New Learnings during COVID-19: Toward the Construction of Educational and Linguistic Policies at Universities	210
<i>David Guadalupe Toledo Sarracino, Laura García Landa, and María del Socorro Montaña Rodríguez</i>	

Internationalization at Home Post-COVID-19 of Mexican HEI Associated to AMPEI. A Descriptive Study	235
<i>Margarita Schmitt Revilla, Ph.D.</i>	

Virtual International Mobility without Student Participation	256
<i>Estela Maricela Villalón de la Isla</i>	

PART THREE

After the Pandemic: Evolution of the internationalization process of higher education	273
--	-----

Post Pandemic Traveling in Place: Multiplying Rich Virtual Study Abroad Opportunities	274
<i>Gonzalo Isidro Bruno, Ed. D. and Patrick Agullana, M.A.</i>	

Virtual Internationalization of Higher Education: Digital Environments and Beyond	292
<i>Dra. Luciane Stallivieri</i>	

Rethinking the Internationalization of Higher Education in View of the New Normal: Considerations from Colombia and Mexico	307
<i>Daniel Arturo Romero León and Tania Isabel Lafont Castillo</i>	

The Latin American University and its Role as a Non-Traditional Stakeholder in Science Diplomacy in the Post-COVID-19 Era	321
<i>Luisa Fernanda Echeverría King, Olisney de Luque Montaña, and Alejandra Fabiola Flores Zamora</i>	

Mexican Higher Education After COVID-19: Positive Transformation or Business as Usual?	342
<i>Magdalena L. Bustos-Aguirre and Carlos Iván Moreno Arellano</i>	

About the Coordinators	356
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About the Authors	358
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Prologue

César Eduardo Gutiérrez Jurado¹

The objective of the works included in this compendium was to encourage reflection on the challenges and vicissitudes triggered in higher education institutions as a result of the COVID-19 health emergency which revolutionized their work at a global level. In this complex and uncertain context, from AMPEI (Mexican Association for International Education), it was imperative to make a call for reflection to learn, on the one hand, from the perspective of the different actors at the international level, about the cases and experiences with which the pandemic has been faced and, on the other hand, to realize the great areas of opportunity that we, as institutions and as a sector had.

Therefore, in this book you will find that some chapters mention the enormous need to apply changes but above all, to take advantage of unprecedented opportunities. The pandemic has come to revolutionize the processes of internationalization and to function as a sort of catalyst to re-invigorate university work at the global level.

This book is also an example of AMPEI's commitment to position itself as a cutting-edge association, sensitive to the dizzying changes in our environment. At AMPEI, in addition to bringing together relevant actors in the internationalization ecosystem to share best practices and establish cooperative relationships, we believe in the power of basing our practice on theory. This book represents an effort to build a bridge between the theory and practice of internationalization in higher education. This book, along with the *Educación Global* journal, is also a symbol of our commitment to generate and safeguard evidence of our member's and allies' international work. We hope that through these 21 chapters, you will find a different view of the internationalization process of higher education in

1 President 2022-2023, Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI)

PROLOGUE

Mexico in the era of COVID-19, with a plural perspective from different fields and geopolitical realities that coincide with the need for disruption and, even more importantly, a reconfiguration of university work in the coming years.

Introduction

Martín P. Pantoja Aguilar¹ and Santiago Castiello-Gutiérrez²

This publication brings together the proposals, experiences, and reflections of the international community that studies and promotes the internationalization of higher education. This volume also represents one more innovation point for the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI) in its academic and literary work. In addition to its already recognized trajectory of publishing the journal *Educación Global*, this book expands AMPEI's new path of promoting research on the internationalization of higher education, especially around internationalization of the curriculum and internationalization at home. The publication emphasizes the importance of the topics covered not only for the field of international education but also for higher education in all its contexts. The various authors who present their work in this book confirm that internationalization is not a goal in and of itself, but a fundamental strategy for achieving the mission and vision of higher education institutions in accordance with current global challenges.

While the challenges presented -under the still-present COVID-19 pandemic restriction-have been daunting for education in general and higher education specifically, institutions have implemented innovative ways to meet those challenges. Regarding the internationalization of higher education and its international cooperation variable, institutions have presented a wide range of responses ranging from reactive, temporary and merely tactical, to exemplary cases of interactive and strategic responses with a long-term vision. The common scenario for all educational institutions has been defined by an environment full of uncertainty and restrictions that have limited physical mobility and therefore academic stays of any kind. Likewise, the preventive confinement of institutions

1 Universidad de Guanajuato.

2 Seton Hall University.

that were forced to close their campuses led the academic staff and students to conduct the learning process from home, with the usual limitations due to technological development and the quality of internet connection services or other means.

In this evolution of situations, organizations and associations such as AMPEI have also played an important role in supporting and promoting new tools, strategies and models among their members that have been able to maintain an acceptable level of international cooperation and internationalization activities, mainly of the curriculum and through various modalities accessible online. As described in chapters five, six, and seven of this volume, several associations identified the current era as a unique opportunity for the generation of innovative projects and sought to highlight the resilience of their members to attempt what had been postponed for years: the transformation of learning processes and the academic impact of institutions.

For years, higher education institutions have been aware of the social demand to generate innovative models that respond to society's current needs; a society impacted by technological development, global interconnectivity, and the interrelation of economies. This situation demands a more agile, innovative, flexible, and attractive response from educational institutions that allows them to maintain both the educational demand they have traditionally served as well as the new demand created by the reduction of borders and distances achieved by the new 4.0 technology.

The institutions' strategies framed in this context had at hand several studies that allow to locate the current context of international education and the result of several research projects conducted through questionnaires on the real impact of the pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the way in which students, faculty and administrators responded to the challenges presented. It is important to mention that the various responses given by institutions to the aforementioned challenges were also due in a complementary manner to other variables such as the already decreasing economic activity, the government styles, and federal policies, the lack of a national internationalization strategy, budget reductions in several countries and other factors that do not depend on the existence of the pandemic.

Today it is a priority - and will continue to be a permanent research task - to reflect on whether the disruption caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, in addition to

demonstrating the true resilience of HEI, was really a learning experience as well as an opportunity for innovation in the area of internationalization strategy. This research continues producing hard evidence to support the various hypotheses which have been generated at this stage or else, to demonstrate whether the impacts have actually been minimal, and even how they will behave once the restrictions on classroom attendance are removed.

As stated in various forums, the change produced will not be totally disruptive since the context of institutions; the economic and budgetary situation will have permanent adjustments and force them to rethink their priorities in the coming years. What is expected and desired, is that this pandemic challenge will finally lead HEI to start the path towards the change they have postponed for so long, based on the evidence showing that the impact has not been minor and that it is estimated that university communities will no longer be able to return to what they were used to, nor to traditional practices.

We believe things will change because users have learned that there are other ways to receive education or to be accompanied during the learning process. Society, students, and their families will demand more of the flexible education schemes already experienced by them. They learned to adapt their personal and work schedules to this temporary context (hopefully) and became more efficient in using time and money.

About this Book

In light of this scenario of obstacles, lessons learned and transformations that the pandemic brought to the ecosystem of internationalization of higher education in Mexico and the world, AMPEI and the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua called for the publication of this book. The objective of this work was to gather reflections and new practices on the experience lived during the pandemic, as well as on what the new context will represent for international higher education. Thanks to AMPEI's extensive network of contacts, it was possible to gather academic and institutional views from authors in various world regions.

This volume is divided into three parts. In the first one, which we have called "Internationalization and the Pandemic in the World", we review the main effects of the pandemic on higher education in general, and on internationalization

in particular. With contributions from colleagues representing different international associations, this section serves as a comparative framework of diagnoses and solutions that we trust will serve as lessons learned to address future crises that seem inevitable. However, before addressing institutional perspectives, this book begins in its first chapter with an important reflection by Contreras on the effect of the pandemic at the individual level. At the end of the day, this crisis we are facing has altered the lives of all people; as the author mentions: “SARS-CoV-2 has been the virus of confinement, of absolute loneliness and depression”. Therefore, it is important to remember that the papers presented here are mindful of the tremendous emotional burden the pandemic has created in all of us in the international higher education ecosystem. Subsequently, Lizárraga summarizes in Chapter Two, some of the main impacts and challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has represented for international student mobility programs. Chapters Three to Six present the reflections of multilateral organizations such as UNESCO-IESALC, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the Latin American Initiative for the Internationalization of Higher Education (INILAT), and the Compostela Group of Universities (GCU). The last three chapters of this first section show global perspectives in three countries in the Americas. First, Deardorff narrates how a national association in the United States was able to support its member universities in maintaining collaborative options; next, Gacel-Ávila and Vázquez-Niño present the results of a survey in Mexico in which HEI evaluate the state of internationalization in the country; finally, Salazar explains how the national context in Peru both supports and inhibits the growth of internationalization strategies.

The second part, entitled “Case Studies on Internationalization of Higher Education in Mexico during the Pandemic: Challenges, Successes and Lessons Learned”, presents six chapters with specific examples from institutions in Mexico. In this section, the authors share how their institutions had to adapt and transform themselves to continue offering internationalization options to their students and faculty in light of the forced transition to distance education modalities. Throughout the first five chapters of this section, the resilience and innovation that flourished within Mexican HEI in the wake of the crisis are evident. Through examples from universities such as the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (Chapter 10), the Universidad de Colima (Chapter 11), CETYS Universidad (Chapter 12), the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (Chapter 14), and a program of several HEI led by AMPEI itself (Chapter 13), the first part of this section documents how the spirit of service, mainly toward the students, led

the staff of the internationalization areas to quickly react to a constantly evolving situation. Two empirical studies complement this section; Schmitt (Chapter 15) and Villalón (Chapter 16) share tools and instruments that allow institutions to assess the effectiveness of their home-based internationalization and virtual mobility programs, respectively. These chapters are relevant because they reaffirm the importance of basing internationalization strategies on empirical data and the need for a rigorous and systematic evaluation of the different programs designed within internationalization offices.

Finally, the third section of this volume, “After the Pandemic: The evolution of the internationalization process in higher education,” seeks to be a beacon with specific proposals that HEI can adopt to continue their international work in the eventual post-pandemic era. A fundamental part of this new stage of internationalization post-COVID-19 will be leveraging programs and strategies in the use of information technologies. Virtual mobility programs, first promoted out of necessity and as the only possible alternative, are becoming an essential component of any comprehensive internationalization strategy. As Isidro and Agullana (Chapter 17), Stallivieri (Chapter 18), and Romero and Lafont (Chapter 19) show, these programs - when well designed - can counteract many of the obstacles that face-to-face mobility presents; mainly, its elitist nature that prevents the vast majority of students from participating in international experiences. Subsequently, Echeverría and de Luque discuss in Chapter 20 how the pandemic opens the door to intensify the role played by universities as paradiplomatic actors. Specifically, the authors show us how in the future it should be the universities who, through strategies of scientific diplomacy, should lead the spaces for reflection on international cooperation. Finally, in Chapter 21, Bustos and Moreno start with a review of the urgent situation faced by the higher education system in Mexico before the pandemic and make a proposal not to return to the same condition. Their invitation to HEI is to prepare a return to face-to-face activities, but in a way that guarantees better opportunities for all; a more inclusive, more strategic, and more intercultural higher education and internationalization.

Thus, this book fulfills its task of documenting evidence on how different actors involved in the process of internationalization of higher education reacted to the sudden challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. These experiences also serve to continue generating knowledge that will serve as a basis for facing the imminent transformations that are still looming in the future of education. Throughout history, humanity has taken advantage of crises as opportunities

to reinvent itself, to transform ourselves, our institutions and our organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception and has allowed us to reflect on the future we want and must build. The tiny, almost invisible SARS-CoV-2 has reminded us how vulnerable we are. It has also been a rude awakening to the fact that our geographic, ideological, cultural, and political barriers are completely porous in the face of our interconnectedness as human beings. Rapid social, economic, and technological changes warn us of the need to create or rethink HEI that are more agile but, above all, more sensitive and committed to their role for the common good. While education has always represented a bastion in the local development of societies, in such a globally interconnected world, internationalization activities of education have the opportunity to establish themselves as cornerstones of a new panorama in which education becomes a global common good.

FIRST PART:
**Internationalization and the
Pandemic in the World**

The Loneliness of the Pandemic

*Javier Horacio Contreras Orozco*¹

Summary

The appearance and contagion of COVID-19 at the end of 2019 generated a radical and unprecedented change in the world. Virtually all activities were impacted, forcing a rearrangement or rescheduling of normal processes displaced by what we now call “prevention protocols” to avoid coronavirus contagion. Now the reference is before and after COVID-19 with a modification in health, education, office work, traveling, and meaning of life, among several effects. This chapter mainly reflects on the impact on mental health, expressed by loneliness, boredom, and depression of students and teachers due to the mandatory home confinement that pushed classes to a virtual environment.

In addition, the various types of electronic resources and social media have certainly been the vehicles for this new modality. Still, they also plunged students into a state of isolation and loneliness in the course of a long quarantine that has exceeded the school year and now the challenge is to prepare ourselves with new content and attention to our emotional and mental development to overcome the despondency and atrophy caused by spending so many hours a day in front of a screen.

Keywords: *Loneliness, depression, pandemic*

¹ School of Philosophy and Letters, Autonomous University of Chihuahua

Introduction

Depression is the great epidemic of modern society (Rojas, 2008) and is considered the disease of sadness. We must point out that depression has always existed throughout the history of humankind; however, it is now a public health problem due to global expansion. One of its main triggers is the emptiness of existence, the meaninglessness of life, and self-confinement in individuality pretending to shield ourselves in digital technologies such as social media.

Those who have suffered the bite of depression (Montiel, 2020) agree in also calling it the disease of the XXI century, erected as the number one enemy of mental health in the new millennium, due to the havoc it causes in the population as demonstrated by the alarming rise in suicides in the world.

Increasingly, isolation within ourselves, our stubbornness to selfishly turn inward, to use our phones to take pictures of ourselves, to ignore the people in front of us and to be in contact with distant people, have turned social media into powerful spaces of sharing and collecting information, but also into inducers of isolation. Immediacy, superficiality, and instantaneousness have deprived us of reflection, and therefore, of a prudent and moderate rationality.

The activity of thinking has been transferred to seeing, reading, and writing texts that are replaced by the magic of screens. Now the world takes place among the cell phone screens, the tablet, the computer, and, of course, the television. The reign of appearance, therefore, has triggered impressions and, as a result, reality has been displaced.

The thesis of *homo videns* (Sartori, 2003) is based on the reality that we live in a remotely controlled society where television is used to manipulate us as if it were an ideological sheepdog. That appearance transforms *homo sapiens* by displacing the image to the word and alarmingly reducing human symbolic capacity.

This can lead to a cultural atrophy paralyzing the use of logic and reason, subjecting us to a single way of seeing through electronic media and thus isolating us into loneliness and depression. And now, with social media, emotions are exposed to the reflections of devices, with emoticons, memes, and technology applications that we use to make up for our inability to say or write what we

feel, putting at risk the loss of emotionality. In the face of this situation, we sink into loneliness, even when surrounded by people.

In the midst of this, at the end of 2019, we woke up to the threat in the world of an epidemic that was spreading without considering borders, age, or nationality. Coronavirus was the best statement for those who still doubted the certainty of globalization.

The preventive and necessary measures were to cover our nose and mouth, increase hand cleaning habits, keep away from each other, stay at home, close businesses, schools, and entertainment centers, stop visiting friends and relatives, cancel work or social gatherings. Although at the beginning, and still some persist, the real effects of the epidemic were seen with disbelief, witnessing the contagion and death of friends or acquaintances. With the added pain of being unable to accompany loved ones in their lonely agony. Some were isolated, others were dying in solitude. And then not even fulfilling the ritual of mourning and burying them.

COVID-19 has been the virus of confinement, of absolute loneliness, and depression.

In combination with the concern for a world of screens—that numbed our thinking, put our brains to sleep, and turned us into sighted beings—the virus of confinement increased our exposure to screens. Children and students were confined to their homes, in living rooms and bedrooms, and subjected to communication through screens. As a result, the world took an unexpected turn. From face-to-face to virtual. From close to distant. From companionship and being together, to solitude and loneliness.

The virus of confinement caused school loneliness, increased mental health problems, fatigue, and domestic violence, where women and minors have been victims of exposure to their own aggressors all the time or at all hours of the day. The phenomenon is shown by the fact that 36.4 percent of university students propose offering courses to overcome depression and loneliness for the post-Covid stage because it is a subject that is not addressed in schools. 45.5 percent of university professors have a feeling of loneliness, according to surveys conducted at the School of Philosophy and Letters of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, based on the opinion of 270 teachers and 344 students.

School Loneliness during the Pandemic

The unexpected outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic took almost all governments, education and business sectors by surprise, leading them to make radical but necessary decisions to mitigate the effects of the contagion. The first measure was to suspend school classes at all levels, hoping that in a few weeks activities could resume.

Weeks and months later, the decision was made to continue classes remotely using digital platforms at home. Along with the campaign to voluntarily submit to a quarantine, staying isolated, hygienic measures were dictated such as covering mouth and nose, not shaking hands or kissing, and suspending social activities.

The measure recommended by the World Health Organization for all countries generated an almost total shutdown in many so-called “non-essential” activities, such as mass, recreational, sporting or political events. Classes were adapted to digital platforms of the various schools and homes became an extension of classrooms; television screens, computers, tablets, and even cell phones were transformed into blackboards, fingers of the hand replaced pens and pencils.

Thus, television and use of social media have regained their place as a source of entertainment, idleness and distraction, privileging image over reason. The world of screens gained momentum as family members stayed at home 24 hours a day. Then, elementary level classes started to be taught through television; from 7th grade on up through electronic devices connected to Internet. Employees got organized and inaugurated the well-known home office, converting home into an extension of the office, while housewives took on the role of their children’s school prefect.

And what was expected to last only a few weeks or a couple of months at the most, was extended to a quarter, a semester and reached a year. From the novelty of being at home day and night, of greater coexistence among family members, of more time to do other activities at home, it became a cost that, although most homes have not paid for it, there have been consequences such as boredom from always staying at home, the routine of a very limited agenda, small spaces, deprivation of socializing with friends or schoolmates, the drama of contagion of acquaintances or close ones, the far away and distant mourning resulting from the very same health conditions.

So much spare time in a small space, idleness, and forced coexistence by decree, unleashed, in many cases, the absurd loneliness in one's own home. It was like being with one's own, but far away from others; being in class, but as if it were just a short online course, without the school atmosphere and proper facilities. Unfortunately, social media was not able to alleviate these feelings, but rather, in several cases, deepened them because intensive use of social media is associated with higher levels of loneliness.

Along with the coronavirus, another virus spread: the virus of loneliness.

For students, it has been a school year without being at school: taking classes with teachers who often do not even see or hear them, without connection; or else, contact has been through cold platforms, with robotized programming and applications.

The World Health Organization had warned about the risk of pandemic fatigue as an emotional malaise that has been eating away at physical and mental reserves. And after that, loneliness, tedium, stress, and depression.

Loneliness is a complex emotion (Sohn, 2020) because you can be in a crowded place and feel lonely, or you can also enjoy that solitude with yourself. Perhaps, loneliness is a matter of connection or disconnection with others or with oneself.

Although humans are social beings by nature, we have all experienced at some point a feeling of loneliness as a state of mind, which like depression, anxiety or fear, we call emotional loneliness. (Linares, 2020). This loneliness is related to feelings of not being understood, sadness, and insecurity.

Moreover, loneliness, apart from being an emotional state, is also linked to the absence of people and places. Abandonment, withdrawal or death is a cause for melancholy or sadness. Many people defend their solitude as a voluntary decision, an individual choice to separate or withdraw temporarily or definitively for artistic or spiritual purposes or to find themselves, and in a certain manner, they relish and enjoy their solitude.

On the other hand, involuntary loneliness is necessary and unwanted due to circumstances beyond a person's control. This is when confinement is necessary due to the risk of being attacked or assaulted, psychiatric illnesses that imply

a risk of violence and, of course, contagious diseases. This is the case with the coronavirus.

School loneliness due to the pandemic is involuntary and has been triggering emotional loneliness, especially among elementary and middle school students, who suffer from the unexpected separation from their friends, classmates, and teammates or gang at a time when human sociability is incorporating them into the society and their personalities are developing.

Spiral of the Pandemic and Mental Health

We never imagined the extent to which reclusive measures would be taken to deal with a highly contagious epidemic. From the original remoteness where the coronavirus was incubated and initiated to the fear and disbelief of the invisible virus when it reached our cities, the reactions and decisions went up a notch. And the world began to come to a standstill, the streets remained empty and the laughter and voices of the students disappeared from the classrooms.

It was not until the overcrowding of hospitals began to occur in search of a cure for an epidemic that still had no cure, and the first deaths occurred, that the problem really became evident. The virus became an epidemic and the epidemic became a pandemic.

On the one hand, the contagion advanced rapidly like a spiral that was spreading more and more all over the world every day, and on the other hand, at the local level, it was a reverse spiral where the circle was closing every day. The virus began to enter homes, offices, public places and, above all, social and family gatherings.

The confinement of several weeks was already beginning to show the effects of loneliness and isolation, which were still justified because it was the minimum shielding against contagion. When the virus entered homes, the anguish was intensified by first-hand suffering from the death of loved ones. From the original disdain or conspiracy theories that said it was all a movie-like set-up, the implausible was met with the desperate search for oxygen tanks for relatives.

Three scenes could describe the phases of a pandemic in the XXI century: i) when the contagion spread to the world, people rushed to supermarkets to buy

large quantities of toilet paper, as if the epidemic would cause serious stomach disorders of bowel movements; ii) then when parties were canceled and bars closed, large lines were formed to buy beer, as if the epidemic problem was a dry law; and iii) as the spiral of contagions and deaths progressed, the lines were to refill oxygen tanks that were required to survive.

The gradual spiral of the pandemic, by now a new reality that no one could escape, represented mental health harm.

Deep collective anguish was formed (Ramírez-Bermudez, 2021) with several ingredients at play, such as the perception that we are all vulnerable, the halt of social and economic interactions, and the never-ending quarantine. And there was a process that went from anguish to fatigue.

The WHO applied the term “pandemic fatigue” to describe the emotional discomfort due to the lengthening of the confinement, and as the months passed, the coping mechanisms became more flexible.

“Confinement turns us towards a virtual world that acts as a palliative, and sometimes as a remedy, but which lacks essential attributes for our vitality. And so clinical issues arise such as insomnia, fatigue, and states of anxiety that may include the sudden terror of being sick, infected” (Ramírez-Bermúdez, 2021). In this state of mind, depressive behaviors such as alcohol or drug use and domestic violence are engaged.

Pandemic fatigue was even qualified as an ad hoc term to describe the emotional state of people (Kraus, 2021). Between the saturation coming from all the media and at all hours, the updating of numbers on infected people, deaths, available beds and people intubated that kept us in a state of alert but also of anguish, we were reaching over-information fatigue; feeling fed-up of the lack of connection with many people; annoyance of going around and around the house like a caged lion, even with back and neck pain due to so many hours with our eyes fixed on a screen, teaching or taking classes, or doing office work.

Emotional loneliness brought on by the pandemic has been extended by the impossibility of providing a wake and a Christian burial for the victims of COVID-19. From the moment they are admitted to a hospital, they are disconnected from their family members and are connected to a tube to help them breathe in total isolation, without the possibility of receiving visitors. If they recover, they will

be able to reunite with loved ones. If the person dies infected, there will be no farewell or spiritual aid, and they will receive the treatment of a pariah. This is another of the cruelties of this pandemic, even the rituals with our deceased have been canceled.

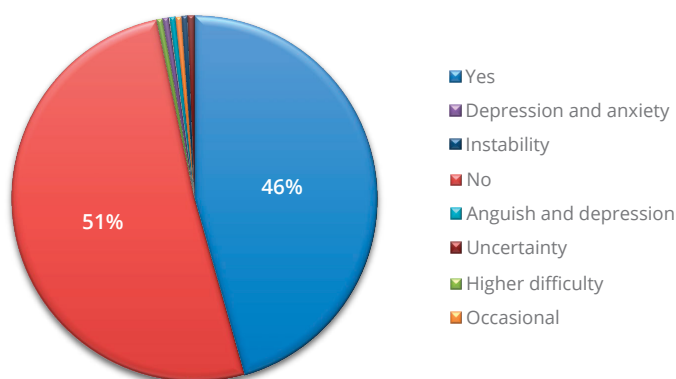
Emotions of Students and University Teachers (Surveys)

To measure a segment of the effects of the isolation caused by the pandemic in the university sector, we conducted a virtual survey with a group of students and teachers, which although it can not represent the general feeling of the population of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, its findings are very interesting and illustrative to know the feelings of a portion of this sector, after one year of remote education.

The situation of loneliness and deterioration of mental health was made evident by the statements and responses, which indicates new challenges in implementing resources to address this deterioration.

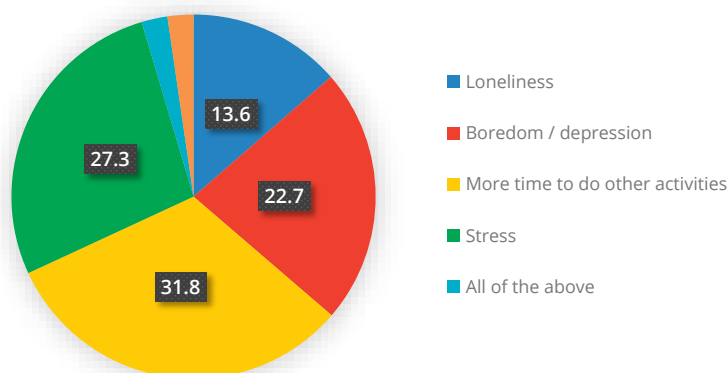
The survey was given to students and teachers at the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, in March 2021, precisely after a year of having online classes, 45.6 (Graph 1) percent of the teachers stated that they felt lonely, while students revealed that 27.3 percent felt lonely and 22.7 percent felt bored or depressed (Graph 2).

GRAPH 1: Has remote instruction provoked in you a feeling of loneliness?



Note: Teacher Survey, March 2021. N=270 responses

GRAPH 2: Which feelings have you experienced during the pandemic?



Notes: Student Survey, March 2021. N=44 responses

More than a third of the students surveyed -36.4%- propose that after the critical stage of Covid and when normal activities are resumed, courses to overcome depression and loneliness should be provided (Graph 5). "The real truth is that I need to interact with people because I feel lonely. So I long to return to face-to-face classes, even if it is something hybrid," said Karla, a student.

Several students, accustomed to the language of social media, mention that they feel "disconnected". Jasmine says there is no connection with her peers, some of whom she has not even met in person. Some teachers have not been seen either, because they only enter a platform where they are asked for work, tasks in a self-management system, but also disconnected from the teachers.

Maria reveals that, with remote classes, she is very distracted, she does not maintain attention because the teacher does not see her. Ana openly confessed "I am depressed, I lie down all day long, doing nothing, alone, isolated...".

Norma shared that she "no longer remembers what it's like to be in the classroom," and says that what she has gained from this year is that she has learned one hundred percent how to do research on the Internet, but that she has only learned the basics from the classes. Likewise, Jorge stated, "I have only learned superficially or what is necessary".

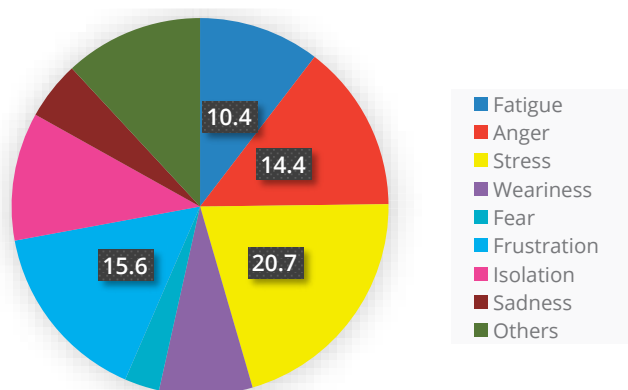
For Karen, the novelty is that she is now totally dependent on technology. In the classroom, she sat and attended the teacher's lesson. Now, she must have a WiFi signal and a computer.

Several agree that they have not developed a sense of trust among their peers due to a lack of face-to-face interaction. And chatting in the hallways or in the cafeteria, meeting as a team to work together, is not the same as connecting and seeing each other remotely. Rodolfo states that he has liked the online classes, but he is very distracted and feels very distant from the teachers. Martha complains that now her world is slower, and that she has more time.

Or Laura says that "it does not feel like being in college, instead, [I feel] in an online diploma course, because you do not feel the adrenaline. *It's cooler to be in school, to be wound up because here at home everything is relaxed, and I get impatient*".

In a survey conducted with 270 teachers from the Autonomous University of Chihuahua and 344 university students, the results were as follows: 20.7 percent of teachers feel stress after a year of classes online (Graph 3), about 63 percent want to return to face-to-face classes, while only 31.3 percent of students do not feel strongly one way or the other.

Graph 3: With which feeling do you identify the most during the confinement stage of the COVID-19 Pandemic?



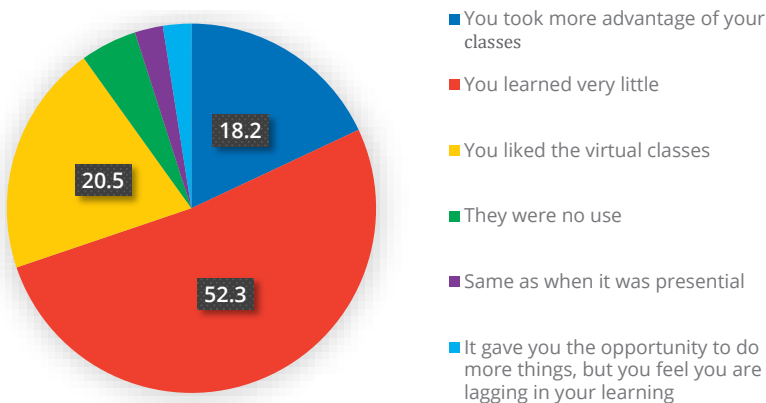
Note: Teacher Survey, March 2021. N=270 responses

During the first year of remote instruction, 46 percent of university teachers consider that there is school disengagement due to online classes, and 23.5 percent report fatigue.

According to the teachers' opinion, the other bad news is that they observed apathy in 37.6 percent of their students, simulation in 29.1 percent, and boredom in 15 percent.

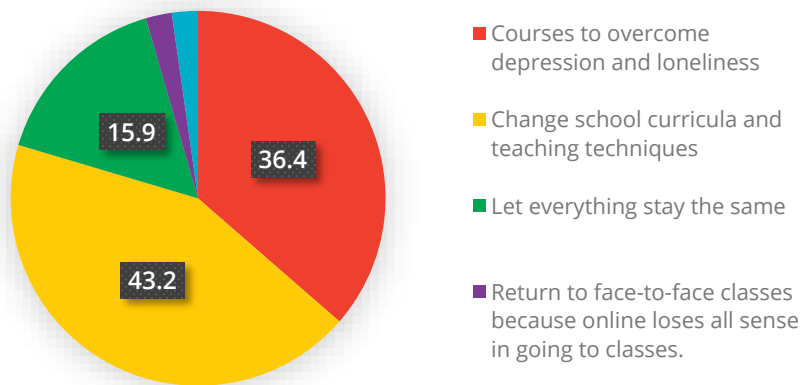
Of the group of students whose opinions were collected after one year of quarantine and online classes, 52.3 percent stated that they have learned very little, 20.5 percent liked the online classes and 18.2 percent stated that they have gotten more out of their classes (Graph 4). Other interesting answers were that 50 percent believe that a mixed or hybrid system of classes should be established to combine face-to-face and online classes. Regarding the post-Covid stage, 36.4 percent of the respondents propose that they be given courses to overcome depression and loneliness, 43.2 percent that school programs and teaching techniques be changed, and 15.9 percent that everything remains the same (Graph 5).

Graph 4: During this year in confinement, you....:



Notes: Student Survey, March 2021. N=44 responses

Graph 5: What would you propose to the university post-covid19?



Notes: Student Survey, March 2021. N=44 responses

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has left a trail of thousands of dead and infected around the world; it has hurt education and paralyzed very important economic sectors. We have no doubt that we are in the scenarios before and after COVID-19 and that we will not return to normal, but to a new reality.

Quarantine as a basic prophylactic measure was not enough in weeks or months to contain infections, so it was extended to more than a year as infections and deaths progressed. From the hope of resuming activities in a short period of isolation, we moved on to despair. Although remote education is an educational strategy to take advantage of new digital technologies, the problem was its unexpected irruption, surprising teachers, students, and educational authorities in implementing programs, strategies, and methods to move forward in school cycles.

And the other aspect, which is the subject of this paper, was the triggering of a serious problem of loneliness and depression among students and teachers due to the long period of abandonment of the classrooms, from isolating themselves in their homes, and then from there, how to continue with the teaching-learning process.

We may not be able to consider the real consequences yet, but for now, loneliness and depression have wreaked havoc on mental health. They are aggravated by the lack of educational or psychological resources to deal with the situation. Some schools have just started courses on Psychological First Aid (PAP for its acronym in Spanish) with the idea of trying to alleviate suffering and to learn basic techniques to help people with depression or mental crises.

Digital technology has been one of the pillars to overcome the necessary quarantine and maintain various activities, including education from preschool to graduate level. The home-classroom has been our haven, but it has also had its consequences, which has taught us that technology is not everything.

After a year of isolation and being connected to screens, we are in a position to reassess physical direct face-to-face contact, to touch and feel each other, and kiss and hug each other to overcome emotional loneliness and depression. The challenge is to return to human contact in classrooms, hallways, and schoolyards, but with new tools such as mental health strengthening.

Major educational programs with philosophical and psychological content should be incorporated so that students have a sense of purpose in life in the face of emptiness, isolation, and individualism that have been developed by certain social media networks.

The experience of the coronavirus quarantine should lead us to a humanistic educational rethinking, to resume human contact that unites us and does not depersonalize us like useful but cold technology does.

Both teachers and students must learn and teach how to overcome anxiety and loneliness crises and not reach the extreme of the case of Japan, which created a Ministry of Loneliness to deal with the depression caused by the confinement of the epidemic.

The main challenge is to survive a pandemic that has not been fully controlled, keeping in force the preventive safety measures against contagion, despite the application of vaccines; secondly, to gradually resume activities and try to return to a new normal with the lesson of the vulnerability that we still maintain as human beings; and thirdly, to design strategies to address the harm of mental health, creating governmental, private and family infrastructure, so that just as we are motivated to develop physical activity for body health, we also implement

programs for mental health at all levels to keep our minds healthy in the face of loneliness and depression.

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Impacts and Challenges of COVID-19 on Student Mobility

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic that has been affecting humanity for more than a year has had a clear impact on all areas of society and has implied major changes in the world's social, economic, political, and cultural landscape, especially in the educational system. As a result of this health contingency, many ways of working have been modified, adjusting mechanisms to bring education to young people at all levels. Its effect has affected systems and structures, forcing governmental, business, and educational institutions to rethink and adapt their strategies to respond to current problems. Thus, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) move at different rates, a process of unplanned digitization where not all students can have access. Part of this transition to the digital world has impacted student mobility and has meant challenges for countries where economic spillover is relevant. Based on a literature review, it was possible to conduct a qualitative analysis, which led to the conclusion that student mobility is currently undergoing a transition process and will take place in the digital world, at least momentarily. Being optimistic, this impasse makes it possible for a greater number of students to access this program, who previously might have been limited by the economic resources involved in moving away from home.

Keywords: *COVID-19, Digitization, Internationalization, Student Mobility.*

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Introduction

This chapter intends to analyze the pandemic and its consequences in the internationalization of higher education (IoHE) processes from the perspective of *Pacifist Internationalization*. The need to promote a culture of peace in international education is discussed since it constitutes a necessary step for learning through respect, tolerance, and the creation of cultural values based on cooperation, where student mobility programs and other internationalization elements demand a configuration in a more attractive space in the national and global contexts, considering the different challenges and areas of opportunity that higher education is currently facing.

For more than a year, the international scenario has been characterized by one thing, uncertainty. It has permeated the educational sphere, whose future depends on decreasing virus transmission and the effectiveness of a vaccination process that has recently started. If someone had said in the past that the great majority of educational centers in the world would be closed for more than 8 months, it would have been unthinkable. However, nowadays 85% of the student population is out of the classroom, receiving their education from home through virtual platforms (Banco Mundial, 2020).

Online education has revolutionized educational institutions that viewed this transition in the long term, and they were not prepared for it. The pandemic caught many students away from home, carrying out mobility stays that were suddenly interrupted, forcing their return to their home institution much sooner than planned. This disruption of normality has been a setback for the development of such program, and in other internationalization processes, inviting users, leaders, and policymakers to develop strategies to keep academic exchange and international cooperation in effect.

Nevertheless, how possible is it to maintain the essence of this type of programs? What are the main challenges? and, how can HEI tackle this new challenge? From these questions, the author determined the objective of conducting a descriptive analysis of the COVID-19 impact on higher education internationalization processes in particular on the student mobility program, as well as presenting some strategies to contribute to addressing the challenges of the health contingency. Thus, this article presents a descriptive, qualitative research, based on bibliographic sources, studies, and reports presented by different national and international organizations.

Background

The health contingency crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus had an unquestionable impact on diverse sociocultural and economic aspects of the life of individuals all over the world. Business organizations and educational systems were not the exception. According to the World Bank, the number of students whose countries shut down schools completely was around 649,462,981, while approximately other 93,602,500 students were in countries in which schools were partially shut down, accounting for 85% of the global student population at all levels (Banco Mundial, 2020).

With these data, not taking action to counter the negative effects of the pandemic on the educational sector would trigger a loss of teaching-learning, with consequences such as increased school desertion and a lower quality of life. In the opinion of the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres (2020): “The decisions that governments and associates make now will have a long-lasting effect on millions of young people, and on countries’ perspectives for development for decades, as well” (UN Web TV, 2020).

Thus, the United Nations (2020b) has presented a document referring to educational policies to address the current health crisis, same which includes four principal recommendations; first, rethinking the way of opening educational centers safely, considering the parents’ as well as health workers’ opinion; second, health and education must be a priority in budgeting decisions; third, that education initiatives have an impact on all society, including vulnerable groups, minorities, displaced, disabled, and special needs individuals; fourth, teaching quality education for everyone as a strategy to attain the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), requiring investment in digital literacy and infrastructure.

In Mexico, HEI incorporated to the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES in Spanish) held a virtual meeting with the objective of planning joint strategies for middle-high- and higher-level students to conclude the school cycle, outside of the classroom, concluding the semester in a satisfactory manner.

During the meeting, Dr. Luciano Concheiro Bórquez (2020), sub-secretary of higher education of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP in Spanish), presented a document titled: “Responses of Public Institutions of Higher Education in

Mexico to address the COVID-19 crisis”, which covers the main courses of action of HEI, their contribution to the National Safe Distancing Strategy, as well as the recommendations proposed by the Secretary of Health and the SEP itself.

For that effect, Concheiro (2020, p. 2) highlighted that the response of Mexican HEI to the pandemic has focused on three activities:

1. Support health authorities and the population.
2. Promoting teaching, research, and culture dissemination activities with the support of technological tools.
3. Driving an ambitious outreach project with productive sectors to detonate the potential of local economies.

These measures account for the relevance of science, technology, and innovation, to provide remote continuity to student training. However, the lack of teacher training, at all levels, on information technologies for teaching purposes, unequal access to technological infrastructure, and poor connectivity among different sectors of the population have also been exposed (UNESCO, 2020b).

For that reason, the disruption of traditional teaching puts students in a position where continuing their education is contingent on their resources to be able to learn through the internet, TV, and radio, while for teachers, it represents a challenge in that they must become familiar with new means of communication and pedagogical concepts on the fly as they work, making their teaching labor more difficult (OCDE, 2020).

Thus, it is clear that the educational sector was not prepared to face the health contingency. Today most HEI are undergoing a digitalization process under uncertain policies and insufficient economic and technological resources, where the most affected are still the end-users, students.

Review of Literature

Internationalization of higher education is not a new phenomenon; however, it has gained relevance in Mexican HEI, and it has become an innovative educational strategy that has allowed addressing the challenges of globalization (Gacel-Ávila, 2003). This is because the needs of nations and institutions are

more focused on addressing the problems of the close environment when they transfer knowledge, understanding that these issues are found in an increasingly competitive world due to globalization (Knight and De Wit, 2018).

In addition to this, Knight (1994) refers to IoHE as the process where it is attempted to incorporate an intercultural and global perspective in all of the institution's substantive functions; for that, the author describes four approaches, as follows:

Table 1. Approaches to internationalization in higher education institutions.

Approaches	Description
Process	Incorporating the international dimension into the institution's substantive functions.
Activity	Categorization of the curriculum and student mobility programs.
Competence	Academic upgrade of teachers, administrators, and students.
Organizational	Construction of intercultural and international initiatives.

Source: Elaborated by the author, based on Knight (1994).

Analyzing the above, student mobility is considered relevant as a strategic element for internationalization. In this regard, according to Varona-Domínguez (2019), the student community must participate in mobility programs, because it allows young individuals to get to know their social environment, growing familiar with it, and generating the necessary transformations to improve, thus growing as human beings with critical and creative thinking, capable of solving conflicts pacifically.

With such a claim, it is possible to infer the impact of sending students or professors to other national or foreign HEI, because it generates an optimal development in their education. Receiving individuals from other countries also allows a cultural exchange within the institution, *internationalization at home*, providing an opportunity to generate similar learning for students and teachers who were not able to leave, in their country of origin.

On the other hand, Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley (2009) indicate that mobility has represented significant progress in higher education globally because it allows students to access quality postgraduate programs in HEI with global recognition due to their high academic indicators, among other benefits,

thus reinforcing the knowledge acquired in their areas, as a result of their international experiences.

That being said, and as highlighted by Altbach and Knight (2006), internationalization goes hand in hand with globalization, and they move forward together. At the same time, different elements implemented in information and communication technologies (ICTs) from HEI are considered. For that purpose, Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) argue that:

Universities have always been affected by international trends. However, the realities of the 21st century have magnified the relevance of the global context. Information and communication technologies have created a universal means for instantaneous contact and a simplified communication at the hands of the stronger universities, located exclusively in the developed world (p. 7).

This increasingly constant use of ICTs has allowed remote education to become a powerful tool in these times. In this sense, HEI have implemented their application in substantial functions, not only as a functional strategy to facilitate access to education, but to offer better services in the cost-benefit ratio (González, 2007). For the above, Altbach and Knight (2006) agree that learning through virtual classes represents part of the IoHE elements, at the same time, it generates academic growth both in the student community and in the institution itself. In this sense, Vriens (2010) refers to virtual mobility as all those activities conducted with the support of ICTs, allowing the creation of international experiences in the university community in the teaching-learning context.

It is important to consider that economic disparity, as part of the global scene, affects countries' educational systems (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley, 2009). Global enrollment in higher education has been increasing exponentially, however, not all countries have opportunities for young people to enroll, this due to worldwide population growth and, in some cases, lack of funding for public HEI.

Impact on Education and Student Mobility

The boost posited by COVID-19 to educational institutions in the digital revolution potentiates the urgent need for an upgrade encompassing all processes

conducted within HEI. Thus, for lectures, tutoring, and administrative activities carried out from home or *online*, a stable internet connection and computer equipment are fundamental for efficient functioning.

In the area of student mobility, the pandemic, economics, and digital processes are setting new internationalization trends, driving students to choose new destinations for their international stay, setting aside places such as United States, United Kingdom, and Germany, and positioning other countries such as Malaysia and South Korea, given their characteristically low transmission rates (Quinteiro, 2020).

Without a doubt, student flow has been affected by prevention measures established globally as part of the health contingency. This has reflected in a lower participation in student mobility programs. In countries such as Finland, HEI reported a decrease in circulation of foreign students compared to the previous year, around 2,342 in 2020, while in 2019 they were 6,600; this represents a 64% drop in student mobility in the Finnish country (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020).

Regarding the above, in the European continent, the Erasmus + program and the European Solidarity Corps (2020) conducted a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on mobility. The study showed that more than 80% of Erasmus+ international students returned home, while the rest of the percentage stayed in Europe because they chose not to move or had difficulties to return to their country. In the case of Mexico, the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI in Spanish) has documented that only seven out of the 35 affiliated institutions maintained face-to-face activities of the program during the second half of 2020. These situations set the trends of what may be expected to be the future of internationalization.

As mentioned above, mobility in the upcoming months will be based on the use of digital tools for the development of virtual experiences, which positively makes access to international education more plural for vulnerable groups. This positive element, a result of the pandemic, contrasts with the negative implications that closing borders brought to international education, the average cost of which is valued in \$300 million dollars (Altbach and de Wit, 2020). For countries such as Australia, this situation directly impacts the economies of cities that base their economic growth on student influx (Altbach and De Wit, 2020).

This is reflected in the mapping elaborated by the British Council (2020) about student mobility, using the following research questions:

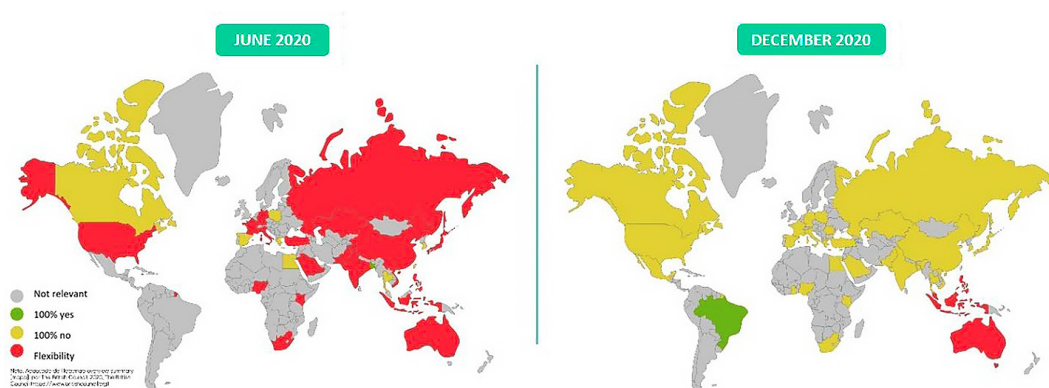
1. Are national students allowed to travel abroad?
2. Is the host country allowing entry of international students?
3. Are higher education institutions open to face-to-face learning?
4. Has COVID-19 generated an impact on scholarships for international students?
5. Are visa application centers open?
6. Should students returning home from abroad be quarantined?

From the information obtained, it was highlighted that during the first months of 2020, Europe and a great part of Asia set restrictions on their borders, forcing mobility students to remain in their host country until the end of the year, when international flights were allowed.

On the other hand, North America and most countries in Latin America allowed students to leave the host country and return home. For example, in Mexico, during November 2020, several institutions allowed students to continue their mobility process. However, some institutions were forced to suspend all student travel a month later.

Regarding the question of whether international students are allowed into other countries, Figure 1 includes a world map showing the countries that imposed incoming travel restrictions in mid-2020, and another map shows that by the end of the year, countries were flexible for incoming/outgoing travel, both of which required medical tests and social distancing. A factor in both cases is insufficient international flights and the closure of consulates for visa applications.

Figure 1. Countries allowing incoming foreign students.



Source: Elaborated by the author, with data from The British Council, 2020.

Thus, the post-COVID panorama for the educational sector will show progress in internationalization processes based on virtual resources, bringing together individuals from different parts of the world interacting through the internet, exchanging ideas, reflections, strategies, knowledge, and culture, being part of the core academic experience of the traditional model of student mobility (Gómez, 2020).

The reality is that there is economic and cultural inequality, representing a limitation for students in vulnerable situations to reach the objective of continuing their education through virtual classes, obtaining with it the possibility of studying abroad. This way, the generation of public policies providing infrastructure and computer equipment to disadvantaged populations is indispensable to guarantee a reduction of the digital divide among and within countries.

Opportunities for Higher Education Institutions

According to a series of surveys conducted by QS (2020), in July 2020, 70% of HEI in the world changed into an online educational model. *Studyportals* (2020) designed an instrument to analyze the perception caused by COVID-19 in students who were to carry out an international stay, and it was found that a significant number of university students considered changing their mobility plans, due to the fear caused by the pandemic.

In addition to this, Pearson (2020) published its findings on learning and the future development of higher education concerning the current context; from these findings, seven key trends promoted by the pandemic are:

1. Change from the conventional face-to-face model to online education.
2. Opportunity and hope in the face of uncertainty through education.
3. Demand of an inclusive, affordable, and equitable education.
4. Demand of investment in learning models based on science, technology, and innovation.
5. Implementation of digital social skills and English language teaching.
6. Offer of adult education, soft skills formation, and options for unemployed individuals.
7. Use of social networks to cope with isolation among students.

Through the trends above, international cooperation in higher education is highlighted because it represents one of the most significant processes to assess conflict situations, thus learning to overcome the crisis in the fastest, simplest manner.

Under this approach, according to UNESCO-IESALC (2020a, pp. 38-41), it is proposed that international cooperation is oriented towards:

- Promoting institutional policies.
- Constructing alliances for resilience.
- Sharing technological resources and solutions.
- Providing legal coverage for student mobility.

This way, the measures that authorities and governments implement to grant economic support, academic scholarships and temporary student visas constitute relevant efforts with a great incidence on the definition of new frameworks for international cooperation (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2020).

Discussion and Conclusions

Through the research conducted, it is considered that the number of participants in student mobility programs will be reduced considerably, given the restrictions imposed worldwide. Just in European countries such as Finland, 64% of students have stopped integrating to this dynamic. This promotes virtual stays at home. However, how does this measure allow the development of transversal skills among the youth?

To respond to this, it is important to highlight that part of the experience of the student mobility process is cultural exchange, integral formation, and development of increasingly necessary socioemotional processes to construct spaces for neutral peace; this is defined by Jiménez (2011) as a gradual process, an agreement to commit with actors under a set of norms and rules, a product of dialogue, born over principles of equality, liberty, social justice, and responsibility.

It is also important to acquire competencies through international professional practices to transition adequately into the job market, but to what degree are these hopeful digital mobility schemes convenient? This so-called liquid modernity, defined by Bauman (2013) as the process of permanent change characterizing the modern global society, involves a virtualization process where the mobility moves from the physical into the virtual space, where social exchange decreases.

According to García (2007), the main challenges of this process are centered around the lack of common norms and frameworks for mobility and the accessibility of virtual platforms that, in some cases, are incompatible among the educational systems. These implications were already present in the *mirror lectures* strategy operated by HEI until before the pandemic; however, they were magnified due to the speed in which measures were taken to shape virtual mobility schemes.

From an optimistic approach, the main advantage of this new scheme rests on the possibility of extending the influence of the IoHE process to more sectors of the population, contributing to the development and competitiveness of the profiles of participants in such a program. For this reason, HEI, concerned about effectively continuing this path, must not forget that, in this trial-and-error exercise, it is also necessary to innovate. The most daring HEI will be

those who manage to overcome the difficulties and challenges posed by the current pandemic.

This discussion leads us to conclude that the pandemic has increased inequalities among the population, generating a vulnerable peace (Jiménez, 2020) where there is a disparity in access to higher education based on the population's different levels of income. As a result, lower-income students have a lower possibility to address the digital strategies established as a response to the closure of educational institutions.

COVID-19 has meant a challenge to internationalization of higher education processes. It has transitioned from a teaching-learning system to a border closing process, where physical mobility represents a high risk for society. In the author's opinion, the student mobility program will transition temporarily into the virtual space, to retake its face-to-face role once the health crisis has been controlled.

The precedent of the pandemic will then expand collaboration options and will add value to digital schemes that, a few months ago, were explored or met with skepticism. That is how HEI will have the opportunity to reassess the work carried out as of today, adapting and improving digital transition, and at the same time, they must have a reflection exercise around their training processes, and their impact on the job market and competitiveness of their graduates.

This way, and as a principal recommendation for HEI, it is proposed:

- Defining a common normative framework for virtual student mobility.
- Increasing institutional agreements for double degrees.
- Implementing an effective outreach with local entrepreneurs.
- Promoting benefits of virtual student mobility.
- Fostering the development of reflection spaces to evaluate implemented strategies.

Finally, we are aware of the difficulties posited by the areas where COVID-19 is ruling. Therefore, it is important to work on reconfiguring spaces for vulnerability, sustainability, and resilience as three axes to sustain the international cooperation and development of HEI.

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The Internationalization of Higher Education from a Student Mobility Perspective: before and after COVID-19

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Abstract

This chapter approaches the phenomenon of international student mobility and the probable impacts that, in the immediate and short term, the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus will have on it, as has already occurred since its outbreak was declared on January 7, 2020. First, the article addresses the main trends that have shaped international academic mobility, of which student mobility is a part, and the main areas of academic pull towards which it converges. Based on the documentary review conducted, it then makes statements about the pandemic's likely effects on student mobility. The section reserved for Latin America uses some metrics that measure the magnitude of incoming and outgoing student flows, given the profound dichotomy between mobility within this geographical block and the probable effects that the pandemic may have on them. This chapter concludes with the projection of a short-term scenario for post-pandemic student mobility, with the understanding that, like all forecasts of the future, it sometimes results in futile logic that can only be achieved in theory, particularly when this future is conditioned by a virus that has become the new Chronos and whose ravages we are only beginning to learn about.

Keywords: *Student Mobility, Latin America, COVID-19.*

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Introduction

International academic mobility refers to the movement of researchers, teachers, and students from educational institutions in one country to others located abroad to participate in training programs and research projects of joint interest. Student mobility is part of it, which is usually recognized as the standard of educational cooperation and the most visible aspect of Higher Education Institutions' internationalization processes and strategies.

In 2010, more than four million people were studying away from their home countries. According to the OECD, the number of international students worldwide could reach eight million by 2025 (OECD, 2012). International student mobility was increasing steadily, and everything seemed to indicate that it would continue to do so in the future until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although some of the trends that favored the phenomenon of global academic mobility were already showing slowdowns and regressions, the pandemic acted as a catalyst in its deceleration and withdrawal due to the effects it brought with it in the form of quarantines and massive confinements worldwide.

This chapter opens a space for analysis and reflection on international student mobility and the probable impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic at the global and Latin American levels, in an attempt to contrast its pre-pandemic behavior with that which may arise after this crisis; and in the hope that it will serve as a contribution to the study of a reality that will assiduously require new work and granular data to fully understand the perceived and hidden impacts on mobility.

Trends Shaping International Academic Mobility up to the Outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Current international academic mobility is strongly correlated with phenomena driven predominantly by globalization. As elements that deserve special attention, cross-border education and the propensities that almost obsessively determine the university world (rankings) stand out due to their impact.

Cross-border education, also known as transnational education, occurs when universities go beyond their own geographical jurisdiction and extend

their educational services beyond national borders. This extra-territorialized modality can take place in three ways: (a) in partnership with institutions in other countries, located “on the academic periphery”, leveraging the value of their brands to establish branches in foreign territories; (b) in partnership with institutions located on that “periphery”, but pivoting the difference by relocating “metropolitan or central” professors there and awarding graduates dual degree qualifications; and (c) through the development of globally accessible MOOC (Massive Open *Online* Courses) (Scott, 2015).

The United States is perhaps the most representative country of the first of these modalities, with educational branches in South Korea, China, the United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia. Although this practice is generally well-received in most countries with markets open to international education providers, it is not exempt from criticism inside and outside of these countries.

The second modality is widely used and represents great savings for potential domestic students who, without this possibility, would most likely choose to move to other countries to continue their studies. In the case of “metropolitan or central” universities, it means substantially extending their reach, both in terms of students and financial income, usually under the aegis of a private sector heavily subsidized by the host state.

The third modality, which refers to the international offer of massive *online* courses, constitutes a market that is constantly growing, and that by 2017, was estimated at 13 million students worldwide (OECD, 2017).

The other phenomenon that strongly conditions international academic mobility is the growing impact of world university ranking tables on national and institutional policies. Many governments are now heavily influenced by the drive to have more than one of their universities in the top 100 or 500 of the world rankings.

While this is happening, globalization has been showing signs of exhaustion, even before the arrival of the pandemic. Following the 2008 financial crisis, the phenomenon slowed down, mainly due to a stagnation in capital mobilization around the world. In addition, Donald Trump’s rise to the U.S. presidency sparked the China-U.S. trade war, and tariffs were gradually introduced on the movement of goods and services and restrictions on the flow of immigrants from the United

States. Although initially against the tide of international public opinion, these policies gradually gained admirers and more than a few followers (Applebaum, 2021).

Postmodernity was supposed to be living by embracing a dominant narrative that spoke to us of a globalized world without borders, a notion that the COVID-19 pandemic unveiled in lieu, at least temporarily. However, global market forces will most likely continue to condition international academic mobility, and we will probably learn² little from the pandemic as it recedes. Consequently, everything seems to point out that we will soon recover normality and that student mobility could reach eight million students by 2025, as was projected years ago (OECD, 2012).

Nevertheless, the pandemic could act as a ridge for globalization: on the one hand, it could lead to a rebalancing between globalization and national policies, operating in favor of the latter, particularly those with strong global dependencies. But, on the other hand, the pandemic could transmute into a syndemic epidemic and raise walls against human flows, including those with academic purposes.

Student Mobility in Latin America in the Pre-pandemic International Context

The number of students enrolled in higher education is growing worldwide, and Latin America is no exception. In just five years, between 2012 and 2017, their overall number increased from 198 million to 220 million, a growth of 10% (IESALC, 2019). The increase in Latin America and the Caribbean has been even more impressive, rising from 23.7 to 27.4 million, reflecting a 16% growth for the same period (IESALC, 2019).

Despite this dizzying growth, the number of higher education students undertaking studies in other countries grew slower in the Latin American and Caribbean region than in the rest of the world. In this regard, it went from having 2.05% of internationally displaced higher education students in 2012 to 2.3% in 2017. In contrast, during the same period the region went from 1.09% to 1.14%

2 As the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel rightly said, “the only thing we can learn from history is that we learn nothing from it”.

or, in absolute figures, from 258,000 to 312,000 mobilized students. It is thus the second region in the world with the lowest growth in mobility, far behind the increases experienced by countries in Central Asia, where the figure has almost doubled, or Southeast Asia, where it has grown by more than a third (IESALC, 2019).

In addition, students from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) prefer to pursue their studies in the United States and Western Europe. Of the 312,000 Latin American and Caribbean students who in 2012 moved to some other country, 38% did so within the region itself, while 54% chose North America or Western European Nations. In the Mexican case, 50% (2015) of all its student mobility goes to the United States (*Maldonado-Maldonado*, 2017).

When we delve deeper into the analysis of the flow of international students to Latin America and the Caribbean, we find that Argentina is the primary destination; it alone receives as many students as the rest of the countries combined. Several reasons would explain this preference: the robustness and diversity of the Argentine Higher Education System, the absence of academic fees, and an active policy for attracting international students (e.g., the Program for the Internationalization of Higher Education and International Cooperation -PIESCI-)³ (G20 Report, 2020). In order of magnitude, other countries that attract students to the region are Mexico, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic.

Although in ordinal numbers, Argentina is ranked number one, the reality is quite different when inflows to a given country are measured in terms of the size of its higher education system. This indicator is known as the “incoming mobility rate.” It expresses the ratio between the number of international students entering the country to the total number of students enrolled. Based on this indicator, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Honduras (in that order) host a higher percentage of international students.

A similar indicator - the “Outgoing Mobility Rate” - expresses the ratio between the number of outgoing national students and the size of their higher education systems. Thus, while in absolute numbers the largest contingents of LAC students leave Brazil, Mexico, and Peru, the outgoing mobility rate is more significant, in

3 This program stimulates and funds internationalization strategies of the Argentine Higher Education System in three areas: promotion abroad, international cooperation, and comprehensive internationalization.

this order, for Uruguay, Ecuador, Honduras, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic (IESALC, 2019).

The island states of the Caribbean have their own characteristics in terms of academic mobility: on the one hand, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic show substantial interdependence in the bulk of their mobility, while the rest focus on their former metropolises (the Netherlands, England, and the United States), due to the survival of linguistic and historical ties or international cooperation policies in favor of former overseas colonies.

The limited offering of higher education in this group of island countries explains why such a high percentage of students decide to continue their studies abroad, estimated at 16% of total enrollment, compared to an average of 1.4% for Latin America. “The beneficiary country par excellence is the United States, where 61% of students go. But the United States is also the country where most of the students coming to the Caribbean come from, representing 68% (2017) of the total number of foreign students” in the area (IESALC, 2019).

The case of Cuba merits a separate discussion that goes beyond the scope of this section, particularly because of the importance of its international cooperation programs (e.g., Latin American School of Medicine), conceived as an “open window” to the advances of the Cuban Revolution. Thus, they host relatively few students, albeit from very diverse geographic origins (more than 122 countries).

In general terms, it can be said that a negative mobility balance characterizes the region’s prototypical model, i.e., many more students move abroad than move into the region. This mobility deficit can indicate a system that is not sufficiently attractive to international students for various reasons (academic, economic, cultural, or others) that are not worth assessing here.

Although Latin American and Caribbean higher education’s internationalization efforts find academic mobility an important asset for their realization, mobility support programs from public and private institutions have been deficient, discontinuous over time, and on a low scale. To such an extent that 48% of Mexican student mobility in 2015-2016 had to be financed by their own families (Maldonado-Maldonado, 2017), a reality that seems to be, despite the lack of data, extrapolated to other countries in the region.

In terms of the international context, the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand together constitute the major destination for international students: they account for just over 50% of the total five million students who move around the world each year (OECD, 2017). These migratory flows represent coveted resources for the receiving economies, becoming Australia's third-largest source of income (IESALC, 2019), or the sixth largest exporter of the United States (2017-2018), only behind its oil, agri-food, automotive, aeronautics, and pharmaceutical industries (Morgan, 2018).

Significant student flows converge in these six countries because their higher education institutions are considered "knowledge hubs." This pulling force is decisive for international mobility, although there are also other drivers.

On the other hand, and despite this long-standing concentration, large centers of higher education are beginning to emerge globally, heralding changes in the dynamics of academic mobility. India, for example, now has 799 universities, and China has 2,880, seven of which are now in the top 200 of the Times Higher Education World *Rankings* (2018). Meanwhile, 5% of the research articles in mathematics with the highest citation rate in the world, for the period 2016-2019 - and according to the Leiden tables - correspond to six Chinese university institutions, led by Tsinghua University (Margisson, 2021).

China attracted 397,635 international students in 2015 due to a government initiative centered on the Chinese Scholarship Council (Lavakare, 2018). This trend responds to the proactivity of government diplomacy, which seeks to turn the Asian giant into a new global academic benchmark, as Malaysia and Indonesia are doing. However, it should also be noted that the generous financial support offered to international students studying at Chinese universities contrasts with the practices adopted by some Western universities, which tend to focus on the financial benefits they derive from hosting international students. This difference suggests that differing objectives are being prioritized in attracting international students (marketing vs. cultural advocacy) (Wang, 2014).

The Outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic and its First Impacts on International Student Mobility

The global emergency unleashed by COVID-19 led universities to stop offering face-to-face classes and adapt to virtuality to ensure pedagogical continuity.

Although not free of stumbling blocks and difficulties, this process has had levels of severity consistent with the level of consolidation achieved by each institution in its previous efforts to transform the teaching-learning model digitally.

Another area most strongly impacted by the pandemic was the internationalization of higher education institutions, particularly academic mobility, as its most visible aspect.

Australia, one of the six benchmarks for international academic mobility promotion, registered 29% of international students (514,707) in its national enrollment (2017). The importance of international students in the sector was that Australian universities earned 20% of their budget revenue solely from the Chinese student contingent (2017). However, student visa applications decreased by 80%-90% during the 2020/21 academic year. Great Britain, also a preferred hub of attraction for international academic mobility in Europe, estimates a 47% drop in international students by 2021, which means an economic loss of 1.5 billion sterling pounds. The United States experienced a 43% drop in international students in the 2020/21 academic year, whereas during the same period the drop for Germany was 16% (Leah, 2021).

While COVID-19 slowed student mobility to traditional academic destinations, recent changes in visa and immigration policies in the two main recipients of international students (the United States and the United Kingdom) seek to alleviate this slowdown quickly. Such measures, coupled with efficient anti-coronavirus vaccination plans, bode well for a rapid recovery of academic mobility, provided that the vaccines prove effective and the pandemic does not spiral into a syndemic. In an optimistic scenario, there would be a certain possibility of reaching eight million students moving abroad for academic reasons by 2025, as projected by OECD at the time.

For Latin America and the Caribbean, the prostration into which academic mobility has been plunged did not entail a loss of income since this source is insignificant for the budgets of the region's higher education institutions. However, it did constitute a slow down on outgoing student mobility, which may have been affected by approximately 70% (IESALC, 2019).

The new post-COVID-19 Challenges to be Resolved in the Field of Academic Mobility in General, and some Recommendations

The impact of the pandemic on international student mobility during the 2019/2020 academic year was colossal, even though the vast majority of universities provided alternative arrangements in the form of virtual mobility through emergency remote teaching, with the stumbling blocks that this entailed for those institutions with a lower degree of digital maturity.

After teaching, internationalization has been one of the roles most strongly impacted by COVID-19. Some universities will find in the pandemic yet another reason to drive internationalization across the curriculum, particularly when in the short term they face great uncertainty about their international student enrollment policies, which in most cases showed a steep drop for the 2019/20 academic year. However, everything points to an unfailing recovery for the 2020/21 academic year, as reflected in a comment by Dan Baker, General Manager of "[Student.com](https://www.student.com)", a platform that claims to be the world's largest provider of student housing: "In January 2021 we had a 70% drop in student housing bookings, while in May 2021 we were up 130%, putting us at 2019 levels, before the outbreak of the pandemic."

The above reflects that students continue to embrace their intentions to undertake study abroad with equal strength, an interest that is also evident from U.S. institutions of higher education that participated in a survey (IIE, 2021) regarding their expectations for receiving international students, which revealed:

1. A return to face-to-face learning: for all on-campus students, most reported institutions (86%) are planning face-to-face courses by fall 2021, and none of them intend to offer only online classes. Moreover, 90% of these institutions plan to offer face-to-face studies to international students.
2. International student applications have increased: 43% of institutions report increases in international student applications for the 2021/22 academic year, nearly double the gains reported one year ago.
3. Recruitment remains a priority: as part of their strategies, most of these institutions focus on online recruitment events (73%), working

with international students studying at other campuses (68%), and social media (65%).

4. Vaccination protocols are still under development: more than half of the institutions (64%) plan to provide anti-COVID-19 vaccines to students, faculty, and general staff, including international students. That said, slightly less than half (45%) will not require any vaccinations before students arrive on campus. Only 14% of the institutions are currently considering vaccination as a requirement.
5. Optimism for the near future: approximately 50% of the institutions anticipate increasing the number of international students for the 2021/22 academic year. This is a significant improvement over last year when 97% of them anticipated a decline.

From the above, it is very likely that student mobility will quickly recover its pre-pandemic levels and resume the expected growth path. However, questions still arise. Specifically, what are the new challenges posed by this new wave of student mobility - and, masked in it, also academic mobility, which includes other stakeholders - in the times to come?

First, we must consider the economic context: according to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2021), the labor market will not recover from the pandemic until at least 2023. It is estimated that a minimum of 220 million people will remain unemployed worldwide during 2021, well above pre-pandemic levels. Consequently, and if we take into account that the bulk of student mobility is financed by families (95% for Chinese students, 45% for Mexican students), we will find that any future mobility decision will have to be more carefully considered, at least from the point of view of its financial impact on families.

Secondly, SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus mutations could upset the confidence levels that we are beginning to enjoy thanks to the immunization coverage we are achieving with worldwide vaccination. It may well be necessary to restrict physical travel to and from certain countries at certain times in the event of any future outbreak of the virus.

Thirdly, and due to the above, universities may be forced to offer only online, or at least hybrid, alternatives. And the Holy Grail question would then be how

to ensure added value for international students and compensate for the loss of physical interaction and cultural gains in the host country. In this regard, we can draw on the results of a recent survey conducted in the United Kingdom, which shows that one in four students rated their online courses as of “poor or very poor value”, these levels of dissatisfaction can safely be extrapolated to students located in other geographical locations.

After the pandemic, the roles of virtuality in all areas of higher education will have to be assessed. There is no doubt that virtuality eliminates physical barriers and allows for greater coverage. However, and even though many of its application areas show unquestionable functional effectiveness, its assessment must go beyond mere learning and exchange achievements. The fact is that although mobility may be valid as far as learning gains are concerned, it inevitably subtracts the key factor of the experience on the part of each of its members and reduces the gaze of the “other” to the frame of a video camera. Thus, even if the pandemic leaves behind some permanent changes in the teaching-learning model, it will most likely not produce as profound academic mobility alterations as predicted by some.

As mentioned above, student mobility looks promising for the future. Still, in the immediate and short term it may be necessary to apply some institutional policy measures to recover the pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible. Among many of the recommendations that should be heeded, several are listed in the following table:

Table 1. Institutional Policy Recommendations to Support Student Mobility during the Pandemic

Areas of Intervention	Recommended Policy	Considerations and Risks
<i>In Planning</i>	To promote a paradigm shift that combines physical mobility with virtuality (within a range of mixed positions), and where the objectives are focused on the exchange of ideas and the achievement of learning.	To what extent do hybrid mobility schemes satisfy students? What would be the level of rate reduction they would expect under this new format? To what extent could intercultural skills derived from living together be achieved?

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FROM A STUDENT MOBILITY PERSPECTIVE

<i>In Planning</i>	Evaluate and negotiate with government authorities the granting of visas for students under the hybrid mobility modality.	The United Kingdom repealed a measure that cut the duration of work visas for doctoral students, in the quest to become a “hub” for foreign talent. In addition, efforts to attract talent are a pressing imperative in many countries, suggesting that mobility hybridization will be equally accepted.
<i>In Planning</i>	Encourage and stimulate support networks, from within and outside the University to mitigate the impacts that the COVID -19 pandemic may have on international students, regardless of whether they are on <i>campus</i> or under virtual mobility.	Support services for international students become essential, especially in viral outbreaks or temporary confinement, even for those under a hybrid modality. Are universities ready to take on this emotional coaching?
<i>In Governance</i>	Shifting funds originally intended for physical mobility towards the development of so-called “mobility at home”, particularly in support of projects that favor online education, the improvement of its quality, or the technological platforms that support it.	“Mobility at Home” may have little appeal at first until the technology platforms provide a satisfactory learning experience or acquire the skills to take full advantage of them.
<i>In Governance</i>	Ensure that the measures adopted at the institutional level have an inclusive approach calibrated from a perspective of equity.	Evaluate which learning components can be acquired through virtual, hybrid, or purely face-to-face mobility, based on more complete profiles and granular data of the student bodies.
<i>In Governance</i>	Adopt strategies to implement the so-called “Internationalization at Home”, ensuring that the cross-cultural elements of the participant group are highlighted in the individual and collective experience.	The preference for mobility with physical movement, both of foreign professors in the teaching staff and of students, could be a determining factor in the positioning of universities in the rankings.

<i>In Governance</i>	Consider mobility schemes with shorter physical movement, given the foreseeable context of financial astringency.	Cutting learning objectives could lead to difficulties for subsequent credit or course accreditation.
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Note: *in other areas of management of higher education institutions, other recommendations may vary and be added.*

If, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was said that it would take at least five years to recover the previous level of international student mobility, now everything seems to indicate that the prostration that occurred in 2020 is being left behind, and that the demand for mobility with physical travel abroad with academic purposes is only contained, waiting for health conditions to improve and for travel restrictions to be relaxed.

Conclusions

International academic mobility is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, it is linked to migratory flows that date back to the earliest times in history. However, globalization introduced the free flow of goods, services, and people worldwide. As a result, many universities have extended the scope of their services beyond their borders, in response to the openness of foreign higher education markets. Through this approach, universities have found their most visible banner, even though international student mobility only reaches a tiny fraction of the world's higher education student enrollment.

Although the signs are that international student mobility will soon recover from the effects of the pandemic, particularly because of the preference for physical travel over virtuality, the main obstacles that may exist now and in the short term are the likely health restrictions on travel and the deterioration of some economic determinants at the global level. Some institutional policy recommendations are made to minimize such impacts, making room for virtual mobility a viable option to reach the benefits derived from academic exchanges more inclusively.

Perhaps a better way to think about international academic mobility is to conceive of it within a spectrum of combined options. On one end, the more static or physically rooted, all the way to the more mobile, where students and mobilized faculty would be somewhere along this spectrum. This approach

would better align with the hybrid university model that will begin to emerge strongly in a post-pandemic context.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been “The most traumatic global experience since World War II”, a U-shaped recovery seems to be the most likely scenario due to the rapid response on behalf of the world’s authorities. In contrast to previous traumatic events such as the financial crisis of 2008, the effectiveness of vaccines at the global level and the higher levels of coverage in higher education are today successes on a global scale, which are expected to continue to invigorate the growth in the demand for academic mobility.

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Universidad Iberoamérica 2030: The Organization of Ibero-American States' Commitment to Post-pandemic Higher Education

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Summary

The post-pandemic era presents a series of challenges for higher education, intensification and acceleration of processes already initiated earlier being a few of them. In response to the enormous disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture has developed a series of proposals to take advantage of the benefits of remote education and internationalization, making innovative use of information and communication technologies.

These proposals, framed within the Ibero-America University 2030 strategy, seek to mitigate the adverse effects of the shutdown of universities throughout the region and serve as a guide for regional higher education institutions immersed in this new rationale of remote education. In addition, they seek to contribute to the generation of confidence in this modality and strengthen cooperation and harmonization of the university arena in the Ibero-American region.

Keywords: *Higher education; Science; Ibero-America University 2030; Agenda 2030; COVID-19; Remote Education; Virtual Education; Quality; Mobility; Internationalization.*

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Introduction

The health crisis caused by COVID-19 and the social distancing measures imposed by governments to combat the spread of the virus has led to a series of profound changes and impacts on all stages of education, including higher education. This disruption has triggered a series of transformations that university education had to face.

Before the pandemic, higher education was already immersed in a transformation process in the face of the advance of online education, which was seen in the spectacular growth of online enrollment or online programs in the last decade. According to the Ibero-American Observatory of Science, Technology and Society in 2019², remote enrollment in higher education has increased by 73% since 2010, while face-to-face enrollment has grown 27%; in other words, in 2010, 2.5 million first-degree university students were studying remotely, and by 2019 this number had almost doubled. This process has been accelerated due to the pandemic.

However, university education shows a lack of confidence in the remote modality. According to a McKinsey survey of U.S. prospective college students, only 23% reported confidence in receiving quality online education. Similarly, Ibero-American societies were skeptical about the validity of distance learning, and even now, these concerns remain.

Finally, along with the trend towards remote education, another challenge that characterized our higher education before the pandemic and has been severely affected is the low regional student mobility. The ratio of international students from Latin American and Caribbean countries, even before COVID, was in all cases less than 3% of higher education enrollment. The percentage of international students in face-to-face modality in 2019 far exceeded the rate of those in the remote modality in all countries in the region. Thus, with the advent of virtuality, mobility has positioned itself as an even greater scourge of our universities.

2 "Percentage of First-Degree Students by Mode 2010-2019," *Index Network*, retrieved October 5, 2021. [http://app.redindices.org/ui/v3/comparative.html?indicator=PCTESTUDPRIMTITXMOD&family=ESU-P&start_year=2010&end_year=2019].

Ibero-America University 2030

Considering these issues, a study of regional higher education was initiated through a meeting held on December 4, 2018, at the General Secretariat of Universities of the Ministry of Universities of Spain, in which government officials, university deans and representatives, university quality accreditation agencies, international organizations, and students participated.

As a result, in the fall of 2019, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) published the report: *Diagnosis of Higher Education in Ibero-America 2019*³, the result of an in-depth analysis process, as well as an intense dialogue with the stakeholders of the university system.

Based on this diagnostic work and dialogue, the OEI designed the current work strategy that is being implemented in higher education and science, known as the Ibero-America University 2030. The strategy was presented at the Ministers and High Authorities of Higher Education meeting, held in Havana, Cuba, in February 2020. The ultimate goal is to advance in constructing a shared space for higher education and research that contributes to the progress, welfare, and sustainable development of Ibero-America and the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda.

The Ibero-American University 2030 strategy is the backbone of the OEI's higher education and science work. Despite being announced only a few weeks before WHO's declaration of a global pandemic, this strategy remained based on the current trends. One might think that the Ibero-America University 2030 strategy was obsolete just a month after its presentation, given the profound changes that universities have undergone in the last year and a half; however, the effect has been the opposite; Ibero-America University 2030 is now more relevant and necessary than ever.

As previously mentioned, the trend toward virtual education has taken hold with the pandemic is particularly noteworthy. In OEI, we consider the increase of higher education in the virtual modality as a very positive fact and actively encourage the growth of the university offer in this modality, because it adapts

3 Jorge Sáinz González, and Barberá de la Torre Rafael. 2019. *Diagnosis of Higher Education In Ibero-America 2019*. Madrid: Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI).

to the demands of the digital economy and offers training opportunities to those who until now were not accessing university education.

For this reason, IEO considers it essential to eliminate existing resistance to remote education, especially regarding its quality. Therefore, as a first step, OEI and the Ecuadorian Council for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CACES for its acronym in Spanish) and the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL), held the Ibero-American Seminar on Quality in Remote Education.

This event, which took place in Loja (Ecuador), aimed to eliminate prejudices about online education and demonstrate that this type of education is comparable to face-to-face instruction, both in terms of quality and learning outcomes for its students. To this end, it brought together different HEI with extensive experience in remote education to share best practices with the rest of the participating universities and quality agencies from various countries in the region. Among the conclusions drawn from it are issues such as the possibilities of inclusion that this modality allows and the need for permanence in the evaluations of this educational model.

In preparation for the Loja Seminar, a working group was formed with experts and technicians from Ibero-American quality agencies. As a result of this cooperation, common definitions and standards were agreed upon, which made up the Ibero-American Guide for the External Quality Assessment of Remote Education⁴. This guide represented a great step forward in the region, as a preliminary common framework with concrete indicators -such as the type of information to which the student should have access or the information security characteristics- that favor national evaluations to be more standardized, supplementing and not substituting the guides of national agencies. This guide was intended to be used by these agencies; however, the pandemic changed its purpose.

The seminar was held on March 10-11, 2020, coinciding with the day the World Health Organization declared the global pandemic of COVID-19. From that moment on, the trend towards the distance learning modality that this meeting was promoting accelerated until practically all Ibero-American students were able to continue their studies from home in less than a week. It was a simple

4 *Iberoamerican Guide to Quality Assessment in Remote Education*. Madrid: Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI).

transition for HEI with experience in the remote modality, but a complicated one in the case of most of our universities.

Therefore, the guide has also become a useful tool for universities. It offers guidelines on how to make this transition to the virtual modality. It also highlights crucial aspects for the quality of the virtual educational offer, such as applying specialized methodologies or teacher training. In this regard, the transition to virtual education, carried out in record time, has been a challenge for the institutions themselves, but especially for teachers and students. Finally, this guide has become the guiding instrument for the new proposals that OEI has developed within the framework of its strategy, which are presented below.

OEI's Commitments to Post-Pandemic Education

In view of this situation and background, the time has come to answer important questions, such as: What do we want to make of remote education? How to overcome the fears towards it and start tackling its possible challenges? What does the region need to take advantage of its benefits? What are these advantages? What are the implications for other areas of the university?

Quality is an essential milestone for the generation of inter-institutional trust: this is a key element in higher education and is still one of the great challenges for the virtual modality. This takes on greater importance in the face of the abrupt incursion of virtuality in universities since it seems that the concept of true remote education has been delayed. In many cases it has been understood that any model that implies teaching without physical participation in the same space is remote education, but this is not the case.

Therefore, universities need to know which issues are essential, which are the elements to be considered and taken care of, to achieve true remote education. Among the key and most important dimensions for the quality of this educational modality are teacher training, teaching methodology, security of technological infrastructures, prior information offered to students, and access to university services. Inter-institutional and student confidence will only be possible by verifying these aspects.

In this regard, we have taken significant steps to adapt to our universities' new situation and maintain the valuable achievements of the past. In OEI, we have

joined forces with strategic allies to start contributing new tools that serve to make a quality input to the model of higher education that the pandemic has brought us. As a result, there are three new proposals in line with the Ibero-America University 2030 strategy:

1. Kalos Virtual Ibero-America Seal:

Together with the Ibero-American Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RIACES), OEI decided to create a quality seal in remote Higher Education for the region: the Kalos Virtual Ibero-America Seal. This seal has been developed based on the *Ibero-American Guide for the External Quality Assessment of Remote Education*. Its purpose is to accredit, through participating national agencies, that the programs being taught in the virtual modality meet minimum quality standards. Thus, the objective pursued is twofold: to ensure quality and generate mutual trust between the different educational systems, i.e., to offer a guarantee of quality, rigor, and requirements for favorably evaluated degrees.

2. Mobility Promotion Platform:

Mobility and internationalization of Ibero-American universities are two issues closely related to remote education and quality. The tendency of today's society towards globalization and the reinforcement of regional projects highlights the benefits of academic mobility, which should not be lost because of COVID-19.

As indicated above, even before the pandemic, Ibero-America had very low levels of internationalization: we are the second region in the world with the least exchanges in higher education, only behind Africa. Considering this fact, only 30% of the few students from the region who undertake a mobility program choose a regional university as their destination.

The difficulties for mobility that the virtual educational model may present are in addition to those already in place. They stem from the differences between our university systems and the lack of trust between HEI in the region. For this reason, the Ibero-America University 2030 strategy aims to bring Ibero-American higher education systems closer together so that the recognition of studies and degrees will be easier and more agile.

To bring the systems closer together, OEI prepared the report *Ibero-America University 2030: a proposal for academic mobility*⁵. In it, the creation of a mobility instrument to facilitate the management of mobility and, above all, to promote recognition among the different HEI in the region is proposed.

This translates into a platform that gathers all the essential information of the learning units being evaluated (courses or subjects according to the denomination of each country): degree modality, semester in which it is offered, number of hours per week in which teaching is organized, planned schedule, description of contents, evaluation system, etc. This means everything that the student's home university needs to know to decide whether to accredit the course before the student's mobility. It is, therefore, a simple, flexible, practical, and realistic proposal, endorsed by experts, that seek to reduce the separation of university systems in the region and increase trust: establishing a dialogue between all stakeholders involved in academic exchanges to promote cooperation in their procedures and thus academic mobility. Renowned experts from the region and internationalization administrators have contributed to the development of this innovative proposal to make the tool truly useful to them.

3. Virtual Mobility:

Finally, to combine our experience in virtual education and mobility, OEI is developing a virtual mobility program that will also make use of the previous initiative. We believe that, if we are able to extract the benefits, the virtual model can be a positive proposal for internationalization. Virtual mobility presents itself as an interesting opportunity, and not only in times of pandemic.

This type of mobility offers many students who, for various reasons, are not able to undertake physical mobility, such as a lack of financial resources or a disability, the possibility of living an international experience. Virtual mobility aims to supplement remote university academic formation with exchange activities between HEI, which promote the development of specific and transversal competencies specific to each degree program.

5 OEI. 2021. *Ibero-America University 2030 In Movement: A Proposal for Academic Mobility*. Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture.

In OEI, we have materialized this proposal in joint work with the National University of Remote Education of Spain (UNED for its acronym in Spanish). We rely on their advice, based on extensive experience, to design the *Guide for the Design, Implementation, and Monitoring of Virtual Mobility Actions*. Its target audience includes professors from Ibero-American HEI who have the responsibility and role of developing virtual mobility programs for undergraduate and graduate students.

Once again, the purpose of this guide, regardless of the institution's mode of study, is to assist the teacher in creating a quality program for his or her students. This document aims to clarify what it is and what is involved in designing and planning a virtual mobility program through guidelines and recommendations. Through this, the experience of internationalization and consolidation of digital competence will be promoted by completing a semester or a course of undergraduate or graduate studies in another university in the region.

Final Conclusions

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated a series of changes in higher education that could already be appreciated beforehand. One of the biggest and most evident trends has been the move towards remote education and, consequently, also the intensive use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in higher education classrooms. These changes are here to stay and will contribute to closing the gap between the university, the economy, and the digital society in which we live.

In view of this, OEI's proposal, contained in the Ibero-America University 2030 strategy, is not to reverse its direction, but to analyze and take advantage of the benefits it can offer. Along these lines, our current proposal is based on offering support to universities to make a quality transition to this modality and to be there to accredit it through the Kalos Virtual Ibero-America Seal. In addition, to promote exchanges in higher education institutions in the region through our academic mobility platform, also welcoming the virtual model and ensuring that it is also of high quality. Although it may seem silent, our region has a high capacity to adapt to this new educational modality accelerated by COVID-19; in OEI we see it through important partners such as AIESAD, CALED, or RIACES. Moreover, thanks to them, the OEI being the Ibero-American

cooperation organization of reference in the field of remote education, can state that the benefits of this new context exist and that they are being worked on.

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Higher Education's Response to the Challenges Imposed by COVID-19. A Latin American Overview

Genoveva Amador-Fierro¹

Introduction

The world was changed in a way very difficult to imagine when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020. The general population was confined in their homes, except for *essential activities* for human life, a concept under which educational systems were not included in the first stage of the pandemic.

Higher education systems were impacted by the drastic abandonment of university classrooms of 1.57 billion students in 191 countries worldwide (UNESCO-IESALC, 2020). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the numbers reached 45 million students affected (Quintero, G.J.A., 2021). All this was derived from the risk prevention and mitigation measures that paradoxically were created to protect students' health without even imagining the negative impacts on their education. The health emergency was followed by other university emergencies: pedagogical, economic, political, and mental health of student communities, faculty, and their families.

In essence, universities only reflected on what was happening in society. The doubly negative impact for universities was an exacerbation of inequalities and

1 Universidad de Colima, Mexico. With input and collaborations from colleagues at 1) RCI-ASCUN (*Red Colombiana de Internacionalización* and the *Asociación Colombiana de Universidades*); 2) REDI-PERÚ (*Red Peruana de Internacionalización*); 3) LEARN CHILE; 4) FIESA-RedCIUN (*Feria Internacional de Educación Superior Argentina* and the *Red de Cooperación Internacional de las Universidades Nacionales de Argentina*) and 5) AMPEI (Mexican Association for International Education)

forms of exclusion, not only in classrooms but also in a significant number of students in higher education. According to the World Higher Education Activity Report (UNESCO, 2020), 17-30% new excluded groups were identified in the Latin American region after the pandemic.

In this context, the Mexican Association for International Education (*Asociación Mexicana para la Educación Internacional*, AMPEI) proposes contributing to the knowledge generated on the Latin American reality of higher education, especially to know how the region responded to the challenges imposed by the presence of COVID-19.

To collect the information of the region, a questionnaire was designed with 12 open questions, grouped into four categories: 1) Obstacles faced and adaptation processes, 2) Takeaways, 3) The future of internationalization in the region, and 4) The importance of networks and associations. A convenience sample was selected to take advantage of the university cooperation networks in five Latin American countries. In addition, University and higher education institution associations in Latin America were invited to respond to the questionnaire, with the participation of five networks operating from Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Chile responded. The list comprises seven networks: RCI-ASCUN Colombian Network for Internationalization-Colombian Association of Universities (*Red Colombiana para la Internacionalización-Asociación Colombiana de Universidades*), REDI-PERU, Peruvian Network for Internationalization (*Red Peruana de Internacionalización*), LEARN Chile Network, FIESA-REDCIUN: International Fair for Higher Education in Argentina and the International Cooperation Network of National Universities (*Feria Internacional de Educación Superior en Argentina y la Red de Cooperación Internacional de las Universidades Nacionales*), and the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI) from Mexico. Thanks to these contributions, it was possible to construct an overview of the response of Latin American higher education to the challenges imposed by COVID-19. The results are presented below.

I. Obstacles Faced by Higher Education Institutions during the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Adaptation Process

The most relevant obstacles faced by higher education institutions in Latin America were somewhat similar, but still, they were experienced differently between and within the countries. These nuances varied depending on the

degree of information technologies and services development and the type of support offered to educational processes before the pandemic. The way internationalization was conceived, whether centered around student and academic mobility or as a strategy that can advance with or without this specific activity, was also determinant for crisis management.

Associations who responded to the questionnaire highlight as main obstacles economic deterioration, affectation of health, difficulty to migrate from a face-to-face model to a remote teaching and learning model, the little or null preparation of some professors for teaching through technological mediation, low connectivity and internet access of some students and professors, and lack of equipment at home. In addition, the perception of remote learning as low quality was a factor that did not help implement the changes with the same determination and speed in all universities. In some cases, such as Colombia, this perception transcended to national indicators, which did not contemplate virtual teaching-learning as part of the internationalization processes.

In all sampled countries, the consequences of a critical health situation deepened social and economic issues. Economic inequality was underlined due to the loss of jobs, associated with the difficulty of continuing studies for many students. The affectation on the mental health of professors, students, and administrative staff became evident after the loss of lives and jobs, curfews in some countries, quarantines, social isolation, and the impossibility to attend physically to university centers. In addition to this, the time of dedication required of professors to transform their teaching mode led to some levels of exhaustion; among them, their mood was far from transmitting motivation to students.

The difficulty for suddenly migrating to a remote emergency model evinced the lack of preparation of most higher education institutions, as well as the scarce technological competencies of a significant portion of the faculty, the incipient teacher training on remote teaching, and the lack of knowledge of teaching models adequate for the new scenario. In Peru, for instance, only 27% of HEI had blended learning programs, most of them in private universities. In Argentina, although many universities to a lesser or greater degree, had previous remote education devices that served as a basis for the adaptation process, the volume of activities to adapt teaching represented a challenge. This scenario adds the reluctance to online teaching in some university communities "in the middle of a generalized imaginary of virtual education as a *second-rate* modality."

On the other hand, and with greater difficulties in some regions of each country, the lack of adequate devices and low connectivity in homes were huge obstacles. That means that the issue was solving the capacity of higher education institutions and the competence of professors was a huge challenge in itself, but especially that good education should reach all students. Of course, the shortages mentioned above limited the possibilities for many students and professors to continue remote teaching fluently.

Faced with this scenario, higher education institutions had to unexpectedly transform all the pedagogical structure and adapt it to virtual education. This was the reality in all other countries. Before the deterioration of the economic situation, higher education institutions (HEI) had to face and offer alternatives, subsidies, and discounts to promote permanence, and as far as possible, alleviate the burden of economic deficit of students' families. Supporting students was a central activity. All actions were organized around this premise. Strategies were attempted for students to have an adequate internet connection so that educational resources could be accessed, and intensive training and pedagogical technique development programs were organized to help the faculty and their students transition from a face-to-face model into a completely new virtual one teaching and learning model.

Main problems for internationalization process and universities' response

In the immediate stage of the pandemic, the impossibility to conduct face-to-face activities, borders closing, and stagnation of student and academic mobility processes brought confusion and economic losses, especially for students who found themselves in the midst of their travel to universities where they had been accepted to have an internship, or who after their trip had to return to their countries of origin prematurely. In addition, many students lost their deposits for the concept of meals and accommodations or airfare; there were even some who had to return earlier and could not use or change their tickets.

The repatriation proceedings, both for domestic students abroad and for international students in an academic stay at each institution when the WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic was crucial for universities, particularly for international programs offices. Ensuring a safe return of students was a management process full of challenges, multiple negotiation strategies,

conciliation of interests and listening ability faced by internationalization managers, where the stakeholders were (national and international) students, parents, partner institutions, national university associations, and embassies.

In addition to the above, budget cuts made the situation worse in all the region's higher education institutions. Given the direct association of internationalization and academic mobility and the lack of knowledge of the internationalization at home potential, in a good part of HEI, the budgets allocated to the process were cut, especially in Colombia and Peru.

Internationalization managers responded quickly promoting the development of several online initiatives. In some cases, limited technological resources and a lack of pedagogical abilities in these new learning environments led to improvisation and learning on the fly (trial and error) in the implementation of the virtual teaching offer in international collaboration. Therefore, it would be necessary to add the prejudice of online teaching as low quality, as "a strategy located among the lowest rungs of the list of possibilities" (ASCUN-Colombia). In this same sense, the great challenge for the faculty in promoting intercultural interaction and learning in the teaching-learning process developed with technological mediation became apparent in Argentina.

The lack of recognition in the Colombian regulations framework of internationalization developed with technological mediation is highlighted, requiring great efforts to continue with cooperation and internationalization that in pandemic times could not be reported to the national authorities and were not sufficiently considered in program evaluation processes. In Mexico, the lack of a national higher education internationalization policy was noticeable, which derived in the absence of funding and the lack of statistics that would help elaborate precise and timely diagnosis for decision-making.

Response to the crisis and change management

Colombian HEI have responded differently, clearly opting for cooperation and internal strengthening. Strategic alliances, deepening work in associations and networks such as ASCUN and the RCI, the development of initiatives such as the *Plan Padrino 1*, the creation of initiatives such as INILAT, account for the collaborative response of higher education institutions.

In Peru, the greater capacity for response occurred mainly in private universities located in Lima. Public universities had to seek the State's financial support to be able to adapt to virtual platforms and provide support for underprivileged students so they could have access to computer equipment and to the internet, while in Argentina, the context demanded a quick reformulation and development of new internationalization strategies that in most universities was translated into a diversification of actions, although not with the same impact intensity at the level of inter-cultural experience, due to the limitations of virtuality.

In all cases, universities' response focused on generating new approaches, spaces and opportunities, joint reflections, and exchange of procedures, ideas, and best practices in a synergy of solidarity and support with impressive scope, all to respond better to the need for pedagogical change and to transition from face-to-face education into virtuality. An example of this synergy was the elaboration of common documents that served as guidelines for each country, most of them elaborated by university associations and networks such as the University Network for Remote Education (*Red Universitaria de Educación a Distancia*, RUEDA), attached to the National Inter-university Council (*Consejo Interuniversitario Nacional*, CIN) in Argentina and the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (*Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior*, ANUIES) in Mexico, who elaborated several documents as guidelines to contain the risk of disease spreading, adaptation of education processes mediated by technologies in the COVID-19 context, and for the safe return to educational facilities.

Through the different spaces of national interaction such as the Network for International Cooperation of National Universities (*Red de Cooperación Internacional de las Universidades Nacionales*, RedCIUN) and the International Fair of Argentine Education (*Feria Internacional de Educación Argentina*, FIESA), several virtual activities, meetings and workshops have been deployed, not only for training and knowledge update in the global context, but also for promoting the exchange of processes and identification of possibilities to overcome the challenges of change jointly.

Positive impacts of the pandemic on internationalization of higher education

In the middle of all issues and the occasional chaos brought by the pandemic, several positive impacts for internationalization of higher education are identified. "Obstacles and issues have become opportunities to give a new direction to internationalization strategies and a spotlight position to internationalization at home, and the role of the professor as the leader in the process" (ASCUN). Likewise, innovations in internationalization were introduced (REDI-Perú), institutions have developed new abilities and adjusted their objectives to operate in the online format, multiple opportunities for international outreach were generated, and new programs were set in motion (LEARN Chile). The promotion of internationalization strategies through virtual means has also deployed global processes such as the need to prioritize and facilitate discussion and planning of the curriculum with an international dimension (FIESA-RedCIUN ARGENTINA, AMPEI).

Universities recognized and expanded new international cooperation channels and actions where flexibility has been key to promoting virtual teaching-learning processes with lower costs and higher inclusion and impact levels on the university community. This accelerated the implementation of internationalization strategies that did not exist or whose development progressed slowly such as mirror classes, the *Collaborative Online International Learning* (COIL) method, MOOCs, virtual research stays, virtual exchanges, among other teaching and learning modalities that before the COVID-19 pandemic had slow progress or were nonexistent.

The role of associations before obstacles derived from the covid-19 pandemic

Raising the question: how do associations or networks assist in tackling obstacles in their country?, from the responses given by each association that responded to the questionnaire, it is possible to identify that organizations that promote higher education quality through the promotion of internationalization played a relevant role in decision-making moments before a critical situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, different national networks crossed borders to foster efforts and collaboration actions in solidary attitude to form a common Latin American front.

Associations and networks offered consulting, organized academic activities that became relevant spaces for debate and reflection on Latin American higher education; they negotiated, managed, and served as bridges for dialogue among universities, governments, and embassies around the world.

The following is a particular view of the scenario in universities in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, and how they got ahead thanks to the inter-university collaboration actions promoted by national or regional networks operating in these countries.

Argentina

The International Fair for Higher Education in Argentina (FIESA), attached to the National Inter-university Council (CIN), facilitated the construction of a common front by promoting the dialogue of Argentine and Latin American universities around principles of discussion on common challenges.

On the other hand, the International Cooperation Network of National Universities (RedCIUN), also attached to the CIN, maintained a constant dialogue with the Council of Rectors of Private Universities (*Consejo de Rectores de Universidades Privadas*, CRUP) and played the role of an intermediary to discuss and channel the different issues and challenges for internationalization during the pandemic context with networks and associations from other countries, as well as before national stakeholders such as the Secretary of University Policies (*Secretaría de Políticas Universitarias*).

Both networks promoted academic actions that contributed to the discussion on the challenges of higher education in Latin America.

Chile

Learn Chile strengthened its international cooperation activities, especially in Latin America, by promoting meetings with associations and networks from other countries in the region to tackle jointly the challenges derived from the pandemic. In this Network, ability development needs were also addressed, especially for a better professor performance during collaborative online international teaching and learning.

Colombia

The Colombian Network for Internationalization (RCI) is a space for collaboration, joint construction, and dialogue with national and international stakeholders. During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, and together with the Colombian network *Challenge your Knowledge*, the RCI, and the rest of the associations put its capacity for management and dialogue with the Ministry of National Education and Colombia's Chancellor's office to the test. Its role in the Inter-sectorial Board for Internationalization of Higher Education (*Mesa Intersectorial de Internacionalización de la Educación Superior*, MIIES) includes strategic topics for higher education in the national agenda deserves special mention.

Together with Learn Chile, the RCI called associations and networks of four more countries in the region to participate in the formation of the Latin-American Initiative for Internationalization of Higher Education (*Iniciativa Latinoamericana para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior*, INILAT), which also expanded the spaces for the exchange of experiences of HEI of Colombia and the region through different academic events, and promoted online academic exchange dynamics through programs such as PALOMA, *Muévete por la Costa*, IZASCUA, and participation in INILATmov+.

The RCI also developed the 10° Latin America and the Caribbean Conference for Internationalization of Higher Education (*Décima Conferencia Latinoamericana y del Caribe para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior*, LACHEC Online 2020), an innovative space for online conferences, with networking activities allowing participants to approach and to introduce topics on "Reconfiguration of international education" to Colombian cultural experiences, some of them with the characteristic Latin American warmth and human touch. LACHEC Online 2020 was co-funded by the Ministry of Education and Colombia's Institute for Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad, Mariano Ospina Pérez (ICETEX), allowing for merely symbolic participation fees and offering a significant number of courtesy passes, which eliminated the barrier to access high-level international education events that would otherwise be limited to a minority with the capacity to incur significant costs involved in developing this type of academic activities.

The RCI highlighted that, based on its principles of solidarity and inclusion, it intends to contribute to overcoming the country's deep inequalities.

Mexico

The Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI) is a not-for-profit association whose individual members work in the international area of higher education institutions in Mexico. Its mission is to promote the inclusion of internationalization of higher education in Mexico and reach the ideals of a multicultural society contributing to the understanding, respect, and tolerance in the world.

During the pandemic, AMPEI focused on attending to the needs of the institutions they represent, to serve as a liaison with the government for the safe return of students and professors to Mexico, and the return of foreign individuals to their countries. An open space was promoted to exchange experience and best practices of internationalization and channel concerns, and manage solutions. Directors of Cooperation, researchers, and scholars were given voice to share with authorities and officials of the federal government; Secretary of Public Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP*), National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUES); with rectors and academic authorities of HEI; as well as with international organizations such as the Consortium for Higher Education Collaboration in North America (*Consortio para la Colaboración de la Educación Superior en América del Norte, CONAHEC*), the Ibero-American University Organization (*Organización Universitaria Iberoamericana, OUI*), among others.

For this purpose, national and international studies were supported such as the OBIRET's Regional Survey on Internationalization of Tertiary Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (*Encuesta Regional sobre Internacionalización de la Educación Terciaria en América Latina y el Caribe*); the Latin-American Initiative for Internationalization of Higher Education (INILAT); OBREAL GLOBAL's impact study of the EU projects on Higher Education and Research in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Global Survey on Internationalization of Higher Education of the National Association of Universities (AIU). An activity that should be highlighted is the Program for Internationalization of the Curriculum (*Programa de internacionalización curricular*) launched in collaboration with the Embassy of the United States and *Santander Universidades*.

Peru

The REDIPERÚ, as a relatively new organization, supported its members by collaborating in change adaptation processes, and through virtual activities, it opened opportunities for meetings among colleagues and institutions. One example is the incorporation to INILAT and its role as an interlocutor between universities and embassies.

Communication with its members was fundamental and constituted one of its strengths by sharing experiences that would help follow a common strategy or improve what each university does in its jurisdiction.

Challenges faced by associations

The immediate challenge faced by associations and networks operating in Latin America after the cancellation of face-to-face events was assuming the consequences of some economic losses, re-scheduling and transforming almost all activities into the virtual format, to continue complying with their functions and improve their capacity for negotiation, at the same time they should consider themselves as an interlocution channel in their respective countries to solve the critical situations experienced within each Network, but especially, to respond adequately to the needs for support expressed by their members.

Some of the needs mentioned by universities were:

- Maintaining the continuity of the internationalization strategy.
- Expanding international collaboration activities despite the suspension of academic mobility.
- Developing abilities for collaborative international online teaching-learning, better known as COIL.

Economic upheaval associated with the consequences of borders closing impacted institutions and associations in different forms, for example, the RCI faced complications due to travel packages purchased for a delegation that would attend the International Fair of Argentine Higher Education (FIESA),

the REDIPERÚ stopped receiving government support for a delegation that would attend the EAIE's Conference. For some other associations like AMPEI, the membership fees were not impacted greatly thanks to the supporting role performed by the association during the time of crisis caused by borders closing.

Other challenges faced by the networks in different forms in each country were: in Argentina the reconfiguration and transformation of FIESA and the Program for Latin-American Academic Exchange (*Programa de Intercambio Académico Latinoamericano*, PILA (RedCIUN) into a virtual format represented a huge challenge. In Colombia the RCI stated how the negotiation to make internationalization at home (IaH) recognized in its country as an equally valid pillar for internationalization "abroad" was fundamental, as the drop in indicators associated with student mobility and the impossibility of reporting results of other types of strategies for internationalization of the student profile and academic activity to the National System of Higher Education Information (SNIES) placed universities in a critical position to advance their internationalization objectives.

How were challenges tackled?

The different associations and networks faced the challenges presented by the pandemic thanks to the quick transit from face-to-face into the virtual format for developing activities. In addition to this, when acting, they strengthened their principles of association, solidarity, collaboration, and inclusion; boosted their objectives by adding inter-institutional efforts for mutual learning and by offering comprehensive responses to the challenges derived from the pandemic. The common actions used to face challenges in the Latin America region were:

- Negotiation before ministries or secretaries of foreign relations and embassies for repatriation of students in foreign academic exchange stays, with associations becoming intermediaries between the government and universities.
- Webinar organization for conferences, conversations, and other local and international virtual meetings, helping participant universities to start trusting and opening to developing actions in new formats, such as virtual academic exchanges, mirror classes, collaborative online international courses, online courses taught in joint international

collaboration, online joint research projects, among others. Some examples of these actions were: the training program organized and funded by Learn Chile in collaboration with the Florida International University, which benefitted a great number of professors and administrators in that country; the 14 webinar cycle on the challenges of higher education organized by FIESA; the Training and Updating Cycle "Challenges of Internationalization of the University" organized jointly by the RedCIUN and the CRUP; the *2º Meeting on Best Practices in Internationalization* and the *Community of Learning for Internationalization of Higher Education* (CAIES- RCI), organized by the RCI and Learn Chile; the forums with rectors and other national authorities, organized by AMPEI.

- The participation in international conferences that before the pandemic would not have been considered, as is the case of the RCI participating for the first time in NAFSA 2020, recognized as the biggest conference of the Association of International Educators. This experience allowed them to improve their proposal for *LACHEC Online 2020*.
- Attention and support to universities of their country, using online resources to address the needs of each HEI in particular, to assist them in strengthening their teaching abilities in the new form of providing education.

With the collaboration, sum of effort, and complementary ability strategy, different organizations obtained positive impacts within their countries that would not have been possible through the individual action of each of the networks operating in Latin America. Some of these impacts were:

- The consolidation of INILAT, created to face the challenges presented by the health crisis and their consequences through the sum of efforts and abilities.
- The incorporation of RCI into the Network of International Education Associations (NIEA), the Inter-American University Organization (OUI) and its Conference on International Education of the Americas (*Congreso de las Américas sobre Educación Internacional*, CAEI), of which is now an active member.

- The organization of *LACHEC Online 2020* enhanced the collaboration of RCI with the stakeholders of the Inter-sectorial Board for Internationalization of Higher Education (MIIES) and allowed, in alliance with ICETEX, launching the call for project funding 2020: "Reconfiguring international education", through which small grants were given to four alliances for initiative development in three areas: 1) The emergent role of international education: construction of global citizenship, 2) Innovation for sustainable development, and 3) Transformation of Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation.
- Learn Chile successfully offered two versions of graduate studies and further education fair to study in that country, and also set forth a policy for strengthening online activities and increasing abilities to have new programs taught in such modality.
- RedCIUN defined an ambitious working plan aimed at strengthening the substantive functions of the university, focusing especially on the challenges posed by the pandemic. Working areas include internationalization of the curriculum, management of international projects, internationalization of outreach and multiculturalism, and internationalization of research and university linkage.

Finances of organizations in pandemic times, and the role of members and governments

The health emergency brought, among other problems, an economic upheaval impacting directly higher education of all countries in Latin America. Organizations and networks dedicated to promoting internationalization of higher education experienced the crisis in different forms and all managed to cover their financial needs through the usual means, or by management of government support or even through non-traditional, alternative sources such as strategic alliances and funding. Governments' actions about the needs of associations and networks dedicated to promoting the quality of higher education through internationalization were different in each country.

In Argentina, most universities had to implement support plans to facilitate connectivity. In some institutions there were even scholarships and solidary

emergency funds for students and community centers, therefore the economy was impacted. Government support was used to finance health projects that have allowed supporting the health of research teams. However, it is expected there will be budget cuts derived from the provisions for economic growth in the country that will affect higher education since it is mostly maintained by public funding.

In Chile, the limitation of financial resources required prioritization of actions oriented towards guaranteeing the continuity of academic and administrative activities, as well as ensuring connectivity. The Chilean government supported a finance scheme organized by Learn Chile and supported by the Network's member institutions that will allow its operation for 18 months.

In Colombia, the scenario was more favorable, "Opting to make an opportunity out of a crisis, added to austerity in expenses, have caused that the pandemic had no repercussions on RCI's finances". The *LACHEC Online 2020* Conference derived in economic benefits because it brought new memberships to the Network, which increased 6% in 2020, and reached 12% increase in 2021, counting with 114 affiliated HEI. Also, the endorsement scheme allowed 13 organizations to provide economic support according to three categories: diamond, gold, and silver. As mentioned earlier, the Colombian government, through ICETEX, also supported the realization of LACHEC by subscribing an alliance agreement to hold the conference and deliver the majority of resources corresponding to the call's small grants "Reconfiguring International Education".

In Mexico, higher education came from a history of budget cuts that added to the need of addressing economic consequences derived from the health crisis. The Mexican Association for International Education, as a not-for-profit association, maintained by the contribution of its members, had its finances decreased. Still, this decrease is not significant thanks to the flexibility and work conducted by AMPEI to adjust to the economic crisis. The association has also generated alternative resources to directly finance some of its strategic activities, such as the Program for Internationalization of the Curriculum that provides higher education professors with tools and knowledge to offer courses with COIL methodology, which is co-funded by the Embassy of the United States and *Santander Universidades*. Joint efforts with the Consortium for Higher Education Collaboration in North America (CONAHEC) to hold the annual conference of both associations in a single activity also represented significant support.

In Peru, the economic impact was evinced by the lack of resources to adapt to virtual education and teacher training. Public universities received funding both to facilitate access to technologies and for teacher training, while some private universities could access a government credit that would help institutions survive in the face of economic hardship. However, the REDIPERU did not directly receive any government support as it does not manage its own resources yet.

II. Takeaways

The great coincidence found regarding the many takeaways assimilated by associations dedicated to promoting internationalization of higher education in the Latin American region in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is impressive.

In the words of associations that answered the question: What have been the most important lessons learned as an association? it is possible to identify some verbs as key elements in the narrative when referring to the learning experience represented by the pandemic stage, which is indicative of their actions. These verbs are: recognize, value, adapt, reinvent, innovate, lead, communicate, collaborate, and the values of solidarity and empathy appear constantly.

There is a coincidence in stating that the health crisis was a detonating factor to reset strategies, create and innovate in record time. The guidelines for behavior learned initiate with a recognition of the creative diversification of internationalization activities beyond mobility, to the generation of appropriate schemes for international cooperation to promote an immediate joint action, the relevance of solidary internationalization, and the design of non-traditional internationalization activities to expand their benefits; teachers' training as a condition for quality performance, remote teamwork as a method integrated to the day-to-day agenda and the great contribution represented by the response of universities in a context of global crisis.

The deployment of leadership on internationalization is identified as a fundamental element to promote collaboration initiatives and to increase the capacity for dialogue with the highest spheres in decision-making. The inter-institutional diversity, as a characteristic of the affiliation to networks, is appreciated as a value that powers association, collaboration, and idea enrichment processes. This leads to a more comprehensive capacity for response.

Ideas, individuals, and institutions in a synergy founded on cooperation and focused on a shared purpose are fundamental to guarantee change. Cooperation works better when focused on all directions: between HEI, regional nodes, national and international networks and between these HEI and networks with government stakeholders.

The good use of information and communication technologies for the promotion and development of internationalization is recognized as a valid, efficient, inclusive, and low-cost alternative that may stimulate a greater participation and expanding its scope and benefits. Furthermore, when an effective communication is developed and an immediate capacity for response is offered, trust is generated among the members.

Finally, one of the takeaways highlighted is the role played by associations and networks as promoters of solidarity and empathy against competitive work models.

Innovations developed during the pandemic

Amidst the chaos caused by the sudden departure of students from classrooms, confinement at home, borders closing, repatriation of students and professors in humanitarian flights, the lack of knowledge about adequate pedagogies for online education, the lack of internet access or computer equipment of many students and professors, as well as the variable information on pandemic management, there were positive aspects. In addition to the takeaways of higher education institutions and the associations and networks dedicated to promoting internationalization of higher education, it was possible to introduce innovations in education and in the organization of associations, with ample benefits for the participating audience. At least three innovations developed to benefit Latin American higher education were identified.

LACHEC Online 2020 was a vanguardist innovation produced during the pandemic. It was developed in the Whova platform and gathered 948 people from 29 countries and 553 institutions. It had 218 panel members, 10,553 views, 6,780 interactions between participants, and 541 contacts exchange, becoming a model conference for the Latin American region.

The initiative that will continue replicating due to its success with the title “Reconfiguring international education” was developed in the Colombian context and the call achieved the participation of 123 HEI organized in 36 alliances for the selection of 4 projects.

The conformation of INILAT as a meeting space with a strong orientation on exchange and cooperation for action that gathers associations from five countries has become an important channel for reflection and construction of a Latin American vision of internationalization.

III. The Future of Internationalization in Latin America

The trends that will evolve in Latin America in the area of internationalization of higher education identified thus by participating associations and networks of Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Peru who responded the questionnaire, provide some common aspects worth sharing.

Positioning internationalization at home has ceased to be an alternative to become the most feasible strategy, putting professors and leaders of academic programs in the main role of the internationalization of the curriculum process, research, and outreach as substantive functions of universities.

Derived from the above, the second trend is internationalization of student profiles through the use of technological means such as virtual exchanges, collaborative online international learning initiatives (COIL), as well as mirror classes and other forms of education where all students in a classroom have the same possibilities for international, intercultural, and global competence, and where professors collaborate with peers in joint teaching processes are some of its features.

The organization of a blended or hybrid education that includes the possibility of face-to-face assistance for students and at the same time having students participating in virtual mode opens the possibilities for inclusion of international students who may not travel to another country.

Collaborative online work among individuals, institutions, and organizations, carried out with technological mediation, will be increasingly used as a strategy

to follow up internationalization activities, promote the cooperation South-South, strengthen interactions, and decrease costs.

Another trend identified in Colombia is the significant change in the current state of internationalization indicators that are now focused on agreement management and academic mobility and that will transition into indicators oriented on results and impact measurement in learning, in substantial functions of universities, and the environment.

In Chile, international scientific collaboration will resume face-to-face workspaces, which have been highly appreciated and required as necessary during the crisis. However, in Argentina, it is perceived that academic mobility will continue playing a preponderant role due to the inter-cultural impact it generates.

Universities in Mexico, in collaboration with organizations such as AMPEI, will continue advancing internationalization of higher education according to Latin-American trends, despite international education not being a priority topic in the government's agenda. Changes in government, the pandemic, the world economic crisis, national challenges, among others, have decreased the government vision and stimulus towards internationalization of HEI. Important programs have been eliminated at a federal level that in the past subsidized scholarships for national and international mobility and funded science and technology development.

The role of associations in internationalization's projected scenario

Before the scenario internationalization of higher education in Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Mexico, the role of associations will acquire relevance as instances of dialogue with the highest national decision-making spheres and as generators of alliances for international cooperation; the role of promoters of national and international policies favorable to change process on internationalization of higher education is identified as a priority, promoters of international higher education in their countries, as well as the role of creators of a Latin-American space for quality higher education space.

In complying with these roles expected from national associations such as FIESA and RedCIUN in Argentina, RCI-ASCUN in Colombia, Learn Chile, REDIPERU, and

AMPEI in Mexico, the need to focus their efforts in at least five lines of action is highlighted:

1. Strengthening strategic alliances and links such as INILAT, generated to promote national, regional, and international cooperation on internationalization of higher education, especially to promote dynamics of South-South cooperation and to respond adequately to the needs of member institutions.
2. Projecting and positioning higher education in each country and in the Latin-American region as a space for academic quality (in research and teaching) that in the post-COVID era will require joint work more than ever.
3. Acting as an instance for dialogue with different stakeholders and in particular with governments in order to procure agreements in the understanding of changes and necessary support on internationalization of higher education and on the formulation of policies to promote them.
4. Promoting high-quality formation, exchange of best practices, and strengthening of international education abilities both of internationalization managers and of the senior direction of the university, professors, and program leaders.
5. Promoting a sustainability approach to internationalization of higher education as a strategy to increase quality and introduce innovations that provide a high value to diversity and inter-cultural links in the region.

IV. The Importance of Networks and Associations

The creation of INILAT as a macro-network in Latin America

The conformation of the Latin-American Initiative for Internationalization of Higher Education (*Iniciativa Latinoamericana para la Internacionalización de la*

Educación Superior, INILAT) is evidence the Latin America region has become aware that the greatest challenges of humanity will only be addressed by the sum of efforts, international academic collaboration/cooperation, organized and planned among peers wishing to attain a common goal. With the declaration “INILAT is born to consolidate international education cooperation in Latin America” (Learn Chile, 2020), on August 13, 2020, for the first time it was presented in the Latin America and the Caribbean Conference for Internationalization of Higher Education (LACHEC) organized by the Colombian Network for Internationalization of Higher Education, RCI.

To understand how INILAT emerged, it is necessary to speak of recent history, when several events conjugated, on one hand the RCI since 2018 decided to prioritize Latin America in its international relations, and therefore, taking advantage of international conferences and meetings during the next two years, conducted a series of talks with other networks such as Learn Chile, AMPEI, and FIESA. It could be stated these dialogues were the preamble to the ideas that would be concreted later with the pandemic in full effect, in a joint effort of RCI and Learn Chile on:

[...] what could be a space for Latin-American integration and attract similar associations and networks in the region... thus... INILAT, starting as an exchange of ideas in a specific context, has become for RCI a priority in terms of international relations. It is an invaluable space for learning, reflection, collaboration, and action, as well as a unique opportunity to circulate Latin American initiatives and practices, some of them jointly with other regions of the world, which has represented a huge potential for the Network. (RCI, 2021)

In effect, the decision of associations such as REDIPERU of joining INILAT converges on the ideas of “participating actively in the construction of a Latin American space for promoting learning and positioning member universities, in addition to sharing the ideals of promoting processes of internationalization of universities in the region”, even hoping that INILAT becomes a platform for global projection. Coinciding with FIESA and Learn Chile, the context of the pandemic and the uncertainty generated in relation with internationalization of higher education in Latin American countries, as well as the need for dialogue and exchange, were sufficient reasons to joint this space of open interaction among participants.

All associations consider that INILAT, more than a “Network of networks”, aims at being a flexible and transversal point of meeting, a joint platform for cooperating responding to common interests and challenges, seeking to start concrete actions based on the complementary abilities of its members.

In the opinion of AMPEI, the great forum represented by INILAT to dynamize and expand participation in already established academic projects is to be commended, such as the collaborative online international learning (COIL) for the region; the creation of a regional exchange program in virtual modality; the generation of initiatives for internationalization of research by approaching researchers in the region; the search for funding sources and generation of international strategic alliances strengthening Latin American networks; the construction of a common agenda for identifying public policies favorable to internationalization of higher education systems in Latin America. All these are pertinent and challenging issues in Mexico.

The benefits of INILAT membership

Different associations affiliated with INILAT coincide that this initiative brought multilateral benefits since its inception, by contributing significantly to the success of several international meetings due to the great number of participants in their activities, starting with *LACHEC Online 2020*, as well as the extensive Latin American participation in CAIES 2020, passing from 250 participants in the meeting with highest attendance, to more than 800 in 2020 (in remote modality) with INILAT support.

The INILATmov+ program opened new spaces for mobility among higher education institutions in different countries. For example, in the first call for participation, around 50% of HEI adhered to the program were from Colombia; despite that, they had the opportunity to reactivate, tighten, and in some cases, start their collaboration with Chilean universities and later with HEI from almost all countries with member associations.

Additionally, INILAT is identified as a space that provides visibility to all participating networks. Since the beginning of the initiative, INILAT has been present in international conferences such as LACHEC, CONAHEC-AMPEI, CLADEA, and FAUBAI and in different events organized by their comprising associations and networks, positioning the voice and work of HEI from Latin America.

For Learn Chile, AMPEI, FIESA, and REDIPERU, being part of INILAT as a multinational space promoting multilateral work is a form of advancing with example in the practice of collaborative work that networks and institutions require of academic personnel and at the same time they demand of their students. It has also become a space per excellence to share best practices and reflection on the importance of starting collaborative research that contribute to global knowledge from the region.

Cooperation vs. competition

The idea of competitiveness that has become fashionable in recent decades, defined by the dictionary as “rivalry or intense competition to attain a goal”, has decreased its popularity when it was demonstrated that solitary work leads to isolation but also to reduced impact results. Perhaps the greatest takeaway from the pandemic is precisely the need for international cooperation and global collaboration as the most viable way to tackle complex situations and construct integral responses, by sharing ideas and experiences and with the sum of abilities and resources, including decreasing costs.

When associations are asked about the disjunctive of competition and cooperation in the future of internationalization and considering there is an important trajectory of competitiveness in the area of international education, especially to attract international students to universities, responses were clear: the choice is cooperation under principles of solidarity, respect for diversity, inclusion, and empathy. This is what humanity needs today from associations dedicated to international education, internationalization of educational practices and graduate profile.

It stands out the fact that in their actions, associations come from the principle of autonomy of member institutions, and their relationship is supported by dialogue, mutual trust, flexibility, promotion of leadership, collaboration, and joint effort. One instance is that most associations integrate public/private, big/small, state/national universities into their ranks.

The purpose of associations is oriented towards strengthening higher education systems with the clear vision of providing an adequate response to society by promoting the formation of high-quality professionals, technicians, and scientists, and promoting socially relevant lines of research. The means to collaborate for

this purpose is internationalization, whose main tool is international cooperation which must be developed in the spirit of collaboration and horizontal relation as premise for interaction. With this vision, it is hoped that in complying with their role, associations collaborate in the ideals of construction of inter-cultural societies, contributing to understanding, respect, and tolerance in the world.

On the other hand, it is recognized that competition is certainly stimulated by national and international funding schemes based on tendering and oriented towards promoting extensive processes of training, construction of abilities, and for developing highly attractive projects that are in many cases necessary. However, it is possible to imagine different forms – certainly, still unknown – to transform them into collaborative processes even in these aspects. A perceived risk is the form some rankings are conducted and the consequences they generate; this is an unresolved dilemma.

The future role of UNILAT and other macro-associations

In the perspective of different associations who participated in the questionnaire, the idea of being part of an organization such as UNILAT is the hope of constructing the voice of Latin America and making a real contribution to global issues.

There are great hopes deposited on UNILAT's work, first to become a window for Latin American abilities on education, science, and technology, a bridge between HEI in the region, and a collaboration scenario with other regions in the world, including a Latin-American conference of international education of the highest level (RCI). On the other hand, REDIPERU considers that INILAT should aspire to become a recognized voice when discussing Latin American cooperation on internationalization, and with that its labor will be to direct the actions that strengthen this process, including its relations with other macro-associations.

For FIESA, it is important to keep maintaining flexible schemes for articulation and coordination that allow having dialogue and continuous meetings and in agreement with the reality faced by our countries on higher education, while AMPEI highlights the importance of following up what has been constructed so far, responding to the needs of international regional associations for international education, and maintaining equality of opportunities as the guiding principle

for actions aimed towards improving the region's development of educational quality.

The more important needs are strengthening INILAT, including other countries, planning its agenda under the principles and goals that created it, and strengthening Latin American identity in higher education through their own constructs and contents, allowing to respond to future challenges of internationalization of higher education.

Conclusions

The pandemic has represented a challenge to internationalization of higher education processes. There has been a transition from a face-to-face collaboration into a digital cooperation system. Higher education institutions had to act quickly to prepare their professors, attend to all students, identify gaps in the quality of education services due to the necessary change, not only in technological mediation but also in the type of pedagogies adequate for the new context.

In parallel, international students require different types of support: academic, psychological, logistical, and management support. Incoming and outgoing international students received support to conclude their academic programs satisfactorily and at the same time guarantee a safe return to their homes in their countries of origin. In the middle of the crisis caused by changes occurring so fast that reflection and decision-making processes could not catch up, it was necessary to exercise an exhaustive process of negotiation and management at all levels and in all directions. On the matter of internationalization, communication flowed between international relations managers to students, their parents, program directors, partner institutions, and embassies.

In this transition, associations dedicated to international cooperation and education constituted a great support and played a relevant role in decision making and finding solutions. Associations for international cooperation and education were the ones who achieved that the voices of universities were heard in secretaries or ministries of international relations and embassies to manage to put students and/or professors in humanitarian flights back home. Their role as interlocutors in attending the most concerning needs of universities

was strengthened with their capacity for understanding new forms of bringing quality education closer to more beneficiaries.

Within each country and with the support of some universities, associations organized to provide forums, conferences, seminars, and meetings with high-quality speakers, who before the pandemic was only possible to see in face-to-face, high-cost events, and therefore, few universities had access to them. Perhaps, the most valuable aspect of associations' academic organization labor was that the spaces constructed served to exchange best practices and to recognize "the others" as equals, seeking new ways in the midst of unknown circumstances.

These experiences allowed confirmation that association for collaboration among individuals, institutions, and associations is crucial to construct together a vision, plans for future work, follow-up, and joint progress.

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Multilateral Perspectives on International Academic Cooperation post-COVID-19

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Abstract

This study reflects the authors' view on the opportunities of multilateral models of academic cooperation by stressing their growing importance for sustainable internationalization in the post-Covid era. Furthermore, through their own experiences and reflections on personal participation in such projects, the authors share examples of multilateral cooperative actions, which may become dominant for the future of persistent academic exchange, sharing of knowledge and practices, and providing excellence in education and research.

Keywords: *multilateral academic cooperation, sustainability, coordination and networking, Compostela Group of Universities, European Universities Initiative*

Introduction

Today's highly interconnected global arena offers a terrain of struggle for better positioning among different actors, including universities. There is increased competition in the global knowledge space (Strassel, 2018) to ensure that institutions are well-positioned to be as attractive as possible to secure optimal quantity and diversity of highly qualified students and produce a convincing percentage of their annual budgets revenues. At the same time, because of the missions (Engwall, 2020) they fulfill in their respective regions, they also help

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actors in other sectors to increase their leverage to generate revenue. Higher education institutions can be seen as global geopolitical actors (see, e.g., Del Canto Viterale, 2018), as entities that are now among the dominant regional development players.

Recognizing the importance of the role of universities in today's world and stressing their position as actors on the international scene, this study aims to reflect on the current challenges in the structure, methods, and formats of international academic cooperation, accelerated by the worst global public health crisis since WWII. The situation of a worldwide pandemic has atomized the complexity and the objective sense of obviosity of a whole range of social activities, including the processes inherent to the field of higher education. Consequently, epidemiologic measures in place, closed borders, and severe restrictions on international travel, alongside limitations for person-to-person contacts for quite a prolonged period, have become difficult burdens for new initiatives in international inter-institutional cooperation.

Posing a question about how the international academic cooperation will change and what forms will evolve as the dominant ones in the post-pandemic world of higher education, an elevated importance of multilateralism in approach and in conduct in international university affairs seems to be one of the likely answers. Following their extensive experiences in the field of management of international university affairs, it is the authors' firm belief that international university consortia, groupings, and networks, given their organized and well-established structure and set of activities, may form the global trend in a strive to achieve an efficient and sustainable international university cooperation post-Covid.

A highly relevant aspect of multilaterality is the interconnecting interactions in science and research, where joint aims and outstanding project results also may be reached through a coordinated approach in more efficient ways. It has become clear that also the European Union has set a primary goal for the new ERASMUS+ program period for the years 2021-2027 to achieve high standards of international cooperation through a minimum of 3 partners from at least 3 different countries as the primary precondition for almost any successful project application, even in case of small-scale project cooperation activities or partnerships. The trend towards multilaterality becomes apparent in a transition towards regional cooperation schemes instead of the formerly strictly bilateral

scope (bilateral inter-institutional cooperation), as traditionally formerly applied in the mobility projects under ERASMUS+ or other similar funding schemes.

As a dominating term for the purposes of this study, multilateralism may, in its widest sense, be defined as any cooperation activity in the field of higher education involving three or more parties from at least three different countries. In its origins, it often builds upon a meaningful bilateral activity between the cooperation partners, which may grow into something broader in following joint unifying goals. Thus, in this very sense, it is not considered a contradiction to bilateralism, but rather as the next developmental phase, as a network of conjoining bilateral relations, which may have stood at the beginning of each successful multilateral cooperation activity.

The efficiency, stability, and durability of more balanced, regionally or broadly global internationally applied strategic cooperation practices will facilitate to overcome the negative effects of future global crises, may they be linked to public health, security or economic circumstances, as they are more capable to outperform hindrances which are likely to challenge a purely bilateral cooperation structure.

It is thus, in the outlined sense, the authors wish to present the perspectives for a sustainable international cooperation framework in the field of higher education by offering their perceptions and experiences to highlight the strengths of multilateral cooperation approaches, models, and schemes in higher education for the years to follow.

Academic Cooperation in University Groups and Networks

Over the years, several projects have evolved through which universities aim for a better and wider structured cooperation on the multilateral scene beyond linking their activities bilaterally. A coordinated institutionalization, supported by creating an own internal structure, management, budgeting scheme and a set of activities aimed at achieving mutual cooperation goals, has attained the form of groups, networks or associations of universities. Some of them follow a regional or more sectoral, field-specific approach. Others are more global in their scope and impact. It will not be the aim of this study to characterize these international academic alignments in a further detail one by one, but rather based on the authors' own experiences with cooperating closely with

one of such groups – namely the Compostela Group of Universities (CGU)³ – the purpose of this elaboration will be to discuss the efficiency of such multilateral cooperation fora for the future of international university cooperation.

The initial idea behind forming any group or network of universities is a joint interest to follow specific academic aspirations and share the result and outputs of such joint activity in the same mutual way and to the full benefit of each of its members. In the case of the CGU, established in 1994 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, the uniting founding objective became the promotion and facilitation of cooperation in higher education between its founding members⁴, linked to the cultural heritage of the social phenomenon in European culture – the pilgrimage of Camino de Santiago. What typically characterizes a networking university project with a stable, institutionalized structure is a varied internationalized membership composition, which over the years has grown to a total of 71 members from a total of 28 different countries. Compared to other international academic groupings or networks, which remain regional or continental in their membership structure and by their impact, the CGU has advanced to become a multicultural, intercontinental university group, by having expanded from its formerly purely European membership structure to an inter-Atlantic cooperation framework, being joined by new members from other parts of the world as well. Having reached a more global membership structure, the activities of the group may involve inter-continental efforts and create ambitious spin-off effects on both sides of the Atlantic and worldwide, not only for the participating universities from a purely institutional perspective, but even more importantly to the benefit of the member universities' students and their staff.

A representative example of the possibilities given by a membership structure involving universities from different continents, is CGU's Stella for Staff program. It is a mobility program aimed at non-teaching staff, eligible for any member of university staff in administration, management or support services, such as IT, accounting or library services, who wish to gain an international experience at another CGU member university across the Atlantic. Such intercontinental staff mobilities are supported by a mobility grant awarded by the CGU. To the services staff, this program provides an outstanding opportunity to learn from

3 See <https://web.gcompostela.org/>

4 The founding members, who have defined the ambitious university cooperation project already back in 1993, were the University of Valladolid (Spain), the University of Liège (Belgium), the University of Nantes (France), the University of Göttingen (Germany), University of Minho (Portugal) and the University Jaume I (Spain), involving members from 5 different European countries.

good practices at other participating universities in Europe or the Americas, to share their experience and knowledge in their respective work area or their field of expertise with colleagues at the receiving university, and to enrich their work-life with an intercultural experience. The creation of an own mobility program of intercontinental mobilities under the CGU framework reflects the fact that most international exchange schemes, such as ERASMUS+ or other EU and inter-governmentally funded frameworks, place a strong emphasis on the exchange of students and teaching staff. However, services staff perform an essential (but often underestimated) role in a well-balanced and successful international cooperation. After a year-long experience with the CGU Stella for Staff program it has become clear that exceptional inter-institutional cooperation perspectives or strategies can also be found on other levels of university activity, not only in the educational field, but also developing cooperation through collaborative actions in the support services sectors.

It has become a substantial aspect of the activity of the CGU to create opportunities and support the most talented students from participating member universities. Some programs are periodic – such as the annual International Video Contest to boost students' creativity in audiovisual production. The Research Pitches Contest aims primarily at Ph.D. students or young scientists, and the Stella Junior program supports students' internships, being hosted by another CGU member university. Other programs have been organized on an ad hoc basis – such as summer schools or academies (most notably, the Compostela Academy on the Camino to study and experience the pilgrimage tradition of the Camino de Santiago). Representative for the era of online activities, further initiatives were added as jointly coordinated actions, having addressed various topics and scholarly issues in the form of shared and co-hosted seminars, virtual classes, and online training sessions by several CGU members. Especially Latin American members are actively involved in introducing the Collaborative Online International Learning model, known as the COIL initiative, and have introduced their outstanding expertise and experience in this field to the wider CGU community.

Not only expressed by a wide range of activities but a further meaningful aspect of a group of universities may also be seen in its common identity, which may appear at least in a dual sense. Among its members it is joining around a connecting vision, sharing the same values and following joint aspirations and mutual interests. To the outside, it is about being visible as an actor in international academic relations by attaining institutional significance and by

articulating an influential voice on behalf of its members. To this respect, the CGU has achieved a very strong role as an institution in raising awareness of joint European values, academic and scientific excellence and for the respect and support for the preservation of European cultural heritage, connecting and defining it towards the global world. The annually awarded Grupo Compostela-Xunta de Galicia International Prize has already marked such institutional identity since 1996. In its main vision, demonstrated by close cooperation of the academic community with actors of the civil society and with a valuable support and financial contribution by the local government of the Spanish region of Galicia, it addresses the very core idea of the Compostela Group itself – to facilitate to attain the visibility of exceptional personalities, whose activity and life work have been closely interrelated with European cultural values. Articulated through academic excellence in science and education, performing or having performed an outstanding role in the European civil society or political life, which has contributed to significantly accentuate the joint European identity and values, the awardee is being selected by an acclaimed international jury, representing the CGU academic community both from Europe and the Americas. In 2021, the 25th edition of the International Prize Grupo Compostela-Xunta de Galicia will be celebrated, marking a small anniversary of this remarkable international academic tradition.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and especially the fact that it has turned into a global pandemic has brought numerous challenges to any field of human activity. In international academic cooperation, the general public health concerns and respective limitations for the daily life of the higher education area were conjoined by a complete termination or at least temporary restrictions to cross-border movement, the introduction of stringent quarantine regulations, and long-lasting travel bans imposed by governments, have made it almost impossible to carry on almost any in-person cross-border activity. This, more than a challenging situation, which has brought international cooperation and daily exchange inflow of ideas and experiences between the universities across the world, has shown that seeking new strategies and defining innovative ways of daily conduct became unavoidable. In a situation where unfavorable conditions and limitations may persist over a considerably long period and influence relationships created in a bilateral scheme, multilateral perspectives may arise as even more substantial than under normal circumstances, inherent to the pre-pandemic era. Thus, the ability to reflect on the changing situation and to address joint strategies and solutions has proven more efficient in the activity of international university networks, having their own institutional

structures, management and administration capacities. Still, it is up to the member universities to decide whether they wish to be involved in certain activities or not. In the case of the CGU's reaction to the global pandemic, the Stella for Staff program was swiftly modified to allow virtual mobilities alongside the classic in-person exchange. Quite naturally, without any further need for regional coordination or accord, it became clear that due to travel restrictions, member universities from the Americas almost unanimously opted only to host virtual mobilities of staff from their European counterparts temporarily. On the European side, most higher education institutions still prioritized to host the interested candidates in person, although within a limited time frame of an academic year, when travel restrictions were lifted during an improved epidemiologic situation in their countries. For a group of universities the mutual feeling for the reality and necessity for in-person interactions to pursue future joint actions has led to an understanding that whenever possible, while adhering to any public health measures and policies, the activity of the group needs to return to an in-person mode, with the extended possibility of a remote online access.

The European Universities Initiative

One of the most ambitious concepts of the EU for multiplayer collaboration, in the very sense of regional European multilaterality in higher education and research is the *European Universities Initiative*, launched upon the proposal that was highlighted in a speech at Sorbonne University in September 2017 by French President Emmanuel Macron. He then called for a new action that can support the creation of 'European Universities' alliances, "a network of universities across Europe with programmes that have all their students study abroad and take classes in at least two languages. These European Universities will also be drivers of educational innovation and the quest for excellence." (Macron 2017) For the first pilot phase between 2019–2021, 54 applications, including over 300 universities from 31 countries, were submitted to the European Commission, which has selected 17 alliances, each receiving up to 5 million EUR over a project duration of three years. As Gunn explains, we are witnessing the build-up of "a novel organisational form for a university alliance, [differing] from established multilateral structures ... a 'network of networks', a series of self-contained, unique, alliances developed using a bottom-up approach, which is united through their membership of a top-down strategic scheme with common overarching aims and objectives" (Gunn 2020: 18).

As a case study in our paper, the European Digital UniverCity (EDUC) alliance⁵, which is among the first consortia that got support from the European Commission, will be examined closely. Its members include the University of Potsdam (leader of the consortium), the University Paris-Nanterre, the University of Rennes 1, the University of Cagliari, Masaryk University, and the University of Pécs. In 2019, EDUC had 1,808 partner universities around the globe, meaning a ‘network of networks’ in 1034 different cities in 111 countries on all continents. Out of this wide pool of partner universities, two-thirds are a partner of only one EDUC member institution, meaning that most of the alliance’s inter-institutional partnerships are not overlapping, and the consortium brings many new possible partners to each member. At the same time, there are 15 universities, which are partners to all of the members, and 52 universities, which are partners to at least 5 of the members. (Internal document of EDUC WP11, 2019) The enhanced interconnectedness of this new form of multilaterality (network of networks) approach is clearly tangible within EDUC, too.

Responding to the recent shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic to online solutions in education in general, and digital distance approaches in higher education in particular, the EDUC European University Alliance intends to confirm its long-term goal of building up an innovative common space of academic community in the form of its core idea of “UniverCity”. Within its realm of digitally supported cross-campus and cross-disciplinary teaching activities, curricula and mobility schemes – among others – EDUC intends to support educators in developing the necessary digital competencies that can foster the modernization and digital transformation of universities by new training. This emerging digital society, which makes all actors in all walks of life change their attitudes by adapting them to the new realities of the interconnected competition scene, transforms and drifts partnerships to focus on acquiring new skills and competencies. New multilaterality, therefore, centres around the promotion and provision of these new attributes.

In addition to teaching and education, the European Universities Initiative embraces research and innovation, and with the help of the EU’s Horizon programme, under the aegis of the “Science with and for the Society” (SwafS), launched by the European Commission within Horizon 2020, additional funding has been provided for the European Universities to foster more multilateral interactions within their alliances. This, at the same time, can certainly create

5 See <https://educalliance.eu/>

synergies between the EU funding programmes. In the new European Skills Agenda, the European Commission outlines how the European Universities should be rolled out as long-term, transnational alliances between universities across Europe, setting new standards for the entire European Education Area and the European Research Area⁶.

For the EDUC alliance, EDUC-SHARE represents the research and innovation part of cooperation within the pilot phase, coordinated by the University of Rennes 1, launched on 12 March 2021 for three years. The main ambitions and goals of EDUC-SHARE include: the implementation of a long-term research and innovation agenda; the development and sharing of research infrastructure; the citizen implication in science and its role in society; the reinforcement of regional ecosystems and their connection; sharing continuous improvement processes in terms of human resources and the development of soft skills training offers for researchers and administrators. (Internal document of EDUC-SHARE). All these aspects again reveal how important it is to set long-term strategic goals and work out schemes of implementation for the sake of the successful realisation of a new type and quality of multilateral, transnational cooperation among higher education institutions as true centres of gravity in terms of knowledge production and sharing, as well as boosting and managing the multi-stakeholder dynamics of our global era.

Conclusion

The two examples presented in this study – the cooperation framework of the Compostela Group of Universities and the recently launched European Universities Initiative – demonstrate the possible ways of efficient multilateral approaches to international academic cooperation in post-Covid times. Likely to be less vulnerable to obstacles in the mutual cooperation prospects, given their broader membership involvement, the range of activities covered, and established rules of conduct in an institutionalized structure, they seem to present possible ways of cooperation mechanisms for the years to come, building upon well-functioning bilateral frameworks and practices rather than aiming to replace them.

6 See <https://www.daad-brussels.eu/en/eu-higher-education-policy/european-universities/>

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AIEA: Successfully Supporting International Education Leaders through the Pandemic

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The Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) is the leading professional organization for university leaders responsible for internationalizing their institutions. In February 2020, AIEA held its largest-ever in-person conference in Washington D.C. USA with nearly 1,000 participants from 40+ countries, including delegations from such countries as Angola, Brazil, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, and Nigeria. Little did participants know that the 2020 AIEA Conference was to be the last in-person conference in the field of international education for months to come.

In March 2020, when the full brunt of the pandemic came crashing down around the world, AIEA quickly organized its first town hall to bring members together and provide them with a space to connect with each other around the pressing issues of the pandemic. Given that AIEA exists to support members and bring them together to learn from and with each other, there was not any question but that AIEA would continue to support its members during the pandemic, including in new ways. AIEA proved to be quite agile in organizing and providing weekly town hall discussions for its members from the first town hall on March 13, 2020 through May 2020. Starting in June 2020, AIEA continued its town hall discussions twice a month through November and resumed monthly town halls from March 2021. These town hall discussions received very positive reviews from members and averaged around 150 participants. Members particularly appreciated the timeliness and relevance of the topics (in one case, AIEA's town hall topic took place just as new immigration changes were being announced that same day!) as well as the value of connecting with experts and with each other in determining the way forward on these topics. Topics addressed included

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supporting international students, the future of study abroad, finance and international education, immigration changes, navigating the future, and the role of racial and social justice in international education. It should be noted that during 2020, AIEA regularly surveyed members as to their feedback on the new programs as well as their needs, including pressing topics to address. This meant that the town hall topics were proposed and guided by members directly, and each of the discussions had robust member participation.

From November 2020 through February 2021, AIEA turned its attention to supporting members through programs that culminated in a very successful online conference on Feb 15-17, 2021 with the theme of “Leading International Education in a New Era: Collaborating for Global Solutions.” Initially, there was hope that the pandemic would have subsided enough by February 2021 to allow for an in-person conference to take place, but as COVID numbers continued to increase during the last months of 2020, it became quickly evident that AIEA’s annual conference would need to be virtual in February 2021. The conference chair, Cheryl Matherly, and the conference committee, in conversation with the AIEA Executive Director Darla Deardorff and the AIEA Secretariat, became very engaged in determining the best ways to design this virtual conference to allow full engagement of all who participated as they gained the latest insights and information in learning from and with each other in continuing to navigating the pandemic. Innovative features of this conference included pre-conference online networking meetups starting in January where members could continue to connect with each other. Six online workshops were offered to members in January on such topics as designing virtual online learning programs, fostering a data-informed culture to support international education, the future of education abroad, and the role of international educators in racial healing. These highly interactive online workshops (involving breakout rooms and other interactive tools such as polling and collaboration tools) proved to be more successful than initially assumed as a higher than expected number of participants were able to engage in surprisingly collaborative ways with each other through the workshops. Participants in the conference itself, which included nearly 700 registrants from 40+ countries, were surprised by the intimacy of the conference despite its online nature. Several decisions made this intimacy possible, including the conference chair’s decision to only offer sessions in “real-time” and not pre-recorded sessions. While this had the downside of time zone constraints, this decision proved to be really key in helping participants feel more connected to each other during the conference. Sessions were recorded and could be viewed later by participants, which made the conference an invaluable resource for the

three months afterward. Another key facet that increased the more intimate connections forged during the virtual conference were the special social events including informal “lunch” discussions, and special events at the end of each day including one that featured poet laureate Trapeta Mayson and another that showcased a live tailored performance of an outstanding jazz duo known as Acute Inflections. Participants also appreciated being able to interact with stellar keynotes who included former UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, founder and chairman of Harappa Education Pramath Sinha, Francisco Marmolejo of the Qatar Foundation, visionary university president David Wilson, COVID-19 expert Michael Osterholm in conversation with the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* Karin Fischer, and futurist Gary Bolles of Singularity.

In addition to offering town hall discussions, the association was also very responsive to members in quickly developing a new program called Peer Learning Circles, which has also been very well received by members. Peer Learning Circles were initiated and implemented starting in Summer 2020 based on a stated need from members to connect with each other in more specific ways, whether from similar institutions, or around one particular topic such as restarting study abroad. Through these Peer Learning Circles, small numbers of members are able to connect online with each other on a deeper level each month to discuss burning issues often related to the pandemic. As of the writing of this article (in fall 2021), AIEA is pleased to have organized four consecutive cohorts of Peer Learning Circles with more to come, involving nearly half of its membership to date. Participants in each cohort agree to meet monthly over a four-month period. AIEA has heard that some from even the first cohort still continue to meet even after their Peer Learning Circles officially ended.

In the midst of the pandemic, AIEA was pleased to partner with two other organizations—the Forum on Education Abroad and EF: Education First—in developing a unique professional development opportunity in conjunction with Nobel Dialogue Week called the Senior Global Leadership Symposium in which teams of university leaders from over 40 universities around the world came together virtually in December 2020 to learn from Nobel Laureates and other leaders over a two-day period. Specifically, the teams comprise the Senior International Officer, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Education Abroad Director—this is particularly important since AIEA members have often stated how important it is that they connect more closely with their Chief Academic Officers in particular. Participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate as an institutional team and found the Symposium to be quite

insightful in envisioning a post-pandemic future. Given current travel challenges and restrictions, this event will also continue virtually in December 2021. It is hoped this annual program will continue in-person in the future.

While the pandemic has hit all organizations quite hard in regard to finances, AIEA is fortunate to have a financial reserve as well as to have received some funds from the state and federal governments to help address the shortfall from the 2021 conference and slightly lower membership numbers. The small staff of four (including only three for three months of the pandemic) has continued working remotely for the last year and a half, with some return to the office in October 2021, and has persevered through the challenges wrought by the pandemic, though it has been important to pay attention to mental health issues and stressors that arise. From an executive director perspective, it has been helpful to connect with counterparts in other international education associations to discuss ways of navigating the pandemic as associational leaders. Now, with the vaccination as a gamechanger, there is hope that the worst is over as the world slowly begins to recover from the pandemic. Even in the slow recovery, there have been setbacks with the emergence of the delta variant which emphasizes the clear need of learning to live with the COVID virus and its variants in the long-term.

One of the main needs noted by AIEA members is the desire to network with each other and to have opportunities to learn from and with each other. Some of the “silver linings” of the pandemic is that AIEA members were indeed able to connect with each other in new and different ways through the town hall discussions, the Peer Learning Circles, and the new Senior Global Leadership Symposium, as well as through the series of pre-conference networking meetups. Thus, members had a myriad of ways to connect with each other throughout the year, when in the pre-pandemic world, these connections mostly only took place at the annual conference and then with only those able to attend. With virtual opportunities, more AIEA members have been able to connect regardless of location, budget, or institutional size. Moving forward, AIEA plans to continue to look for new and innovative ways for members to connect with each other in substantive ways. Further, with what some could call the twin pandemic of hate that has emerged, AIEA and its leadership have recommitted to addressing Justice, Equity, Inclusion and Diversity (JEDI) within the association, starting with the appointment of a task force to help guide the association through the creation of a JEDI plan that will be integrated throughout the association, meaning its policies, practices, and programs. AIEA has also continued curating

a list of helpful resources for members on its website to help members navigate the pandemic.

The theme of the 2022 AIEA conference is “Why the Internationalization of Higher Education Matters” and will be as an asynchronous hybrid experience for participants. Specifically, AIEA will offer again virtual workshops in January, followed by an in-person conference in New Orleans (situation permitting) followed by a first-ever virtual Global Summit in April. Thus, members can participate in both the virtual and in-person offerings, and for those unable to travel in-person to New Orleans, they will still be able to participate in the online workshops and the virtual Global Summit. AIEA is thrilled to be celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2022, with various celebrations taking place throughout the coming year.

During this pandemic, AIEA has been working on the second edition of *The Handbook of International Higher Education*, first published in 2012 by Sage. The initial editorial team of Darla Deardorff, Hans de Wit, John Heyl, and Tony Adams developed a comprehensive resource, with the guidance of AIEA, that was meant to be foundational for internationalization leaders. The second edition of the handbook, co-edited by Darla Deardorff, Hans de Wit, Betty Leask, and Harvey Charles, features several new chapters given that international higher education continues to evolve. Some of the new chapters include ones on managing risk, on engaging students as partners, and another on engaging faculty staff. There are also chapters on virtual exchange and on serving communities. The final chapter features voices of rising scholars from around the world and highlights some emerging themes including the following:

- Inclusivity and equity
- Decolonization of internationalization
- Internationalization for society
- Forced internationalization (such as refugees)
- Internationalization of the curriculum
- Digital internationalization
- Affordability and access of internationalization

Throughout the handbook, recurring themes of hope emerge which point to a possible new era of transformational internationalization emerging in the post-pandemic future. Francisco Marmolejo notes that there is no doubt that the

long-term impact of the pandemic on higher education and more specifically on internationalization is yet to be fully understood. He goes on to say that as the world finds itself in an increasingly polarized and volatile environment, many may question the value and benefits of a global dimension of a national education. And yet, Marmolejo states unequivocally “Internationalization of higher education is needed now more than ever.” AIEA is pleased to contribute this second edition during such a critical time in the history of the world, and as higher education institutions emerge from this pandemic-fueled crisis. This crucial resource is yet another way in which AIEA hopes to continue to meet members’ needs as well as those in the broader field of international education.

All in all, AIEA has succeeded quite well in meeting member needs during the pandemic, despite the challenges. In reflecting upon this success, it is important that the association sought out members’ needs and responded with agility in meeting these needs. Further, AIEA members serving in leadership roles were able to step up their efforts in meeting member needs – and this despite the additional strains placed on them in their roles as Senior International Officers guiding their institutions through the pandemic’s impact on institutional international programs. And of course, even with this success, there are always ways to improve continued associational support of members.

The COVID-19 pandemic upended the world as we know it. Future crises and disruptions are a given; moving forward, it will be helpful to take the experiences from the pandemic to apply in future crises. Some lessons learned from these past 18+ months of the pandemic for associations, based on AIEA’s experience, include the following:

1. Support members throughout the crisis, calibrating such support to members’ needs;
2. Stay attuned to members and regularly seek members’ input on their needs, knowing that such needs will change over the course of the crisis;
3. Remain as nimble as possible (which may include the creation of new programs as needed to support members better) and being ever responsive to the changing situation, which in the case of COVID, included staff working remotely and having flexible work schedules

4. Create multiple opportunities for members to connect with each other as they navigate their way through the crisis
5. Utilize the virtual space in a variety of ways to support members in seeing the association as a one-stop shop for information, direction, and support their professional needs
6. Focus on enhanced communication with members and leaders
7. Remember that leadership matters, especially in a crisis!
8. Ensure an adequate reserve fund to keep the association operating in times of financial duress.

In looking to the future, AIEA understands that the post-pandemic world will not be a return to the way things had been given the total disruption of the pandemic upon international education. Rather, the association embraces the opportunities created through this new landscape as it seeks to continue to support and meet its members' needs in a changed environment. To sum up thoughts in looking to the future, here are the collective words of AIEA members who wrote the following poem during the 2021 AIEA Annual Conference:

AIEA Collaborative Poem

February 15, 2021

Guided by Trapeta Mayson, Poet Laureate of Philadelphia

Oh 2021

I feel anxious, but I embrace the energy that exudes from the souls of those I love
I feel disillusioned, but I embrace opportunities for deepening commitments to global justice

I feel skeptical, but I embrace optimism

Perplexed, but I embrace adventure

Overwhelmed, but I see so many possibilities ahead

I feel amazed, and I embrace the unknown with optimism for its infinite possibilities

I feel hopeful, and I embrace life as it is

Suspicious, but I embrace the possibility that you'll leave me feeling hopeful and in awe

Oh 2021

I feel galvanized, and I embrace growth and new life
Courageous, and I embrace new possibilities
Optimistic, and I embrace change, transition and the unknown

Oh 2021

I feel courageous and I embrace, I embrace, I embrace anyone who will come
Perplexed and overwhelmed, but I embrace daily gratitude and grace
Confused, but I embrace hope
Vulnerable, but I embrace the uncertainty of the road ahead
Eager, and I embrace growth and change

I embrace the uncertain days to come
Overwhelmed, but I am moving forward bravely
I embrace opportunities for intercultural learning both near and far
I embrace the insecurity of what is to come
I embrace hope that we are now better prepared
Who is caring for the caretaker?

I feel eager and I embrace this time of transition
I embrace the future which will bring me closer to the hearts, arms, and physical
presence of others, sipping wine and laughing

Poem Contributors:

Eny Di Iorio, Jewell Winn, Jeff Cohen, Wondwossen Gebreyes, Erich Dietrich, Laura Allen, Sonia Feigenbum, Penelope Pynes, Sarah Olson, Katy Rosenbaum, Kelsey Prima, Cari Vanderkar, GianMario Besana, Mirian Carballo, Jennifer Evanui, Thomas Buntru, Megan Francis, Elizabeth Langridge-Noti, Sue Roberts, Christa Olson, Lisa Pawloski, Marko Princevac, Rosalie Richards, Dale LaFleur, Sue Roberts, Charles Reilly and Karen Wachsmuth.

The Challenge of Internationalization in Peruvian Universities

Sheyla Salazar Fernández¹

In Peru, unlike other countries in the region, higher education was not the responsibility of the State, which was only responsible for K-12 education. In this scenario, discussing internationalization among Peruvian universities is still a process requiring awareness, training, and learning for decision-making among managers and university and government authorities.

This chapter begins with an overview of the situation of universities at the national level and the change that has been generated through new regulations that rule them, and that has resulted in the closing of a good number of universities. Then, it presents a brief overview of the situation faced by universities with the advent of the pandemic, and the need for state support both for public and private universities. In this context, this chapter reflects on the vision and activities of the offices in charge, because many of them are not only focused on internationalization, but also on inter-institutional management. It also examines the status of internationalization as an indicator used in entities related to evaluating the quality of Peruvian higher education institutions. Finally, it reports on the creation of the Peruvian Network for the Internationalization of University Higher Education and its actions and scope within its member universities.

This study also includes the work and impact of the pandemic on international offices and the perspectives that are envisioned for their development and strengthening, also reflecting on the needs, possibilities, and aspirations that universities should outline considering the leadership of internationalization as a transversal axis to their institutions.

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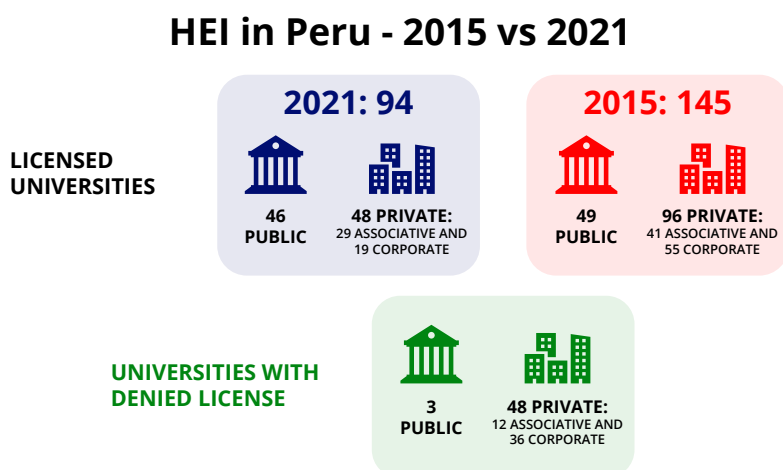
Context of Peruvian Higher Education

The Peruvian education system has gone through a series of changes since 2014, with the approval of the new university law (No. 30220) through which the State for the first time takes on the role of oversight of universities through the Ministry of Education (MINEDU), with the Department of Management of Higher Education, and under the mandate and creation of a new entity called the National Superintendence of University Education (SUNEDU).

To understand the Peruvian higher education system, we must start by understanding that we have three types of universities, according to their management regime: public, private non-profit (associative) and private for-profit (business) universities. Public universities receive funds from the State and the development of their activities and the resources they can collect directly are based on this budget. Private-nonprofit (associative) universities are private universities but established as non-profit, which is why they must revert their income to the institution itself. Finally, there are the private for-profit (business) universities. These universities were created in 1996, when the so-called “investment promotion law” was passed, which allowed the creation of for-profit (business) universities, thus initiating a cycle of excessive opening of universities, without regarding or complying with some basic quality standards to operate.

As of 2014, Peru had 145 universities: 49 public and 96 private (55 business and 41 associative). However, the State did not guarantee university higher education, much less a public service that promotes transparency in accountability. Therefore, in 2012, the so-called Moratorium Law was passed, prohibiting the creation of new universities. This was the first step in the reform, two years later in 2014 the new law No. 30220 was published, which promotes the continuous improvement of the educational quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and designates MINEDU as the governing body of the policy of quality assurance of university higher education, which begins to have oversight of them. Through the newly created SUNEDU, the university licensing process began, which lasted five years (2015-2020), resulting in a reduction from 145 universities to 94 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Higher Education Institutions in Peru 2015 vs 2021



The Situation of Universities during the Pandemic

When the pandemic began, Peruvian universities were in the midst of a reform process. As indicated, the licensing process led to the closure of 51 HEI, which represented 35% of the total number of universities. It is important to mention that the closing was not immediate; their new status initially granted them two years to continue operating, and due to the pandemic, it was revised to a period of five years because of the shutdown of their activities. This time must be used to formalize documentation and support students in transferring to other HEI. These universities are no longer authorized to carry out new admission processes.

On the other hand, the universities that achieved licensing through compliance with what SUNEDU called the eight basic quality conditions did not include the use of virtual platforms or access to quality remote education. The requirements that the universities had to meet were minimum standards for their operation: (i) Existence of academic objectives, degrees, titles and curricula; (ii) Educational offering compatible with planning instruments; (iii) Adequate infrastructure and equipment to fulfill their functions (classrooms, libraries, laboratories, among others); (iv) Lines of research to be developed; v) Availability of qualified teaching staff with no less than 25% of full-time faculty; vi) Basic complementary educational services (medical, social, psycho-pedagogical, sports, among others);

vii) Job placement mechanisms (job pool or others); and viii) Supplementary basic quality conditions: university transparency.

Furthermore, the University Law 30220 limited virtual education, setting percentage ceilings for its development at the undergraduate level and also limiting online studies at the graduate level. As was common, online education was viewed with disdain, until the pandemic arrived and turned us all to virtuality, with no other option. In the Peruvian case, the pandemic forced MINEDU to change the law to adapt to the global health emergency, thereby modifying article 47 of the Law and introducing three types of education: face-to-face, semi face-to-face, and remote. This allowed universities to continue providing educational services at both undergraduate and graduate levels and from that moment on having fully virtual programs.

Once the impasse of local regulations was solved, the universities (mostly the public ones) had to face the lack of resources to turn their face-to-face education into online education. For this, in May of 2020 the government had to allocate 14 million soles (3.5 million dollars approximately) to cover the needs of technical assistance and training for the development of online classes. However, the capacity of response to the adaptation process was slow, and according to the study published by Figallo et al. (2020), as of May 15, two months after the closing of universities (March 12), 59 universities (26 public and 33 private) began classes that month; the remaining universities gradually began in the following months in a slow process and with many difficulties not only on behalf of students but also on behalf of teachers in terms of access to equipment and Internet. As the months elapsed, public universities obtained a larger budget from the State with new disbursements aimed at covering the digital gap and private universities were able to access credits from the State, within the program called Reactiva Perú, in order to help them in the face of the national economic insolvency.

Internationalization in Peru Pre Pandemic

The internationalization of higher education in Peru is still not very well known or studied. Under current higher education legislations, internationalization is named as one of the 17 guiding principles of higher education. Although it is only a mention, it is a first step in the recognition of internationalization as a necessary process in universities. The certification process, as indicated above, is based on basic conditions that must be met by HEI to provide educational

services, which is why no evaluation is made of the internationalization process. And if this were the case, this certification process should begin by guaranteeing the existence of offices in charge of the international relations of universities, a situation that is not always assured as such in Peruvian universities.

An example of this is seen just by reviewing the names of the offices in charge of the international area. At the national level, a large percentage are offices are in charge of both national and international relations. The separation of duties has not been achieved. The offices are either focused on signing local and foreign agreements or only focused on practical activities of physical mobility and communicating opportunities for international scholarships. A quick review of some names of these offices can give us an idea of the situation and impact of these offices internally: Directorate of International Technical Cooperation (UNSAAC - Cusco), Office of Cooperation, Agreements, International, Relations, Scholarships and Internships (UNSA - Arequipa), General Office of Institutional Image, Cooperation and Public (UNC- Cajamarca), Office of National and International Cooperation (UNAP - Puno), Central Office of National and International Relations (UNFV - Lima).

On the other hand, entities such as the National System for the Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of Educational Quality (SINEACE), which carries out two types of evaluations: one for the accreditation of programs and another for institutional accreditation, considers mobility through national and international agreements within their indicators of accreditation of programs, in what they call the dimension of comprehensive education. That is, the measurement of these standards is basic and without further explanation regarding percentages or actions that universities must develop and/or achieve in the area of internationalization.

At the institutional level, it is an issue that is under review, however, there is an approach of the institution towards including internationalization as one of the key factors to be evaluated. Nonetheless, the accreditation processes of Peruvian programs is voluntary. The only programs required to be accredited, according to current regulations, are degrees in Health Sciences, Education, and Law.

Given this context at the national level, we can affirm that the internationalization of Peruvian universities is in an incipient situation and requires development and strengthening. It is still necessary to raise awareness among local and

governmental authorities and improve the capacities of the managers in charge of the international offices.

Creation of the Peruvian Network for the Internationalization of University Higher Education

The creation of the Peruvian Network for the Internationalization of University Higher Education (REDIPERÚ), emerged as an initiative of the managers of the founding universities with the support from the Department of Higher Education Management (DIGESU) to establish a policy of actions that considered internationalization as a crosscutting value to the functions of the university.

Within this framework, the establishment of the Network was formalized by agreement of eight deans in 2016, and was made up of both public and private non-profit (associative) universities. The founding universities are: Universidad de Lima, Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina (Lima), Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Lima), Universidad del Pacífico (Lima), Universidad ESAN (Lima), Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (Lima), Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia (Lima) and Universidad de Piura (Piura and Lima). To date, the following have joined as adherent members: Universidad Católica de Santa María (Arequipa), Universidad Andina del Cusco, Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú (Huancayo), Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abad del Cusco, Universidad Católica San Pablo (Arequipa), Universidad Nacional de San Agustín (Arequipa) and Universidad Ricardo Palma (Lima).

The basic actions carried out by the Network are to serve as a representative body before government entities, embassies, and institutions related to the internationalization of its member universities, and to promote training and awareness of national actors in strengthening the internationalization processes of universities. According to a survey conducted among its members in March 2021, when asked about the benefits it considers are obtained by participating in REDIPERU, the following options were provided: Training and information through webinars held and/or promoted, contacts with offerings from agencies such as Austrade, the National Council for Science, Technology and Technological Innovation (CONCYTEC), opportunities to exchange experiences and learning among network members, opportunities generated through REDIPERU's participation in the Latin American Initiative for the Internationalization of Higher Education (INILAT), and none of the above. The highest percentage

and recognition that the Network obtains among its associates is for sharing or conducting training webinars and as a means of learning experiences. Something that was undoubtedly strengthened during the pandemic. However, the Network also aims to have a voice to promote internationalization in public policies, to have a Peruvian education brand, to encourage strategic alliances, to support research of international impact among its associates, and to build a comprehensive international vision in Peruvian HEI.

Impact of the Pandemic on International Offices

The situation of the pandemic caught us all unprepared to deal with a situation of this scope. With the closing of the borders at the national level, the first challenge that the international offices had to take on, and with increasing pressure as the weeks went by, was the work of coordinating the return of their students abroad and the departure of the international students in the country.

In March 2020, when the pandemic became visible worldwide, Peru was about to start the academic year, and therefore, a large number of international students had already arrived. The work carried out with them was basically through their embassies, which were in charge of registering them and supporting them in their repatriation flights; and providing support to some international students who decided to stay in the country, despite the uncertainty of the situation.

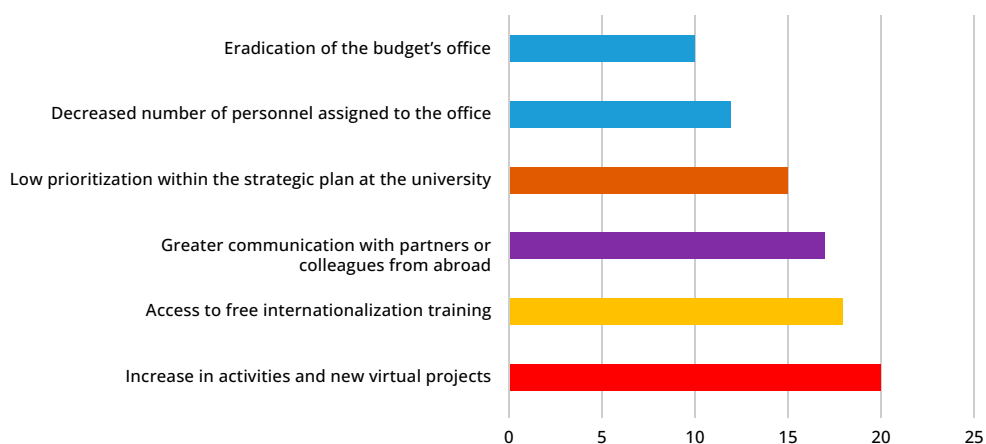
The case of Peruvian students stranded abroad, most of them with little resources, represented a great concern for the mobility areas that received worried requests from parents. This situation led to a first action at the level of the Peruvian Network for the Internationalization of Higher Education. As a first action, a database of stranded students and their corresponding locations was created, which was shared and further coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Teamwork under the same strategy of representation and sharing of efforts paid off with the return of the Peruvian students and showed that collaborative work in times of crisis works. It should also be noted that, while the member universities of the Network carried out the repatriation work jointly, the rest of the universities at the national level did the work directly and individually.

After this first impact, which was initially thought temporary, we were all led to a new style of work and to redefine our strategies and actions. At the international

office level, a change in the situation was reflected, beyond working at home or the closing of borders that halted the mobility process. Many of these areas known only or mainly for student mobility actions were considered as non-essential areas in this new normal. This situation was evident in the reduction of personnel in some international offices at the national level, and the consequent elimination of the budgets allocated to them.

REDIPERU wanted to know in greater detail the impact on the international offices, and so the survey conducted among its associates asked them to indicate which actions had had an impact on their development. It is important to note that this survey was conducted in March 2021, that is, almost a year after the beginning of the pandemic. The alternatives included both positive and negative actions that could have occurred. With 28% of REDIPERU members indicating an increase in activities and new virtual projects, followed by 18% indicating access to free training on internationalization, and 17% indicating that the impact has been greater communication with partners or colleagues abroad. In fact, the impact on positive actions adds up to 63% vs. 37% of actions such as: low prioritization within the strategic plan in the university (15%), 12% who claim to have had a reduction in the staff assigned to the office and 10% indicate having lost the budget allocated to their office (see figure 2).

Figure 2: *Impact of the Pandemic on International Offices*



The results indicating that there were greater positive than negative effects, in fact, coincides with the research conducted by the International Association of Universities (IAU) in its report of the global survey conducted in 2020 on the

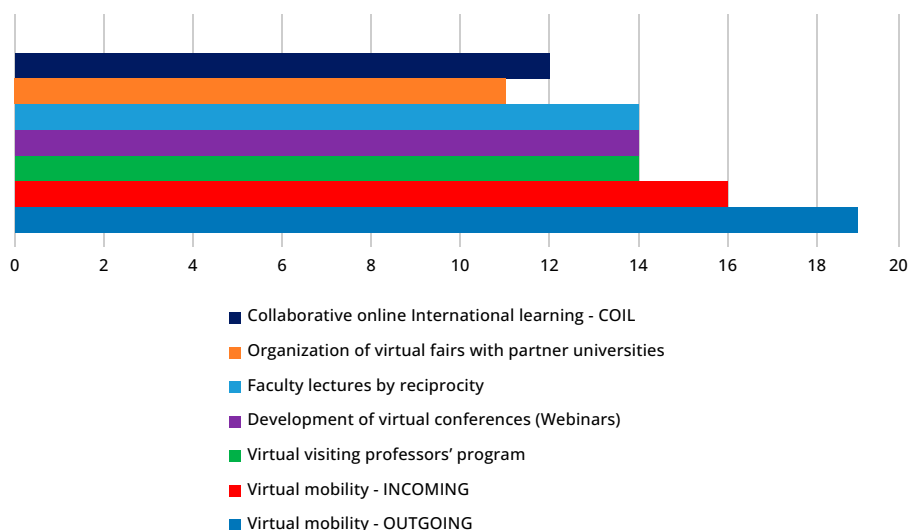
"Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education around the World", which asks: *How has Covid affected your alliances?* The responses at a global level show that: It weakened them, we had to concentrate our resources on local issues (51%), strengthened them, concentrated their efforts to respond to COVID-19 (18%), and 31% pointed out that it created new opportunities with partner institutions (for example, virtual mobility, resources, etc). However, if an analysis is carried out at the regional level, Latin America reports greater positive effects (59%) with the strengthening of relations with 27%, and 32% stating that Covid created new opportunities.

In this scenario, the international areas that knew how to respond quickly by changing their strategies during the first year of the pandemic (2020) managed to develop a series of actions that have strengthened cooperation in the region. An interesting fact is that prior to the pandemic, student mobility activities in Latin America and the Caribbean did not mainly take place in the same region, but instead had North America and Europe as their main destinations, according to the study developed by IESALC -- UNESCO (2019).

However, in virtuality, despite the lack of specific studies, the experience and presentation of new projects confirms that the development of internationalization actions among Latin American universities has been strengthened. Among the activities carried out by the member universities of REDIPERU we found that 19%, and as the number one activity, was the promotion of outgoing virtual mobility, followed by 16% of incoming virtual mobility. The division of the processes was considered important because, as the results show, the percentage of universities that decided to open the opportunity for outgoing mobility, either through networks or bilateral agreements, is higher than the internal development of a virtual mobility program open to the outside world. With the following three options having an equal percentage of 14%: international virtual faculty programs, development of reciprocal master lectures, and development of webinars, focused on different subjects and not necessarily within the formal curricula. It is important to point out the difference between the first two options, while in the first one, international guest lecturers can be invited for a single class or session, in the second option it is done under the figure of reciprocity. In sixth place, with 12%, was the organization of virtual fairs for promotion and/or strengthening with foreign partners, activities that were basically focused on students and thinking about a future of physical mobility. Finally, with 11% the development of the so-called Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). COIL has gained great relevance in the pandemic

because it is a methodological tool that supports curricular internationalization and allows networking of faculty and students through the innovation of their teaching-learning processes.

Figure 3: *Internationalization Actions during the Pandemic*



Finally, it is necessary to first point out the diversity of actions developed in online education. In general, it is not that the universities have focused on a single main action, but rather that most of them have initiated various strategies, either actively or passively, that is, by generating their own programs or responding to proposals from abroad. Secondly, it is necessary to indicate that these responses correspond to the actions developed mostly by private non-profit (associative) universities that are members of REDIPERU, but not necessarily replicable at the national level, where the reality in terms of the expertise of the managers or connectivity problems could have caused internationalization actions to be paralyzed to a large extent since the pandemic.

Conclusions and Perspectives of the Internationalization in Peruvian Universities

The context of development of Peruvian university higher education is still in the process of changing. Although after the licensing evaluation, work has

begun to improve the quality of Peruvian HEI and the closing of universities, there is still political instability on the subject.

There are no government policies or incentives through licensing or accreditation, nor other guidelines that support the establishment of internationalization as a transversal policy in all universities.

The development of internationalization in Peruvian universities is uneven, it is the private universities and especially in Lima, which have developed the most Internationalization strategies, due to the support they have by having their own budgets and having specialized managers.

The pandemic was an opportunity for international areas that knew how to adapt their processes and programs. Those who reacted quickly were able to set their planning on track with a series of activities, one of which, and one of the most outstanding, was approaching teachers for the development of mirror classes or international virtual collaborations as something innovative. This approach to faculty is very valuable because in pre-pandemic times many of the activities were focused on students, and although internationalization strategies at home are not new, the faculty did not see much interest or strength in developing them. As a result of COVID-19 and virtuality, teachers were called to act and respond by making collaborations that made internationalization of their classes possible, and through this, democratize the internationalization of their students having access not only to shared knowledge but to be able to interact from their homes with students of other cities.

In Peru, the establishment of REDIPERU -despite being a small network- for the first time makes internationalization visible as an important axis among universities. It is becoming a representative network when it comes to internationalization in Peru, however, there is still a need to strengthen the commitment and actions of all universities, starting with the development of policies and strategies that go beyond pronouncements.

Internationalization in Peru needs to be understood and conceptualized by each university according to its own characteristics and strengths. Having universities that are not only different in terms of their type of management, but also in terms of their location and seniority, requires first of all strengthening their actions and promoting their internal development, starting with the statement of their mission and vision and the definition of the profile of their students in

each of the institutions. To understand that internationalization is not simply copying what other universities are already doing, but rather, based on their own situation, develop the strategies and actions that are most beneficial and sustainable. To achieve this, incentives must be provided at the institutional level in each university, but also at the governmental level. There is a need for policies that stimulate professionalization of their managers and the development of new strategies according to their own needs and aspirations in which the State acts as a driving force for continuous improvement, understanding that internationalization is a process in constant progress.

When these processes begin to be directed and strengthened in all universities at the national level, it will result in having universities with greater impact and representativeness at the international level and achieve a country brand of Peruvian education in which Peruvian HEI are recognized as high-level academic destinations. This also entails strengthening the transversal development of internationalization in all the functions of the Peruvian university, in a sustainable way, and recognized as a generator of global professionals who impact both the local and global development of our society.

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Internationalization of Higher Education in Mexico: A Step behind Global Trends?

Jocelyne Gacel-Ávila and Guadalupe Vázquez-Niño¹

Abstract

This paper analyzes the current state of higher education internationalization in Mexico based on the main findings of the 2nd Regional Survey on Higher Education Internationalization in Latin America and the Caribbean, conducted in 2021 by the Regional Observatory of Internationalization and Networking in Latin America and the Caribbean (OBIRET) in collaboration with the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI). The objective of such survey was to characterize the main trends of internationalization in the country, including some data on the impact of the pandemic, to generate reflections on the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities of the process, and to provide feedback to the decision-making process on related strategies.

Key words: higher education in Mexico, comprehensive education, impact of COVID-19.

1. Introduction

This paper intends to offer an overview of the international dimension of Mexican higher education. To do that, it presents findings from the 2nd regional survey on internationalization trends of tertiary education in Latin America and the Caribbean (*II Encuesta regional sobre tendencias de la internacionalización en educación terciaria en América Latina y el Caribe*) concerning Mexico. This

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is the most recent survey (2021) produced by the Regional Observatory of Tertiary Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OBIRET in Spanish) in collaboration with the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI in Spanish).

The survey results allow identifying the main trends, strengths, risks, obstacles, and limitations and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the internationalization process of Mexican higher education institutions (HEI).

Our analysis is divided into five main sections: 1) benefits and risks of internationalization; 2) public policies favoring internationalization; 3) organizational frameworks for internationalization; 4) programmatic frameworks for internationalization; and 5) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the internationalization process in Mexico.

1.1. Methodology and conceptual framework

For this study, 250 heads of internationalization offices in Mexican HEI were contacted. A total of 105 responses were received, representing a 42% response rate; 62% of responses were from public, and 38% from private institutions.

The research questions addressed by this study are: 1. Does the internationalization process of Mexican HEI comply with the concept of *comprehensive internationalization*? 2. How has the process progressed in Mexico in recent years, compared with other HEI of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the world? 3. How has the pandemic affected Mexico's higher education internationalization process?

To complement the interpretation of the data collected during the survey mentioned above, a comparative analysis was conducted with other studies, such as the 1st regional survey on internationalization trends of tertiary education in Latin America and the Caribbean (1st OBIRET survey), (Gacel-Ávila & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2018); the 5th Global Survey of the International Association of Universities (5th IAU Survey), (Marinoni, 2019), as well as the different studies conducted by the British Council (BC) on the main global higher education internationalization trends (Ilieva & Peack, 2016; Ilieva *et al.*, 2017; Usher *et al.*, 2019).

Our analysis was based on the conceptual framework of higher education internationalization, which provides the following definition:

the deliberate process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into tertiary education purposes, functions, and provision, seeking to increase the quality of education and research for all students and staff in institutions, aiming at a significant contribution to society (De Wit *et al.*, 2015, p. 29).

Internationalization is also defined as

a process integrating in all the substantive functions of higher education institutions a global, inter-cultural, compared, and interdisciplinary dimension, with the scope of fostering a global perspective and awareness of human problems, favoring values and attitudes of a responsible, humane, and solidary global citizenship (Gacel-Ávila, 2006, p. 61).

In addition to this, the interpretation of the data collected in the survey is based on Hudzik's "comprehensive education" (CE) framework (2011), defined as

a commitment confirmed through action to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise.... It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility [It] not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. (p. 6).

2. Benefits and Risks of Internationalization

2.1. Benefits of internationalization for the institution

Most HEI in Mexico consider that the main benefit is to "sevelop the students' international profile", while at a global level it is reported "To strengthen international cooperation and upskilling". In second and third place, HEI both at a regional and global level report "Improving academic quality of educational programs" (Gacel-Ávila, 2018, Marinoni, 2019).

2.2. Risks of internationalization for the institution

Most HEI in Mexico point out that the main risk of internationalization is that it “Favors wealthy students”. It is important to mention that LAC show a higher percentage in this area than most HEI in the world (Marinoni, 2019).

Regarding the second and third risks of internationalization, Mexican HEI indicate it “Favors wealthier HEI” and that it “Maintains the center-periphery paradigm”, respectively. In contrast, at a global level, the “Difficulty for obtaining recognition of the quality of foreign institution programs” and “Brain drain” are reported in second and third place, respectively (Marinoni, 2019).

2.3. Risks of internationalization for the country

Most HEI in Mexico consider “Brain Drain” as the country’s main risk from internationalization. This risk also tops results globally and in the Latin America region according to the 5th IAU Survey (Marinoni, 2019).

In LAC, brain drain is ranked second in the world (7.4%), being only higher in Africa (10.8%) and higher than the world average (5.4%) (Gacel-Ávila & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2018, p. 47). The second and third risks reported are: “Increasing inequality between HEI within a country”, and “Commercialization of Education”, respectively.

2.4. External obstacles for internationalization

Most HEI in Mexico consider the “Lack of public policies promoting internationalization” the principal obstacle to advancing the internationalization process. Globally, the main obstacle reported is “Limited funding for higher education internationalization” (Marinoni, 2019).

The next obstacles reported by Mexican HEI are, ranked by importance: “Visa restrictions imposed by other countries to our students and scholars” and “Difficulty to find partners abroad”.

3. Public Policies Promoting Internationalization in Mexico

51% of Mexican HEI report that public policies promoting internationalization are “Insufficient”, 26% considers them “Sufficient”, and 22% report they are “Good”.

This problem has been highlighted by the British Council (BC) studies on public policy development status (*National Policies Framework*) in 26 countries in different world regions. In the case of Latin America (LA), participating countries included Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico (Ilieva & Peak, 2016).

In regards to government support for national strategies for higher education internationalization and student and scholar mobility, academic programs, and collaborative research, LA countries attained the following rankings: Brazil “*high*”; Chile “*low*”, Colombia “*low*”, and Mexico “*very low*” (the lowest position among all participating countries).

In contrast, countries such as Malaysia and China obtained a “*very high*” ranking; other nations such as Vietnam, Thailand, India, Indonesia, Botswana, Pakistan, The Philippines, Kenya, and South Africa, attained a “*high*” ranking.

In the area of “quality assurance and recognition of certificates and degrees”, the ranking attained by the four Latin American countries was “*very low*”, the lowest position among participating countries, along with Ethiopia and Nigeria. Conversely, Malaysia attained a “*very high*” ranking, whereas Vietnam, South Africa, and The Philippines attained a “*high*” ranking (Ilieva & Peak, 2016, p. 10).

In the most recent BC study (Usher, *et al.*, 2019), in the domain of “Openness of the national higher education and mobility system”, the four LA countries attained the following rankings: Brazil remained at “*high*”; Chile and Colombia went from “*low*” to “*high*”, while Mexico went from “*very low*” to “*low*” (last place among all participant countries). In the area of “Quality assurance and recognition of certificates and degrees”, Brazil and Colombia attained a “*low*” ranking; Chile and Mexico attained a “*very low*” ranking, the last places.

The BC concluded that Latin American countries have not implemented a national internationalization policy as such. In the case of Mexico, it concluded that “There is no national internationalization strategy, despite internationalization being mentioned briefly in sector plans” (Usher, *et al.*, 2019, p. 12). Currently, Higher

Education internationalization is not listed among the priorities of the National Development Plan (PND, 2019).

4. Organizational Frameworks for Internationalization

Organizational frameworks cover all “strategies and initiatives supporting institutionalization of internationalization through proper policies and administrative systems” (De Wit, 1995, p. 17).

4.1. Institutional internationalization strategy

45% of Mexican HEI report that internationalization is mentioned in their institutional mission and 89% report it is mentioned in their institutional development plan (PDI). However, only 70% reported having a specific section dedicated to the institutional internationalization strategy in their PDI. Furthermore, only 40% reported creating an internationalization plan itemized into strategies, objectives, and goals.

While it is true that to achieve a comprehensive internationalization (CI) both centralized and decentralized institutional frameworks are required to create synergies and to provide feedback for practices (Hudzik, 2011), only 26% of HEI report having a head of internationalization in their academic units or campus, and only 11% of them have elaborated a specific internationalization plan itemized into strategies, objectives, and goals.

Regarding how long their internationalization plan has existed, most HEI (42%) report “between one and five years”, followed by 24% reporting “less than a year”, and 20% “doesn’t know” this information. Only 7% indicate that this proposal was elaborated “more than five years and less than ten years ago”, and only 7% report this activity was made “more than ten years ago”. In contrast, most HEI globally (42%) report their internationalization plan was elaborated “more than five years ago” and 19% report “more than ten years ago” (Marinoni, 2019). Therefore, it is deduced that Mexico lags behind between five and ten years after global HEI in this area.

4.2. Degree of internationalization importance

According to Hudzik (2011), institutional authorities' dedicated support and leadership are essential for the internationalization process. However, in the case of Mexico, only 38% of institutional authorities consider internationalization as "very important", a sharp contrast with the 68% reported globally (Marinoni, 2019).

Such finding is probably a consequence of the low priority given to internationalization in the National Development Plan (PND, 2019) and of a lack of public policies promoting internationalization, as mentioned above. In addition to this, 58% of Mexican HEI rank the country's internationalization as "Regular", 23% report "Good", 15% mention "Bad", 1% indicate "Very Bad", and 3% rank it as "Very Good".

4.3. Internationalization Office (IO)

The IO effectiveness is strongly correlated with their hierarchical location in the institutional organigram. When they are not positioned in the top-level, compliance of their strategic role in decision-making on institutional policies and programs may be limited (Gacel-Ávila & Marmolejo, 2016).

Only 20% of Mexican HEI report having an IO in a top-level, in contrast with a global 60% (Marinoni, 2019). Most IOs in the country are positioned in the second (45%) and third (31%) hierarchical levels.

In relation with the number of people working in the IOs, 64% of institutions report their staff comprises between one and five individuals, 15% report between six and ten, 11% between eleven and twenty, 5% between twenty-one and fifty, and 5% report more than fifty individuals in their staff. Regarding the gender of the heads of IOs, there is an equal proportion between men (50%) and women (50%). In the public sector, there is a higher number of men (58%) leading IOs; in the private sector, there is a higher number of women (58%).

Most heads of IOs in Mexico have Master's (55%), followed by Bachelor's (23%) and PhDs (22%); in total 77% of heads of IOs have postgraduate degrees. This finding contrasts with the United States, where it is reported that 81% of heads of IOs have PhDs (Gacel-Ávila, 2019).

In the domain of the years of tenure in the position, most heads of IOs (43%) report a tenure between one and four years. This time frame aligns with a rector's typical term in Mexico, particularly in the public sector.

43% of heads of IOs report not having experience in the area before being appointed. In the private sector, a higher professionalization of heads of IOs; on average, they keep their positions for seven years, against four years of the public sector average (Gacel-Ávila, 2020).

The lack of professionalization in management frameworks is a concrete trend in LAC, often causing a lack of continuity in internationalization programs, frequent management errors, and eventually, a lack of stability and viability of the internationalization process (Gacel-Ávila & Marmolejo, 2016).

In sum, Mexican educational authorities do not see as much importance in the internationalization process as their foreign counterparts; IOs are given less weight in the organizational framework; and the vast majority of IOs lack professionalization. All these elements seem to indicate that in Mexico the complexity of the internationalization process is underrated.

4.4. Quality assurance and assessment of international academic stays

A minority of Mexican HEI (31%) indicated they have an assessment system and indicators to monitor their internationalization process, which contrasts sharply with the global 81% (Marinoni, 2019).

This situation highlights a contradiction since, despite the fact 89% of HEI declared they have an internationalization policy, 69% do not link it to a quality assurance and assessment process. In addition, only 31% reported having assessment mechanisms to measure the impact of scholar mobility, and 48% for student mobility.

5. Programmatic Frameworks for Internationalization

Programmatic frameworks for internationalization refer to “academic activities and services rendered by a tertiary education institution with an international

dimension”, such as teaching, the curriculum, research, and outreach (De Wit, 1995, p. 17).

5.1. Institutional policy for foreign language teaching

LAC has been singled out as lacking national policies for teaching the English language, in addition to reporting a generally low level in teacher training (El Espectador, 2017, n.p).

Recently, a world ranking comparing English language command in 19 countries was conducted by the *Education First* institute, and LAC was ranked lower than Europe, Asia, and Africa (EF, 2020). In the case of Mexico, the national policies implemented by the previous administration have been canceled by the current government, jeopardizing the progress of recent years.

In this context, 85% of Mexican HEI mentioned having an institutional policy for foreign languages (81% in the public sector and 89% in the private sectors). Most institutions (85%) report the CEFR levels A1 and A2 as a requirement for enrollment, which is a considerably basic level and reiterates the limited command of foreign languages that prevails among Mexican students upon completing high school, especially in the public sector.

5.2. Internationalization of the curriculum and internationalization at home

Both internationalization of the curriculum (IoC) and internationalization at home (IaH) are fundamental elements in the construction of a CI process (Hudzik, 2011). IoC is defined as “the incorporation of intercultural and global dimensions in the curriculum contents, as well as in learning objectives, evaluations, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study” (Leask, 2015, p. 9). On the other hand, IaH is understood as “deliberate integration of international and intercultural dimensions in the formal and informal curriculum for all students in home learning environments” (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 76).

In this domain, 53% of Mexican HEI consider IaH as “very important”. A very high percentage (71%) declared they do not have an institutional policy on IoC.

Only 26% of public HEI reported having an IoC policy compared with 32% in the private sector.

Among the HEI who stated they have such a policy, only 50% mentioned having it outlined in a specific document, detailing strategies, programs, and goals to be reached. In addition, only 53% of Mexican HEI reported including global competencies in their graduates' learning objectives. These findings may indicate that the HEI declaring an IoC policy is more discourse than a reality.

The three activities reported by HEI as more important for IoC are, in order of importance: the "Stay of foreign guest professors", the "Programs and courses taught in a language other than the local", and the "Programs and courses taught in collaborations abroad".

Massive online open courses (MOOCs) and collaborative online international learning (COIL) are offered by 43% and 47% of HEI, respectively.

5.3. Academic programs in collaboration

Joint and double degree programs with foreign institutions is offered only by 38% of Mexican HEI, contrasting with the 57% reported globally (Marinoni, 2019).

Most (57%) of HEI indicated they offer joint and double degree programs at undergraduate level. Globally, however, this kind of programs are mainly offered at a master's level (Marinoni, 2019). Joint degree programs are mainly offered in Mexico at a doctorate level (29%), followed by master's (14%). Double degree programs are offered mostly at undergraduate level, followed by master's (30%) and doctoral (13%) level.

The principal countries with which joint degree programs are established are Spain, Colombia, France, (the same country of) Mexico, and the United States, whereas for double degree they are France, Spain, Colombia, and the United States.

5.4. Scholar mobility

52% of HEI reported having no program supporting scholar mobility. The public sector offers more support for this area, with 54% of institutions, compared with 40% in the private sector. 48% of HEI reported giving this funding exclusively to full-time professors, 2% to adjunct professors, and 50% to both. It is worth remembering that in LAC, full-time professors account for between 20% and 30% of the academic staff in the public sector, with a lower percentage in the private sector, therefore, it is a minority of scholars who have the opportunity of receiving funding for mobility programs, and internationalize their profile (Gacel-Ávila, 2016).

59% of HEI point out that no funding programs are offered for visiting scholars. Such finding shows a contradiction, given that most institutions declared that the first activity of internationalization of the curriculum was “Stay of foreign guest professors” (see section 5.2).

Only 54% reported keeping a record of scholars who attained an academic degree outside of the country. This shows that there is a very high proportion of HEI not using their own human resources to advance their internationalization process, such as professors who studied abroad. It is worth highlighting that only 53% of Mexican HEI consider international experience in the hiring, promotion, and tenure of academic staff.

Regarding the percentage of scholars in mobility programs in relation to the total number of full-time professors for the 2018-2019 period, most HEI reported “less than 0.5%” both for incoming (63%) and outgoing (56%) mobility.

The countries of origin of foreign scholars in order of importance are the United States, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Spain. The preferred destinations of scholars in outgoing mobility in order of importance are: United States, Colombia, Spain, Argentina, and Chile.

5.5. Internationalization of research

The three principal institutional obstacles for internationalization of research are, in order of importance: the “Lack of institutional funding”, the “Difficulties

for management of external funds”, and “Lack of experience or international profile of scholars”.

Only 26% of Mexican HEI mentioned having a funding program for collaborative research projects. In addition to this, only 58% reported counting with mechanisms for promoting scientific articles in international journals.

Consequently, a scarce 12% of LAC HEI receive funding from international organizations for collaboration in research, a contrast with the global 33% (Marinoni, 2019).

BC studies report that in a group of twenty countries, Mexico is one of the four nations with the lowest level of funding for research, together with Bulgaria, Chile, and Russia. The studies conclude that “whereas funding for research is commonly low in Latin America, the resources allocated for international collaboration are even lower” (Usher, *et al.*, 2019, p. 10).

BC studies in 2017 reported that Mexico’s commitment to internationalization of research is “*weak*” when compared with other countries such as Brazil, India, Vietnam, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Greece, ranked as “*strong*” (Ilieva, *et al.*, 2017).

5.6. International student mobility

Regarding outgoing student mobility, LAC is one of the regions with the lowest percentage (6.4%) of international students globally, just ahead of Central Asia (4.8%). Likewise, LAC is the region with the lowest percentage of outgoing mobility (1.26%) related to the total number of enrolled students. Regarding incoming student mobility, LAC occupies the second place with the lowest proportion (0.67%) after South and East Asia (0.16%) (UNESCO, 2021).

For the percentage of students in mobility as a proportion of the total number of enrolled students for the 2018-2019 period, the most selected category is “less than 0.5%”, both for outgoing (35%) and incoming mobility (55%). The three principal regions of destination for international outgoing student mobility are Western Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America. However, 82% of HEI reported offering preparation for students to conduct international stays.

Only 55% of institutions offer a scholarship or student support program for student mobility. Only 2% offer full scholarships or funding, 46% offer partial scholarships or funding, and 7% offer both types of support. The result is that 45% of institutions provide no funding for students. Therefore, Mexico is below the LAC regional average, where 62% indicated offering this kind of funding (Gacel-Ávila & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2018). It is worth mentioning that 63% of Mexican HEI reported no scholarships or grant for international students.

The main obstacle to student mobility, according to the survey participants' perception and experience, is reported in the header "Lack of language command in the same students", followed by "Administrative or bureaucratic difficulties", "Family and/or work-related activities of students".

Most incoming student mobility comes from LAC, followed by Eastern Europe and North America.

6. The Internationalization Process as a Consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic

70% of HEI believed that the importance of internationalization will not decrease, and 66% reported it is not jeopardized as a consequence of the pandemic. However, 70% of HEI indicated they will have budget reductions in their institution, and 88% think these reductions will affect internationalization.

When asked whether in the future the internationalization strategy will be modified as a consequence of the pandemic, 60% declared "to a certain extent", 25% "to a great extent", 8% "very unlikely", 6% "not very likely", and 1% answered "no". Currently, after a year and a half of the pandemic, only 35% of HEI declared having adapted their internationalization strategy to the new reality.

Because of the pandemic, 73% of HEI have canceled their student mobility programs and 75% have canceled scholar mobility. Internationalization activities that have lost importance due to the pandemic are, in order of relevance, "Student exchange," "Incorporation of international students", and "Professor mobility". In contrast, the activities that have been prioritized due to the pandemic are, in order of importance: virtual Exchange and collaborative online learning; internationalization of the curriculum and internationalization at

home; and academic and administrative staff training on global and intercultural competencies.

It is worth highlighting that 76% of HEI indicated implementing laH strategies during the pandemic, being the most important ones: “Virtual mobility programs”, “Internationalization of the curriculum”; and “Intercultural awareness programs”.

However, it is contradictory that 82% of HEI indicate they have not implemented changes in the curricula as a consequence of the pandemic. Only 16% report that “they are more internationalized, and include more international, intercultural, and global perspectives”, and 2% that “they are less internationalized”.

Collaboration relations that have increased most during the sanitary crisis are, in order of importance: “Academic collaboration agreements for collaborative online international learning (COIL)”, and “Agreements for research projects on health-related topics”. On the other hand, the decreased collaboration relations are: “Memberships of associations and organizations” and “Academic collaboration agreements for mobility”; this confirms a decreasing trend in outgoing internationalization activities.

To the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the participation in collaborative degree programs, 40% reiterated “not participating in this kind of program”, 25% that “it did not have a substantial effect”, 19% that “it opened opportunities to create new collaborative degrees with institutions abroad”, 9% that “some collaborative degree programs had to stop”, and 7% that “it had a negative effect”.

7. Conclusions

The main findings of the 2nd OBIRET survey and the different international reports discussed in this paper coincide that Mexico is one of the countries in the world with the least government support to and whose institutional leaders show the least concern for internationalization. In addition to this, organizational frameworks for internationalization show significant deficiencies or lack or consolidation; the international dimension of curricula and research is still marginal, peripheral, and occasional; regulations are outdated; international activities lack planning, direction, and assessment, and they respond to individual interests. Also, offices in charge of the internationalization process do not have enough recognition in the institutional organigram, in contrast with their counterparts

worldwide; IOs lack professionalization and experience constant staff changes, hindering sustainability and feasibility of internationalization programs and strategies, among others. The complexity of the internationalization process and its contribution to institutional transformation and improving the pertinence and quality of university functions are underrated.

In the area of programmatic frameworks, as little as 29% of HEI declared having an internationalization of the curriculum policy, out of which only half reported a provision of global competencies in learning results; 38% offer joint or double degree programs, contrasting with a global 57%. After decades of ineffective policies, the command of the English language is still insufficient and is one of the most significant obstacles to internationalization, to the greatest extent than in other regions of the world. A recent ranking on English competence placed LAC below Europe, Asia, and Africa (EF, 2020). Regarding government funding for research, Mexico is positioned –along with the African continent– in the last places globally; consequently, the resources allocated to international collaboration are even scarcer, despite the quality of research and international collaboration. As a result, only 26% of HEI report having an institutional program to promote collaborative research. Mexico has been singled out as one of the countries receiving less funding from international organizations.

In summary, in practically all the headers of the comprehensive internationalization process, Mexico shows negative indicators; it is positioned in the last places in the world, and even in the Latin America region, behind countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia. Mainly, internationalization strategies are individual (student and scholar mobility), to the detriment of systemic strategies (internationalization of the curriculum and research); in other words, their impact is moderate and their contribution in the transformation of the higher education system as a whole is hardly noticeable.

Regarding the impact of the pandemic on the future of internationalization, although most HEI have the opinion that it is not at risk, 88% think it could be affected by budget reductions caused by the economic crisis. After more than a year and a half of the pandemic, only 35% of HEI declared having adapted their internationalization strategy to the new reality, and 82% reported not enhancing their IoC or IaH strategies; this, despite the pandemic showing the urgent need for internationalization, replacing the focus on mobility for one centered around internationalization at home.

Situations of crisis are always an opportunity for change. This transformation may prove a challenge for Mexican HEI in the short term since it requires a comprehensive internationalization foundation fostered by solid public and institutional policies, the know-how for designing and implementing complex strategies such as IoC and IaH, an internationalized academic staff, highly-professionalized management, and coordination strategies, and last but not least, sufficient funding, which may be difficult to obtain due to the economic crisis.

In the authors' opinion, if these conditions were a distant reality in Mexico before the pandemic, they presumably will be even more difficult in the post-pandemic world; therefore, the process could be negatively affected, perhaps for years, as the country's economic recovery could take at least a decade (CEPAL, 2021, p. 58).

According to the British Council, this deficit situation in Mexico regarding the internationalization process is due, in part, to the higher education system being still in the process of consolidation and, as a consequence, internationalization holding a low priority in the country's educational agenda (Usher, *et al.*, 2019, p. 11). But in the authors' opinion, there could be other causes such as a lack of vision of education and policy decision-makers, as well as lack of awareness of the potential for internationalization in the transformation of higher education systems. This attitude is a sharp contrast with emergent countries in Asia that have made the strategic decision of investing massively in internationalization to accelerate the transformation of their higher education sector in particular and of their society in general. Lagging behind in the global process in matters of higher education internationalization could have a high cost in Mexico's future economic and social development; despite attracting increasing numbers of international students and scholars, most Mexican students will not have the opportunity to develop global citizenship competencies and professional qualifications for an international job market; higher education and research will lack relevance and innovation capacity in the current global context. Education is a passport for the future because tomorrow belongs to people preparing themselves for today. Therefore, it is required to invest massively in an education system capable of responding to future challenges. A higher education that is not internationalized and simply drifting away from global trends becomes a lack of opportunities for Mexico's future development.

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PART TWO:
**Case Studies on the
Internationalization of Higher
Education in Mexico during the
Pandemic: Challenges, Successes
and Lessons Learned**

The Reconfiguration of University Processes for International Education Following COVID-19: The Case of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico

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Abstract

During the last decades, higher education institutions (HEI) around the world, and particularly in Mexico, have been consolidating their internationalization processes with the support and drive of organizations such as the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI), as well as with financial support from associations and state and federal governments. However, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its spread worldwide, universities were forced to transfer their processes and activities to an online modality to avoid interrupting their substantive and administrative functions. Some activities at the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México-UAEM) that suffered delays in their processes due to the pandemic were the management of collaboration agreements and the implementation of collaboration programs, including student mobility. This paper presents in detail the effects on the international area of UAEM as a result of the pandemic and the actions that have been taken to continue promoting interaction with peers abroad.

Keywords: *Internationalization, COVID-19, Educational Administration.*

1 Autonomous University of the State of Mexico

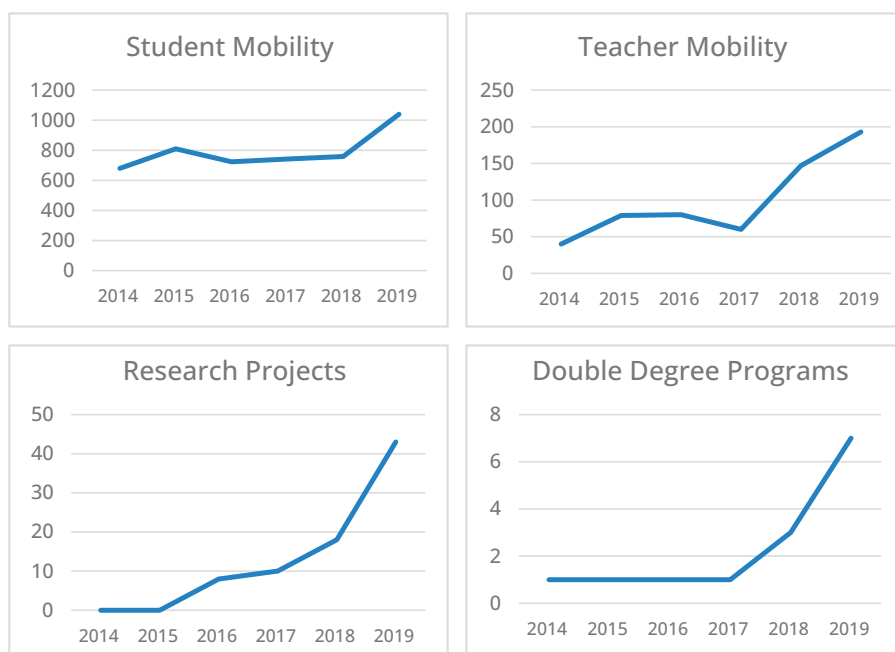
Introduction: Internationalization before COVID-19

During recent decades, international cooperation and internationalization processes in higher education institutions (HEI) have been a key factor in strategic and cross-cutting planning to improve educational quality has been a subject of debate and discussion. In Mexico, the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) conceives international cooperation as “a strategic element for strengthening Mexican higher education institutions by taking advantage of the comparative advantages existing in each of them” (ANUIES, 1999).

Within this context, various global, national, and regional organizations conceived and implemented initiatives to strengthen international cooperation among nations. Thus, the work of the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI), founded in July 1992, stands out as it has played a strategic role in the dissemination and training of professionals on topics of international cooperation and internationalization through its Annual Conference and Global Education Journal (AMPEI, 2021).

During the 2012-2018 period, the federal and State government developed programs to promote and finance international cooperation projects and boost student and faculty mobility, as is the case of the so-called “Proyecto 10,000” and “Proyecto 100,000” programs or the “North American Mobility Program (NAMP),” to mention a few. These activities were based on a national policy that allocated federal and State budgets to promote the internationalization of higher education.

Within the framework of these activities, UAEM’s Secretariat for International Cooperation was created in 2013 with a policy that favored the visibility of the Institution and networking with international peers. As a result, significant progress has been achieved in credit-earning mobility of students, short stays for students, joint undergraduate and graduate programs, and research projects between peers from different HEI. Figure 1 shows the gradual increase in the number of joint undergraduate and graduate programs and research projects between peers from different HEI. Figure 1 shows the gradual increase in the above-mentioned activities, beginning with establishing an international office at the highest hierarchical levels.

Figure 1. International Activities at UAEMex Between 2014 and 2019.

Note: Adapted from Universidades, UAEMin numbers (pp. 158, 193, 201, 202), UAEMex, 2020.

Synergy at UAEM up to 2020 had led its course to strengthen the international dimension as part of the educational model, seeking complementarity in its work with the full awareness that it was part of a global village. Internationalization was moving towards joint activities under the precept of mutual benefit.

The Arrival of COVID-19 and its Impact on the Internationalization of Education

With the suspension of face-to-face activities and the closing of borders, the international area of UAEM established its action plan. Although some tasks, such as the management of collaboration agreements or the implementation of cooperation programs already programmed, suffered delays, the one that received the most attention when the pandemic broke out in Mexico was student mobility. At UAEMex, 226 students were programmed to participate in mobility

programs abroad. However, only eleven students had not left the country when the pandemic was declared, therefore, it was possible to hold back their mobility.

For the rest of the students, who were already abroad at the time of the global confinement, an individualized follow-up strategy was implemented to protect their physical and mental integrity until their return. As part of the International University Mobility Program, each student is assigned a manager from the International Mobility Office, who is in charge of establishing weekly contact with each member of their group to ensure that they were in appropriate accommodations. As a result of these weekly supervisions, some actions were taken, among which the following stand out:

1. Psychological support was offered by telephone and online through the personnel of the Center for Integral Psychological Studies and Services (CESPI) of UAEMex, paying special attention to 24 cases that suffered crises due to the impossibility of returning home.
2. Food was provided to students in cafeterias of some of the HEI destinations that kindly agreed to provide this support. In the remaining cases, they received financial assistance for food for the time of their extended stay.
3. Close work was done with embassies, consulates, and the Government of the State of Mexico to return students as soon as possible. In the end, 49 students return on humanitarian flights and the rest on commercial flights.

In the same vein, the University had 104 foreign students, to whom it was necessary to provide assistance to guarantee their physical and mental health, as well as to support them in their return to their countries of origin, assisting in the solution of migratory problems, when required, and granting scholarships in kind.

Similarly, the International Representation Offices (ORI) of universities worldwide experienced the stress of having students in different countries, with no possibility of repatriating them, at least until the situation became more certain and countries opened or closed their borders.

What was initially thought to last only a few months of isolation has lasted more than a year, resulting in the cancellation of academic mobility activities for several semesters. When writing this article, UAEMex has not yet fully activated the International University Mobility Program.

As expected, international activities involving physical movement were reduced to a minimum. Unfortunately, in a generalized manner, student and teacher mobility is considered by many actors not immersed in the dynamics of internationalization of education as the fundamental pillar of the ORI. Therefore, when programs are suspended, the efforts of the international areas are minimized. This, in addition to the serious economic impact, has affected the support and promotion of international activities.

Specifically at UAEMex, with the new administration for the period 2021-2025, the decision was made to eliminate the Secretariat for International Cooperation and incorporate its functions into the Secretariat for Teaching and the Secretariat for Research and Advanced Studies. This action, although justified, can have an important impact on activities not closely linked to teaching or research, such as cultural activities, best practices in administrative processes, or institutional representation.

Effects of the Health Crisis on University Education: UAEMex Case Study

Sánchez et al. (2020) identified the sudden shift to remote learning through technology-mediated education as one of the most significant immediate effects of the pandemic. During the first semester of online classes, there was generalized stress: the administrative authorities had to provide the conditions and facilities that would allow for the full development of the substantive and administrative functions; the teachers had to fulfill their academic commitments and attend to their class groups, and the students had to get through the semester with the least possible impact on their academic path, all of this in an atmosphere of concern for the family environment and insecurity in the social environment.

One of the first activities of the university authorities was to identify the resources available to the community to continue activities remotely. To this end, surveys were conducted to determine the connectivity conditions of

teachers and students, computer or telephone equipment available to them, and platforms they were familiar with and mastered, among others.

The first challenge to address was internet access since many students came from non-urbanized areas and had limited access. As a result, a scholarship program was launched to guarantee connectivity for students during the health emergency to prevent students from dropping out of school, and computer equipment was loaned to students, teachers, and administrators who had to work from home.

As could be foreseen, the main difficulties of the students were and still are related to the ability to be connected to an internet network that allowed them to continue their studies in an adequate manner, which is directly linked to the conditions of inequality of our students since not all of them had a computer that enabled them to continue their academic training online, and/or had internet in their localities or homes.

The next priority issue for the university administration of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico was the training in competencies and skills in using available information and communication technologies. UAEMex has its own platform designed to offer its educational programs remotely, called SEDUCA. However, it could not handle the entire university enrollment and courseload that needed to be migrated from face-to-face to online. Therefore, it was decided to purchase licenses to use the Microsoft Teams platform, which entailed an important training effort on behalf of the administrative and teaching staff and the student body.

Almost unexpectedly and abruptly, UAEMex like all educational institutions in the country had to adapt to the new challenges presented to them, trying to minimize the impact on their daily activities. Although online education was not unknown, as there have been academic programs in this modality since 2004, only 5% of its academic offerings were distance learning. This meant that what would normally have taken years to achieve could be accomplished in just a few months.

Following the announcement of the pandemic and its spread throughout the world, it has been a central issue on the agenda of all international organizations and governments worldwide. However, at the time of writing this chapter, the latest variants of this virus still represent a great danger to public health, which

keeps universities in an arduous process of adaptation and change without yet being able to glimpse a stable panorama that would allow us to elucidate what the social dynamics will be like.

It is not yet possible to estimate how many years it will take to overcome the effects of the pandemic, much less to quantify its consequences; what can be said is that education in the world will have enormous gaps and, in the case of higher education, our young people will graduate and begin their activities in the labor market with fewer tools and at a time in history when the economic environment is adverse.

Undoubtedly, a positive effect worth highlighting is the willingness and rapid adaptation of HEI to the use of online platforms that eliminate borders can be perceived. Thanks to this tool, the internationalization of education has been possible despite the suspension of face-to-face mobility at UAEM. Furthermore, thanks to technology, it has even strengthened cooperation ties with international peers.

Towards a New Organization in the Management and Operation of UAEMex

The sudden new reality that the pandemic confronted us with, has placed various stakeholders in the education sector in an unexpected situation. In addition to attending to their personal situation, faculty have the responsibility to provide continuity to the teaching activities with their students, which has generated a large number of complex circumstances that must be faced in the short, medium, and long term, to reduce as much as possible the impact on the learning and professional training of university students (Sanz, 2020).

As a result of these changes, some of the reforms that the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico carried out or is in the process of implementing to adapt to the new working conditions are presented, including those that directly and indirectly affect the internationalization processes.

1. Automation of school procedures

One of the positive impacts that have arisen is related to the innovation of the registrar's office system. As a result of virtuality, processes have been automated, and it is possible today to complete various procedures without the need to go to the university offices, such as registration, enrollment, payment of services, etc. The admission exam, the recording of grades, and the signing of evaluation reports can also be done from home; it is now possible to download your report card from the system, and it is also valid for completing paperwork.

All these changes are of special significance for the international area since they will speed up the acceptance and enrollment processes of foreign and national students who, in the future, will require these documents for international mobility purposes. In addition, the validation of qualifications will undoubtedly be carried out in a more agile and efficient manner.

2. The flexibility of administrative processes

The central campus of the UAEMex is located in Toluca, the capital of the State; however, it has a presence in 23 other municipalities in the State of Mexico. Currently, enrollment in outside facilities exceeds the enrollment in the facilities located in Toluca. (UAEMex, 2021). For years, this dynamic has been a source of controversy due to the centralization of academic and administrative procedures requiring constant commuting to the State's capital.

As a result of the pandemic, new work processes have been established that allow various procedures to be completed remotely, reducing economic and human resources used in traveling and making them more efficient and expeditious. This will indirectly benefit activities with international peers, such as the management of agreements, funding, participation in calls for proposals, etc. In addition, it is expected that academic and administrative activities will continue to change in the future to further reduce this geographic gap between foreign academic areas and the central administration.

3. Restructuring of undergraduate, advanced studies, and continuing education curricula

Undoubtedly, the teaching-learning processes will not be the same after the pandemic. Virtuality will be adopted permanently, either for curricula entirely in this modality or in a combined format. This configuration of programs will be very favorable for virtual mobility and other aspects of work, such as mirror classes and internationalization activities at home. It will continue to be promoted as an alternative for those who, due to special conditions or because they belong to vulnerable groups, will not be able to do it in person. This will benefit both students and the University since it is an effective and low-cost way to interact with peers.

Currently, inclusive mechanisms are being formulated to promote interaction between faculties, university centers, and professional academic units of UAEMex. It is expected that emphasis will continue to be given to academic activities supported using information and communication technologies. This ensures that all initiatives and projects developed by the Chancellor's Office can reach them.

UAEMex has been implementing a combined education model for some time now, which involves completing some learning modules, or part of them, online. After this impasse, authorities decided to lay the legal groundwork to ensure that this teaching model permeates permanently into all curricula.

As a result, in October 2020, the Honorable University Council of UAEMex approved the *Agreement establishing that the study curricula and programs of the University Baccalaureate and Professional Studies approved in the school-based modality may be delivered in a combined modality*. This document sets out the pedagogical and technological elements to be considered in the Institution's virtual classes that seek to strengthen dual education at the Institution.

Additionally, this document states in its seventh item that "economic support should be guaranteed to enable low-income students to have internet connectivity service as an essential element of studying in the online learning system" (UAEMex, 2020).

4. Reconfiguration of cultural and sports activities

The confinement policies faced affected academic and administrative activities and, perhaps, to an even greater extent, cultural and sports activities. Several exhibitions that had been set up and programmed were suspended; training and sports competitions also had to be canceled.

When it became clear that a return to face-to-face instruction would be delayed longer than the few weeks that were anticipated, novel adjustments were made to ensure academic continuity. Through social media, physical activation classes were developed, followed by the local university community and by students who were abroad and society in general. This experience opens up new opportunities to develop joint sports activities with HEI abroad in areas not previously considered.

The same happened in the case of cultural activities; the programmed exhibitions were reconfigured so that they could be projected through videos, which made it possible to appreciate artworks remotely. A short film exhibition was also developed between students from UAEMex and the University of Rome 3 in Italy, which received very good reviews and will be replicated.

Although these activities could have been implemented before the pandemic, it was not until the pandemic that the different areas began to broaden their horizons towards previously unexplored ways of working. It is expected that even in the event of a future return to fully face-to-face activities, some online activities will continue to be carried out, as they represent an opportunity to reach a larger audience using fewer resources.

5. Driving internationalization at home (IaH)

Much has been discussed and published about this concept since Jane Knight made it popular in 2006, and various definitions can be found, addressing different perspectives and incorporating different nuances. However, in practical terms, we will say that it is "...the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments..." (Beelen & Jones, 2015).

IaH has been implemented as a methodology for internationalization in many educational institutions, as it allows for the development of international competencies to reach a larger number of beneficiaries than traditional internationalization activities that involve physical travel.

The pandemic has further enhanced its relevance. UAEMex has considerably increased the development of these types of activities, which previously were of less interest to the community. The current climate in institutions represents a great opportunity to reconfigure the processes of internationalization within these spaces, which can also be developed without necessarily resorting to large budgets to finance them.

Final Considerations

In general terms, these five actions undertaken to face the health emergency constitute a short-term reinvention of the University. The example from the international office represents a strong asset that could be replicated by other HEI. We posit that the only way to move from an aspirational internationalization to a real and operational one is by carrying out endogenous actions, such as the one presented here.

The new trend—undoubtedly exacerbated by the contextual needs—of promoting and prioritizing online activities may be a major turning point that will force us to reflect on the indicators used in international evaluations. This is mostly due to some ranking agencies using the percentage of students and teachers who undertake credit mobility abroad and the number of international students enrolled by the universities as parameters to evaluate the internationalization of a campus. Unfortunately, this is usually very difficult for public HEI in Latin American countries with insufficient funding to promote these activities.

This situation is even more acute in public universities such as ours, considering that the family income of most of our students does not allow for a stay of several months at their own expense. Therefore this organizational adaptation in UAEM constitutes an opportunity to include vulnerable sectors such as those with limited economic resources in international activities and thus, conduct ourselves under the principles of social inclusion.

It is unavoidable that, as institutions that educate future professionals in different areas of knowledge, we must ensure that we provide the tools so that our graduates can develop themselves in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world. In agreement with Hans de Wit (2015), it is not only through mobility that this can be achieved: It is to be expected that the reforms being made to higher education reach and underpin the incorporation of international and intercultural dimensions in the daily work of institutions. In the same vein, it would be advisable for HEI to identify the organizational obstacles that limit the participation of their communities in this new global order as a result of the pandemic. If they focus on the resolution of their internal problems, they will be able to articulate their work as a catalyst for change in the substantive and administrative functions of the universities themselves.

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Responsiveness and Resilience in University Faculty and Students: Teaching-Learning Experience Online through International Collaboration

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Abstract

The pandemic's impact permeated the core of the teaching-learning process globally. At the University of Colima (Mexico), an academic continuity program was implemented. This program required redesigning curriculum contents and using strategies to continue classes using technology. Under this context, the permanent seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters was established. This chapter discusses, from a theoretical and phenomenological methodological approach, the experience of university professors-researchers and students that have participated in the seminar and the challenges they have had to overcome to operate the seminar in a scenario of risk and vulnerability, evincing the capacity for response and resilience of professors and students. On the other hand, the main contributions of this international collaborative online teaching-learning proposal are highlighted, such as training human resources, strengthening of higher education internationalization, universality of knowledge through a digital platform, and the consolidation of the work in national and international academic cooperation networks.

Keywords: *responsiveness, resilience, professors, students, COVID-19.*

1 Universidad de Colima

Introduction

The presence of the SARS-CoV2 virus and the emergence of the pandemic have affected not only the economic, political, and social scenarios in different countries in the world, but also, the impact of this virus has permeated the core of the teaching-learning process in each location of the global context, thus modifying the conditions of educational practice.

Students of all educational levels were practically expelled from school to continue their academic periods from home, and in re-enrollment many were excluded; in Mexico around 5 million students abandoned school education for causes associated to the pandemic (Salinas, 2021), despite the measures taken by educational institutions to attend their students.

In the University of Colima, in Mexico, starting on March 18th, 2020, a reorganization of curriculum content was carried out to follow up on the teaching-learning process through technological mediation, which weeks later was formalized in the Academic Continuity Program (*Programa de continuidad académica*). In the beginning, it was thought that it would take a few months, and as of the time of writing of this paper, this modality has been in operation for more than a year.

Without a doubt, this pandemic scenario has evinced the capacity for response and resilience, of both university professors and students, because it has obliged them to explore new forms of teaching and learning, including online education. At the same time, the pandemic has challenged professors to be at the forefront in the use of digital platforms –*Zoom*, *Google Classroom* and *Meet*, mainly– where they did not have neither the abilities nor the skills to use them as the situation emerged, which translated into an educational vulnerability that did not occur in face-to-face teaching. In addition to the above, professors and students –both with differential vulnerabilities– have had to face new emotional, physical, and economic challenges and issues provoked by the disease, at the time they comply with a social responsibility commitment to prevent the virus from propagating.

This chapter addresses from the perspective of phenomenology the acquired experiences of university professors-researchers and students in the framework of a pandemic scenario that has modified many of the day-to-day practices around the educational environment, specifically in the Permanent Seminar

on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters (*Seminario permanente de estudios e implicaciones del riesgo, la vulnerabilidad social y los desastres*).

The permanent virtual teaching learning space that has been constructed contributes to the formation of human resources on topics related with studies of risk, social vulnerability, and disasters, understanding the latter as social processes rooted in cultural practices and in the social, economic, and political framework of each of the regions where they appear, from a multidisciplinary approach, because current phenomena are increasingly complex and demand study from different perspectives.

On the other hand, the seminar strengthens the consolidation of collaboration and internationalization networks among consolidated academic bodies and research groups of the University of Colima (Mexico), the University of Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico) and the Bernardo O'Higgins University (Chile).

From this experience, the internationalization of higher education and the universality of knowledge have been strengthened through a digital platform, allowing a direct dialogue with students, professors and researchers in different parts of the world –United States, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela– from different disciplines, who have also had to show their ability for response and resilience, facing the changes and challenges brought by this pandemic.

Genesis of the Project

In early 2020, one day people stopped going to the university to work from home, the international alarm of the World Health Organization (WHO) had been activated, and the government of Mexico decreed a quarantine as a measure to stop the number of new COVID-19 infections, a virus that is transmitted easily and causing from a simple cold to more severe respiratory diseases, even death. In this context, all teaching staff of the University of Colima was asked to work on the reorganization of curricular content for each subject, based on the guidelines provided in the Academic Continuity Program of the University of Colima, designed as a response to the health contingency caused by the SARS-CoV2 virus.

In the academic continuity program, contents are shared with students by means of technology under an integrator or modular project scheme, where different didactic strategies are designed through the EDUC² platform, and professors provide support through *Meet*, *Zoom*, *Classroom*, among other platforms.

On the other hand, full-time professors had to continue with research projects, with work in national and international academic cooperation networks, activities supporting teaching such as tutorship and advising, as well as diverse academic management activities priorly scheduled. All these actions also had changes, for they could no longer be face to face to become remote activities through *Meet*, *Zoom*, or Google *Classroom*, which involved that those who did not know how to use these technologies had to learn to use them. But it was the situation that not all professors had the technological equipment at home that was needed for this new work modality, requiring time to prepare professors in the use of proper technological tools and equipment, as well as for contracting optimal internet service providers for a good performance of the suggested platforms.

The new work modality, and in the framework of the Agreement No. 2407 with the Bernardo O'Higgins University (UBO) of Chile and the academic networks with the University of Puerto Rico, allowed the conditions for the creation of the permanent online seminar, taking advantage of the features provided by virtual work and considering that the costs of working with recognized national and international researchers through *Zoom* are more accessible.

During the months of June, July, and August, the new project permanent seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters took shape, with the objective of creating a permanent virtual space for training and exchanging experiences on teaching and researching on topics such as risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters.

The seminar was organized by Dra. Aideé C. Arellano Ceballos of the School of Literature and Communication (*Facultad de Letras y Comunicación*), Dra. Alicia Cuevas Muñiz of the School of Sciences (*Facultad de Ciencias*) –both of the University of Colima–; Mtra. Fabiola Barrenechea Riveros of the School of Earth Sciences (*Escuela de Ciencias de la Tierra*) of the Bernardo O'Higgins University; and Dra. Jenniffer Santos Hernández of the Center for Applied Social Research (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociales*) of the University of Puerto Rico.

In this process, six guidelines for the seminar's academic planning and logistics were established:

- Elaboration of a directory of more than 20 professors and researchers with national and international recognition, who were invited by e-mail to participate as speakers in the seminar.
- Two modalities were defined for the events: *webinar* and/or course-workshop, where each speaker chose the modality depending on their schedule.
- The topic is suggested according to the academic experience and lines of research where each of the speakers has excelled.
- The events are held every month.
- The call for participation is conducted through the official social network profiles of the three institutions (University of Colima, Bernardo O'Higgins University and University of Puerto Rico), as well as the speaker's institution of origin.
- A group of collaborators was created (students from the University of Colima's School of Science and the School of Literature and Communication), who formed the seminar staff and oversaw the registration and communication with all participants.

The Permanent Seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters started operations in October 2020.

Phenomenology as Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology is the theoretical perspective selected to approach the experience of university professors-researchers and students who joined the permanent seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters as an international collaborative online teaching-learning modality, during the last ten months.

Phenomenology seeks comprehension out of the individuals' direct experience with the object of study, in the framework of their day-to-day life (Schütz, 1972). In this case, the object of study is the practices of university professors-researchers and students in each of the ten events that have been held as of the time of writing.

For Weber (1978) the path to the construction of a new knowledge of social reality from phenomenology is the systematic and rigorous comprehension of this portion, aspect, or situation of reality being studied. In this study an audiovisual, digital record has been maintained of each of the events, always watching the rigor and systematization of information, allowing the recovery of experience, perception and signification of this work modality, the speakers, the contents, and interactions generated in each event.

On the other hand, Berger & Luckmann (1993) discuss that the theory of comprehension (*verstehen*) "incorporate subjectivity as pertinent data for day-to-day life analysis. Subjectivity is understood as a phenomenon that reveals the universe of significations constructed collectively out of interaction" (Arellano, A.; Cuevas, A. and Robles A. 2021, page 5). In this sense, opinions are a key element to understand the experiences of both university professors-researchers and students.

Phenomenology is also used to understand the experience of internationalization that is lived under this project with the complexity that is contributed by the nature of Interculturality in the Exchange of ideas and knowledge, and this also allowed the strengthening of collaboration networks with other groups of researchers – University of Delaware, the College of Michoacan, the National University of Mexico (UNAM), the Center for Research and Higher Studies on Social Anthropology (CIESAS), the US National Institute of Standards and Technology, Mexico's Water Technology Institute – that have incorporated to the seminar, which has provided direct benefits for the academic body (UCOL-CA67 "Society, Culture and Signification") and the consolidated research groups – of the University of Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico) and the Bernardo O'Higgins University (Chile)–, as well as for the training of human resources on scientific research in the framework of the subjects addressed in the seminar: risk, social vulnerability, and disasters.

In the University of Colima, internationalization is understood as a process, a means and a strategy designed to help the institution reach international

standards of quality in its processes and results in teaching, research and outreach; thus, the institution uses it as the "... principal mechanism for (...) managing agreements in academic mobility processes, both for local students and professors in outgoing mobility, as well as visiting scholars and students; the conformation and development of academic networks and joint projects in international cooperation, as well as the development of double degree programs, international co-tutorship and professional practices abroad, are (...) activities such as the culture of internationalization is expressed in the substantive functions of the University of Colima" (Universidad de Colima, 2018, paragraph 3).

On the other hand, it is important to mention that the phenomenological comprehension that we make out of these experiences is framed in the pandemic scenario, where both university professors and students have been forced to explore new forms of teaching and learning, including online education. At the same time, it has challenged professors to be at the forefront in the use of digital platforms, where they did not have neither the abilities nor the competences to use them as the situation arose, therefore one of the first vulnerabilities expressed in this group was the technological-educational vulnerability, due to the inequality in access and the knowledge of digital tools of each professor. In addition to this, enabling digital platforms for professors in such a short time ended up being overwhelming for some, because a psychosocial vulnerability (Zapa, *et al.*, 2017) was also expressed, generated from the uncertainty of being affected by the dangerous event caused by COVID-19.

In the case of students, there have been educational, psychosocial, economic, and geographical forms (Arellano and Cuevas, 2021) of expressing vulnerability, same which have expressed in differential form in each of them. In the middle of this complex scenario, professors and students have shown their capacity for response and resilience to carry on.

The capacity for response refers to the "capacity to react appropriately in an unanticipated moment of crisis. It is a synonym of the capacity for adaptation and reaction, of being able to face, with a positive attitude and without delays or difficulties, the demands and unanticipated effects of all kinds of disasters and situations of crisis" (Aguirre, 2004: page 489). Therefore, the capacity for response makes a determined social group be more able to respond properly with the available resources; that is, with the social capital available for facing a determined threat, considering the social capital as the aggregate of potential

resources linked to the possession of a durable networks of relations (Bourdieu, 2007). Just as the capacity for response depends on how and what ways the professors and students use their resources, social capital, knowledge and abilities to adapt and face adversities brought by the period of health contingency.

On the other hand, resilience is the capacity of individuals to overcome tragedy or traumatic events, characterized as a set of social and intrapsychic processes that make a healthy life possible while living in an insane world (Rutter, 1993). Pelling (2003) defines it as “the capacity to cope with an unanticipated threat, with the ability to recompose” (page 15).

In this sense, in a context of pandemic where professors and students have had to adapt, manage and negotiate adversity, each from their own trenches to face the adverse process they are living, it is possible to refer that a resilient individual holds “the capacity to control emotions, have empathy, capacity to face adversity, as well as abilities to socialize and tackle the challenges of life” (Rabanal, *et al.*, 2020: page 253).

This way professors and students at the University of Colima, in the context of the permanent seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters have had in this pandemic process the capacity of adaptation, because they have each demonstrated with their own resources their capacity for reaction, spontaneously and even planned as the months of health contingency have passed. Their spontaneous and reactive capacity arose during the first weeks of quarantine, when responding to the demands and needs required by online academic work; their spontaneous capacity arose when professors were being enabled in the use and knowledge of digital platforms for teaching, in a way that this technical knowledge became a social capital that was very useful in the capacity for response and even resilience in an adverse scenario.

Phenomenology as a Methodological Strategy

The methodological strategy used was phenomenology, since from the experiences that both university professors-researchers and students have experienced in each of the ten events held as of the time of writing, an account is given of the capacity for response and resilience that both social stakeholders have demonstrated to have a successful international collaborative online

teaching-learning project in the middle of a context of global risk due to the health contingency caused by COVID-19.

The research techniques used were virtual and documentary ethnographic observation. Ethnography, according to Galindo (1998) is working with sight and sense. It starts when an observer sets their gaze on the other, "leaving perception do its job, everything has a place, everything that appears is part of a text that can be deciphered" (Galindo, 1998, page 347); he also says: "perception is guided by assessments, signifiers, and these clusters of parts comprise the higher senses of social organization and composition" (Galindo, 1998, page 348). Thus, the researcher has to use perception, descriptive and phenomenological gaze to account for the situation under study.

In this exercise is used virtual ethnographic observation, which, as mentioned above, uses perception, comprehension, and description to account for the experiences that professors and students have had in the ten events held as of the time of writing.

The documentary technique is that which identifies, collects, and analyzes documents related with the studied event or context (Valles, 2007). In this case, audiovisual and digital records of each of the events were reviewed to extract information on the characteristics of participants and speakers, the institutions where they work, and the countries of origin. In addition to this, it allowed recovering the assessments on the international collaborative online teaching-learning experience of those who participated in the seminar.

International Collaborative Online Teaching-Learning Experience in University Professors and Students: Capacity for Response and Resilience

Experiences have been organized into three moments: initial challenges, speakers and participants, and assessments, in order to close with the final reflections on the capacity for response and resilience demonstrated both by those who organized and by those who participate in this seminar, because it was held in spite of facing a health contingency caused by COVID-19 with impacts on all aspects of day-to-day life.

Initial challenges

Work from home involved modifying the dynamics of the teaching-learning process, because it was necessary to move from face-to-face interaction to virtual interaction, from a teacher-student relation in the classroom, to a technologically mediated interaction where the role of the professor becomes a facilitator of the teaching process and students become stakeholders and managers of their own learning process.

On the other hand, the permanent seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters is a proposal for an alternative teaching-learning option where the participants are enrolled students. It was registered in the University of Colima as a formative event with the General Department of Continuing Education, the office in charge of validating the project and issuing certificates for speakers and participants.

It was possible also to visualize the gaps of those with proper technological equipment for technologically mediated classes; those who have internet service at home; those who have an adequate space for virtual sessions, and those who do not, both in professors and in students.

Given the economic conditions of higher education institutions in Mexico, as well as the impact on the domestic economies due to the health contingency, it was agreed that the seminar should be free of charge; the speakers kindly accepted participating and sharing their knowledge without compensation, thus guaranteeing that no individual who was interested in the events would be left out.

The permanent seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability, and disasters started in October 2020, seven months after face-to-face classes were suspended on March 18th, 2020. By this date, some of the limitations had been solved by the professors-researchers organizing the seminar, and by the students comprising the staff.

Speakers and participants

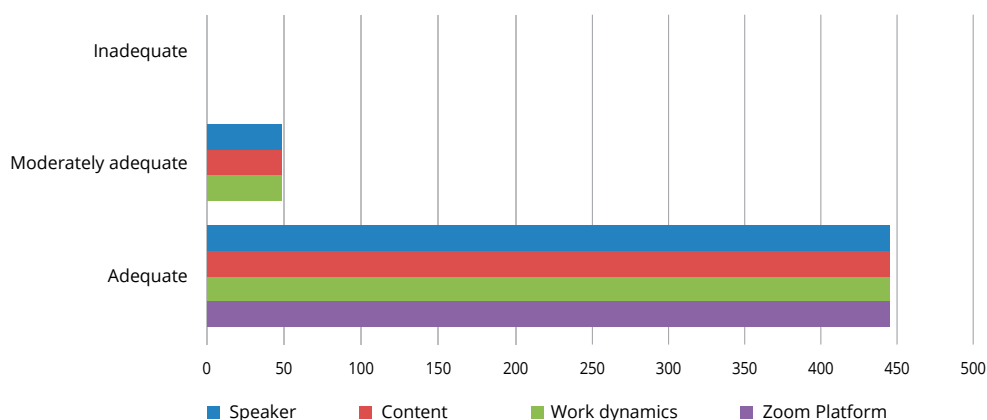
As of the time of writing, ten speakers –with outstanding academic careers– have participated in the seminar covering topics such as risk, social vulnerability,

and disasters. Seeking equity in the speakers' voices and their contributions, 50% of them are female and 50% are male; 40% of speakers were international (United States, Guatemala, and Chile), and 60% are Mexicans from institutions in education, government, or private sector. The seminar has had 446 participants, 85% of which are from national institutions, and 15% from international institutions. The national institutions of origin of participants are: the Autonomous University of Mexico City, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the University of Guadalajara, the College of the Northern Border, the Technological Institute of Monterrey, the University Center for the Prevention of Regional Disasters (CUPREDER in Spanish) of the Meritorious Autonomous University of Puebla (BUAP), the Autonomous University of Chiapas, the College of Michoacan, the National School of Civil Protection, the Center for Research and Higher Studies on Social Anthropology (CIESAS), the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), the Autonomous University of the West, the University of Quintana Roo, the San Luis College, and the University of Colima. In addition to these, individuals of private companies and local, state, and national government have also participated.

The institutions of origin of international speakers are the University of Puerto Rico; the National University of Asuncion, Paraguay; the National University of Santiago del Estero, Argentina; the University of San Carlos, Guatemala; the National University of the South, Argentina; the National University of Tucuman, Argentina; the Bernardo O'Higgins University, Chile; and the Heidelberg University, Germany. Professionals from the United States, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela also have participated.

Assessments

Finally, we have the assessments of those who participated in the seminar on the international collaborative online teaching-learning experience. When talking about assessments, it refers to the recognition of those who have participated in some of the events. In this sense we constructed a simple scale –adequate, moderately adequate, and inadequate– to place the assessment that participants give of four basic aspects –speaker, contents, work dynamics and *Zoom* platform– from a survey they respond when downloading their certificate of participation in the platform of the department of continuing education (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. Assessments on the online teaching-learning experience.

As it can be observed, most participants have a positive assessment of the events that have been held as of the time of writing. In spite of the technological, educational, and economic challenges, the seminar has yielded fruit that evince the capacity of response of those who organize and participate, as well as resilience to cope with the personal circumstances of each individual in their day-to-day life due to the effects of SARS-CoV2.

Final Reflections

The permanent seminar on risk studies and implications, social vulnerability and disasters has been an adequate space for training human resources of the different educational programs of the University of Colima, especially majors in Disaster Risk Management and Reduction, as well as in Environmental Science and Risk Management.

For students at the School of Literature and Communication, especially those majoring in Journalism and Communication, this has been a valuable window of formation in two priority areas for future professionals: risk journalism and communication management in situation of crisis and emergencies.

In addition to the above, it has contributed to the training of students, professors, researchers, and professionals of 13 national educational institutions, as well as private companies and government offices at the local, state, and national level,

and eight international educational institutions, as well as professionals from the United States, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela. The many different seminar participants may be understood as a sensible indicator of the need for acquiring knowledge on risk, social vulnerability, and crisis management.

The current context of vulnerability the world is undergoing forces individuals to take creativity to the limit in the forms of teaching and increasing our capacity for innovation to train students in a scientific and critical thinking, leading them to assume their responsibility to take advantage of, use, update, reflect upon, delve into, enrich their knowledge, and adapt to this permanent change. That is to say, both professors and students are forced to have capacity for a response accordingly to the current scenario, taking advantage of our resources and social capital to face an instance of adversity that nobody could have imagined, thus achieving a community resilience because in this process individuals have had the capacity to adapt and adopt new learning strategies and at the same time they have been able to manage their emotions, therefore reducing vulnerability, understanding the latter as one of the characteristics of a person, derived from their social, political, economic, and cultural conditions, related to a determined situation and with the possibility of influencing on their capacity for anticipation, resisting and recovering optimally in the face of a determined threat (Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon and Davis, 2004).

Both professors and students participating in this seminar have demonstrated their capacity for resisting adversity and recovering from this difficult process, using their available resources to overcome these critical moments, after experiencing this unforeseen situation.

The internationalization process has derived into a virtuous circle with positive impacts for progress in institutions and individuals. The development of the international collaborative online teaching-learning project allowed the participation of high-quality speakers and opened opportunities of access to participants of different countries, thus providing high-quality education for all applicants, free of charge. There was also progress in the consolidation of the work in national and international academic cooperation networks. These impacts keep the hope alive that it is possible to democratize opportunities for a relevant education for everyone and access to universal knowledge through a digital platform.

There are many challenges and vulnerabilities –technological, educational, economic, emotional– that have been necessary to overcome in order to operate the permanent seminar, but without a doubt, professors and students have had the capacity for response and resilience to cope with the adversities under this process in a risk scenario and to continue with this project. Setting aside the fact that it is currently in the first year of development and its emergent character, the seminar has contributed permanently to the development and strengthening abilities, as well as resilient self-management at all levels.

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E-Mobility as a Tool to Support Students' International Experience during the Pandemic: The Case of CETYS University

Scott Venezia Corral and Diana E. Woolfolk R.¹

CETYS Universidad (CETYS University) is a private, not-for-profit institution founded in 1961, offering undergraduate and graduate programs, with national and international accreditations (WASC, ACBSP, ABET) and participation in international rankings such as *Times Higher Education* (THE) and *QS Stars*. It has a strategic location in the North-East of Mexico for developing educational processes related to internationalization.

CETYS Universidad's need and beginning of the search for inter-institutional links started in the 1980s, but increased years later with the signing of the first agreement with a international university (Cal Poly Pomona, in the US). Since that historical event, and supported by the institution's strategic planning, the collaboration programs with universities from different countries have multiplied throughout the years, and internationalization of students has increased with them.

Strategic Planning of the Institution and Internationalization

Although the projects and programs on internationalization had been conducted at CETYS Universidad since the 1990s, and despite the impact they have on the courses of study, it was until the educational model was renovated in 2003 when internationalization became explicitly managed as part of curriculum development with a direct impact on students' lives.

1 International Affairs, CETYS University

For CETYS Universidad, nuances are distinctive elements that the institution intends to promote more strongly in a determined period, and their main points of reference are both the institutional philosophy and pedagogical principles. Nuances must be clearly reflected in the design of courses of study. The educational model provides a group of nuances, including internationalization.

The 2020 Plan defined the *raison d'être* of this educational institution for the upcoming years. It set the strategic trends and clearly stated the challenges and implications that would be faced in the future. The plan was drafted in 2009 and began being implemented in 2010. The purposes of the plan were:

1. Define precisely the type of institution that the CETYS intends to be under the parameters of humanist education, global competitiveness, feasibility, and sustainability for the next ten years.
2. Define and operate a high educational quality strategy, guaranteeing measurable results in the key processes of institutional life (student learning, role of the faculty, academic programs, finance management, among others).
3. Strengthen the strategies to consolidate CETYS in the international scenario and its position as a competitive university in that context.

Addressing these purposes, the vision defined by CETYS and passed by the highest office of institutional life is the following:

CETYS Universidad will be an institution with high educational quality, globally competitive, working as a community of learning, and recognized by its actions and results in favor of sustainable development.

This distinctive element of CETYS education understands internationalization as a process that attempts at expanding the traditional general formation of individuals in a national framework, into a formation that also transcends borders and prepares students as citizens of the world. Thus, in the 2020 Plan, the nuance of internationalization was an initiative that attempted to create at CETYS a relevant environment to develop among students a global training and mindset that allows them to perform as competitive professionals in the modern society of the 21st century. This internationalization nuance at CETYS

comprises six components: 1) curriculum and faculty, 2) studies abroad and international exchange, 3) international students, 4) technical cooperation and international development, 5) public service, and 6) administration. Among the most relevant attributes of the international dimension (globally competitive) we find:

- All students have an internationalization experience.
- Recognition under international standards.
- International accreditation.
- Command of English (bilingual graduates).
- Faculty with high prestige and educational level (including doctorates and PhD).
- Valuable offer (flexible, innovative, competitive).
- International experience, exchange programs and student mobility.
- Active participation of professors in inter-university projects in the framework of globalization.
- Recognition of cultural diversity and global perspective.
- Joint degree programs and internships abroad.

Performance Measurement Indicators

Designing indicators to measure the progress of the institution regarding internationalization was key to monitor the performance of different academic areas through time. For instance, international experience is measured dividing the number of graduates of a particular program that have at least one international experience by the total number of students graduated in that generation. The resulting percentage is the most important indicator related to internationalization measured by the institution for any academic program and area (school at campus level or college at state level), as well as for each campus and the institution in general. The measurement and recording system allows from knowing such information for each student of each generation of the four years of a specific program, to knowing the full performance of the CETYS in such area.

It is worth mentioning that the institution's specific achievements in this area range from a low 30 percent in 2012, growing constantly until reaching 50% in 2017 (goal proposed for 2020), attaining 54% of international experience that

year, 58% in 2018, 62% in 2019, and 65% in 2020. More recently, and even in the middle of the pandemic, the institution achieved 65.43% of international experience in the undergraduate generation graduated in June 2021.

From the impulse generated by the 2020 Plan, between 2010 and 2015 the level of international activity in the institution increased strongly. Factors such as new alliance, the trends in higher education both in Mexico and in other countries, the interest of students for this kind of activity, as well as the goals set by the institution towards 2020 were influential for that purpose.

Parallel to this, the institution decided to enter the *Internationalization Lab 2.0* of the *American Council on Education* (ACE) of the United States. Years before, CETYS had attempted the ACE Audit to their internationalization processes (*Internationalization Lab 1.0*) aimed at obtaining pertinent recommendations to promote even more internationalization of the curriculum, faculty, and students. The resulting recommendations from that process were crucial to fine tune the CETYS internationalization strategy and initiatives during the first years of the 2020 Plan. Given that, CETYS underwent the *Lab 2.0* in 2017, allowing it to receive progress recommendations and suggestions for improvement for this new stage from internationalization experts.

It is important to remember that by 2015, the institution had already reconsidered the goal of international experience, setting forth that it should attain 20% of undergraduates with international experience by 2020. At the same time, for the 2015 program update for the College of Administration and Business and obtaining the corresponding REVOES, the course "Global Citizenship" was included as part of the subjects of the curriculum for any student of any program of such college; this course can only be passed by participating in at least one international experience. In essence, this action moves the international experience from a co-curricular environment into mandatory curriculum. De Wit (2011) claims that internationalization of curricula and teaching and learning processes (also called internationalization at home) have become as relevant as the emphasis on mobility. This claim is reflected in the importance of the Decision of the College of Administration and Business, which will allow such college to achieve that 100% of the graduates in generation 2022 will complete their studies with international experience.

Recognizing this increase in students' international activity, as well as the variety of international experiences offered by the institution, the goals proposed and

the demand of curriculum requirements, it was attempted to standardize and regulate the characteristics and elements that an international activity should comply in order to be considered international student experience at CETYS Universidad.

The Direction of International Relations, together with the heads of Academic Colleges, established the parameters and characteristics of international experiences, same which were validated by the CETYS Academic Vice-Rector's Office in 2017. The contributions of the group were reflected on concepts and elements that must now be considered by the guidelines, actions and annual programs for internationalization.

The international student experience was defined as "the sum of activities or experiences developed at middle-higher, higher, and graduate level, combining three key elements: international curriculum, international faculty, and international students." These international activities or experiences can materialize through an international academic exchange program, a double degree program, the CETYS International Summer Program (ISP), or any short stay where there are: a) revalidation of courses by international activity-class and/or internship; b) lectures by international professors; c) lectures with groups that include national and international students.

The expected level or purpose set forth by any international student experience seeks that in every program, the student participates in multicultural environments, can perform within them, and is able to develop the skills required in a global society, assessing and improving their performance in international teams.

Thus, since 2017, CETYS has attempted to ensure that all such international activities and experiences in and out of Mexico comply with the standards, characteristics, and requirements necessary to be considered a formal international experience. Therefore, to be officially regarded as *institutional international experiences* by CETYS Universidad, all programs must have the following attributes:

1. Comprise eminently academic activities, no less than 16 hours.
2. Include and focus on an international curriculum and content.

3. Include the participation of international professors.
4. If held in Mexico, include the participation of international students, key element for internationalization at home.
5. If held outside of Mexico, it does not necessarily must include international peers.
6. In the case of internships and stays abroad, the academic activities mentioned above may be replaced by an equal or higher number of work or practice activities abroad, in which case the items above are replaced in a work environment as follows: faculty by superiors, curriculum by work activities and labor dynamics, and international students/peers for coworkers.

Internationalization at Home

As the institution progressed in their goals of internationalization of students, it became evident that some percentage of student population would not be able to participate in face-to-face mobility abroad, for different reasons. Meeting the requirements and interests of students and the curriculum element of international experience were key factors for the institution to try to include an extensive and coherent strategy in the internationalization at home initiative.

It is then considered that any internationalization at home initiative implemented by the institution, to be considered an international experience, must comply with the attributes and characteristics mentioned above, including and especially the presence and participation of international students. This requirement, together with the international curriculum and the involvement of international faculty, are key elements of CETYS' flagship internationalization at home initiative: the *International Summer Program* (ISP).

CETYS Universidad's ISP was initially launched in 2013 to offer tCETYS students an internationalization at home experience. With a group of 16 students and two international professors (One from India and another from the US), a master's degree program was offered in July of the same year. The program has evolved strongly through the years. Together with an ambitious international

student scholarship program, international alliances and partners achieved the participation of 158 CETYS students, 66 international students, and ten international professors in the 2019 edition. The countries represented by international students and professors were 18: Poland, United States, Malaysia, Greece, India, Egypt, France, Mexico, Colombia, United Kingdom, Austria, Czech Republic, Armenia, Brazil, Spain, Peru, China, and The Netherlands.

The ISP organized by the CETYS System International Campus (Ensenada) is now the signature program for the internationalization at home initiative and a crucial element in the internationalization of CETYS students. Courses taught by international professors, classes with international students, and cultural and academic activities. These activities help students develop global awareness and intercultural skills, preparing students to be more active in an increasingly globalized world (Knight, 2008). Together, these initiatives make the ISP a program that enhances CETYS internationalization, it has obtained important recognition abroad, obtaining funding from the USA and the European Union for its implementation, through the *100,000 Strong for the Americas* program of the US Department of State and the Erasmus+ of the European Commission on Education.

In April 2020, as a response to the pandemic, the *International Summer Program 2020*, designed since 2013 in a face-to-face format, was modified to become a virtual event. It was successfully implemented in July 2020; it included five courses, with instructors from five countries, and enrolled 162 students from 14 countries.

E-Mobility as a Response to the Pandemic

The COVID-19 virus dramatically changed how global education and international mobility were implemented. Millions of students were affected, causing the most significant online education movement in history. With the sudden change of activities from the classroom into platforms, universities had to deploy quickly virtual and digital strategies (Ghada, 2021). Seeing that the pandemic would make it impossible for face-to-face mobility to occur during at least the following two semesters, and based on the experience provided by the first completely virtual edition of the ISP, the institution decided to enter an emergent strategy to support the international experience requirement of its students, and continue during the 2020 August-December semester with an additional offer of virtual

courses including both international students and professors from different countries. Each of these virtual courses complied with each of the requirements set forth by CETYS to be considered an international experience: minimum time, participation of international professors, international students, and an international approach in the curriculum and execution.

This virtual course offering had not been implemented before. For the 2020-2021 academic year, 430 CETYS students and 227 international students participated in these programs. Thirty instructors from twelve countries (Poland, The Netherlands, Malaysia, Greece, United States, Czech Republic, Italy, India, Colombia, United Arab Emirates, Mexico, and Spain) were also part of this initiative.

According to a survey developed by the International Association of Universities (IAU) (Marinoni *et al.*, 2020), the experience of working and teaching remotely has been considered a significant opportunity to learn from this situation and to propose flexible ways to promote learning, exploring hybrid synchronic and asynchronous learning. The pandemic represented the possibility to detonate competences in the staff and academia, through the use of new tools and systems to promote remote learning. Higher education institutions reacted to the emergency through contingency plans, providing opportunities for international students. A reflection of this was the ISP, where an ambitious scholarship program was deployed, aimed at stimulating the participation of international students in CETYS E-Mobility in the 21 courses implemented during the 2020 August-December and 2021 January-June semesters.

Virtual international mobility since July 2020, in strict compliance with the characteristics and requirements established by the institution, in addition to the high level of participation in this mobility and the participation of students in other international activities before the pandemic, allowed 65% of graduates of the generation that finished in December 2020 to conclude with international experience. In June 2021, despite the pandemic, 65.43% of the graduating cohort had at least one international experience.

In its second E-Mobility edition in July 2021, the ISP had the participation of 129 CETYS students and 162 international students. The curricular offer consisted of ten courses taught by 11 international professors. The countries represented in the program through students and participating instructions were Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Chile, Colombia, United Arab Emirates, Spain, United States,

Georgia, Greece, India, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic. The deployment of this program allowed the connection of students from different parts of the world, learning from different cultures in a global experience. Furthermore, students who participated in this activity could connect with peers from other countries, providing this remote activity with the opportunity to create a community of learning, exchanging ideas, resources, and methodologies between individuals from different educational and social contexts (Xie *et al.*, 2020).

Conclusions

In a short time, the emergent CETYS Universidad international E-Mobility has become an important element of students' international experience. This will also be reflected in the institution's new strategic plan currently being elaborated. Even though the plan considers face-to-face mobility will gradually recover in the years after the pandemic, it is expected that the CETYS E-Mobility initiatives will represent at least 25% of the array of options for international experience that the institution will offer towards 2036.

As perceived from the information in this chapter, higher education institution internationalization initiatives require being firmly anchored in the university's strategic plan. This allows continuity and the necessary support by the leaders of the institution by having to implement emergent strategies in situations such as those generated by the pandemic.

The use of specific internationalization indicators and goals has allowed CETYS Universidad to define the scope and depth of the international E-Mobility initiative, establishing the elements, characteristics, and especially the number of courses to be implemented in a determined period, clearly and quickly, as well as measuring their progress and impact during implementation.

Given that the disruptions provoked by COVID-19 in the area of international mobility will continue, to achieve maintaining the same rhythm of international experience of the generation that will conclude in 2022, CETYS shall launch at least 32 international E-Mobility courses between August 2021-June 2022, attempting that such generation attains an international experience percentage close to 70%. Based on the experience obtained and the capacity generated in the July 2020-June 2021 period, this goal is feasible.

On the other hand, one of the main goals in internationalization is related to the percentage of international students attending short programs, seminars, and even full programs. Such participation is estimated to be at least 10% of total students starting in 2022 and gradually increasing following the new strategic plan. However, this indicator will not be possible if it does not involve initiatives linked to E-Mobility in the mixture of international options, turning one of the institution's emergent strategies into a deliberate, day-to-day, continuously implemented strategy to reach their goals towards 2036.

The participation of CETYS students in courses and subjects implemented through international E-Mobility, with the elements and characteristics described above, not only allow students to have an international experience, but are also a fundamental base for the internationalization at home initiatives of a higher education institution that seeks to satisfy the integral education required by current generations in a relevant manner.

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PIC US-MX: Bilateral Initiative to Boost Internationalization of Curriculum in Times of Pandemic

*Ofelia Cervantes Villagómez*¹

Abstract

The internationalization of the curriculum is one of the most relevant dimensions of internationalization of higher education institutions (HEI). The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have hindered student mobility and promoted internationalization at home. The Program for the Internationalization of the Curriculum United States - Mexico (PIC US-MX) was created by the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI) jointly with the United States Embassy in Mexico, with the support of Santander Universidades and Fomento Educativo, A.C. to strengthen the internationalization of the curriculum of Mexican and American HEI, using the SUNY-COIL² methodology. To contextualize the contribution of the PIC US-MX, some examples of other initiatives of internationalization at home are presented, as well as the description of how the COIL methodology began in Mexico. Finally, the main characteristics of the PIC US-MX are described, the challenges faced, and first results obtained.

Keywords: *internationalization of HEI, internationalization of the curriculum, COIL, collaborative online international learning, internationalization at home, virtual exchange, US-Mexico collaboration.*

1 AMPEI, PIC US-MX Executive Coordinator

2 SUNY-COIL: Collaborative Online International Learning. Developed by The State University of New York (SUNY).

Introduction

Internationalization of the curriculum is a fundamental activity to prepare new generations for global professional performance in the 21st century (UNESCO, 2019). During last decades, the trend of higher education institutions around the globe to incorporate internationalization actions in their strategic plans has increased. Mobility of students and professors has been promoted, and actions for the internationalization of courses of study have also been initiated (Deardorff *et al.*, 2021).

However, due both to restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for economic reasons, students were not able to participate in studies nor professional practices abroad during the last months. In particular, from early 2020 mobility has been reduced considerably and it has been necessary to open new opportunities to provide students with an international educational experience.

The pedagogical proposal initiated by SUNY-COIL, offering collaborative international learning online courses is highlighted as an excellent alternative for internationalization of the curriculum and to promote internationalization at home, in particular during pandemic times.

The Mexican Association for International Education (*Asociación Mexicana para la Educación Internacional, A.C.*, AMPEI), committed with opening opportunities for Mexican higher education institutions, launched the Program for Internationalization of the Curriculum United States Mexico (*Programa de Internacionalización Curricular Estados Unidos-México*, PIC US-MX) jointly with the United States Embassy in Mexico with the support of *Santander Universidades* and *Fomento Educativo, A.C.*

In section two the concepts of internationalization of the curriculum are defined and in section three the most relevant cases of internationalization at home are presented. Section four describes how the COIL methodology arrived at Mexico. Section five describes the main characteristics of PIC US-MX and presents also the first results of the experience of creating and implementing the program. Finally, section six describes the challenges and existing opportunities for increasing internationalization at home.

Internationalization of the Curriculum

The globalization phenomenon in which we are immersed demands expanding horizons and being increasingly competitive. Many higher education institutions (HEI) in the world have integrated internationalization as an institutional strategy comprising the international and intercultural dimension in the functions of teaching, research, and outreach, to respond to new challenges demanded by society, the economy, and the market. The most common measures adopted by HEI in this area are student mobility, scholarships for studies abroad, and participation of teachers and researchers in international networks for knowledge generation (De Wit *et al.*, 2017).

In recent years, internationalization of higher education institutions has mainly been oriented towards internationalization of the curriculum, being the liaison between institutional strategies and student experience. The curriculum plays a fundamental role in the institutional internationalization agenda (Leask, 2015). Internationalization of the curriculum is defined as the integration of the international and multicultural dimension in the contents and forms of courses of study, with the aim of training graduates to act professionally and socially in an international, multicultural context (Gacel-Avila, 2014).

As reported by Kanwar & Carr (2020), COVID-19 had a significant impact on international higher education with closed borders, cancelled flights, and a change into online teaching and learning. As a result, many international students abandoned or postponed their plans of studying abroad, impacting the economy of host countries. Beyond the economic implications, it is also important to consider the personal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students, who had to face delays or challenges to complete their courses of study, due to not being able to return to the country where they studied before the pandemic. Although there are certainly risks and short-term losses, it is expected that the interest continues while demand for international education grows, recognizing the benefits it offers. The new post-pandemic stage presents an opportunity for HEI and governments, not only to decrease the impact of COVID-19 on their current economic models, but also to exploit new models and opportunities. HEI and governments should consider the redefinition of international higher education for the new normality, which will involve a change in existing policies and programs.

Therefore, as a consequence of the pandemic and increasing economic challenges, and in some cases in addition to safety issues, options for student mobility have decreased, and the possibilities to provide university students with an international education experience without leaving their own institutions have increased.

This alternative for internationalization of the curriculum, also called *internationalization at home*, consists in incorporating the international dimension into courses of study, in teaching-learning models, in extra-curricular activities, and therefore, develop intercultural abilities and skills in students without leaving their country.

Internationalization at home

As a response to the challenges posed by COVID-19 in education, the programs offering *internationalization at home* have increased, under different names and variants in their implementation (Symonds, 2020). Below are presented the more relevant programs nowadays.

The SUNY-COIL Center

The *SUNY-COIL Center*³ pioneered in the COIL model more than 15 years ago, and since then it has helped professors and institutions to know and professionalize the practice of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and virtual exchange. The SUNY-COIL Center renders services to institutions of the *State University of New York* (SUNY) and offers services to higher education institutions all around the world. Their services include workshops for professor and higher education professional formation on international education. Additionally, they developed the *Global Network*⁴, which serves as a center for the exchange of information and ideas, professional support, search for partners and exchange of resources. Many institutions worldwide have incorporated COIL successfully into their institutions in close collaboration with the SUNY-COIL Center.

3 SUNY-COIL Center (<https://coil.suny.edu/>).

4 <https://coil.suny.edu/global-network/>

The COIL created and developed by the SUNY-COIL Center has expanded significantly and today is a referent of collaborative online international learning. Below, other internationalization at home proposals are analyzed.

Initiatives in the European Union

The trend of expanding opportunities for students to participate in an online academic exchange experience, using technology, is present in different countries of the world. In Europe, the *Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange* project (Erasmus+, 2020) is part of the Erasmus+ program and it provides an accessible and innovative form for young people to participate in intercultural exchange. Working with youth organizations and universities, the program is open to any person between 18 and 30 years of age residing in Europe and the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The program includes different modalities and activities with different formats, duration, time investment, thematic scope, and number of participants.

Through this type of collaborative online learning without borders, as of March 2020, twenty thousand young people, educators, and youth workers have benefited from the *Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange* since it was launched in 2018. Participants have established relations with their peers in countries such as Libya, Germany, Syria, Italy, Morocco, Turkey, or Finland. The report *Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange 2018-2019* (Erasmus+, 2020) shows strong evidence of the project's impact.

This project is conducted under an agreement with the European Education and Culture Executive Agency funded by the European Union; it is implemented by partnerships with several organizations specialized on education. The Virtual Exchange program has proven that virtual exchange programs work synergically and complementarily to physical exchange programs. Particularly in pandemic times, they have been an excellent alternative to mitigate the obstacles for physical mobility.

Program for Virtual Exchange Development VE-COIL

The program for Virtual Exchange Development VE-COIL (Compostela, 2021) arises as a tool to promote cooperation and internationalization of learning

among the partners of the Compostela Group of Universities (*Grupo Compostela de Universidades, GCU*). The GCU has created the ***Universities for Virtual Exchange*** network, comprising those partner universities who opt for bringing virtual exchange programs closer to their university community. The members of this network appoint a head of the program, facilitating dissemination of information relevant in their university, supporting the faculty in attending formation workshops, and promoting their application to different calls for participation.

For professors and teachers of the member institutions of the Compostela Group of Universities and the International Association of LaSalle Universities, teacher formation and innovation courses are offered to prepare them to teach courses based on the COIL model.

The GCU and the LaSalle University in Mexico collaborate to offer this course free for faculty and teachers of both networks. The university assumes the teacher responsibilities of the course and both institutions co-manage the training to bring the faculty of the five continents together.

Initiatives for outreach in Latin America

Among other initiatives, there is the proposal of the Veracruz University (*Universidad Veracruzana*) through the creation in 2020 of the Latin American COIL Network (*Red LatAm COIL*), which is an inter-disciplinary network with an interest on collaborative online international learning methodology, initially at the higher education level. It comprises Latin American universities and initiatives worldwide who wish to integrate the COIL methodology in the courses and do research on the topic (Red LatAm, 2021).

The objectives of the Red LatAm are promoting communication among practitioners and institutions involved in COIL in Latin America, promoting the practice and research of COIL methodology in higher education level in Latin America, and expanding the benefits of this methodology as a strategy for internationalization of the curriculum at higher education level, through collaboration with other national and international networks and organizations promoting collaborative online international learning.

The Latin American COIL Network founding members are the Veracruz University, the University of Monterrey from Mexico, and Brazil's State Paulist University

(*Universidad Estadual Paulista*) and Colombia's Metropolitan Technological Institute of Medellín (*Instituto Tecnológico Metropolitano de Medellín*). The Red LatAm COIL counts with institutional and individual members, offers training courses on the COIL methodology, and international webinars on topics of interest for the international educational community; it also organizes an annual conference.

Other initiatives

Many universities and consortiums are organizing new modalities and programs to offer their students opportunities for internationalization at home. It would not be possible to present here all existing initiatives in a comprehensive manner, therefore this section concludes mentioning other projects that have been successful and which include more information in their official webpages.

For instance, the Stevens Initiative (Stevens, 2021) is highlighted as an international effort to develop global competence and the skills for professional training for young people in the United States with the Middle East and Northern Africa. Created in 2015, the initiative is committed to help expand the field of virtual exchange through three working pillars: investment on promising programs, sharing knowledge and resources, and promoting the adoption of virtual academic exchange. The Stevens Initiative is sponsored by the United States Department of State and is managed by the Aspen Institute⁵. It also counts with the support of the Bezos Family Foundation and the governments of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. Recognizing the impact promised by virtual exchange and capitalizing on technological advances, the objective is to provide trans-cultural experiences for all young people, transforming their lives. The initiative has given 86 grants and for the summer of 2023 will expand its reach to almost 75,000 young people in 17 countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa, as well as Palestinian Territories, and in 47 states of the United States, Puerto Rico, a tribal community, the US Virgin Islands, and Washington, D.C.

On the other hand, the mission of the *Global Partners in Education* organization (GPE, 2021) is to offer services to member institutions, maintaining, and improving excellence and efficiency of the programs, promoting collaborative opportunities for education and research, as well as applying new technologies

5 <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/>

and pedagogies to global education. Its origin was *The Global Virtual Exchange programming and network*, developed in the East Carolina University (ECU) as a response to a strength existing in online education and a clear need to bring significant international experiences to first-generation ECU students, mainly rural, low-income students who were reluctant to explore beyond their state of North Carolina. Beginning with a single class in 2003, GPE has increased both the number of members and the variety of its programs throughout the years. Its flagship program is Global Understanding.

Finally, the *UNICollaboration* organization (UNICollaboration, 2021), created during the Second Conference on Telecollaboration on Higher Education held in Trinity College, Dublin, in April 2016, is an inter-disciplinary professional organization for telecollaboration and virtual exchange in higher education. The *UNICollaboration* is co-funded by the *Erasmus+* program of the European Union and has two main objectives: promoting the development and integration of research and practice in telecollaboration and virtual Exchange in all disciplines and thematic areas of higher education, as well as participating actively in sensitization on the benefits of telecollaboration and virtual exchange, both at an institutional level and for the formulation of new policies at a European level.

SUNY-COIL Methodology Arrives in Mexico

In the framework of the Bilateral Forum Mexico-United States on Higher Education, Innovation and Research (*Foro Bilateral México-Estados Unidos sobre Educación Superior, Innovación e Investigación, FOBESII*), created in 2014, Mexico and the United States met government authorities, the community of higher education, the private sector, and civil society, to promote the development of the workforce, educational and research cooperation, and promoting better access to quality higher education, mainly for traditionally disadvantaged demographic groups, including women, in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The objective of FOBESII is also to expand student, professor, and scholar exchange, promoting language learning, increasing joint research, promoting the development of human capital, and sharing the best practices between both countries (ANUIES, 2015).

It is true that many Mexican students and scholars have participated in many educational programs in United States institutions, but, unfortunately, not all students have the chance to participate in a physical mobility exchange program.

For this reason, the Section of Public Affairs (SAP) of the United States Embassy had the initiative of offering creative ways to provide Mexican and American students with alternatives to connect and interact in online shared classrooms with the use of technology, applying new teaching and learning approaches. The initiative also tried to have a greater impact and a multiplying effect to reach the highest possible number of students in both countries, particularly in regions of Mexico where there is not a lot of academic exchange activity with the United States.

Thus, in 2014, upon hearing success stories of the State University of New York (SUNY) applying its COIL methodology, the SAP decided it was the program to be promoted in Mexico. In 2015, the SAP started negotiations with the COIL director and other collaborators, including the SUNY representative in Mexico. The program focused on providing opportunities for institutions whose students have less probabilities of participating in international exchange programs for economic or other reasons, and with whom it was desired to develop long-term relations.

With the support of *Banco Santander Universidades*, the project reached 18 states of Mexico. Each participating Mexican institution received support to develop two pilot courses improved by COIL with one or more partner institutions in the United States. The SUNY-COIL Center developed the program to support the 72 professors to design their courses and make them sustainable in the long term and promote the creation of tight academic collaboration bonds among participating institutions.

This was without a doubt the seed program that introduced the COIL methodology in Mexico and allowed the formation of the first Mexican experts. Several participating Mexican institutions continued working on consolidating their internationalization at home programs. They became leaders in the country, offering COIL courses regularly in their institutions, developing faculty formation programs and appointing responsibilities of coordination of COIL courses to ensure continuity in the use of this methodology in the internationalization of their academic programs.

The institutions that are highlighted due to their participation in this Pioneer program and for continuing the consolidation of internationalization of the curriculum in their institutions, and for continuing participating with the SUNY-COIL Center and expanding their collaboration networks are the University

of Chihuahua, the University of Guanajuato, the University of Monterrey, the LaSalle University, the Technological Institute of Monterrey system, and the Veracruz University. The impact produced by the Veracruz University and the University of Monterrey is especially relevant as Mexican founding leaders of the Red LatAm. On the other hand, the LaSalle University, the University of Chihuahua, and the University of Monterrey participate in the Compostela Group and have expanded their collaboration networks with other countries from Europe and Asia. Finally, due to the number of campuses comprising the Technological Institute of Monterrey system, they created their own consortium through the *Tec Global Classroom* project (Méndez, 2019).

PIC US-MX: the Mexican Initiative of AMPEI-COIL

Let us focus our attention on the actions carried out by Mexico to expand the opportunities to implement the COIL methodology in a comprehensive and intensive form in the country. In Spring 2020, the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI), committed to opening new opportunities for internationalization of Mexican higher education institutions, had the initiative to approach the United States Embassy in Mexico to propose the creation of the Program for Internationalization of the Curriculum United States-Mexico (PIC US-MX).

The initiative coincided with the vision of the embassy of expanding the impact of the COIL methodology with the participation of more Mexican universities to continue strengthening academic cooperation between Mexico and the United States. Thus, joining efforts, the PIC US-MX was conceptualized and commissioned, with the main objective of strengthening internationalization of courses of study and academic contents of the courses offered by higher education institutions in the United States and Mexico using the SUNY-COIL (*Collaborative Online International Learning*) methodology. The program is offered as part of the FOBESII. The PIC US-MX is a seminal program, designed to be completed during two academic years.

PIC US-MX promotes the creation of multi-cultural educational environments where professors of two institutions work jointly to develop modules emphasizing collaborative learning, allowing students to have trans-cultural experiences without traveling abroad. The content of the courses is transdisciplinary, professors develop the contents jointly, offered in a hybrid format. Students

attend to their regular course in their respective institutions that have already incorporated the COIL component. Thus, the online activities are enriched with those of students in the other country, providing a valuable experience.

PIC US-MX design and launch

The PIC US-MX was officially launched on September 8, 2020, thanks to the active collaboration and funding of the Embassy of the United States, complemented with funds from *Banco Santander Universidades* and *Fomento Educativo*, A.C. AMPEI is responsible for coordinating the execution of the program with the support of collaborators and institutional resources of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua (*Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua*). The launch was attended by authorities of the financing institutions, as well as by rectors of Mexican and American HEI, consuls of Mexico in the United States, representatives of American HEI with presence in Mexico, deans, and directors of international and academic exchange offices, and by a large number of professors interested in participating in the program. Christopher Landau, ambassador of the United States in Mexico at the time, emphasized that “When Mexican and Americans work together, we are stronger and can go further”.

The first call for participation was opened for Mexican and American professors attached to public and private HEI in both countries; 195 applications were received. Mexican professors who demonstrated institutional support by being associate or full-time professors and researchers, with advanced level of English, experience in teaching, and members of AMPEI were selected. The most relevant criterion in the selection process was the interest in offering a COIL course and counting with the necessary competences to teach the course along with an American professor.

After a careful analysis, 124 professors were selected to become the first cohort in the program. In the selected group there were professors from 35 universities in the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Guerrero, Guanajuato, Baja California, Michoacan, Yucatan, Hidalgo, Sonora, Ciudad de Mexico, Puebla, Jalisco, and Veracruz; and from 27 universities in the American states of Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Connecticut, Missouri, Ohio, Maryland, New York, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Washington D.C.

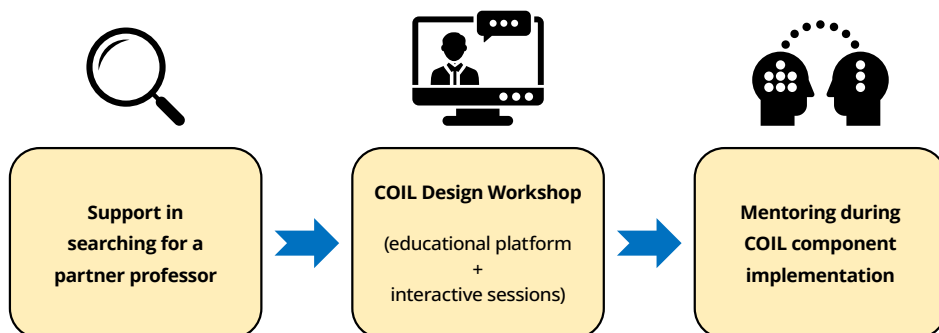
That same fall semester the first training workshops of PIC US-MX (described below) were taught, and the first two professor partnerships in the program taught their COIL courses successfully. The pioneers in the program were the University of Guanajuato working with the La Guardia Community College – CUNY, and the Meritorious Autonomous University of Puebla (*Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla*) collaborating with the University of Maryland, in Baltimore.

Teacher training program

Professors selected to participate in the program showed enthusiasm for innovative, collaborative, and interdisciplinary teaching, experience in curriculum design and skills in information technologies applied to teaching, in addition to commitment to participate in the COIL training workshops and working with a colleague from another country to teach jointly a COIL course. But for many of them, COIL was something new and required specialized training to know and be able to apply the COIL methodology in their courses.

For this reason, in the PIC US-MX, a specialized course was designed to provide the American and Mexican HEI with all the knowledge and necessary tools to successfully offer courses with a COIL component. Figure 1 shows the services offered by PIC US-MX to professors and which distinguish it from other COIL methodology training programs, in particular the stages for searching a partner professor and the COIL component implementation.

Figure 1. Services provided by the PIC US-MX.



The training program includes a workshop on the foundations of the COIL methodology and training and follow up in the design of the COIL component. For the first group of Mexican professors accepted in the program, the first workshop was held in October 2020 with live videoconference sessions, covering the COIL methodology foundations. Two options for time and day were offered to reach the highest number of professors. This first workshop was a great success because it allowed the introduction of the model's essential aspects and started the training of the 124 professors admitted to the program. Although the workshop was taught in Spanish, some American professors also participated.

The second stage of the training was oriented into the design of the COIL component and requires the participation of both the American and Mexican partner professors. All professors who already had a partner professor participated in some of the COIL Design workshops that had been offered since the beginning of the program. To date, four COIL design workshops have been held, with the participation of 78 professors, and two more workshops are scheduled for this year. By the end of fall 2021, 32 COIL courses will have been taught, and the rest are scheduled for Spring 2022. A total of 27 American universities from 13 states and 17 Mexican universities from 12 states have participated. In Spring 2022, more COIL design workshops will be taught.

The COIL design workshop is offered in hybrid modality during six weeks, allowing the participants to have asynchronous access to the materials available in the educational platform designed specifically for the program, hosted in

the Moodle servers of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, and it also offers weekly interactive online sessions where instructors present the main topics of the week, respond questions of the participants, and generate synergy produced in the exchange of learning experiences between participant professor partnerships.

For the design and implementation of the PIC US-MX educational platform, SUNY-COIL authorized the use of their educational materials, which were adapted to guide professor partnerships in the design of their COIL components effectively and quickly. The aim was to simplify the time required to complete the workshop, considering the burden of the academic work of professors, which increased due to the need of offering online courses during the pandemic. The content was centered on the stages required to design the syllabus containing the description of the COIL component, the learning objectives, and activities designed for participant students in binational teams. Activities include icebreaking actions and cultural rapprochement of participants, an academic paper to be developed jointly, and a final reflection on the intercultural communication processes, and takeaways.

For the design and implementation of the educational platform, a group of Mexican instructors, experts on the COIL methodology from the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, University of Monterrey, University of Guanajuato, Veracruz University and the LaSalle University, leading institutions in the COIL methodology in Mexico, were selected. A first version was elaborated, inspired by the SUNY-COIL, used only during the first two COIL design workshop editions.

A second version was made on a new Moodle version to improve the quality of contents and the platform interface, which started in February 2021. The new version is simpler and attractive in its use, and participants in different workshops have assessed it positively.

Mentoring program

One of PIC US-MX program's main qualities is the mentoring program's personalized support, which aims at supporting the professor partnerships to implement their COIL components with success. The design stage of a course including a COIL component is certainly the most relevant for the success of the COIL experience offered to participant student. But at the moment

of teaching the course, it is possible that different factors may arise, forcing partner professors to modify the design, and make adjustments to reach the learning objectives defined for the course. For this reason, and with the desire to provide all the support required by professors, a support and mentorship program was designed, provided by professors with extensive experience in the COIL methodology.

Mentors are experts that have been trained in the SUNY-COIL program, who have designed and taught several COIL courses and even have in their institutions the role of COIL coordinators, promoting the COIL methodology, and acting as liaisons and tutors for other colleagues to teach COIL courses. Mexican professors collaborating in the PIC US-MX give attention to a reduced group of professor partners and support them during the implementation of their COIL components. This is a special characteristic of the program, contributing to ensure a successful performance of professor partnerships during the execution phase of all activities designed to provide the experience of a COIL course to students in both countries.

Seminar for COIL coordinators

Consolidation of internationalization of the curriculum based on the COIL course offer requires specialized personnel dedicated to informing professors in their institution of the COIL methodology, promoting their participation by teaching COIL courses, and supporting them in finding adequate partners for teaching the COIL component; these are the responsibilities of an institutional COIL coordinator.

In the HEI international education offices, there is generally trained staff to promote and manage the different kinds of international education programs, which very likely require a short update on the particularities of the COIL methodology. For this reason, in the PIC US-MX a seminar for COIL coordinators was developed, oriented towards the personnel of international education and/or academic exchange offices to provide the required support to become COIL coordinators at their institutions.

In the seminar, designed in two three-hour sessions, a group of expert lecturers presented topics such as What is internationalization of the curriculum?, Introduction to COIL methodology, Technological tools to offer COIL courses,

Profile and abilities of a COIL coordinator, Recommendations to position the COIL courses in the institutional strategic planning, Analysis of successful cases, among others. The first seminar was taught in Spanish on March 25 and April 15, with 28 participants from Mexican public and private institutions.

Currently the second edition of the seminar is being planned, and will be offered in English to have colleagues from the United States. The context will be adapted to consider the educational models, organizational structures, and cultural contexts of HEI in each country.

Perception of professors and students

Considering the program has only been developed halfway through, it is premature to report a complete quantitative evaluation. Surveys have been applied to assess the quality of the workshops, and a 100% of participants report learning a lot and enjoying the first experience working with colleagues from the other country. By the end of the workshop, all participants show great enthusiasm for starting the implementation state of their COIL components. In the COIL course implementation stage, both professors and participant students also report high levels of satisfaction and motivation in continuing participating in this type of educational experience.

There are many positive testimonies of the COIL courses taught in the framework of the PIC US-MX, both from professors and participant students. The following are some cases showing the benefits and enrichment brought by the COIL experience:

- The professor of the *La Guardia Community College*, who worked with a female professor from the University of Guanajuato in the module "Analysis of Financial Systems of NYSE Companies", where students developed several intercultural activities and worked with financial information in real time, stated that: "it was an opportunity to learn about other cultures, bridges were built between the two countries; there was effective communication, and critical thinking was promoted".
- One of the Mexican students who participated in the course said that it had been "... the best experience, rich in cultural experience, and diversity".

- Of the COIL component titled “How to understand other cultures through intercultural Communication”, taught by professors from the Meritorious Autonomous University of Puebla and the University of Maryland, two students who participated in the course said:

“I realized there are cultural differences, we shared points of view, and I realized the importance of the English language to communicate in all countries” (Mexican student).

“It was an educational project with the great opportunity to learn from my partner. I realized stereotypes are incorrect. I had the opportunity to know my partner personally” (American student).

- Another successful case was the COIL component titled: “The study of the art of singing: an approach to culture through Mexico and US vocal repertoire” where an experienced singer and professor from the Catholic University of America worked with a Music professor from the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, and in his opinion: “it was a great experience to work with students from both countries in such an ambitious project”. The Mexican professor partner said that: “it was an enriching experience for students and professors. It was gratifying to understand other cultures”.

Challenges and Perspectives

A year after launching the PIC US-MX, the first fruits of the program are already evident. The testimonies illustrate how the PIC US-MX opened the doors, both for professors and students of both countries, to a new international education experience. For many of the participants it was a unique experience, as they would not have had contact with students and professors of the partner country otherwise, both in Mexico and the United States, especially when they reside in remote locations, with few possibilities of opening to the international experience. Thanks to the PIC US-MX, they had the opportunity to interact directly and in a personal level with their colleagues from a different culture, to discover and appreciate it, and to learn to work with them.

The number of participant students is not as high as expected. Two common situations in the courses taught so far are highlighted. In the case of Mexican students, not all students enrolled in the courses incorporating a COIL component have the level of English required for the experience, therefore, it is still necessary to strengthen English teaching programs. In some cases, not all students have the connectivity required for online work.

An interesting characteristic of the program is the cultural academic richness provided by the COIL component in some courses, involving professors and students from different disciplines. The interdisciplinary work provided new dimensions to the knowledge acquired by participants and opened new opportunities for cooperation, such as the case of the Restaurant Management area of the University of Ohio, who worked jointly with a Marketing professor from the Autonomous University of Guadalajara in the module “Audiovisual Communication and Restaurant Operation”. Their students had the opportunity to communicate through social networks and working in technological platforms to support a non-for-profit organization. The American professor said that “it is a great opportunity for students to learn the situation first-hand, in real time, of both cultures ... when Mexico and the United States are such close countries, with so many differences”. He claimed that the PIC US-MX is a very high-level opportunity and that all his students thanked the opportunity for this great experience.

Another important characteristic of the PIC US-MX program is being a seminal program, with the vision that the COIL methodology must be included in the internationalization processes of all HEI. For this reason, the PIC US-MX also includes the formation of future COIL coordinators through a specialized seminar. This activity must be repeated every semester to train new sets of professionals who will be responsible for expanding this innovative working model in their institutions’ internationalization of the curriculum activities.

The main challenge presented is obtaining higher participation of American professors. There is great interest and availability of professors and their institutions on the Mexican side. It is very likely that considering the additional work introduced due to the pandemic and the need to elaborate new materials for online courses, learning new information technology tools to offer courses and provide tutoring, as well as the exhaustion, monotony and despair caused by the excessive number of hours professors had to be online to comply with their academic obligations, make them consider their participation carefully.

Despite several American professors showing interest in participating, for the program is attractive for them and they recognize its benefits; they have also claimed that their participation requires more time for planning and promoting the COIL courses they would teach. It is recommended that professors conduct the search for the partner professor and take the COIL design workshop in a semester and teach the COIL course the following semester. But in several cases, professors have mentioned that they require more time between their first contact with the program and teaching their COIL courses, due to the scheduling of courses by their academic directors, who sometimes have to make yearly plans to ensure students with the proper profile for the course are enrolled.

Many actions have been conducted to disseminate the opportunity of participating in the PIC US-MX, particularly among American professors, and to detect potential partners for Mexican professors who are already in the program and awaiting to design their COIL components sharing them with an American partner. Alliances have been made with sister organizations with compatible missions of promoting international education opportunities, such as with the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) and the American Consortium of Universities (ACU) to disseminate the PIC US-MX especially among their members.

Additionally, close collaboration actions have been conducted with representatives of American universities in Mexico and with some American institutions with a special interest in participating in the program, such as the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the University of New Mexico, Alamo Colleges District, San Diego State University (SDSU), Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, among others.

Another important initiative being worked in the PIC US-MX is developing a platform to facilitate linkage between American and Mexican professors. The platform is being developed by IT experts at the Autonomous University of Chihuahua. It is expected that it will be available by the end of spring 2022. This type of initiative already shows effectiveness, such as the COIL Connect for Virtual Exchange platform developed and directed by Jon Rubin, founder and director of the SUNY COIL Center between 2006 and 2017.

Finally, hoping to strengthen the academic collaboration relations between Mexico and the United States, the PIC US-MX will offer special support for partner professors who have taught their COIL courses successfully and propose actions

that contribute to consolidating the academic relation established between their institutions of origin.

The PIC US-MX is an initiative created in pandemic times to promote internationalization of the curriculum in Mexican and American educational institutions and strengthen the educational cooperation relations between both countries. The first results of the program show that the COIL methodology is here to stay as an important alternative for internationalization of the curriculum. AMPEI will continue promoting the program to achieve higher participation of HEI, professors, and students from both countries.

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New Learnings during COVID-19: Toward the Construction of Educational and Linguistic Policies at Universities

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and María del Socorro Montaña Rodríguez¹*

Abstract

This chapter describes the reality of new learnings in the international student exchange process experienced by students of the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC), in Mexico, during 2020 and 2021-1. From the narratives presented under qualitative methodology, with the support of a focus group, 18 students shared their perceptions based on the social representations of Moscovici (1979) as a corpus of knowledge, physical and social reality, and the glottopolitical analysis of Guespin & Marcelessi (1986), Arnoux (2008), and Arnoux & Bein (2015). In this section, a new way of planning the International Relations Offices of Mexican universities is proposed to create an internationalization model framed in a linguistic policy under a virtual environment, to improve decision-making to conform to the new teaching-learning schemes and practices in the new normality.

Keywords: *Social representations, glottopolitics, linguistic policies, educational policy and internationalization.*

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1. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the academic frameworks of universities worldwide. Traditional teaching moved away from classrooms into virtual spaces in a short time and compelled educational institutions to reactivate contingency programs for emergencies and virtual processes in their administrative and substantive functions.

In this study, 150 students were identified who experienced confinement in countries such as Germany, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, South Korea, Spain, United States, France, Japan, and the United Kingdom, among others. Students required personalized tutoring, support in the confinement process, crisis intervention therapies, a follow-up to eradicate school dropouts, and support for parents.

Through narratives, the authors aimed at identifying new learnings that students acquired during their student exchange experience abroad to have an outlook of elements to be considered in the construction of educational and linguistic policies in pandemic times.

The Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) holds an implicit linguistic policy secured by the Virtual Internationalization Program (*Programa de Internacionalización Virtual*) (UABC, 2020, pp. 1-5) organized by the full-time professors in the Internationalization at Home Program (*Programa de Internacionalización en Casa*, PIE). In addition to this, the participation of 50 professors in internationalization at-home activities with guest lecturers represented an impact on ten thousand students with this initiative.

From 2019 to date, emblematic programs have been implemented with an implicit linguistic policy towards the learning of foreign languages, such as the online language program (Dexway), online language courses taught by UNISER, A.C.; programs of Coursera, Inc.; Internationalization at Home program (with partner universities), Virtual Internationalization Program, virtual short stays, calls for (virtual) student exchange, among others.

For that reason, face-to-face student exchange moved into virtual settings with free, open access with prestigious universities. A sample of this was the Internationalization at Home program (national and international) and the homologated courses (San Diego State University, San Diego Global Knowledge),

which moved into courses with the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) methodology; virtual rotations in health science (AMOpportunities, Queen Mary University of London, University of California Irvine and University of Miami); Legal English programs for lawyers and translators (California Western School of Law); the Dentistry English program (Arizona State University), and the Research Schools programs (Queen University of London & University of California, San Diego).

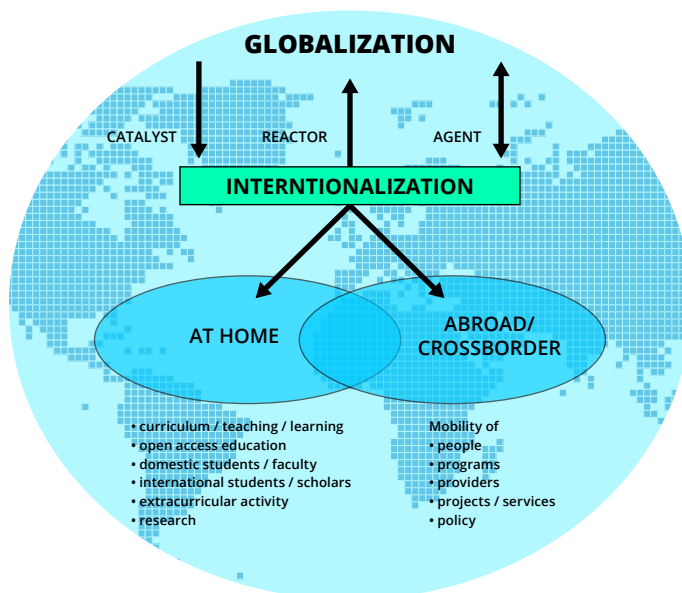
During the pandemic, students lived the international experience from home, and this represented for the UABC a low cost and the possibility of accessing prestigious universities and organizations without traveling. One hundred eighty students who were exchange candidates in 2020 had to postpone their trip, generating significant economic losses for families and the university. Uncertainty, without a doubt, brought with it a new way of internationalization of universities in the form of internationalization at home.

2. Internationalization in Pandemic Times

The pandemic offered a new outlook to internationalization, which had to adapt its academic processes to this “new reality”. Figure 1 shows Knight’s pillars of internationalization (2012), summarized as the vision of two fundamental pillars which are introduced by a reactive and a catalyst agent, generating these changes, and dividing them into internationalization at home and cross-border mobility. This means that, starting with the pandemic, the way that virtual internationalization processes will be incorporated are changing.

New academic scenarios were generated, allowing cooperation with international universities through open access courses, virtual visiting professors, curriculum content shared with other virtual courses, and everything that would allow students an internationalization at home (IAH) experience.

Figure 1. Pillars of internationalization of higher education according to Knight (2012, p. 9).



Knight (2012) indicates that the pillars of internationalization promoted in universities include, first, professor and student mobility, educational and academic programs that may be accessed when studying in the university, and projects and services in which students can participate.

3. Social Representations (SR)

In this sense, we asked ourselves what happened with students who experienced mobility during the pandemic, how it changed the way they perceived student exchange and what was the social representation they held before their experience. We start by saying that social representations, as living entities, involve cognitive processes represented in the mind of speakers from their own experience; through language, they configure their discourse or cognitive framework, which is autopoietic and symbolic. They can reconstruct, regenerate, and re-signify themselves in their interaction with other subject-objects.

The social representation is a discursive configuration, where a series of values, beliefs, assumptions, ideologies, practices, and behaviors converge,

obeying the relation object-agent, state of the world or context in particular, which is precarious, changing, and eminently historical. The SR is a discursive configuration in the sense that it comprises a series of horizons for an object, depending on the relation of this object with other objects, with other agents and other contexts outside of themselves, allowing the individual to enter a rupture process, defining its signification limits in a determined moment, which may erode and result in a new horizon of being (García-Landa, 2007, p. 30).

Discourse can provide a window to access the representations of internationalization in its ideological dimension, particularly of collective imaginaries, of planning actors, in this case of ideologies, beliefs, and values underpinning the experience of students from Baja California.

Knowing their ideologies allows identifying its position and relation vis-a-vis institutional linguistic policies, to observe through the practices and images stated in their discourse whether their social identities adapt to the naturalization of an educational policy (Del Valle and Meirinho-Guede, 2016, p. 628). We consider that inquiring into these social processes will provide a perception of glottopolitical agents on this particular process, at the same time offering a critical perspective on their social location, because the language is a symbolic and ideological space where the cultural identity and a model of internationalization of HEI are debated.

Before the discourse of internationalization, students march towards an integral formation as a perspective in a dialogue with the processes of internationalization and institutionalized practices: resource allocation, external institutional educational policies, and linguistic policies. Therefore, social representations of what is internationalization, in their adjudication of student exchange or academic mobility, are fragmented in their essence and significations arise in perpetual construction, in the interaction of subjects with the different elements offered by the historical and social context, and their specific exchange experience. In this sense, the analysis of social representations allows understanding the mental framework through which this experience is organized, how students adapt, act, belong, and are oriented within the framework of internationalization, in a pandemic context, concretely COVID-19.

4. The Autonomous University of Baja California's Educational and Linguistic Policies

Lauria (2016), Arnoux & Bein (2015), and Lagares (2018) coincide in that linguistic policies are coordinately focused on educational contexts as unique interdisciplinary spaces to incorporate foreign languages and everything related to them. They are a platform for developing global, soft, communicative, and socio-affective competences, therefore it goes beyond glottopolitics.

For that reason, the regulations for teaching foreign languages are included in the *Autonomous University of Baja California's School Statute* (2018), where foreign language command is established as a requirement for degree attainment. Without a doubt, student Exchange, academic mobility, internationalization of the curriculum, integral formation, and the visibility of the national and international ranking indicators, are not far from what is entailed by the transition from a public university in the North West of Mexico, bordering California, the most prominent and powerful state of the United States.

At the UABC, curriculum flexibility started in 1993 as an institutional policy generating a transformation in the curriculum approach, introducing components such as optional courses, tutoring, mobility, teacher's professionalization, and it also impacted on the organizational culture and framework to provide academic and administrative support to flexible curriculum proposals (UABC, 2018, p. 53).

The Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC), located in the Northwest of Mexico, at the Mexico-United States border was founded on the 28th day of February 1957. It started to teach English to build bilingual literacy in 1974. However, it was not until 1996, 39 years later, when it incorporated the accreditation of a foreign language as a requirement for degree attainment for the first time.

In 2003, at the UABC's School of Languages, a program was introduced that would allow schools and institutes to choose different options for accreditation (Program for Access to Accreditation, *Programa de Acceso a la Acreditación* [APRUEVA]) (Toledo & Montaña, p. 19). In 2006, the Agreement for Course of Study Update was issued allowing those who graduated before August 14, 2006 to comply with language accreditation by submitting a certificate of studies as a degree attainment option for foreign language accreditation (i.e. comprehensive examinations, pursuing the levels required by the educational

program, submitting an international language certification, or being a native speaker and submitting evidence of studies in English speaking countries).

The student exchange program was restructured in 2017, by agreement of the University Rector, Dr. Juan Manuel Ocegueda Hernández, and the foreign language requirement was included in the calls for participation in exchange programs fostering English language learning, with the argument of strengthening the integral formation of the university student and at the same time to have a strengthened linguistic competence in a second language. That being said, the *University of Baja California's School Statute* in force provides in Article 116 the explicit linguistic policy that academic units must enforce in the creation of their courses of study and in the modifications passed by the UABC's University Council. These must contain:

XIII. Therefore, the level of knowledge of one or more foreign languages, as well as the options and stages for their accreditation, All these actions have strengthened the linguistic policies regulating the university, with the purpose of strengthening academic training of its graduates (UABC, 2018, p. 3).

This study attempts to understand the development of educational and linguistic policies in a Mexican university in the northwest of Mexico. Under this approach are tackled topics of new educational scenarios in the teaching-learning process of the new normality. The following sections present the study's methodology that opens a detailed analysis of the narratives told by students.

5. Methodology

In this study new scenarios of internationalization in pandemic times will be identified, where the implicit linguistic policies of universities demonstrated how the academic progress level of Spanish speaking and non-Spanish speaking countries emerged. The study has a mixed methodology to account for the cognitive frameworks constructed by students, on which their academic, social, and personal activity lied. In addition to this, we address the emergent social representations by replacing ideologemes (discourse assumptions in common places) identified in the academic exchange students' discourse during the time. We subscribe this approximation to Weisz's idea (2017), who argues that:

Focus groups allow identifying typifications and informing on the rationalities organizing experience, whether rational actions pursuant to goals, pursuant to values, or a combination of both. By clarifying the practical sense of the social worlds underpinning the cognitive consensus on what is real and schemes of action, is made explicit the knowledge or principle of reality, that is, the sum of distinctions and assessments from which the subject positions itself, making it possible to understand and interpret social representations (Weisz, 2017, p. 4).

The object of the subjects of representation is the academic exchange students with an internationalization component focuses on those who participated in the mobility program during the apex of the pandemic (2020, 2021). For that aim, this study explores the narratives and discourses told from experiences, beliefs, values, interests, and ideologies underpinning their representations about internationalization within this complex framework of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the quantitative approach, a database with 150 participants was prepared, they were sent a survey of 22 questions – using the Likert scale –, and 59 responses were received. Participants were invited to participate in a focus group for its application. 35 students from different campuses answered the call. Only 18 students participated in the survey, which was open so they could express their experiences freely.

The focus group was supervised by two researchers with experience in semi-structured interviewing, and it was conducted virtually through the Zoom platform. An interview guide with 10 open questions was elaborated, with topics that allowed sharing the learnings during their Exchange experience, and the narratives were transcribed in Word format. Communication, social relations, and communicative competence in the foreign language, were included, among others.

6. Data Analysis

The sample comprised 62.7% women and 37.3% men. 33% of participants studied in the Ensenada campus, 35% in Mexicali, and 32% in the Tijuana campus. Most participants (87%) participated in exchange programs during the academic cycle 2020-1; that is, the beginning of the pandemic in our country. The remaining percentage (8.5%) participated in exchange programs in semester 2020-2, and

4.5% in the period 2021-1. Out of the surveyed students, 89.8% had a semester stay, while 10.2% had a year-long cycle. It was identified whether their stay they had face-to-face, blended, or virtual courses; 42.4% had virtual exchange, 33.9% had blended, and 23.7% had classroom courses, respectively. This indicates that although most were virtual, more than 50% experienced their exchange in face-to-face or blended modalities due to the pandemic. In addition, 38% of students lived in Spain, roughly 20% lived in Germany, Argentina, South Korea, France, and the rest of the participants in various countries including Russia, Peru, Belgium, and Italy.

For this study, participants were asked about their satisfaction with the exchange experience; e. g., whether it helped them grow and mature; 93.2% of students mentioned that the experience had been satisfactory in three scales: completely satisfied, 64.4%; very satisfied, 16.9%; satisfied, 11.9%; 6.8% mentioned being “not very satisfied” and “completely dissatisfied”. This is interesting: although the majority had to return, they considered the experience fulfilling and positive for learning. In the same vein, in regards with the level of satisfaction of their study experience, 93.2% found it satisfactory. Only 6% of participants said it was not. A significant part of this study is students’ linguistic competence; 92.3% consider they are competent in English as a second language, and the rest, equivalent to 7.7%, have competence in French, Italian, Portuguese, German, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.

7. Qualitative Analysis of the Focus Group Results

The focus group interview was conducted through the Zoom platform, with an attendance of 35 students (23.33% of invited students participated), out of which only 18 students shared their experiences. The interview lasted approximately two hours. For this study, a thematic code was used from the discourse of each individual framed in a sentence or paragraph. To obtain their social representations the questions were posited using the signified *student exchange* to refer to the signified international exchange through the student’s experience. Table 1 shows the distribution of questions in the focus interview according to the fields of information, representation, and attitude, referred to in the study on social representations.

Table 1. Focus chart of social representations.

Social representations	
Fields of analysis	Questions
Field of information	Was the foreign language or the dialect variety competence you had sufficient to communicate with your peers and professors? Has the pandemic allowed you to have new learnings of disciplinary subjects, improving foreign language competence, soft skills, etc.? Where are you working, or where do you plan your employment insertion?
Field of representation	How would you describe your student exchange experience during the COVID-19 pandemic? What could the university do to improve student mobility in pandemic times? Was the language determinant to have a better student exchange experience abroad? How would you rate the university support you had for student mobility?
Field of attitude	Why did you learn in confinement in a country that is not your native country? Did exchange contribute to your professional development?

Source: The author, based on Cuevas (2016).

7.1. Emerging categories in the field of information

Moscovici states (Cuevas, 2016) that “it is related to the organization of knowledge possessed by a group regarding a social object (Moscovici, 1979, p. 45). It comprises the selection made by the subjects of a piece of information available on the object of representation” (p. 121), through general knowledge or information on the subjects, the information channels providing it, and emergent elements of interaction with the object of representation.

The second part of the interview focused on communication skills, language competence, job performance, employment insertion opportunities and key abilities in the competence-based teaching framework. The competence elements were investigated in the discourse, in performance criteria, and in evidence for creating these categories.

Ten categories emerged in the three fields: information, attitude, and social representations of UABC’s exchange students, who shared their experiences on the learning process during confinement and online work abroad.

7.1.1. Category: development of key labor competences

The first emergent category is the ability of students to construct what is known as professional orientation of occupational project, comprising the processes that allow individuals to assess their own conditions and to analyze the requirements and advantages of training options and job postings in the local labor market, the basis for making decisions oriented towards the development of professional competences needed in the job market.

“The student exchange opened doors for me to be part of a project that I am developing with my peers... and I was hired as a Spanish-Korean translator”. (A8).

On the other hand, identifiers of beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967) were found; some of the students expressed feeling that exchange becomes a “social support” system, for the experience acquires a special significance when their job hunting becomes a success story, as told by students who spent their student exchange in Spain and South Korea, respectively.

“Within 15 days of returning to Mexico from my exchange trip in Spain, I was contacted, and thanks to that I am now collaborating with a football and sports analysis channel... in Spain I learned a lot about sports, about auto racing”. (A5).

“It created new opportunities for me, I am working in the US, thanks to my experience in South Korea”. (A7).

7.1.2. Category: planning activities for employment insertion

In the category of employment planning, students reflected upon themselves and assessed the skills, recognizing their own knowledges and labor abilities they possessed and the skills they need to strengthen to develop in the areas where they may develop their abilities and extend their communication skills in a second language, job opportunities, and in some cases, planning postgraduate studies. This indicates a high level of awareness in consensus decision making, acknowledging the diversity they faced during their student exchange experience.

“It helped me to know the job environment I want, and where I really want to develop, and to decide what I want to specialize on”. (A16).

"I had never thought of South Korea for a job opportunity... now, after the exchange, I am focusing on learning the language... and working there". (A7).

Another element arising out of the students' narratives is the ability they developed from the exchange experience, that of organizing, planning, and assessing labor environments, their goals, and opportunities available, for attaining short, middle, and long-term objectives.

"I managed to learn where I want to go and develop in the place where I want to study a master's, because I was convinced, and I now know I want to be a part of that work environment". (A3)

"The exchange allowed me to expand my goals, to have serious, concrete goals, and I have plans of studying a master's in Spain in the future". (A5)

"I found work in South Korea and in a fair in Guadalajara, I have plans to study a master's in translation and interpreting in that country, in the future". (A8)

7.2. Emergent categories in the field of social representation in internationalization

In this section the meanings given to the object of representation are described, they can be diverse such as judgments, claims, typologies, beliefs, cultural elements (Jodelet, 1989^a in Cuevas, 2016, p. 121); subjects express what common elements of daily life or what individuals are related to the meanings attributed symbolically a determined object of representation.

In this field emerged three categories related to: internationalization as cognitive dissonance, internationalization as an opportunity for improvement, internationalization as facilitator of a comprehensible input, internationalization as opening to a sense of community, internationalization as a horizon of uncertainty, internationalization as intercultural awareness.

The categories described below are organized and hierarchized in relation to the object of representation "internationalization", which, as mentioned above, in the case of the student, it is characterized in the discourse as "exchange", because it was the experience that allowed a transformation of social representations, before and after this experience.

7.2.1. Category: Internationalization as opening to other core values in society

The predominant category was internationalization as opening to other core values in society. In particular, this was mentioned by the group of students who experienced their exchange in South Korea. The ideology that places the community before the individual in South Korean society was highlighted. One of the narratives describes how this form of social organization becomes apparent in the interactions during the academic exchange process: in the club's support at all levels: health, economy, school, psychology, and social level. Some mention the absence of this core value in Mexico and propose the topic of managing citizenship as a sociocultural learning permeating everyday life.

Smolicz's (1980) notion of "core value" mixes with the exchange students' experience in the South Korean context, as:

It may be considered that core values comprise one of the fundamental components of a group's culture. Generally, they represent its nucleus and act as identifying values, which are symbolic for the group and for the members (...) Core values demand special attention, insofar as they provide a special bond between the social and cultural systems of the group. In their absence, both systems would eventually undergo disintegration. In fact, it is through core values that social groups may be identified as ethical, religious, scientific, or other communities (Smolicz, 1980, p. 1).

The following are some of the students' testimonies:

"In South Korea they have the ideology that society is collective. They give more importance to society than to the individual. They think more about the common Good, they care about each other, so they follow the rules without complaining". (A7).

"At Seoul Tech University I felt that communication was really good. They were always responding our mails and our doubts. There was a student body or club who were in charge of exchange students. Thanks to this club I had many facilities to clarify doubts and carry out proceedings, one of the members of the club even picked me up at the airport. The university students went to banks with us so we could open accounts. They were always reporting about the sanitary restrictions we should follow. Communication was very efficient". (A11-South Korea).

“It was an excellent relation. We arrived at our room with a box of hygiene and personal care items. They supported us to obtain our Korean ID. They always made us feel part of the school, despite not having face-to-face classes”. (A8).

“The joint effort of the population was noticeable. I think that is one of the major reasons for the spread rate being so low. I wish our country could follow South Korea to be more transparent on the information provided to the population, in order to reflect the actual situation and that the people may reflect and take better care of themselves”. (A8).

7.2.2. Category: Internationalization as horizon of uncertainty

The second most outstanding category was internationalization as a horizon of uncertainty. The pandemic context generated a collective confusion with impact on all the community. As observed in the testimonies, the students' internationalization experience shows clear signs of uncertainty at different levels, both in the structural and the individual and institutional levels, at the survival level, at the communication level, at the support level, and at the administrative level. It becomes patent what De Sousa Santos (2020) observed “all that is solid, vanishes in the air”.

It is true that there is always a degree of uncertainty, but there are means and resources to minimize it, such as medical attention, insurance policies, services of security companies, psychological therapy, gyms. This feeling of security is combined with a sense of arrogance, even condemnation, of those who feel victimized by the social solutions themselves. The virus outbreak pulverizes common sense and evaporates security overnight (pp. 6-7).

This experience is lived with fear and anguish by exchange students. The lack of support emerges with particular strength, solitude in a community and institutions that, in the confusion, do not see the consequences of their actions or lack of action, and are overwhelmed by uncertainty, collective confusion, and fake news.

“I was in Spain, in the city of Lugo. I remember well the social fear of the population of Spain and Italy”. (A6).

"In my case, I am majoring in communication, and I spent six months studying at the University of A Coruña, in Spain. I arrived in January 2020, and the confinement started in March. Many news reports caused fear among us due to the pandemic starting". (A59).

"I went to Torino, Italy, for my exchange program, a two-hour drive from the COVID-19 outbreak epicenter. I would have liked to have better communication with the heads of exchange. We had no way to communicate, and our school did not get in contact with us, either. Some professors insisted on us returning, but without taking the obstacles we faced into consideration. The airport was closed and there was no way out. The collective pressure made me feel very stressed". (A7).

7.2.3. Category: Internationalization as development of intercultural awareness

The categories of internationalization as development of intercultural awareness (Bennet in Fiocchi & Rojas, 2015) and online internationalization as mediator of comprehensible input for the execution of studies (Krashen, 2009 as quoted in León, 2015, p. 39) appear at the same level. The first category shows the case of an exchange student at A Coruña. In his discourse arises the signified "friendly", which is contrasted with the "not as open to friendships" or "cold" of the Spaniards from the region of A Coruña. The student finds it conflicting but learns that building a friendship relationship in that context takes a long time. Facing this evaluation, the student assesses their ability for organization and work. Implicitly, under their own perspective, it refers to the contrast with their own culture, which is observed as less prone to organize efficiently in the job. In short, a process of permanent assessment of their own and foreign cultural values is made patent.

In this regard, we allude to *intercultural sensitivity*, the ability to develop a positive attitude towards perception and comprehension of cultural differences, generating a positive and effective behavior in intercultural communication. The context of internationalization opens possibilities of acquiring abilities to intervene in intercultural spaces and develop intercultural awareness. The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) starts from the assumption that contact with other cultures should generate pressure to execute a change in one's vision of the world (Bennet, 2004).

There are six stages of development: three are ethnocentric, based on the dominance of one's own culture: denial, defense, and minimization; and three are ethnorelativistic, more flexible at organizing reality: acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Some students of this sample refer to internationalization as part of this adaptation process into the cultural environment of the moment, without renouncing their own values (Bennet in Fiocchi & Rojas, 2015, p. 214).

Regarding the category of online internationalization as mediator of comprehensible input (Krashen, 2009 in León Manzanero, 2015, p. 39), we observe how the transition from the exchange experience into the online modality facilitated the understanding of languages of instruction during mobility, even in Spanish speaking countries; dialect varieties and the use of masks in face-to-face modality, made it difficult to understand curriculum contents in real time.

Exchange students mention that the online exchange experience benefited their access to resources repeatedly, in order to clarify doubts in the understanding of the courses' input. In this sense, remote internationalization becomes an ideal space to attain intake; that is, "receiving input, understanding the message, connecting the signifier with the form and be exposed to it with enough frequency" (Krashen, 2009 in León Manzanero, 2015, p. 39). The ratio of comprehensible, contextualized, interesting input (adduct), in sufficient amounts, provided a better language acquisition and a greater capacity for understanding, and eventually, producing the language, to progress academically.

Finally, less frequent yet interesting representations that help explain other learnings that also arose from the internationalization process were identified: the representations associated with internationalization as a multilingual contact (where students can interact with non-native speakers) and internationalization as cognitive dissonance (system of ideas, emotions, and beliefs unique to the exchange process).

We first find that the juncture presents advantages for interaction that would not be available without a confinement context. The lodging space becomes a place for meeting and interaction, where narratives are constructed from experiences and identities are constituted through languages-cultures. Just as migrants confined in a Berlin building, academic migrants in Liege, Belgium, found in their confinement an opportunity to interact in a multicultural, multilingual context.

Located in the historical context of centuries of migration and multilingualism in Berlin, [the narrative] invites the reader to join the author in a research expedition into the urban center of Neukölln. Its inhabitants come from different parts of the world and they tell their experiences – their life in Berlin (Stevenson, 2017).

In the case of one exchange student who shares her experience through interaction in different languages and her day-to-day experience in confinement internationalization is seen as cognitive dissonance and, from the point of view of confinement and as a product of the pandemic, the experience presented a breaking off with what was traditionally understood as academic exchange. According to Festinger, quoted in en Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones (2007) “when an individual retakes two or more elements of knowledge relevant for each of the members, but are somehow inconsistent among themselves, generating a state of discomfort” (p. 7).

For Moscovici (1979), the attitude in a community comprises expressions of evaluative character in relation with the object of social representation. Students develop social and emotional abilities among most of the interviewed students, as when they face a situation beyond their control, some had a response that allowed them to assess the experience. A minority did not do it, as in their case, they could have the attitude of recognizing they needed help, whether in the target university or through the Autonomous University of Baja California, and they could get support.

“I had the idea that in Europe people followed rules, the government’s instructions. In reality it does not happen, many people did not wear masks, did not respect the curfew, I did not expect that. My expectations for order in France were crushed by reality, which was a surprise for me” (A2).

7.3. Emergent categories in the field of attitude

7.3.1. Category: Development of the capacity for resilience

Resilience is understood as the capacity to adapt successfully despite threatening or unfavorable circumstances (Masten, 2007), that is, the process allowing some individuals to develop normally and harmoniously with their environment despite living in an unfavorable, socially deprived context, and despite experiencing

conflictive situations since childhood (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000). For the purposes of this investigation, resilience is understood as the capacity of an individual to overcome circumstances in an unfavorable or unknown context or situation, in the case of the UABC's students, they relate that, despite the difficulties, they were able to control and overcome the circumstances and obstacles presented to them, indicating an important degree of development of the capacity for resilience. This positive or biophile attitude or capacity favors health and normality, promotes growth and improvement, even in adverse conditions (Chiland, 1982, Radke-Yarrow and Sherman, 1990, quoted in Uriarte, 2005). The students' narratives confirm a high degree of growth and maturity by overcoming and coping with the feelings experienced during confinement.

"I had to cope with the situation... think about how to overcome the adversity caused by the pandemic". (A4).

"I take home the capacity we developed to push forward" (A12).

"I learned to cope with feelings of sadness, frustration, and to see the situation under a different light, I learned to be by myself, I learned to be comfortable just with myself in a limited space". (A3)

"It involved a lot of reflection and it taught me to take cold-headed decisions, following and respecting the host country's rules". (A5).

7.3.2. Category: Openness to the cultural and academic experience

This category arises out of the testimonies of students where they present with examples and narratives the experiences that allowed them to explore the world of things and ideas; a degree of curiosity, creativity, cultural flexibility, and assessing diversity found in these moments.

"Despite not having face-to-face classes, I try to see my exchange differently, because we could be present and live the exchange experience in South Korea, hear the government's instructions, and how the number of cases was reduced drastically with only two weeks of health restrictions, it was impressive to see the reaction of the population, I liked to see how they handled the situation" (A7).

"It was not the experience I imagined, but it was a good, interesting experience" (A6).

7.3.3. Category: Development of the capacity for emotional, quiet, and positive stability

Positive emotions are part of human nature and have become an indisputable key to attain social relations (Vecina, 2006). Emotions promote positive and negative questions, however, when they bring positive experiences, they bring feelings of calm, happiness, and peace, which in general translates into an upward spiral of transformations in people's lives (Prada, 2005, quoted in Barragán, Ahman and Morales, 2014). This transformation referred by Prada is manifested in students as an impactful personal change, where they learned to find the positive side of the experience, even though it was not optimal, and lead them to reflect on the form they would face this change and the experience to make them stronger, more mature, and to attain the proposed objectives. These are some of the testimonies:

"It was more an individual than an academic learning experience, because we faced a pandemic and the obstacles it entailed by ourselves... it was an experience in which we had to learn to coexist with ourselves for a long time and to find the bright side of the situation" (A3).

"It was a period with a lot of reflection, of getting to know yourself, of remembering and appreciating all things, our family, to treasure the moment I was at... even in lockdown" (A6).

"I made my mind that I had to pass all my courses... I kept myself active in my academic activities. It was a very gratifying experience for me, learning to organize my activities and my time" (A9).

7.3.4. Category: Capacity to open to the cultural context through "socialization"

The anthropologist Maritza Díaz establishes an important difference, set forth from the study of some psychologists such as Cousinet (1973), M. Debesse (1973), and H. Wallon (1953), and enunciated by Margaret Mead, we are talking about socialization. According to the authors, "socialization" is the process through which a social being transforms into a specific cultural subject, acquiring a cultural identity, and reacting to it; this in itself will affect the development of personality to a significant degree.

It is clear that the pandemic experience determined the conscience of students with a cultural identity, allowing them to develop a part of their personality and acquiring the awareness of asking for help, getting support from their peers and building friendships to learn the language and the culture of the country where they lived.

This allowed them to conduct academic and social activities responsibly, and this attitude was a determinant for students to try to cope with adversity, thus attaining their objectives and goals; in other words, students learned that they needed to socialize (transform) to face those challenges.

“I had friends that were supportive and helped me to cope with the situation” (A2).

“I had to get support from a classmate who spoke English and Spanish” (A11).

“In Mexico, we are very friendly and open to initiate friendships. In Spain they were not as open to new friendships... they are cold, but they know how to be organized... eventually we got to establish a friends’ relationship” (A5).

“Interestingly, when I approached a Korean individual to speak their language, they got excited and felt encouraged to practice Korean/English” (A8).

7.3.5. Category: Conscience to do things as required and on time (responsibility, goal-oriented, discipline, self-control, order)

The natural incentive of motivation (or need) for achievement is “to make something better”, even though individuals can do it for different reasons: to be liked by other people, to avoid criticism, obtaining approval, or just to obtain a reward. The following students expressed a goal-oriented conscience, determined by independence and personal satisfaction for achievement.

“My learning was personal, I rediscovered my individuality as a person, as a Mexican woman ...”. (A4).

“One had to be self-taught, I felt as if our professors abandoned us in our lectures” (A13).

“I learned to be by myself, I learned to be comfortable just with myself in a limited space” (A2).

Without a doubt, as discussed by (McClelland, 1989, quoted in Moran and Menezes, 2016), subjects involved have the motivation to achieve or to do well by themselves, with the intrinsic satisfaction of doing something better.

8. Conclusions

From the experiences of students and researchers in this study, we make the following claims:

First, the new forms of promoting internationalization in Mexican universities were identified, transitioning into virtuality in pandemic times. This study allowed us to reflect on the new trends of operation of international programs in Mexican universities, and how to maintain the indicators demanded by federal institutions and rankings where universities are listed. It also reveals that, although exchange students perceive internationalization as an opportunity for improvement, constituted in a space facilitating the comprehension of the language, through an interaction that is sensitive to the needs and sociocultural frameworks of others, this experience causes also an effect that at the same time paralyzes and drives those who experience it to expand their communication resources: linguistic and cultural codes, registers, dialect varieties, as well as their intercultural awareness. Within this discursive representational framework we observe an institutional linguistic policy that, despite procuring a standardized offering of linguistic education in the university curriculum, at the same time limits the possibilities for this expansion, insofar as English is given a privileged position over other languages, hindering a better exploitation of the exchange spaces, in particular virtual spaces, identified as spaces of opportunity to arrive at a comprehensive version of study resources in the languages of academic communities which share the virtual space.

Second, it was identified that students that participated in student exchange before, during and after the pandemic attained a wealth of knowledge associated with disciplinary contents strengthening global competences, and soft skills. Regarding the English and French languages, it was verified that those who possessed a higher command of the languages before traveling managed to consolidate the linguistic formation, therefore, this requirement, more than an

obstacle to access international mobility, enables the student to participate in the global exchange, constructing at the same time a linguistic ideology and a reconstruction of their intercultural idiosyncrasy (Arnoux & Bein 2015) from experiencing a new form of learning to know, learning to be, learning to coexist and learning to be together (quoted in Delors, 1994, pp. 91-203) under what we now call the new normality.

Third, students' lives were transformed, for they developed socioemotional abilities with maturity, openness to change, self-discipline, and they now possess a clearer vision of what they can achieve. In addition to this, they have concrete projects for professional development, thinking about a specialization or postgraduate studies, and future plans. Even though students were reinserted into their new academic life during the pandemic, the transformation they lived allowed them to have new forms of thinking, they improved their mother language and foreign language levels, they learned new styles of learning in times of lockdown, a barely explored digital culture, an improvement of (implicit) digital culture, and that the pandemic allowed to solidify self-study strategies.

Fourth, in times of pandemic, students generated new forms of constructing a life project. Results indicate that exchange during the pandemic allowed accelerating the growth and maturity of most students.

Finally, the development of key competencies for self-regulation in decision-making was revealed by facing adversity during their exchange and the capacity to take advantage of available resources during the pandemic. To account with better students in international spaces, universities must transition into a culture of education under the new normality, generating support mechanisms in socioemotional, psychological, and academic follow-up conditions, as well as generating a formation for global, soft, linguistic, and socio-pragmatic skills, with command of foreign languages and their cultures, in addition to the new ideology of digital culture and the new ways of living abroad in the post-pandemic world.

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Internationalization at Home Post-COVID-19 of Mexican HEI Associated to AMPEI. A Descriptive Study

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Summary

Internationalization at Home (IaH) is gaining more importance in the higher education internationalization debate, in part, because of the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic at a global level. The migration of educational services and academic collaboration to virtual environments revealed an area of opportunity for HEI due to the perceived benefits. However, the implementation of IaH has been carried out more reactively than strategically. This study analyzes IaH of Mexican HEI members of the Mexican Association for Higher Education (AMPEI) through five variables. The results confirm the importance of HEI having an institutional IaH strategy, which is partially integrated.

Keywords: *Internationalization at home, higher education institutions, internationalization strategy.*

Introduction

Internationalization of higher education

The concept of internationalization in higher education has its roots in ancient history in which the intellectual centers of the great empires attracted scholars and people from distant places, being the origin of the mobility of people, the dissemination of ideas, and the blending of different cultures (Hudzik, 2015). In the contemporary model of internationalization, these elements only represent a part of it, since management and institutional functions have also been included in the international dimension, making the internationalization of higher education a means to an end and not an end in itself (Knight, 2012) and which is expressed in the definition of De Wit (2018, p. 1):

It is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and offerings of postsecondary education, to improve the quality of education and research for all students and faculty and to make a meaningful contribution to society.

This definition highlights the elements of intentionality, integration in its purpose and substantive functions, quality assurance, social impact, and the attribution of the diversity of contexts in which higher education institutions are embedded in the world. These elements make internationalization an instrument that guarantees the quality of higher education while promoting sustainable development, since it is through internationalization that HEI can respond to a current local need within a global framework, thus forming global citizens (Gacel-Ávila, 2003).

For an institution to adopt internationalization, it must do so based on its general strategy that allows HEI to focus on what is important for their performance and to be up to date on trends (Erasmus+, 2017). HEI must define their motives and reasons for internationalization, which are conditioned internally by their mission, vision, values, and strategic objectives; and externally by their context (Erasmus+, 2017; Seeber *et al.*, 2016). Overall, the motives and reasons determine the resources and efforts to be invested in the internationalization strategy (Hudzik, 2015), and based on these, an action plan is created, which defines the operational goals, processes, resources, and indicators that will allow

performance to be measured and which will be reviewed annually to make adjustments and improvements (Erasmus+, 2017).

The action plan is the operational character of the strategy, and it is important that it is not separated from it, as there is a tendency to focus only on activities, losing sight of the strategic objectives and falling into erroneous assumptions with respect to internationalization (De Wit, 2011). Therefore, the strategic objectives of internationalization must be aligned with the key decision-making areas to ensure the integration of the strategy into the day-to-day operations of the institution (Erasmus+, 2017). For there to be clarity in the integration of the internationalization strategy, it can be compared to the process of implementing an organizational change, in which, in the absence of one of its elements (vision, skills, incentives, resources), confusion, anxiety, resistance, frustration, and false starts will result instead of change (Erasmus+, 2017, p. 23).

Internationalization at Home (IaH)

Internationalization of an institution can be achieved in two ways: externally and internally. Externally refers to the traditional internationalization abroad, while internally refers to Internationalization at Home (IaH). Both are interdependent elements of internationalization (Knight, 2005, 2012). IaH highlights the elements of curriculum internationalization, online services and programs, student integration, organization of curricular and co-curricular activities and events, research projects, teamwork, implementation of a strategy and its evaluation (Knight, 2005; Universities UK International, 2021). Considering the definition of internationalization of higher education and the characteristics of IaH, Beelen & Jones, (2015, p. 69) propose the following definition: “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments”.

Another approach to these two ways of internationalization is a combination of on-campus and off-campus elements. Thus, IaH is implemented through the importation of ideas and people, international faculty training, international content of programs, and the integration of foreign students on campus (Engwall, 2016). IaH is increasingly being discussed, with themes such as international experience for all students, integration of international students on campus, hybrid, and online academic offerings, and sustainable IaH activities emerging (Universities UK International, 2021).

Studies on the impact and benefits of IaH show that it is not only an alternative for those who do not have access to a face-to-face experience abroad, but also a scenario with a more enriched context that can ensure the quality and inclusiveness of internationalization (Almeida *et al.*, 2019). This impact is achieved mainly through interaction with visiting students on campus, as well as with the activities arising from the curricular design of the programs and extracurricular activities with an international/global focus. All of this is designed based on the institutional strategy (Almeida *et al.*, 2019; Soria & Troisi, 2014). Wang (2018) suggests that the institution should clearly state what it defines as IaH and what it understands by intercultural competencies, going from strategy to program development, and should emphasize that all students should have an international experience.

Table 1 shows a series of actions that were compiled from the most relevant success stories of Universities UK International (2021) and that have proven to be beneficial in IaH efforts. The integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in pedagogical changes and curricular development has had a direct impact on the IaH, since it has massified the mobility of ideas, the inclusion of those involved, favoring transnational collaborative network systems, and the development of HEI capacities within the global context (Hudzik, 2015; Salmi, 2021).

Table 1. Catalog of Examples of IaH Projects and Activities. Source: Author's compilation.

IaH Projects and Activities	Results
Preparation course for incoming students to familiarize them with the host system and culture.	Higher academic performance
Social activities, sports, volunteering, and recreation for integration	Leveraging cultural immersion
Employability and cultural awareness workshops in the host country	Offering the workshop to the entire university community
Field application course in an online format	High academic standards, accessible and inclusive with mental health benefits during confinement
Online Study Tour	Increased student involvement creating a global student community
COIL Project	Exhibition of a selection of materials created

Visiting students in a one-week collaborative research stay	100% of students recommended the activity
Experiences of health cases in online formats	Work of multidisciplinary teams
Social and language events on campus	Expansion of global experiences and competencies
Conferences and <i>online</i> discussion forums	Integration into the living, culture, and ways of working of the university community
Portfolio of intercultural competencies	Evidence of skills developed
<i>Global</i> Campus Activities Hub	High level of international and local student participation
Community language and cultural learning	Content diversity, community engagement, and program growth
Students in charge of internationalization projects on campus	Impact on community projects, development of skills for employability

Note: The aforementioned projects and activities are an example of the diversity of opportunities for international and intercultural experiences that foster inclusion, equity, and diversity throughout the institution, which reflect the institution's IaH objectives. Created by author.

Large-scale educational programs such as Erasmus+ continue their work so that the participation of individuals and organizations in sustainable and digital educational projects is more accessible, seen in the increased use of ICTs, the combination of physical mobility and virtual learning, and virtual cooperation that is coordinated by an educational center. The evolution to hybrid teaching systems and the emergence of the “digital teacher” is also evident, as well as platforms that serve as spaces for formal and informal online collaboration (European Commission, 2021; The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2021). The potential of digitizing IaH activities and collaborations requires the supervision of trained academic staff with the necessary specific competencies (Wang, 2018).

COVID-19 Impact on the Internationalization of Higher Education

Prior to the pandemic, the challenges faced by Latin American HEI included the conception and integration of internationalization into their substantive functions, educational guidelines and policies regarding internationalization, educational quality assurance, lack of knowledge of institutional capacities, budgetary restrictions, migration and brain drain, scientific collaboration,

human resources training within an international perspective, and regional recognition of professional studies (Fazio, 2016; Ramirez García & Rodríguez Jiménez, 2018; UNESCO, 2019) and that, in addition to being accentuated, other types of challenges have been added, including the digital division. As for the Mexican case, as of 2019 Mexico reported that 70% of the population had internet access (UNESCO-IESAL), which implies a limitation for online activities. It is recognized that Mexican HEI have solved these challenges, initially in an immediate and obligatory manner, but that, in a second term, it is desirable that the answers be given in a reflexive manner, taking advantage of the areas of opportunity of traditional education (Ordorika, 2020).

These areas of opportunity can be seen in the IAU questionnaire (2020), where it is shown that the main impact of the pandemic in higher education has been in the digital transformation of educational services, being this a learning opportunity and new possibilities for the Latin American case in its development of academic capabilities. Not without highlighting that thanks to the technological advancement of ICT and its incursion into the classroom since the year 2000 (Al Jaber and Elayyan, 2018) this trend of digitization of education (or *e-learning*) is not a phenomenon that originated as such as a result of the mobility restrictions imposed by the pandemic, but which allowed its momentum and generalization. Studies of 2020 that address the adoption of digital education in various academic areas and levels emphasize the challenges that access to technology entail, the adaptation and transformation of new pedagogical models, as well as the educational opportunities they represent. In this questionnaire it is also reported that a second effect of the pandemic has been the increase in virtual international activities as an alternative to face-to-face mobility, which in turn has been a driver to develop and foster IaH (IAU, 2020).

Quality Assurance of Higher Education

The higher education system continues to be the most important system for providing people with the skills they need to function in society and the global economy. Within this system, higher education is the one that carries the greatest responsibility since it is the level to which the fewest people have access and the one that has the greatest impact on other levels. In addition to this impact, the globalization of higher education is also a factor that requires HEI to have a quality assurance system that demonstrates that the institution

has elements for measuring and evaluating the adequacy of its strategy. In the case of the internationalization of higher education, we are talking about integrating this international dimension into the strategy and integrating the elements to be measured and evaluated of this international dimension into quality assurance methods (Al Jaber and Elayyan, 2018).

In a Latin American analysis, Malagón Plata *et al.* (2021) identified that both the guideline of internationalization and that of educational quality assurance within the global context are concentrated in public policies, which on the one hand is heterogeneous among the countries that make up this bloc and that on the other hand this represents a challenge for the development of HEI. In response to these challenges, the creation of quality assurance associations has been triggered in Latin America over the last 15 years as mechanisms that respond to the diversity of educational models, the consensus on what is understood by quality and its interaction among institutions.

In the Mexican case, as part of the evaluations of the CIEES, COPAES and SEP accrediting agencies, indicators related to internationalization activities were gradually integrated, while at the federal level, the recognition of the international dimension in national higher education is highlighted within the General Law of Higher Education (2021), which recognizes internationalization as cooperation and educational support, with full respect for the sovereignty of each country, in order to establish multilateral processes of training, outreach, exchange, mobility and research, based on a diverse and global perspective"; and emphasizes that the purposes of higher education should integrate international training to the "solution of local, regional, national, and international problems", and vice versa, relying on the establishment of bilateral cooperation mechanisms. Prior to this new law, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019) conducted a review of Mexico's higher education policy with respect to the last one carried out in 2008 to serve as input to the National Development Plan. Among the topics that stand out in this review are quality assurance and innovation of educational models, which are elements that fit within the institutional strategy of internationalization. However, no official document was identified to serve as a common framework for the development of internationalization strategies for HEI, nor studies at the federal government level that propose a strategy for the internationalization of higher education both abroad and at home, including education and research activities, reflecting its objectives in a regulatory framework.

Reflections on the Internationalization of Higher Education in Mexico reaffirm that defining an internationalization strategy is a way to contribute to the improvement of educational quality, since this dimension allows integrating compliance with international standards into the system. This reflection suggests the development of a national strategy to standardize the academic parameters that favor internationalization activities for capacity building and the solution of social problems at the system level (Comas Rodríguez & Lastra Barrios, 2019).

Methodology

The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between the strategic dimension of IaH of the Mexican HEI Members of AMPEI with respect to their substantive processes and functions. Two central questions arise from this assumption: What is the relationship of the strategic dimension of IaH regarding its functions, agents, and infrastructure involved in the process? What is the effect of the IaH strategy on quality assurance?

In order to answer these questions, an IaH model was designed based on the IMPI-IL inventory items (William Internationalization at Home, 2019): Support and incentives for academic and administrative personnel for IaH.

- Strategy/Regulations/Structures.
- Quality assurance for the IaH.
- Internationalization of the curriculum and classroom.
- Support for international students.
- Social integration.
- Support for local students for IaH.

Infrastructure for virtual activities is added to this list, based on the importance of literature to digitization of educational activities and services.

In order to gather information, a questionnaire was used with a section of general information of the participating HEI asking about their size and location, followed by an open-ended question regarding the main impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the international activities of the institution, while the second section contained the IMPI-IL inventory items that were translated

into Spanish, taking into account the Mexican context and including the items proposed for the category of Infrastructure for Online Activities. A total of 56 items were included to be answered on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, the scores being interpreted as follows:

1. Not applicable/does not exist.
2. Applicable in a few areas/sporadically.
3. Applicable in several areas (partially exists).
4. Applicable in most areas.
5. Applicable in all areas/institutional level.

Data gathering was done through *GoogleForms* platform. Before answering the questionnaire, participants were informed of the confidentiality of the use of their data and the Presidency of AMPEI sent out the invitation to all AMPEI members through the International Offices of the 60 HEI associated to AMPEI up to 2021. Out of this population, only 20 HEI participated and responded, which represents an important limitation for the study. However, there is no minimum sample size rule (Gaston, 2013) there is the estimation of the “10-fold rule” method which assumes a 10-fold population for each relationship between latent variables in the model (Hair *et al.*, 2014), which infers a minimum population of 50 HEI for this study. A second estimate is the inverse square root method, which assumes a minimum population of 33 HEI over an R^2 of .50 (Kock and Hadaya, 2016). Another limitation of this study is that the estimation of the minimum population size could not be calculated prior to the data gathered because the universe of HEI is very small and would subtract respondents from the final gathering.

For the first section of the questionnaire, we presented descriptive statistics and a summary of the opinions to the open-ended question, while for the second section of the questionnaire (items) we resorted to Least Squares Modeling (PLS-Path Modeling) using the statistical software R version 4.0.5.

The descriptive data of the sample reflect the profile of the participating HEI (see Table 2), where it can be seen that the majority come from the private sector and that, in turn, most of these private institutions already have a virtual program at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Table 2. Type and Size of Participating HEI

HEI	n=20	HEI	Full Online Programs (undergraduate and/or graduate)
Private University		Private University	10
Between 1,000 and 9,999	8	Federal Public University	2
Between 10,000 and 29,999	6	Federal Public Technological University	1
Federal Public University			
Up to 999	1		
Equal to or greater than 30,000	2		
Federal Public Technological University			
Between 1,000 and 9,999	2		
Up to 999	1		

Note: Created by author.

Regarding the open-ended question on the perceived impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the international activities of the institution, responses that were similar were grouped together, resulting in the following list:

- Reduction or suspension of face-to-face student mobility abroad and at home.
- Development of international/intercultural activities, events, and forums in online formats.
- Promotion of online academic projects (COIL, mirror classes, expert lectures, discussions, and languages).
- Incursion and strengthening of the online modality of academic exchange of subjects with curricular validity.
- Adoption of technological platforms to carry out administrative and teaching-learning processes.
- Access for a greater number of students to internationalization and intercultural experiences through the online modality.

- Incursion to teleworking of academic bodies and administrative services.
- Increased opportunities for online research collaboration and publications.

To perform PLS modeling, the analysis matrix must be squared, that is, the number of items must be at least the same as the number of respondents. Given the limited sample ($n=20$), the number of items was reduced to 20. The first elimination criterion was based on reported factor loadings under 0.7 and the second elimination criterion was based on those items that were considered qualitative. The factor loadings were recalculated and the last item with a loading of less than 0.7 was eliminated, leaving 19 items that respond to the five IaH variables to be analyzed (see Table 3).

Table 3. Items Describing the Variables of Analysis for IaH

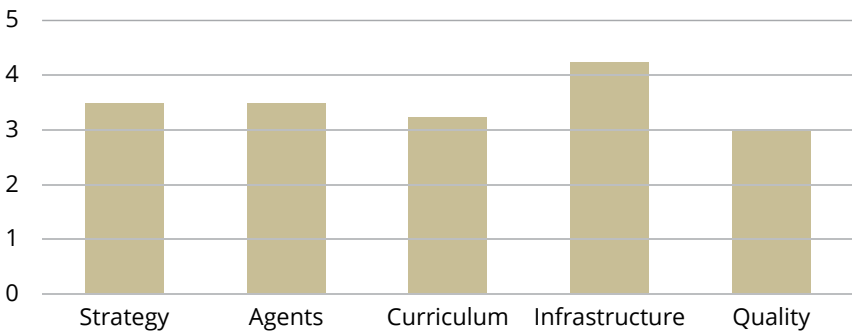
IaH Variables	Item	Item Detail	Factor loading	Commonality
IaH Strategy	301	Clearly defined IaH strategy	0.86	0.75
	302	Knowledge of the IaH strategy	0.91	0.84
	306	Regulations, policies, and procedures	0.88	0.78
	307	Responsibility of senior managers	0.81	0.66
Quality Assurance Internationalization of the curriculum	401	Procedures for international programs	0.83	0.70
	403	Measurement of the impact of improvement of procedures	0.96	0.93
	404	International and intercultural learning outcomes	0.97	0.94
	502	Joint programs or dual degrees	0.82	0.67
	503	Classroom integration of international and local students	0.88	0.78
	508	Research projects	0.82	0.68

Agents	204	Academic staff training	0.90	0.81
	604	International student welcoming and support center	0.81	0.66
	609	Tutoring and mentoring of international students	0.88	0.78
	613	Cultural immersion courses for international students	0.80	0.64
	703	Global classroom	0.83	0.68
	705	Integration activities	0.93	0.87
Online infrastructure	904	Classroom with special infrastructure for remote teaching	0.93	0.86
	905	Specialized personnel for remote teaching	0.90	0.82
	906	Process digitalization	0.84	0.72

Note: Loadings greater than 0.70 and communalities greater than 0.49 were accepted. Created by author.

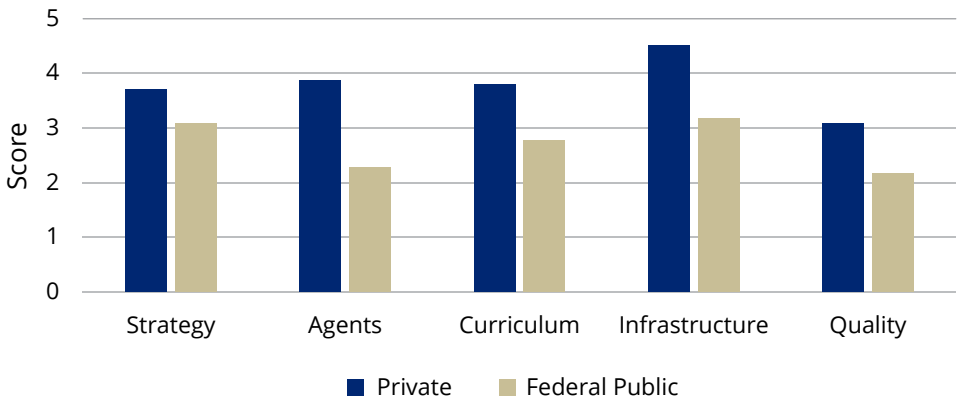
Based on this information, the statistical averages of the responses were calculated for each IaH variable (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Average statistical weighing of IaH variables by all participants.



Note: N=20. Online infrastructure is the variable that receives the most attention and matches the perceptions of HEI regarding the incursion and promotion of online activities because of COVID-19. Created by author.

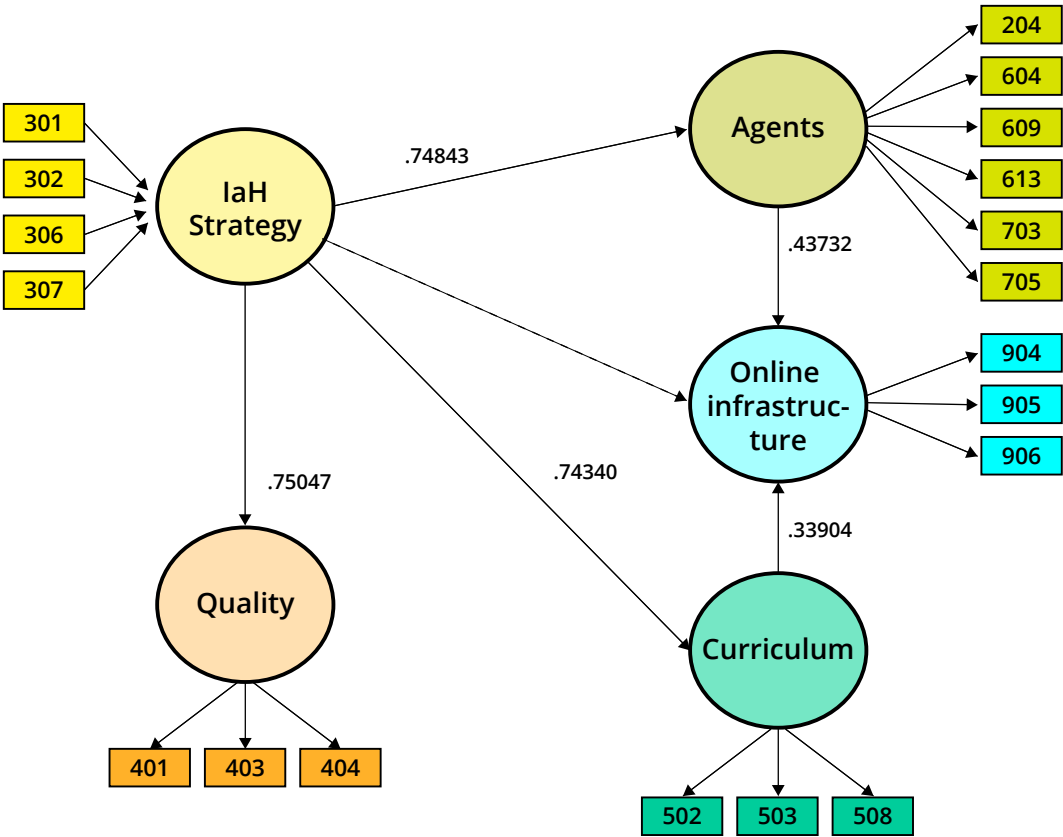
Figure 2. Average statistical weighing of IaH variables by subsystem.



Note: There is a difference between institutions in the federal public subsystem and the private subsystem, with the largest gap in the area of agents. Created by author.

To validate the IaH model, tests of unidimensional constructs, internal model fitting, PLS fitting, and Bootstrapping percentiles were calculated. Values obtained show: Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.7$ and DG $\rho > 0.7$ are acceptable while the value for R^2 is moderate ($0.30 < R < 0.60$). The fit index of the model has a prediction of 66%, which is less than the desirable 70%, but is considered equally acceptable, with the IaH model resulting as follows (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. IaH PLS-SEM Model



Note: The IaH strategy variable positively and significantly determines the agent's curriculum and quality constructs, and indirectly positively and significantly determines online infrastructure. In turn, the agents and curriculum constructs have a positive, but not significant, relationship with online infrastructure.

Analysis of Results

Taking into account that the number of samples was significantly lower with respect to estimated population models for PLS-SEM, it is not possible to generalize the results, however, the information collected provides a minimum of resources to analyze the components that make up IaH considering the current performance of HEI in terms of internationalization of higher education.

The first important result is that HEI focused their work on online infrastructure for management and educational offerings, especially for those that mostly carry out face-to-face activities and had to migrate to an online modality immediately. The second result is that HEI are not considering the strategic component for the management of IaH as a priority, from which the projects and actions of the other variables are derived.

On the other hand, the IaH model confirms a direct effect of the IaH strategy on the curriculum, agents, and quality assurance variables and in turn has an indirect effect on the infrastructure through the curriculum and agents.

With this information we answer the first question: What is the relationship of the strategic dimension of the IaH with respect to the functions, agents, and infrastructure involved in the process? We can say that there is a direct relationship of the IaH strategy with the curriculum design, quality assurance, and the agents involved in the execution of the strategy, and that its relationship with respect to the infrastructure for online activities is subject to the people involved and the curriculum design.

To answer the second question (What is the effect of the IaH strategy on quality assurance?), we can say that there is a direct effect, therefore, to the extent that the strategy is clearly defined and disseminated along with its policies and procedures, and that it involves top management, procedures for measuring impact, learning outcomes and process improvement with respect to international/intercultural programs and activities will be ensured.

In other words, HEI should approach IaH in a dedicated way from a well-defined and articulated strategy, including policies and procedures, and that its responsibility be assumed by top management; the internationalization of the curricular design should be focused on the development of complete joint or double degree programs, the development of research projects and elements of the curricular design that favor the integration of international students; the agents involved in the teaching-learning process should include the training of teaching and administrative staff, and the integration of international students with local students through assistance and follow-up, social activities, and cultural immersion courses; quality assurance should include procedures for reviewing academic programs, a framework for measuring the impact of IaH and improvement process; and finally, the infrastructure for online activities should include infrastructure within the classroom to enable remote classes,

technical, and pedagogical training of staff in ICTs, and the digitalization of procedures in the international area.

The lack of participation of HEI in studies of this nature is evident, so it is suggested that this same study be carried out on a larger scale to have information that can be generalized for the Mexican Higher Education System.

Conclusions

The internationalization of higher education is conceived in different ways by different institutions, so it is important to first define what is meant by internationalization. In the case of Latin America, and specifically Mexico, there is still a lack of unified criteria and the establishment of common policies and processes around the internationalization strategy that would make it possible to systematize activities. IaH's actions in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic concentrated efforts on the adoption of ICTs to continue operating, but not as a strategic objective that followed the trend of digitalization, but as an immediate response to a circumstance.

The findings suggest emphasizing the development and implementation of the internationalization strategy that permeates the other variables of the IaH for its integration and above all to ensure quality, which in turn is the mechanism of response to the global conditions and demands of higher education. This leads to a twofold discussion: the first discussion is regarding the coordination between the different federal and state agencies involved in the management of the higher education system to establish a framework of reference for national internationalization, and the second discussion is regarding the autonomy of HEI to recognize the importance of developing an IaH strategy that is supported by senior management and that meets the criteria of the framework of reference. Only then will it be possible to speak of an internationalization of the country's higher education.

Recommendations and Future Studies

The recommendations derived from this study are:

1. The development of a framework of reference with respect to the internationalization of higher education at the federal and state levels, adapted to the management subsystems, with defined policies that standardize an expected level of internationalization at the national level.
1. The development of an IaH strategy based on the motives and reasons why the institution wishes to integrate internationalization, which is defined, communicated, coordinated, and for which senior management assumes responsibility.
2. The review of current curricular designs, identifying existing and missing elements to achieve IaH, considering the required infrastructure, training of teaching and administrative staff, the promotion of research, and the integration of international and local students.
3. The establishment of procedures to ensure the quality of the international dimension of the programs and the creation of a framework for measuring the impact of IaH to improve existing procedures.
4. The digitization of international and intercultural, curricular, and co-curricular experiences, through the IaH strategy involving all students, including the digitization of procedures for the management of international programs and projects.

A second suggested study is the measurement of the level of maturity of the internationalization strategy and its relationship to the development of international and intercultural competencies of students.

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Virtual International Mobility without Student Participation

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Abstract

Before the pandemic, student mobility was the main internationalization strategy in all the University Centers that make up the University of Guadalajara Network (Red UdeG), Mexico. With the necessary closure of schools and borders, face-to-face mobility was completely suspended. Faced with this adverse situation, the University strengthened the offer to study courses abroad virtually. However, in the *Centro Universitario del Norte* (CUNorte), the strategy did not obtain student participation. This paper shares an investigation conducted to identify why students at CUNorte do not participate in virtual mobility actions. It is a case study using a questionnaire designed to know the perception of students regarding virtual mobility. The sample is made up of students enrolled and active at the University Center during the COVID-19 crisis, that is, 2020B and 2021A semesters. The research generates insights into the challenges faced by the University regarding internationalization.

Keywords: *Students' perceptions; virtual mobility; internationalization of higher education; COVID-19 pandemic; challenges.*

Introduction

The social isolation health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the way internationalization works in universities. Around the globe, governments

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and institutions prioritized needs. During the spread of the disease, the Health System in Mexico was close to collapsing. The closure of economic activities highlighted significant issues of poverty and inequality. In the educational sector, remote teaching took the first place in the order of priorities. In the middle of the crisis, public universities, especially the University of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco, became a “cornerstone for pandemic management” (Villanueva, 2021). This description of the crisis scenario provides the context on the time and situation where the study shared in this paper arises and develops.

This is a case study where is analyzed a problem identified in a moment when Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) become basically the only “safe” means of communication. This means we are not dealing with an isolated, unique problem, but a situation that impacts and is impacted by other aspects of academic life in the university. The first part of the chapter provides context on the characteristics of the internationalization process in the University of Guadalajara, before and during the pandemic. The following section is the methodology used to respond the research question. After discussing the validity and reliability of the instrument designed to analyze the object of study, the study focuses on the author’s interpretation of these results. The final section includes a brief set of conclusions and recommendations.

Overview of University of Guadalajara Mobility Programs

The University of Guadalajara is one of the largest public universities in Mexico, enrolling 83.3% of total higher education students in the state of Jalisco, and covering 87.2% of total middle-higher education students in the state. It comprises a middle-higher education system with 174 campuses, a virtual university system, and 15 higher education university centers. From the 310 thousand active students in the 2020-2021 school term, approximately 4 thousand are currently studying undergraduate and graduate programs in one of the regional university centers of the Red UdeG, the *Centro Universitario del Norte* (CUNorte) (Universidad de Guadalajara [UdeG], 2021a). This Center is located in the Northern region of Jalisco; one of the characteristics of this geographical area is being one of the regions with the highest levels of poverty, indigenous population, and educational backwardness, therefore, the impact of the University in this area holds a scope and relevance that can hardly be measured.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic (*Coronavirus Disease* as denominated by the WHO in 2019), the most visible and recognized internationalization strategy around the globe was face-to-face student mobility. In the case of the University of Guadalajara, in 2018 the CUNorte had the distinction, among the centers in the university network, that 2% of total active students had some form of international academic mobility (Centro Universitario del Norte [CUNorte], 2019, p. 85; Universidad de Guadalajara [UdeG], 2021b, p. 1893). As is well known, the forced closure of schools and borders caused an indefinite suspension of mobility, among other things. Due to the health emergency posed by the pandemic, in June 2020 the University launched a support program for the repatriation of international students, bringing incoming and outgoing students to their countries of origin (Coordinación General de Cooperación e Internacionalización [CGCI], 2020).

Faced with the imminent need of indefinite suspension of face-to-face mobility, that for decades had been the UdeG's main internationalization strategy, the institutional response was strengthening virtual mobility (Coordinación Internacional [CI], 2020; CI, 2021a). At this point it is worth clarifying that the purpose of the University has never been replacing a modality for the other. The main objective was offering students the opportunity of complementing their academic formation with the experience in a multicultural/international exchange, in spite of the social isolation made mandatory due to the health contingency caused by the deadly COVID-19.

Now, before starting the description of the problem that originated this study, it is necessary to pause and analyze the type of experiences and knowledge acquired by students in each modality. Table 1 summarizes the differences between studying abroad by physically moving into another country and studying completely online.

Table 1. Concepts and characteristics of mobility.

Concepts	
Face-to-face mobility	Virtual mobility
"In student mobility, undergraduate and graduate students perform practices, seminars and academic residences outside of their institution" (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior [ANUIES], 2019).	Virtual mobility (MV) "comprises the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to create trans-border collaboration, improving intercultural understanding and knowledge exchange" (Instituto Internacional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe [IESALC]/UNESCO, 2021).
Characteristics	
Stay in a place different than the residence	Stay in the same residence
Breaking off from usual personal responsibilities	Continuity with usual personal responsibilities
Exclusive, by not facilitating mobility to students for reasons derived from individual, family, economic situations	Integrating, all students may access this modality, independently of individual situations
Significant time and cost	Balanced time and cost
Formation developed in face-to-face interaction	Formation developed in digital environments
Intercultural, social, and educational experience in the host higher education institution and the place where it is located	Intercultural, social, educational, and digital experiences exclusively online

Source: Ruíz-Corbellá, López-Gómez and Cacheiro-González, 2021, p. 18.

In the UdeG regulations, one of the main functions of the Internationalization Coordination Office (Coordinación de Internacionalización, CI), is "Coordinating the Network's cooperation and internationalization actions without affecting the exercise of their corresponding attributions" (CI, 2021b). In practice this means that University Centers in the Network disseminate the supply of scholarships managed by the CI. In the particular case of this study, the promotion of virtual mobility is framed within the University's Virtual Academic Stays Program (Programa de Estancias Académicas Virtuales, PEAV). In this point it is worth mentioning that the CI is the office coordinating the promotion of institutional strategies on internationalization around the network. Each university center implements dissemination actions deemed ideal to promote the programs managed by the CI. In practice this means the CI posts several

calls for participation in the official webpage <http://www.ci.cgai.udg.mx/>. As in the organigram of each university center there is no instance with the exclusive purpose of strengthening internationalization, it often happens that the scholarship and calls for participation dissemination strategies consist just in “sharing and forwarding links”. Empirical data collected in field work for this investigation allows the claim that specifically in the CUNorte, during 2020 and 2021, the main virtual mobility promotion strategy consisted in disseminating calls for participation in the Center’s official social networks and webpages, together with seeking support of coordinators and professors in disseminating information among students (A.V. Gaeta, personal communication, November 11, 2021).

It is necessary to clarify that internationalization promotion mechanisms are not the object of analysis in this paper. The dissemination strategies applied in CUNorte are described only to provide context for the problem analyzed in this investigation. During the COVID-19 pandemic the main internationalization strategy in the University of Guadalajara was promoting institutional virtual mobility programs. In the CUNorte the strategy had no response. During the four semesters of the 2020 and 2021 school calendars, CUNorte students did not participate in any of the calls for participation to take courses from foreign universities online. Therefore, the principal research question is: *Why is it that CUNorte students do not participate in virtual mobility programs during the contingency derived from the COVID-19 pandemic?* Therefore, with this question, the objective of this research is identifying the reasons for CUNorte not participating in virtual mobility actions during the contingency derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. With the hypothesis that CUNorte students are not interested in participating in virtual mobility actions, this study is conducted considering that the results may provide the foundations for a proposal to solve the problem that is adequate to the context of the investigation.

Methodology

The population in the study is the total of active students in the 2021-A semester at the CUNorte, located in the north of Jalisco, Mexico, in the Municipality of Colotlán. The probabilistic sample comprises 220 students enrolled in different undergraduate programs (bachelor’s). There are 52 men (23.6%) and 168 women (76.4%), with a mean age of (M) 20.94 years and 3.06 standard deviation (SD).

The instrument used to know the perception of students on virtual mobility was a questionnaire that in this paper is called EnMov. The EnMov survey was designed by the author with the purpose of knowing the perception of students regarding four aspects of virtual mobility. Each aspect is a dimension, and each dimension includes five items. The 20 questionnaire items are statements written in positive sense to be ranked in a range from 1 (Disagree totally), up to 5 (Agree totally). Participants' responses are measured using a Likert-type scale.

The dimensions comprising the EnMov survey are:

- Dimension I. Attitude towards virtual mobility.
- Dimension II. Knowledge of options for virtual mobility.
- Dimension III. Economic aspects related with virtual mobility.
- Dimension IV. Other aspects associated with the virtual learning environment.

The survey was applied online with the Google Forms application. The link to the survey was disseminated among the student population through the professors. The responses were collected during June 21-29, 2021, in a single issue. The 220 participants were anonymous and were informed of the purpose of the study.

Validity and reliability of the instrument

A questionnaire is valid when it measures what it intends to measure. The qualitative evaluation of the instrument used in this study was the validity of content based on experts' opinions. The validity of content is often established deductively by defining a universe of items, in essence, what makes the best construct is that a high number of inferences can be made on it, in the most direct manner (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). The subjective indicators of validity and structure of the questionnaire were validated in the following elements:

- a. Pertinence of the items' content.
- b. Number of dimensions and variables proposed for measurement.
- c. Clarity in the wording (writing) of items.
- d. Questionnaire length.

Reliability is the precision with which it does it, indicating consistency in measurement. Reliability is not a property or inherent characteristic of a questionnaire, but of the scores obtained with its application. An instrument may be reliable with one sample and not reliable when applying it to a different sample. In other words, reliability applies not to a scale, but to the scores of the scale obtained in a determined sample (Lacave, Molina, Fernández and Redondo, 2016; Frías-Navarro, 2021).

When items are used to form a scale, they must have internal consistency. All items must measure a same construct, that is, a same psychological domain, therefore they must be related among themselves (Frías-Navarro, 2021). A useful coefficient to evaluate internal consistency is Cronbach's Alpha (Bland and Altman, 1997). Although there are several methods to estimate reliability of tests, Alpha is the internal consistency coefficient more often used in Social Sciences (Cho and Kim, 2014; Frías-Navarro, 2021).

Cronbach's Alpha has a direct interpretation (Bland and Altman, 1997). It is an index to evaluate the magnitude of correlation of the questionnaire items, that is, the average of correlations between items comprising the instrument (Oviedo and Campo-Arias 2005, quoting Cortina, 1993; Bland and Altman, 1997).

Table 2. Internal consistency analysis of the scores obtained in the sample.

Dimension	No. of items	Mean	Cronbach's alpha	Total corrected correlation with the item	Cronbach's alpha if the item is suppressed	95% and confidence interval	
Attitude	5	3.266	0.858	Min.= .584 Max.= .746	Min.= .809 Max.=.850	0.823	0.885
Knowledge	5	2.666	0.879	Min.= .644 Max.= .755	Min.= .842 Max.=.870	0.851	0.902
Economic aspects	5	2.99	0.474	Min.= .149 Max.= .491	Min.= .268 Max.=.690	0.356	0.577
Other aspects	5	3.06	0.773	Min.= .316 Max.= .664	Min.= .688 Max.=.808	0.722	0.817
EnMov (4 dimensions = 20 items): Mean = 3.190 Cronbach's Alpha = .843							

Source: Elaborated by the author.

Different authors (Nunnally, 1967; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Huh, Delorme and Reid, 2006) agree that a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value under .7 indicates

a low correlation between the items. An internal consistency value over .7 is acceptable, the values ranging between .9 and .95 are considered excellent, and a value over .95 indicates redundancy or item duplication.

Taking these recommendations into account, the data in Table 2 show the reliability of the instrument (EnMov) scores in the sample is .843, however, in the internal consistency analysis for each dimension separately it is observed that dimensions *Attitude*, *Knowledge*, and *Other Aspects* are acceptable in their Cronbach's alpha value (.858, .879 and .773 respectively), and the internal consistency value of the *Economic Aspects* dimension is unacceptable (Coefficient <.5). The interpretation of the values is that results of items comprising the economic aspects dimension indicate errors in measurement. Obtaining a low Cronbach's alpha value means the items have a multidimensional structure (Frías-Navarro, 2021).

In this point it is important to indicate that the analysis presented in this investigation is on the application of a Pilot Test (PT). As is well known, pilot testing in research is conducted to obtain elements allowing a reduction in the risk of bias or measurement errors. Therefore, the information presented in this paper corresponds to the test of the data collection questionnaire that will be used with adequate modifications at a different stage of the research that is yet to be performed.

Interpretation of Results

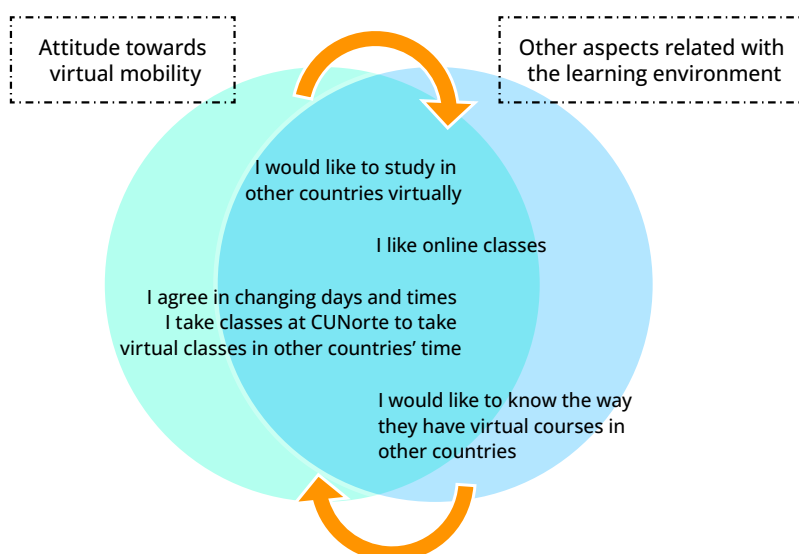
In this area of study, the highest degree of correlation is observed in the *Other Aspects* dimension, associated with the virtual learning environment of the *Other* variable and the *Interest* general variable. From the r value = .823 (over 0.80), it is determined that there is a very high positive correlation. From the significance value .000 (under 0,01), it may be claimed with 99% confidence that this correlation is very significant.

Before continuing, it is necessary to explain that in the interpretation of results the values of Pearson's r parametric test coefficient ($-1 \leq r \leq 1$) are considered, and also what here is defined as theoretical content of variables (expressions of items comprising each dimension). This means that when a determined level of correlation is observed, it must be considered a relation only of association, but it does not imply causation. In this investigation, the degree of correlation

is analyzed to identify whether there is covariance in variables, but not to determine cause and effect relations (Psyencia Mx, 2020). In this sense the visual interpretation of correlations with greater contribution to the purposes of this study is the following:

Figure 1. Relation between the *Others* and *Attitude* variables.

International virtual mobility without student participation



Note. Elaborated by the author.

Figure one shows the interrelation of the contents of the *Attitude* and *Other Aspects* dimensions. Each dimension has its own contents. The overlapping space between both represents the correlation or association relation (without causality); as the scores that show liking of online teaching/learning modality are higher, the scores in items with positive attitude expressions towards virtual mobility are also higher. Arrows in the image represent there is a relation between variables. Bidirectionality means that no variable can be defined to have an effect over the other. The interaction is not defined as cause and effect, but association. The relation values of the *Attitude* and *Other Aspects* dimensions in virtual learning modality allow claiming with a high degree of security that as students agree more with online studies, they have a greater disposition to

take virtual courses of foreign universities (Pearson's r positive value = .653; very significant correlation, with significance level = .000).

Given that the main interest in this research is knowing *Why is it that CUNorte students do not participate in virtual mobility programs during the contingency derived from the COVID-19 pandemic?*, the values of the relation analysis shown in Figure 1 allow dismissing the "dislike for virtual modality" as a factor affecting the decision of studying abroad in a virtual setting. The like/dislike relation between the online learning modality and the attitude of being predisposed to study abroad virtually makes it clear that for student in the test, the situation "studying in other universities through the internet", that is, without traveling, in a virtual setting, IS NOT a characteristic they dislike about virtual mobility. Therefore, fear or rejection towards the study modality cannot be considered a reason for students not participating in the different programs offered by the University.

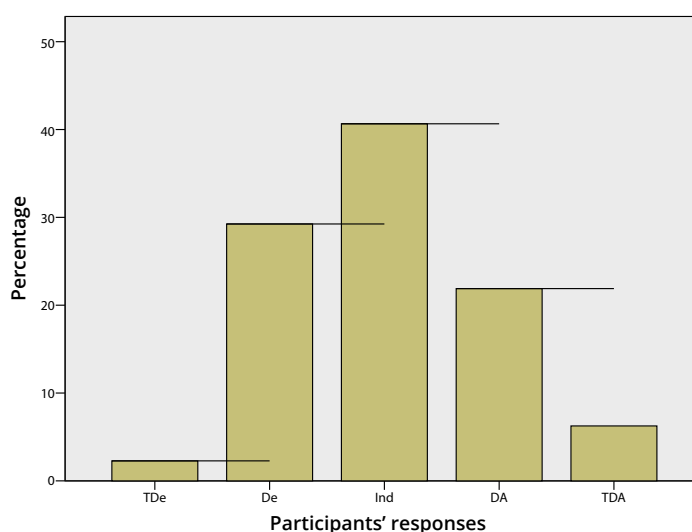
In addition to the implication of this claim, it was decided to process the *Knowledge* dimension by analyzing frequency measures and descriptive statistics.

Table 3. Items and statistics of the *Knowledge* dimension.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha if the element was suppressed
I know when calls for participation in <i>online</i> studies in foreign universities are opened	2.80	1.172	.870
I know the scholarships to support payment of virtual courses in other countries	2.43	1.089	.842
It is easy to identify universities with virtual classes related to my major	2.61	1.056	.857
I know my opportunities to study abroad in a virtual setting	2.76	1.097	.845
I know the people who may provide assessment to study <i>online</i> courses in other countries	2.72	1.143	.850

Note: The mean value allows the inference that average score of participants represents disagreement and indifference.

Figure 2. Visual summary of frequency of responses obtained in the *Knowledge* dimension.



Note: In the frequency of responses, the valid percentage is:

TDe – Totally Disagree 2.3%

De – Disagree 29.1%

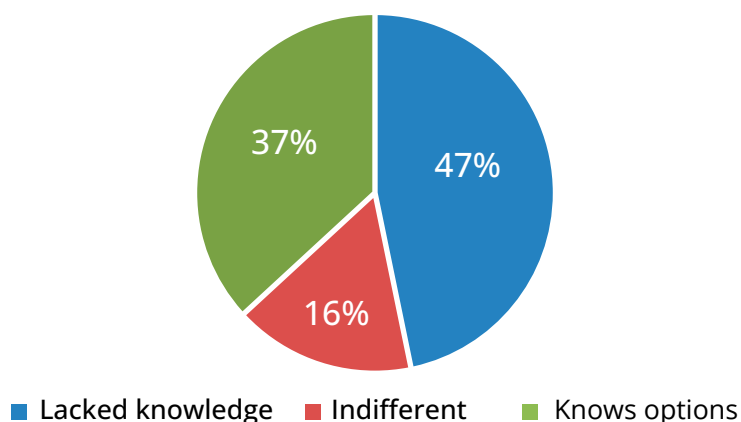
Ind – Indifferent 40.5%

DA – Agree 21.8%

TDA – Totally Agree 6.4%

According to the results shown in Figure 2, the fact that 71.8% (percentage accrued up to the Ind response) of participants scored in the Knowledge dimension responses of indifference (40.5%) and disagreement regarding the knowledge of virtual mobility (Dt 2.3% + D 29.1% = 31.4%), allows the claim that lack of knowledge was the factor with higher impact in students' decision of whether to carry out virtual mobility actions. As this claim is very significant, each of the items of the dimension is analyzed specifically.

Figure 3. Responses of students about knowledge of options they have to study abroad in a virtual setting.



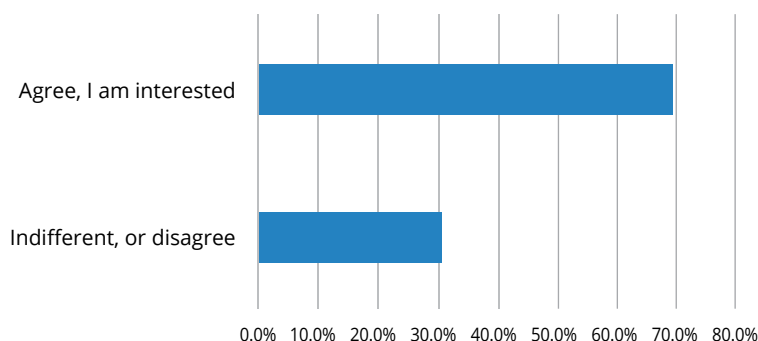
Note: Elaborated by the author.

In the EnMov (measurement instrument), the *Knowledge* dimension comprises items focused on identifying whether participants in the survey know the different options offered by the university through scholarships framed within different programs. The interpretation of scores represented in the categorization of Figure 3 is that less than half of participants in the study knows how to participate in virtual mobility programs. According to students' responses, 47% does not know, 16% is indifferent, and only 37% expressed knowing about forms of virtual mobility.

In the analysis of the *Economic Aspects* dimension related with virtual mobility, the responses in one of the items draws attention in particular.

Figure 2. Responses to the item with greater relation in content with the *Knowledge* dimension.

I am interested in knowing about virtual mobility support scholarships



Note: The item is relevant due to the content.

The item displayed in Figure 2 shows that 70% of students who participated in the test had high scores in expressions associated with their interest on knowing about support programs and scholarships to take virtual courses in foreign universities. The values in the analysis of Figure 2 provide statistical elements allowing the dismissal of the hypothesis that students of CUNorte are not interested in virtual mobility.

In summary, according to the results, the author finds that the lack of knowledge on how, where, when, what for, and why taking online courses in a foreign university is the most significant response to the question Why is it that CUNorte students do not participate in virtual mobility programs during the contingency derived from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Conclusions

In field work it was identified that during the pandemic the University increased the supply of support scholarships for virtual courses in foreign universities. From their content, courses may be divided in English as a second language courses, or courses related to the subjects that undergraduate students are studying.

The interpretation in function of students' responses, that is, from scores obtained in the "Knowledge of options for virtual mobility" dimension of the instrument, is that most students who participated in the survey do not know the opportunities offered by the University regarding virtual mobility options or they are just not interested. This means the form the virtual mobility programs are disseminated and promoted is not working well. According to the results of this research, relevant information does not reach students. Out of 10 students who participated in the study, less than four know the way to study in some foreign university in virtual settings and without funding these studies themselves.

The results also allow the claim that there is a positive and very significant relation between "Other aspects associated with the virtual learning environment" and the "Attitude towards virtual mobility" dimensions. As indicated in paragraphs above, the relation is interpreted as a very "specific" association, so to speak, in the sense that it is observed that most students express they like virtual courses, and they also show expressions showing a positive attitude towards virtual mobility. This result allows claiming that the study modality is not the main reason for students not participating in mobility actions, but the lack of knowledge about the strategies. In common words, the "problem in this problem" is not virtual mobility, but students "not knowing" that they can study in another country without traveling.

Based on the claims of the two paragraphs above, supported by statistical analysis of responses and reliability indicators, the author considers having met the objective of this research. It is concluded that most participants in the study agree with expressions indicating a potential interest for studying abroad in a virtual setting. However, they do not have enough knowledge on options, scholarships, courses, or virtual mobility programs in which they may participate.

It is suggested to study the problem and its context more deeply as follows:

1. Reviewing effectiveness of dissemination mechanisms and virtual mobility strengthening as an internationalization strategy in the *Centro Universitario del Norte* (CUNorte), to confirm that all students have knowledge of virtual mobility and how it is conducted, and the benefits they may obtain.

2. Evaluating the pertinence of restructuring the scale before using the instrument analyzed in this paper in any other sample or context, by suppressing or modifying less significant items, whether due to contents or by reliability and/or correlation indicators.
3. Proposing a parallel study on the association identified between the positive attitude of learning in an online environment and studying abroad in a virtual modality, that is, having virtual mobility without actual, physical mobility.

Thus, the first step before conducting the studies suggested will be to apply the survey again in order to confirm the reliability of the instrument used in this pilot test. Now, as the next application of the study will be conducted in what is already called "postpandemic" time, the author considers it is feasible to collect data that allow some sort of comparison or relation with the interest for face-to-face mobility.

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PART THREE:
**After the Pandemic: Evolution of
the Internationalization Process of
Higher Education**

Post Pandemic Traveling in Place: Multiplying Rich Virtual Study Abroad Opportunities

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Abstract

When the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic brought most higher education institutions to a worldwide standstill, in the U.S., most of the study abroad programs were cancelled. As the pandemic developed, it became clear that it would reach every corner of the world, extended gap-year, academic year, summer and semester abroad programs were discarded altogether. As a response to the pandemic, the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa Outreach College International Programs (OCIP) staff adjusted its regular short-term (three-week) study abroad programs to a virtual format. UH Mānoa institutional goals include a mandate to permeate education with a strong sense of Hawaiian identity and purpose. As such, this short-term format is the basis for the implementation of a model that can be adjusted, modified, or reviewed by other institutions of higher education.

Keywords: *short-term study abroad, post-pandemic, online tertiary education, educational internationalization*

Introduction

When the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic brought most higher education institutions to a worldwide standstill, many American study abroad (SA) participants

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(students, administrators, and support staff) swiftly fled home and upcoming international educational programs were canceled. In 2021, many universities created innovative ways to complete terms, semesters, and academic years, and made changes so that all academic credits needed for graduation were awarded to students. Without much delay and as an alternative to a complete SA shutdown, universities around the world implemented online distance education SA options. The transition from in-person to virtual high education scenarios would require an imperative to retain all the high-quality experiential and life-changing educational qualities of traditional face-to-face (F2F) SA programs.

As an example, some American educators in charge of international students participating in short-term or long-term SA programs sought to replicate the experience of being overseas and employed live streaming video applications for classes held synchronously. This is the case for international students studying in the US enrolled in Intensive English and Culture programs. As their visa status in America is dependent upon their classroom attendance, international students studying English as a second language (ESL) and their instructors had no choice but to hold synchronous lessons online.

Previous and ongoing developments in Collaborative Online International Learning, also loosely known as Virtual Educational (VE) Exchange, Tele-collaboration, or Virtual Mobility, helped pave the way for an expedited transition to virtual settings. The American Council on Education (ACE) has recognized that “using online communication to connect faculty and students across borders is proving to be an accessible, affordable, and flexible option at a growing number of institutions in the United States and around the world” (Ward, 2016, p. 1). In particular, VE programs allow groups of students in various countries to connect and engage in a collaborative effort while enrolled in a regular class through the use of online technology with supervision and support from experienced facilitators (O’Dowd & Lewis, 2016).

Post pandemic educational travel for traditional SA programs will not be viable until high health standards and safeguards stabilize and vaccination rates permit reaching herd immunity across nations. While the exact dates are uncertain, the pressing need to continue delivering higher education has instilled new efforts to reinvent pre-pandemic norms and create new ones. This chapter proposes a preliminary model with best practices for virtual SA programs in light of the impossibility or reduction of safe travel opportunities abroad. For the purposes of this chapter, we will concentrate on two to three-week SA programs.

Literature Review

Bowman (2021) explains the relationship between global citizenship and limited mobility in an online NAFSA Report: “For many in the field, travel limitations highlighted the case that mobility is not a requirement for a global citizenship.” (The Pandemic’s Effect, para. 4) She highlights that “students from underrepresented populations, including low-income or first-generation students, are less likely to study abroad due to costs, family responsibilities, or other circumstances.” (Leverage Technology, para. 1).

Although traveling in place may be an oxymoron, there is a conceptual antecedent in prominent cultural and literary studies. As portrayed in Stiegler (2013) *Traveling in Place: A History of Armchair Travel*, individuals can achieve a certain state of mind that allows them to see themselves and their everyday surroundings with fresh eyes as a person would experience while visiting another country. Burton calls this experience “a 360-view of self” that can strengthen leadership skills: “Recognizing these differing perspectives provides avenues of opportunity for leaders to support followers during developmental challenges through feedback, guidance, and support” (2012, p. i).

The pedagogical value that SA programs offer to university students aims exactly at providing a number of insights. It should be a surprise that curricular and co-curricular university SA programs have been around since the turn of the nineteenth century (Di Maggio, 2016).

In the case of SA programs coming to the United States, the April 2021 Chronicle of Higher Education *Today’s Global Campus: Strategies for Reviving Enrollments and Study Abroad Report* states that in regards to campus internationalization even before the 2020 Pandemic, “American colleges have struggled to fully integrate foreign students on campus, raising questions about whether they can effectively educate their classmates about other perspectives” (p. 5).

Due to persisting economic disparities in Mexico and other less affluent countries, the number of university students who are able to afford visa and travel expenses, insurance, tuition, incidental, and living costs will remain low or decrease. With this in mind, retaining and expanding innovative and affordable virtual post-pandemic SA options have the potential to dramatically increase students’ participation in such life-changing programs. International COIL and particularly online SA programs pose technological, pedagogical,

cognitive, socioeconomic, cross-cultural, linguistic, and emotional challenges for all stakeholders (Ward, 2016).

Although most short-term SA programs focus on one topic or one course, there have been efforts to expand their length and scope into multidisciplinary, multicourse programs (Varney, 2011). Di Maggio (2016) investigated student engagement and retention value in Higher education in the 2011 National Survey of Engagement. Due to their life-changing range of experiences, Milius (2019) found that short-term SA programs have been positively associated with the development of leadership outcomes that can positively impact the participants' future leadership skills.

Lombardi (2011) conducted research that indicates the benefits of short-term SA programs increase students' intercultural sensitivity when they are exposed to cultural differences prior to their travel compared to students who had no previous intercultural exposure. Consequently, pre-departure orientations are beneficial to the development of intercultural competence. Nicol (2018) investigated the beneficial effects of an online short-term SA program for nursing students. For their professional work, nurses require high levels of intercultural competence. Teaching cultural competence to nursing students has had limited results with traditional instructional methods.

One way for short-term SA programs to distinguish themselves apart from other institutions also striving for campus internationalization has been the inclusion of a peer-mentor, buddy, conversation partner, or language exchange program. These programs make it possible for the participants to have access to structured regularly scheduled sessions. Kasper (2004) examined the conversational orientation of German language learners in a conversation-for-learning setting.

For the most part, these peer-support services can be part of the curriculum or extracurricular activities. They provide opportunities for freshmen, new graduate students, newly arrived international students, or English and foreign language learners to interact with more experienced, seasoned, domestic students or fluent speakers of a target language. As with any type of campus academic support service, there are numerous challenges that come with the transition to online environments.

Despite the many administrative challenges that come with a conversation partner program, students that participate in such support programs view it

as extremely beneficial. Participants see the necessity of these programs for their growth in their studies to make progress and improvements, develop English or foreign language fluency, and increase their confidence due to the ongoing social interaction afforded by the conversation program (Barraja-Rohan, 2013). Ongoing social interaction within such a program might provide program participants with a sense of community leading to a decrease in acculturative stress (Yeh & Inoue, 2004) and provide opportunities for ESL students to learn the pragmatics of politeness (Tajeddin et al., 2014). Peer mentor, conversation, or language exchange programs coupled with explicit instruction on interactional fluencies and disfluencies (e.g., hesitations) could also enable learners to become effective at social interactions (De Jong, 2018).

In 2017, Howard et al. pioneered a study with a hybrid approach for a SA program. 10 American students traveled to Italy for a semester abroad and 16 others took live classes with them from the U. S. This study showed the great potential that virtual programs can have to replicate a SA program: “In terms of student and faculty satisfaction, both groups of students and the instructor reported specific areas of satisfaction, offered critical feedback, and felt that the concept was a viable one” (p. 115). Howard *et al.* (2017) point out that “(b)oth groups submitted assignments of similar quality, engaged in communications between the abroad and online groups, and interacted with the instructor and experts in the field” (p. 115).

Traveling in Place: A Case Study of the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa

As the pandemic developed, it became clear that it would reach every corner of the world, extended gap-year, academic year, summer and semester abroad programs were discarded altogether. The need to implement alternatives allowed for little time to plan. As a solution, most virtual SA programs implemented synchronous courses in order to establish similarity to immersion trips. As for methodological instructional considerations, student-centered and content-based approaches to distance education are more beneficial to facilitate student integration into the target culture and language.

How dealing with the pandemic normalized flexibility, innovation, and resourcefulness

As a response to the pandemic, the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa Outreach College International Programs (OCIP) staff adjusted its regular short-term (three-week) SA programs to a virtual format upon request by South Korean and Japanese universities. These institutions currently award university credit to their students and require them to participate in an educational experience abroad to graduate. This short-term SA format is the basis for the implementation of a model that can be adjusted, modified, or reviewed by other institutions of higher education.

Following UH Mānoa instructional design recommendations to create online courses grounded on five fundamental Hawaiian values, led to innovative three-week SA programs, known as Special English and Culture Programs (SECP). These programs utilized instructional strategies that focused on flexibility and resourcefulness since there was reduced time for curriculum design and materials preparation. The three main learning domains were: ESL instruction, Interchanger Interaction, and Hawai'i Cultural Exploration.

At UH Mānoa, university institutional goals also include a mandate to permeate education with a strong sense of Hawaiian identity and purpose. In the 2012 Institutional Report Hawai'i Papa O Ke Ao, the UH System "set goals and objectives to address the higher education needs of our Indigenous people – Native Hawaiians – by creating a model Indigenous serving institution" (Overview and History, para. 2). Among them, it indicates that the UH System "gauges its effectiveness in including Native Hawaiian values in its decision making and practices" and "fosters and promotes Hawaiian culture and language at all its campuses" (Overview and History, para. 2). For this reason, online courses have a strong foundation on Hawaiian goals and values.

As explained by the UH Center for Online Innovation, there are five fundamental Hawaiian values highly recommended in UH Mānoa online classes: *Pilina* (relationship building), *Kū I Ke Aloha* (instructor presence through empathy), *Kūlana 'Ike* (students' voice and choice), *Holomua* (iteration and continuous improvement), and *Ho'opili* (resistance) (Center for Online Innovation, 2021).

At the UH Mānoa OCIP short-term SA programs were given the possibility of implementing these five fundamental Hawaiian values because their shorter

duration allowed all stakeholders (sending institutions, host institutions, university officials, faculty members, and students) to collaborate and make multi-level courses possible with a reasonable degree of flexibility.

How the Five Values were implemented

1. Pilina (relationship buildings) refers to all online activities and tasks that consolidate a strong sense of a learning community. Virtual meetings can lead to a debilitating sensation of physical and emotional distance that was mitigated by using:

- Opening/Closing sessions with opportunities for students to talk.
- Using Breakout Rooms or a similar technique to create pairs or small groups.
- Planning regular and constant ways to connect among participants.
- Asking for individual video responses to student work (using Flipgrid or similar applications/services).
- Doing short surveys or polls related to students' interests at the beginning of the term or session.
- Scheduling talking storytime.
- Taking the time to get to know students' learning goals. (Center for Online Innovation, 2021)

2. Kū I Ke Aloha (instructor presence through empathy) refers to the supportive connection that an instructor can establish with the far-away students based on empathetic attitudes (Center for Online Innovation, 2021). Many students go through challenging times and are at a disadvantage during the ongoing pandemic restrictions. While the instructors' goals are to conduct effective classes, they cannot overlook situations in which students are asking for flexibility and adjustments that would have been unthinkable in pre-pandemic times.

SA directors or program coordinators can promote and assist instructors to create flexible and empathetic environments. Paparella (2018) recommended flexibility since faculty and administrators are involved in processes similar to those of the students. He recommends personal and professional development opportunities for faculty and program administrators.

After the conclusion of an OCIP SECP, one student sent an instructor the following personal communication that highlights the importance of establishing instructor-to-student empathetic connections:

Dear professor *****,

First of all, thank you for teaching me for the past three weeks.

This program helped me a lot in speaking English.

Actually, I was a freshman last year, but I didn't have any friends because my whole classes were online.

But I felt like the interchangers and people who took this program with me were my friends during this program.

It was hard because I had to talk only in English for the first time, but it was a good experience.

Have a nice day and thank you :)

(Personal Communication)

It is no surprise that in lieu of F2F classes, online classes provided students with opportunities to socialize, interact with peers, acquaintances, and even create lasting friendships. These opportunities are crucial since human interaction in new settings is the backbone of all SA programs. In this context *Kū I Ke Aloha* validates instructors' roles as first-line representatives of their institutions and even their nations.

The UH Center for Online Innovation (2021) recommends several instructional online strategies including creating short video announcements available to SA participants in advance of the course and during the program. These announcements can replace in-person, welcome ceremonies and bulletin board notices that are common in school settings.

Other online strategies can be implemented by:

- Putting yourself in the students' mindset of what it is like to experience a new culture and place with online resources and technology.
- Sending out weekly announcements/reminders.
- Checking in on students who may not be completing assignments or are not participating regularly.
- Participating in discussions with the students without taking over the conversation.
- Acknowledging students who have exceeded class expectations.

3. Kūlana'ike (students' voice and choice) refers to a recommendation to include the students' opinions and perspectives and to provide choices to the students when it comes to submitting assignments. Given the inequality of technological resources among students, and the diversity of students' learning styles, having options is extremely valuable. The recommended instructional strategies for giving students choice and voice are:

- Setting up open-ended assignments in which students can provide evidence of their learning processes such as being open to students' ideas and suggestions.
- Scaffolding session activities and assignments to reach all learners.
- Presenting students with different types of approaches to their assignments and assessment.
- Encouraging and allowing for students to use their strengths and their areas of interest in the course.
- Providing assessment and evaluation options to meet the learning objectives in a way that is relevant to the participants. (Center for Online Innovation, 2021)

4. Holomua (iteration and continuous improvement) refers to the recommendations that all online instructional strategies be regularly scheduled to develop study habits and allow for flexibility (Center for Online Innovation, 2021). Reviewing, reflecting, and revising are best practices in instructional design that should be utilized often to ensure maximum benefit to the students. To implement such online teaching strategies, online classes can:

- Read and go over student feedback to adjust, modify or change session activities and tasks.

- Provide opportunities for students to review and reflect on study strategies, habits, and techniques.
- Explore how your students learn online, how they are studying, reviewing, or completing assignments at home (environment, time, resources, etc.).
- Identify learning deficits and challenges to find ways to overcome them.
- Allow students to revise assignments after the due date for learning/practice/understanding of content or ability to achieve goals (increase flexibility). (Center for Online Innovation, 2021)

5. **Ho'opili** (resistance) is the fifth value that encompasses ideas of resilience, perseverance, and solidarity that can assist instructional design to face the challenges that online education poses. The UH Center for Online Innovation (2021) recommends:

- To encourage virtual students to share their personal experiences and help them make personal connections related to the topics covered in class.
- To share the instructor's own experiences and perspectives related to the subjects covered.
- To create assignments for students that have visited Hawai'i and for those who would like to visit Hawai'i virtually and, if possible, have them collaborate.
- To save time for students to "talk story" together about their own experiences related to learning English, which helps students develop resilience by encouraging solidarity and empathy by sharing the experiences that they are going through.
- Additionally, the integration of a conversation-partner program as it is applied within SA SECP, be it online or F2F provides international ESL students with the opportunity for interaction and social connectedness (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Barraja-Rohan, 2013), social and community support (Chao, 2012) positively impacting their language learning and dealing with acculturative stress (Doi, 2016).

In addition to promoting online student interaction, an online conversation-partner program has the opportunity to impact student engagement, which is the amount of effort and level of participation learners invest in their formal

and/or informal academic pursuits (Coates, 2007). While increasing online student engagement would be most effective at the initial stages of designing an online course, careful thought towards the affordances of online platforms and applications, and how those systems and applications impact student learning (Pruarajomandlingrudi & Chen, 2020) through the use of authentic learning contexts, activities, and formative assessments (Gurjar, 2020) can also be applied during course instruction.

For online SA programs, instructions are given to the conversation partners in advance of a scheduled meeting by the SECP instructors of our SA programs in order to prepare the UH students ahead of time. The conversation topics range from general to culture-specific:

- Personal hobbies & leisure activities
- Local and international travel & holidays
- Entertainment & current films
- Friends & family
- American/Hawaiian traditions & customs
- Hawaiian art & music
- Hawaiian food & culture

There is flexibility with topics and SA participants can request other topics or additional one-on-one sessions. The faculty, staff, and UH students for OCIP SA programs all communicate and work together to ensure the experience for all short-term SA participants goes smoothly.

Añorga (2016) explained that “coming out of [the participants’] comfort zones while interacting and using Spanish abroad enabled the participants to increase their self-efficacy perceptions.” (p. iii). While stepping out of one’s comfort zone is crucial, support and scaffolding are extremely necessary. In this context, the conversation partners become supportive peers that accelerate the students’ adjustment processes in the new language/culture/country. It is a type of “intervention.” The idea of intervening in intercultural learning during the SA experience has been investigated and considered appropriate to make the experience more beneficial (Harvey, 2013). Prior Wojenski (2014) explains that “as more guided study abroad interventions move online and into a collaborative format, it is important to not only examine the influence of students’ social interactions as related to their intercultural development and experiences in

the interventions but also understand which variables influenced the success of an intervention” (p. iii). Because the interchangers are local peer students, they help bridge gaps of sociocultural information and facilitate students’ levels of comfort in the target language and culture.

As indicated by the goal of Pilina (2014), community building, recommends online learning communities or communities of inquiry should be supported. In this regard, Prior Wojenski (2014) investigated the impact of pre-departure intervention sessions and warned that “designing and sustaining a successful Community of Inquiry, as well as a successful online collaborative learning environment, is not without its challenges” (p. iv). She recalled an image that can help visualize what traditional SA programs have done, “The image is of a college student being tossed, arms flailing, into the deep end of a swimming pool” (p. 98). Then she explains, “The image is then associated with the traditional belief that immersed students learn easily and happily in the deep end of the pool, without a single drowning victim among them” (p. 98). The image clearly shows that taking the online courses is not enough to create the learning environment and community of inquiry necessary for the participants. She recommends pre-departure sessions and considers them as important as the final outcomes of the programs.

Another element that makes an online SA more effective is replicating the effect of a manageable “immersion.” While the daily sessions are very desirable, the length of time for the classes should not exceed the students’ ability to concentrate and prepare. As mentioned before, an immersion experience can be overwhelming. It is important to provide language learning support, conversation exchange opportunities, and intercultural lessons (such as virtual tours, local guest speakers, virtual participation in local events, virtual concerts, etc.)

Añorga (2016) explains that SA immersion participants “had the chance to put into practice the language they knew, they began to discover their real language abilities; then, they began experiencing a change of self-efficacy perceptions.” (p. 161) Unless SA program participants are advanced or native speakers of the national country, most overseas experiences include using a foreign language. A successful overseas experience includes language learning development (Añorga, 2016):

Even participants with minimum language knowledge were able to begin communication with their basic language skills. Some participants realized that they did not have to understand one hundred percent of what was said and that sometimes communication kept simple could flow very well. (p. 163)

It is precisely that language activation and realization that leads students to gain self-esteem and to use language for communicative purposes even with limitations. Fortunately, this effect can be truly replicated online with the use of available synchronous technology, the use of Interchangers, language classes, and specific culture classes. Focusing on listening and speaking is key to maintaining a distinction with a grammar or history class. "At the abroad site, where the concentration was on speaking and listening, these participants were challenged to practice a set of language skills that have been dormant. The main task at the abroad site was to wake up their speaking and listening skills" (p. 164).

As more nations are reopening international travel, more people are getting vaccinated, more vaccines are being approved and distributed, universities are considering planning for in-person SA programs to reopen. The US, Mexico, and all nations around the world need to prioritize the reopening of tertiary education as a joint effort (Kim, 2021). However, since many SA programs were historically limited to certain students from certain countries, they can be considered elitist by the larger student population. The limitations need to be broken as Contreras Jr. (2015) explains:

Finally, understanding how the roots of selectivity and elitism in study abroad were established to mitigate fears of unregulated growth and academic illegitimacy will help contemporary advocates think about ways to achieve greater access in education abroad while still maintaining institutional standards today. (p. vi)

As educators continue with online classes, whether due to COVID-19 or to provide an option to students who cannot afford to travel overseas, facilitating student interaction and engagement is necessary for academic success for all students enrolled in virtual content-based courses.

Liu & Shirley (2021) offers clear post-pandemic guidelines to re-design SA programs into fully online COIL courses with the collaboration of all sending and receiving universities. This study echoes and overlaps with what Slotkin *et al.* (2012) found in pre-pandemic times as benefits of in-person SA as a blended

learning experience when combined with academic content in their empirical study.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have advocated for the continuation of online classes as a way to reach out to those students who would otherwise not be able to participate in such programs. This continued effort contributes to the internationalization goals set by many universities. The reality is that many students around the world will slowly enroll in hybrid modalities where part of the students in a class alternate or rotate schedules to attend in-person classes and the rest of the class attends virtually. Hyflex models will be used when some students have a choice to go to classes some days or continue attending virtually during other days for various reasons. The here-or-there modality refers to classes when some students are able to attend classes while others are not or choose not to for the duration of the whole term. This will be the case when some students are physically in the country and others are out-of-the-country for the length of the school term.

We recommend that SA abroad programs should not focus only on grammatical aspects of language learning or sightseeing. A more appropriate program focus should include intercultural awareness, cross-linguistic/cultural interpersonal skills, levels of engagement, autonomy, leadership, and self-efficacy goals.

There are innumerable definitions of what the new normalcy will look like after the effects of the pandemic are subdued to the extent that international travel will resemble the situation in 2019. Most optimistic perspectives include the notion that there can be a better normalcy that can be built upon the innovations, resourcefulness, resilience, and flexibility that society as a whole demonstrated. In the case of institutions of higher education, the expectations of a fortified resurgence should be higher and deliberate for at least one important reason: there will be other pandemic or natural disasters that require worldwide collaboration. And for that single reason, affordable life-changing study abroad programs for the majority of the students should be the norm.

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Virtual Internationalization of Higher Education: Digital Environments and Beyond

Dra. Luciane Stallivieri¹

Introduction

One of the most fertile fields for the internationalization of higher education (IHE) is students' international academic mobility (Stallivieri, 2017), which was expected to reach 8 million students participating in exchange programs by 2025 (OECD, 2018). The growth is due to the understanding that internationalization emerges as a response of universities to the phenomenon of globalization (Gacel-Ávila, 2003; QIANG, 2013). For this reason, higher education institutions (HEI) invested heavily in mobility programs through which their students could develop global skills for better insertion into the professional scenario and effective performance in multicultural markets (Deardorff, 2015; Stallivieri, 2017). However, at no point until then, was there any sign that the internationalization process and, consequently, the in-person academic mobility programs would be suddenly interrupted.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began at the end of 2019 in the city of Wuhan in China, spread uncontrollably across the planet, forcing various sectors of society to take drastic measures, including isolation and social distancing. Despite this, for IHE experts Philip Altbach and Hans de Wit, "the basic configuration of internationalization is likely to remain." According to the authors, "broadly, global higher education will remain fundamentally stable. But significant short, medium, and perhaps long-term consequences and disruptions are inevitable –

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and becoming increasingly serious as the crisis continues” (Altbach and De Wit, 2020). The theoretical debate, however, is strongly trying to structure. Even if there are preliminary reflections, they can already show some paths and raise some debates on how to proceed with the actions of international cooperation, minimizing the damage, especially in international students.

Facing this new scenario, it is necessary to deepen the questioning on the progress and maintenance of international collaborations. The central question is to identify which alternatives can HEI envision to continue international cooperation actions, minimizing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a contribution, this chapter analyzes the possibility of transitioning from internationalization based on face-to-face environments to one based on digital environments. Therefore, this chapter advances the concept of virtual internationalization (VI).

Both virtual exchange (Helm, 2015) and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) (Rubin, 2016), are viable possibilities for HEI and the scientific community to continue with their international activities. However, in governments’ agendas, drastic measures should be taken to observe responsible internationalization (RI) paradigms to minimize the effects of the interruption. The concept of RI primarily considers inclusion, sustainability, qualitative reciprocity, accountability, and social commitment (Stallivieri, 2018) to aim for a high-quality internationalization.

The present study is anchored in the review of available internationalization literature to understand the transition from face-to-face to digital environments. It also analyses surveys published by international associations that encompass a high number of institutions in all continents, such as the Institute of International Education (IIE), and the International Association of Universities (IAU). The study takes up the concepts of IHE, analyzing its objectives in the formation of global citizens, but identifying its main weaknesses: being an elitist activity (De Wit and Jones, 2018; Stallivieri, 2019), and showing that it is still unprepared to face a global crisis.

The chapter begins with presenting the concepts and the different terminologies used to define virtual exchange (VE). Then, it suggests the adoption of virtual internationalization (VI) as a more adequate concept. This chapter also investigates the necessary elements for applying VI as an educational modality. Using digital environments is a strategy to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19

pandemic that have disrupted the internationalization process (Vianna; Stallivieri & Gauthier, 2019).

Internationalization of Higher Education and New Scenarios

Internationalization of higher education is not a recent phenomenon. Still, it has been during the last twenty years when it gained more space and became fundamental for the advancement of knowledge and the positioning of HEI in the global education world. As a result, the concept has evolved a lot and its initial contours have been altered by expanding its scope, scale, value, and focus of action (Knight, 2004; Sebastián, 2004; Hudzik, 2011; De Wit, 2015).

In 2015, the concept crystallizes even further among the specialists and the academic community, by establishing a new widely-adopted definition. This definition states that internationalization is “the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the objectives, functions and provision of post-secondary education, to improve the quality of education and research of all students and employees and make a significant contribution to society” (de Wit et al., 2015).

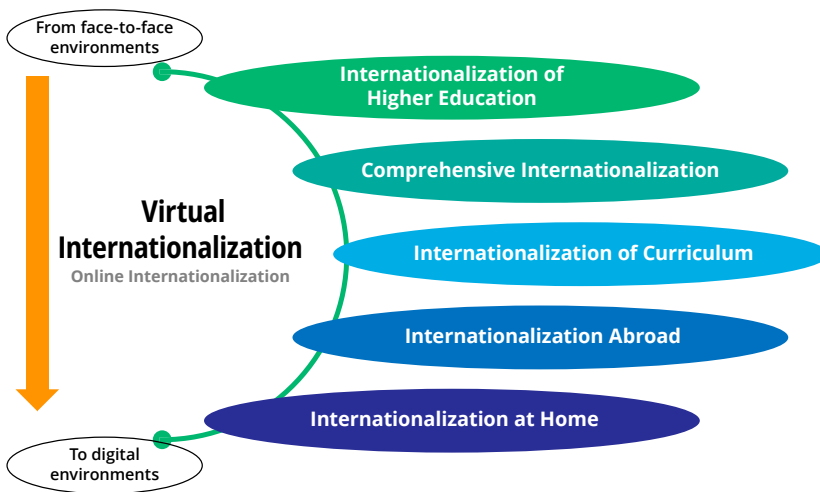
Previous studies indicate that universities are increasingly concerned about preparing graduates to be active and responsible global citizens in an intrinsically digital, globalized, and multicultural world (Brent & Lee, 2020; Deardorff & Jones, 2012; Leask, 2015; O’Dowd, 2017). For many years, study abroad programs have been considered the most effective way to prepare students to be “global citizens.” Nevertheless, despite high indicators and strong theoretical assumptions, mobility has always been a limiting concept, accessible to only a small fraction of those who could benefit from access to cross-border higher education (O’Dowd, 2018; Lee & White, 2020). Due to its access’ restrictions, study abroad is not an inclusive program that can benefit all members of an institution. This can be due to the language barrier, lack of resources or structural deficiencies, and, more specifically, international academic mobility will hardly be for everyone. It is still a privilege for a few students who meet the minimum necessary conditions to attend and compete for vacancies in an international exchange program (Stallivieri, 2019).

Many institutions began to develop what Nilsson defined as Internationalization at Home (IaH) (Nilsson, 1999), i.e., bringing internationalization to the university

campus. IaH can be defined as a set of instruments and activities “at home” that focus on developing international and intercultural skills in all students (Beelen & Leask, 2011; Deardorff & Jones, 2012). IaH also highlights the importance of training citizens with other skills, in addition to those foreseen so far.

The concept indicates intentionality (De Wit, 2015) and the need for the engagement of the entire academic community, formed by professors, researchers, students, and managers, seeking the same objective, the excellence of higher education, through international partnerships and collaborations. This approach to IaH opens a broad spectrum of actions and different manifestations of IHE, that can transition from face-to-face to digital environments, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Models and forms of the Internationalization of Higher Education – from face-to-face to digital environments.



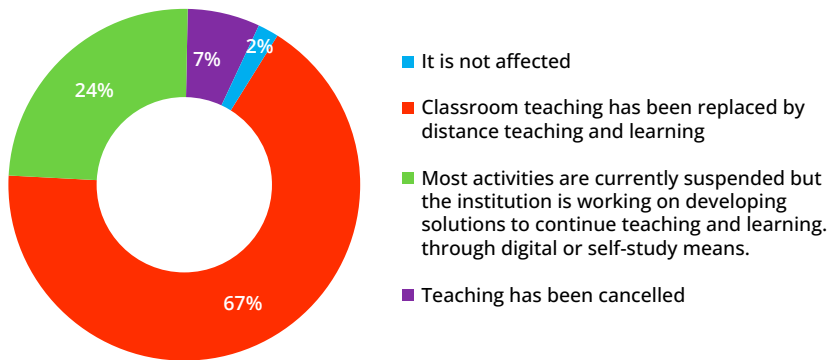
Source: Author.

The different manifestations of internationalization (at home or abroad) constitute, in its most integral form, an example of ‘comprehensive internationalization’ (Hudzik, 2011), or in its most specific one, ‘internationalization of the curriculum’ (Leask, 2015). For both in face-to-face environments or digital ones, the success of internationalization depends on favorable organizational and academic conditions.

Analyzing all forms of internationalization, the one that is more feasible to be investigated is the virtual one, that is, transition from in-person environments to digital environments, through all the tools and models available that use technologies as a form of communication and learning. Therefore, I propose adopting the concept of 'virtual internationalization' (VI). I define VI as the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the objectives, functions, and provision of post-secondary education, supported by information and communication technologies.

However, even given the advance of internationalization, solutions and new alternatives proposed to involve an increasing number of members of the scientific and academic communities, no one could predict that the whole movement, in its magnitude, would face moments as dramatic as a COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020). The scientific community, international education associations, international education professionals, educators, and managers worldwide begin to express themselves and express their concern for the future of internationalization facing the pandemic.

The International Association of Universities (IAU) launched the IAU Global Survey on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education around the world to better understand the disruption caused by COVID-19 on higher education. The survey investigated the first measures undertaken by higher education institutions around the world to respond to the crisis. It was available online and open from March 25 until April 17, 2020. It received 576 replies from 424 universities and other HEI in 109 countries and two Special Administrative Regions of China (Hong Kong and Macao) (IAU, 2020). As stated by IAU, "many universities and other higher education institutions already foresee the impacts of the move online or the impacts of economic crisis on national and international students and their families, including closure of universities for short, medium or long term" (IAU, 2020). According to UNESCO, on April 1, 2020, schools and HEI were closed in 185 countries, affecting 1,542'412,000 learners, which constitute 89.4% of total enrolled learners (IAU, 2020). The impacts could also be felt in all academic aspects: teaching, research, and extension. Related to the teaching and learning activities, IAU survey confirms the movement towards virtual environments, showing that 67% of classroom teaching has been replaced by distance teaching and learning (IAU, 2020).

Figure 2: How has COVID-19 affected teaching and learning.

Source: International Association of Universities, 2020.

IAU states that as far as research is concerned, 80% of HEI reported that research has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic at their institutions. The most common impact of COVID-19 has been the cancelling of international travel at 83% of HEI, and the cancellation or postponement of scientific conferences in 81% of HEI. Moreover, 52% of the respondents mentioned that scientific projects at their institution are at risk of not being completed (IAU, 2020).

Faced with the new unstable and uncertain panorama of “interrupted internationalization”, higher education institutions must act quickly using the premise that is peculiar to them based on three important pillars: (i) leadership, assuming its role and its pro-activity in the search for knowledge-based solutions; (ii) innovation, enhancing intellectual capital and creativity; and (iii) its social commitment, ensuring rapid responses to society. These movements will differentiate the great institutions.

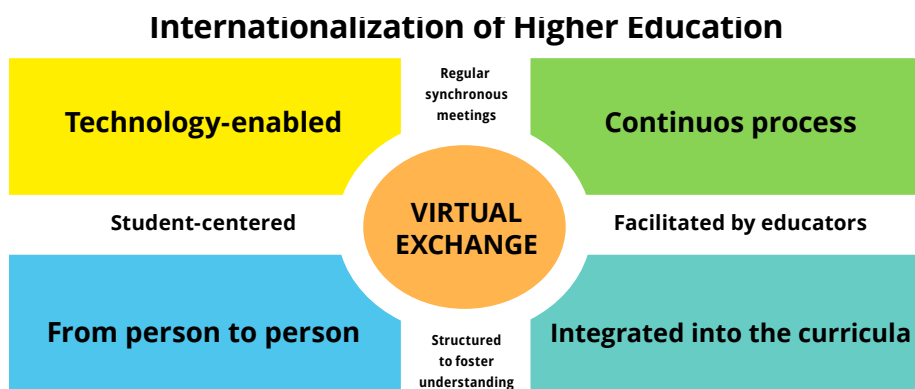
However, the transition from face-to-face to digital environments requires a series of necessary artifacts that are not always available to all students and all universities. Knowledge, innovation, and commitment to society will be the great differential for governments and HEI to respond to what is expected from large organizations at such complex times.

Virtual exchange: Requirements and Conditions

Using different technology-based platforms and programs (e.g. EVOLVE, 2017; EVALUATE, 2017; MIDIMUM, 2016), it is evident that there is an innovative way to learn about different cultures without leaving home. Virtual exchange programs connect people around the world so they can build relationships, all online. Using virtual exchange features, participants can log in from their phones or computers, usually at any time of the day, for structured activities with others around the world. Virtual exchange is a practice supported by research consisting of technology-enabled sustained personal education programs or activities in which constructive communication and interaction occur between geographically separated individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators (EVOLVE, 2017, n.p.).

For its realization, some requirements are necessary, and can be ensured through the use of technology, (i) the quality of the relationships between the participants, (ii) the sequence and synchrony of the activities, (iii) the focus on the learning objectives of each curriculum, with (iv) the assistance of professionals qualified to monitor and conduct telecollaboration activities. Figure 3 synthetically consolidates the essential elements of virtual exchanges and emphasizes the definition that virtual exchange combines the profound impact of intercultural dialogue and exchange with the broad reach of digital technology (EVOLVE, 2017).

Figure 3: Key-elements of Virtual Exchange



Source: Prepared by the author, adapted from Rubin (2016), O'Dowd (2017, 2018), EVOLVE (2017), EVALUATE (2017).

Telecollaborative activities can range from simple conversations to projects and group games. Some exchanges connect one classroom with other classrooms; in some others, any individual can participate (MEDIUM, 2018). But for all this to happen, investments are a central issue. Thus, based on the information provided by the literature analyzed so far, this study is signaling that the fundamental obstacle to overcome the crisis and move forward with virtual internationalization lies in the resources that can be invested by the government and institutions. It points to the urgent need that governments analyze their educational policies and that higher education institutions review their objectives and strategies for organizational and academic strategies for the transition from face-to-face to digital environments. The requirements point to budget investments, availability of human resources, improvements in technological infrastructure, professional training, among other needs. It does not help make immediate technical intentional decisions on the part of leaders, who, intentionally (De Wit, 2015) need to understand and assume that internationalization needs to continue to ensure the quality and excellency of higher education. And it can't be stopped!

Rethinking Administrative Processes and Reorganizing Academic Processes

From the trajectory followed by the internationalization of higher education, both in face-to-face and in digital environments, the experience shows that, with some exceptions, it remains a movement for the few. If it is true that internationalization is a globalizing phenomenon, which came from reducing the distances between peoples, it is also true that it has become an elitist movement (De Wit, 2019; Stallivieri, 2019; Lee & White, 2020). Telecollaboration initiatives also have encountered the same problems and challenges as face-to-face internationalization. While seeking to expand their practice to a more significant number of people, classrooms, and institutions they find problems at different levels. These include students without access to computers, limited access to technology, professors not prepared with technological skills, lack of support from the institutions, foreign languages proficiency, etc.

The proposal that is presented by the virtual exchange is exciting and motivating but cannot be treated lightly. Programs aimed at these social interferences in the depth of their consequences should be government goals pursued in inclusive and participatory aegis conducted by knowledge results. In this article, some of these consequences are highlighted to allow higher education institution leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders to reflect on and be better prepared to address them.

However, for the expansion of the environments to materialize, it means reviewing organizational and academic structures, based on knowledge management, guided by strategic internationalization plans, supported by clear institutional and governmental policies, which ensure the equalization of opportunities and the possibility of participation for all (Childress, 2009; De Wit, 2013; Stallivieri, 2019).

There is no doubt that the use of technologies is one of the viable alternatives for the delivery of internationalization initiatives, particularly for the possibility of providing opportunities for an increasing number of people to have significant intercultural experience as part of their formal and non-formal education (O'Dowd, 2018). There is also no doubt that, while being a viable possibility, the transition from in-person environments to virtual ones requires significant operational and structural changes in higher education institutions. This transition can further intensify the differences in the level of internationalization

of institutions, exposing weaknesses, delimiting deficiencies, and demarcating institutions (Stallivieri, 2019).

The need for operational and structural changes are evident, especially for institutions that do not yet have the minimum requirements necessary to move from face-to-face environments to digital ones. Notably, more actions are needed. Knowledge-based government intervention, energetic actions of the administrative and academic leaders of universities must take the lead, provoking reflection and acting quickly in this moment of crisis, identifying what is necessary to respond to the involuntary interruption of the internationalization process. However, can students, primarily from higher education institutions located in unfavorable contexts (Stallivieri, 2019), actively participate in classroom discussions with speakers of other languages separated geographically? How many students have access to the internet? Do students have a computer to follow their projects? Are they at home during different time zones?

The need to design public policies that guide HEI in directing the virtualization of internationalization with quality standards becomes more than urgent. There is a consolidated need to present knowledge-based solutions for the post-pandemic, post-mobility world, which must be conducted by leaders who, just as they are directing government efforts to the health and economic sectors, should focus on the recovery of education.

As far as higher education institutions are concerned, they can optimize their most precious asset: “knowledge.” The task force is in capacity building, training of professionals with digital skills and competencies, language skills development, projects and programs design, instructional contents definition, establishment of qualified partnerships for the qualification and learning about the technologies as they can overcome and survive in the post-pandemic world.

The conceptual architecture presented in Figure 4 suggests some institutional movements of organizational and academic strategies and structures, observing the primary requirements for the virtualization of internationalization.

Figure 4: Basic requirements for Virtual Internationalization.

Source: Elaborated by the author.

It is expected that with the information provided by this theoretical framework, some reflections and some paths may be evident for the continuity of internationalization actions, or at least to minimize the effects of their interruption. Inevitably, all educational institutions will perceive the impacts. The differential will be recognized in the way each institution uses the knowledge available and how each country's governments will react and make efforts in conducting responsible internationalization.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed to investigate viable alternatives for educational institutions to overcome and keep active their internationalization initiatives, preventing them from being abruptly interrupted. Through theory and the most recent surveys and publications, we sought to identify how different countries are reacting to the pandemic. The possibility of maintaining internationalization active depends on its virtualization; migrating from in-person environments to virtual environments in the form of online collaboration.

The study, carried out initially as a descriptive and exploratory investigation, with a literature review, sought in its second stage to identify the elements necessary for the transition from in-person to virtual internationalization, that is, from face-to-face environments to digital environments. Linguistic studies, approximation of several university communities, valorization of integrated research dynamics can all be objectives of virtual internationalization but requiring urgent intervention. It is crucial to insist on finding solutions so that internationalization is really for everyone. A process that must be inclusive and sustainable and not so elitist. It should avoid repeating the misconceptions when designing policies, projects, and programs for the few with differentiated financial, intellectual, linguistic, or family conditions. International collaboration through technology shows great disparities in the profile of institutions, faculty, and also student profile that must be left behind.

Another conclusion is the immediate need for definitions and actions from governments and educational institutions, to establish incentive and development policies for both organizational and academic structures that can meet the new demands. Undoubtedly, the world will come out differently from this pandemic. So that in the increasingly internationally globalized world, we will have to think of a society based on justice, equality and more socially responsible.

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Rethinking the Internationalization of Higher Education in View of the New Normal: Considerations from Colombia and Mexico

Daniel Arturo Romero León¹ and Tania Isabel Lafont Castillo²

Abstract

The internationalization of education faced unprecedented challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic. This new and unprecedented situation required quick reactions to manage activities related to internationalization in the short term. With the spread of the current pandemic, there is a clear need to rethink internationalization strategies and operational plans. The main objective of this document is to make a brief, but at the same time exhaustive, exploration of what have been the main challenges and trends in the internationalization of higher education, given the situation represented by the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the consequences that this will have for the medium and long term. Reflection from the Colombian and Mexican experiences allows us to pose different questions for the future of the internationalization of higher education, derived from this planetary crisis. What does the future hold for international student mobility and international education in general? The essential question is to identify the challenges and opportunities that university communities will face around the world. It is necessary to rethink the internationalization of higher education in the near future. Therefore, this essay aims to reflect on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education with a critical approach and

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explore sustainable internationalization recommendations for higher education institutions.

Keywords: *Internationalization, mobility, higher education, global society.*

Introduction

The world is living unprecedented moments in the current internationalization environment of the first quarter of the 21st century and in universal history. Constant advances in communication and information technologies, as well as the discoveries and innovations in the field of different sciences that –in a constant and determined manner– strive to resolve a wide array of longstanding challenges such as disease, poverty, and hunger, climate change, alternatives for sustainability, among others.

The advances in the scientific and intellectual fields and the optimism lived as little as a quarter of a century ago made Francis Fukuyama announce in 1989 the definitive triumph of capitalism when the Soviet regime collapsed, meaning the start of a new world era. However, today, his ideas have generated a series of debates around the idea that they were generated by ideological changes that transformed the world. Setting the tone for expansion of free enterprise and dissemination of democracy, globalization caused authoritarian and protectionist schemes in different economies to decrease, having no alternative but to adapt to the canons imposed by the principal hegemonies of the world (Cortés, 2020). Globalization is a phenomenon that has impacted all areas of life, expanding inter-relations among different close and distant communities in the world. Internationalization of higher education has developed steadily during the last 40 years, resulting from the globalizing process, formalized after the adoption of the Washington Consensus (Hernández and Rivas, 2017). In this context, the internationalization of education has had a substantial cultural and social impact on participating communities that have adapted to permanent global challenges.

A new global context

The city of Wuhan in central China was the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, which represented the starting point of an unexpected phenomenon; something

that had not happened in more than a century after 1918's Spanish Flu and that in two months spread rapidly to different parts of the world, in particular Western Europe and North America (Hernández and Rivas, 2017). The pandemic has had negative repercussions on many corporations, small companies, different professions, financial institutions, and in particular, on the academic environment where higher education institutions (HEI) have had significant participation in the discussion to try to find alternatives for solving the complexity of the issues brought by this disease (Echeverría and Lafont, 2020).

Specifically, in the area of global economics, there is a decreasing trend in the gross domestic product (GDP) in each of the regions of the world; in particular, Europe and North America reported a decrease of 14.4% and 10.4% respectively, compared with the second quarter of 2019, a loss of years of production (Ugarteche and Zavaleta, 2020). However, the Latin American region has a more negative outlook than the rest. The International Monetary Fund (2020) expects this economic crisis to be as severe as 2008's. On the other hand, the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL, 2020) reports that it will be the worst ever. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE) anticipates each month of confinement to represent a 2% loss in a country's GDP (Cortés, 2020).

S&P Global Ratings reported that by the end of 2021, the main economies in Latin America would have a 5.9% GDP growth; despite these data, the estimate for 2022 is not so encouraging due to the normalization of monetary policies and enforcement of more severe tax policies, less than 2.5% GDP growth is to be expected (S&P Global, 2021). This will bring adverse effects to most Latin American governments' tax collection capacity due to the contraction caused by the pandemic. The focus will be on social programs such as fighting poverty and supporting health, among others. In the Colloquium "The University and its future: a look from 2020" (IISUE UNAM, 2020, 8m42s), Dr. José Joaquín Brunner, former minister in Chile's government, posited a question about the guiding principles: "Who is going to fund higher education?", and according to him, the upcoming years in Latin America will be very difficult due to excessive competition for resources and the efficient management of resources considered scarce. This context will be one of the starting points of the trends that will impact the internationalization of higher education.

It is pertinent to clarify that the concept of internationalization of higher education is only one way a country responds to the dynamics of globalization,

considering the nation's idiosyncrasy (OUI, 2020). Therefore, we must consider how internationalization of education in Latin American HEI has advanced and faced limitations during the development of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the main concerns that have emerged in the mind of the scholars involved in internationalization is the impact and duration of the pandemic in the global academic environment, as well as the perspectives for a solution, participation of public and private sectors, and perspectives for higher education and its internationalization under this new context (Finardi and Guimarães, 2020).

Education in a global contingency

The global contingency has brought with a new paradigm for internationalization of education. International mobility faces a great challenge given the impossibility of starting projects and initiatives involving the physical displacement of students and scholars. It is difficult to determine the duration of this crisis and its implications, as it has affected higher education institutions with the suspension of their mobility programs and the uncertainty regarding the continuity of international cooperation relations and the response of students. Internationalization has had an important impact, mobility has been a substantive element, as highlighted by the statistics in countries of Europe, the United States, and Canada, as well as emergent and developing economies; historically, it is an important indicator remarked in rankings and measurement standards imposed by countries.

In response to the contingency, HEI in Latin America have embraced virtual internationalization strategies as a much stronger initiative than in other latitudes. The leadership assumed to take a decisive step towards virtualization of internationalization has allowed the continuity of this process, in the face of the crisis that will continue, even after the situation starts to normalize (Finardi and Guimarães, 2020).

Different approaches identified, in the middle term, uncertainty for the internationalization of higher education process. A context of low economic growth and the perspective of negative external factors that unfolded during the global contingency give an adverse outlook for education in Latin America. The budgets allocated for public universities are being reduced, which means that internationalization at home will acquire a new position. However, there

are extensive challenges in Latin America in this respect, such as the great digital gap between different university communities.

In the OUI Webinar (2020), Knobel & De Wit discussed that governments are like a captain of a vessel whose helmsman is not steering at all and is navigating a terrible fog, this fog is the pandemic situation, and its effects on education have not been accounted for. It is not known how long its effects will last on higher education. But the perspective is a little pessimistic because HEI particularly those in Latin America will have to support themselves with the budgets, which are expected to be low in the middle term.

Also, in the Webinar of the General Direction of International Relations (DGRI) (2020), Marmolejo formulated serious questions on the current problematique; a guiding question for the present and future of internationalization of higher education is: Were the alarms of recent years heeded? The answer, critically, is no. The inconvenience internationalization faces is HEI's inaction; they remain in a comfort zone without innovation or creativity. The author also considered it disastrous that the pandemic event was the factor behind virtualization or digitalization of higher education.

Current situation of internationalization of higher education

According to Marmolejo in DGRI (2020), global society is characterized by inequality. It has not achieved equality of opportunity, among these, access to higher education; the author also mentions an exhausted planet due to resource exploitation and environmental deterioration. There is in society today a general skepticism about the role of different institutions such as governments, political parties, and churches that have had an influence on it for many years. The issue of growing skepticism comes with the question: "Where is that government?". Often it is asked to intervene, when facing an uncertain scenario. Peter Drucker, some 23 years ago, thought that HEI would disappear. However, the opposite has happened in countries like China and India, which have increased student enrollment significantly. Many thought that Drucker was out of touch with reality, even though he anticipated or sensed a severe crisis that would unfold in a not-so-distant future. The critical topics in higher education are 1. equity in access, 2. relevance, 3. governance, 4. innovation, and finally, 5. internationalization.

As confirmed before, one of the perspectives on that globalization is facing is moving backward. The world is experiencing a scenario similar to the 1930's, with the great depression. Sectors such as aviation and tourism have had drastic setbacks, resulting in higher unemployment. Regarding international student mobility, 70% of students returned to their countries of origin, and 30% could not move and were left stranded in their destinations for outgoing mobility (Cortés, 2020). In addition to this, as part of some of the strategies to provide continuity to the educational experiences abroad, it was decided to create "virtual mobilities", which revealed a great digital gap, given that a considerable percentage of the youth lacks connectivity due to nonexistent internet access. The OCDE (2020) reports that in Latin America approximately 24% of young people come from socioeconomically disadvantaged environments, where they do not have any technological device to allow them to take online classes.

Towards an internationalization of remote education

Globalization has motivated a constant flow of knowledge, technology, individuals, values, and ideas over territorial borders. Societies around the world have been influenced –in their history, traditions, culture, and interests– by the globalizing phenomenon; without a doubt, it has had a deep impact on universities and higher education. The 21st century has been characterized for an increasingly integrated global economy, with a more extensive supply of information technologies, with access to and exchange of knowledge from different world regions; Colombia and Mexico are not the exceptions.

Internationalization is a transversal principle for HEI in the world. It has become a necessary means to consolidate and strengthen the academic development of students and professors. Internationalization of higher education is a process that transcends traditional mobility. It is a comprehensive and inclusive process impacting the design of educational policies, curriculum frameworks and the teaching-learning relation. It contributes to improving the quality and pertinence of education and adapting to a permanent change imposed by globalization.

Internationalization of education means the enrichment of local knowledge from a global perspective. HEI have initiated different measures for their consolidation. Students are fundamental stakeholders in the internationalization process given their position as the main beneficiaries of its strategies. As global citizens and

future graduates, cultural and linguistic diversity promotes an international and intercultural approach.

As mentioned, continuous improvement has impacted all aspects of the educational process, and the internationalization of the curriculum holds particular interest. Although it is important to project visibility of institutions, it is necessary first to review a core area of the teaching-learning process, the curriculum. Although, virtualization of higher education is not a new phenomenon, the 21st century motivated its exploration and gradual adoption. The use of the internet and the extensive use of new information technologies have expedited remote communication, favoring the growth of higher education services in Colombia, Mexico, and the rest of the world.

This process has stimulated the evolution from traditional higher education based on learning resources in hard copy into the incorporation of learning platforms with the increasing supply of providers and the need for a curriculum and pedagogic variable applicable to new typologies of universities and institutions. Massive access to the internet around the globe is part of the economic, social, and cultural transformations attributed to the globalizing process. The global approach and meeting that is possible through the internet turned it into a strategic tool for the configuration of a public space where stakeholders of local, regional, national, and global levels participate.

Internationalization of higher education and the pandemic

The transition into an online system is another core topic in the dissertations of Marmolejo in DGRI (2020) and of many other scholars around the world. The United States progressed more than 90% in this transition process within a month. In contrast, in Mexico, for instance, with very different conditions to the most advanced countries in the OCDE, only 75% of students have a computer, while 25% do not (OCDE, 2020). In the case of higher education, this situation refers to the question: Were HEI prepared for this situation? The most immediate and precise answer was “No”; although there were online courses, the transition into remote education has been slow.

In this context, HEI in Mexico and Colombia have been no exception and have also found the need to propose changes, not only in their format and framework but also in their own approach to education in the framework of

a new global dynamics that incentivizes HEI to tackle new challenges of this context. Globalization and the internationalization of higher education have found in virtuality an efficient tool for innovation.

In the last decade, Mexico and Colombia have promoted the configuration of a university space with organizational frameworks that allow integrating international activities to improve its substantial functions. In Mexico, for instance, the *Universidad Veracruzana* has followed a process to permeate, among its different academic activities, projects, and programs, a policy and practice of internationalization.

By establishing relevant academic agreements, HEI in Colombia and Mexico have stressed the importance of competence development to train integral professionals, enriching the curriculum design of university educational programs. As a result, internationalization of higher education has become an indispensable element for the socialization of knowledge and the preparation of professionals in an interconnected, interdependent world.

The pandemic affected professors and researchers due to the lack of government funding for science, technology, and innovation. However, there is a trend toward international cooperation, especially towards research on solutions for COVID-19, reflecting the interdependence, the need of nations to work collaboratively towards the solution of global issues; that is the reason for Latin American governments betting on topics of scientific diplomacy and their consideration of positing strategies for knowledge return and brotherhood with the private sector to join efforts and leverage resources.

The present of higher education and its internationalization, leads to an efficient exploitation of information technologies and virtual environments. Virtual modalities arise as a tool that brings knowledge and the formation of human capital together, favoring the coverage and accessibility of education considerably, independently of the physical location of professors and students.

Virtual internationalization

Internationalization of higher education is not independent to the global context, the current trends, strategies, or best practices that have been useful to other universities and HEI in Mexico and Colombia. Virtualization

constitutes a substantive tool for internationalization of higher education, by facilitating a remote educational processes acquiring international dimensions, transferring experiences and knowledge. This virtualization may comprise different teaching and learning activities, research, outreach, management, and internationalization. Activities can be innovative, flexible, and diverse, such as carrying out operations through the internet, accessing electronic courses, consulting documents in an electronic library, and communicating with students, professors, and other national or foreign researchers.

The effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have been devastating. They have exposed the weakest links in the organization and infrastructure of each country and have demanded a limitation on day-to-day activities such as physical interaction, dialogue, and coexistence (Boude-Figueredo, Becerra-Rodríguez and Rozo-García, 2021). The pandemic has motivated adaptation in educational processes, integrating technologies in favor of transformation in education. The objective of incorporating technologies to the formative process is to transform the teaching-learning process, favoring the development of new competencies.

Virtualization of education is not only representing objects, scenarios, and experiences of the real world in a virtual environment. It also involves mediating physical objects and spaces, transforming them into information, knowledge, and communication devices. The present challenge in this context is pedagogy and emergency remote education.

The lack of technological resources, professors' stress, and the uncertainty of the teaching-learning process have impacted higher education during the pandemic, creating significant challenges for university communities worldwide. There is no doubt that the lack of technological equity has manifested with the pandemic crisis. This context demands that universities design, formulate, and indicate strategies for educational, social, and economic recovery; these challenges became complex during the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many complications for higher education and its internationalization. Nevertheless, it also created opportunities, given that internationalization had to deviate from a competitive orientation around student and scholar mobility into considering alternatives for virtual mobility, thus allowing greater cooperation and active roles for Latin American universities. The change in orientation provided by the pandemic, from mobility orientation

to cooperation and virtual mobility orientation, may induce a more balanced internationalization outlook in the world based on knowledge ecology.

The development of information technologies in Colombia, for instance, is contributing to a new dynamic of internationalization with remote education. The presence of HEI in virtuality is increasing student coverage and inclusion, motivating the internationalization process in favor of competitiveness, taking advantage of a low cost. Although remote education has been coupled to the phenomenon of internationalization in Mexico, the efforts have focused on a quality assurance system.

The pandemic context in the world has caused Latin American universities to reinvent themselves. The execution of immediate strategies to contain the pandemic is a great challenge for public universities. In a situation like this, the three fundamental principles of university labor, such as academia, research, and outreach, require immersion into internationalization processes to overcome global challenges effectively. Adopting these processes has strengthened postgraduate and joint degree programs and funding for professors to create research networks. The challenge of internationalization requires continuing work on networks, outreach, and social relations.

There are different requirements imposed by new technologies and digitalization of education, such as: a) pertinent technological infrastructure; b) competencies of professors in the use of information technologies; c) adequate pedagogical practices; d) development of critical thinking and autonomous learning in students; and e) permanent evaluation of the virtual modality (Bedoya-Dorado, Murillo-Vargas and González-Campo, 2021).

The current context of global contingency demands universities and HEI to consider virtual education decisively and to join digital networks and platforms in favor of flexible, global learning. Globalization has situated universities and higher education in a transnational context, where students, scholars, the curricula, knowledge, or learning resources interact in a global space, permanently enriched by relations among individuals.

Conclusions

Internationalization of higher education must be incorporated as a social, cultural, and educational strategy into the dynamics of globalization in the 21st century. This strategy must be consolidated with a proactive character towards globalization, considering the own local characteristics.

Colombia and Mexico, active stakeholders of the regional integration process in Latin America, have embraced the globalizing context to promote collaboration, association, and academic cooperation agreements, under two branches, the mobility of students and scholars, as well as joint research and collaboration projects, and on the other hand, promoting the internationalization of the curriculum process. The present global contingency has boosted the need to widen the means of interaction of two countries towards the virtualization of substantive areas of their higher education systems.

Internationalization goals do not have to be modified during the pandemic. Still, they must maintain the promotion of research and exchange of scientific knowledge as a goal, favoring the expansion of understanding between different cultures and languages. HEI have implemented different strategies in Colombia and Mexico to promote the process of internationalization. Student exchange programs, foreign language study and internationalization of the curriculum have been implemented within the institutions at different degrees.

HEI have a strong sense of belonging to their immediate environments, which must be reflected in the profile of their academic programs, representing a strategic factor for integration and academic collaboration processes. HEI must maintain the conviction that international cooperation, joint construction of knowledge, and science and technology transfer between regions and countries are fundamental for developing common values. Future professionals face new needs related to knowledge, techniques, competencies, and abilities that they must possess and be able to use to develop themselves in a global environments.

The global COVID-19 contingency has promoted the virtualization of higher education; therefore, HEI in Colombia and Mexico have to assume the challenge of articulating new schemes to guarantee the teaching-learning process in the context of the “new normal” after the pandemic. HEI have been proactive in

generating strategies and solutions to promote internationalization with virtual mobility actions.

COVID-19 has impacted internationalization of higher education in one of its guiding principles, physical international mobility. This motivated new opportunities to generate new actions for internationalization at home and promote virtual mobilities through the use of information technologies. Widening these opportunities has allowed adding more participants to the internationalization of higher education process before the social and economic obstacles that may hinder traditional face-to-face mobility. Internationalization has the potential to be an engine driving dynamism of learning processes. This global crisis has opened a new discussion in the search for new processes and approaches that generate value and are pertinent to the needs of institutions, future graduates, and the environment.

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The Latin American University and its Role as a Non-Traditional Stakeholder in Science Diplomacy in the Post-COVID-19 Era

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Abstract

The global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has generated economic, political, and social implications that foresee significant changes in the so-called new world order. Nevertheless, opportunities and strategies have emerged within Universities, highlighting the importance of science and diplomacy to face global challenges and contribute to the post-crisis recovery. In this context, it is clear that the role of the Latin American University has changed, not only because of the necessary adaptation of its administrative and academic practices but also because of its relevance in the creation and dissemination of knowledge and foreign policy. Therefore, this chapter seeks to contribute to the understanding of the role of the university as a non-traditional stakeholder of science diplomacy projects, specifically in times of uncertainty that force us to rethink the roles and activities of universities within the Latin American context.

Keywords: University; Science Diplomacy; Latin America; COVID-19.

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Introduction

The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has generated transformations in the global dynamics that have repercussions in the economic, political, and social spheres, resetting the so-called new post-coronavirus world order. This impacts the international relations and foreign policy that countries in both the north and the global south have been pursuing. Therefore, governments have taken on the task of generating alliances and scenarios that allow them to resort to more robust science, technology, and innovation systems as a fundamental part of their public policy agendas so that they can deal with the aftermath of the coronavirus (Gual Soler, 2020). The crisis has also altered education systems, highlighting the profound inequalities in which most of the world's population lives and are rooted in basic rights such as food, health, and education. This scenario has had a negative impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), mainly SDG 4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Moreno Bau, 2021). However, as Pedró (2020) explains, the impact on higher education still needs a detailed assessment tied to the socioemotional, labor, and financial spheres that make up the sector as a whole and involve multiple stakeholders.

According to González (2021), it is important to move towards new forms of collaboration between countries that consider the scientific and academic communities as non-traditional stakeholders in science diplomacy. The latter is understood as a set of initiatives that promote joint work among scientists from different parts of the world, and whose main objective is to respond to common global challenges.

To this end, this chapter will first address the reconfiguration of the new world order and its effects on higher education; the role of the Latin American University in the face of the dynamics of international collaboration as a non-traditional stakeholder for science diplomacy in the post-COVID-19 era; the tensions, challenges, and implications for the mission areas of education, research, outreach, and social projection. Finally, suggestions and recommendations will be made to institutions of higher education so that they can insert strategies that facilitate knowledge and application of science diplomacy at the institutional level.

Science Diplomacy in Higher Education: Challenges in the Post-COVID-19 Era

Science Diplomacy promotes collaboration between researchers from different countries to address the challenges we face as humanity in the 21st century, creating meaningful partnerships in which scientists can support in their various areas (Fedoroff, 2009). In the face of global problems and especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this concept has gained special relevance as a term that seeks to find the existing intersections between science, international relations, and public policy, generating interdisciplinary, multisectoral, and collaborative spaces, which can be formal or informal (Ordonez-Matamoros *et al.*, 2021). Faced with global challenges, the University is no stranger to these complex problems since they can be part of the tension Universities are currently experiencing with a direct influence on their work. Likewise, and highlighting other aspects that stress the substantive functions of universities, elements such as foreign and public policy are observed and the great scientific advances that go beyond borders. In some cases, and according to Carosso's statement *et al.* (2019) and Gast (2021), scientists can even act in certain situations as diplomats, creating scientific communities that go beyond national borders. According to Gast (2021), Universities should have their own external relations policy that ties science diplomacy and is based on three aspects: the generation of networks, capacity building, and reciprocity.

The Latin American University is one of the essential stakeholders in supporting the processes to be carried out in the post-pandemic recovery, in which international cooperation and science diplomacy become linking tools foreseeing generation, exchange, and transfer of knowledge. Given the relevance of the University as a non-traditional stakeholder in the schemes of science diplomacy (Echeverría King, 2020), and in the creation of networking with different organizations that enable responses to national, transnational, and global responses to problems. Therefore, it is necessary to build bridges that promote innovative alliances in synergy with technological changes and the priorities of countries in times of uncertainty.

The New World Order Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic

In recent years, the effects of globalization have led to various crisis scenarios and intensified global problems, such as financial depression, increased levels

of inequality, effects of global warming, and the push of massive migration around the world. In addition to the above, the current coronavirus pandemic has widely affected humanity in the macroeconomic, political, and social spheres. Likewise, according to Vieira Posada (2021), there have been negative changes in the world order, most of which are related to the strengthening of authoritarian and nationalist governments; State controls that hinder citizen independence; world recession that has repercussions on high levels of poverty, loss of jobs, inequality in income distribution; and a lower budget to respond to the challenges regarding the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, led by the United Nations Organization. However, favorable post-pandemic changes would be related to a more cooperative and less competitive international system that addresses development programs related to public health, human protection, and economic systems based on more supportive and collaborative patterns.

The Inter-American Development Bank (2020), in its document: “Higher Education in Times of COVID-19”, and according to the online discussion held with Latin American vice-chancellors, calls the pandemic a challenge to the global socio-economic system that has led to the digitization of multiple productive sectors, directly and abruptly affecting the education sector. In this regard, the various changes in international politics and the increase in global challenges have impacted higher education and the stakeholders involved in this scenario. These transformations stem from the weakening of global governance, the rejection of free trade and multilateralism, the revival of political populism, and Asian-led global power. All these variables have driven a new geopolitical landscape (Sabzalieva *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, the current health crisis, according to UNESCO-IESALC (2020), has affected approximately 23.4 million university students and 1.4 million teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean, representing more than 98% of the academic community in the region. However, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, recommends in its report “COVID-19 and Higher Education: From the immediate effects to the day after”, some guidelines that governments and higher education institutions should follow to address the crisis as an opportunity and strengthen their governmental and institutional policies. These are briefly described in Table 1:

Table 1. UNESCO Recommendations for governments and HEI

Governments	HEI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize higher education within the framework of economic and social recovery plans. • Promote a national strategy that contributes to the strengthening and innovation of higher education. • Promote international cooperation scenarios and joint projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee the education of students under terms of equity, monitoring, and efficient support. • Establish pedagogical changes that strengthen the learning process of students. • Promote ICT-mediated programs with hybrid models.

Source: Created by the author (s) based on UNESCO-IESALC (2020).

The above invites us to rethink higher education so that students are taught to understand the reality in which they live and can lead individual and collective actions in times of chaos, crisis, and uncertainty, considering the importance of promoting joint solutions to *global* challenges (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020). Similarly, according to Miguel Román (2020), it is relevant that the stakeholders involved in the teaching-learning process face a paradigm shift, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that education must be assumed holistically according to its complexity, so it is necessary to prepare and educate students for uncertainty.

On the other hand, universities have been contributing through research and development programs in synergy with groups of scientists, in several government-driven efforts, from investment in epidemiological surveillance projects, clinical trials of drugs, and discovery and containment of the virus (UNESCO-IESALC, 2020). Therefore, the University is recognized as a relevant stakeholder in the scenario of science diplomacy due to its capacity for knowledge production and contributions to national health systems. This is based on the IUA Global Survey Report, which indicates that about 41% of HEI have been involved in research on COVID-19, contributing to the development of public policies and programs led by national governments (International Association of Universities, 2020). It is also essential to commit to international cooperation as the only mechanism for generating alliances in crisis scenarios, implementing actions more effectively, and sharing resources and technological solutions.

As for science diplomacy, it should be conceived as a field that brings together science, technology, and international relations to face local and global challenges,

in which universities, are not only stakeholders but should be agents that enable the consolidation of curricula in their undergraduate and graduate programs, with a view towards knowledge and the development of scientific and diplomatic skills in students (Mauduit and Gual Soler, 2020).

The Role of Universities as Stakeholders in Science Diplomacy: Tensions and Opportunities

Universities are institutions with a social commitment (Cordón and Cordón, 2021; Schwartzman, 2020; Jones *et al.*, 2021) that must be aware of the reality in which they find themselves, as they respond to social and contextual needs, as well as to trends in research and knowledge generation, which are constantly changing (Ruiz-Corbella and López-Gómez, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to reignite the debate regarding the mission of universities and their relationship with the context in which they are inserted, as well as how they meet local, regional, and global demands (Orellana, 2014).

In this regard, universities have found it necessary to adjust how they relate to the different social stakeholders, as well as their internal organization (Schwartzman, 2020), as each one has specific conditions and addresses a specific audience, and therefore in each case, the starting point is the context and how the university consolidates networks with the different state and non-state, national and international stakeholders, for the solution and response to local and regional demands. This requires higher education to move towards the definition of multisectoral cooperation mechanisms, as they are the ideal means for the exchange of experiences that guide decision-making and the consolidation of networks to address global problems, as it has been shown that there are no local problems but global ones (Jones *et al.*, 2021), so joint work between the State, universities and international organizations should be prioritized (Schwartzman, 2020; UNESCO-IESALC, 2020). This becomes a central task and challenge for universities as non-traditional stakeholders in diplomatic activities, especially in science diplomacy due to the dynamics of creation and dissemination of knowledge.

The challenge of building capacity, especially in science, was also highlighted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The gaps in this area between the global north and south were observed. The University can help close this gap by actively

participating in transnational programs that enable capacity building among various countries. Farnell *et al.* (2021) argue that the pandemic helped universities recognize the importance of horizontal peer-to-peer collaborations to exchange knowledge and technology. In this respect, science diplomacy coming from universities in the global south should focus on three aspects: establishment of alliances, management of resources for CTI, and capacity building (Echeverría King *et al.*, 2021). This is closely related to what Flink and Schreiterer (2010) proposed; they explain that one of the objectives of science diplomacy can be to facilitate access to resources, infrastructure, and top-level experts.

Universities have been recognized as key players in science diplomacy, both in European proposals and taxonomies and in emerging countries (Elorza *et al.*, 2020; Echeverría King *et al.*, 2021). However, it is necessary to clarify the implications of the university in the face of global challenges and how it responds to them by linking itself to international, national, and subnational schemes of science diplomacy.

First, it is worth noting that the University is one of the main leaders and managers of international science cooperation projects, which may be articulated to national, transnational, or global interests (Gluckman *et al.*, 2017). Secondly, universities support public and/or foreign policy scientific advisory processes through scientific projects, advisory groups with public policymakers, or publications with recommendations and implications (Josten, 2020). Additionally, they help to build networks of scientists, not only through the international relational assets of their researchers, but also through transnational projects and alliances managed hand-in-hand with the research and internationalization departments. A clear example is the case of the Fundación Universitaria Los Libertadores in Colombia, which hosts and supports the Colombian chapter of the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD), an organization that in itself is a case of science diplomacy by promoting the strategic relationship of female researchers from various countries of the global south with those from countries of the north for capacity building, knowledge exchange, and transformation of their realities (Monsalve, 2021).

At the subnational level, universities also create areas to promote science diplomacy, as seen in the case of the Mexico City Chair of Diplomacy and Science Heritage, hosted by the National Autonomous University of Mexico, which develops areas for training, discussion, and research on science diplomacy;

and supports better articulation between politicians, diplomats, and scientists in Mexico City (Mexican Cultural Centre, 2020).

Universities can also establish international research centers on their premises, aiming to solve global challenges. A clear example of this is the Center for Sustainable Development Goals (CODS, for its acronym in Spanish) at the Universidad de los Andes in Colombia, which follows up on the 2030 Agenda in the Latin American region, monitoring indicators and promoting sustainable development through strategic alliances (CODS, 2019).

However, global crises such as COVID-19 have demonstrated the need for better preparation of students and future scientists for active participation in public or foreign policy discussions (Gore *et al.*, 2020; Bernstein *et al.*, 2016), creating synergies with policymakers and diplomats in the search for solutions to challenges of interest. Likewise, the University has demonstrated the need to include science diplomacy in transnational research projects by establishing bridges of communication between its scientists and diplomats, and public policymakers but always safeguarding the independence of academia in these matters (Elorza *et al.*, 2020). In this respect, scientists are not the only stakeholders of science diplomacy in universities but also administrators, heads of research, internationalization officers, and even outreach and social projection, who are responsible for building bridges and facilitating strategic alliances. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to manage and lead knowledge transfers between governments, facilitated by universities, was observed in Latin America (Widmaier *et al.*, 2020) on relevant topics such as epidemiological monitoring, and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, among others.

Another way for Latin American universities to be linked to science diplomacy schemes is through active participation in transnational scientific communities, as well as in the so-called diaspora networks. To this end, it is essential to have follow-up strategies for alumni of the institution who work as scientists and are studying and/or working abroad. In addition, the relationship with the country's representatives abroad (embassies and consulates) should also be strengthened. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how important diaspora networks can be for developing and advancing projects of relevance not only for the home country but also for the host country (Lope-Verges *et al.*, 2021). Mahmoud and Bodnarova (2019) explain that universities join diaspora and

allied universities, especially for implementing and developing transnational research projects, including early career researchers.

Universities can, in this regard, contribute to science diplomacy mainly in three areas: (i) capacity building, promoting understanding, training, research, and up-to-date information on science diplomacy; (ii) supporting the establishment of networks and alliances to support the solution of global challenges or to promote the development of science, technology and innovation systems in countries; or (iii) managing and administering funding for transnational science collaborations aimed at developing solutions to challenges of interest and allowing the exchange of knowledge and technology among the various stakeholders (Echeverría King *et al.*, 2021).

Implications for the University's Substantive Functions

The university is conceived as a non-traditional stakeholder for diplomacy, especially in the scientific field. The mission areas promote research and outreach as two key areas (Jones *et al.*, 2021) for consolidating networks with educational institutions, government, and industries, seeking to create and disseminate relevant and pertinent knowledge for local and global demands (Echeverría King, 2020).

It is important to reflect on the implications that the pandemic has had on the educational sector, and especially on the university's mission areas: education, research, outreach, and social projection. The University should be seen as a complex system in which different stakeholders participate and shape the internal and external dynamics (UNESCO-IESALC, 2020).

Education (teaching-learning process)

Education constitutes one of the core elements in terms of the identity of universities. Necessary conditions must be generated for students to develop competencies that enable them to respond to an increasingly globalized and interconnected context and become aware of the importance of continuous training, given how learning is constantly being updated (Salmi, 2020).

Therefore, it is necessary to update the curricula to help implement science diplomacy chairs, allow for the development of soft skills in students and ensure their participation and contribution to the solution of transboundary problems and the current challenges that arise on a planetary scale, such as migration, water resource management, pandemics, and the effects of climate change (Universidad de la Sabana and Universidad Nacional de Río Negro, 2021). Likewise, HEI should promote spaces for training and exchange of experiences among scientists and internationalists involved in decision-making on foreign policy, science, innovation, and competitiveness of countries (González and Pantovic, 2021).

In addition, universities should promote the development of competencies that allow future professionals to perform in diplomatic fields, such as multidisciplinary teamwork, communication, management, leadership, negotiation, and emotional intelligence (Echeverría King, 2020; Maudit and Gual Soler, 2020). Also, science diplomacy must be seen in a cross-cutting manner in teaching and the formal curriculum, not only through extracurricular activities as has been the case up to now. In this way, the articulation of a bridge between science and diplomacy as converging disciplines is achieved (Maudit and Gual Soler, 2020). To achieve the above, as proposed by Maudit and Gual Soler (2020), it is possible to develop everything from courses to seminars in which science diplomacy is a central theme and practice through role playing, or other strategies contribute to the professionalization of students.

Research

Research has become a core task in times of crisis such as the current one. Universities have promoted the creation of research groups and ties with different organizations and networks that contribute to the generation and dissemination of knowledge regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, they have contributed to creating “clinical drug tests, rapid virus detection tests, etc.; also, groups have been integrated to produce biomedical equipment such as respirators and other innovative actions” (UNESCO-IESALC, 2020, p. 39).

In addition, related to university outreach and social responsibility, outreach with various organizations that contribute to transferring knowledge and response to local and global needs is promoted (Cordón and Cordón, 2021). However, it

is necessary to keep in mind that there are other relevant areas of research, so while attention has been focused on the response to the pandemic, it should not be overlooked that they also require support for the development of research as a central function (UNESCO-IESALC, 2020). In this respect, universities face the challenge of acting as a place for debate on local and global problems, also acting as consultants because of the scientific and research activity they carry out and guiding the different stakeholders in the decision-making process (Cordón and Cordón, 2021; Jones *et al.*, 2021).

Thus, they can become diplomatic stakeholders by participating in scientific debates with global impact and by promoting the development of international research that leads to the formation of multidisciplinary and international research teams, which serve as diplomatic stakeholders in global discussions.

Likewise, according to Gonzalez and Pantovic (2021), it is important to encourage interdisciplinary work between research groups and research workshops for the development of cross-cutting skills such as negotiation and intercultural communication. In addition, efforts should be made to disseminate research results, with emphasis on evidence to raise awareness and support decision-makers in the face of complex challenges that are latent at the local, national, regional, and global levels. This should promote the partnerships among universities, research centers, administration, and industry for the development of processes that promote the generation, dissemination, and transfer of scientific and technological knowledge in favor of capacity building and compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (Universidad de la Sabana and Universidad Nacional de Río Negro, 2021).

Outreach and social projection

Outreach is a key role of the University (Jones *et al.*, 2021). It should be conceived as the involvement of the University in different social spheres, responding to their needs and valuing how it affects the internal and external dynamics of the institution (Cordón and Cordón, 2021). Thus, in addition to courses and teaching and research departments and institutes, universities can have hospitals, museums, and outreach and technological development centers (Schwartzman, 2020), linking themselves through social projection to local and global communities.

On the other hand, outreach and research are two areas that should be approached jointly, as they seek to address how the university affects society and identify and respond to the main social problems (Cordón and Cordón, 2021). Moreover, in an increasingly interconnected context, the idea of “Global Social Responsibility of Universities” is emerging (Jones *et al.*, 2021). Local problems have an impact on global dynamics and vice versa, so strategies must be sought to contribute to the sustainability of relations between the University, as a social stakeholder, and the global community (Escrigas *et al.*, 2014; Marginson, 2019), and to the recognition of social commitment for the benefit of a variety of stakeholders (Jones *et al.*, 2021).

In Latin America, the so-called third mission, also known as outreach, social projection, or extension, is established by HEI as an element that allows them to strengthen their actions in society and respond to complex challenges. Therefore, science diplomacy becomes important in the discourse of HEI, whose purpose is to link knowledge and scientific and technological capacities into society (González and Pantovic, 2021). This should promote the articulation between HEI and the instruments of international scientific policy, in such a way as to encourage the outreach to the scientific diaspora, the establishment of knowledge networks, and the promotion of exchanges of experiences and training practices among scientists, academia, and public managers.

Thus, a fourth institutional mission is identified, which conceives education, research, and outreach; and considers the University as a complex system and key player in decision-making because of dynamics that are closely linked and contribute in an integral way to the construction, dissemination, and transfer of scientific knowledge. An example of this is the effort made by universities such as Los Andes in Colombia through the Center for Sustainable Development Goals (CODS), through which it seeks to monitor the SDGs from a multidisciplinary perspective, based on relationships and partnerships with sectors that promote innovation in response to social demands (Schwartzman, 2020).

Moreover, it seeks to encourage the three missions to be seen as complementary, becoming part of the institutional discourse (Jones *et al.*, 2021), and contributing to the discussion regarding the relevance of the University as a non-traditional stakeholder in science diplomacy as a result of internal dynamics and characteristics, as well as the ability to establish cooperation networks with

similar organizations and institutions in different countries that contribute to the response of global demands.

Recommendations and Implications for Higher Education Institutions

The Latin American University has been reconfigured and is currently rethinking its relevance beyond its mission of education. Due to the new world order and the tensions on higher education, the role of higher education as an articulator of diverse stakeholders in society is reaffirmed, promoting intersectoral and interdisciplinary work in the search for solutions to challenges and situations of national, transnational, or global interest (European Union, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the need and relevance of scientific consultation, which in the countries of the global south mainly comes from universities for projects, programs, and public policy. It also highlights the role of researchers in establishing transnational science networks and consortia and of the University as an operator of international scientific cooperation projects.

However, how can universities contribute as proactive stakeholders in science diplomacy? The following are several recommendations and implications from the mission areas:

Education (teaching-learning process)

- Establish courses or modules within the academic offerings that seek interdisciplinary work to solve global challenges.
- Generate challenges, role-plays, hackathons and/or bootcamps focused on science diplomacy, trying to inform decision-makers of the results. International students may be invited to these activities.
- Encourage exchanges or mobility of university researchers and young researchers to embassies, representations of the country abroad, or multilateral organizations.

- Train teachers and students on scientific consultation and the writing of policy briefs, white papers, and other formats to bridge the gap between academia, researchers, and public policymakers.

Research

- Encourage work areas among researchers (by areas of knowledge, maybe by SDGs) and diplomats located in key embassies.
- Articulate research carried out at the University into regional, national, transnational, and global research agendas.
- Establish lines and/or groups of interdisciplinary research on science diplomacy as an area of study.
- Actively participate in transnational science consortia and projects and report on their results to politicians, government representatives, and diplomats.
- Promote the articulation of university researchers in thematic transnational scientific networks.

Outreach and social projection

- Participate in task forces, associations, and other areas that promote scientific consultation for the establishment/updating of policies, programs, and processes, especially those with international impact.
- Offer courses and training in science diplomacy not only for scientists but also for politicians, diplomats, and other stakeholders.
- Encourage exchanges of knowledge and technology with foreign entities and governments on topics of interest.

- Generate collaborative work networks with scientific alumni (diaspora) who study or work in research abroad.

With these recommendations, the Latin American University is proactively linked to international, national, and subnational schemes of science diplomacy, contributing from its articulating role to crises, challenges, and interests, establishing bridges, alliances, and projects, and remembering the social value of science and education in an increasingly interdependent world.

Conclusions

Universities have a fundamental role in addressing local and global issues. They are a key factor for crisis response and during times of uncertainty, such as the current one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially due to their capacity to generate and disseminate knowledge that contributes to informed and joint decision-making among stakeholders from different areas and disciplines.

In this regard, they are conceived as a subnational stakeholder of diplomacy. Therefore, from their substantive functions, they must promote the integration of science diplomacy as a central discipline, not in isolation but as part of the formal curriculum, thus promoting the training of professionals aware of their environment, capable of working in teams, with leadership and communication skills, among others, that allow them to perform in an increasingly globalized and interconnected context.

Likewise, universities contribute to the achievement of global objectives, adopting what is proposed in international agendas as a transversal element, as is the case with SDGs, which show the impact of universities in addressing issues with global impact, as well as their role as a non-traditional stakeholder in diplomacy, and especially in scientific diplomacy, by being a mediator and taking part in global discussions.

Likewise, the different institutional stakeholders can act as diplomats, so it is necessary to generate the appropriate conditions for scientists and researchers to play an increasingly active role at the policy debate tables, as well as to promote training in which the development of certain competencies is achieved

(Echeverría King, 2020). This not only promotes the generation of networks but also contributes to capacity building and reciprocity due to the agreements and different cooperation schemes that currently exist (Gast, 2021).

Thus, as proposed by UNESCO-IESALC (2020), it is recommended that crises be seen as a trigger for reflection on how universities are organized, taking into account the active role they play and the importance of increasingly promoting collaboration between stakeholders from different areas and levels, also doing an exercise of analysis on the impact that universities have in proposing solutions to local and global problems through the various initiatives that emerge from them.

In summary, based on the substantive functions, universities should be encouraged to integrate science diplomacy and become aware of its importance and role in addressing global issues, for only in this way will it be possible to form professionals with the necessary competencies to perform in a new world order, characterized by increasingly developing cooperation schemes between stakeholders from different sectors, normally not linked to each other, such as the diplomatic and scientific bodies. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that universities should play a more active role in disseminating knowledge and in decision making and integrating science diplomacy in a cross-cutting manner in their programs and activities.

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Mexican Higher Education after COVID-19: Positive Transformation or Business as Usual?

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had important consequences on Mexican Higher Education Institutions (HEI) that were already in the process of weathering before the health emergency. Among the most pressing issues for HEI before the pandemic were diminishing public funding, lack of international competitiveness, low coverage percentages, obsolete educational programs, and internationalization strategies strongly focused on mobility. This was in addition to the challenges that demanded immediate solutions due to the pandemic, which highlighted the large gaps, differences, and inequalities in the sector and throughout the country. This chapter begins by reviewing the situation of this sector and its challenges before the pandemic. It then discusses the challenges faced during the pandemic, and it closes with a critical analysis of the situation of HEI in the run-up to the post-pandemic era and the return to full face-to-face attendance.

Keywords: *higher education; internationalization; COVID-19.*

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 health emergency in Mexico led to the shutdown of classes for more than 53 school weeks at all educational levels between March 2020 and September 2021, making it one of the countries that kept its schools closed for the longest period of time. With the shutdown of face-to-face activity at educational institutions, the pandemic confined the school experience, in the best of cases, to a series of interactions mediated by information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the intensity, quality and scope of which have been determined by the psychosocial circumstances, technological capabilities, connectivity possibilities, and equipment available to students and teachers.

The ongoing effects of school shutdowns, continuing at least partially in most of the country's public universities at the time of writing this chapter (the second semester of 2021) are devastating for the system. INEGI reported that for the 2020-2021 school year, more than five million students at all levels ceased to enroll, the ANUIES statistical yearbook points to a reduction in first-time enrollment in higher education of close to 10% (ANUIES, 2021), and the educational backlog is estimated to be at least 1.8 years of achievement in real terms (Moy, 2021). In addition, the internationalization strategies that Mexican HEI have implemented over the last thirty years, mostly in a weak, reactive, and unsystematic manner, have suffered a strong setback since they were based almost exclusively on student mobility. To remedy this, some of the HEI implemented emergency curriculum internationalization strategies, such as virtual mobility and mirror classes, and carried out massive teacher training actions to offer Collaborative International Online Courses (COIL) (Bustos-Aguirre and Vega Cano, 2021). The chapters in the second part of this book narrate some of the successful experiences some Mexican HEI implemented to further their internationalization projects during the pandemic.

Furthermore, in Mexico, the health emergency and the educational crisis due to school shutdowns were concatenated with two other equally serious phenomena: the worst economic contraction in the last 100 years and a society divided by deep and long-standing inequalities, creating a vicious circle of negative repercussions for the Mexican population. The pandemic increased the number of people living in extreme poverty by 6.1%, reduced the middle class by 10% (Moreno Arellano, 2021), and widened pre-existing social inequalities: between

income quintiles; between private and public educational institutions; between those who have access to health services and those who do not; between urban and rural populations; and between men and women, to mention only the most evident.

Considering this scenario, this chapter seeks to identify whether in the post-COVID era the disruption caused by the pandemic will be taken by the higher education sector in Mexico as a learning event that will result in adaptation, change, and improvement, or whether, on the contrary, it will be characterized by continuity, returning to business as usual once it returns to full face-to-face attendance. The discussion is divided into four parts, this introduction, a section on the situation of the sector before the pandemic, a third segment that analyzes what happened during the pandemic, and a concluding section that closes with a critical analysis of the expectations of the sector in the run-up to the post-pandemic era.

2. Higher Education in Mexico before COVID-19: Sweet as a Pie?

This section provides an overview of the situation of higher education in Mexico prior to the pandemic, describing the system in terms of enrollment, research, financing, and internationalization; it also analyzes the main challenges and problems that HEI faced in a situation of relative stability.

In quantitative terms, higher education enrollment in Mexico increased from 3,648,945 students in the 2015/2016 term to 4,983,204 in 2020/2021, reaching a coverage close to 40% and with a considerable average annual growth of approximately 4%. However, regarding Martin Trow's classification, Mexico is still in a phase of widespread growth that began almost 50 years ago with the opening of state public and private universities in the 70s. Based on the increase in enrollment coverage in recent years, the authors believe that reaching universalization (coverage above 50%) will take at least another six years, provided that dropout rates due to the pandemic do not result in major setbacks.

The average coverage rate in OECD countries is around 65%. Mexico ranks 36th out of the 38 member countries: ahead of Luxembourg with 17% (which has a strong tradition of international mobility in higher education given its

geopolitical conditions) and Israel with 39% (compulsory military service reduces the number of young people who enter higher education immediately after high school). Compared to other regions of the world, our country is only above the coverage achieved in Sub-Saharan Africa (9%) and Central and South Asia (26%); the rest of the regions have rates that exceed the world average of 38%. In Latin America, the average coverage went from 41% to 52% between 2010 and 2017. The leading countries are Argentina and Chile, with rates close to 90%, Peru with 70%, Uruguay with 63%, Costa Rica with 58%, and Colombia with 55% (World Bank, 2021; ANUIES, 2021; OECD, 2021; IESALC, 2020; Casanova Cardiel, 2020; Bustos-Aguirre, Crôtte-Ávila, and Moreno Arellano, 2018).

There are approximately 10,000 HEI in Latin America and nearly a third of them are in Mexico (Bustos-Aguirre, Castiello-Gutiérrez, Cortes, Maldonado-Maldonado and Rodríguez, 2021; Reimers, 2021; Crôtte-Ávila and Moreno Arellano, 2018). About 70% of Mexican HEI are private, and the rest are public, although the population they serve is proportionally inverse: student enrollment in the public sector is around 65%, while private HEI cover approximately 35% (Bustos-Aguirre, Castiello-Gutiérrez, Cortes, Maldonado-Maldonado, and Rodríguez, 2021). Besides Mexico, the countries in the region with predominantly public education are Cuba, Argentina, and Uruguay; in the rest of the countries, at least half of the enrollment is in the private sector (Casanova Cardiel, 2020; Bustos-Aguirre, Crôtte-Ávila, & Moreno Arellano, 2018).

The high percentage of Mexican enrollment in the public sector represents important challenges in terms of financing since it relies almost exclusively on tax revenues and government funds and on the ruling government's agenda of priorities. In this respect, some analyses indicate that "the influence and relevance of education continues to decrease relative to the national GDP [..., and] accumulates a reduction of 11.4% in real terms [since 2015]" (Moreno and Cedillo, 2021). Furthermore, the difference between the estimated inflation at the beginning of the tax year (with which budgets are defined) and the inflation observed at the end of the year, have resulted in a real cumulative loss of the budget for public HEI since 2015, amounting to 27,000 million Mexican pesos according to the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) (Moreno and Cedillo, 2021). Finally, the emergency funds for innovation, technology, teaching, and research, that were crucial for the public system to be able to respond to the challenges of increasing enrollment and improving quality in the 21st century and that represented drivers of change

and incentives for improvement, have gradually disappeared in the last five years (Moreno, 2021b; Moreno and Cedillo, 2021).

In addition to the aforementioned, HEI in Mexico, as in many other places in the world, for several years have been facing the challenge of attending an increasingly diverse student body in terms of its socio-demographic composition, as well as growing demand from a sector of the population that seeks to return to the classroom to update knowledge and skills, and that requires personalized and versatile educational programs that most Mexican HEI have not been able to offer so far.

In terms of research and training of highly skilled human resources, Mexico has one of the lowest numbers of full-time researchers per million inhabitants among countries with similar economies in the region, with only 327. Without considering Colombia, which registers 88, Mexico is behind Chile (492), Uruguay (694), Brazil (888) or Argentina (1,211), and way further than South Korea (3,080) or Spain (3,080) (Dutta, Lanvin, Leon and Wunsch-Vincent, 2021; Scimago, 2021).

R&D investment in Mexico is also a pending issue, as the percentage of GDP earmarked for it has systematically decreased since 2015, going from 0.34% to 0.2% in the estimated federal budget projected for 2022, well below the regional average, which was 0.62% in 2018 (Moreno and Cedillo, 2021; OEI Ibero-American Observatory of Science, Technology and Society, 2020). Table 1 shows the percentages allocated to R&D in the leading economies of the region and data for Spain and South Korea to facilitate comparison.

Table 1. R&D Expenditure as a percentage of GDP

Country	% of GDP Allocated to R&D		
	2020	2018	2016
Argentina	0.6	0.6	0.6
Brasil	1.2	1.3	1.2
Chile	0.3	0.4	0.4
Colombia	0.3	0.3	0.2
Mexico	0.3	0.5	0.5
Uruguay	0.4	0.4	0.3
España	1.2	1.2	1.2
South Korea	4.6	4.2	4.3

Source: created based on Dutta, Lanvin, León and Wunsch-Vincent, 2021 and Dutta, Lanvin and Wunsch-Vincent, 2018 and 2016.

Mexico's situation was not much better before the pandemic in terms of internationalization. Student mobility is the most visible strategy of internationalization carried out by HEI, and sometimes the only one. However, even though students participating in mobility accounted for 2.3% of global enrollment in 2017, mobility in the region was 1.14%. In other words, of the 5 million higher education students who moved to another country in 2017 to study, only 176,000 traveled to a Latin American country, and two out of three were students from the region itself (IESALC, 2019).

In Mexico, during the 2018/2019 school period, the 911 Database recorded 20,829 students from Mexican HEI who participated in temporary international mobility; 6,102 students from other countries who carried out a temporary stay in Mexico; and 44,998 students of other nationalities pursuing a full educational degree in the country. These students were linked to barely 10% of the country's institutions, and do not even represent 0.5% of the total enrollment (Bustos-Aguirre, Castiello-Gutiérrez, Cortes, Maldonado-Maldonado and Rodríguez, 2021).

Since the travel ban and restrictions on face-to-face attendance in Mexican HEI, many institutions began to carry out other activities, mainly internationalization

at home, collaborative teaching projects with peers, and virtual mobility. A recent study (Bustos-Aguirre and Vega Cano, 2021) acknowledged that while HEI quickly found a substitute for student-based approaches, little was done to continue internationalization activities for university professors and researchers; the authors warn that the disengagement of this sector of the university community from internationalization may have long-term consequences and further undermine the poor internationalization efforts of the curriculum that some HEI in the country had undertaken before the pandemic: “it must be remembered that it is the professors who design and teach the programs, carry out research, and in general have the responsibility for the education and development of global competencies for future professionals.”

In summary, when the pandemic put a halt to face-to-face activities, the challenges the sector faced accumulated: in addition to what was mentioned in previous paragraphs, there was the need for (and little preparation to) continue teaching, research, and internationalization activities at a distance, and soon after, the need to respond to new problems that were developing as the quarantines piled up: “social, economic, and governance crises, greater gaps in education, new research needs” (Reimers, 2021, p. 11).

Although the situation before the pandemic had already forced HEI to a certain level of reflection on their impact on the knowledge society and the education of competent and capable citizens, it cannot be said that a generalized review of educational programs had begun, or the incorporation of technology in a massive way in the teaching-learning processes, or a comprehensive reform of the management processes to make Mexican HEI swifter and less dependent on paper. On the contrary, before the pandemic, the general situation in Mexico, and fundamentally in public sector HEI, was characterized by inertia and incrementalism. In other words, in the best-case scenario, there were minimal changes that did not alter the system or its results, and in some cases, no changes were made at all.

3. HEI Situation during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cold Shower and the Harsh Reality

With the suspension of face-to-face education due to the health emergency, HEI were forced “to face the challenge of reorganizing their activities, with haste

and creativity [and little preparation!], to continue to fulfill their fundamental purpose and [...] continue to address the challenges and problems they faced before the crisis broke out” (Ordorika, 2020, p.1); this implied implementing what Pedró called *coronateaching* (2020), which is related to the appearance of an emerging type of teaching without a specific plan or prior preparation. If one also considers the prevailing conditions of inequality in Mexico and the lack of technological skills of teachers and students, as well as the deficiencies in equipment and connectivity in their homes, it is easy to imagine that public sector HEI, which generally serve the most disadvantaged student population, had greater challenges in maintaining virtual teaching than their elite peers in the private sector.

Ordorika (2020) points out that the most pressing challenges that HEI have faced during the pandemic are to guarantee the health of the university community and to continue with academic activities in a scenario of reduced public funding and a decrease in the number of re-enrollments and first-time applicants, as well as fees and tuition. For Reimers (2021, p. 22), “The crisis generated by the pandemic accelerates the need for the dissemination of knowledge based on scientific research of expert knowledge,” and HEI, particularly public ones, are the ones that can best contribute to this since research is one of their core activities and they are the ones with the greatest installed capacity to do so.

However, little support has been given to HEI by the federal government to face these challenges and take advantage of them as a lever for innovation and growth in the country. Whereas in other countries, emergency measures were implemented to support students, professors, and HEI and minimize and combat the great educational backlog that the pandemic has generated and the setback in all kinds of indicators. In Mexico, the president opted to foster a climate of tension, polarization, and social resentment, minimize the risks and havoc caused by the pandemic; and cut the budget of public HEI and scientific work.

Beyond discourse, the 2022 Federal Expenditure Budget Bill (PPEF-2022) does not show any signs of strengthening Mexican public HEI; on the contrary, it accentuates the backwardness and underinvestment in this strategic sector: the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) proposes that, in 2022: “out of every 100 pesos available for programmable spending, 16.8 be allocated to the educational system; from these, 2.9 pesos would be for higher and graduate

education, and barely one peso for STI [Science, Technology and Innovation]” (Moreno and Cedillo, 2021, p. 7). In the breakdown of the PPEF-2022, for federal public universities the planned subsidy barely exceeds the estimated inflation, while for other types of public HEI, such as state universities (which account for 40% of enrollment), and those categorized as intercultural and with solidarity support, the proposal is for an increase of only 0.05 in real terms (Moreno and Cedillo, 2021). This, combined with the loss of the extraordinary funds already mentioned in the previous sections, will have negative effects in the short, medium, and long term, since the regular budget barely covers the operating costs of HEI with healthy finances, not to mention the serious problems faced by a significant group of public HEI that have been in crisis for several years.

Regarding science, technology, and innovation, the budget in the PPEF-2022 is 36.5% lower than that approved in 2015, which represents “a loss of approximately 31,000 million pesos by 2022, adjusting for inflation [... which] is equivalent to more than the entire budget for CONACYT [...] and about four times the resources for the National System of Researchers” (Moreno and Cedillo, 2021, p. 14).

Internationalization strategies seem to be the other casualty in the post-pandemic period. Unlike what happens in other geographical contexts, in which there is a clear understanding of the contribution of internationalization to the quality of the core functions and the development of globally competent professionals, and therefore an interest in increasing and deepening international activities (Helms, 2020), in Mexico it has never been a priority for the country or the HEI. In most cases, internationalization strategies remain a “nice to have” that can be discarded if the budget is reduced, if priorities change or if it becomes an unpopular topic. The final thrust of this were the travel bans and the looming economic recession, as many internationalization efforts require physical mobility (of students, faculty, and managers) and sufficient financial resources that are sustainable in the long term. Moreover, with mobility being the dominant strategy, the post-pandemic scenario seems more than complicated, as some experts point out that it will take at least five years to recover the number (already very low in the Mexican case) of mobile students registered before the health emergency (Viggo, 2020).

In the best examples, such as those included in the second part of this book, the pandemic also involved a deep reflection of the academic endeavor, a genuine

concern for student learning on behalf of teachers and administrators, the implementation of changes that could remain, and what Reimers (2021) calls “an innovation dividend.” In the worst cases, the pandemic has exacerbated systemic failures, deepened gaps, and implied setbacks of several years in a key sector for the sustenance and viability of the country in the short, medium, and long term.

4. Conclusions. Will we go back to business as usual?

The dawn of the full return to face-to-face attendance is the ideal scenario to resume pending issues that were paused with the health emergency: the financial insufficiency to attend not only the usual activities of the HEI, but also the recently imposed requirement of mandatory and free of charge higher education; the recovery and expansion of enrollment; improving the conditions of academic staff, especially those who are hired on an hourly basis; security and equity in the academic career of university women, as well as gender parity in collegiate and administrative bodies; and the implementation of systemic and efficient internationalization strategies to contribute to international collaboration in teaching and research and the development of skills for employability in students and graduates. In Reimers’ words, “the need to seize this historic opportunity comes, not only from the urgency of the challenges of the pandemic, but from the preceding challenges the university faced” (Reimers, 2021, p. 10).

Ordorika (2020) highlights some of the guiding principles to be implemented once the health emergency is over, as pointed out by UNESCO IESALC: ensuring the right to higher education; leaving no student behind; reviewing regulatory frameworks and policies to strengthen the academic trajectories of all students who reach higher education; preparing for the return to face-to-face education without forgetting the learning from the pandemic and taking advantage of the intensive use of technology; and generating mechanisms to respond to new emergencies, whatever their nature may be.

In terms of internationalization, the pandemic era provided clear opportunities for Mexican HEI that already had strategies and programs for the internationalization of their curriculum or the institutional capacity to do so, as many of them successfully replaced physical mobility with virtual mobility, mirror classes, and COIL programs. In many HEI, the massive implementation of COIL required

the training of a large group of professors, while virtual mobility implied the adaptation of existing mechanisms and mobility processes. In the case of COIL, it will be important to have more information on the experience of professors and students, because although a significant number of new courses were implemented, in general this was done in a reactive and somewhat forced manner, with the risk of having privileged COIL collaborations to the detriment of the learning outcomes and pedagogical strategies of the original courses. In the case of virtual mobility, it will be important to perform studies on the profile of the participants to find out if this form of mobility really incorporates students with diverse profiles, democratizing the international experience, and making it more equitable. However, the greatest risk is that the internationalization of the curriculum actions implemented (or strengthened, in a minority of cases) during the pandemic by the most internationalized Mexican HEI are fragmented activities, disintegrated, limited and with low impact; and therefore dispensable, substitutable, and non-permanent once face-to-face activities resume. In doing so, we might be wasting the transforming potential that the pandemic provided for the curriculum and the unique opportunity to internationalize it.

Regarding research and knowledge production, the post-pandemic era looks even more complex. The cuts mentioned in the previous sections are combined with the lack of international links among scholars for almost as long as the schools were closed, so that contact with peers, participation in international academic events, and the use of collaboration networks were severely affected. To return to previous levels and reduce the risk of making the sector even more precarious, we need a budget, institutional policies, and a strong vision. The trend seems to be to further reduce spending on research and related activities (such as mobility and economic incentives for research and researchers) and increase the teaching load to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis, making staff more efficient and reducing costs. However, the negative impact of these measures will not be limited to a reduction in the number of researchers or articles published, but will significantly affect the performance, competitiveness, and international visibility of the sector, as well as the development of human capital and the country's ability to attract talent and investment.

Successful learning and adaptation of HEI to the conditions of the post-pandemic era will imply maintaining the lessons learned, mainly related to the use of ICTs, including their use in internationalization strategies and the new ways of understanding teaching-learning processes; recovering and remedying budget

losses, enrollment, projects, knowledge and drive, and generating “institutional capacities [to] teach in a hybrid way; overcome the deficiencies of HEI that offered low quality and pertinent education; and offer students the opportunities to develop the skills needed to build a better world” (Reimers, 2021, p. 14).

Higher education is crucial for the success and international competitiveness of societies and countries in the knowledge society for its contribution to individuals’ technological development and employability. But, will Mexico and its higher education system be able to take advantage of the pandemic as a lever for change? Or on the contrary, are we on the verge of the third of many lost years? The answer lies in how each HEI takes on the challenges ahead and transforms itself to face them... in this scenario, returning to business as usual does not seem to be the best strategy.

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This book poses internationalization both as a strategy to broaden horizons and to reinforce awareness of social responsibility from higher education institutions. It is also an invitation to read the pandemic as a forced pause to refocus the debate on human beings and their overall well-being. This book is an exceptional starting point on the steps we need to follow to review educational models and learning strategies necessary to face this rapidly changing world.

— **Dr. Dante Arturo Salgado González**

President of CUMex and Rector of the Autonomous University of Baja California Sur

This book is an important contribution, not only from the perspective of Higher Education in Mexico, but it also allows us to learn from other parts of the world about good practices and the importance of working together with other associations.

— **Prof. Hans de Wit**

Center for International Higher Education, Boston College

For us, at the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI), it was imperative to make a call for reflection to learn, on the one hand, from the perspective of the different actors at the international level, about the cases and experiences with which the pandemic has been faced and, on the other hand, to realize the great areas of opportunity that we, as institutions and as a sector had.

— **César Eduardo Gutiérrez Jurado**

President of AMPEI

Regarding the internationalization of higher education and its international cooperation variable, institutions have presented a wide range of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, ranging from reactive, temporary and merely tactical, to exemplary cases of interactive and strategic responses with a long-term vision.

Today it is a priority - and will continue to be a permanent research task - to reflect on whether the disruption caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, in addition to demonstrating the true resilience of HEIs, was really a learning experience as well as an opportunity for innovation in the area of internationalization strategy.

— **Dr. Martín P. Pantoja Aguilar and Dr. Santiago Castiello-Gutiérrez**

Editors

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