Internationalization Of The Curriculum For Developing Research Competences As A Human Right In The Baltic Region: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract
The main objective of this study is to describe how through the internationalization of the curriculum strategy, professional can develop research competences, collaborate with others, and research impact can be achieved in the Baltic region. The phenomenon of globalization required countries to interconnect and be open to trade, generating a new economy based on knowledge. Which in turn demanded human capital to develop specific competences for doing research, create and innovate in their corresponding fields of study. Higher education institutions had to embrace the internationalization process and its four strategies: Internationalization by Competencies, Intercultural Competence, Comprehensive Internationalization, and Internationalization of the Curriculum, from which the connectivism approach, and research competences are part of. These competences demand: 1) statement of a research problem, 2) development of a contextual framework, 3) review of the state of the art, 4) build and validate models, 5) create and validate a data collection instrument, 6) master data analysis techniques, 7) know how to structure a scientific document and master scientific writing, 8) know participate in a scientific activity as a lecturer and, finally, 9) have knowledge of languages and sensitivity towards universal art and culture. This qualitative analysis was carried out with the techniques: documentary review and literature review. It is concluded that in the Baltic region efforts have been made for the development of the competences previously mentioned through the internationalization of the curriculum strategy, but it could also benefit from the connectivism approach based on their economic, geographical, physical or political possibilities.

Keywords: Education, Globalization, Internationalization, Internationalization of the curriculum, research competences, connectivism approach

Introduction

The economic and political forces that required a free trade among countries led to globalization, which in turn changed the way economy was based. After which a new technological revolution took place.

The inclusion of technology permitted to investigate, generate knowledge, to create or innovate. Before crossing geographical frontiers, it was necessary to protect those new alliances through agreements, especially those generated by new knowledge.

Economy then became based on knowledge economy by human capital that required specific education as well as competences for doing research. Therefore, a change had to be made in education of Higher Education with the implementation of internationalization strategies, such as: Internationalization by Competencies, Intercultural Competence, Comprehensive Internatio-nalization, and Internationalization of the Curriculum, from which the connectivism approach derives.

This approach involves learning in two different educational modes, either analog or virtual, from the variety of options to be interconnected, create long lasting relationships that in time can become research partners, networks, collaborations, and institutional agreements.

The objective of the study is to describe how through the internationalization of the curriculum strategy, professionals can develop research competences, collaborate with others, and research impact can be achieved in the Baltic region.

Development

Since the creation of the United Nations [UN], countries have joined and stated in written documents the rights its member countries have and must hold for their citizens. In the declaration of Human Rights Article 26 related to education for all (UN, 1948) stated that everyone must have access to free education in order to build equitable, healthy, and prosperous societies

Education as a Human Right

In the best interest of observing the compliance related to education, a specific branch was created in 1945 for the rescue of world education, but also for promoting peace through education, research and culture called UNESCO (United Nations for Education, Science and Culture Organization) (UNESCO, 2021). It is mentioned that all the citizens of the world should have the same education opportunities and the same abilities now denominated competences to be developed, such as: learn how to do, learn how to know, learn how to be, and learn how to get together with empathy and for the general welfare (Delors, 1998).

In the document UN Millenium Sustainable Development Objectives [SDOs] (UN, 2015) in the objective #4 Education, everyone must develop the same competences overseeing an inclusive and equitable education of quality in order to reach the minimum global standards, and to promote learning opportunities for lifelong learning. And specified in the goals 4.3, 4.4. and 4.7 to promote a technical and professional formal education with specific abilities to ensure everyone acquire the practical and theoretical knowledge to maintain a culture of peace, global citizenship, and a contribution to sustainable development.

Globalization

The know how is a term that refers to knowledge and it can be technical, commercial, or economic. It was defined in the 1980s with the changes happening around the world because of the interconnection of countries, due to the globalization phenomenon, to prevent someone or companies to acquire it without a legal permit, the contract of know how was conceived, this way knowledge began to be protected (Stumpf, 1984).

As globalization spread, it was necessary to understand its concept defined as the integration of economies of the world through commerce and financial agreements, including people's mobility

and knowledge transfer through international borders (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2000). This knowledge transfer permitted the advancement in technology and communication with the rising of a social structure in a web allowing global interdependency among nations (Castells, 2001).

The end of the Cold War and the advancements of new technologies permitted the creation of a global village that could be a risk due to culture clash according to Bell (2006). The states in globalization faced the need to compete in order to maintain their power space, authority, autonomy, and control of their territory. Governments around the world had to negotiate with international corporations operating globally because of public and private interests immersed in those business alliances (Palomo Garrido, 2012).

Globalization created an impact in different aspects, such as: economic, political, and technological. As an economic phenomenon, international commerce was born. As a political one, based on the Westphalia treaty in 1648 -which indicated that all conflicts in Western Europe were resolved. Some scholars identified it as the origins of international relations, including the inviolability of borders and non-interference in the domestic affairs (Oxford Bibliographies, 2021)- where states were recognized as population with cultural similarities, governed in a space denominated nation, and with free market. In the last aspect, also considered the third wave, the technological revolution changed the way an individual procures his or her subsistence in the planet. The free software and knowledge generation have led to relevant discovery such as: human genome, nanotechnology, and software to become competitive when delivering products or services (Flores, 2016).

Internationalization of Higher Education
In order to face the internationalization process derived from globalization (Cambours de Donini, 2008), and to the interest of the new economy, researchers were considered the human capital that generates economy through their discoveries, inventions, and knowledge; by contributing with innovation and diffusion of technology (Horwitz, 2005; Pistorius, 2004; Siggel, 2000).

Internationalization also contributed directly to the education of undergraduate and graduate students so they could become competitive human capital and in turn, provide an advantage to their nations (Qiang, 2003). This process became a reality since the XIX century, it has been promoted by economy, national unities and expansionist ideas creating the scenarios by the technological revolution also called globalization, reason why internationalizing is a common commercial denominator (Paz, 2005).

But for achieving this condition, international requirements must be met, such as: political, structural, organizational, and financial. Not only to react to the external forces of globalizations but following the UNESCO World Declaration in 1998 that indicates: new educational policies to conceive cooperation as a relevant institutional mission in universities therefore education had to be oriented towards research (Gacel-Ávila 2010).

This characteristic must be observed from inward to outward of universities specially on research to grow through international collaboration and cooperation (Sebastian, 2011). It is also observed as an institutional motor of change in Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] (Egron-Polak, 2014). And so, the new theory of economic growth can be emphasized by the importance of education and innovation, elements pertaining to human capital (Pelinescu, 2015).

Myths and realities of Internationalization
Because internationalization was a new process a few years ago, it was understood differently over the years, the two most renowned authors and the most cited in the literature revised were selected. According to the following authors, these are the myths to be avoided regarding to the process:

Table 1.- *Myths of Internationalization*

Myths	Knight (2011)	De Wit (2011)
1	International students.	English as a second language, studies abroad, international subject, and many international students.
2	International reputation as a quality indicator	International and Intercultural competences do not have to be necessarily evaluated.
3	Number of agreements, memberships, or networks	Great number of agreements, mostly international.
4	International accreditation	Higher education is per se international.
5	Global brand	It is one objective for the institution.

According to other authors there are four viable ways to make Internationalization a reality. Here are the four strategies that form the process of internationalization, which is explained along with its requirements:

a) Internationalization by Competencies: It is the development of attitudes, aptitudes, knowledge and values in students, faculty, and administration. As the emphasis on educational outcomes increases, so does the interest in identifying and defining the global/international domain of competence (Knight, 2005).

b) Intercultural Competence: Deardoff (2006) Essential for inclusive societies, serving as an instrument of mediation and reconciliation but also promoting integration and social cohesion; and defines it as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

c) Comprehensive Internationalization: Commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives into the teaching, research, and management processes of higher education. Essential to be embraced by institutional leadership and governance, faculty, students, and all support and service units (Hudzik, 2011).

d) Internationalization of the Curriculum: Student-centered learning, directed to what they experience: 1) connecting with different cultures and the ways of knowing, doing and being in the different disciplines with active participation of teachers in the process and 2) those teachers who have lived the experience should also be involved (Leask, 2014).

In this section, research competences can be included, for being essential in master's and doctoral programs where future professionals, science teachers and doctors develop the following competencies: 1) statement of a research problem, 2) development of a contextual framework, 3) review of the state of the art, 4) build and validate models, 5) create and validate a data collection instrument, 6) master data analysis techniques, 7) know how to structure a scientific document and master scientific writing, 8) know participate in a scientific activity as a lecturer and, finally, 9) have knowledge of languages and sensitivity towards universal art and culture (Rivas Tovar, 2012).

Internationalization of the Curriculum is the suitable strategy to ensure future and in consolidation researchers are exposed to international perspectives and provide them with the opportunity to develop global competences (McGill & Matross, 2013).

Distance mode education or virtual education, learning and acquisition of a second language, as well as budgeting questions must be the considerations or options to be evaluated as an alternative for internationalizing HEIs (Palma Anda, 2015).

Internationalization of the curriculum: R & D

University administrators and decision-makers have focused their efforts on internationalizing R&D activities because they recognize that knowledge is the future of trade and are seeking competitive advantages in both national and international arenas. (Adapa, 2000).

However, the American Council of Education [ACE] (2005) found that for the internationalization index on research, the following dimensions were examined: a) there was insufficient articulated commitment; b) academic offerings and organizational structure are supported by a campus-wide task force; c) external funding is mentioned as a central point to internationalization; d) institutional investment in faculty is mostly funded by external sources; and e) international

students and student programs: the first is insufficient; the interaction abroad has had an impact, but only a small number of students enroll in abroad programs.

Rostan, and others According to the Changing Academic Profession [CAP], the number of international collaborations has increased in the lingua franca (2014), and most of the publications came from hard fields of study and academics engaged in either basic or theoretical research. According to Kwiek (2015), another study found that there is a latent competitiveness of national research, that individual research productivity is present, and that European productivity is strongly correlated with international research collaborations.

Zetina Pérez et al. (2017) indicated that because research is an important aspect in HEIs, it is necessary to educate in research competences, which cannot be achieved by enrolling in a methodology course, but through seminars, writing scientific papers, presentation of results or findings in congresses.

For Woldegiyorgis et al. (2018) competitiveness has contributed to an increase in research, but the following key factors may also have contributed: each faculty member, the student, the institution, and a significant one: funding. Since the number of publications has become the productivity indicator of institutions, which in turn for Valencia et al. 2018) generates institutional excellence, prestige accumulation is another factor to consider for this increase.

One suggestion by Hernández Romero et al (2020) is to implement, an academic course in summer or during university recess periods, this would be a challenge in the Education System for some nations, but as a result of their study, participants showed an academic advance and were glad about the flexibility in schedules with the implementation of a training between semesters called intersemester modality.

Haley et al. (2022) added that trustworthy relationships and an openness or willingness to learn attitude are necessary for successful international research collaborations, followed by planning, leadership, and adaptability.

Connectivism approach
Connectivism (Siemens, 2055) is the synthesis of principles explored by chaos, network, complexity, and self-organization theories. Learning is a process that takes place in a nebulous environment with varying core elements, not under the complete control of the individual. Learning is defined as actionable knowledge that can be found outside in an organization or a database, and is focused on connecting specialized sets of information, the connections that allow you to learn are more important than the current level of knowledge.

Connectivism is also based on the understanding that decision-making is based on rapidly changing fundamentals. New information is being collected all the time. The ability to distinguish between important and unimportant information is very important. The ability to recognize that new information is changing the landscape based on decisions made yesterday is also important. Principles of connectivism:
- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivism learning activities.
- Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision.

Connectivism also addresses the difficulties many organizations face in their knowledge management activities. Any knowledge that exists in a database must be connected to the right people in the precise context in order to be classified as learning.

The management of the internationalization process at the institutional level of academic programs and learning environments is the goal of this strategy, which is part of the

internationalization of the curriculum strategy. According to Aponte & Peña (2018), it aims to comprehend the internal and external connections that foster global professionals through education.

It examines the higher education system as a whole and rethinks how communication and learning connections are made with the rest of society, as well as its goals, strategies, and methods. According to Peña (2019), the construction of its curriculum, whether digital or analog, must result into multiple access options that foster dynamic cooperation and intelligence.

Research in the Baltic region: characteristics & requirements

Kushnarenko & Cojocari (2012) in their study they stated that internationalization for Moldovia occur as follows: Moldovans recognize that current academic internationalization activities do not occur in just one context. Inadequate local management, financial turmoil, domestic and foreign value orientation University advantage in policy and management strategy initiatives by overseas partners.

Genys (2013) indicated that even though there is a formal education for scientists specially for the energy sector, there is no relation between scientific knowledge and power. However, they noticed a comprehensive view and manages to identify advantages and disadvantages in research.

The internationalization implemented in the Baltic region according to Kaša & Mhamed (2014) is related to language policy in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, where the study programs were offered in a monolingual curriculum offered in the official national language, Russian, or English, a reason why students had to travel to English-speaking countries.

Cultural identity is a universal human right and must be preserved, cultural clash due to interaction or education may overpass one from the other, if a framework is followed the problem is overcome from the start (Stewart Gordon, 2015).

Literature Review

The studies found during the literature review on topics related to research in the Baltic region are the following:

Table 2.-*State of the art on Intrenationalization in the Baltic region*

Author	Year	Approach	IC strategy	Results/Findings
Mammadov	2019	Qualitative	Internationalization of the Curriculum (institutional profile and benchmarking).	Reputation and promotion of HEIs profile, cultural diversity, partnership development, international student recruitment, staff engagement, educational excellence, quality & success management.
Soler	2020	Qualitative	Internationalization of the Curriculum (mobility).	English language as university branding.
Tõnismann	2022	Qualitative	Internationalization of the Curriculum (network).	A few scholars began publishing in Western scientific journals for gaining grants.
Smagina et al.	2022	Qualitative	Internationalization of the Curriculum (graduate program).	Creation of a graduate program, working closely with Mkt team to promote it via social media. Feedback provided by participants was positive and accepted well foreign literature on topics related to the Master program.
Hlynsdóttir & Matonytė	2022	Qualitative	Internationalization of the Curriculum (Benchmarking).	Political science has been affected by private institutions becoming a trend with no stability. The evidence from the four countries indicated: Estonia had more promising projects, Iceland & Eslovenia after modest initiatives gained impetus, rather than those based on slow, incremental undertakings over a longer period as in Malta.

It is understood from the literature review that in order to promote research, this one is fostered through the internationalization of the curriculum with a second language, connectivism

approach, partnerships, or research network, and by offering an internationalized curriculum as a Master program with foreign literature, implementing the proper materials and guided inquiry to help the student-centered practices.

Method
Research Design
This qualitative method used the research design qualitative analysis, which is concerned with transforming raw data by searching, evaluating, recognizing, coding, mapping, exploring, and describing patterns, trends, themes, and categories in the raw data, in order to interpret them and provide their underlying meanings (Ngulube, 2015). The following techniques were used to obtain information from different secondary sources: the documentary review and the literature review techniques, obtaining 50 documents: articles, book chapters, theses, official organizations publications, and one online encyclopedia.

The documentary review (Restrepo & Tabares, 2000) was carried out first in order to analyze the documents on topics related to internationalization of higher education, internationalization of the curriculum, research competences, connectivism approach, and research engagement.

Secondly, a literature review of primary and secondary sources was carried out to obtain documents or sections of a document to collect key sources on research competences in the Baltic region topic (Purdue, 2022) about research engagement strategies implemented and suggested by authors, synthesized, and presented in a chronological order by the group of researchers. This analysis was carried out from September 2022 to January 2023. The objective of the study is to describe how through the internationalization of the curriculum strategy, professionals can develop research competences, collaborate with others, and research impact can be achieved in the Baltic region.

Findings
From the literature review on the Baltic region, it is observed that due to political situations, Internationalization as a process has been implemented later compared to nations or countries mentioned in articles published before 2012.

The nations located in this region have started to implement internationalization strategies, such as: institutional profile by benchmarking, which is basically the promotion of their institution under the concept of cultural diversity, partnership development, receiving international students, promoting quality education and engagement from faculty and the student body.

They have also included mobility from the internationalization of the curriculum, promoting English as the spoken language to attract international students and make them feel at home, mentioning that they can survive by speaking this language as the local ones are rarely being used, and promoting a familiar environment including stereotypical scenarios: landscapes, food, social activities.

A graduate program was detected where Administration is the field of study and topics such as Organizational Literature and Human Resource Management information comes from foreign authors, and it is well accepted from the student body as mentioned in their feedback.

And in the last document, it is clear that a benckmarking was carried out in order to understand what other nations or countries are doing on the matter to keep the trend when there is no budgetary ceilings, funds, or support in order not to be left behind.

Conclusion
The internationalization of research has become necessary even if it is a master program because of the application of knowledge, which is the association of what is learned and what is put into action, when professionals are better trained on the subject, they are able to generate new knowledge, create, or innovate paying close attention to the solution of problems and how to prevent or overcome them.

As mentioned from the documentary review, it is important derived from the globalization phenomenon and the internationalization process to foster international collaboration as well as cooperation. Internationalization of the Curriculum and Connectivism approach has allowed future researchers to have access through different connections to a variety of reading materials, to know the advances in their research field or to join with other fellow partners to publish recent discoveries.

It is relevant to mention because of the delay in the implementation of internationalization of the curriculum in the Baltic region, nations must catch up with some initiatives or strategies already being put into practice in other countries, given that second language acquisition, inclusion of technology, and internationalization of research as isolated ideas are not entirely strategies of the process, but mere elements of the process as observed from the research competences indicated by Rivas Tovar (2012).

However, from the literature review is understood that these competences are developed based on the papers found, the reasons for not finding sufficient literature may be caused by the lack of presenting research in conferences, research engagement, knowledge of data analysis techniques or instruments, including funding issues, premises that could be proven through an empirical study.

Benchmarking is a suggested qualitative technique for comparing strategies used from one HEI to another, speaking at a university level as the universities analyzed did in the findings by Mammadov (2019) and Hlynsdóttir & Matonytė (2022), in order to understand what others are doing according to their economic, geographical, physical, or political possibilities.

It is recommended that internationalization of the curriculum through the connectivism approach is implemented to foster partnerships that can become research networks, institutional international agreements, virtual collaborations, virtual research mobility, access to electronic or online publications, university repositories, invitations as lecturers or attendance to virtual webinars, conferences, or congresses for mutual exchange, and reinforce their internationalization efforts.

It is concluded that there is work to be done first understanding what the internationalization process is, what it implies, that path that needs to be walked through to become a competitive region in the research field.

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