

Chapter 28

Effective Higher Education Management through Collaborative Dual-Degree Programs

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ABSTRACT

Influenced by constantly changing demographic, social, and political forces, the internationalization of higher education has been a movement that has shifted purposes and directions over the last 40 years. As more and more students take advantage of educational experiences that transcend country borders, and as these educational experiences become more varied, the development, delivery, and evaluation of educational programs becomes more complex. In some settings, newly developed structures, such as dual-degree or joint-degree programs, have been established as one way to organize and provide structure to such educational programs. The purpose of this chapter is to use the results of a study of a sample of collaborative dual-degree programs in Europe to provide guidance for the management of transnational higher education initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into higher education programs is often used as the definition of internationalization in higher education (Knight, 2003). This broad concept includes both activities on the home campus that help students develop international/intercultural skills, such as international studies,

strengthened foreign-language instruction, sponsorship of foreign students to study on campus (Siaya & Hayward, 2003), and activities off the home campus, across borders, and sometimes oceans (Knight, 2006). As a way to provide students with academic experiences outside of their home countries, the European Union (EU) has developed such programs as ERASMUS (Huisman & van der Wende, 2005) and has provided leadership for the development of joint- and dual-degree programs. “Double and joint degree have become

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a highly desirable tool in the Bologna Process – to promote convergence of higher education systems as well as to foster both international cooperation and competition” says the current President of the European Association for International Education (Hunter, cited in Tobenkin, 2012).

European higher education institutions have been awarding dual degrees to students for several years. Over the last 22 years, estimates suggest as many as 3,000 double degrees have been awarded (Culver et al., 2011). Dual (or double) and joint degrees have been discussed as part of the Bologna discussions, during both the Prague Communiqué (2001) and the Bergen Communiqué (2005), as a way to demonstrate institutional cooperation and enhance student mobility. In addition to mobility discussions related to Bologna, partners in the Top Industrial Managers for Europe Association (TIME) have focused much of their work on the development of dual-degree activities. TIME is a network of 53 leading engineering schools, faculties, and technical universities in Europe that “encourage and promote” voluntary bilateral agreements that lead to such degrees. The organization posits that this model of “in-depth, bi-cultural learning and the mobile, flexible, high-quality graduates it produces are more relevant now than ever” (<http://www.time-association.org/about-TIME/>). More recently, in response to pressures to “deepen inter-institutional connections and accelerate human mobility,” institutions in other countries, such as the United States, Australia, Japan, Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, Croatia, and Serbia have begun to develop dual-degree programs with EU universities (Olds, 2012).

Although the specifics of these programs vary by country, by institution, by degree program, and by faculty collaborators, the common objective of all of them is to better prepare graduates for work in a global marketplace. However, little actual research has been conducted on whether or not these types of programs add value beyond the

typical university degree or beyond the value of an international experience that is part of a typical degree. Given little evaluative material on these programs, a comprehensive multi-method study was conducted with representatives from several European and US universities to gather information regarding the outcomes and “value added” of a sample of dual-degree programs. Results from this study indicated that all stakeholder groups (faculty, students, alumni, and employers) had positive perceptions about collaborative dual-degree programs; the gains for students in these programs are more situated in personal dimensions (e.g., self reliance) than professional, disciplinary ones; and that communication regarding the purpose and design of these programs, particularly with employers, could be enhanced. The results of this study also highlight specific areas of concern related to the management of dual-degree programs in particular and to global higher education initiatives in general. The purpose of this chapter is to examine these concerns brought to light by this study and to suggest possible solutions.

BACKGROUND

There has been rapid movement towards the internationalization of degrees in several fields (see Gereffi, Wadhwa, Rissing, & Ong, 2008; Gill, Kreisel, & Verma, 2009; Olds, 2012). Indeed, there is an emerging literature (Knight, 2004; Shore & Groen, 2009; van Damme, 2001; van der Wende, 2001) that describes the various strategies used to develop and enhance international partnerships in higher education, particularly in regard to double degrees. A survey of 180 higher education institutions across the United States and the European Union by Kuder and Obst (2009) found that a majority of institutions planned to develop more international, collaborative degree programs. In a subsequent 2011 survey on joint

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