

## **TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION: Concept And Methods**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Transnational education is a new and permanent reality in educational life. It should be viewed as a positive set of educational opportunities. It raises profound and far-reaching implications for all those involved in higher education. The challenges represented by it may impact at the local, regional, national and global levels and reactions to these multi-level challenges result in a co-ordinated set of global responses in the form of alliances.

The globalisation of higher education manifests itself in various forms, of which transnational education is perhaps the most visible. It is something that can be focussed immensely for global pace. Transnational education has clear long-term implications for the nature and structure of educational provision throughout the world particularly in Europe.

**Keywords:** Transnational education, Borderless education, Higher education, Models of transnational education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The present society may be regarded as knowledge society with universities and information technology its key elements replacing capitalism by acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. In knowledge society education, particularly higher education can play a crucial role in reshaping and restructuring the social, economic and political institutions of a country. International cooperation and collaboration is taking place among countries in educational, social, economic, and services sectors through national and international organizations and agreements. It may provide opportunities of higher education across the borders of a country at global level through phenomenon termed as 'Transnational Education'.

The term transnational education has been coined to project the recent activities of higher education institutions throughout the world. It encompasses to present worldwide mobility in academia in the field of research and training. According to Collins Dictionary (2000) transnational means something that extends beyond the boundaries etc. of a single nation. In context of education transnational education is regarded as the service of education on global scale or on a cross border level involving educational institutions or students and academicians of more than a single nation. It involves cross border mobility of students, academicians, programme of study and/or institutions. Transnational education is not a new phenomenon but its global expansion may be a new development. It can absorb and facilitate large students' body disseminating knowledge beyond the geographical boundaries of a state and/or a country. It makes higher education programs accessible to the learners irrespective of location of the awarding institutions. Such educational programmes may belong to the education system of a country different from the country in which it operates, or may operate independently of national education system. According to the Council of Europe and UNESCO (2000) transnational education includes:

***All types of higher education study programme, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the educational system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national system***

**It is not a new phenomenon but the pace of its international expansion and strategies are developing and restructuring the higher education. That is why it is becoming popular and competing at global level. It is characterised by:**

- **development of information and communication technologies providing new opportunities and possibilities of educational collaboration and cooperation at international level,**
- **emergence of corporate educational provision through higher education institutions,**
- **development of borderless higher education.**

**Developing countries like Pakistan, India and Bangladesh may benefit much more from the Transnational Education in human resource development as these countries:**

- **do not offer higher education programmes in certain disciplines**
- **cannot provide opportunities of skill based learning.**
- **do not provide higher education in local languages**
- **face socio-cultural problems restricting women's access towards higher education in various ways.**
- **have less expertise and resources.**

## **DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION**

**Transnational higher education serves different purposes in different countries. The benefits of transnational delivery include domestic capacity building, broader student choice in education systems facing resource constraints, minimizing the resources flowing out of the country, reducing brain drain, and enhancing innovation and competitiveness in the sector. However, provision has a tendency to be concentrated in certain subject areas (e.g., business and information technology), meets needs addressing the developmental agenda of the host country and contributes to real capacity building. The increasing internationalization of education expands and reinforces the conditions that promote the growth of transnational education. According to Haug, G (2000):**

***.....what is genuinely new and explains the growth of transnational education is that students are less and less restricted to what their national system is prepared to offer, for two main reasons: the appearance of new providers competing from far with their national universities, and the fast emergence of "global English" as an alternative to the national language for the acquisition of higher education qualifications.***

**The continued growth of transnational education is inevitable even if the pace of this growth may be slow. The precise nature and pattern of growth would depend on the continued globalisation of education and the responses of national and international educational bodies to it. Globalisation has prompted many governments to rethink how their citizens are educated and trained. Transnational education is the educational manifestation of this globalisation process and strategies to adjust to it and therefore it must fit with other national educational goals, e.g. to promote lifelong learning, transmit culture and increase competitiveness, etc.**

All national and international organizations providing education should adopt a balanced attitude towards transnational education. National and international priorities can complement, rather than stand in opposition to, each other. The potential and actual advantages associated with transnational education are significant and its import and export should be encouraged as a vehicle to improve access, widen participation, enrich the curriculum, and expand choice and flexibility. Transnational education has strategic implications for all citizens, institutions, governments, and international bodies. It has a far-reaching positive and negative potential to impact on the higher educational area. The positive must be encouraged whilst the negative is blocked. Transnational education is perhaps best regarded as a 'positive irritant' that will, if approached correctly, cause the quality and attractiveness in educational provision.

Education may be provided by collaborative arrangements, such as franchising, twinning, joint degrees where study programmes are provided by another partner, as well as non-collaborative arrangements such as branch campuses, off-shore institutions and corporate universities. Individuals can avail the opportunities of quality education and training through transnational mode. It can provide education throughout the world using innovative strategies and forms. The most common form of transnational education is Distance Education which is gaining momentum in developing countries as well with International acceptance and recognition. The basic theme of transnational education resembles with distance education but the nature and mechanism of delivery and provision of academic services is somewhat different. Various forms of transnational education as adopted by the leading provider countries are discussed below

#### **FORMS OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION**

Transnational education providers inhabit different national education systems whose idiosyncrasies dictate different sorts of arrangements. Transnational education is a constantly mutating phenomenon. It involves cross-border mobility depending on what and who crosses the border. According to the National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB) (2002) such education can take three forms:

- **People mobility-based education:** a person can go abroad for educational purpose
- **Programme mobility-based education:** an educational programme can go abroad and
- **Institution mobility-based education:** an institution or provider can go or invest abroad for educational purposes

The first kind of mobility involves students or academicians who travel abroad to study or teach. The second kind of mobility relates to mobility of educational programme and curricula across border via e-learning, educational partnerships with a foreign institution to offer joint courses, elaborate joint curricula or undertake any other joint educational arrangements, while students, academicians and institutions remain in their country. Third kind of mobility for cross border education is when an educational institution sets up a branch campus abroad, partners with a foreign university or buys or otherwise invests in foreign institution. Likewise Wilson and Vlăsceanu (2000) stated the following common forms of Transnational Education:

#### **Delivery Mechanism-Based Form**

It relates to the actual delivery process and arrangements and includes the following forms:

#### **Franchising**

It is the process where a higher education institution (franchiser) from a certain country authorises another institution (franchisee) from the same or from another

country to provide it (i.e. the franchiser's) educational services (the whole or a part of one or more of its approved study programme/qualifications).

### **Programme articulations**

It includes inter-institutional arrangements where two or more institutions agree to offer jointly a study programme in terms of study credits and credit-transfers, so that students pursuing their studies in one institution have their credits recognized by the other, and accepted for transfer in order to continue their studies. It may also be termed as twinning programmes.

### **Branch campus**

A higher education institution from one country establishes its campus in another country in order to offer there its own educational programmes/qualifications irrespective of the students' provenance:

- The arrangement is similar to franchising, but the franchisee is a campus of franchiser,
- The notes on franchising apply here as well.

### **Off-shore institution**

An autonomous institution established in host country and belonging to one particular national educational system in terms of its organisation and contents, without necessarily having a campus in the country (or system) to which it belongs. It is seldom recognised in the host country having some articulation agreements with other educational institutions in the country they belong to.

### **Corporate universities**

They are usually part of big transnational corporations and organise their own higher education institutions or study programmes offering qualifications, which do not belong to any national system of higher education.

### **International institutions**

These include institutions which are offering international qualifications and that are not part of specific educational system. Such institutions may have branch campuses in several countries.

### **Distance-learning**

It is an educational provision for all levels of study characterised by the separation of the learner from the tutor. The learners are provided self-instructional study material through post or web-based solutions and complete their study programmes under the guidance of tutor at home. The guidance is provided through post, e-mail and/or occasional face-to-face sessions. These programmes may or may not belong to the higher education system of the host country.

### **Virtual universities**

Virtual university is a new concept in developing countries. It also uses the distance education approach using information and communication technologies for teaching learning process. Wilson et al (2000) further described that these new developments in higher education have some common characteristics in terms they cross the borders of national higher education systems. Therefore, they are usually identified by the generic phrase of transnational education.

### **Institutional Arrangements-Based Form**

It relates to the institutional and organisational arrangements that result from the specific delivery mechanisms chosen. This can be a new institution, a branch, or a franchised programme or course of study offering an award within an existing institution or other organisation. It may, or may not, belong to a national higher education system.

### **Qualification-Based Form**

It refers to the nature and quality of qualifications awarded through transnational education (degrees, certificates, study credits, etc.). Transnational education can be viewed in all its permutations through its forms discussed above.

## **MODELS OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION**

Transnational education is not a temporary phenomenon but it is a reality that would develop more and more in future. In the long-term student mobility will be eclipsed by study programme mobility as more transnational programmes are offered. It is becoming cheaper relatively to move courses rather than students. In short terms its impact is now of medium-scale and significance. Verbik, L and Jokivirta, L. (<http://www.obhe.ac.uk>) has discussed the following regulatory models of transnational education:

### **No regulations**

This model describes that there are no special regulations or control over foreign providers, which are free to operate without seeking permission from the host country. Foreign providers can run their academic programmes in the host country according to their own criteria and strategies and the host country would not have any objection or prohibit them to operate. Examples of such countries include: Czech Republic, France, Malta, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, Serbia, and Sri Lanka. These countries don't have check on the foreign institutions.

### **Liberal-Flexible**

It is flexible in terms that the foreign provider and host country both are flexible in providing education. The host country envisages minimum conditions & criteria and foreign providers must satisfy these minimum conditions & criteria of the host country prior to commencing operations (e.g., official recognition in the host country). Examples include: Argentina, Bahrain, Estonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

### **Moderately Liberal**

It is less flexible and the host (importing) country is actively involved in licensing and (in some cases) accrediting transnational providers. The host country forms rules & regulations of registration and requires that foreign institutions to gain accreditation or other formal permission by the host country (e.g., competent authority-Ministry of Education) prior to commencing operations.

This category is diverse, ranging from compulsory registration to formal assessment of academic criteria. Requirements are generally straightforward and no burdensome. Examples include: Australia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Hong Kong, Israel, Jamaica, Singapore, and Vietnam.

### **Transitional: From Liberal to More Restrictive**

A more restrictive regulatory framework is gradually being introduced. Changes in legislation can include: compulsory registration and/or accreditation through the national system in order for foreign institutions to be allowed to operate and/or for their degrees to be recognized, requirements to establish a presence in the country, and criteria for collaboration between domestic and foreign institutions, as well as other factors. Examples include: India and Pakistan.

### **Transitional: From Restrictive to More Liberal**

New legislation aimed at removing restrictions for foreign institutions wishing to operate in the country is being introduced. The new guidelines usually follow a period where regulations have practically ruled out transnational provision.

In some cases, restrictions are only lifted in specified areas (e.g., South Korea); in others changes apply to the entire country (e.g., Japan). Examples include: Japan and South Korea.

#### **Very Restrictive: Regulations Concerning Permission to Operate**

The government or another authoritative higher education body imposes strict requirements on foreign providers. Such institutions may be required to establish a physical presence in the country (i.e., franchised provision is not allowed), only institutions or programs accredited by the host country's agency are authorized, and foreign providers must change their curricula to be in line with domestic provision, and other factors. Examples include Bulgaria, Cyprus, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates.

#### **Virtually Impossible Recognition For Qualifications Obtained Through Transnational Provision**

In some countries, the governments do not recognize foreign qualifications obtained through transnational provision. The students and foreign providers do face problems. Therefore, foreign institutions which want their degrees be recognized by the host country, should fulfill the conditions & criteria of the host country becoming part of the national system (this may not be straightforward). Examples include: Belgium (francophone) and Greece.

#### **Emerging: Capacity Building Model**

It is new model of transnational education. Its focus is on the capacity building and professional development of individuals. If it is not mandated by the importing country, it is suggested that foreign institutions could increasingly be expected to adopt a development-based rhetoric to secure external support and funding from both the importing and exporting countries. Institutions are increasingly aware that to boost capacity, safeguard institutional reputation, and assist in the strengthening of domestic systems, a long-term commitment to the country through sustainable partnerships or other investment is required. Whichever the model is adopted, the important thing is that transnational education is a new concept having potential to provide quality education even in developing countries.

### **IMPACT OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

The structure and nature of education system of developed and developing countries are rapidly changing under the impact of globalisation. Adams, S. (2001) stated that in the long-term, study-programmes will be offered to the students in their countries and student's mobility will become restricted as more transnational programmes would be offered. It is becoming cheaper relatively to move courses rather than students. However, the initial cost of developing (hard-copy and software) mobile programmes is very high but once it has been covered, the marginal cost of expanding programmes is low. Higher education is increasingly being supplied by commercial organisations in highly competitive situations by American 'for-profit' universities, corporate universities, and new global consortia like 'Universitas 21', an incorporated alliance of 18 universities drawn from ten countries.

The impact of transnational education can be seen in global mobility of students (out of their native countries) which was 1.6% of all the global students in the year 2000 (DAAD, 2003). According to Forhriep (2005) the USA received the highest number of foreign students in the year 2000, almost 465000 students and the highest number of students going abroad were from China numbered 107000 students. These numbers represent 3.6% entire higher education population in USA and 1.5% of the total number of Chinese students respectively. The potential impact of transnational education is now-of medium scale and significance. Its effect varies in terms of geographical area, academic sector and types of education systems.

Currently, its impact is not uniform and this is unlikely to change. However, strong circumstantial evidence suggests that its impact will intensify and broaden in future. New national and international initiatives are continually being announced. Most of this growth is likely to be outside Western Europe as most transnational providers regard it as a 'mature educational market' and developing countries across the world are likely to be targeted.

## TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

At present transnational education is being imparted by the developed and technologically advanced countries having broader capacity of absorbing large students' body from all over the world. Therefore, some examples are given below better understanding of the transnational mechanism.

### Finland

In transnational education is imported and delivered by franchised providers, virtual universities (on-line learning), branch campus operations, international corporate providers and 'for-profit' providers. Dual awards exist and are the main example of exported transnational education. The most important originating sources of imported transnational education are the UK and the USA. Several UK new universities offer franchised education and there is at least one US branch campus in Finland. The most important originating sources of exported transnational education are Finnish Polytechnics that offer some courses ([www.oph.fi/tutkintojentunnustaminen](http://www.oph.fi/tutkintojentunnustaminen)) in the Baltic States.

Imported/exported transnational education is not specifically regulated. The Finnish Higher Education Council has a responsibility for the accreditation of higher education continuing education programmes, but to date, transnational programmes have not applied. Imported higher education qualifications are regulated in the sense that once obtained they may be recognised if the originating institution is appropriately recognised in its home country. The Finnish quality assurance body currently has no role regarding transnational education. The main subject areas for transnational education are currently business, law and technology. Future growth is likely to be in the area of continuing education. The primary causes of growth are globalisation and information technology developments.

Well-constructed and regulated dual awards are an example of good practice to be followed.

### France

The official website of France provides information on French higher education abroad. (<http://www.france.diplomatie.fr/culture/france/ressources/filieres>). This lists more than 220 examples of 'French language education' in higher education establishments in countries where French is not the first language. International Corporate transnational education is imported into, and exported by France. Also, to a lesser extent there is activity by 'for profit' educational providers and branch campuses, e.g. Georgia Institute of Technology's 'Platform into Europe' at Metz. The import and export of 'dual awards' is being developed.

There are also various '*diplômes internationaux*': schools of business and engineering are currently developing international programmes, such as MBAs' (presently around ten accredited by AMBA and around 50 accredited by EFMD) and other international masters, which lead to fruitful co-operation between establishments in different countries, with dual or joint awards. Imported franchised education does not exist in public universities, but there are some private establishments, e.g. the American University in Paris, notably delivering MBAs' from American universities. Conventional distance learning is exported by the national centre (CNED) as well as by some universities. There is also a partnership between the Paris Chamber of

Commerce and the UK Open University. The most important originating sources of imported transnational education are the USA and EU countries.

The main French source of exported education is CNAM with centres in 20 countries and with approximately 7500 students, followed by CNED, universities, and Schools of engineering and commerce. In France, the academic recognition of overseas qualifications lies with each individual higher education institution. The main subject areas in France for transnational education are Management and Information Technology. These are most significant at the Masters level. Future growth is likely to be in these areas - associated with lifelong learning and virtual education. The growth of transnational education (imported and exported) is due to the revolution in information technology, the competitiveness of transnational education, the demand for lifelong learning and the international recognition of transnational education qualifications. Previously unmet student demand and the relative decline of State funding of education are also factors in the growth of exported transnational education. France provides educational opportunities to 130,000 foreign students per year. French education aims to develop internationalisation by increasing student mobility. France has a strong tradition of international co-operation and entertains foreign students. In the future, some programmes (engineering and business) will not demand fluency in French as a pre-requisite but will teach the language alongside the main studies. France does not seek to over-commercialise its international activities. It wants to promote dual awards. In the long-term France views distance learning as complimentary to its traditional education, but not as a commercial product.

### United Kingdom

In United Kingdom (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/eprovis/contents.htm>) all types of transnational education are exported and imported, except franchised education which is not imported. The most important originating source is the USA for branch campuses (but not specifically to recruit UK students) and distance learning. Unlike the USA, the UK has very little full branch campus export activity. Examples include the University of Nottingham which has been invited by the Malaysian government to set up a campus, and De Montfort which has a campus in South Africa. UK exported transnational education tends to be through partnerships (franchising/validation, articulation and locally supported distance learning) and distance learning. On-line education is an emerging mode e.g. Strathclyde University Business School programmes in marketing. There are approximately 35,000 students registered out of European Union in UK courses. There are many links with higher education institutions in other EU states based on joint programmes and dual awards. Some distance learning provision is *de facto* international because of the recruitment publicity e.g. advertising in international publications such as 'Newsweek, Time and The Economist' where no effort is made to target a specific country.

### Sources of Transnational in UK

The most important originating sources of exported transnational education and qualifications are:

- Members of the Council of Validating Universities (world-wide);
- The Open University (operating mainly in Europe but also in the USA and Singapore and through the Open University Validation Service);
- Distance learning programmes offered on a global basis e.g. Heriot Watt;
- Large corporate institutions provide continuing professional development (CPD) to their own staff e.g. Price Water house Coopers or, in partnership with Universities e.g. Ford.
- The University of London external degree programme.
- Several of the UK professional bodies are very active overseas. The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) is example whereby either

**examination facilities are made available on a global basis (CIM) or local programmes are validated or accredited for recognition by the UK body.**

**In respect of the recognition of qualifications no distinctions are made concerning the origins and nature of transnational education. This may reflect the fact that individual academic institutions, employers and/or professional bodies have autonomy or responsibility for recognition decisions.**

**The volume of imported transnational education is generally regarded as marginal at present, but there is some consensus that it has a positive impact on student choice, access to higher education, on domestic cultural autonomy, and on keeping UK higher education institutions competitive by highlighting the positive nature of UK higher education. Imported transnational education provides the opportunity for the 'benchmarking' of standards and exchange of good practice. It extends opportunities to students to participate in UK higher education and gain internationally recognised qualifications; it internationalises the curriculum (in the UK) by developing and broadening cultural perspectives of staff and students; generates income for the providers; and facilitates networks and opportunities for research, scholarly activity and student mobility. It is envisaged that most future growth will probably be in business and management (especially in the fields of health, education and human resources), computing, tourism and health and medicine. There might be an increase in corporate provision of higher education/postgraduate training, particularly if new providers of higher education are given degree awarding powers or other recognition. The main factors responsible for the expansion of transnational education are mixed. Several respondents do not prioritise factors for the expansion and there is almost no consensus on the importance of factors in relation to imported education. There is much clearer consensus in relation to the main factors for the expansion of exported transnational education: previously unmet student demand; rigidity of traditional education systems; the relative decline of state funding; and barriers to student mobility.**

## **CONCLUSION**

**Transnational Education is a new phenomenon with its global expansion and recognition. It resembles with 'distance education' and would probably develop more and more in future. It embraces large students' body the world over catering the domestic needs of developing countries that require high-level expertise. The new information and communication technologies have facilitated students' in their studies providing global competitive environment. It may provide the students and academicians opportunity of achieving the international standards of education. There will be concerted and deliberate efforts to ensure the quality standards and worldwide qualification recognition through transnational education in future.**

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