

How to Internationalize a High School? Perspectives from Principals in Taiwan

Yueh-Chun Huang¹, Shan-Hua Chen¹, Hsuan-Fu Ho¹ & Cheng-Cheng Yang¹

¹ Graduate Institute of Educational Administration and Policy Development, National Chia-Yi University, Taiwan

Correspondence: Shan-Hua Chen, National Chia-Yi University, Taiwan. E-mail: shanhua@mail.ncyu.edu.tw

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Abstract

Facing global competition of human capital, governments around the world has endeavored to internationalize their school education. In the context of fixed school budget, it is important for school principals to decide which factor of internationalization has higher priority in the process of internationalizing their schools. This research thus aimed to figure out the relative importance and weight of different purposes of internationalization of high schools.

Keywords: globalization, internationalization of high school, principal, Analytic Hierarchy Process, Taiwan

1. Preface

Globalization has influenced countries around the world and internationalizing school education has become an important focus globally. Facing global competition of human capital, governments around the world has endeavored to internationalize their school education. Taiwan is one of the significant cases. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan has published a white paper about the internationalization of high school, demanding all high schools to devote themselves to the internationalization of education.

Theoretically, what is internationalization? What is the difference between internationalization and globalization? Svensson and Wihlorg (2010) argue that internationalization is a cross-border cultural exchange and it can foster deeper understanding between countries and enhance knowledge production. Luxon and Peelo (2009) then point out that though there is no single definition of internationalization, but when discussing internationalization of education, they all focus on teaching and learning. Carano (1991) elaborates this point of view, that internationalization of education is not only enhancing students' understanding of various culture and knowledge, it also strengthening students' recognition on their own culture.

In terms of the actual implementation of internationalizing school education, Carano (1991) argues that when teachers and students go abroad and have exchange activities with foreign schools, these experiences can effectively provide valuable cultural exchange. Kwok, Arpan, and Folks (1995) declare that there are three important factors of promoting internationalization of school education: curriculum internationalization, teacher internationalization, and cooperation with foreign schools. Zheng, Hinshaw, Yu, Guo, and Oakleey (2001) emphasize the importance of the exchange relationship of cross-national schools, and they assert that the formal exchange relationship can efficiently foster the internationalization process.

Some researchers warn that internationalization of school education could lead to a lost of local culture (Nukaga, 2003). For example, Gay and Jones (2002) echo this point and argue that the benefits of internationalization should be based on the recognition of local culture and national identity. Altbach(2004) also warn that over-internationalization could lead to the result of re-imperialism and post-colonialism of education.

In summary, since internationalization of education has to consider the balance of benefits. We also have to consider the implementation of internationalization in the school administration level. However, in the context of fixed school budget, it is very difficult for school principals to decide which factor of internationalization has higher priority in the process of internationalizing school education. Based on this assumption, this research aimed to figure out the relative importance and weight of different purposes of internationalization of high school.

2. Methodology

The main purpose of this research was to identify the major attributes that can be used by schools to enhance their effectiveness in internationalizing their schools. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was adopted as the main research method of measuring relative importance of the benefits.

2.1 Analytic Hierarchy Process

In this study, we applied Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) as the main method for weighting the importance of attributes. AHP is a way of decomposing and streamlining a complex problem and re-forming it into an organized decision hierarchy. By breaking down a big problem into smaller ones, AHP allows us to solve and clarify the sub-relationships between each sub-elements of the macro structure. It thus has several advantages: (1) collecting opinions from experts; (2) allocating weights to individual elements; (3) validating the consistency of the ratings (Saaty, 1980; Cheng, Li, & Ho, 2002). Since importance of indicators is a relative measure and a decision making process is full of rating the importance and priority of policy tools, we believe that AHP is the most appropriate research method for this study.

2.2 AHP Structure

Figure 1 is the AHP structure that constructed by literature review and discussions among experts of our research team. In figure 1, the main goal, located on the far left, is “the total benefit of internationalizing high school”; the second level of the hierarchy includes two dimensions of internationalization: “inside campus” and “outside campus”; the third level includes four benefits of the above two dimensions; and the fourth level consists of the 12 attributes that represent the sub-benefits of internationalization.

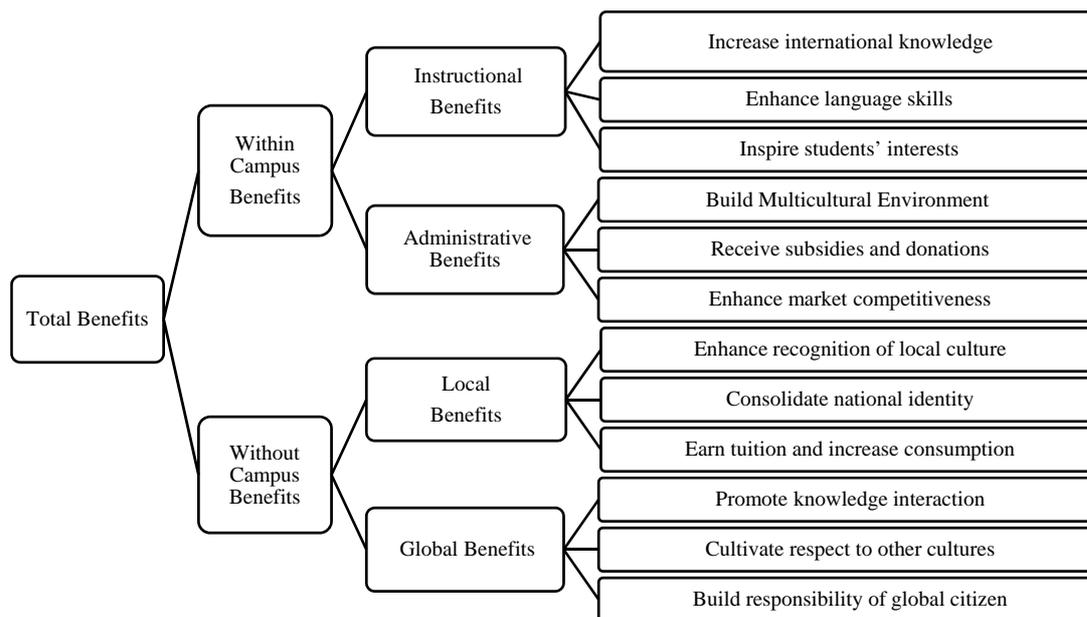


Figure 1. AHP structure of high school internationalization

2.3 Questionnaire Design

Our research team designed a self-developed questionnaire for this research. This questionnaire includes three sections. The first section is for measuring high school principals' view on the relative importance of the indicators shown on the figure 1. In the second section, we listed eight strategies that mostly used by high school principals to internationalize their high schools: (1) actively recruit international students, (2) encouraging teachers and staff to participate in international education, (3) constructing an multi-language learning environment, (4) integrating international knowledge into curriculum, (5) building collaborative relationship with foreign schools, (6) hosting study abroad program, (7) promoting long-distance interaction with foreign students, and (8) actively join international campaign.

In the third section of our questionnaire, we designed a list of the above eight internationalization strategies with a five-level Likert-type scale, and participants were asked to check the implementing level of the above strategies in their high schools.

2.4 Participants

The questionnaire was then administered to 50 high school principals randomly selected in Taiwan. Of which 31 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 62% retrieving rate.

3. Research Results

AHP was adopted to calculate the weight of the dimensions (located at the second level), the benefits of internationalizing high school (the third level), and the sub-benefits of internationalizing high school (the fourth level). Table 1 shows the weight of the second level on the main goal, high school principals' ratings revealed that the dimension of "within high school benefits" bears a higher weight (.707) than "without high school benefits" (.293).

Table 1. Weight for the Main Goal according to High School Principals

First Level (Main Goal)	Second Level (Dimension)	Weight	Rank
Total Benefits of Internationalization	Within High School benefits	0.707	1
	Without High School benefits	0.293	2

Table 2 shows the weight of the third level items both on the second level and on the main goal. We found instructional benefit has highest weight on the main goal (.530), administrative benefit (.177) and international benefit (.157) also have higher weights, while local benefit bears the lowest weight (.136).

Table 2. Weight for the Main Goal and Second Level

Second Level (Dimension)	Third Level (Benefit)	Weight on the Second Level	Weight on the Main Goal	Rank
Within School	Instructional Benefit	0.750	0.530	1
	Administrative Benefit	0.250	0.177	2
Without School	Local Benefit	0.465	0.136	4
	International Benefit	0.535	0.157	3

Table 3 shows the fourth level's weights both on the main goal and on the third level. The results show that the sub-benefits of broadening students' international knowledge, enhancing students' language ability, and inspiring students' interests on international affairs are the attributes that have highest weights on the main goal. The least weighted attributes are 'earning tuition and stimulate consumption', 'gaining funding and sponsorship', and 'cultivating global citizenship'.

Table 3. Weight of Attributes on the Main Goal and on the Third Level

Third Level (Benefits)	Fourth Level (Sub-Benefits)	CR	Weight on the Third Level	Weight on the Main Goal	Rank
Instructional Benefit	Broaden International Knowledge		.399	.212	1
	Enhance Foreign Language Ability	.028	.359	.191	2
	Inspire Interests on International Affairs		.242	.128	3
Administrative Benefit	Build Multicultural Environments		.489	.087	4
	Attract funding and Sponsorship	.010	.151	.027	11
	Increase School Competitiveness of Student Enrollment		.361	.064	7
Local Benefit	Value local culture		.551	.075	5
	Strengthen National Identity	.062	.296	.040	9
	Gain Tuition and Consumption		.152	.021	12
International Benefit	Promote Knowledge Exchange		.299	.047	8
	Appreciation of Different Culture	.043	.455	.071	6
	Cultivate a Global Citizenship		.246	.039	10

Thereafter, we tried to figure out which internationalization strategy may contribute to which attributes. Table 4 indicates that Providing Opportunities of Long-Distance Interaction with Foreign Students contribute much to many attributes, 'building cooperative relationships with foreign schools' and 'hosting overseas study trips' also contribute much to some attributes. However, the strategies currently used by schools do not contribute much to 'receive subsidies and donations', 'value local cultures', and 'gain tuition and increase domestic consumption'.

Table 4. Frequencies of Strategies that Can Achieve Internationalization Sub-Benefits

Internationalization Sub-Benefits	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB
Frequency of Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Actively Recruit International Students	10	9	7	19	3	11	5	2	9	13	22	4
2. Encouraging Teachers and Staff to Participate in International Education	8	1	8	16	8	8	1	1	0	17	16	15
3. Constructing a Foreign Language Learning Environment	8	28	5	20	5	15	2	1	0	8	12	7
4. Integrating International Knowledge into Curriculum	23	7	24	15	3	6	6	5	0	8	17	13
5. Building Collaborative Relationship with Foreign Schools	15	16	9	15	8	12	8	4	3	20	19	5
6. Hosting overseas study trip	21	23	10	17	8	10	4	6	1	15	21	12
7. Encouraging Long-Distance Interaction with Foreign Students	21	18	17	15	4	8	2	1	1	15	18	6
8. Join International Competitions	11	12	10	16	9	16	0	15	2	20	9	9

Finally, we investigated the implementation level of the international strategies. Table 5 indicates that schools do a good job in ‘constructing a foreign language learning environment’ and ‘periodically hosting overseas study trips’, but there are plenty of rooms for improvement in ‘actively recruit international students’ and ‘providing opportunities of long-distance communication with foreign students’.

Table 5. Means of Internationalization Strategies according to High School Principals

Strategies of Internationalizing a High School	Mean	Rank
1. Actively Recruit International Students	1.78	8
2. Encouraging Teachers to Participate in International Education	2.56	6
3. Constructing a Foreign Language Learning Environment	3.63	1
4. Integrating International Knowledge into Curriculum	3.25	3
5. Building Collaborative Relationship with Foreign Schools	2.91	4
6. Hosting overseas study trips	3.50	2
7. Encouraging Long-Distance Interaction with Foreign Students	2.25	7
8. Actively Join International Campaign	2.59	5

4. Conclusion

Understanding that each benefit bearing different importance, and that different strategies contribute differently to certain benefits can help schools to select the most appropriate strategy for a given internationalization purpose (benefit). The results of this study show that the benefits most stressed by principals are ‘increasing students’ international knowledge’ and ‘enhancing their international communication capability’. The most effective way of addressing the former is by ‘augmenting the curriculum with a wide range of international content’, ‘hosting overseas study trips’, and ‘encouraging communications between students from different countries’; and the best way of addressing the latter is by ‘building foreign language learning environment’, ‘hosting overseas trips’, and ‘encouraging communication among students from different countries’. At present, enhancing the aforementioned strategies would be the most effective way of improving the effectiveness of the internationalization of secondary education in Taiwan. Moreover, although ‘encouraging students’ international communication with those from other countries’ contribute much to internationalization of education, the implementation level of this strategy is far from satisfactory, and thus, schools should put much more attention to this strategy.

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