

Report on the Chile Project Funding 2011

Internationalization of Chilean Higher Education Institutions

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Cambridge, January 2012

Overview

This report presents the results of my field work in Santiago, Chile, during August and September 2011. The objective of this visit was meeting authorities of different Chilean Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in order to present my research and secure access to data and population (undergraduate students and international relation officers). As I explain below, this objective was only partially met due to the strikes and take-overs in most public universities during the months I spent in Chile. However, I contacted other key stakeholders at a governmental agency (ProChile) and at an international business foundation (EuroChile), and through them I had access to key primary and secondary sources about the Chilean higher education system and its current level of internationalization. The information and experience gained during my time in Chile helped me to reframe and change the focus of my PhD research, which has since changed from the relationship between participation in internationalization activities and the academic/work achievements of students after graduation, to focus on the inequalities of access of Chilean undergraduates to internationalization activities offered by their HEIs. I consider my new research topic to be more relevant to the Chilean higher education system, in accordance with the current concerns about the internationalization of HEIs around the world Altbach *et al.* (2009).

Theoretical Framework and Original Plans

The growing importance of the international dimension of higher education has been widely acknowledged by different authors (Knight, 2002; Luchilo & Albornoz, 2008; Altbach *et al.*, 2009; Munk, 2009; OECD, 2009; Findlay *et al.*, 2012). Despite this trend, we still know little about the development of internationalization in Latin America (de Wit *et al.*, 2005). In the case of Chile, internationalization has become an integral part of the mission statement of almost every higher education institution (Ramírez, in de Wit *et al.*, 2005). Acknowledging the importance of internationalization of HEIs for the development of the country, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) urged Chilean authorities to improve the international component of higher education (OECD, 2009). Despite these trends, after a carefully conducted literature review, I found no study about the effects of international academic activities on Chilean undergraduates, if any at all, or about the rationales behind Chilean HEIs involvement in internationalization activities, their long term objectives or policies. Therefore, and based on the literature review I had developed during my first two terms at Cambridge University, I decided to focus my research on the relationship between participation in internationalization activities and the academic/work achievements of undergraduate students after graduation. Originally, one of the aims of my research was to raise awareness of the importance of providing equal access to internationalization activities to Chilean undergraduates, independent of their social and economic background.

In order to further develop my research question and objectives, I needed to visit Chile to gather data from primary and secondary sources about the country's higher education system and its internationalization, unavailable at online sources from UK. Most importantly, I needed to secure access to data, students and international relations authorities of Chilean HEIs, who I expected to be the population of my research. This would be the first of the two or three visits to Chile during the course of my research. In

order to obtain funding to this first visit, I applied to the Chile Projects 2011 funding. In June 2011 I was granted the sum of £2,000, courtesy of Antofagasta PLC. I made plans to work in Chile from August to September 2011. However, as a result of unforeseen circumstances, I had to change my original plans.

Chilean Education System in Crisis

In early May 2011, an important student movement began in Chile. The *Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile* (Confederation of Chilean Students, CONFECH), which brings together student federations of different Chilean public universities, and the *Colegio de Profesores de Chile* (Professional Association of Chilean School Teachers) united forces to ask for a wholesale reform of Chile's education system. Previously, between May and June 2006, the so-called *Revolución Pingüina* (Penguin¹ Revolution) gathered secondary and university students, in an effort to ask for a series of short and long term changes in public education, including free travel passes, waiving of the university admissions test fee, abolition of the Organic Constitutional Law on Teaching (LOCE), and quality education for all, among other requests. During the *Revolución Pingüina*, students organized a series of national strikes and several school take-overs. Though some improvements were accomplished, the expectations of the participants of the 2006 student movement were not fully met, as the student movement of 2011 has, in general terms, similar demands to those of 2006. These can be briefly summarized as a call for central government to take full control of education and to increase spending on public schools and universities, but most importantly, students demand an immediate end to the existence of profit in higher education. Chile has a mixed education system made up by public and private institutions, with the latter usually having the best academic results and most of their students continuing to higher education in public or elite private universities. Though profit on higher education is forbidden by law, in practice, many companies have developed astute commercial trickery to actually turn the provision of higher education into a highly lucrative business (Monckeberg, 2007).

If the 2006 movement was born in secondary schools, the 2011 movement is lead mainly by representatives of higher education students. Students have organized a series of strikes, demonstrations, cultural events, and public talks, as well as university take-overs and boycott of classes across the country. Unfortunately, the rather pacific demonstrations of the first months evolved slowly into a number of increasingly violent protests not only in Santiago, the capital, but in most cities of the country.

As I prepared for my visit to Chile, which was to take place from August to September 2011, I was confident government authorities, students and teachers would reach an agreement soon so that the academic year would resume. However, the student movement is still active and by the time I left the country, conversations between education authorities and students had broken down and they have not resumed since.

During October, education authorities developed emergency plans to allow primary and secondary student to complete their academic year, the *Salvemos el Año Escolar* project (Let's save the academic year). This would allow students of taken over schools to study on line and 'save' their academic year. On the other hand, university authorities

¹ *Pingüino* (penguin) is a Chilean slang word meaning *school student*.

decided to resume classes to complete, at least, the first semester of the 2011 academic year², though some opposed to this measure and urged fellow students to boycott classes. Currently, students of previously taken over faculties attend classes and will continue to do so until mid- or late February 2012, just in time to begin the new academic year by mid-March 2012. It is yet unknown if the student movement will actually continue during 2012 or if it will fade away during the summer break. Specialists in education forecast the crisis will resume during the second term of 2012, but then, none of them was able to predict the current crisis would even take place. Though some important signs of weakening and division within the student movement have been noticed, public opinion, in general, remains supportive of students and critical of the work of the government to overcome the crisis.

Impact on field work

As a result of the above described situation, I was not able to formally meet university authorities as I expected. In their own words, all their efforts were focused on solving the crisis they were facing at their very own institutions. Therefore, they were not in a position to offer support or access of any kind. This meant most of my original schedule couldn't be fulfilled, so I had to develop another strategy in order to make out the best during my time in Chile despite the unexpected situation.

I held unofficial meetings with former colleges at the international office of a major public university in Chile. Through them, I contacted Ms Bárbara Sepúlveda at ProChile (Direction for the promotion Chilean Exports), under the General Direction of International Economic Relations of the Ministry of International Relations of Chile. ProChile introduced me to EuroChile. This business foundation was created in 1992 to promote 'economic, trade and technological cooperation between businesses and institutions both in Chile and the European Union' (EuroChile, 2011). EuroChile was developing a project to promote the export of Chilean higher education services abroad, about which they asked me to provide academic advice. EuroChile invited both public and private higher education institution to join the project, which would be should be submitted to ProChile during 2012. ProChile has already financed a number of initiatives to promote Chilean Higher Education services abroad, mainly financing participation of Chilean HEIs in international fairs, and studies of key markets for these services.

I had the chance to work closely with key officers at ProChile and EuroChile but also to informally meet Directors of the international offices of some Chilean universities, both private and public. More importantly, I was given access to a number of governmental sources about the internationalization of Chilean higher education, data, and small scale studies about the most attractive markets for Chilean HEIs to promote their services. I was invited to a formal meeting with international relation Directors, where I was asked to provide feedback and insight about the project being developed by EuroChile, but also about current issues on the internationalization of higher education around the world. During informal conversations with some of these Directors I briefly explained my research. Most importantly, I was given access to official data about the Chilean higher education system but also to official reports on the internationalization of

² In Chile, the academic year divides in two semesters and runs from March to December.

Chilean HEIs which eventually lead to an important change in my research. Though my original plans were to gather this information on a later stage of my research, it allowed me to have a better understanding of the Chilean HE system and its international dimension and helped me to focus my research and develop new research questions and objectives. However, I could not secure access to data and students at the institutional level, something I must do during 2012 in order to carry out my research.

Change of focus

With a clearer and more accurate vision of the internationalization of Chilean HEIs, backed by current data and small yet useful reports on the matter, I was in a position to redefine my research objectives and schedule. The original aim of my study was to ‘analyse the relationship between participation in internationalization activities and the academic/work achievements of students after graduation’. I have now decided to focus on the inequalities of access of Chilean undergraduates to internationalization activities offered by their HEIs. Chilean HEIs don’t seem to have a clear understanding of the motivations of their students to participate in internationalization activities, neither about the reasons why so many of them do not participate, even when they face no economic or academic constraints. As a result of this, undergraduates don’t seem to be taking full advantage of the international academic offer available for them at their HEIs.

Some authors suggest that participation in international academic activities is related to international jobs after graduation (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008; Norris & Gillespie, 2009), which are usually associated to higher salaries. Munk (2009) confirmed that ‘student mobility is influenced by [the student’s] social origin, in terms of both parental cultural capital and economic capital’ (p. 19). As the number of students enrolled at national HEIs increases, many look for academic credentials abroad at HEIs with higher prestige than local universities. Thus, students expect international credentials to increase their chances to obtain better positions in the local power field and, therefore, better social positions. In this scenario, access to international education becomes a new source of inequality, which causes and consequences should be studied. Interestingly, in recent years, experts on internationalization have also expressed concerns on the unequal access to international education and urge to develop further research on the matter.

[... T]he students and scholars most likely to take advantage of the range of new opportunities in a globalized higher education environment are typically the wealthiest or otherwise socially privileged. The enormous challenge confronting higher education involves making international opportunities available to all equitably.

Altbach *et al.*, 2009, p. 32

With a better understanding of the extremely dissimilar levels of internationalization at Chilean Universities, I realized the offer of internationalization activities varies dramatically from one institution to another, ranging from those having a wide range of activities with international partners, to those having but a handful of partners mainly in countries within the region. In view of this reality, I decided to focus my study on the

participation of Chilean undergraduates in two internationalization activities available in most universities, namely international academic exchange and language courses.

My study will analyse the relationship between *cosmopolitan capital* (Weenink, 2008) and *cultural intelligence* (Earley and Ang, 2003), and Chilean undergraduates' participation in internationalization activities. Cultural intelligence is defined as a 'person's capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings, that is, for unfamiliar settings attributable to cultural context' (Earley and Ang, 2003; p.9). On the other hand, cosmopolitan capital is defined as the 'bodily and mental predispositions and competencies [...] which help to engage confidently' in multicultural labour and educational markets (Weenink, 2008; p. 1092).

Conclusion

Although I was not able to fully carry out my original plans during my visit to Chile, I did manage to get the most out of it by collecting official data and having access to some of the very few official reports about the internationalization of higher education in Chile. This material has given me a better understanding of the Chilean higher education systems and the rationales behind the internationalization efforts of Chilean HEIs. In accordance with this information, I have changed my research questions and aims to focus on the activities Chilean HEIs have implemented and the motivations of Chilean undergraduates to participate in these activities. Currently I am working on my upgrade report, which I expect to submit by the end of Lent term 2012.

I thank Project Chile for its support, as the funding provided has been essential to carry out an important part of my research I couldn't have developed in Cambridge. Furthermore, it gave me the opportunity to meet important stakeholders at key governmental and non-governmental bodies related to the internationalization of Chilean higher education.

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This Chilean case study is part of a series of studies funded by Intel, exploring how teachers and schools in diverse contexts are blending information and communication technology (ICT) tools and practices into their classrooms (Light, 2010; Light & Pierson, 2012a, 2012b). Intel Chile, student-centered learning, and Khan Academy Intel has long sought to contribute to the development of modern, high-quality educational systems worldwide by being a partner to national governments in helping to prepare young people for the 21st century. The Khan Academy project grew out of Intel's response to the Chilean earthquake in 2010. With Intel's support, Costadigital created the professional development course to use Khan Academy for math in 2011. The Global Synthesis Report of the Project for Ecosystem Services is an output of the four year Project for Ecosystem Services (ProEcoServ), a GEF-funded umbrella project aiming at piloting the bundling of ecosystem services and the integration of ecosystem services approaches into resource management and decision making. This project was implemented by the Ecosystem Services Economics (ESE) Unit of the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI), UNEP, in partnership with the Centre for Advanced Studies in Arid Zones (CEAZA) in Chile, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Chile established two funds in 2006, the Pension Reserve Fund to help finance pension and social welfare spending and the Economic and Social Stabilization Fund to help overcome fiscal deficits when copper revenues decline unexpectedly. The Funds are governed by a strong set of deposit and withdrawal rules underpinned by a fiscal rule that smooths spending over time. The Financial Committee is appointed by the Ministry of Finance to advise on the Funds' management and investment policies. It releases its own annual reports separate from those of the Ministry of Finance. The Central Bank of Chile manages the Funds with a portion delegated to external fund managers. It also monitors the performance of external fund managers and the custodian institution. This report represents the output of a year-long project focused on assisting the Government of Chile in developing options for its National Finance Strategy (NFS) to set out how the country can transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. It was undertaken in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Finance of Chile and primarily funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Prosperity Fund, co-financed with funds from the Low Emission Capacity Building Programme Chile (LECB) and E3G. Chile submitted its national climate change commitment or Intended Nat