

**Collaboration in Distance Education
among Caribbean Tertiary Level
Institutions,
St. Lucia,
November, 2007**

**Models of Collaboration:
International Experiences,
Challenges and
Opportunities**

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Overview

- **five approaches to international distance education**
- **examples, advantages and disadvantages of each approach**
- **economic, cultural and social issues**
- **recommendations and conclusions**

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**Different approaches to international
distance education**

- **an international university:** e.g. UWI
- **direct marketing:** e.g. UK Open University
- **franchise:** e.g. Australian universities in Asia
- **partnership:** e.g. University of British Columbia, Canada/Tec de Monterrey, Mexico
- **consortia:** e.g. Virtual Network of Small States of the Commonwealth

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A single international university

Example: University of West Indies: 15 countries, one institution (also USP, Antilles et de la Guyane, Aegean)

Advantages:

- **economies of scale**
- **high regional status**
- **unified administration/single language**
- **specialist DE centre**
- **shared history**

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A single international university (cont.)

Disadvantages:

- **only Commonwealth countries**
- **limited number of DE programs**
- **not fully online (blended model)**
- **high communications costs**

Possibility of partnership with other Caribbean institutions

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Direct marketing: advantages

Example: UKOU, UNED, USA

- 1. easy to do, if courses already exist**
- 2. economies of scale/extra revenue for institution**
- 3. international accreditation for students**
- 4. quality degree? - depends**
- 5. no cost to government**

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Direct marketing: disadvantages

- 1. No cultural adaptation**
- 2. Expensive for students**
- 3. Revenue drain**
- 4. Local institutions don't develop DE skills/experience**
- 5. Learner support?**
- 6. Quality? Money first?**
- 7. No local accreditation**

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Franchise

Example: Australian universities in Asia; variations:

- a. local institution offers courses from another institution and awards own degree**
- b. local institution recruits students for another institution**
- c. local institution accredited to offer degree of another institution**

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Franchise (cont.)

Key: nature of student support: who supplies tutors/examines students
Often private local university + public international university
Basically a business deal
Quality (especially local support) often an issue

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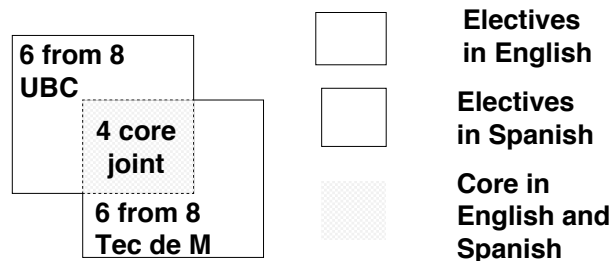
Partnership

- **Masters in Educational Technology (for teachers)**
- **UBC/Tec de Monterrey: joint degree + T de M degree**
- **fully online: English and Spanish**
- **certificates + master**

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Partnership



5 courses in English = UBC certificate
10 courses in English and/or Spanish = joint masters

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Partnership

- **partnership since 1996: masters opened 2002**
 - **joint degree: 80 students a year**
 - **Tec de M degree: 200 + per year**
 - **fee: US\$9,000, paid per course**
- full cost recovery inc. overheads and risk = new research faculty**

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Partnership

Students choose known brands:

e.g. MET joint degree (English)

UBC on-campus students: 20%

rest of province: 24%

rest of Canada 23%

international (31 countries) 33%

Partnership

MET program: a niche market:

- **strong local and international markets (global demand)**
- **target group with access to Internet and computers**
- **willing and able to pay (e.g. Tec de Monterrey scholarships)**
- **lack of quality competitors**

Partnership

- 1. not easy but manageable**
- 2. cultural/language adaptation**
- 3. partners must be of equal status (power/accreditation)**
- 4. needs leadership/support**
- 5. clear agreement on responsibilities/conflict resolution/costs and revenues**

Consortia

Example: Virtual University of Small States of Commonwealth (also SREB Electronic Campus, WGU, NTU, BC Campus)

Advantages:

- **institutions retain autonomy**
- **more choice for students**
- **economies of scale**
- **blended learning (campus +)**

Consortia (cont.)

Disadvantages:

- very difficult to maintain
- often no credit transfer, hence no fully distance degree
- where consortium degree, lower status than institutional degree
- lack of coherent programs

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Different approaches to international distance education

International institution: restricted to limited number of countries

Direct marketing: no cultural adaptation

Franchise: local students prefer international accreditation

Partnership: manageable and culturally adaptable

Consortia: complex/difficult to sustain

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Economic issues in international programs

- what to charge students (subsidize, break-even or profit)?
- government regulations/subsidies for foreign students?
- how to handle different fees in different countries
- do you know what the costs are?

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Cultural and social issues

The digital divide

Home ownership

- **60%-70%+** in USA, Canada, Scandinavia, UK, Portugal, Australia, Hong Kong, S.Korea, Singapore
- **50%-60%** in Germany, France, Italy
- **33%** in Mexico, Chile, S. Africa
- **15% (6 million)** in Caribbean: 60% Barbados and spreading rapidly

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Cultural and social issues

The digital divide

However, no access for the poor

Alternative access:

- campuses/libraries/learning centres
- employers
- Internet cafes

Doing nothing widens gap

Language issues

Dominance of language (especially English)

- **cultural context** (idioms, examples, cases)
- **standard of written English varies**
- **asynchronous discussion forums require high level of English**
- **oral vs written cultures (but high bandwidth helps)**

Pedagogical issues

- **objectivism vs constructivism**
- **information transmission vs critical thinking, problem solving**
- **authority of the teacher**
- **collaborative learning**
- **participation in online discussion forums**

Pedagogic issues

Styles of teaching related to economy and jobs

- **industrial society: authoritarian, following orders, information transmission**
 - **knowledge-based society: entrepreneurial, personal responsibility, creative thinking**
- one reason for foreign courses**

Quality control

- **same admission requirements (especially English)?**
- **entrance vs exit standards?**
- **access to same facilities (e.g. libraries)**
- **same instructor: student ratios?**
- **who gives degree?**
- **same or different fees?**

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Conditions for success

Different stakeholders:

- **students**
- **teachers**
- **institutions**
- **funding agencies (govt., etc.)**

All must see the benefits

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Conditions for success: students

- 1. More choice for students (courses, programs, delivery method)**
- 3. Coherent programs**
- 3. Credit transfer between institutions**
- 4. One-stop shopping (portal)**
- 5. Quality qualifications**

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Conditions for success: teachers

- 1. no on-going extra work**
- 2. involvement in course design and decision-making**
- 3. must accept/respect teachers from partner organizations**
- 4. willing to work in a team**

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Conditions for success: institutional

1. no loss of students
2. equality between institutions
3. common shared technology infrastructure
4. no extra (unfunded) costs
6. must add value to institution
5. structure/mechanism for shared decision-making
7. small neutral facilitating organization

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Conditions for success: funders

1. avoids duplication
2. builds on existing institutions/ infrastructure
3. avoids creating a new institution with high overheads
4. endorsement rather than creation
5. sells as innovative, hi-tec, relevant

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Recommendations

- be clear on reasons for participation in collaborative program
- develop clear business plan
- clear joint contracts/agreements
- joint, powerful steering committee
- content with international focus
- inter-cultural training for staff
- involve administration from start

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Recommendations

- choose partners strategically; long-term relationship
- identify unique contributions of each partner (strengths/ weaknesses)
- reward professors/avoid increased workload
- dependency and power always an issue

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Conclusions

Collaborative DE programs:

- are difficult to do successfully
- require strong vision, leadership, and support from academics
- need a strong business plan
- are very satisfying, both for students and instructors

Further information

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