

Transnational Higher Education Programs for Facilitating Inter-university Knowledge Transfer: University of Indonesia's Experience

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This paper explores the impacts and extent of knowledge transfer (KT) in an undergraduate engineering transnational program with an Australian university partner at the University of Indonesia using an inter-university KT conceptual framework (Sutrisno, Lisana, & Pillay, 2012). For the purpose of this paper, the opportunity for KT in curriculum design is examined. Given the explicit nature of curriculum knowledge, assessing each partner's curriculum was pivotal in allowing UI to enrich its own curriculum. The KT mechanism of face-to-face interaction between Indonesian and Australian academics led to not only transfer of knowledge related to the curriculum of the undergraduate program but also to other cooperation beyond the transnational program in the form of joint research and joint supervision of post-graduate thesis. Positive inter-university dynamics, such as trust and willingness to work together between the partners were underpinned by the presence of key actors from both sides at the earlier stages of the partnership. Retrospectively exploring the KT process in the UI's transnational programs with its Australian partner suggests that there have been both structured and unstructured mechanisms, highlighting the ubiquitous and unbounded nature of KT between universities. While initially successful in facilitating KT, due to rapid succession of persons in charge of the program and the increasing focus on revenue generation, the useful lessons and practices unfortunately are being lost. Although the intention to use the transnational program for KT was always implied, it gradually was overlooked by newer staff members. Based on UI's experience as the first provider of transnational program in Indonesia and other similar cases in China, seemingly transnational programs driven by short-term immediate financial return are unsuccessful in facilitating KT due to sensitivities to unfavourable economic situation. Those that remain operational and contribute to knowledge exchange between the partners apparently have genuine long-term engagement objective.

Key Words

Transnational education, knowledge transfer, Indonesia