

own multiple schools, have program offers that target lower-income populations, and attract larger enrollments.

Among the legally registered private universities, for dozens no contact data or basic information are available; many more could be considered “garage universities,” apartments or offices with signs in front that often disappear as quickly as they appear. Both phenomena raise concerns of diploma mills and fraudulent practice. Because Panama does not have an accreditation system in place, it is easy for fly-by-night schools to function and even thrive.

The Republic of Panama is an illustrative case of a small, highly globalized country whose university system has grown exponentially since 1990—without a solid quality-assurance system.

BUSINESS VERSUS VISION

Panama, like many Latin American countries, has signed extensive legislation and agreements reflecting its higher education political globalization and vision for moving its universities toward international norms. The most significant initiatives are the 1998 law establishing Panama’s “city of knowledge,” which was designed to bring international business, technology, and academia together in a former US military facility; the 2003 accord founding the Central American University Accreditation Council; and the 2006 law creating Panama’s National Council for the Evaluation and Accreditation of University Education (CONEAUPA).

These visionary initiatives compete, however, with older, deeply rooted legal codes: the 1927 law facilitating creation of corporations, allowing nationals and internationals to establish businesses quickly, easily, and cheaply for any nonillegal enterprise, including higher education; and the 1972 constitutional article centralizing university-system control and private oversight in the University of Panama, an institution perceived to be dysfunctional at best and blatantly corrupt at worst. The former code fuels university proliferation since it is not difficult to obtain Ministry of Education recognition but is complicated for authorities to thwart those who fail to do so. The latter provides a business for the University of Panama and impedes the establishment of an autonomous quality assurance body; CONEAUPA, three years after inception, is still not operational.

Nonregulatory factors—a large pool of low-paid adjunct professors, a service-sector economy, and limited vocational options—further contribute to making higher education an attractive business. They also encourage universities to sell profitable modules for generic proficiencies like English, office protocol, and computer skills, alongside their degree courses.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPETITIVENESS

The general consensus in Panama is that the content and relevance of most university programs do not correspond to either international standards or market demand—a common problem for developing countries. But without a substantive, operational quality assurance body supported by both public and private sectors, economic globalization will dominate the political. Business will undermine vision. The upshot of this is that although higher education may become available to more of the population, the value of local degrees diminishes. This is already happening in Panama. A recent national study reports that 80 percent of mid- and high-level management holds degrees from universities outside the country.

Without credible quality assurance, developing countries’ university systems will not be positioned to contribute effectively to development or competitiveness. This will increase reliance on outside education and labor—particularly for countries like Panama where international services power the economy. Quality assurance is the first step to university capacity development. But to take this step, national mentality must shift from equating university development with business opportunity and toward equating it with strategic necessity. ■

Canadian Universities’ Strategies for Internationalization

SALLY-ANN BURNETT AND JEROEN HUISMAN

Sally-Ann Burnett is a higher education consultant and 2008 doctoral graduate of the Business Administration in Higher Education Management program, University of Bath, UK. E-mail: contact@saburnett.com. Jeroen Huisman is director of the International Centre for Higher Education Management, University of Bath, UK. E-mail: j.huisman@bath.ac.uk.

The press and academic literature have focused on universities that embraced globalization, attracting a large share of foreign students to their campuses or launching global research networks. Indeed, notice is also taken of failures—such as a university dismantling an overseas branch campus a few months after its launch. Less attention is paid to the “average” higher education institution—possibly limited by its location, the regional/local mission, a lack of prestige or status—but the strategy seeks to broaden its internationalization strategy in response to globalization. Another gap in the existing literature involves how institutional culture relates to internationalization strategy and activities. We have tried to meet this deficiency by studying four comparable Canadian universities

in Ontario. Mainly undergraduate and relatively small, three of these institutions had less than 8,000 students, and one had about 17,000 students. We analyzed background documents from the government and the institutions, carried out site visits to the campuses of the institutions, and interviewed senior faculty and staff working in the area of internationalization.

Ontario's image as one of the most multicultural societies in the world enhances its universities' efforts to develop their internationalization activities. The higher education institu-

A surprising similarity was found among the universities regarding a focus on international recruitment.

tions are relatively autonomous, with the latitude to develop their own missions and strategies. The government lacks clarity with respect to its internationalization program, which gives institutions little guidance on how to progress. This situation becomes complicated by the two-tier government and provincial and federal responsibilities for different, and sometimes overlapping, aspects of higher education. The lack of a clear national strategy—with financial incentives for students and institutions—results in a meagre 1 percent of higher education students going abroad for study. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada has been promoting Canadian higher education lately, but a number of institutions still “suffer” from the lack of international appeal.

RESPONSES TO GLOBALIZATION

A surprising similarity was found among the universities regarding a focus on international recruitment, although they differed considerably in achieving this objective. International enrollment ranged from 1.2 to 8.5 percent, and main countries of origin also differed greatly. Emphasis varied on student versus staff mobility and on internationalizing the curriculum versus international research cooperation. The main reasons for internationalization—particularly international student recruitment—were portrayed as the value of student diversity as well as revenue generation.

We found that the institutional cultures influence responses to globalization. Two of the four universities, nurturing an entrepreneurial culture, showed the most systematic and extensive strategic response to the challenges of globalization. The fact that one of these universities also had elements of a bureaucratic culture did not inhibit the development of an effective strategic response. The university characterized as collegial and autocratic and one collegial/entrepreneurial university had a much more marginal strategic approach.

CONCLUSION

Bearing in mind that the evidence is limited to four universities, the findings support the notion of a relationship between

an entrepreneurial culture and the type of strategic response to globalization challenges. However, developing an appropriate comprehensive strategic response to globalization is not simply a matter of changing the culture. The literature on organizational culture shows that changes cannot happen overnight. Contextual factors such as governmental policies continue to play an important role.

Finally, there were indications in our research that culture and strategy may mutually reinforce each other: achievements in the area of internationalizing the curriculum, catering for student diversity, and other factors may reinforce an entrepreneurial spirit or help to spread an entrepreneurial culture across the university. Assuming that the four universities would like to broaden their internationalization portfolios, we recommended specific activities and strategies for each of the institutions. These recommendations ranged from making the vision and mission more explicit, developing appropriate budget allocations, giving internationalization a specific place (metaphorically and geographically) in the organizational structure, to developing strategic alliances with Canadian and/or foreign partners. ■

Postgraduate Studies in Africa: The Looming Crisis

WISDOM J. TETTEY

Wisdom J. Tettey is professor in the Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada T2N 1N4. E-mail: tettey@ucalgary.ca.

Academic staff shortage has become a huge challenge for African universities, and no respite seems to be in sight. In fact, observers of the higher education scene on the continent unanimously identify this issue as one of the most critical challenges to the mission of these institutions. They contend that, if urgent concerted action is not undertaken soon enough to address the problem, the African academy will not only lose its ability to produce the requisite number of personnel to support the countries' human resource needs, but the quality of intellectual life will continue to erode. The foregoing concerns call for evaluating how well African institutions are developing the next generation of academics to combat the decline and thereby boosting academic staff capacity and reinvigorating intellectual life. A critical area for such efforts, and the focus of this article, is postgraduate training. The sample is made up of 15 universities and seven countries that are members of the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (see <http://foundation-partnership.org/>).