

to those institutions that have been able to gain most advantage from that network. New forms of cultural engagement between Birmingham (UK) and Chicago involve multiple linkages between museums, theaters, art galleries, and universities, utilizing long-standing “Sister-City” relationships. Businesses also take the lead in establishing networks: Santander Bank created Santander Global Universities Division to support higher education as “a means of contributing to the development and prosperity of society.” There are now 1,000 university members in 17 countries and the bank has funded research, mobility, and scholarships. International associations have also facilitated global networks to pool resources, address pressing challenges, and contribute to the development of societies. The UNITWIN Networks and UNESCO Chairs—a program now involving 650 institutions in 24 countries—“serve as think tanks and bridge builders between academia, civil society, local communities, research, and policy-making”.

Institutions coalesce and cooperate in global networks across multiple themes to exchange information and good practice

MULTIPLE THEMES

Institutions coalesce and cooperate in global networks across multiple themes to exchange information and good practice, benchmark their activities, create new knowledge through research and joint-degree programs, facilitate mobility of staff and students, optimize resources and increase capacity, and promote and advocate services and values. Thematic networks include UNICA (a network of 46 universities in 35 capital cities of Europe), UArctic (a cooperative network of universities, colleges, research institutes, and other organizations from 10 countries concerned with education and research in and about the north), UASNet (a network of universities of applied science from 9 countries represented by their national rectors’ conferences) and the Asian Association of Open Universities focusing on distance learning. Shared values also drive global networks. With 320 institutional members in 72 countries, the Talloires Network is committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education; the International Sustainable Campus Network with 67 member institutions across five continents is committed to sustainability in campus operations and research and teaching; the global Scholars at Risk Network of institutions, academic

associations, and associated networks advocates to protect academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and related higher education values.

SUSTAINABILITY

Some of today’s global networks are new: some have lasted for decades; others have restructured, like the Oresund Network, and some have disappeared, like Scottish Knowledge, an e-learning consortium across 11 universities. Past experience offers some clue to sustainability—suggesting that where strategies either ignore or downplay cultural, political, or intellectual differences, failure will ensue—especially when the pursuit of new international connections is perceived to weaken national ties. A further lesson is that all partners must gain benefits from the network if trust, effort, and flow of institutional resources are to be maintained. Managing relationships respectfully and productively across international boundaries is likely to be a core competence for sustaining global networks. ■

Are Double/Multiple Degree Programs Leading to “Discount Degrees”?

JANE KNIGHT

Jane Knight is adjunct professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada. E-mail: janeknight@sympatico.ca.

The number and types of international double and multiple degree programs have skyrocketed in the last five years. According to the 2014 International Association of Universities report on internationalization there has been a 50 percent increase in double-degree programs in professional areas, 19 percent increase in Natural Sciences and 14 percent increase in Social Sciences during the last three years. These figures are indicative and do not capture the total growth, especially in Asia and Europe. But they clearly demonstrate the role of double/multiple degree programs in the current landscape of international higher education and their popularity with students and institutions alike.

DIFFERENCES AMONG THE DEGREES

A few words about what a double/multiple degree program

actually means and involves is important, as there are multiple interpretations and hence mass confusion about the meaning of the term. An international double-degree (or multiple-degree) program involves two or more institutions—from different countries collaborating to design and deliver an academic program. Normally, a qualification from each of the collaborating institutions is provided. They differ from joint-degree programs or co-tutelle arrangements. A joint-degree program offers one qualification jointly issued by two or more collaborating institutions, while a co-tutelle arrangement involves partner universities working together on the development and delivery of a program; but only one degree is offered by the institution of registration. This discussion recognizes the contribution of all three approaches but focuses on the issues related to double/multiple degree programs only.

DOUBLE COUNTING OF ACADEMIC WORK FOR TWO OR MORE DEGREES?

As an internationalization strategy, double/multiple degree programs address the heartland of academia—the teaching/learning process and the production of new knowledge between and among countries. These programs are built on the principle of international academic collaboration and can bring important benefits to students, professors, institutions, and national/regional education systems. The interest in double degrees is exploding but so is the concern about those programs, which double count the same credits for two or more degrees.

An international double-degree (or multiple-degree) program involves two or more institutions—from different countries collaborating to design and deliver an academic program.

A broad range of reactions to double-degree programs exists due to the diversity of program models; the involvement of new (bona fide and rogue) providers; the uncertainty related to quality assurance and recognition of qualifications; and finally, the ethics involved in deciding the required academic workload and/or acquired new competencies for granting of double/multiple degrees. For many academics and policymakers, double-degree programs are welcomed as a natural extension of exchange and mobility programs. For others, double/multiple-degree programs are perceived as a troublesome development, leading to

double counting of academic work—thus, jeopardizing the integrity of a university qualification and moving toward the thin edge of academic fraud.

ATTRACTIVE TO STUDENTS

Students are attracted to double-degree programs for a variety of reasons. The opportunity to be part of a program that offers two or more degrees from universities, located in different countries, is seen to enhance their employability prospects and career path. Some students believe that a collaborative program is of higher quality because the expertise of two or more universities has shaped the academic program. Other students are not so interested in enhanced quality but are attracted to the opportunity to obtain two degrees “for the price of one.” Students argue that the duration is shorter for a double-degree program, the workload is definitely less than for two single degrees, and there is less of a financial burden. This argument is not valid for all programs of this type, but there is an element of truth in these claims.

Even the traditional twinning arrangements, where an academic program and qualification from the parent/home institution is being offered in a different country through cooperation with a local host higher education institution, are now morphing into double-degree programs—one from the home institution and another from the host institution, even though the credits for only one academic program are completed. Not all double-degree programs involve student mobility, as it is more economical to move professors than students, and virtual classrooms are becoming more popular. Finally, the status factor cannot be ignored. There is a certain sense of elitism attached to having academic credentials from universities in different countries, even if the student never actually studied abroad.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES FOR INSTITUTIONS

For institutions, academic benefits in terms of curriculum innovation, exchanges of professors and researchers, and access to expertise and networks of the partner university make these programs especially attractive. Another important rationale is to increase an institution’s reputation and ranking as an international university. This is accomplished by deliberately collaborating with partners of equal or greater status. Interestingly, some institutions prefer double-degree programs with higher-ranked partners, in order to avoid domestic accreditation procedures. For others, counting students from double-degree program cohorts can increase their graduation numbers and throughput rates.

While the benefits of double-degree programs are many and diverse, so are the challenges. Different regulatory systems, academic calendars, quality assurance and ac-

creditation schemes, credit systems, tuition and scholarship programs, teaching approaches, entrance and examination requirements, language of instruction, thesis/dissertation supervision are a few of the issues that collaborating institutions need to address.

A challenge facing the higher education community around the world is to develop a common understanding of what double/multiple programs actually mean.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

My analysis of double/multiple-degree programs, by several national higher education organizations, shows that there is no one model. Nor, should there be one standard model as local conditions vary enormously. However, important new questions are being raised as the number and types of double/multiple programs increase. For example, which is the best route for accreditation of double/multiple-degree programs—national, binational, regional, or international accreditation? Can one thesis/dissertation fulfill the requirements of two research-based graduate programs? Are international collaborative programs encouraging the overuse of English language and the standardization of curriculum? Will status building and credentialism motives eventually jeopardize the quality and academic objectives of these international collaborative degree programs? Are these programs sustainable without additional internal or external supplementary funding?

INTEGRITY AND LEGITIMACY OF QUALIFICATIONS ARE AT STAKE

A challenge facing the higher education community around the world is to develop a common understanding of what double/multiple programs actually mean, the academic requirements and qualifications offered, and how they differ from joint-degree programs. Joint-degree programs are very attractive alternatives but face legal and bureaucratic barriers, as it is impossible in many countries to offer a joint qualification with another institution. Most importantly, a rigorous debate on the vexing questions of accreditation, recognition, and “legitimacy” of the qualifications needs

to take place to ensure that international double/multiple-degree programs are respected and recognized by students, institutions, and employers around the world and that double/multiple-degree programs do not become known for offering “discount degrees.” ■

Is the United States the Best in the World? Not in Internationalization

MADELEINE F. GREEN

Madeleine F. Green is senior fellow at the International Association of Universities and at NAFSA: Association of International Educators. A longer version of this article appears in NAFSA's e-publication, Trends and Insights. E-mail: madeleinefgreen@gmail.com.

The American narrative about its higher education system is “the best in the world.” This assertion is largely based on the US research output, but other nations are closing the gap. Can the United States claim any worldwide pre-eminence in internationalization? Data from the *4th Global Survey of Internationalization of Higher Education*—conducted by the International Association of Universities (IAU), providing a unique opportunity to compare US perceptions and practices with those of other countries—suggests that the answer is *no*.

THE IAU SURVEY

Conducted in 2013, the survey elicited responses from a total of 1,336 institutions worldwide (approximately a 20% response rate), of which 209 were from the United States (approximately a 14% response rate). For comparability of data with the worldwide population of institutions that IAU surveyed, community colleges were not included in the US survey group. Within the US respondent group, 49 percent were doctorate-granting institutions; 26 percent master's-degree level, and 25 percent granted baccalaureates only. Nearly 55 percent were private, not for profit; 3 percent private for profit; and 42 percent public. The IAU respondent population included 66 percent doctoral institutions.

The full report analyzes global responses, as well as regional ones, and highlights changes from previous surveys. In the regional analyses, the United States and Canada comprise the North American region. Of the 253 respondents in North America, 209 were from the United States.



In addition to our Web site and Facebook page, we are now tweeting. We hope you will consider “following” us on Twitter!