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Internationalization of the curriculum and integration in Argentine higher education

Abstract

This paper problematizes the internationalization of the curriculum in Argentine context, which stands out as a key element in the crucial phenomenon of the internationalization of higher education in a globalized world, with growing development of Communication and Information Technologies (ICT), but marked by global crises. . Driven by globalization, technological advances and socioeconomic challenges, educational institutions face the need to adapt to prepare students for these challenges. Educational integration and internationalization emerge as powerful tools to address challenges and train individuals capable of contributing significantly to the resolution of global problems. Curriculum management is viewed as a complex system that involves strategies, processes, consensus and negotiations, requiring constant updating and innovation. Collective collaboration in curriculum construction seeks to promote innovation and dynamic development. The internationalization processes of higher education offer a series of benefits, such as the promotion of intercultural understanding, the improvement of educational quality and the development of intercultural skills. However, it also presents challenges, such as language and cultural barriers, as well as the potential exclusion of those without resources to participate in international programs. The internationalization of higher education presents advantages such as multicultural interaction and educational improvement through collaboration with foreign institutions. This develops intercultural skills and facilitates multidisciplinary research. However, language and cultural differences can be obstacles, favoring academic elites and generating financial tensions. Maximizing benefits and addressing challenges requires implementing inclusive and sustainable policies, including language support, scholarships, and community collaboration. Keywords: Internationalization, Curriculum, Integration, High Education

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INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of Higher Education refers to the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and provision of higher education. This concept, raised by Knight (2004), implies a deep reflection on how universities can develop strategies to integrate these elements into their curriculum. In the last two decades, the internationalization of higher education in South American countries has gained relevance. However, recent studies show that this aspect is not yet fully mature in most higher education institutions (HEIs). However, the internationalization of the curriculum is progressively beginning to be a clear priority for many actors in the educational system, particularly for HEIs.

This context creates an interest in studying and discussing the internationalization of the curriculum, relating it to the quality assurance system of higher education, especially in terms of the quality conditions necessary for the granting of qualified records. The idea of "comprehensive internationalization" (Arango and Acuña, 2018) advocates planning and management that impacts all areas of university life. This means that internationalization strategies must be transversal and encompass educational, curricular and academic processes, including horizontal cooperation between institutions and sectors (Oregione, 2016).

Addressing the internationalization of the curriculum involves focusing on various aspects that contribute to integrating a global perspective in education. The object of study is the internationalization of higher education, where one of its most explicit trends is the internationalization of the curriculum. Curriculum internationalization refers to the implementation of strategies and actions to incorporate intercultural and international elements in the academic programs of an educational institution. This initiative is essential for the training of global professionals capable of facing the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world. Internationalization of the curriculum not only enriches education, but also prepares students to be global citizens capable of addressing challenges and seizing opportunities in a globalized world. The internationalization of the curriculum in Higher Education is not only about incorporating international elements in the courses, but also about comprehensively transforming institutions so that these strategies impact all aspects of university life. This comprehensive approach requires deep reflection and a commitment to cooperation and interculturality, supported by a solid theoretical and methodological foundation.

METHODOLOGY

Critical reading of articles and contributions on internationalization of the curriculum in South American universities. Knight (1999) proposes the existence of four areas of programs for the internationalization of the different functions of higher education institutions.

- academic; There are possible activities such as: student exchange programs; the study of a foreign language; the internationalization of the curriculum; studying/working abroad; the reception of international students; joint master's and doctoral programs; mobility programs for academic/administrative staff, etc.
- Research and international collaboration. These are joint research projects; international conferences and seminars; joint publication of articles and essays; international research agreements; exchange programs for graduate students and researchers.
- External relations and services such as carrying out community associations and projects with non-governmental groups or private sector companies; international projects to promote development; cross-border contract/special training programs. This category has traditionally been oriented to international development activities and



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bilateral cooperation agreements between institutions (Abba, López and Taborga, 2010).

- Extracurricular activities such as clubs and student associations; intercultural and international activities at the university; coordination with community cultural groups; programs and peer groups; social, cultural and academic support systems (Abba, López and Taborga, 2010).

FINDINGS

Comprehensive internationalization transforms higher education institutions, considering them global assets with significant cross-border exchanges. Internationalization strategies must be transversal in educational, curricular and academic processes. Furthermore, they must be integrated into the most important levels of institutions, such as institutional academic policies and program design.

International academic mobility has been an important first step in the internationalization process, allowing some students to acquire skills to face global challenges. However, mobility has limitations and can deepen inequity and inequality if it is promoted as the only strategy. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on in situ actions that provide all students with tools to obtain skills in a globalized environment and a more inclusive and democratic strategy is the internationalization of the curriculum. This includes actions such as the teaching of foreign languages, the creation of joint study plans with foreign HEIs for double degree programs and the development of intercultural competencies. It is not enough to introduce international elements into the curriculum; It is crucial that students acquire critical, interdisciplinary, self-reflective and comparative thinking, with skills to interact and adapt to other cultures.

It is about examining how subject content can reflect an international perspective, including global case studies, literature and examples from different cultures, and global issues such as climate change, the global economy, and human rights, analyzing the competencies that They must be developed in students so that they can act effectively in a global context. This includes intercultural skills, multilingualism, critical global thinking, and the ability to work in diverse teams, studying how teaching methodologies can be adapted to foster an international perspective. This may include using information and communication technologies (ICT) to connect students with their peers in other countries, implementing exchange programs, and fostering international collaborative projects. In addition, it includes the investigation of the opportunities and challenges associated with the mobility of students and professors, such as exchange programs, academic stays abroad, and the reception of international students, the analysis of policies at the institutional, national level. and international that support the internationalization of the curriculum, as well as the strategies that educational institutions implement to carry out this process, the continuous examination of how the impact of internationalization on student learning and development can be evaluated, and how The results of these evaluations can be used to continually improve the curriculum and educational practices and study the training and professional development needs of teachers so that they can deliver an internationalized curriculum effectively. The internationalization of the curriculum must be approached in a multidimensional manner, ranging from content and teaching methodologies to educational policies and the professional development of teachers, with the aim of preparing students to live and work in an increasingly globalized and interconnected.

The professor is the main actor in the internationalization of the curriculum. His role involves integrating international, intercultural and interdisciplinary dimensions into his teaching



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strategy, course content, teaching methods and assessments. This integration not only enriches learning, but also prepares students to interact effectively in a global context (Quiroga, 2017). Key strategies for the internationalization of the curriculum (Arango and Acuña, 2018)

- Incorporation of international conventions, treaties and regulations applicable to the discipline.
- Inclusion of trends, research and scientific and academic production at an international level.
- Use of international terminology and symbols in the discipline.
- Study of current and historical events relevant to the area of knowledge.
- Integration of issues of global interest, such as environment, equity, human rights and sustainable development goals.
- Pedagogical Strategies for the Internationalization of Courses:
- Promotion of international collaborative projects and the use of information technologies to connect students with their peers in other countries.
- Implementation of exchange programs and academic stays abroad.
- Provision of educational materials that reflect cultural and international diversity.
- Access to international databases, bibliography and digital resources.
- Intercultural Competences and Foreign Language
- Development of intercultural skills that allow students to interact effectively in diverse contexts.
- Promotion of multilingualism, encouraging the learning of foreign languages.

Teacher's Guide

To facilitate the internationalization of the curriculum, teachers are suggested to follow these specific strategies:

- **Curricular Content:** Integrate international content into the courses.
- **Pedagogical Strategies:** Adapt teaching methods that incorporate global perspectives.
- **Learning Resources:** Use educational materials that promote cultural diversity.
- **Intercultural Competencies:** Develop intercultural skills in students and promote the learning of foreign languages.
- **Practical examples of internationalization**
- **Conventions and Treaties:** Include in the course's studies of international conventions and treaties relevant to the discipline.
- **Global Research:** Analyze and discuss global trends and research in the study area.
- **International Terminology:** Use and teach international terminology and symbols relevant to the discipline.
- **Historical and Current Events:** Study and debate historical and current events of international relevance in the context of the area of knowledge.
- **Global Issues:** Incorporate global issues such as the environment, equity, human rights and sustainable development goals into course content.

Internationalization of the curriculum not only enriches education, but also prepares students to be global citizens capable of addressing challenges and seizing opportunities in a globalized world. Intercultural experiences in the internationalization of the curriculum refer to the opportunities and activities that allow students and teachers to interact and learn across different cultures. These experiences are essential to develop intercultural skills, essential in an

increasingly globalized world. There are several models that address cultural diversity and offer different approaches for the integration of intercultural experiences in the curriculum:

- Assimilation: This model is based on the idea that cultural minorities must adopt the norms and values of the dominant culture. Although it can promote social cohesion, assimilation can result in the loss of cultural identity and the marginalization of minorities.
- Multiculturalism: Promotes the coexistence of diverse cultures, recognizing and celebrating cultural differences within a society. Although more inclusive than assimilation, multiculturalism can sometimes be superficial, promoting tolerance without true integration or intercultural understanding.
- Interculturality: It focuses on interaction and dialogue between cultures, promoting mutual understanding and the co-creation of new forms of coexistence. This model is more dynamic and transformative, as it not only recognizes diversity, but also encourages collaboration and mutual learning.

Critical Readings from the Notion of Elemental Experience

To further the critical study of intercultural experiences, it is useful to adopt the notion of "elementary experience", which focuses on the fundamental experiences that individuals have in intercultural contexts. Here are some critical ideas and approaches:

- Experience and Perception of the Other: examines how people perceive and understand those from other cultures through direct experiences. This approach helps understand the barriers and facilitators of intercultural understanding, providing a basis for designing educational experiences that promote a more positive and understanding perception of the other.
- Dialogue and Reflection: promotes the use of dialogue and reflection as tools for intercultural learning. It fosters an environment where students can share their experiences and critically reflect on them, facilitating deeper and more meaningful learning.

Intercultural experiences can empower students, giving them the agency to act in multicultural contexts. This approach emphasizes the importance of experiences that not only teach about other cultures, but also enable students to influence and actively participate in diverse environments. To achieve true internationalization of the curriculum, international programs must be taught that combine different types of academic offer:

- Curricula with an international theme
- Curricula with an international comparative method
- Curricula to prepare students for international professions
- Curricula taught in foreign languages
- Interdisciplinary programs, such as specialized and regional studies
- Curricula to achieve professional qualifications with international recognition
- Curricula with double degrees
- Curricula with parts taken abroad
- Curricula offered especially to foreign students
- Programs with complete modules taught by foreign guest teachers
- Curricula where foreign students interact continuously, in person or virtually (Van der Wende, 1996).

CONCLUSIONS

The priority goals in the processes of internationalization of the curriculum include the improvement of foreign languages, the comprehensive understanding of other countries and cultures, and the development of intercultural and transcultural competencies in students. Harari suggests that this process be carried out through the infusion of international content in disciplinary courses, comparative use in teaching and research, and the study of foreign languages as an integral part of the curriculum (Harari, 1992). The internationalization of the curriculum is an essential process for higher education, but it faces several obstacles. These include the fragmentation of the curriculum into different disciplines and the disjointed implementation of international strategies. Teachers often add international elements to their courses without a comprehensive approach, which limits the effectiveness of internationalization. International strategies must be integrated with a specific purpose and not in isolation. Student academic mobility, for example, should be considered an integral part of the internationalized curriculum, as it enriches academic discussions and promotes constant learning, in addition to offering different pedagogical perspectives (Arango & Acuña 2018).

However, teachers often lack the guidance needed to create internationalized curricula and are often forced to improvise. Therefore, it is crucial that institutions and academic programs deeply analyze their curricular perspectives and pedagogical methods to implement internationalization processes that involve teachers and students comprehensively. The internationalized curriculum must be based on comprehensive, interdisciplinary, humanistic and socio-constructivist concepts, reflected in pedagogical methodologies focused on ethno-relativism. This would give greater relevance to the curricula in the context of international and multicultural education. Many institutions do not consider internationalization policies a priority, and international education is often a marginal function. It is necessary for authorities to design policies, allocate resources and define clear priorities in internationalization strategies, integrating them into the institution's strategic planning. Furthermore, administrative structures must be adapted and articulated to generate synergies and support within the process. According to Knight (1999), international education must be integrated into substantive functions, and the great challenge is the degree of internationalization included in the disciplines and subjects. Simply introducing international elements without context or guidance is not enough; Analysis, exchange of perceptions, self-reflection and self-criticism are required to develop effective international competencies in students.

Designing internationalized curricula is not just about implementing a list of actions, but about creating planned strategies with clear purposes, where all teachers participate in a conscious and articulated way.

Identifying and overcoming obstacles to the internationalization of the curriculum is crucial for the success of the process. Some of the main obstacles are:

- Curriculum Fragmentation: The lack of integration between disciplines makes it difficult to create a truly comprehensive system.
- Lack of Guidance for Teachers: Teachers need guidance and support to internationalize their curricula effectively, avoiding improvisation.
- Disjointed Implementation of Strategies: International strategies must be coherent and specific, integrated at all levels of the curriculum.
- Marginal Perception of Internationalization: International education should be an institutional priority, not a marginal function.
- Need for Reforms and Training: Institutions must redefine their priorities, carry out curricular reforms and train teachers.

- Resources and Long-Term Commitment: The investment in time and resources (human and financial) is significant, and the results are not seen in the short term, which requires a sustained institutional commitment.

Overcoming these obstacles implies a strategic and coordinated approach, where internationalization policies are integrated into institutional planning, adequate resources are allocated, and a culture of collaboration and continuous reflection between teachers and students is promoted. Furthermore, it is essential that teachers develop international competencies to effectively manage curricula, ensuring that students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to face global challenges. The first step to advance this process is the design of an internationalization plan with specific objectives according to the reality and needs of the HEIs. This plan must allow students to acquire international skills and competencies, integrating international elements into curricula and study plans. The will of the entire academic community is necessary, as well as the joint construction of said plan and collaborative work between teachers and students. Internationalization in general is a transversal element that must be adopted within the substantive functions of HEIs, including teaching. Internationalization is essential in quality processes, since it enriches substantive functions by comparing, integrating and cooperating with the outside world (Quiroga, 2017). Quality assurance processes should include a special chapter on internationalization, focusing on its results and effects on student training. The generation of new knowledge gives comparative value to nations, translated into the creation of wealth. Universities play a fundamental role in this process, training professionals capable of functioning in the era of knowledge.

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