Sustainability of International Educational Linkages

Uluslararası Eğitim İşbirliklerinin Sürdürebilirliği

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Öz. Uluslararası kurumsal iş birlikleri, uluslararasılaşmış kampüsün bir bileşenidir. Ancak bir iş birliğinin başarısı veya başarısızlığı, kampüs genelindeki tüm uluslararasılaşma çabaları ile yakından ilişkilidir. Bu nedenle, uluslararası girişimlere dâhil olan uluslararası program sorumluları, üniversite yöneticileri ve öğretim elemanları gibi kampüs çalışanlarının sadece başarılı bağlantılara yol açan faktörler hakkında bilgi sahibi olmaları değil, aynı zamanda bu faktörlerin kurum içindeki karmaşık etkileşimini yönlendirmek için gerekli araçlara da sahip olmaları önemlidir. Başarı ve sürdürülebilirlik konusuna ilişkin pek çok soru bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan bazıları şunlar olabilir: Başarılı bir iş birliğinin tanımı nedir? Bir iş birliğinin başarısında hangi faktörler rol oynar? Uluslararası eğitim uygulayıcılarının iş birliklerinin başarı şansını artırmak için kullanabileceği araçlar nelerdir? Bu çalışma, bir üniversitedeki üç iş birliği vakası üzerine bu konuları inceleyen nitel bir çalışmadır. Elde edilen olay içi ve olaylar arası analizler, uluslararası kurumsal iş birliklerinin kök salması, gelişmesi ve sürdürülebilmesi için yükseköğretim kurumlarında üç ayrı çevrenin desteklenmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Çalışma, bir iş birliğinin başarısına katkıda bulunan bir dizi faktör bulunduğunu ve bir bağlantının sürdürülebilirliğini sağlamak için kurumun bağımsızlık ile destek arasında veya daha doğrusu gevşek bağlı ve sıkı bağlı bir yapı arasında sağlıklı bir denge kurmaya çaba göstermesi gerektiğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dağıtılmış Liderlik, gevşek bağlılık, sıkı bağlılık, uluslararası kurumsal işbirliği, sürdürülebilirlik.*

Abstract. The international institutional linkage is one component of the internationalized campus. The success or failure of a linkage, however, may reverberate through all internationalization efforts across the campus. Therefore, it is essential that those on campus who are involved in international initiatives, such as international programs officers, university administrators, and faculty, not only possess knowledge of the factors that lead to successful linkages, but the tools necessary to navigate the complex interplay of those factors throughout the institution. There are certainly many questions underlying the issue of success and sustainability, including: What is the definition of a successful linkage? What factors play a role in the success of a linkage? What are tools that international education practitioners can utilize to increase chances of success in regard to linkages? This study explores these issues in a qualitative study of three specific cases of linkages at one university. The resulting in-case, and cross-case analyses explore the notion that three separate environments should be nurtured at institutions of higher education in order for international institutional linkages to take root, develop, and ultimately sustained. The study concludes that there are a number of contributors to the success of a linkage, and that in order to achieve sustainability of a linkage, the institution should endeavor to strike a healthy balance between independence and support, or rather, between a loosely coupled and a tightly coupled structure.

Keywords: *Distributed leadership, international institutional linkage, loose coupling, sustainability, tight coupling.*

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş. Bu çalışma, başarı, sürdürülebilirlik ve liderlik açısından yükseköğretimde uluslararası kurumsal iş birliği kavramını incelemektedir. Bu tür işibirlikleri, farklı ülkelerdeki üniversiteler arasındaki iş birliği faaliyetlerini içermektedir. Bu çalışma, iş birliklerinin üç genel özelliğini tanımlamaktadır: Dostluk ve iş birliği anlaşmaları, Programa özgü iş birlikleri ve Geniş kurumsal iş birlikleri. Dostluk anlaşmaları, maddi taahhütler olmadan iş birliğini teşvik ederken, programa özgü iş birlikleri genellikle kişisel iş birliklerini içermektedir ve mali destek gerektirmeyebilmektedir. Geniş kurumsal iş birlikleri, öğretim elemanları ve öğrenci değişimleri ve ortak araştırma çabaları gibi her iki kurumdan da ciddi taahhütleri gerektirmektedir. Bu tür iş birliklerinin avantajları karşılıklı fayda ve kurumsal kapasite oluşturmaktadır. İş birliği türüne ve nedenine bakılmaksızın, uluslararası ortaklıkları sürdürmekle ilgili birçok zorluk bulunmaktadır; birçok iş birliği, ilk anlaşmaların ötesine geçemeden sürdürülemez hale gelebilmekte ve bunların uzun ömürlü hale getirilmesi için hangi formüllerin sorulması gerektiği konusunda sorular sorulmasına yol açabilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, yükseköğretimde uluslararası kurumsal iş birliklerinin başarı ve sürdürülebilirliğine ilişkin algılar, tutumlar ve süreçler hakkında daha iyi bir bir çerçeve sunulmasına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem. Bu çalışma, yükseköğretimde uluslararası kurumsal iş birliklerini incelemek için nitel bir vaka çalışması yöntemini kullanmaktadır. Veriler, 20 katılımcıyla yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmış ve raporlar, anlaşmalar ve kayıtlar gibi arşiv bilgileri ile doğrulanmıştır. Katılımcılar, uluslararası eğitimle ilgili rolleri veya belirli iş birlikleri hakkında bilgi sahibi olmalarına dayalı olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırmada incelenecek kurumsal bağlantıları daha iyi anlayabilmek amacıyla veri üçgenlemesi (triangulation) yöntemi kullanılmıştır (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, s.4). Stake (1998, s. 97) tarafından "çoklu bakış açısı" olarak da adlandırılan veri üçgenlemesi, destekleyici kanıtlar sağlamak amacıyla birden fazla ve farklı kaynak, yöntem, araştırmacı ve teorinin kullanılmasıdır (Creswell, 1998, s. 202). İnceleme yapılan üniversitede, bu yöntem ile kamu belgeleri, güncel ve arşivlenmiş kayıtlar incelenmiş ve çeşitli açılardan bağlantıları incelemek için görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler, geniş bir fikir ve tutum keşfi için imkân tanıyabilmesi açısından yapılandırılmamıştır. Görüşmeler kaydedilerek deşifre edilmiş ve anonim olarak kodlanmıştır. Üç ayrı vaka çalışması, her bir vakanın benzersiz yönlerini anlamak için yürütülmüş ve vakalar arası analiz ile vakalar arasında ortak temalar belirlenmiştir.

Sonuçlar. Uluslararası iş birliklerinin başarısı ve sürdürülebilirliğini etkileyen faktörleri açık bir şekilde anlayabilmek için ABD'deki tek bir üniversitede üç vaka çalışması yapılmıştır. İlk vaka çalışması, ABD'deki kurum ile Çin, Japonya ve Tayland'daki üniversiteler arasında bir dizi iş birliği oluşturmuş geniş, uzun vadeli bir programa ilişkindir. Program, öğrencileri, öğretim elemanlarını ve yerel liderler için "kardeş kuruluşlar"a yapılacak yılda bir kereliğine beş haftalık bir saha gezisi içermektedir. Uluslararasılaşmayı ve kültürel anlayışı teşvik etme hedefi doğrultusunda yüzlerce kişi bu programa katılmıştır. Programın başarısı liderin destek sağlama ve güçlü taahhüdüne atfedilmiştir. Ancak, liderin bağımsız yaklaşımı bazen üniversitenin müfredat entegrasyonunu ve üniversite genelindeki uluslarararsılaşmayı vurgulama yönünde evrilen uluslararası program vizyonuyla çelişmiştir. Bu vakada öne çıkan temalar, liderlik, uluslararasılaşma ve ilişki kurmanın programın başarısını ve sürdürülebilirliğini etkileyen faktörler olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

İkinci vaka çalışması, üniversitenin İşletme Fakültesi ile İstanbul Üniversitesi arasında kurulan bir iş birliğini içermektedir. Yaklaşık yirmi yıl boyunca, İşletme Fakültesi'ndeki bu iş birliğinin lideri,

üniversitenin uluslararasılaşmasına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlayarak iş birliğini desteklemiştir. Program, çeşitli bölümlerden öğretim elemanları ve öğrencileri için İstanbul'a öğrenci saha gezileri içerecek şekilde genişlemiş, bu da kültürlerarası etkileşim ve uluslararası işletme çalışmalarını teşvik etmiştir. Üniversite yönetiminin güçlü katılımı, programa olan bağlılığın bir göstergesi olmuş ve bunu desteklemek amacıyla "Akademik İş birliği Anlaşması" imzalanmıştır. Lider, daha geniş uluslararasılaşma için yöneticilere ve öğretim elemanlarına sistematik olarak etki etmeyi amaçlamış; ancak programın bu amaç için bir araç olarak rolünü aktarmak konusunda zorluklarla karşılaşmıştır. Liderin stratejisi, destekleyici öğretim üyeleri kadrosu oluşturmayı, çok bölümlü bir program kurmayı ve program bağımsızlığını sağlamayı içermektedir.

İngiliz Koleji ile iş birliği içeren üçüncü vaka, başlangıçta başarılı olmasına rağmen on yılın üzerinde sürdürülemeyerek incelenen tüm vakalar arasında diğerlerinden farklılaşmıştır. Kişisel ilişkiler, ekonomik zorluklar, kurumsal dinamikler, değişen öğrenci ve öğretim elemanı ihtiyaçları ve bir yedekleme planının (succession planning) eksikliği gibi çeşitli faktörler iş birliğinin sonunu getirmiştir. İş birliği, bir konferansta yapılan bir konuşma ile başlamış ve öğrenci talebi ve idari ve öğretim elemanlarının desteği ile devam ettirilmiş; ancak son beş yılda, bu alanlardaki zorluklar iş birliğine yönelik ilgiyi azaltmıştır. Sonuç olarak, liderlik değişiklikleri ve değişen taahhütler dahil olmak üzere çeşitli faktörler, iş birliğinin potansiyelini gerçekleştirmesini engellemiş ve sonlandırılmasına neden olmuştur.

Tartışma. Çalışma, uluslararasılaşma çabalarıyla tanınan bir üniversitedeki üç kurumsal iş birliğine odaklanmıştır. Bu iş birliklerinin liderliğini üstlenen liderlere Dağıtılmış Liderlik teorisi perspektifinden bakılmıştır. Üç vakanın incelenmesiyle, başarıyı tanımlamada önemli olan destek, etki, faaliyet ve sürdürülebilirliğin önemi gibi ana temalar ortaya çıkmıştır. Başarı ve sürdürülebilirlik, üç kendine özgü çevre ile elde edilebilmektedir. Olanak Sağlayan Ortam, kolektif liderlik tarafından yönlendirilen uluslararası programlar için üniversite genelinde destek vurgusu yapmaktadır. Çekici Ortam, paylaşılan liderlik aracılığıyla paydaş ihtiyaçlarını ele alarak bağlantıları cazip hale getirmeye odaklanmaktadır. Son olarak, Sürdürülebilir Ortam, sorunsuz geçişler ve daha geniş etki için liderliğin iş birliği ile ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Üç uluslararası iş birliği vakasının başarısı ve sürdürülebilirliği, kültür, dış çevre, planlama, organizasyon yapısı ve kaynakların mevcudiyeti gibi beş kritik faktörden etkilenmiştir. Uluslararasılaşma yolunda kampüs çabaları, öğretim üyeleri ödüllendirme yapılarının zorlukları tarafından engellenmiştir. Dış çevre, bağlantıların çekiciliğini etkilemiş, güvenlik endişeleri sürekliliği etkilemiştir. Planlama, öğretim elemanı ve öğrenci işe alımı için önem arz etmiş ve organizasyon yapısı bağlantıları kurum içinde gevşek bağlıdan sıkı bağlı hale getirmiştir. Kişisel ve kurumsal kaynakların mevcudiyeti hem kişisel hem de kurumsal olarak önemli hale gelmiştir. Paylaşılan liderlik, üç durumun hepsinde yaygındı, ancak bağımsızlık ile destek arasındaki doğru dengeyi bulmak sürdürülebilirlik için bir zorluk olmuştur.

Sonuç. Bu çalışma, yükseköğretimde uluslararası kurumsal bağlantıların anlayışımızı zenginleştirerek, paylaşılan liderlik ve bağlantı dinamikleri konularında teorik içgörüler sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, başarılı ve sürdürülebilir bağlantıları teşvik etmek için pratik araçlar ve stratejiler sunmaktadır. Ancak, sorun hala kurumların uzun vadeli sürdürülebilirliği ihmal etme eğiliminde olmalarıdır. İleride yürütülecek araştırmalar, kurumların bu kavramları kendi bağlamlarına nasıl uyguladığını inceleyebilir.

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Introduction

One metric of the internationalized campus is some form of international collaborative activity between two universities. Such international institutional linkages may be limited to individual faculty members at two institutions in different countries collaborating on projects, including faculty and student mobility between the institutions. Linkages may also expand to the point where they are broad-based and diffused through numerous departments across campus. Regardless of size and scope, international institutional linkages often hold the unfortunate reputation of living short life spans[1], leaving some wondering whether typical global partnerships are "doomed beyond the first few years" (Lanford, 2020, p. 89). This is not a baseless claim. Chief International Officers can easily produce longer lists of inoperative partnerships than active ones. Which begs the question: Why is this so? From an institutional perspective, partnerships are generally entered deliberately and strategically. Rather than the more traditional approach of "stamp collecting", institutions increasingly focus on *a small number of deep, multi-faceted, more meaningful relationships* (Taylor, 2016).

However, not all partnerships begin at the top. Indeed, a significant proportion are grassroots, emerging from affiliations forged at conferences or on collaborative projects. While many partnerships stay right there, as one-to-one or department-to-department associations, there are also cases where, either organically or strategically, a partnership that began at the personal level ripples through other programs and departments across campusses. As the leveraging of expertise, resources, and human capital (Lanford, 2020) in such partnerships increases, the stakes are raised to ensure success and sustainability of such linkages. This study examines three international institutional linkages, exploring the concepts of success, sustainability, and leadership in relation to these partnerships. I viewed the purpose of my research as trying to contribute to a greater understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and processes (Glesne, 1999) regarding the success and sustainability of institutional linkages.

The term international institutional linkage will be used to describe the phenomenon being explored. Linkages can be broken into three general characterizations: Friendship and cooperation agreements; Program-specific linkages; Broad institutional linkages. The literature offers other names attached to this concept: International inter-organizational arrangements, bilateral cooperative arrangements, mono-disciplinary bilateral linkages, transnational linkages, and international interuniversity linkages. One additional category of linkage, which is a frequent source of concern among international education practitioners, is commonly referred to as "holy water", "phantom", or "amorphous" agreements. These are the linkages that generally exist on paper only, with little or no actual activity resulting from them.

The literature also offers numerous reasons to justify the establishment of international linkages between two institutions of higher education; certainly, multi-lateral linkages are prevalent as well (Thullen et al., 1997). Perhaps the most common reasons are "mutual benefit" (e.g. ACE, 1984,

p. 1) and "building of institutional capacity" (e.g. Jenkins, 1996, fn 1). Klineberg listed four practical reasons for pursuing linkages: (1) mutual scientific interests, (2) tradition, (3) geographic proximity, (4) the high status and good standing of certain departments at foreign institutions (1976, p. 238).

Definitions of linkages are numerous, with many focusing on the notion of "direct operational ties… with mutual agreement, providing mutual benefit, and mutual investment of resources" (ACE 1984, p. 1). Taylor (2016) offers six *levels* of partnerships, from the individual to the institutional. Arguably the version with the clearest distinctions, and therefore the one chosen for this study, was provided by the Office of International Education and the American Council on Education (1993). The OIE and ACE have defined linkages as falling into three categories: Friendship and cooperation agreements; Program-specific linkages; Broad institutional linkages.

Friendship and cooperation agreements are "intended to encourage cooperation and friendship between institutions, but make no financial commitments" (OIE & ACE, 1993, p. 9). What may be considered "lower-commitment, or proof- of-concept" partnerships (Antony & Nicola, 2020). It is usually in these instances that institutions develop a Memorandum of Understanding, which "expresses a desire to promote friendship and cooperation. At the same time, no promises have been made, so the door is open for future action – after careful consideration".

Program-specific linkages "are often initiated by faculty members and are frequently facilitated by personal links to faculty abroad. Many program-specific links do not involve financial commitments" (OIE & ACE, 1993, p. 10). Examples of such linkages may include internship programs, cooperative research efforts, and departmental student exchanges. One informant in this study referred to these as "cosmetic" linkages. "They are generally arranged by a random faculty member, whereby we have an agreement to agree to do something if and when the time and resources permit. It commits us to nothing. We don't support these with our resources. They are supported with the department's or college's resources."

Broad institutional linkages "set the terms for broad cooperation between two institutions. Agreements usually spell out a range of conditions, expectations, and obligations for participating faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students" (OIE & ACE, 1993, p.10). Such agreements "rely on substantial commitments from both institutions to make them viable...there is usually a commitment for broad-based exchange of faculty members and students, as well as for joint research and the exchange of research and library materials" (Thullen et al., 1997, p. 34). One informant in this study likened them to marriage agreements (i.e. "'Till death do us part"), defining them as broader, longer-lasting agreements spanning across various departments and colleges. The cases examined for this study fall under the rubrics of program-specific and broad institutional linkages.

The issue here, regardless of what form of link one is considering, is which factors lead to the success and ultimate sustainability of the linkages. This is a critical question for higher education

instituions in pursuit of internationalization, while doing so in a manner that is effective and efficient because the success or failure of a linkage may reverberate through all internationalization efforts across the campus (Antony & Nicola, 2020; Taylor, 2016). Therefore, it is essential that those on campus who are involved in international initiatives, such as international programs officers, university administrators, and faculty, not only possess knowledge of the factors that lead to successful linkages, but the tools necessary to navigate the complex interplay of those factors throughout the institution. This study aims to identify those tools.

The challenge facing those on campus who share in the responsibility of developing and maintaining linkages is that, outside of anecdotal accounts, there is a rather limited body of research regarding the development and long-term maintenance of successful international institutional linkages. Critiques of research in internationalization make a claim for "more data and a stronger research base," (Burn & Smuckler, 1995, p. 2), while asserting that "many of the data available for analysis [of internationalization] are methodologically suspect, inappropriate for comparison, and/or too outdated to be of much contemporary value," (ACE 2000, p. 4).

Although evidence does exist for instances of successful linkages that began as far back as the days of the Marshall Plan in the late 1940s, researchers have long been "struck by the fact that in general, bilateral programs do not always work," (Klineberg, 1976). For a number of years now, there have been calls to "strengthen, expand, replicate, and promote models of mutually beneficial partnerships," (ACE 2002, p. 17).

Methodology

Data was collected through archival information and a series of interviews that were digitally recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. For the purpose of exploring this issue, and the subsequent research questions, a qualitative, case-study methodology was used. The value in conducting a case study is that it allows the research drill deeply into a phenomenon at an individual site; in this case, a model site with a positive reputation for its internationalization efforts. By selecting a case approach, the aim, rather than exploring this phenomenon across multiple institutions, was to form a clear understanding of how internationalization did and did not succeed at a single institution. The data-collection methodology of triangulation was employed in an attempt to secure in-depth understanding of the institutional linkages to be examined (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Triangulation is the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 1998), or what Stake (1995 p. 97) refers to as using "multiple perceptions" to clarify meaning. At the university under study, this included examining public documents, such as current and archived records (e.g. departmental and university senate decisions), books written about the university, newsletters published internally, in addition to numerous interviews in order to study the linkages from multiple perspectives.

Interviews were conducted with twenty separate individuals who agreed to participate, and were interviewed throughout an eight-month data collection period. These participants were identified and approached with the aim to achieve vertical and horizontal distribution of informants. Interviews were sought with institutional leaders, such as the provost and the assistant provost for international education, college level administrators, and a range of faculty and staff from across campus. Administrators, staff, and faculty, both current and retired, emerged as potential interview candidates or what Morse (1998, p.73) calls "good informants"; i.e. those who demonstrate the knowledge and experience regarding internationalization and linkages, and those who have the ability to reflect, are articulate, and have the time and willingness to be interviewed. Quite often, from the recommendations of these initial interviewees, other names emerged, leading to further interviews, or snowball, chain, or network sampling (Glesne, 1999, p.29). This was frequently the case when interviewing linkage directors; i.e. they provided names of faculty who had participated in the linkage at some point. Some of these individuals were subsequently approached, via either email or phone call, and were requested to act as informants. Furthermore, written records of pertinence to the specific cases and international education at the school were collected through websites, from the university archives, and from individuals who willingly granted access to their personal documents. From this approach, additional informants were identified. Eventually, data saturation manifested as redundancies began to emerge in the data (Glesne, 1999, p.135).

The interviews themselves were primarily unstructured, referring to Fontana and Frey's (1998) categorization of three interview types; i.e. structured, group, and unstructured. Unstructured interviews were chosen because, as Fontana and Frey point out, this form offers "greater breadth," (p. 56). This approach allowed the examination of the three separate linkages without "a priori categorizations" that would limit the focus and line of inquiry. At the same time, questioning was guided by what Glesne calls "topical interviewing" (1999, p.69), which allowed exploration of "opinions, perceptions, and attitudes toward some topic," which in this instance were the specific cases.

The digitally recorded interviews were professionally transcribed. Each of the recordings and their accompanying transcripts were coded to protect informant anonymity. In addition, original names of all informants were replaced with pseudonyms to identify recordings and transcripts.

The three individual case studies were conducted because each, in its own right, was a unique story. Therefore, records were collected and interviews conducted in order to intrinsically examine (Stake, 1998, p. 88) the cases separately for better understanding of their own stories. The within case analysis for each was sequential and interactive, with the data and the emerging text influencing each other (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 187). The three stories that evolved, while revealing common themes pertaining to success and sustainability of linkages, also revealed themes that were unique to the individual cases. A cross-case analysis was also carried out, in which recurring themes were analyzed across the cases.

Three cases

Case 1: The Far East program

Over a four-decade period, a Korean faculty member would create, develop, and lead the university's Far East Asia Program. Throughout the years, the program evolved from a single linkage agreement with the faculty member's home university in Seoul, South Korea to a much broader endeavor that included linkages with an additional university in Korea, as well as others in China, Japan, and Thailand. The centerpiece of the program was a field trip that occurred every summer, as a different faculty member led a "delegation" of students and faculty, and sometimes local business leaders and government officials on a five-week tour of the "sister institutions" in those Far Eastern countries.

Over a thirty-five year period, hundreds of faculty, students, and community members participated in the program. During that same time-frame, an equal number visited from Asian sister institutions, which was in line with program's stated goal of internationalization by encouraging people to cross borders. As often stated by the lead faculty member and many of his colleagues, the overall vision for the program was, through the interaction of people, creating a better understanding between cultures. Faculty that participated in the program over the years remarked overwhelmingly that it had significantly impacted their lives. By many accounts, the program was considered a success, mostly the result of the efforts of the program's leader. "My definition of success is more people participating in the program. I think I got that. So I was very happy with that."

In order to achieve his vision, and this level of success, the program leader needed to remain creative when it came to generating support to grow and sustain the program. One of colleague referring to his resourcefulness called him "clever;" another said he was a "bargainer." In short, the lead was extremely committed to his program, which meant that he sometimes felt the need to circumvent the system to get what he needed. Some felt that he was too independent in this respect; one colleague remarked that there were times when the administration thought of him as a "bothersome gnat… who could find ways of making things happen under the table."

The lead himself believed that the key to success was relationship building. Relationships on campus garnered resources and encouraged involvement from faculty and students. Relationships with the community also led to resources, but it also led to a broader understanding of the Asian culture. Relationships with sister institutions, including students, faculty, administrators, and surrounding community members, gave field trip participants a destination, a name, and a face, which was, in the eyes of the lead, the ultimate means for developing understanding between cultures.

At the time of this research, the university was in the process of strengthening its international programs by creating the position of Assistant Provost of International Education. The AP began by focusing his attention on "International Education: A New Strategic Plan for The University", followed

by the "Proposed Reorganization of the Office of International Education", both of which would significantly impact the future of the Far East Exchange program.

Throughout the Strategic Planning document, and reiterated in interviews, the AP emphasized the necessity of creating an environment on campus where the essence of internationalism runs through all aspects of the university life. In the AP's view, a field trip, for instance, would include a curricular component, tied to a specific field of study. The field trip would also include a continuation element by offering related academic, social, and cultural activities on campus throughout the year. The way in which this plan would impact the Far East Exchange program would be through an evaluation of the field trip, and including an assessment of whether or not it had spun a "coherent thread" through the fabric of the University, by meeting criteria that contributed to an internationalized campus; e.g. the impact on curriculum.

Through the course of researching this case, a number of key themes related to success and sustainability of linkages emerged: Leadership, particularly that exhibited by the program leader as he grew the Far East program over a 36 year period, and how his leadership style may be in conflict with the university's future direction of international programs; Internationalization, and the leader's impact across time and across the campus on reaching his goal of broader understanding between cultures; and Relationships, which were essentially the driving force behind the leader and this program – relationships in the Far East, in the community, and across campus, with administration, faculty, and students.

Case 2: The Istanbul University linkage

The linkage with Istanbul University, began in 1983, when a Turkish academician joined the Marketing faculty of the College of Business. One of the faculty member's chief claims to fame on campus was that for nearly twenty years, he was the "champion" of the Istanbul University partnership; one that is characterized by many across campus as a successful program. This lead of the partnership earned considerable respect and admiration from many of his colleagues at through his work as the leader on this linkage, as a program administrator, and as the chair on numerous international committees. When exploring this linkage, it is evident that the leader's vision was to utilize the linkage for the greater goal of contributing to an internationalized campus. Moreover, the individual stories emerging through interviews suggest that there were three contributing factors to this goal: 1) Create a cadre of faculty to support the program, 2) create a multi-departmental program, 3) create independence for the program; i.e. diminish its reliance on a single individual as the sole leader.

Despite some initial complications when the linkage was maturing, 1992 would mark the beginning of an impressive run of student field trips to Istanbul – 1992, '94, '95, 96, 98, 99, and 2000. This is what the leader had envisioned: Faculty and student recruits from an increasing number of

departments (e.g. Accounting, Economics, Management, Marketing) were joining field trips to Istanbul to study international business while becoming immersed in the Turkish culture. The field trips included lectures by IU faculty on their campus, followed by afternoon visits to businesses throughout Istanbul. During the same period, dozens of Istanbul University faculty and students have traveled to their US partner university to conduct research, or earn MBAs or other "non-business degrees."

The university president eventually traveled to Istanbul University to take part in their commencement ceremonies, and to sign an "Agreement of Academic Cooperation" between the two institutions. While the signing of this document was more or less a formality, the act itself was significant in that, according to the linkage leader, it demonstrated commitment. It showed the university "that it's a program worth paying attention to. It's something worthwhile. When they see higher administration getting involved, it helps build confidence in the faculty."

The overall vision for the Istanbul exchange program, as laid out by its leader, was that it be used as a means to an end; that it would make a "contribution to internationalization". And, he viewed internationalization as a systemic challenge. When talking about working toward this vision, the leader talked in terms of administrators – presidents and provosts and deans and chairs – and in terms of faculty. These are the people, this is the system, that he sought to influence. However, the leader claimed he had significant difficulty in conveying the message that the Istanbul program is a means to an end; that he sees it as a tool for the larger internationalization effort. "The difficulty is not getting people to do it. It's getting people to understand it. It's not just related to a single program – it has to be university-wide. I think I am succeeding with some people, but not across the board."

In his efforts to achieve this vision, it is apparent that the leader had established a set of intertwined goals to help him succeed: 1) create a cadre of faculty that would support the program, 2) create a multi-departmental program, 3) create independence for the program.

The leader saw the development of a cadre as an on-going process, with a new faculty member participating in the program each year and ultimately becoming an advocate of the program. The need to develop an increasingly large cadre of advocates naturally ties in with the goal of having a multi-departmental program. If all of the participating faculty originate from a single department, then it will be thought of as isolated, and perhaps remain that way. The leader's vision was for a large number of faculty, from all across campus, to support the program and to help to ensure its independence. The linkage leader's third measure of success was to "create independence" for the linkage. He has worked to develop a support group of faculty, in departments across campus, who, if he leaves, "will take it over because they have a vested interest." He wanted to be seen as a "facilitator, not as the person who owns, who possesses the program and runs it." To back this statement up, the leader spoke of what succession looks like:

These programs, after so many years, they develop their own life…I hope so because if I leave,

what happens? So I tried to create independence for this program. They will take it over because they have a vested interest. Because if I try to do it just by myself, I could have gone every year for a field trip to Turkey and have my way paid. But that was not the idea. The idea was recruiting these people and making them a part of it. Having them as advisors, consultants, support people.

Case 3: The UK college linkage

What made the UK College linkage an interesting case was that while it had been apparently successful, it had not been sustained. In this respect, this linkage is unique because it offers an interesting contrast to the other linkages in this study that were sustained for 37 and 15 years respectively.

Multiple factors emerged in the explanation of how this relationship was not able to survive beyond the ten-year mark: Personal relationships, economics, institutional relationships, the changing needs of students and faculty, and the lack of a succession plan. Faculty and administrators that discussed the linkage reflected on it as a positive experience for the students and faculty that had participated in it, and that the linkage had served a useful purpose for a decade. At the same time, it was felt that the need had arisen for the ties to be severed, and for the university to examine other linkage opportunities.

The linkage got its start through a conversation at a conference between a faculty member and a board member from the UK school. "[They] started talking about their interests and their schools and they seemed to see that there was an opportunity here to perhaps get together and create something for the students at both schools."

Early success of the linkage was attributed to student demand, administrative support, and faculty engagement. The first few years of the program experienced strong interest, and favorable reviews, particularly from the US university perspective. One allure of the program was timing. The trip took place in May, after the school year ended, which allowed students the possibility of summer employment after returning home. The chair of the department where the linkage was initiated noted that he, as the chair, was "certainly was supportive" of the faculty member who initiated the program, and as an administrator he became involved in the linkage. What he appeared most interested in was supporting faculty who were trying to accomplish something that was "in the best interest of our students."

"The idea was that we wanted to be able to share this experience with faculty throughout the college." The method for continually attracting fresh participants from the faculty, and for ensuring longevity of the linkage, was through a succession plan. The chair explained the succession plan as one in which two faculty members would team up each year and work together on the program, with one of them assuming leadership in the following year.

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It was obvious that early on, the College of Business had viewed the linkage as a successful one, with the chair and his colleagues working hard to sustain it. Yet, during its last five years, challenges arose in terms of relationships, economics, and student and faculty participation. Interest in the program, in its original form, slowly waned, and an underlying current to eliminate the program began to circulate within the College.

The ultimate demise of the linkage cannot be attributed to a single factor. Rather, it came about through a diverse combination of factors such as personal relationships, economics, institutional relationships, the changing needs of students and faculty and the lack of a succession plan. The College of Business faculty member who had initiated the linkage, retired the year after the program was launched. This led to a series of transitions in the leadership of the linkage. The program, however, would also be impacted by another change in personnel at the UK university, when a new administrator of the school apparently did not demonstrate the same level of commitment to the partnership as his predecessor. The chair explained that there had been plans to develop the program to the point where "surely we could work out something that the students could take there and transfer back here." Yet, he explained, "We never got to that point."

Findings

Success and sustainability of international institutional linkages

The university in this study was chosen due to its reputation for internationalization efforts, which have been ongoing since the mid-1980s. The study examined three specific institutional linkages at the target university in terms of their histories, leadership, and levels of success and sustainability The three linkages studied were the Far East program, the Istanbul University linkage, and the UK linkage. Each of these linkages had unique characteristics and challenges.

The UK linkage had a successful run for about ten years. The themes that emerged from this case included personal relationships, institutional relationships, economics, changing faculty and student needs, lack of a succession plan, administrative support, and the need to attract faculty and students effectively.

The Istanbul University linkage had considerable support and popularity during its 15-year lifespan. The program leader viewed it as successful because he had been able to create "a support group" with his dean, his chair, and other faculty. He stressed that, "They were the advocates. They were defending the program and supporting the program, and trying to advance... I think that contributes to the success of the program." Themes from this case study included administrative support, creating faculty support, multi-departmental programs, independence from the linkage's creator, and campus internationalization.

The Far East program, established in four Asian countries, lasted for over 36 years and was primarily shaped by a dedicated faculty member. Themes from this case included leadership, campus internationalization, relationships with the local community, and relationships with faculty, students, and administrators.

Several broader themes stood out across all three cases. These themes formed the basis for discussions on the success and sustainability of international linkages. They included garnering support for international initiatives, effectively attracting students and faculty, and facilitating sustainability of linkages. Administrative and faculty support were highlighted as crucial for international initiatives. The leaders of these linkages shared a common vision of broadening their impact and contributing to campus internationalization. They believed that success relied on consistently recruiting students and faculty to participate in the linkage.

As a result of this analysis of success and sustainability of international institutional linkages, this study proposes the existence of three separate environments on a university campus that contribute to the development and sustainability of international institutional linkages: an Enabling Environment, an Attractive Environment, and a Sustainable Environment. Institutional leadership, from the President to the Chief International Officer (CIO), to the linkage director him or herself are all key to the development and maintenance of these three environments within the organization. The question is how.

Success in international linkages can be defined in terms of support, impact, activity, and sustainability. Expanding the circle of influence and impact on campus and in the community was a common thread across these three cases. The effective leader plays a vital role in creating an *enabling* environment with maximum support and minimal barriers for new linkages. What the Chief International Officer referred to as a "top-down, bottom-up facilitator". Such leaders secure support from university governance, faculty, and students, in locating resources and removing road blocks to participation. Again, the Chief International Officer noted that such leaders is adept at locating resources from across campus and removing barriers that may inhibit participation. The effective international leader is creative and flexible, a facilitator and an advocate, as well as someone who can make "tough decisions" (i.e. restructure or terminate a program). He or she can "broaden the base of activity" and "raise the visibility" of international programs across campus.

Likewise, the study highlighted the importance of creating an *attractive* environment for linkages, where they are seen as opportunities rather than burdens. This involved addressing issues related to program alignment, curricular integrity, faculty needs, and cost considerations. Finally, for linkages to be *sustainable*, a long-term strategy is necessary, including a succession plan. This plan outlines how the linkage will transition from relying on a single individual's commitment to broader participation and leadership.

While the activities associated with these three cases could have been carried out by an individual, these three cases demonstrate that a greater degree of success is attained when a network of leaders is established. The lens of success in each of these three cases draws a line directly to the concept of Distributed Leadership theory, which views leadership as a complex web of social interactions between leaders, followers, and the situation. Leadership practice is distributed across individuals, artifacts, and organizational structures (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane et al., 2004). The central notion of Distributed Leadership is that "the appropriate unit of analysis is not leaders or what they do, but leadership activity" (Spillane et al., 2004, p.13). Distributed Leadership posits that a

leader's cognition is stretched, or distributed, situationally, over aspects and actors (Spillane & Sherer, 2004), thereby rendering decisions meaningful only within a social context. Therefore, the focus of leadership shifts from a single individual to the "interplay between the actions of multiple people" (p. 37).

Distributed Leadership theory proposed three forms of leadership distribution: collaborated distribution, collective distribution, and coordinated distribution. It could be suggested that the prominence of collaborated and collective distribution of leadership in international linkages was due to the loosely coupled structure (Weick, 1976) of international programs at the university. Loosely coupled refers to those entities that are within, and responsive to an organization, while still maintaining individual identities. Situational and social cognition played a crucial role in leadership, with leadership practice extended through organizational structures.

In conclusion, the study examined the success and sustainability of international institutional linkages. It identified key themes and emphasized the importance of support, impact, activity, and sustainability in defining success. The study also introduced the concept of Distributed Leadership theory to understand how leadership is distributed across individuals and structures in international linkages. This research provides insights for CIOs and linkage directors seeking to strengthen and sustain international partnerships.

Distributed leadership and its connection to the creation of an enabling environment

An Enabling Environment is one where support for international programs is maximized, and barriers are minimized. According to the Chief International Officer, linkages will not flourish unless there is an enabling environment. Such an environment encourages international educators to feel supported and encouraged rather than constrained. For decades now, this focal university has made significant efforts to create such an environment, reflecting a shared belief in the value of internationalization. The university administration, including the president and provost, has demonstrated support by committing resources and advocating for internationalization.

To foster an enabling environment, international program leaders aim to establish supportive relationships with university administration and promote the shared belief that international programs enhance the overall university experience. The study suggests that Collective Distribution of leadership best characterizes the leadership style at this university in nurturing this enabling environment. Collective Distribution involves two or more leaders working independently but interdependently toward a shared goal, with their activities generating leadership practices. Leaders involved in creating an enabling environment include positional leaders (such as the president, provost, and deans), informal leaders (those involved in leading specific aspects of programs), and followers (participating individuals). These leaders work collaboratively to support internationalization based on their shared belief in its value.

The positional leaders, including the president and provost, play influential roles in promoting internationalization. They consistently emphasize the importance of internationalization in their speeches and actions. As the Chief International Officer put it, the university is "blessed…because every time the president speaks, he puts 'international' into a phrase, somewhere." The director of the Center of International Programs enthusiastically described the provost, as "all for this international program stuff...very much an advocate of international education." The provost herself, who professed a "real personal commitment on my part" to international programs, also emphasized that "it's not just something that we have to do, but the people who are in administrative leadership positions related to international programs are personally engaged pretty strongly."

Deans and department chairs at the college level also support international programs, allocating resources and demonstrating their commitment. Informal leaders, who may not hold official titles, contribute to the distributed leadership approach by developing linkages and involving others in international programs. At the college level, positional leaders such as deans and department chairs evidenced support for international programs as well. The interim director of Far East Asian Studies, pointed out that "My department releases me…I think they are very generous in this case." A faculty member from Teachers College echoed these sentiments, noting that, "Both my department chair and my dean are very, very supportive of the whole process. Both are so supportive that I have three hours of my load for international. And that's just out of their hides and goodness."

Faculty members who establish linkages with foreign institutions are instrumental in promoting internationalization. They recruit other faculty members to lead various aspects of programs, further spreading the shared belief in the value of internationalization. Followers, including faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members, participate in internationalization activities because they perceive value in doing so. Their involvement is crucial for leadership activities to be effective.

The cognitive activity that generates the shared belief in internationalization's value is both "situational" and "social." Situational cognition refers to the distribution of beliefs through material and cultural artifacts across campus and the community. Artifacts are defined as "entities designed to shape and enable organizational practices (e.g. policies, programs, and procedures)" (Halverson, 2003, p.4). These artifacts include strategic plans, newsletters, scholarships, meeting minutes, and promotional materials related to internationalization.

Social cognition is distributed through interactions between individuals engaged in internationalization efforts (Spillane et al., 2004). Leaders such as the provost and assistant provost contribute to social cognition by emphasizing the importance of internationalization and advocating for supportive organizational structures. Informal leaders, such as program directors, also play a role in distributing social cognition by facilitating and supporting faculty and students.

The key takeaway is that the Enabling Environment is the result of a Collective Distribution of leadership. It reflects the effective distribution of the shared belief that internationalization adds value to both the university and the community. This collective effort involves leaders at various levels and a broad range of individuals who participate in internationalization activities, all working together to promote and support this shared belief. Graphically, this is how the Enabling Environment may be represented:
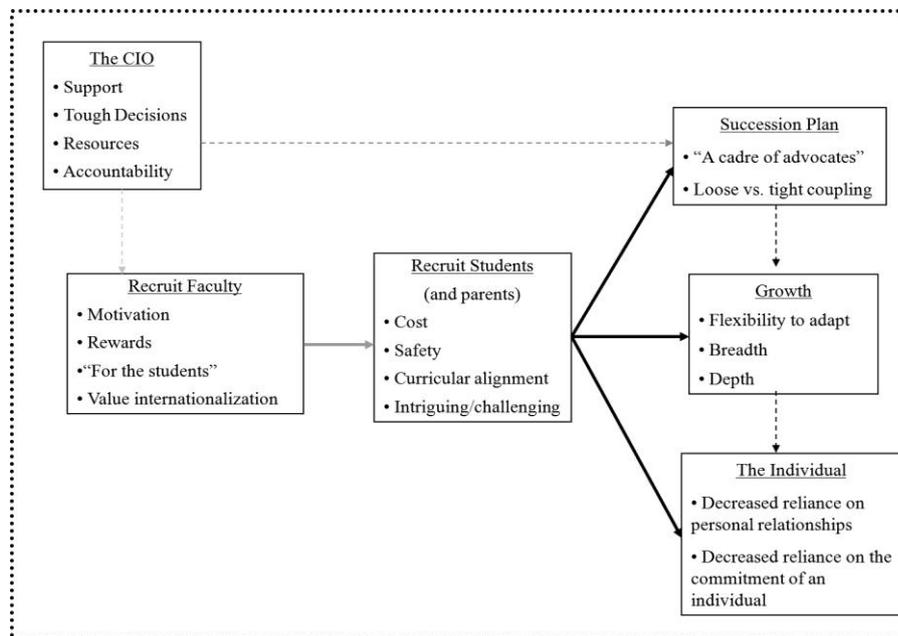
Figure 1: The enabling environment

Distributed Leadership and the Attractive Environment

The Attractive Environment, in contrast to the Enabling Environment, focuses on sustaining and developing a specific linkage over time. To achieve this, international program leaders must present the opportunity as something valuable and not burdensome to various stakeholders, including departments, faculty, students, and parents. As two non-positional internationalization leaders put it, "In order for people to have buy-in for an international partnership you need to really identify what's in it for them to do that". And, "So, they have to say, 'What am I gonna give up out of this set of things I'm doing now to do this?' And so the issue of buy-in is an issue of attractiveness. 'Okay, why is this attractive to me?'... And somehow or another there has to be an outcome that makes sense to them".

This requires a shared belief that the linkage offers value, whether in education or professional development. Key priorities in creating an attractive environment include addressing faculty needs, such as support and rewards, and considering student needs, including cost, timing, location, course credits, and safety. In this environment, the international opportunity should be presented as having curricular integrity, being safe and cost-effective, supporting professional advancement, and offering

a unique learning experience for students. In addition, importantly, the activity must be viewed as an "opportunity, not a burden," according to one linkage director.

While the Enabling Environment pertains to the broader institution-wide support for international programming, the Attractive Environment is more linkage-specific. Thus, what works for one linkage may not necessarily work for another. The concept of distributed leadership is once again relevant in understanding how an attractive environment is fostered for each of the three cases examined in this study.

Distributed leadership involves stretching cognitive activity over various actors, artifacts, and organizational structures to achieve a leadership task. In this case, the task is creating an attractive environment for an international linkage (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). Individual linkage leaders rely on activities performed separately by others in the organization but with interdependence for the specific linkage's benefit. The Collective Distribution lens, as proposed by Spillane and Sherer (2004), is a useful framework for examining how leadership contributes to building an attractive environment for each of the three distinct linkages discussed here.

Leaders of all three linkages shared similar thoughts on creating an attractive environment, emphasizing the importance of communication and connections with students, faculty, and administrators. Each leader approached this task from a slightly different perspective. The leader of the Far East program emphasized the establishment and maintenance of a web of relationships as key. In one instance, he spoke of his positive relations with the upper administration, which provided support in his efforts. "If faculty member really wanted to go, I make this somehow work…I think if provost and administration been supporting, there's no way department will say 'No', unless there is some good reason. Without the provost we couldn't do it." Moreover, through the International Advancement Unit at the University, he established the *Friends of the Far East* fund, which served as a recruitment tool by lowering travel costs for faculty and student participants.

The leader of the Istanbul University linkage believed that effective recruitment of faculty is critical for the attractiveness of the linkage. He understood that motivating faculty was "as important as sending students out, if not more. Because if I have enough cadre of faculty members who will be supporting the program, then I think I will be more successful for future years." He even had a name for his approach. In order to recruit faculty, he would "reward them by elevating them above the rest, to use them as demonstrators. The Demonstration Effect. I didn't send an email to people and said, 'Oh, let's do this.' I worked with each faculty member on an individual basis. I told them they were important."

The College of Business chair, reflecting on the struggles experienced in the UK linkage, highlighted the central role of addressing faculty and student needs in maintaining an attractive environment over time.The approach here was to appeal to faculty by demonstrating the benefit to their students…

From a curricular point of view. I think those of us involved felt a great deal of satisfaction in

the sense that we saw some really true, great wonderful learning experiences for our students. The things we knew that obviously you can't do in the classroom. It was wonderful to see the kids get those kinds of opportunities.

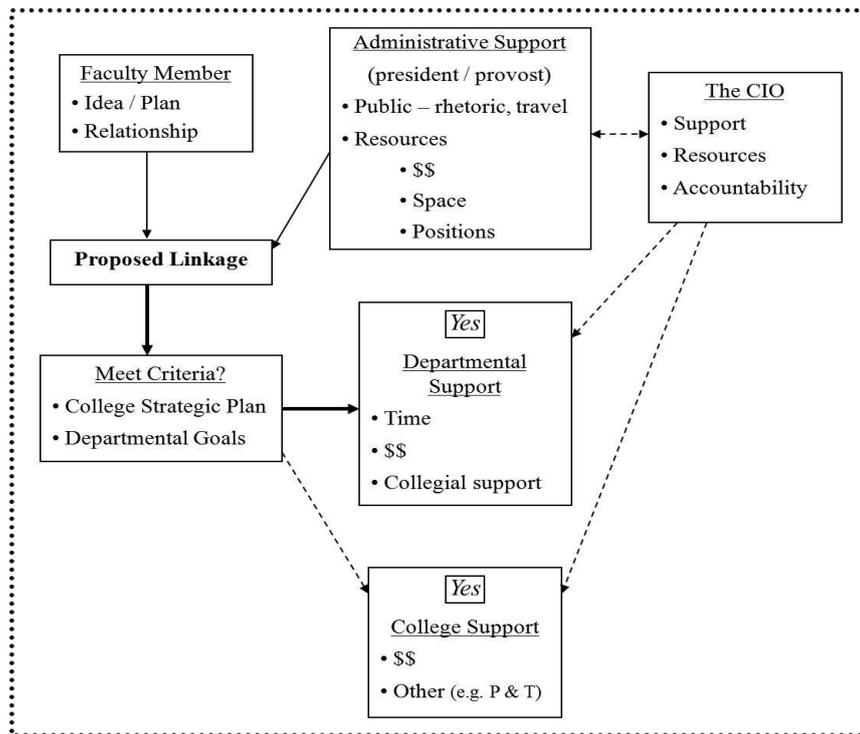Graphically, this is how the Attractive Environment may be represented:

Figure 2: The attractive environment

Distributed Leadership and the Sustainable Environment

The Sustainable Environment for an international linkage is characterized by its ability to maintain current success while continuing to grow independently of the efforts of a single individual. In the enabling and attractive environments, it was demonstrated that in Spillane and Sherer's (2004) taxonomy of Distributed Leadership types, *collective* distribution best approximated the pattern of leadership throughout the international linkages examined here. In exploring the sustainable environment, the focus will shift to the *collaborated* distribution of leadership. According to Spillane and Sherer, collaborated distribution of leadership occurs when "one leader's practice becomes the basis for another leader's practice" (2004, p. 14). Data collected in this study suggests that a sustainable environment is fostered by collaborated distribution of leadership as the respective linkages either progress through transitional periods, such as a change in leadership, or broaden their scope, such as working with additional departments, colleges, or institutions. In such situations, collaborated distribution of leadership would be evidenced by successive individuals carrying out the

leadership activities that sustain a linkage, or emerging leaders emulating the leadership of the current leader or leaders of the linkage. The question that emerged was the degree of this actually taking place. In the case of the UK linkage, it did initially, however over time, according to one of its leaders, the program "just kind of evaporated itself".

Data from all three cases in this study suggest that there are several key elements underlying the sustainable environment. In a sustainable environment, there is reduced reliance on personal relationships, with a greater emphasis on building broader institutional structures and relationships. This was the primary aim of the leader of the Istanbul University linkage. "If I can recruit one more faculty member from the College of Business who didn't have international experience… then sending that person and making him or her part of the international, is an important goal for me." For this reason, his approach was to "involve as many departments and individuals as possible. Because I see myself as facilitator, not as the person who owns… who possesses the program and runs it."

In order to create sustainability, the university developed structures around internationization, which, as the director of International Advancement saw as "brilliant". "Folks that were cast adrift and didn't have anyone care about them, now have a reporting structure. So there is accountability there. That is key. I think it is brilliant".

Flexibility is another crucial aspect of sustainability, allowing the linkage to adapt to the changing needs of students, faculty, and the institution itself. Moreover, a sustainable environment ensures that a linkage continues to evolve, driven by the institution's increasing commitment, rather than being dependent on any one individual's personal commitment.

One of the most important factors in fostering a sustainable environment is the development of a succession plan that facilitates smooth leadership transitions during periods of change. The ultimate outcome of a sustainable environment is not only a sustained linkage but also a campus and community that become increasingly internationalized. Historically, linkages, such as the Far East Program, were reliant on a single individual, and lacking a succession plan, which was seen as detrimental by most, including by the leader of the program himself. One non-positional leader from the College of Business, who had actively participated in the program, noted the downside to a lack of succession plan or collaborated leadership, "When it just comes down to one person, partnerships have a tendency to live and die with that person…" The program leader framed the same issue this way, "I think that if it only happens when I am here and it dies when I retire, then it has been an interesting experience for the people who had the opportunity. But it's not benefiting the new people."

The leader of the Istanbul University linkage admitted that it was his own responsibility, as the person who initiated the program, to be the one who created a sustainability plan for it as well, beyond his leadership:

When I started this program, I was only one person. Convincing…and having the dean and my chair and other people agree it was something valuable to do. But, when I started recruiting

those other faculty members, I started creating a support group, an advocate group, where I didn't have to defend the program anymore. For resources, for time, for activities. That cadre of people helps to make the program in the long run to be more sustainable.

In summary, a sustainable environment for international linkages involved reducing reliance on personal relationships, embracing flexibility, and ensuring that the linkage can thrive independently of any one individual. Collaborated distribution of leadership played a crucial role in achieving sustainability by facilitating transitions and enabling the linkage to broaden its impact.

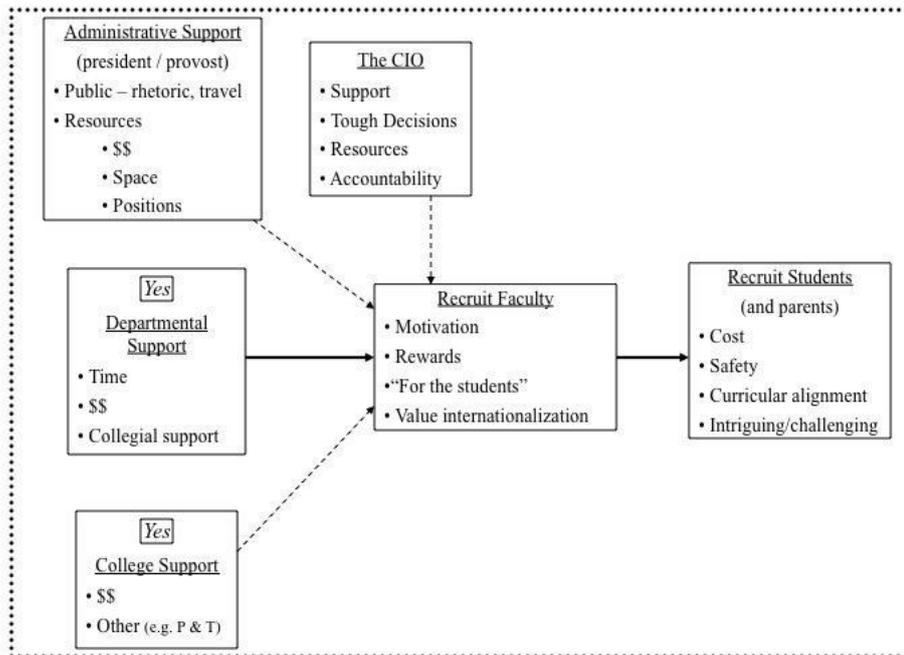Graphically, this is how the Sustainable Environment may be represented:

Figure 4. The interrelationships of the three environments

Discussion

The success and sustainability of the three international linkage cases examined in this research were influenced by five critical factors: culture, external environment, planning, organizational structure, and resource availability. This research identifed additional were relevant to their success and sustainability. However, as Figure 4 suggests, it is the interplay between these factors that may, or may not, lease to success and sustainability of a linkage. These factors, as they stand apart, are the following.

Culture: The institutional culture at the focus university evolved over time, transitioning from little interest in international endeavors to a greater acceptance of globalization. This was evidenced in the words and actions of all involved in internationalization in one way or another. What historically

Staub, D. (2023). Sustaining International Institutional Linkages. *Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences,* *14*(Special Issue 3)*, 82-106.* DOI. 10.51460/baebd.1368994

been an isolated, regional university became, thorugh the efforts of a few visionary individuals, an award-winning institution known for its efforts. One that had göne so far as to create a cabinet post for a Chief International Officer, and created a position solely dedicated to the procurement of resources for internationalization through International Advancement. While there was a shift towards embracing international activities, faculty reward structures still remained a challenge, reflecting a reluctance to fully adopt internationalization.

External Environment: The external environment significantly impacted the attractiveness of the linkages. The Istanbul University linkage faced challenges due to periodic upheavals in Turkey, such as wars, bombings, and earthquakes, with concerns of student safety affecting continuity. The UK linkage saw a decline in popularity due to student preference for more cosmopolitan locations such as London and Paris.

Planning: Planning was crucial for both attractive and sustainable environments. Linkage leaders had to strategize faculty and student recruitment for multiple years, often alternating faculty participation and leadership roles. Contingency plans and responses to changing conditions were essential. For the UK linkage, inadequate planning in response to changing student preferences posed challenges.

Organizational Structure: Organizational structure, particularly for sustainability, was discussed using Weick's concepts of tight and loose coupling (1976). As linkages expanded and strove for sustainability, support from the president and provost was necessary, but the establishment of an Office of International Education played a more pivotal role. This office provided critical support and leadership, transitioning linkages from loosely-coupled to tightly-coupled within the institution.

Resource Availability: The commitment of resources, both personal and institutional, was crucial for linkage development. Individuals, such as those leading the Far East and Istanbul linkages, were highly committed and invested personal resources to drive their respective linkages. The sustainability of these linkages depended on the institution's commitment to allocate adequate resources as these leaders moved toward retirement.

Distributed leadership was a common theme among all three linkages. The Far East program had to create its enabling and attractive environments from scratch, accumulating support across the campus over time. The Istanbul University and UK linkages also distributed leadership effectively, aiming to involve more faculty and students and groom future leaders for sustainability.

However, in all three cases, despite their initial success, these loosely coupled linkages struggled to create sustainable environments independently. The paradox of loose coupling suggested that, as linkages matured and gained success, they needed greater institutional involvement and support to ensure continuous progress (i.e., greater tight-coupling). The challenge was striking the right balance between independence and support. It appears that this balance was not achieved.

To transition these linkages effectively to sustainable environments, formal leadership positions within the institution and integration into the faculty reward structure were advisable. This would have offered some flexibility while ensuring institutional support and oversight. Sustainability also relied on fostering a broader sense of value for the linkages, beyond individual goals.

In conclusion, international institutional linkages are essential for an institution's internationalization efforts but require substantial investments of time, energy, and resources. To support leaders in developing successful and sustainable linkages, institutions must strike a balance between independence and support, recognizing the need for both loosely and tightly coupled structures as linkages evolve and mature.

Implications

The findings of this study on international institutional linkages in higher education have several theoretical and practical implications. The study has explored the concepts of distributed leadership, loose coupling, and the three distinct environments (enabling, attractive, and sustainable) in the context of linkages.

Theoretical implications

Distributed Leadership and Loose Coupling: This study highlights the relevance of distributed leadership and loose coupling in understanding the dynamics of international linkages within educational institutions. While these concepts have been applied to educational institutions before, their application to international linkages provides new insights.

The Three Environments Framework: The conceptualization of three distinct environments (enabling, attractive, and sustainable) for international linkages offers a valuable framework for analyzing and understanding the developmental stages of these partnerships. Further research can explore how these environments evolve and impact the success of linkages.

Shifting Forms of Distributed Leadership: The study suggests that the form of distributed leadership may shift from collective to collaborated as linkages transition from the attractive to the sustainable environment. This highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of leadership distribution within the context of international linkages. Yet, at any rate, institutions keen on success and sustainability of their international linkages are advised to explore variations on distributed leadership (Lanford, 2020).

Situational and Social Distribution of Cognition: The research questions the interplay between situational and social distribution of cognition within different linkage environments. Understanding how these cognitive processes vary and influence linkage development can be a subject of further investigation.

Practical implications:

Tools for International Educators: The three environments framework can serve as a practical tool for chief international officers (CIOs) and linkage directors. It enables them to assess the institution's readiness for international linkages, identify barriers, and develop strategies tailored to each environment.

Loosely vs. Tightly Coupled Structures: Institutions should consider the continuum between loosely and tightly coupled structures for linkages. They should adapt the coupling level based on the linkage's stage of development, leadership succession, and evolving goals.

Web of Leadership: Institutions can benefit from fostering a web of leadership that extends across linkages. This distributed leadership approach ensures that programs are supported and sustained as long as they meet the needs of faculty and students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics of international institutional linkages in higher education. The theoretical implications extend our understanding of distributed leadership and coupling within the context of linkages. Meanwhile, the practical implications provide tools and strategies for international educators and institutions to foster successful and sustainable linkages. One of the major hurdles in this respect is that institutions simply fail to dedicate enough attention to the long-term sustainability of such linkages (Lanford, 2020; Taylor, 2016). Further research can delve into these implications and explore how different institutions apply these concepts to their unique contexts.

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