

# The Lure of Europe for International Higher Education Cooperation

JANE KNIGHT

*Jane Knight is adjunct professor, in the Comparative, International and Development Education Centre, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. E-mail: janeknight@sympatico.ca. For more information on the survey findings and report see <http://www.unesco.org/iau/internationalization/index.html>.*

Higher education is undergoing significant changes both domestically and internationally in access, financing, mode of delivery, providers, accreditation, and the role in society. A recent worldwide survey on internationalization conducted by the International Association of Universities, in Paris, addressed several of these factors, especially those related to future geographical priorities and areas of growth for internationalization. The opinions reported at higher education institutions in 95 countries provided some surprising and interesting perspectives.

## GROWTH IN REGIONALIZATION

The significance of regional collaboration was clearly confirmed. Higher education institutions in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Latin America—four of six world regions—indicated that collaboration with neighboring countries would be the first geographical priority for internationalization activities in the coming years. These findings appear to confirm the role of common culture, shared history, and geographic proximity as key factors for international academic relations in the future. However, in both North America and the Middle East, data showed a greater preference for collaboration with institutions in Europe over those in their own region.

Overall, the growth in the importance of regionalization is one of the unexpected outcomes of globalization, and intraregional collaboration is a factor to be seriously considered when preparing long-term national and institutional plans. The geographic areas identified as most attractive for international higher education collaboration, after countries' own regions, did provide some surprises.

## THE LURE OF EUROPE

Europe was identified as the first or second geographic priority (after countries' own areas) for universities in all six regions, making it the most favored region for future internationalization activities. This finding was confirmed and perhaps explained by many respondents, indicating a strong interest in

the new developments and reforms emanating from the Bologna process. After Europe, collaboration with higher education institutions in Asia Pacific ranked next in importance, followed by North America in third place. Given that the United States currently hosts the largest number of international students and probably holds the highest number of international institutional agreements, it may come as a surprise that North America was not given greater prominence.

A number of push-and-pull factors involving security and cultural issues affect North America, but clearly the international profile and perceived benefits of the Bologna process and the European Union outreach programs are two pull factors making Europe very attractive for future international academic cooperation. In the coming years, it will be fascinating to monitor the growth in international research, joint curricular design and program initiatives, distance education, student recruitment, among other developments, to determine whether this predicted growth of cooperation with European higher education institutions materializes.

Academic collaboration with Latin America ranked as the fourth priority, followed by Africa and then the Middle East. These results corroborate what has been acknowledged and lamented for several years. In the current era of increasing competitiveness and international rankings, Africa is losing out on international academic partnerships that bring mutual benefits to all partners. This fact is also supported by survey results that point out the low level of importance (8 out of 17) currently attached to international development cooperation projects as desirable and important internationalization strategies of universities

*Europe was identified as the first or second geographic priority (after countries' own areas) for universities in all six regions, making it the most favored region for future internationalization activities.*

## UPCOMING INTERNATIONALIZATION GROWTH AREAS

The survey polled both private and public higher education institutions to determine which areas will experience growth in internationalization over the next five years. The opinions of institutions in all six regions of the world (in developed and developing countries) actually converge on the three most important and likely areas of future growth. Of the 17 different internationalization strategies listed, international institutional agreements and networks ranked first; outgoing mobility opportunities for students, second; and international research collaboration, third. While research has always been a key part of international cooperation, emphasis has grown on ways to invest in and benefit from this area of internationalization. In

previous surveys, research did not appear in the top three.

An interesting finding is that recruiting fee-paying students ranked fourth as a strategy, while recruiting non-fee-paying students ranked ninth. These items raise important issues on the anticipated role and benefits related to international students and also the commercial nature of internationalization. The same institutions identified commercialization as the primary risk related to internationalization. Is charging international students fees, which are often higher than for domestic students, not seen as a commercial activity? Is there a contradiction in these two findings? Apparently not. Perhaps the necessity of charging fees is linked to the high subsidizing of domestic students. Yet in countries where between 15 to 20 percent of enrollments consist of international fee-paying students questions should be asked about the motivation and rationales of recruiting fee-paying versus non-fee-paying students.

The past 10 years have seen significant interest levels and innovations in cross-border education—such as the mobility of students, programs, and providers. These developments have been a result of and also an incentive for new types of public and private institutions, nongovernment organizations, and corporations involved in academic programs being offered in international locations. The survey results showed that in terms of future growth, cross-border program mobility and branch campuses ranked 14th and 16th, respectively. Thus, the future importance of these two areas does not appear as widespread among traditional universities active in internationalization as one might have expected. Instead, program and provider mobility seems to involve a group of institutions in a

*Of the 17 different internationalization strategies listed, international institutional agreements and networks ranked first.*

small number of countries and nontraditional education providers such as companies in the Global Education Index that are listed on public stock exchanges and sell education programs and services in an international market.

The survey shows that the identified areas of future growth are in fact highly similar to current priorities and practices of internationalization. These findings raise the questions whether universities are taking a short-term approach to planning for internationalization and are still in a reactive mode to international opportunities rather than adopting more of a proactive or strategic stance to maximizing the benefits of internationalization and minimizing potential risks. ■

## Institutional Responses to the Internationalization Agenda in the United Kingdom

STEVE WOODFIELD

*Steve Woodfield is a research fellow at the Centre for Policy and Change in Tertiary Education, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XH, UK. E-mail: s.woodfield@surrey.ac.uk.*

UK higher education institutions have recently been transforming their approaches to international activities, influenced by the 2006 Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education. This initiative encouraged institutions to broaden the term *international* that while still focused on generating additional revenue via inward student mobility highlights solidifying the long-term reputation and standing of UK higher education “at home” and overseas, through international partnerships and the experiences of international students.

### INSTITUTIONAL INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES

In the United Kingdom, 77 percent of higher education institutions refer to *international activity* or *internationalization* in their strategic plans, either as a separate section or within other strategic areas (e.g., teaching and learning, research, etc.). A small number of UK institutions have either developed or are developing comprehensive stand-alone international strategy documents to guide their international activity.

*Content.* Conceptions of an *internationalized* institution determine the nature and coverage of international strategies. Some UK institutions focus selectively on one or a small number of activities (e.g., overseas recruitment, transnational education, or research partnerships) while others seek to integrate an international dimension within the whole institution. This latter approach is often informed by the recent definitions of internationalization developed by Jane Knight and can involve a range of different international activities and institutional culture or ethos as related to the international dimension.

*Stages of development.* It is possible to identify three sequential stages of strategic development in UK higher education institutions. At the first—*international activity*—stage, activities are disparate and uncoordinated at the central level. The second—*international strategy*—stage marks the beginning of central coordination and alignment of different agendas. The third—*internationalization process*—stage represents an attempt to integrate and achieve leverage and added value regarding all international activity. Most UK higher education institutions stand between the first two stages, although insti-