

Giles A. Packer and Frank D. Larkins

In response to the need to prepare students to take their place in a global economy, more and more metropolitan universities are internationalizing their curriculums. Those international programs that are most effective provide for or even require students to go abroad for a portion of their university education. Challenged by the need to make this affordable for more students, metropolitan universities may find international cooperative education a promising alternative to traditional study-abroad programs. Work-based international programs have the added advantage of providing a more comprehensive exposure to foreign cultures, customs, and business practices.

International Cooperative Education in the Metropolitan University

Recent world events, including the creation of the European Economic Community, the Maastricht Treaty Agreement, and the North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, underscore the diminishing role of national borders and government restrictions on trade and commerce. The movement in this direction may not be proceeding as rapidly as some had hoped, but in spite of bumps in the road toward global trade we can anticipate an economic free-for-all as nations compete in as many markets as they can to gain and keep competitive advantage. In this competitive free market consumers will be the winners, assured—at least in theory—of being able to purchase products of the highest quality at the lowest price.

In order for the United States to compete successfully in this economic environment, our schools, colleges, and universities must provide students with a heightened awareness of trends in economic interaction among nations. They must also help students to understand the challenge to U.S. business of operating competitively in a global economy. Movement toward globalization may be more ideology than practice at the moment, but world events suggest an acceleration of the pace of change. The general consensus is that the process is irreversible. If we assume that today's college graduate will reach a position of leadership and

authority in fifteen to twenty years, it is safe to say that the world economic model and business environment in which they will work will be much more global than today's.

Responding to the Challenges of Globalization

How should higher education respond to the challenges that globalization presents? Research universities and liberal arts institutions will respond in their own ways. But metropolitan universities have the most at stake. Their mission in large measure is to provide technological and educational support for local and regional development and, therefore, to prepare their graduates to function successfully in a global economy. A successful educational strategy to meet this challenge must, above all, instill in graduates a globally competitive philosophy of doing business.

This task may sound simple, but we must recall that from the 1950s through the 1970s American industry was shielded from foreign competition, not so much by protectionism as by the inability of foreign competitors to produce goods and services that could penetrate U.S. markets. But when the world economy began to catch up to the United States in the '70s and '80s, our markets were flooded with lower-cost goods of relatively high quality compared to domestically produced goods. Unfortunately, the response of the American business community was not to meet competition head on but to cry out for protection from foreign competition. The message to consumers was "buy American"—as if somehow patriotism could mask or overcome inferior quality and higher cost. We know protectionism will not work in the long run if it means cutting off the supply of high quality, low-cost foreign-produced goods. It is unfortunate as well that many of our students still do not understand our nation's need to compete vigorously in global markets. Many seem to believe that the way to protect jobs now, and in the future, is to shield our borders from foreign products.

If the metropolitan university is to educate students for a global economy, it must address the need to change the provincial views held by many students. Our graduates must attain a much broader, more global view of society. Our curriculum and co-curricular activities must emphasize international education, so that students can benefit from historical and cultural studies of Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. In a more practical sense, they will also need to overcome their fear of international travel and receive at least a portion of their education abroad. International cooperative education can play a critical role in providing students with practical options for achieving these objectives.

The Role of Cooperative Education Programs

Cooperative education programs have enjoyed considerable growth in higher education since the 1970s. This expansion is due, in large part, to the U.S. Department of Education's funding of postsecondary cooperative education programs under Title VIII. There are today approximately nine hundred colleges and universities across America

that offer some type of cooperative education program with the academic curriculum, which combines periods of practical work experience, classroom based education, career exploration, practical training, and professional practice. Cooperative education is an ideal model for an international delivery system of global education.

The model, when applied internationally, has several advantages over other international educational programs such as ISEP (International Student Exchange Program), semester abroad, or junior-year abroad programs. First, cooperative education provides a source of funds to enable students to meet the expenses of travel and living in a foreign country. The economic barriers to foreign study can be formidable for students who must struggle to meet the cost of studying at a local university. In general, salaries paid to co-op students abroad are sufficient to cover the costs of the experience. Second, an international co-op experience can be flexible. A typical student at a metropolitan university, with family obligations or a job, will often find it impossible to go abroad for an entire year or semester. But some useful co-op experiences can be arranged for periods as short as three months. Third, most of the traditional programs of overseas study—valuable as they are—replicate the basic structure of the American university experience: the student resides in a university abroad, takes regular or special courses, and identifies with the students and faculty who make up the academic community. International cooperative education, on the other hand, requires the student to live and work not in an academic institution but in an overseas community, thus providing a more realistic view of foreign culture. In addition, the community exposure fosters independence based upon acquiring needed survival skills.

Finally, an overseas workplace, when properly chosen and developed, is much more likely to provide personal mentoring through training and supervision than is the university experience with its emphasis on judging the student's accomplishment through examinations. Both traditional and cooperative education programs, of course, share certain advantages. Both require students to overcome inertia and to go abroad; they both offer a cross-cultural experience, and both do much to alleviate the fear that many of our students have of foreign travel. But international cooperative education is ideally suited to the needs of students who represent a large percentage of those studying at a metropolitan university.

International Cooperative Education Options

There are a number of forms of international cooperative education. The most popular option is to offer the program on an exchange basis in which both the domestic and overseas program agree to place and oversee an equal number of students. But, exchange programs involving work experience have proven to be difficult at best. Their success depends largely upon finding placements for foreign students, often on a "sight unseen" basis. Unfortunately, cyclical downturns in local business activity frequently exacerbate this difficulty. The greatest success in developing placements for foreign cooperative education exchange students has been achieved by working with domestic-based subsidiaries of foreign-owned

companies such as Siemens A.G., Cadbury-Schweppes, Saab Automobile AB in Europe, and Sony in Japan, to mention a few. Northeastern University has had success through its Home Country Placement Project in placing its foreign students among U.S. companies doing business abroad. Despite the difficulty involved in finding appropriate placements, the effort is worthwhile. The presence of students from abroad enriches both campus and community, and the decision concerning exchange agreements often depends on how important the university regards this aspect of its international education program.

If the goal is simply to achieve international experiences for as many students as possible, it is possible to arrange placement of students directly through U.S.-owned companies or subsidiaries or even foreign companies that do business in the United States. Six-month work permits for U.S. students can be obtained for most European countries through the Council for International Education Exchange (CIEE) or through the Association for International Practical Training (AIPT). AIPT even offers a program in which it assumes responsibility for finding overseas placements for participating students. Another successful method for placing students abroad is to work through a host-country agent, either an individual or university, who, under a prearranged financial arrangement, can develop placements and assume a degree of responsibility for assisting U.S. students while abroad.

In all cases, when placing students abroad, work permits enabling the student to be employed in the host country will be required. The easiest way to obtain these are through CIEE or AIPT, and usually there is a fee involved for the student and sometimes for the employer as well. Operating an international cooperative education program on an exchange basis presents the additional problem of securing an Exchange Visitor J-1 Visa, which allows the foreign visitor to work in the United States for a year or more. Educational institutions in the United States that seek to sponsor an exchange student can offer curriculum-related work experience only if the placement is arranged as part of the student's program of study. All sponsored students who plan to undertake a field experience in this country must be first enrolled as students. Both CIEE and AIPT can sponsor students from abroad for practical training, thus bypassing the need to enroll and study in a U.S. college or university. Both programs charge foreign students a fee of approximately two hundred dollars and require an employment agreement before the J-1 Visa can be issued.

Costs of International Cooperative Education Programs

Because it is a labor-intensive process, the cost per international placement of a cooperative education student is more than twice the cost of a domestic placement, not counting additional costs to students for work permits, passports, and air travel. A full-time staff member can usually accommodate up to sixty students per work cycle in the United States. For foreign placements, the ratio is one full-time staff member for up to twenty-five students.

Is the cost of operating these programs prohibitive for the metropolitan university? We cannot ignore the need to provide our communities with

the type of trained manpower their business and industrial establishment will need to compete globally in the twenty-first century. It is not a question of whether or not to pursue opportunity for our students to live and work abroad as part of their university education, but rather how we shall accomplish this goal in the face of limited budgets.

The issue of cost and efficiency of effort has been addressed by a number of innovative programs, one of which is being spearheaded by Georgia State University in Atlanta. Operating under a U.S. Department of Education Title VIII demonstration grant project begun in 1991, Georgia State will research and implement a program of practical training, internship, and cooperative education in Europe. As a feature of this project, Georgia State acts as a clearinghouse for information that facilitates the match between educational institutions abroad who seek to send their students to the United States and member schools of the Georgia Consortium for International Cooperative Education. Georgia State seeks to reduce placement costs through a consolidation of resources. The result is fewer contacts to reach more institutions, students, and employers, and less travel and other costs to overseas exchange partners. The consortium assists member schools in starting up international cooperative education programs, in providing overseas institutional and employer contacts, in making available a library of materials and information, in furnishing up-to-date information to all affiliated schools, and in developing a set of uniform procedures to simplify and standardize applications, overseas assignments, and employer agreements to receive students.

A grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has created a network of universities with strong cooperative education programs and significant enrollment from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and the South Pacific Island Nations. Member schools include Northeastern University, which provides the administrative center, American University, California State University at Fullerton, Drexel University, Georgia State University, Purdue University, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The purpose of this endeavor is to strengthen the human resource capacity of American companies operating within the ASEAN region. This will be accomplished by providing these firms access to qualified foreign nationals who would be available for cooperative education placements in their home countries.

Collective or consortial arrangements such as these allow member schools to provide opportunities for students to undertake overseas cooperative education assignments at only a fraction of the administrative cost of establishing individual programs. Similar collective efforts are springing up in Europe as well, promising still greater efficiency in the exchange process. The Community Programme in Education and Training for Technology (COMETT) Project located in Brussels and serving all European Community nations has, as one of its major purposes, the extension of training beyond national boundaries and the establishment of a training communications network. Its University Enterprise Training Partnership (UETP) sponsors collaborative efforts between universities and employers, which include the provision of workplace training for

university students. France alone has twenty-five of the UETP centers covering most of the country. These centers also provide for regional coordination of international exchange programs involving practical training. They also make an ideal contact point for U.S. universities and university consortia who seek to develop or expand international work experience programs.

Obviously, the growing worldwide interest in work-integrated education is leading to more frequent and varied interaction among educators and employers from around the world. To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and establish a network of international contacts, the World Council and Assembly for Cooperative Education (now called the World Association for Cooperative Education) was formally constituted in 1983. The most recent biennial meeting was held in Hong Kong in 1991. Its next meeting is scheduled in Dublin from August 30 to September 3, 1993. Information may be obtained by contacting Adrienne Joly, Conference Administrator, Dublin City University, Dublin 9, Ireland.

Suggested Readings

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- Vozzella, Robert, ed. *Global Newslink*. Boston: Northeastern University; World Association for Cooperative Education (Winter 1992): 2.
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