



Students and Internationalization: Student Mobility in the Internationalization Processes

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ABSTRACT

Internationalization in higher education institutions has traditionally included a broad set of elements such as study programs, teaching and learning, research, institutional arrangements, mobility of students and teachers, cooperation, etc. This research addresses the perceptions of "participation", "stay", "experience" and "culture" of students of the National University of San Luis (UNSL) who participated in the internationalization processes in Colombian, Chilean and Mexican universities during the period 2005-2014. Through interviews, the testimonies of four students who had internationalization experiences and who traveled to foreign university centers were collected. The mobility experience is enriching for students and for their future professional life. The experience of mobility is very strong and impressive in all people and more in the students who aspire to develop a future career in the future, and in this way the training is enriched with these learning in different contexts that entail a whole cognitive and cultural experience.

KEYWORDS

Students. Internationalization. University.

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Alunos e Internacionalização: Mobilidade Estudantil nos Processos de Internacionalização

RESUMO

A internacionalização em instituições de ensino superior tem tradicionalmente incluído um amplo conjunto de elementos, tais como programas de estudo, ensino e aprendizagem, pesquisa, arranjos institucionais, mobilidade de alunos e professores, cooperação, etc. Esta pesquisa aborda as percepções de "participação", "ficar", "experiência" e "cultura" de estudantes da Universidade Nacional de San Luis (UNSL) que participaram do processo de internacionalização das universidades colombianas, chilenas e mexicanas durante o período 2005-2014. Por meio de entrevistas, foram coletados os depoimentos de quatro estudantes que tiveram experiências de internacionalização e que viajaram para centros universitários estrangeiros. A experiência de mobilidade é enriquecedora para os estudantes e para sua futura vida profissional. A experiência de mobilidade é muito forte e poderosa em todas as pessoas e mais estudantes que aspiram a desenvolver uma futura carreira no futuro e, assim, a formação é enriquecida com esses aprendizados em diferentes contextos envolvendo um todo experiência cognitiva e cultural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Estudantes. Internacionalização. Universidade.

Estudiantes e Internacionalización: Movilidad Estudiantil en los Procesos de Internacionalización

RESUMEN

La internacionalización en las instituciones de educación superior ha incluido tradicionalmente un amplio conjunto de elementos como los programas de estudio, la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, la investigación, los acuerdos institucionales, la movilidad de estudiantes y profesores, la cooperación, etc. Esta investigación aborda las percepciones de "participación", "estadía", "experiencia" y "cultura" de estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional de San Luis (UNSL) que participaron en los procesos de internacionalización en universidades colombianas, chilenas y mexicanas durante el periodo 2005-2014. A través de entrevistas se recogieron los testimonios de cuatro estudiantes que tuvieron experiencias de internacionalización y que viajaron a centros universitarios extranjeros. La experiencia de movilidad es enriquecedora para los estudiantes y para su futura vida profesional. La experiencia de la movilidad es muy fuerte e impactante en todas las personas y más en los estudiantes que aspiran a desarrollar una futura carrera profesional en el futuro, y de este modo la formación se ve enriquecida con estos aprendizajes en contextos diferentes que conllevan toda una experiencia cognitiva y cultural.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Estudiantes. Internacionalización. Universidad.

Introduction

The concept of internationalization has evolved over time and is as complex as it is confusing according to Knight (1999). It has traditionally included a wide range of elements such as study programs, teaching and learning, research, institutional arrangements, mobility of students and teachers, cooperation, etc. A wide range of proposals and activities that have multiple dimensions and actors of higher education and does not constitute a homogeneous or unidirectional process. The term also refers to two opposing paradigms that account for conflicting visions, on the one hand, the internationalization model focused on cooperation and traditional international solidarity, on the other, a competitive model, oriented to the pursuit of benefits according to Verger (2006).

This research addresses the perceptions of "participation", "stay", "experience" and "culture" of students of the National University of San Luis (UNSL) who participated in the internationalization processes in Colombian, Chilean and Mexican universities during the period 2005-2014. Through interviews, the testimonies of four students who had internationalization experiences and who traveled to foreign university centers were collected.

Internationalization

María Paz López (2013) has proposed the concepts of internationalization capacities and internationalization institutional conditions when investigating the capacities built by the actors of the research groups, the university communities and the possibilities that the institutional frameworks provide for their development.

The search for elements or processes of relations between management policies on internationalization that a university assumes in our time, within the framework of the interrelation and bids between institutional cultures and teaching cultures in university organizations, involves moving on a complex terrain and constitutes a Thematic set worthy of study topics. Clark (1996) has argued that in developing societies in trying to modernize their higher education systems, they have been oriented towards an ambiguous and open complexity, where the increasing diversity of tasks leads to higher education systems towards a series of systemic adaptations.

The processes of internationalization of higher education, in many cases, are associated with those activities of student and teacher mobility, interdisciplinary international research, conferences and programs that bring together the academy, among other activities (KNIGHT, 2005, DIÓMEDES, 2012). However, to speak of the internationalization of higher education means today to consider a multiplicity of tasks in the universities that range from the planning of their cooperation activities, the teaching and student exchange, the participation in networks and in new associations of universities and in its own modes of linkage with other universities and academic centres.

The concepts of internationalization have begun to evolve and differentiate over time. There are often many terms that are confused or used together with internationalization. The most frequent is globalization, which also has a clear economic connotation. One way of understanding the processes of internationalization initiated by a university is to consider them as one of the ways in which it can respond to the impact and influence of globalization, respecting for that, the individuality, the identity and culture of the organization. In this sense, globalization has become an economic and cultural phenomenon that overcomes institutional life and internationalization constitutes a proactive response (ALARCÓN, 2010).

The International Association of Universities (IAU for its acronym in English) is a global organization created in 1950, which aims to improve international understanding and cooperation and contribute to the development of quality higher education around the world. In its paper on internationalization *Affirming Academic Values in Internationalization of Higher Education: A Call for Action* (2012) calls for reinforcing academic values in the internationalization of higher education and calls for action to university students to ensure that the impacts of internationalization are positive. The declaration affirms that the internationalization of higher education is a dynamic process, defined and constantly redefined by the international context in which it operates. To the extent that the latter changes, the purposes, objectives, meanings and strategies of internationalization are also modified.

It characterizes globalization as interdependence between countries and manifests itself in the economic, political, social, and cultural and knowledge spheres. The increase in the mobility of goods, services and people, as well as the growing use of information and communication technologies, shorten time and space to an unprecedented level, at increasingly lower costs, occupying a central place in the process of globalization.

Faced with the growing interest of states, universities and teaching communities in the international dimension of higher education, the term "internationalization" has begun to be used.

The transformations that universities face today in the terms proposed by Gacel Ávila (2006) are phenomena such as virtual education, transnationalization, the promotion of education without borders, internationalization, international education, the international curriculum and virtual mobility or physics, which appear in this new virtualization scenario of higher education (GACEL ÁVILA, 2006). The internationalization of universities and higher education has emerged as a phenomenon more recent than that of international cooperation already traditional in universities. To a certain extent, this trend appears as a strategy in the face of globalization and, at the same time, it is modifying the role of the institutions that should generate their own cooperation programs and offices after strategically defining their ways, forms and with whom to link.

Student Mobility

Travel is always a great cultural experience. The possibility of moving and knowing other geographies, other cultures, other people and also studying or training, can result in a fascinating and valuable experience for a future academic career. The possibilities of conducting studies, internships or other activity in foreign universities in the current context of globalization, internationalization of universities and transformation of higher education are immense. The development of internationalization processes has been characterized by including international mobility programs for undergraduate students. This activity serves the knowledge of students from other university systems and the students' own participation in groups of foreign students.

Argentina has become a pole of attraction for foreign students based on their cultural and natural wealth. In particular, the mobility to Argentina of students from Latin America (Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and Chile) as well as the United States and Europe is notorious.

The causes of student internationalization can be sought in the low diversity of the local face-to-face offer, the low virtual international offer, the greater global certifications and the educational re-labeling before the university massification (RAMA, 2011).

Interchange of Students

The San Luis National University has sent and received interchange students from Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru among other countries. These initiatives help the integral formation of the student through collective experience and contact with other cultures and societies, favoring their understanding of the world in a space of respect for diversity and expansion of international links.

The calls in which the students have been able to participate from the UNSL are Youth Exchange Mexico Argentina (JIMA) which is the exchange of the Argentine universities with the Mexican universities, the Academic Mobility Colombia Argentina (MACA) and with the countries of Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, the CRISCOS Program (Council of Rectors Integration Subregion Central West of South America).

The Mexico-Argentina Youth Exchange Program (JIMA), was born after the signing of the Agreement between the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES) of Mexico and the National Interuniversity Council (CIN) of Argentina, and seeks to promote the exchange of Mexican and Argentinean students between the universities, to study undergraduate studies during a semester in the other country. The Program began in 2005, with the participation of 28 Argentine higher education institutions (IES) and 32 Mexican institutions.

The Cooperation Framework Agreement, celebrated between the Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN) of the Colombian Republic and the National

Interuniversity Council (CIN) of the Argentine Republic, established an inter-institutional cooperation agreement for the exchange of undergraduate students, with the purpose of to promote the internationalization of higher education, seeking to strengthen academic cooperation and the development of the quality of teaching that is given to students.

CRISCOS is a subregional, non-profit organization, made up of universities from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Peru, which share territorial, historical and cultural ties and has the objective of promoting and proposing policies, plans, programs and integration projects and development for the member countries. It seeks the integration of the peoples and universities of the Subregion through mutual cooperation, in order to assume the challenges of globalization, improving their competitiveness.

Usually the requirements of being a regular undergraduate student of a UNSL Degree are as follows: the student must have passed at least 40% of the degree, be younger than 30, not hold teaching positions, have high performance Academic and not having previously been recipients of Exchange Scholarships and Student Mobility.

In the case of students who apply from the San Luis National University, they are chosen through a selection made by an Evaluation Commission of the UNSL, which take into account the merits and academic background, compliance with the stipulated requirements, and the plan of subjects to be studied. Based on these aspects, an order of merits is established in the selection of the titular and alternate postulants according to the places offered in each mobility program.

In order to find information about how the students of the San Luis National University live the processes we have conducted four interviews. The testimonies collected from the experiences of internationalization and international cooperation held by the students have been examined in four categories such as "participation", "stay", "experience" and "culture".

We have investigated students on four issues:

1. How was your participation in mobility abroad as a student?
2. How was your stay at the reception center?
3. What significant aspects could you highlight from this experience?
4. What do you think about the possibilities of cultural enrichment to live a few months in a foreign country?

The UNSL students who participated in the exchange processes at Colombian, Chilean and Mexican universities show first of all the profound gratitude to the National University of San Luis for having had the opportunity to study in a foreign country. The gratitude to the UNSL is profound. Another point to note is that student participation is carried out through the JIMA Program (Youth of the Mexico-Argentina Exchange (JIMA), aimed at undergraduate students and the MACA Program.) JIMA seeks for students to

acquire their own experience. acquisition of a richer and universalist vision of reality and the achievement of greater integration between Mexico and Argentina.

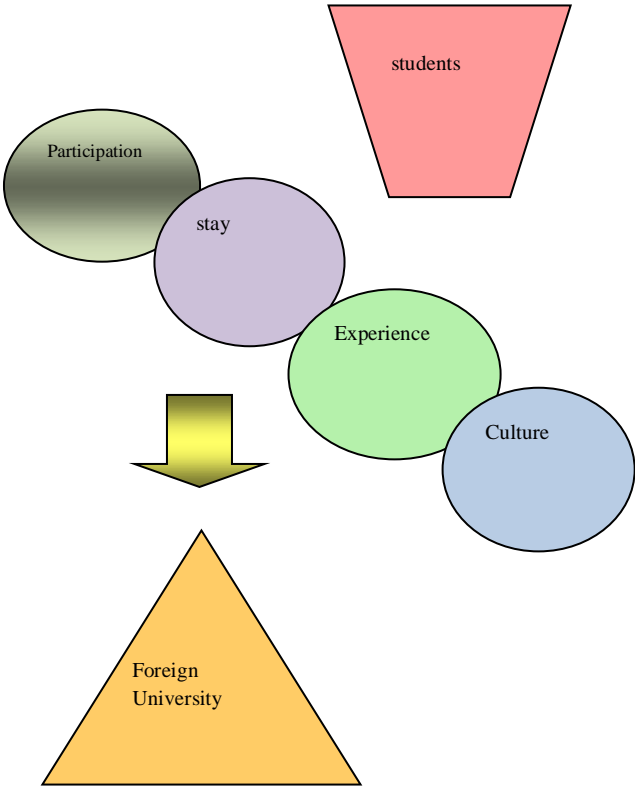
MACA emerged from a Cooperation Framework Agreement, celebrated between the Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN) and the National Interuniversity Council (CIN) of Argentina, whose objective is the exchange of undergraduate students to promote the internationalization of higher education, strengthening of academic cooperation and the development of the quality of teaching.

Through the reports of the Secretary of Interinstitutional Relations (SRI) we were able to access data that reported the participation of students of the National University of San Luis in mobility experiences. The Secretariat of Interinstitutional Relations (SRI) manages agreements with public, private, governmental and non-governmental organizations, at the provincial, national and international levels.

Its functions are to promote the inherent steps for the realization of the signature of framework agreements and specific agreements for the realization of joint activities of the UNSL with public and private, provincial, national and international organizations and institutions, promote the realization of Conventions and Agreements of connection of the University with other universities and academic and research centers, national and foreign, cooperation agencies, foundations and multilateral organizations and encourage the realization of internship agreements and pre-professional practices or residences of UNSL students

We sought to interview four of them who had effectively completed the mobility experience and know their impressions regarding their participation, stay, experience and culture during the study abroad.

Diagram N ° 1. Student Participation (done by the author)



Regarding the idea of participation, students' stay in a foreign center, experience gained and known culture, students give account of the following concepts.

Participation

The students interviewed highlighted first of all the gratitude to the university for having been able to access the possibility of applying for international cooperation programs. Testimonials from two students like *"I'm really very grateful and for me it meant a very important event in my life and in my profession"* or *"I had the good fortune of being chosen among other students and that possibility was opened to me that naturally takes advantage"*, they give account of the institutional recognition of the San Luis National University for having participated in the mobility activity. A student affirmed that *"it was a good experience to have lived a few weeks abroad and to have been able to get to know a university that is not the one in your country. I thank the San Luis National University of San Luis for having been able to participate in this exchange experience"*.

Another student also pointed out that *"the experience of living abroad is very good because it allows you to see the reality of your country with other prisms, with other perspectives. Although the universities are all more or less similar, they also have differences. You are in a strange place, with people you do not know first, where everything is different and where they are more agile in some things"*.

Stay

As for the stay in the foreign universities, the students gave an account of the *"cultural shock" produced when studying in a foreign country with another culture, with other ways of doing or feeling things. In this sense, the students expressed expressions like "even though we spoke the same language I had a cultural shock, let's say, since I found myself studying with a different group of students" or of different issues from one country to another "from the classes, personal treatment, interaction with students, etc. Living in a foreign country opens your mind, allows you to look with perspective at your local experience and perhaps examine your life in the country of origin in Argentina, in another way"*.

Another student affirmed that *"it was a good activity to have lived a few weeks abroad and to have been able to get to know a university that is not the one in your country. I thank the National University of San Luis for having been able to participate in this exchange experience. As far as I'm concerned, I think I've won a lot with her and she has enriched me a lot"*. The students interviewed felt satisfied with the completion of studies abroad and one of them stated that *"the classes were barbaric, in every sense and had access to the library. It was awesome. My place of residence was simple and limited, but comfortable"*.

Experience

Regarding the experience obtained, the students pointed out that it was *"very enriching to be able to participate in this exchange that provides the possibility for Argentine students to know other universities, other students, and another culture. The contrast of being abroad gives us the possibility of comparing universities and better appreciates what we have. The universities are similar in general, but they are also different in terms of management and administration, class styles, etc."*.

Another student stressed that *"it was a nice experience to share with other students in a different country. Although the universities are similar, each of them has particularities. In Colombia they appreciate the Argentines a lot, so I did not have major problems to insert myself little by little into the university community. I adapted to the food ... "In the same conceptual direction, another student said that" without a doubt the experience is very good, since you must live in another country with a different culture and if you know things, you also miss the ones from your country. But I think that what contributes to a great extent to be able to realize this experience, is that if the concrete ones later you have the desire to travel and visit other universities, after you finish your career in the UNSL ". The emotionally stronger concept was "I will never forget that wonderful experience that allowed me to know a different country ..."*.

Culture

With respect to the cultural enrichment that a university exchange means, a student conceptualized *"exchange is a way of knowing another culture. Mexico has a great culture in every way, from the original peoples to its fascinating gastronomy. It is very interesting for a student from San Luis to travel and study in a foreign country."*

Another student stressed that *"the people, the students, the university, the residence, everything is different. In my case it was cozy, but always miss San Luis and Argentina, especially in regards to food. Each country is special in that sense, and one being in Argentina, does not realize"*, a third said *"not only will you study, you will go for a while you can, you will know, and you will have new acquaintances of other latitudes. That is very interesting, live that process" and a fourth highlighted that "as you adapt to the university, to the city where you are, you also adapt and you know how people move and how they live"*.

Conclusions

The mobility experience is enriching for students and for their future professional life. The students who traveled could meet other students, other professors, another university, other teaching cultures and another country. Being in another country for a short period allows us to study at a foreign university, have other classmates, know what life is like for the locals, what matters and matters to them, their cuisine and their way of doing things.

Living in another country for a few months means being able to learn the culture of the place, interact with different people and adapt to new foods. The experience of mobility is very strong and impressive in all people and more in the students who aspire to develop a professional career in the future. The training is enriched with these learning in different contexts that involve a whole cognitive and cultural experience.

However, the number of students who can access these experiences is minimal and the university needs to generate creative proposals and articulate experiences in activities known as *"internationalization at home"* and in this way allow in some way that students can link with local or foreign higher education institutions in terms of undergraduate studies. Internationalization at home as a concept was introduced in 1999, an idea that tried to describe that students were competent interculturally and internationally without leaving their own place for purposes related to studies (Crowther, 2001).

Internationalization at home can be understood as those processes of linking international and multicultural aspects in university environments: classrooms, lecture halls, student canteens, libraries, multimedia rooms, language laboratory in academic, extension and research projects.

Proposals such as undergraduate and undergraduate courses in English for undergraduate and undergraduate curricular courses in English, the development of virtual mobility for teachers and the internationalization of curricular curricula, double

degree degrees and virtual chairs they integrate the wide range of internationalization possibilities at home.

Mobility abroad for students is an incomparable experience, since it is not a common trip, but it constitutes a journey of learning in all senses. A brushstroke on what the travel experience means we can find in “Il Viaggio”.

*Trasportarsi da un luogo all'altro, non è viaggiare
Semplicemente andare, tanto meno è viaggiare
Il viaggio...è un'altra cosa..
Viaggiare è connettersi con la vita di una regione,
è provare a comprendere la vita di un luogo,
è' relazionarsi come si può con la cultura di una comunità...
E' portare pochi indumenti, una piccola borsa e tanti sogni,
E' conoscere la gente e il suo paesaggio
E' deviare dai noti itinerari turistici
E' cercare di capire di più...
Il Viaggio (Quiroga,S, 2015).*

The mobility of the students of the National University of San Luis has been generally established between local students and the universities of Latin American countries, including Mexico and foreign students from these latitudes who come to San Luis, in reciprocity with the established agreements and mobility programs. current.

Thinking and developing mobility experiences, the increase of exchanges among students from Latin American universities seeking to expand the latitudes, constitutes a present challenge of the political and economic actors, the dialogue organizations of university problems such as the CIN, the academic community in general and of the university management in particular.

The causes of the low student mobility among universities is due to Claudio Rama (2011), the low diversity of the local face-to-face offer, the low virtual international offer, the greater global certifications and the competence understood as the educational reelitization before the overcrowding university

One weakness of the current mobility scheme of Latin American students is the lack of learning of foreign cultures and languages along with the institutional challenge of moving forward with other universities and the organizations that group them in equivalences and recognition of degrees, the almost absence of technologies of information and communication in the teaching processes of local universities and the lack of linking of internationalization with the quality of teaching.

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