Local responses to globalization : a comparative study of four North American universities' study abroad programs

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Topic
(Definition of Keyword)

Local responses to globalization : a comparative study of four North American universities' study abroad programs

ความเป็นท้องถิ่นในกระแสโลกาภิวัตน์ : การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบมหาวิทยาลัยสี่แห่งในทวีปอเมริกาเหนือในการศึกษาหลักสูตรต่างประเทศ

Background

Globalization has become an important concept in social science studies and its many facets intensely influence our current economic, cultural, and political spheres. Many within the higher education realm believe that globalization is a converging force imposing itself on higher education institutions. However, some scholars believe globalization could also become a force to recover universities' local characteristics. In a university context, study abroad programs are viewed as an important component of international activities on campus and have been increasingly advocated as a way to provide students with the knowledge and skills required for individuals and nation-states to compete in a global market—a direct linkage to globalization. On the other hand, study abroad programs are also bound in their specific local contexts and history. So, how do globalization and universities' local contexts influence these study abroad programs?

The purpose of research (Purpose of study)

This thesis is a comparative case study focusing on four North American universities' study abroad programs. The project investigates why and how these programs are organized at the university level within the context of globalization and explores how the local and the global interplay to shape the arrangement of study abroad programs in universities

Research question

∞ how do globalization and universities' local contexts influence these study abroad programs ?

Research Hypothesis

Summary of Literature Reviews

- **- A Brief History of Study Abroad Programs**
- **- Number and Trends**
- **- Why study Abroad**
- **1. Improving Cross - Cultural Competence – the Individual Dimension**
- **2. International Peace - the social Dimension**
- **3. The Political Dimension**
- **4. The Political Dimension**
- **- Nationnal Security**
- **- Ideology Propaganda**
- **- Economic Competitiveness**
- **- Post "9/11" in the United States**

Conceptual Framework

The present study raises questions regarding the ways in which universities organize their study abroad programs while also exploring how the interplay of global and local processes influences the way these programs are set up at the university level. The study adopts a comparative perspective. It compares the arrangements of study abroad programs and their organizational structures in four different universities and explores the local and global factors influencing program organization.

The study examines four university-based study abroad programs in relation to globalization. Thus, questions related to universities' international policies and international activities are central to the present thesis. Also, the present study investigates the formats and organizational structures of study abroad programs. The aim is to clarify how local and global factors influence these programs' organization and the involvement of faculty members and students.

Research Methodology

The results of this study demonstrate that globalization forces some universities to be strategic players emphasizing internationalization as a direct response. In turn, such emphasis on internationalization enhances the development of study abroad programs in these universities. The desire to present students with the opportunities for developing cross-cultural communication skills also contributes to the development of study abroad programs. Yet the many facets of globalization also present challenges to study abroad programs. From influences of the economic aspect of globalization, the market ideology is creeping into the organizing process, raising the risk of losing these programs' long-term educational integrity to satisfy customer's needs. As travel costs make these programs more expensive, study abroad programs have to compete with other more cost-effective on-campus international activities for increasingly limited resources. From the perspective of a cultural version of globalization, the moving of people and ideas creates spaces for cultural exchange, and thus, adds the agenda of expanding certain ideological influences in some universities' study abroad programs. All these issues create a complex reality for the development of study abroad programs on university campuses. Further research on how the internationalization process influences the development of   study abroad programs is needed to expand our understanding of impacts of economic globalization.

Discussion

Globalization, Internationalization, and University Study Abroad Programs

Globalization and internationalization are closely related concepts and are sometimes used interchangeably in the context of higher education. However, these two concepts are different. As Altbach and Teichler put it, "Internationalization in higher education is an inevitable result of the globalized and knowledge-based economy of the 21st century" (2001, p. 5). In other words, internationalization of higher education can be viewed as a strategic response to challenges brought by globalization. In this study, interviewees were asked about institutional policies in relation to the status of internationalization at their universities in order to observe the level of each institution's strategic response to globalization as well as to map the role and importance of study abroad programs within the particular institutional context.

Recommendation

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored how study abroad programs are organized at the university level and why they are organized in certain ways. Only the major university study abroad programs and their organizing offices were selected and studied in the present research. Yet during the overview of every university's available study abroad opportunities, it was found that in all the selected universities, there were more than one office that organized such programs, e.g. programs organized by business schools at University Cherry and University Apple in which study abroad opportunities were embedded in their curriculum. Not only that, there were also programs in which though students were not moved physically to another place, their learning contexts were moved to the other end of the world through Internet and Communication Technology (ICT). In one of the selected universities, there were also programs jointly organized by several universities with students coming from all the participating universities in different countries for certain courses. Hence, clearly, this wide variety of programs, which was not included in the present study, means that study abroad programs or student mobility programs can no