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R e p o r t

Joint and Double Degree Programmes: Vexing Questions and Issues

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Abstract:

International joint, double and combined degree programmes clearly have a role in the current landscape of higher education and will likely be more numerous and influential in the coming years. As an internationalisation strategy, they address the heartland of academia - the teaching/learning process and the production of new knowledge between and among countries. These programmes are built on the principle of deep academic collaboration and bring important benefits to individuals, institutions, national and regional education systems. The interest in them is exploding but so is the confusion. The purpose of this report is to examine the different meanings of double and joint degree programmes around the world, examine the driving rationales, identify core concepts and elements, propose a working definition and typology, and discuss some of the vexing issues related to the organisation, recognition and perceived 'legitimacy' of these programmes and their qualifications.

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Joint and Double Degree Programmes: Vexing Questions and Issues

Double and joint degree programmes – an important worldwide development in internationalising higher education – but one that is raising questions and eyebrows

1 Introduction

1.1 What are double and joint degrees?

What is meant when one refers to joint, or double or multiple or combined degrees? Are they the same or different? How are they organised? Does a double degree mean 'two for one'? Do the degrees come from 'degree mills'? Does it mean that if you pass exams from all partner institutions offering the same programme you can get multiple degrees? Can you get a Bachelor's and Master's degree from different countries by completing a combined and shorter programme of study? Are the qualifications legitimate and recognised? Can students stay at the home institution and get a second foreign degree by taking some extra courses by distance? If students study at the foreign partner institution for two semesters does it mean they get its degree as well? Are double degree programmes the same as twinning programmes? If students complete one joint programme provided by two institutions and get two degrees isn't this double counting - sort of academic fraud? These questions are not made up - they are real. They come from academics and students who are interested, but unsure, about what a joint or double degree means and involves.

Internationalisation of higher education is innovating and growing so quickly that we are seeing many new initiatives as well as unexpected developments and results - both positive and negative. This applies to international collaborative programmes such as double and joint degrees. The interest in them is exploding but so is the confusion. The purpose of this report is to 1) examine the different meanings of double and joint degree programmes around the world and the driving rationales, 2) identify core concepts and elements, and 3) propose a working definition and typology that will help to answer some of these troubling questions and provide some clarity on the meaning, rationales and key issues involved in international joint, double, multiple and combined degree programmes.

It is important to acknowledge that Europe is the leader in raising the importance, identifying the value, and promoting the organisation of these types of collaborative degree programmes. As will be discussed in the report, joint degrees are seen as a principal instrument for developing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and for improving the competitiveness of European higher education around the world. But Europe's leadership does not mean that it has all the answers, a fact it is the first to recognise and which spurs it to undertake important research. Surveys completed by European organisations have identified many issues associated with joint and double degree and have produced guidelines of good practice. Many recognised experts and studies have specifically addressed the vexing issue of defining terms and identifying key concepts and challenges¹. This report acknowledges and builds on the foundational work of these experts and tries to develop a typology that will relate to institutions and organisations in all regions of the world. It is a daunting challenge and thus the proposed working definitions are definitely a work in progress. The analysis may raise more questions than answers. But, if this in turn makes international educators give more attention to the subject of joint and double degrees, the goal will be met.

¹ See for example, Tauch C. and A. Rauhvargers (2002); Rauhvargers A, S. Bergan and J. Divis (2003); European University Association (EUA) (2004); Schüle, U. (2006); and Maiworm, F. (2006). Full references are included towards the end of this report.

1.2 Internationalisation Terminology

Even though terminology is a central theme of the report, it is still useful to state up front what is meant by frequently used terms. Joint and double degrees are considered to be part of the internationalisation process of higher education. Internationalisation is defined as ‘a process of integrating international, intercultural and global dimensions into the goals, major functions (teaching/learning, research, service) and delivery of higher education at both institutional and national levels’². It is important to note that this definition does not specify rationales, outcomes, strategies, or actors as these differ from institution to institution, country to country and according to actor and stakeholder priorities. The vocabulary attached to international education and internationalisation has changed enormously over the last three decades. It is therefore important to understand joint and double degrees as stand alone concepts as well as their connection to related terms. Table One shows the evolution of terminology and places joint and double degrees in perspective with other key terms. Finally, the generic term used to describe international joint, double, multiple and combined degree programmes is *international collaborative programmes* signalling the importance of close academic cooperation between/among higher education institutions (HEIs) located in different countries.

Table 1: Evolution of International Education Terminology³

<i>New Terms Last 15 years</i>	<i>Existing Terms Last 25 years</i>	<i>Traditional Terms Last 40 years</i>
Generic Terms		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalisation • borderless education • cross-border education • transnational education • virtual education • internationalisation ‘abroad’ • internationalisation ‘at home’ • international collaborative programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internationalisation • multi-cultural education • inter-cultural education • global education • distance education • offshore or overseas education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international education • international development cooperation • comparative education • correspondence education
Specific Elements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joint, double, multiple degree programmes • twinning, franchise, articulation, validation programmes • branch campus • education providers • corporate universities • networks • virtual universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international students • study abroad • institution agreements • partnership projects • area studies • bilateral and multilateral agreements • partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foreign students • student exchange • development projects • cultural agreements • language study

² Knight, J. (2004) “Internationalisation Remodelled: Rationales, Strategies and Approaches” in *Journal for Studies in International Education*. Volume 8, Number 1, p. 11.

³ Updated in 2008, this information is originally based on Knight, J. (2005) *Borderless, Offshore, Transnational and Cross-border Education: Definition and Data Dilemmas*, The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, London, England, November.

1.3 Outline of Report

The outline of the report is as follows: Section Two introduces new developments in double and joint degrees; examples of regional and national funding initiatives; recent survey/research studies; and several new institutional initiatives are provided. This is to illustrate the diversity of programme models and hence the multiplicity of issues at play. In Section Three the triggers and rationales driving the increased interest in these types of international collaborative programmes are analysed. Rationales at the individual, institutional, national and regional levels are examined. Section Four presents working definitions and a proposed typology of joint, double, multiple and combined degrees. Finally, key issues and challenges facing the development of these international collaborative programmes are identified in Section Five.

2 New Developments

For many academics and policy makers, double and joint degree programmes are welcomed as a natural extension of exchange and mobility programmes. For others, they are perceived as a troublesome development leading to double counting of academic work and the thin edge of academic fraud. Yes - a broad range of reactions exist because of the diversity of programme models being developed, the involvement of different types of traditional and new providers, the uncertainty related to quality assurance and qualifications recognition, and finally, the ethics involved in deciding what academic workload or new competencies are required for the granting of a joint, double, multiple or combined degree.

In order to get a sense of the scope, scale and support for these international collaborative programmes, this section provides a very brief overview of some of the new developments. It starts with new funding programmes at the regional and national levels.

2.1 Funding Programmes

The Erasmus Mundus Programme (2004-2008) was established by the European Commission with the goal of establishing university networks dedicated to offering joint degree programmes. The programme aims to establish 250 joint programmes between European institutions and those in other regions of the industrialised world. Joint degrees among European based institutions are seen as fundamental to establishing the EHEA, where as joint degree programmes between European universities and institutions outside of Europe are considered as effective ways to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European higher education system.

The Atlantis Programme – European Union (EU) - United States (US) Cooperation in Higher Education and Vocational training is a prime example of a strategy to promote joint and double degrees. The purpose of the Transatlantic (EU-US) Degree Programme, which is funded by both Europe and the US, is to stimulate the creation of joint or double degrees by providing support to multilateral consortia consisting of at least 2 EU HEIs located in different member states and 1 US institution. The partner institutions are required to create an integrated joint study programme with students spending a period of study both in the EU and in the US institutions and getting either a joint degree (issued jointly by two institutions) or a double degree (two degrees, one from an EU institution, the other from the US). At the core of the programme is the enhancement of student mobility, joint curriculum development, and improvement of academic recognition between the EU and the US. It is worth noting that student

mobility is mandatory which is not characteristic of all joint and double degree programmes. To illustrate the annual benefits reaped from this programme it is noted that in 2007 eight Transatlantic double or joint degree projects were funded. The majority were at the undergraduate level but they crossed many fields of study including Geosciences, Information Management, Nursing, Education, Engineering and Urban Planning.

Similar initiatives exist between Europe and Canada, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea but there is currently no other regional level funding scheme dedicated to the establishment and sustainability of double and joint degree programmes.

2.2 Survey and Research Reports

The increased interest in establishing these new types of programmes has stimulated surveys both in the US and Europe. Other countries are not as active in surveying and analysing new developments in joint and double degree programmes. It is worth repeating that Europe is the leader and catalyst for the growing attention given to this type of internationalisation activities. The long experience of Europe is valuable to the rest of the world - but there are limitations to adopting European practices as none of the other regions has the regional level infrastructure in place such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the Diploma Supplement, the Bologna reform process, and the European Commission funding programmes.

In 2002, the European University Association (EUA) completed a ground breaking study on Master's and joint degrees⁴. This study identified some of the most pressing issues and tried to estimate the number of active joint degree programmes in European institutions. The key issues and challenges included the legality of joint degrees, the need for compatible credit system, the language of instruction, requirements for national legislation to facilitate the establishment of the programme, and recognition of the qualification/s awarded. The report led to increased attention being given to joint degrees in the Bologna communiqués and major reforms in the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications.

A follow-up project⁵ by the EUA focused on identifying best practices and developing a set of 'golden rules' for establishing joint Master's programmes. The latest Trends V report⁶ provides updated information on the number of European institutions which have established joint programmes. The results by level of degree are as follows: Bachelor's 20% of responding institutions; Master's 36%; Doctoral 18%; not yet established 36%; and no need 4%. This snap shot paints a very positive future for joint degrees given that less than 5% indicated no interest or need for joint degrees. It is important to point out that in Europe the term 'joint degree' often covers both double and joint degrees and does not make a distinction between the two terms. This is not the case in the rest of the world where joint degree and double degree programmes have different meanings.

In 2006, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Rectors' Conference commissioned a 'Survey on Study Programmes awarding Double, Multiple and Joint Degrees.' While 45 EU countries were polled, only 24 countries responded

⁴ Tauch C. and A. Rauhvargers (2002) *Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe*, EUA, Brussels, Belgium.

⁵ EUA (2004) *Developing Joint Master's Programmes for Europe*, Brussels, Belgium.

⁶ Crosier, L. Purser and H. Smidt (2007) *Trends V: Universities Shaping the European Higher Education Area*, European University Association, Brussels, Belgium.

and over 40% of the responses were from Germany. The results show that these types of programmes are relatively a new phenomenon as 75% of all programmes have been established since 2000 with about 64% receiving some kind of financial support. The breakdown by level of programme indicates that 21% were at the Bachelor's level, 66% at the Master's level, 10% at a combined Bachelor's/Master's level and only 2% at the Doctoral level.

The type of degree awarded is revealing, as 59% of the programmes awarded a double or multiple degrees while an additional 12% awarded the double/multiple degree plus a joint certification. A single national degree was given in 13% of the cases and a total of 16% were awarded a joint degree by the universities where the student actually studied or by all universities in the consortium. Given the low percentage of joint degrees it is important to ask why a joint degree was not awarded. About 39% indicated that the legislation in their country did not allow the award of a joint degree and another 21% indicated that the legislation of a partner country did not allow it. Particularly interesting is that 38% of respondents indicated that it is easier for graduates to find employment with a national academic degree only which in some ways seems to contradict 'increased employability' as a rationale for these types of programmes. Less than half of the programmes charged tuition fees to the participating students. Finally, special quality assurance agreements with partner universities were reported by two thirds of the respondents with common admission standards (53%) and use of the same credit system (53%) most frequently mentioned. Only one third use common study or exam requirements. It should be noted that the majority of the programmes reported on in the study were European based and did not involve non-European partners.

In the United States, the Council of Graduate Studies 2007 'Survey Report on International Graduate Admissions' indicated that 11% of the responding American graduate schools have established a dual/double degree programme and 7% have set up a joint degree programme. Interestingly, colleges and universities that enrol large numbers of international students are more likely to offer these types of collaborative programmes. Table Two illustrates the impact that the number of enrolled international graduate students has on the interest and ability to offer these kinds of programmes. However, the report states that as technology is further enhanced and best practices emerge, it is likely that more institutions with smaller enrolments will establish international collaborative degree programmes in the future. American graduate schools look first to Europe (39% of respondents) for both Master's double/dual/joint programmes followed by China (24%), India (14%), Korea (8%) and the Middle East (6%) - a fascinating group of countries. Doctoral level double/dual/joint degrees have primarily been established with universities in Europe (16%) and China (4%). The future is bright for these kinds of international collaborative programmes as 24% of all respondents indicated the intention to pursue these types of programmes in the next two years⁷.

⁷ Redd, K. (2007) *Data Sources: International Dual, Joint and Other Collaborative Programmes*. URL: http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/DataSources_2007_10.pdf. Last accessed 16 September 2008.

Table 2: Percentage of American Graduate Schools with International Collaborative Graduate Degree Programmes

International Graduate Student Enrolment Size					
Type of Degree Programme	Largest 10	Largest 25	Largest 50	All other institutions	Total (All respondents)
Dual/Double degree programme only	44%	33%	32%	5%	11%
Joint degree programme only	0%	5%	3%	8%	7%
Other type of degree programme only	11%	5%	12%	6%	7%
Dual & Joint degree programmes	0%	5%	9%	2%	3%
Dual & Other degree programmes	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Total With One or More Collaborative Programme(s)	56%	48%	56%	22%	29%
No Programmes	44%	33%	32%	61%	55%
No Response	0%	19%	12%	17%	16%

* Due to rounding, percentages may not total to 100. Source: Council of Graduate Schools (2007) *International Graduate Admissions Survey II: Final Applications and Initial Offers of Admission*, August.

A survey on joint programmes between American and European institutions is currently being conducted by the Institute of International Education, the State University of New York, Free University of Berlin, the Latvian Rectors' Council and the Franco-German University, but the results are not yet available. Similar types of studies are not underway in other regions of the world but given the popularity of these programmes it is probable that they will emerge in the next few years.

2.3 Institutional Initiatives

This section provides examples of collaborative programmes in a variety of countries of the world. Europe is by far the most active, thanks to the European Commission funding programmes, followed by Asia and the US. It appears, but cannot be confirmed until further studies are completed, that there are more programmes at the graduate level than undergraduate and that although all fields of study are covered Engineering and Business Management programmes seem to predominate.

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Beppu, Japan and the Fachhochschule Trier-Institut für Angewandtes Stoffstrommanagement in Germany are collaborating to offer a double degree Master's programme in very different fields. It is a two year programme and students graduate with a MSC International Cooperation Policy from the Japanese partner and an M Eng from the German partner. The programme is offered in English only (interestingly, not the home language of either partner). Students spend one year in Japan, three semesters in Germany and a one month internship dedicated to thesis work in a global company also in Germany. This programme makes good use of new media through distance learning and computer-based tutorials.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) has developed joint undergraduate degree programmes with the Australian National University in the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, the University of Melbourne in civil engineering, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in five different disciplines. It appears that these types

of collaborative programmes are part of the NUS strategy to attract some of the brightest students to Singapore and especially to its institution⁸.

The Double Degree Master's Programme between Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and the University of Bologna (Bologna) is original in its focus on Art and Cultural Management. This newly established programme emanates from a lengthy collaboration between the Institute for the Management of Creative Enterprises (IMCE) of CMU and the International Arts and Cultural Management Programme at Bologna. Students receive two Master's degrees when they have completed their six terms of study – an MA in Arts Management from IMCE of CMU and an MA in Innovation and Organisation of Culture and Arts from the School of Economics from Bologna.

The UK-based London School of Economics (LSE) has fully embraced both double and joint degrees. It defines a double degree as a programme offered in conjunction with a partner higher education institution normally of two years duration in which students study the first year at LSE and the second year at the partner institution or vice versa. The student is awarded the Master's degree or equivalent of both institutions'. Partnerships are established with well-known universities in China, the US, Europe, and Singapore and often involve double degree programmes in different disciplines. A joint degree is defined by LSE as 'a degree which is awarded jointly by LSE and one or more other institutions'. LSE has established fewer of these but it has done so in such diverse fields of study as Philosophy and History of Science, Health Policy, Planning and Financing. This illustrates the interdisciplinary opportunities of joint degrees and how an institution such as LSE partners with universities which can provide a complimentary but different Master's programme.

The Universidad del Norte located in Baranquilla, Colombia has established about 20 double degree programmes with six HEIs in Europe and three in the US. The programmes cross a variety of disciplines at both Bachelor's and Master's level but focus primarily in Business Administration and Engineering. One example is with the University of South Florida (USF). The Colombian engineering students study for four years at the Universidad del Norte and then transfer to USF for two semesters and a summer (32 academic credits) and vice versa. On successful completion of the programme, students receive a Bachelor's degree in Engineering from both institutions as well as access to professional engineering accreditation organisations in both countries.

Doshisha University in Japan has forged ahead to develop double degree programmes at both the Master's and Doctoral level in engineering with a group of four Ecoles Centrales for Engineering in France. Students work on a Doctoral degree at the Doshisha University Graduate School of Engineering and after completion of their Doctoral dissertation in France they receive a Doctorate in Engineering from Japan and a PhD from France.

Italy is one of the leaders in establishing joint and double degrees. One example is the University of Bocconi who has set up double degree programmes with a total of ten universities - seven in Europe, one in the US (New York State University of Albany), one in India (the Indian Institute of Management - Ahmedabad) and one in Russia (the Moscow State Institute of International Relations). Their model involves attending the first year at the home university and the second year at one of the foreign partner

⁸ See Kong, K. (2008) *Engaging Globally through joint and double degree programmes: A view from Singapore*. URL: <http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/2008/02/15/engaging-globally-through-joint-and-double-degree-programmes-a-view-from-singapore/>. Posted 15 February, last accessed 15 September 2008.

institutions. This leads to a Laurea Specialistica degree from Bocconi and a similar degree - usually a Master of Science from the partner university.

The University of Rotterdam in the Netherlands is involved in an international network of ten European institutions, one Israeli and one American university that provide a joint Master's degree (with provisions for double degree) in Law and Economics. The year long (three term) programme is innovative as students take four mandatory courses in each of the first two terms with the third term allowing for two specialised courses and the Master's thesis. Courses for the first two terms are identical at all 12 partner institutions

The Andhra University College of Engineering (AUCE) in India is collaborating with the Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH) in Sweden on a double Master of Science degree programme in software engineering and signal processing. Indian students spend their second, third and fourth semesters in Sweden working on applied research projects under the supervision of BTH faculty.

The School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University has developed a Global Public Policy Network (GPPN) to further academic co-operation, especially for what they call dual degree programmes. SIPA students have the option of spending their second year of the Master's programme at a GPPN institution such as the LSE, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at NUS, and Sciences Po in Paris. They will then receive MPA degrees from both universities 'in the same amount of time it takes to earn one degree, and in most cases, at significantly less cost'⁹.

3 Triggers and Rationales

What has initiated this deluge of interest in joint, double and combined degree programmes? Virtually all regions of the world have institutions seeking out opportunities or responding to requests for international collaborative programmes. Why? What are the triggers for the growing popularity of these types of programmes? This section examines some of the more important catalysts as well as the driving rationales.

First, it is important to reflect on the unprecedented increase in the internationalisation of higher education in general. The number of multilateral university networks for research, teaching and contract project work has exploded; new regional international education organisations have been established; countries are reviewing their national internationalisation strategies and programmes; and new policy actors such as immigration, industry, trade are engaged and collaborating with education, foreign affairs, science and technology. The increase in volume, scope and scale of cross-border movement of education programmes (franchise, twinning, branch campus, etc.), and providers (commercial companies, non-government organisations, traditional universities), is unprecedented. The overall demand for higher education is growing and this impacts the interest in international education opportunities and especially the quest for foreign education credentials. This scenario helps to contextualise the appeal of double and joint degrees.

Three of the major triggers for stimulating the interest in joint and double degree programmes are the increased demand for higher education and particularly international education; improved information and communication technologies which

⁹ Redd, K. (2007) *Data Sources: International Dual, Joint and Other Collaborative Programmes*.

permit more virtual mobility and collaboration among HEIs; and finally, the perception by many institutions that the more international they are the better their reputation and status is. It is important to delve deeper into what is driving institutions, countries and students to get involved in joint and double degree programmes.

The analysis of the rationales driving joint and double degree programmes is enlightening when looked at from the different perspectives of individuals including students and professors, the institutions, national education systems and regional organisations.

3.1 Individual Level - Students and Professors

Students are attracted to these types of collaborative programmes for a number of reasons. The opportunity to be part of a programme that offers two degrees from two different universities located in different countries is seen to enhance their employability prospects and career path. In some countries, students who have completed a professional programme such as Engineering also receive accreditation from the professional body in each country thereby enhancing job opportunities.

Some students believe that a collaborative programme is of higher quality given that the expertise of two universities has shaped the academic programme. This is especially true for joint degrees. Other students are not as interested in enhanced quality but the opportunity to get two degrees 'for the price of one' so to speak. They argue that the duration is shorter for a double or combined degree programme, the workload is definitely less than for two single degrees, and often there is less of a financial burden as well. This argument is not valid for all such programmes, but there is an element of truth to these claims. Double degree programmes are being presented by a leading European international education organisation as 'a lot easier to achieve and not necessarily less valid' and 'two degrees for the price of one'.

Moreover, students with a desire to study in another country benefit from exposure to another culture and from interaction with professors and students working in a different policy and problem context. Studying in a second or third language, English is often seen as a huge advantage as well. Students see many advantages in a collaborative programme over an exchange or semester abroad experience as there is no loss of time or the risk of credits not being counted.

Finally, the status factor cannot be ignored. There is a certain sense of elitism attached to having academic credentials from universities in different countries, even if the student never studied abroad but benefited from distance education and visiting foreign professors.

Many professors are also attracted to the collaborative programme as they like the diversity of students, the opportunity for innovation in the teaching/learning process, the occasion to work with fellow scholars on a joint research project, the chance to collect data or access specialised equipment, and a way to broaden their professional network. The appeal of exposure to another culture, new problem solving strategies, and a different academic institution should not be underestimated for faculty members as well as students. While there is often extra workload and problems involved in collaborative programmes, especially at the Master's and Doctoral levels, there are faculty who see that it is definitely a win-win situation for all involved.

3.2 Institutional Level

Collaborative degree programmes lead to a deeper level and more sustainable type of relationship than many other internationalisation strategies and thus bring important academic benefits. This is because the collaboration requires extensive discussion and reworking of programme design, content, organisation, outcomes and requirements for completion. Of course, administrative matters such as registration, enrolment, evaluation, tuition costs are also involved. One can imagine the complexity of the issues involved, but the 'pluses' seem to outweigh the potential problems. Academic benefits in terms of innovation of curriculum, exchange of professors and researchers, and access to expertise at the partner university and its research networks make joint degrees especially attractive. Combined degrees allow institutions to work with partners that may offer a Master's or Doctoral level programme or speciality that is not available at their own university.

For other institutions the primary rationale is to increase their reputation and ranking as an international university. This is accomplished by deliberately collaborating with partners of equal or greater status. This type of 'status building' applies to institutions in both developed and developing countries. For instance, institutions in developing countries seek double degree programmes with developed country partners as it indirectly verifies the quality of their programme given that courses are judged to be equivalent in order to count towards a double (or multiple) degree(s). Examples exist of institutions that believe that a collaborative programme with an institution of 'greater status' will also help their national accreditation process. Finally, collaborative programmes are perceived by some universities as a way to attract talented students who may want to stay for a work experience after graduation and perhaps immigrate permanently.

The financial investment required to launch these kinds of programmes is a subject worthy of further investigation. In some cases, the majority of extra costs can be borne by increasing student tuition fees which in turn makes the programme quite elitist and only available to financially independent or supported students. In other situations, costs are absorbed by the institutions or covered by external funding. At this point in time, generating income as a driving rationale has not been attributed to these collaborative programmes in the same way that cross-border programmes such as franchise and twinning programmes, and recruitment of foreign students, have been motivated by revenue generation. Institutions with successful joint, double, multiple degree programmes have indicated that staff have mixed views on the issue. For some, it is definitely an opportunity for innovation and extension of programme curriculum and research projects; for others the upheaval and change of joint programme design, development and delivery is not welcomed.

3.3 National Level

At the national level, profile, status, capacity building, and competitiveness appear to be the primary rationales guiding the establishment of collaborative programmes. National internationalisation strategies often include scientific, economic and technological competitiveness as top priorities. The higher education sector plays a central role in producing research and innovation as well as training the required knowledge workers to implement the strategy. To that end, institutions are encouraged to cooperate with universities that are leaders in the field and to recruit the best and the brightest of students and scholars to the collaborative programmes. Partnerships with highly regarded institutions are sought after.

The potential for capacity building of developing country institutions through collaborative programmes with universities in developed countries is very important, but not seen as a priority by countries with a more sophisticated higher education system. Developed countries are often motivated and shaped by self-interest and can be more oriented to status-building than to working collaboratively with less developed institutions in terms of these kinds of programmes. This is another example where north–south international education initiatives are steering away from international development cooperation. Perhaps with time, more attention will be paid to using collaborative degree programmes as a tool for building capacity in both developed and developing higher education systems and more opportunities for south-south-north cooperation will be available.

Multinational companies, especially those located in countries with a bilateral trade agreement, are interested in hiring multilingual students who have studied in both countries and understand the similarities and differences in the regulatory and cultural contexts.

3.4 Regional Level

In Europe, three communiqués from Bologna ministerial meetings have emphasised the central role these types of programmes have in building the EHEA¹⁰. The EUA report on the ‘Establishment of joint degrees’ (2004) extols the virtue of joint degrees by stating “joint degrees will boost the development of joint quality assurance; the recognition of degrees and qualifications across the EHEA; the transparency and convergence of higher education systems; student and staff mobility; the international employability of graduates; the European dimension of studies; and the attractiveness of the EHEA”. This is eloquent testimony to the important role that international collaborative programmes play at the regional level.

The potential for promoting inter-regional cooperation also needs to be acknowledged. The previously mentioned Atlantis Programme between EU and the US is one example of how networks of European and American institutions are collaborating to offer joint or double degrees at Bachelor’s and Master’s level. Erasmus Mundus is a worldwide programme that enables European universities to establish mobility, networks and joint degrees initiatives. This type of strategic programming and investment by the EU is not evident in other regions of the world yet, but the potential is there. Europe’s success at using joint and double degrees to establish collaboration with other institutions around the world and to increase competitiveness with other regions may lead to greater priority being given to international collaborative degree programmes as an effective instrument for both intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation.

4 Terminology and Typology

4.1 Diversity of Terms – Mass Confusion

A worldwide review of the literature, university web pages, survey reports, and research articles shows a plethora of terms used to describe international collaborative programmes such as double and joint degrees. These terms include: double; multiple; tri-national; joint; integrated; collaborative; international; combined; concurrent; consecutive; overlapping; conjoint; parallel; simultaneous; and common degrees. They

¹⁰ Schüle, U. (2006) *Joint and Double Degrees within the European Higher Education Area - Towards Further Internationalisation of Business Degrees*, Consortium of International Double Degrees, Papers on International Business Education. Paris, France. URL: <http://www.CIDD.org>. Last accessed 15 September 2008.

mean different things to different people within and across countries - thereby complicating the situation. One of the key questions to be clarified is whether the terms listed above are used to describe the programme offered or the qualification awarded.

To deal with the confusion of so many terms, organisations, governmental bodies and institutions have correctly tried to provide a definition to clarify what they mean. Different regions of the world, indeed each country active in this aspect of international education, have proposed definitions that relate to their policy framework and the concepts integral to their approach and native language. This has resulted in a multitude of definitions and another layer of complexity. An analysis of these definitions shows a variety of core concepts or elements used to describe double and joint degrees. They include: 1) number of collaborating institutions; 2) number of qualifications/certificates awarded; 3) completion time; 4) organisation of the programme; 5) recognition bodies; and 6) number of countries involved.

The following examples illustrate two different approaches to definitions – the first makes the qualification central and the second focuses on the programme.

The definitions proposed by Schüle¹¹ use the qualification or diploma as the core concept: “Joint degree is a single diploma issued by two or more institutions offering an integrated study programme. The single diploma (Bachelor’s, Master’s, Doctorate) is signed by the rectors of all participating universities and recognised as a substitute of the national diplomas. A double degree is two nationally recognised diplomas issued separately by the universities involved in the integrated study programme”.

The Ministry of Education in Finland¹², as well as many institutions, define double and joint degrees in terms of a programme. For example: a joint degree means a programme developed and organised by two or more HEIs in collaboration which leads to one joint degree certificate. Double degree in turn means a degree programme developed and organised by two or several HEIs in collaboration which leads to two degree certificates - in practice one from each partner HEI.

Both of these definitions distinguish between joint and double degrees. However, the definition included in the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications uses ‘joint degree’ as a generic term that can encompass several kinds of degrees issued by cooperating HEIs. The Convention states that a joint degree is understood to be “referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more HEIs or jointly by one or more HEIs and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the HEIs, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions. A joint degree may be issued as 1) a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas, 2) a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma or 3) one or more national diplomas issued officially as the only attestation of the joint qualification in question”¹³.

¹¹ Schüle, U. (2006) Joint and Double Degrees within the European Higher Education Area- Towards Further Internationalisation of Business Degrees, p.6.

¹² Ministry of Education (2004) *Development of International Joint Degrees and Double Degrees - Recommendation of the Ministry of Education*. Helsinki, Finland, URL: http://www.mineed.fi/opm/koulutus/yliopistokoulutus/bologna/Joint_degrees_recommendations.pdf. Last accessed 15 September 2008.

¹³ EC/UNESCO (2004) *Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees. Adopted by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region*.

These definitions are appropriate for their particular context but illustrate the confusion and misunderstanding about what different countries, institutions and regulatory bodies mean by double or joint degrees. While it is not the intention to propose a universal set of definitions it is necessary to have some common understanding of what is meant in order to facilitate the collaborative agreements and mutual understanding which underpin these programmes/degrees and to ensure that the qualifications awarded are recognised.

4.2 Core Concepts

The first key question is whether joint and double degree labels refer to the qualification awarded or the programme offered. The first reaction is to automatically focus on the number of degrees/qualifications offered – one, two or more. But further reflection reveals that if the degree or qualification is the central concept one faces problems in trying to distinguish among the options available - single, joint, double, multiple or combined degrees. Furthermore, several legal issues arise due to the different national regulations of collaborating institutions. This is particularly true for awarding a joint degree when one qualification from two or more institutions is often illegal.

On the other hand, if programme is the primary concept, there are more elements available to describe and differentiate the various terms. Secondly, the collaborative nature of the academic programme is the essence of this type of international education initiative and thus should be emphasised. The fact that institutions are collaboratively redesigning their curriculum and the organisation of their programmes is the most important feature and demonstrates deep international cooperation in their internationalisation efforts. Therefore, given the challenges of national legal requirements for granting and recognising qualifications and secondly the importance of collaboratively designing an internationalised programme, the following analysis and proposed typology for joint and double degrees will use the collaborative academic programme as the foundation principle.

4.3 Proposed Working Definitions and Typology

This section differentiates four types of international collaborative programmes: joint degree programme; double degree programme; multiple degree programme; and combined degree programme. These programmes differ significantly from cross-border initiatives such as franchise and twinning programmes. It is important to understand what each one means and how they relate to and differ from one another. The generic descriptor for these three types of programmes is international collaborative programmes. International is used to indicate that two or more countries are involved and to differentiate them from domestic level joint or double degree programmes which are also growing in popularity. The term collaborative infers close cooperation among the partner institutions in curriculum development, design, organisation, and delivery of the programme (including joint research) and most importantly the requirements necessary for awarding of the qualification/s.

i) International Joint Degree Programme

“A joint degree programme awards one joint qualification upon completion of the collaborative programme requirements established by the partner institutions”.

The distinguishing feature of this type of international collaborative programme is that only one qualification is awarded jointly by the cooperating institutions. The duration of the programme is normally not extended and thus students have the advantage of completing a joint programme in the same time period as an individual programme

from one of the institutions. The design and integration of the course of study varies from programme to programme but it normally involves the mobility (physical or virtual) of students, professors and or course content. It is important to emphasise that students travelling to the partner country for research or course work is not a requirement in all joint degrees programmes but the benefits of doing so are recognised. The options of having visiting professors, courses by distance, joint virtual research projects provide valuable alternatives to student mobility.

The awarding of a joint qualification can face many legal issues. National regulations often do not allow for a university to jointly confer a qualification, especially in association with a foreign institution. In this case, if both names of the collaborating institutions appear on the degree certificate there is a risk that the joint degree will not be recognised by either of the home countries meaning that the student does not have a legitimate qualification even though all programme requirements have been completed. The situation becomes more complicated when one looks for an international body that will recognise a joint degree from two bona fide institutions. At this point, the Lisbon Convention for Recognition of Credentials is the only one of six UNESCO regional conventions that does so. Innovative ways to circumvent this problem have been developed by organisers of joint degree programmes. As stated in the addendum to the Lisbon Convention (2004), a joint degree may be issued as 1) a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas, 2) a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma or 3) one or more national diplomas issued officially as the only attestation of the joint qualification in question. While this only applies to the Lisbon Convention, it does illustrate the complexity involved in jointly awarding one degree by two institutions.

Overall, the most important features of a joint degree programme are the strengths that each institution brings to the programme and the opportunities it allows for students to benefit from a programme that draws on the teaching, curricular and research expertise of two or more institutions located in different countries. The major drawbacks at the current time are the issues related to the legality and recognition of a jointly conferred qualification.

ii) International Double Degree Programme- Multiple Degree Programme

“A double degree programme awards two individual qualifications at equivalent levels upon completion of the collaborative programme requirements established by the two partner institutions”.

A multiple degree programme is essentially the same as a double degree programme except for the number of qualifications offered. *“A multiple degree programme awards three or more individual qualifications at equivalent levels upon completion of the collaborative programme requirements established by the three or more partner institution”.*

The titles of Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees differ across regions and may not even exist in some countries. Therefore, the term equivalent level is used to indicate that the double or multiple degrees conferred are of the same standing regardless of the title used.

The duration of the period of study for a double or multiple degree programme is normally extended beyond the length of a single degree programme in order to meet the requirements of all partners participating in the collaborative programme.

(It is important to emphasise that duration in terms of time is different than the actual number of credits achieved, or workload of a student.)

The legality and recognition of the qualifications awarded by a double/multiple degree programmes are more straightforward than for joint degrees. It is assumed that each partner institution is officially registered or licensed in their country. Thus awards offered by the enrolling institution in a collaborative programme should be recognised in that country and the other award/s would be treated like any other foreign credential.

The major hurdles facing double/multiple degree programmes involve the design of the curriculum and the establishment of completion requirements. There is no standard way to establish completion requirements due to the variety of disciplines, fields of study and national regulations involved. Each partnership does it according to the practices and legalities of the collaborating institution. However, the approach of double/triple counting the same student work load, or learning outcomes, can put the academic integrity of the programme in jeopardy. The idea of having two degrees from two different institutions in two different countries is attractive to students but careful attention needs to be given to ensuring that the value and recognition of the qualifications are valid and do not violate the premise and academic purpose of a collaborative degree programme. This is especially true for multiple degree programmes.

iii) International Combined Degree Programme

“A combined degree programme awards two different qualifications at consecutive levels upon completion of the requirements established by the partner institutions”.

The combined degree programmes are becoming more popular both at the domestic and international level. It basically involves two consecutive qualifications (usually Bachelor/Master or Master/Doctoral) awarded when programme requirements for each degree as stipulated by the awarding institutions are completed. For the international combined degree programme, the two awarding institutions are located in different countries. In this case, it is usual for a student to be mobile and complete the course work and research requirements for the first degree in one country and the requirements for the second degree in the partner institution located in another country. The duration of the programme is usually longer than a single programme but shorter than if the two degrees were taken separately.

iv) Dual Degree

The term ‘dual degree’ is problematic. At the international level, it is normally used interchangeably with double degree. However, at the domestic or national level it often refers to a double major indicating two areas of concentration attached to one degree or two degrees in different fields from the same institution. For the purposes of the typology of international collaborative programmes a dual degree programme is not differentiated from a double degree programme.

Table Three presents a summary of the different definitions used and points out the core concept underlying each different concept and key elements common to them all.

Table 3: Typology of International Collaborative Degree Programmes

Type of Degree Programme	Differentiating elements	Common elements to all three types
<p>International Joint Degree Programme</p> <p><i>“A joint degree programme awards one joint qualification upon completion of the collaborative programme requirements established by the partner institutions.”</i></p>	<p>Qualification One qualification is awarded jointly meaning that the name/seal of all collaborating institutions appear on the degree certificate. If national regulations prevent the joint conferral of a joint qualification, then normally the name of one institution, (usually the enrolling institution) appears on the official degree certificate and a supplementary unofficial certificate is provided.</p> <p>Duration A joint programme is normally completed in the same time period as a similar single degree programme from one of the partner institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A formal agreement exists among all collaborating institutions outlining the roles and responsibilities of each partner, detailing the content and organisation of the academic programme and identifying the requirements and procedures for awarding each institution’s qualification.
<p>International Double/Multiple Degree Programme</p> <p><i>“A double/multiple degree programme awards two (or more) individual qualifications at equivalent levels upon completion of the collaborative programme requirements established by the two/multiple partner institutions”.</i></p>	<p>Qualification Two/or more qualifications of equivalent standing are awarded upon completion of programme requirements. Requirements for programme completion and qualification may differ between partner institutions but they are established collaboratively.</p> <p>As titles for Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral awards often differ between countries the term ‘qualifications at equivalent level’ is used.</p> <p>Duration The period of study is usually longer than a single or joint degree programme given the extra requirements needed to receive two (or more) qualifications but less than the time taken for each degree separately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the international designation of the degree programme, the collaborating institutions are from different countries. • Physical or virtual mobility of students and/or professors and/or course content is normally involved. • The programme meets the appropriate national/institution quality standards of all collaborating institutions.
<p>International Combined Degree</p> <p><i>“A combined degree programme awards two different qualifications at consecutive levels upon completion of the requirements established by the partner institutions.”</i></p>	<p>Qualification Two different qualifications at consecutive levels (i.e. Bachelor/Master or Master/Doctoral) are awarded upon completion of the requirements established by the collaborating institutions.</p> <p>Duration The period of study is usually longer than a single programme but shorter than if the two degrees were taken separately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic arrangements for collaborative degree programmes are different than for franchise and twinning programmes

4.5 Analysis of Working Definitions

It is informative to examine what is excluded from the proposed working definitions. The concept of recognition is problematic, especially with joint degree programmes. Given that these definitions aim to be used in all regions of the world, it is too limiting to include the recognition element as these procedures differ from country to country. The same argument applies to including concepts related to duration, rationales, intended outcomes, types of institutions. There are so many stakeholders and actors bringing different perspectives and approaches to these types of international collaborative degree programmes that one needs to develop a generic definition that is useful and relevant to them all regardless of country origin. Finally, the concept of physical or virtual mobility is not included as collaborative programmes can involve the movement of students or professors or researchers or course content etc., and it is best not to make one particular kind of mobility a prerequisite.

The definition can include all types of programmes (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral) and so the level is not specified. Consideration was given to using another word for degree, such as diploma, in order to include pre-university or non-degree programmes. This is especially relevant for the combined degree definition. In the end, degree was chosen because of the current familiarity and wide use of the term. However, in practice these definitions could include non-degree level higher education programmes as well.

In the double/multiple degree programme definitions the phrase 'degrees of equivalent level' is included to clearly distinguish them from the combined degree definition which specifies that the degrees are 'consecutive'.

The number or location of countries is not specified in the proposed definitions. The generic descriptor/label for all programmes is 'international collaborative programme'. Using this label is preferable to having each of the four definitions specify the number of countries. A definition which is clear and succinct and can apply to the widest set of circumstances is most useful. It is important to note that joint, double, and combined degrees can also be offered by institutions within a country and the proposed definitions could theoretically apply to these situations as well. There may be some advantages in having the same definition apply at domestic and international levels. It would help to avoid more confusion.

5 Issues and Challenges

The benefits of joint, double and combined degree programmes are many and diverse but so are the challenges that face the collaborating institutions involved in establishing these types of initiatives. Different regulatory systems, academic calendars, credit systems, tuition and scholarship schemes, teaching approaches, examination requirements are only a few of the more technical level challenges to overcome. This section identifies many of the academic alignment issues and the macro questions that institutions and higher education authorities need to address in order to move ahead in the development and recognition of these programmes and qualifications¹⁴.

¹⁴ For a detailed account of how European Business Schools in the Consortium of International Double Degrees overcome obstacles and develop different models of programmes see Schüle (2006). An example of a check list is available to guide institutions in their work to establish joint and double degree programmes. EUA (2004) has also developed a set of 'Golden Rules for New Joint Master's Programmes'.

5.1 Academic Alignment Issues

National and university regulations and customs differ from country to country and present many challenges for the design and implementation of international collaborative programmes. For instance, there are often regulations which prevent students from enrolling in more than one university at a time, or laws which require students to spend their last year or semester at the 'home' university or mandatory practises regarding the recruitment and selection of students. Non-recognition or limitations on the number of courses/credits taken at a partner university are additional barriers. Different academic years can present problems for student mobility, yet on the other hand, provide more opportunities for faculty exchange. Examination/evaluation requirements and procedures often present obstacles to double degree programmes.

Professional and applied programmes are popular areas for double and joint degree programmes and student internships are attractive features. The opportunity to choose an internship in one of the partner countries is appealing to students but often difficult to arrange because of visa issues, academic work load requirements, and language capacity.

Quality assurance and accreditation are of fundamental importance but pose significant challenges. When institutions have internal quality assurance procedures in place, requirements can be met for the portion of the programme or research supervision provided by the home university. It is more difficult, but not impossible, to quality assure the courses offered by the partner university. Common entrance and exit requirements are often used but it would be helpful if mutual recognition of the respective quality assurance programmes (where they exist) is included in the agreement for the collaborative programme.

Accreditation is even more of a challenge as national systems do not exist in all countries around the world and even if they did accreditation agencies differ enormously - some focus on programme and others on the institution, some focus on inputs and others on process or outputs. Furthermore, the establishment of procedures for accrediting international collaborative programmes is relatively new territory for many agencies. For the present time, the best case scenario is that accreditation is completed by each partner institution involved in the double, joint, combined degree programme. For professional programmes there are international accreditation agencies like ABET, Inc. or EQUIS which may be appropriate for joint or double degree programmes but at the current time more institutions have their 'home' programmes accredited than the double or joint degree programmes. An important question is whether national or regional or international accreditation is the best route for international collaborative programmes.

The financial aspects, including tuition fees and funding, can cause many headaches. It is clear that revenue generation is not usually the primary motive for these kinds of programmes as they often require extra investments by the institutions or higher tuition fees charged to students. In countries which do not charge tuition fees per se or have limited autonomy to set fees, the extra costs must be borne by the institutions or external funders. But, the sustainability of a programme can often be at risk when it is dependent on external funds. Matters become more complicated when multiple partners with different tuition fees are involved or when there are extra costs for physical and virtual mobility for professors. Arrangements for joint costs regarding marketing, recruiting, assessments, administration also need to be worked out – and in the cases where there is income, an agreement for income distribution is also necessary.

5.2 Vexing Issues - Mobility, Language, Recognition and Legitimacy

In many cases, double and joint degree programmes have evolved from well established student/staff exchange agreements among institutions. In these instances mobility continues to be a salient, if not mandatory, aspect of the collaborative degree programme in order for students to benefit from studying and living in a different culture and academic context. In other situations, institutions are more flexible and encourage various forms of physical and virtual mobility for students, professors and courses. New information/communication technologies and virtual worlds, such as Second Life, are spawning innovative teaching/learning/research opportunities and peer based learning. While these will not replace the benefits of physical mobility, they add valuable dimensions to collaborative programmes and expand access for students and staff who are not able to physically move to another country for a period of time.

The language of instruction for joint and double degree programmes introduces some complexities. Each partner usually offers its programmes in the home teaching language and in some cases English. This means that courses could be offered in at least three different languages and more if multiple partners are involved. Students need to be at least bilingual - usually their native language/s plus English. There are two issues at play here. The first is the dominance of English in cases where English is not the native language of any of the partners. This speaks to the 'Anglicisation' trend, or what some call 'English imperialism', in the higher education sector (and many other sectors as well). Are international collaborative programmes encouraging the overuse of English and the standardisation of curriculum? The second issue relates to the required proficiency level of students/professors in the second language of instruction or research and the training needed to help students/academics meet the language proficiency requirements. The positive side of the language issue is that students are required to be bilingual or multilingual which helps their communication skills, employability and understanding of another culture. The establishment of language requirements and availability of upgrading courses by each partner needs to be crystal clear in the collaborative agreement.

The recognition of the qualifications awarded from the four different types of collaborative programmes is by far the most vexing issue. As already discussed, while the number is increasing, there are only a few countries which legally allow one of its universities to confer a joint qualification in partnership with an institution in another country. This means that the student often gets a formal diploma from one university and an unofficial certificate from the other/s indicating that it was a joint collaborative programme. For some students, this is not a problem as it is the international nature of the academic programme which is most important, not the qualification. For many though, this is not the case as credentialism is increasingly important to students.

Employers, academic institutions, and credential evaluation agencies all need to be cognisant of what is entailed in the granting and recognition of double or multiple qualifications. There is a perception that some double, multiple and combined degrees are more 'legitimate' than others, but this is difficult to prove. The 'recognition' process raises the "legitimacy" or "misrepresentation" issues often associated with double/multiple degree qualifications - more than with joint or combined qualifications. Part of the concern rests with the double counting of course credits/workload for two or more qualifications. This has led to the 'two for the cost of one' label for double degrees. Cost in this case is not measured in monetary terms alone, as student work load is also involved.

The diversity of models used to determine the completion requirements for double/multiple degree programmes is extremely varied. There is no one explanation or correct framework used to set programme completion requirements. This raises the critical question whether the framework is based on 1) the number of completed courses/credits 2) the student workload or 3) required outcome/competency? These three approaches lead to different explanations and arguments in the analysis of the 'legitimacy' of the double/multiple degrees awarded. The value of a qualification/credential is at the root of the murkiness surrounding the 'acceptability' of double/multiple degrees emanating from a collaborative programme. Many would argue that attributing the same courses or workload towards two or more degrees from two or more institutions in different countries devalues the validity of a qualification. Others believe that if students meet the stated learning outcomes/competencies required to obtain a qualification regardless of where or how the competencies were acquired, the credential is legitimate. This logic infers that double and multiple degrees, based on a set of core courses or competencies and augmented by any additional requirements of the collaborating institutions, are academically sound and legitimate; and it is the process for recognising these qualifications which requires more attention not the completion requirements per se. Both arguments have validity but the variety of models used prevents a clear resolution to the question of 'legitimacy'.

Clearly the debate on 'legitimacy' is nuanced and complicated by national policies, customs and interpretations of what constitutes the requirements for a qualification. The critical point emanating from the concern and different interpretations of the 'legitimacy' of double/multiple degrees is that the issue needs further analysis. Stakeholders, including students, HEIs, employers, accreditation and quality assurance agencies, policy makers, academic leaders and credential recognition bodies, need to address this issue individually and collectively. Similarities and differences among countries and stakeholders need to be acknowledged and respected but there needs to be some common understanding about what two or more qualifications at the same level emanating from a collaborative double or multiple degree programme actually represents and signifies.

6 Conclusions

International collaborative programmes clearly have a role in the current landscape of higher education and will probably be more numerous and influential in the coming years. As an internationalisation strategy, they address the heartland of academia which is the teaching/learning process and the production of new knowledge between and among countries. These programmes are built on the principle of deep academic collaboration and bring important benefits to individuals, institutions, national and regional education systems. The challenge facing the higher education sector is to work out a common understanding of what joint, double and combined programmes actually mean and involve and to iron out many of the academic alignment issues inherent to working in different national regulatory frameworks, cultures and practices. Most importantly, a rigorous debate on the vexing questions of accreditation, recognition, and 'legitimacy' of the qualifications needs to take place to ensure that international collaborative programmes and their awards are respected and recognised by students, HEIs and employers around the world.

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