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ENLACES: Transformative Educational Policy for the Latin American and Caribbean Region

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ENLACES: Transformative Educational Policy for the
Latin American and Caribbean Region

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SIT Graduate Institute

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

August 15, 2016

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Abstract

This capstone paper explores ENLACES, the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting Space for Higher Education, or in Spanish, Espacio de Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Educación Superior (ENLACES). In the same fashion that the UNESCO-Bologna Accords gave rise to the European Higher Education Area, so, too, did the UNESCO-International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean give rise to ENLACES. ENLACES is an evolving, transformative education policy that promotes the region's integration and internationalization of higher education through collaborative means. This paper explores the region's educational environment during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that led to the creation of the ENLACES, presents a stakeholder analysis of the policy, examines its goals, objectives, and strategies of implementation, and evaluates its strengths and weakness. Records from regional and global conferences are the primary sources for this policy analysis.

List of Acronyms

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Name</u>
LAC.....	Latin America and the Caribbean
UNESCO.....	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ANDIFES.....	Spanish..... <i>Asociación Nacional de Dirigentes de las Instituciones Federales de Educación Superior</i>
	English.....National Leadership Association of Federal Institutions of Higher Education
ANR.....	Spanish..... <i>Asamblea Nacional de Rectores de Perú</i>
	English.....Peruvian National Rectors Assembly
ANUIES.....	Spanish..... <i>Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior</i>
	English..... National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions
AUGM.....	Spanish..... <i>Asociación de Universidades Grupo Montevideo</i>
	English.....Association of Montevideo Group Universities
CRESALC.....	Spanish..... <i>Conferencia Regional de Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe</i>
	English.....Regional Conference for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
CSUCA.....	Spanish..... <i>Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano</i>
	English.....Central American University Superior Council

ENLACESSpanish.....*Espacio de Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Educación Superior*

English..... Latin American and Caribbean Meeting Space for Higher Education

IESALC.....Spanish.....*Instituto Internacional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe*

English..... International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

OCLAE.....Spanish.....*Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes*

English..... Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization

UDUAL.....Spanish.....*Unión de Universidades de América Latina*

English.....Union of Latin American University

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Introduction

The Latin American and Caribbean Meeting Space for Higher Education, or in Spanish, Espacio de Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Educación Superior (ENLACES), is an inclusive platform for international cooperation for institutions of higher education across the Latin American and Caribbean region. ENLACES is administered by International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Instituto Internacional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe - IESALC), which in turn, is administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). According to UNESCO-IESALC (2016c), ENLACES is based on the principals of solidarity, autonomy, and cooperation, and it seeks to promote the following:

- the organization and mobilization of supportive actions that foster academic cooperation through building awareness of the topics, trends, and challenges that the region's higher education institutions face;
- the dialogue between institutions with the aim of establishing a consolidated agenda that addresses strategies to overcome deficiencies and fosters higher education that is inclusive, of quality, and relevant;
- the necessary support for the processes of reform and the strengthening of national systems and institutions of higher education, to include the dissemination of information related to these processes (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 2).

When the IESALC developed the ENLACES policy in 2008 (UNESCO-IESALC, 2016b), they had a bit of a quandary. While they knew what the role of the policy would be, they were mindful of the fact that the activities that ENLACES would support had yet to exist. Where most policies are relatively rigid and well-defined, as is required by their very nature, the

authors of ENLACES deliberately penned the policy to be extremely adaptable. The intentional fluidity of the ENLACES policy enables for its maximum efficacy in facilitating the growth and development of all future programming. As José Renato Carvalho (2009a), director of UNESCO-IESALC, stated, “ENLACES should be conceived as a collective construction in perpetual fine-tuning, open to the participation and collaboration of all” (p. 11).

ENLACES is an enduring discussion (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 1), a think-tank of sorts, in which all conversation is centered on the progressive development of higher educational activities, and all interested parties are invited. It is comprised of national ministries of education, development agencies, professors, researchers, students, and the general public (UNESCO-IESALC, 2016d). It exists to promote the mobilization of faculty and students, foster curricular alignment, harmonize accreditation processes, and increase accessibility to educational opportunities, (UNESCO-IESALC, 2010, p. 51). Through its unique style of pooling resources (Carvalho, 2008, p. 21), ENLACES’ transformative approach to higher education (Rodman, 2011) will reshape the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Current State of the Policy and its Impact to Date

The process of integrating and internationalizing the higher education system across an entire region is extremely cumbersome and time consuming. Bureaucratic processes are renown for being complicated and slow, and the Latin American and Caribbean region is not an exception. To date, trends and deficits within the region’s higher education system have been identified, a regional Action Plan has been adopted, and programs that address the areas of need are currently being developed. There are some examples of functioning programs that were

implemented by means of ENLACES, and these programs are explored in a later section within this capstone paper.

While the majority of the programs that are anticipated to rise from ENLACES have yet to be implemented, the necessary process of partnership building is widespread. The formation of these alliances is evidence that the policy's purpose, that of increasing the integration and internationalization of higher education institutions across the region, is being realized. Examples of such alliances, just to name a few, are the formation of the ENLACES Follow-Up Commission for monitoring and evaluation activities (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 11), the creation of regional observatories for the integration and advancement of research (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 7), and the network established with the Brazilian Federal Universities of Latin American Integration (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 10; EDCLR, 2010). In essence, all dialogue pertaining to the development of programs within ENLACES can be evidenced as the policy's impact.

Historical Context of ENLACES

1918 - Córdoba University Reform

There is a long, rich history of educational initiatives throughout the Latin America and Caribbean region that predate the conception of ENLACES. The most widely recognized, the Córdoba University Reform of 1918 (also known as the Argentine University Reform of 1918), took place in Argentina during a period of world history that is riddled with social upheaval and transformation. According to Bernheim (1998), while the European War and the Russian Revolution were raging, radicalism within Central and South American leadership resulted in numerous uprisings throughout the region. One such revolt, concentrated within the Argentine middle-class, was initiated by students at the University of Córdoba, and led to a movement of

transformation across the region's institutions of higher education. The key components of the Córdoba University Reform focused on university autonomy, the election of institutional directors, competitive hiring practices for the professoriate, academic liberty, the right to free education, academic reorganization, student welfare, connection of the national educational system, and bolstering the university's role throughout Latin American society (Bernheim, 1998).

1978 - Regional Center for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The role of the higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean took a dramatic step forward at the 1971 Latin American and Caribbean Conference for University Ministers, held that year in Caracas, Venezuela. According to CRESALC-UNESCO (1989), the need for a regional center for higher education was first introduced at the 1971 conference, and over the next years, regional leaders collaborated with UNESCO to design a program. In February 1978, the Venezuelan Ministry of Education and the Director General of UNESCO formally inaugurated the UNESCO-CRESALC (Centro Regional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe - Regional Center for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean). According to the Centro Regional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe (1989), the principal objectives of the CRESALC were:

- To foster closer co-operation among Member States in the field of higher education.
- To help to improve mutual knowledge of higher education systems.
- To assist Member States in their efforts to develop or improve their higher education and research systems and institutions, and in the reform processes entailed by such efforts.
- To encourage the mobility of higher education professionals with a view to making better use of human and educational resources and achieving greater regional integration.

- To facilitate the exchange of information and experience among the relevant institutions and centers in the region and in other parts of the world (CRESALC-UNESCO, 1989).

As reported by CRESALC-UNESCO (1989), the Center realized these objectives by providing regional institutions three central services: 1.) information and documentation, (2.) publications, and (3.) research, development, and technical assistance (p. 15). The provision of information and documentation services strengthened academic cooperation by facilitating the distribution of research. The primary areas of focus were:

- Higher education structures
- Policies and plans
- Administrative organization
- Organization and content
- Research and evaluation
- History of higher education
- Trends and development
- Information systems and design
- Higher education in global-social context
- International cooperation
- Statistical information
- Economic and financial aspects (CRESALC-UNESCO, 1989).

Services pertaining to publications included the generation of the Analytical Summary Bulletin, the Latin American Educational Document Network, and the Center for Graphic Arts and Reproduction (CRESALC-UNESCO, 1989, p. 17). The Analytical Summary Bulletin was a

publication that compiled all relevant information from scholarly journals, newspapers, and magazines that concerned higher education in the region. In an effort to maximize its collaborative impact, the bulletin's reach was augmented by publishing it in Spanish, French, and English. The Latin American Educational Document Network was an interconnected library system that was accessible throughout the region. The Center for Graphic Arts and Reproduction coordinated the translation, editing, and publication of all documents (bulletins, magazines, newspapers, books, etc.) that pertain to activities, research, technical assistance, and information exchange that was relevant to institutions in the region. These documents were then made accessible via the Latin American Educational Document Network.

According to CRESALC (1989), the third service that the Center was responsible for concentrated on research, development, and technical assistance (p. 25). This service focused on the promotion and coordination of research projects and the organization of academic assemblies. The objective was to gather the academic community on a regular basis to discuss research findings, prepare future studies, and provide technical, investigative support whenever needed. Between 1978-1988, 95 regional conferences were organized through this service (p. 28-40), and examples of the regional studies and research produced include:

- The study of the nexus between the university and small device production in Latin America and the Caribbean. Problems and future prospects from the perspective of research and technical educational policies (1983);
- The state of knowledge regarding higher education and employment in Latin America and the Caribbean (1984);
- The university and the development of technical science in Latin America (1984);

- Higher educational statistical information in Latin America and the Caribbean (1984-85);
- The role of higher education in the development of the Amazonian Sub-Region (1985);
- Quality of university student life (1985);
- Higher education and educational development in Latin America and the Caribbean: the contribution of educational research (1985-86);
- Post graduate studies in Latin America (1983-86);
- The condition and status of educational staff in Latin America and the Caribbean (1986);
- The university as an economic change-agent (1986);
- The university of the West Indies as an institution of sub-regional integration (1986);
- Alternative financial strategies for higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean (n.d.);
- Higher education's contributions to educational, economic, and social development (n.d.);
- Pedagogical training for university faculty (n.d.) (CRESALC, 1989, (p. 26-28).

1992 - MERCOSUR Education Sector

In 1991, the Treaty of Asunción was signed, and MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur/Common Market of the South) was formed. The new coalition, comprised of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, was an economic and political agreement designed to promote the free movement of goods, services, and people among its member states (Klonsky,

2012). The following year, MERCOSUR extended its reach beyond the principal mission of trade liberalization, and created the MERCOSUR Education Sector (Sector Educativo del MERCOSUR – SEM) (Perrotta, 2013, p. 3).

The SEM policy paralleled the European Union's 1987 educational policy called the Erasmus Mobility Program (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) (European Movement Ireland, 2013), and the Bologna Magna Chart Universitatum of 1988 (EHEA, n.d.a). The primary goal of the Erasmus program was to facilitate the movement of students and staff among the universities of the member states. It was within the Erasmus Mobility Program that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was first outlined (University of East Anglia, n.d.). The Bologna Magna Chart Universitatum of 1988 was the proclamation of academic freedom and institutional autonomy (Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum, 2016). SEM expanded upon the EU models to include mobility for students and staff, quality accreditation of degrees, diploma recognition, and the continued establishment of research networks (Perrotta, 2013, p. 3).

1996 - Regional Conference for Higher Education

The academically focused regional integration agreements (ROI's) were proving effective for both continents. Through the pooling of resources (financial, administrative, and knowledge), significant advances were being made, and transnational cooperation was normalizing. In an effort to further harmonize the internationalization of higher education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced the first World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE), to be held at the UNESCO world headquarters in Paris, France on October 5, 1998 (UNESCO, n.d.b). UNESCO (n.d.b) provides the following rationale for the first conference:

In convening the WCHE, UNESCO's objective was to lay down the fundamental principles for the in-depth reform of higher education systems throughout the world and thus contribute to transforming higher education, in its material and virtual manifestations, into an environment for lifelong learning, for cultural debate, for the affirmation and safeguarding of diversity, and for forging and confirming the values and principles laid down in the constitution of UNESCO for "the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" (para. 2). All confirmed that we are now facing global problems that call for solutions to be applied worldwide, even though in every region there are variations in the economic, social, cultural and political context (para. 4).

In preparation for the WCHE, regional conferences were held between November 1996 and March 1998 (UNESCO, n.d.b). In Europe, the Lisbon Recognition Convention took place in April 1997, from which policies regarding international academic recognition, statements of non-discrimination, increased mobility for students and faculty, academic consideration for refugees, international transcript centers, and Diploma Supplement (easy to understand degree clarification) were agreed upon (EHEA, n.d.b). In May 1998, the Sorbonne Declaration was signed by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy, in which an outline for the European Higher Education Area was further outlined, and a frame of reference for the promotion of qualifications for the job market was agreed upon (EHEA, n.d.c).

Preparation for UNESCO-WCHE in the Latin American and Caribbean region looked very similar to that of Europe. In November of 1996, the Regional Conference for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRESALC) took place in Havana, Cuba (Red Académica Uruguay, n.d.). During the 1996 conference, participants from twenty-six countries (UNESCO, 1996, p. 3) analyzed the state of the region's educational system, collaborated upon a

set of goals, determined areas that needed improvement, designed a long-term plan, and set benchmarks to monitor their progress. In total, the CRESALC held thirty-six preparatory meetings prior to the WCHE (UNESCO, 1996, p.6). Their objectives were successfully designed to align with those anticipated to result from the 1998 UNESCO-WCHE conference in Paris, France. UNESCO-Instituto Internacional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe (2016a) states that the following objectives were created for the CRESALC:

- To foster a closer cooperation between member states of the region, their institutions and specialists in the field of higher education;
- To contribute in the improvement of the mutual knowledge of the tertiary education systems of the region, in order to facilitate their comparison with other regions of the world and to contribute in such a way to their development;
- To provide assistance to any Member state that requests the cooperation of the institute for improving and developing its tertiary education systems and institutions, within the process of undergoing reforms;
- To promote and to support within the frame of the regional integration, a major mobility of professionals pertaining to establishments of higher education, particularly those from countries of minor relative development, with a view to better using the human and educational resources and helping to facilitate a major fluency in the recognition of studies, degrees and diplomas of higher education among the countries of the region and those of other parts of the world;
- To promote national and regional mechanisms aimed to strengthen the quality of higher education by means of processes of evaluation and accreditation;

- To promote the use of the new information and communication technologies in higher education institutions and to facilitate, within the same institutions, the creation of laboratories and virtual libraries. Additionally, the creation of local, national and regional networks that offer a new dimension of development to the region's higher education;
- The Institute will also contribute to the planning of, evaluation and follow-up of the programs of UNESCO regarding higher education, in cooperation with the UNESCO units and the programs approved by the organization, and also with the diverse institutes, other governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as with agencies of the United Nations System that realize activities of the same offer at national, sub-regional, regional, and international level (UNESCO-IESALC, 2016a).

1998 - World Conference on Higher Education

The first UNESCO-WCHE (World Conference on Higher Education) took place in Paris, France in October 1998 (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1998). Never, in the history of the world, had an academic assembly of this magnitude taken place (UNESCO, 1998). According to the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education Final Report (UNESCO, 1998), more than 4,000 participants, representing 182 states, attended the conference. The basis for the conference was to underscore the emerging role that higher education would have in the development of a global community, establish a working set of goals, identify the challenges to said goals, and build consensus for the necessary framework of an action plan. According to UNESCO (1998), the areas of focus were:

- Mission and functions of higher education;
- Ethical role, autonomy, responsibility and anticipatory function;

- Equity and access;
- Enhancing participation and promoting the role of women;
- Advancing knowledge through research in science, the arts and humanities and the dissemination of its results;
- Long-term orientation based on relevance;
- Strengthening co-operation with the world of work and analyzing and anticipating societal needs;
- Diversification for enhanced equity of opportunity;
- Innovative educational approaches: critical thinking and creativity;
- Higher education personnel and students as major actors;
- Qualitative evaluation;
- The potential and the challenge of technology;
- Strengthening higher education management and financing;
- Financing of higher education as a public service;
- Sharing knowledge and know-how across borders and continents;
- From 'brain drain' to 'brain gain';
- Partnerships and alliances (UNESCO, 1998).

The WCHE had two principal objectives. The first was to assemble the academic masses to collaborate upon a shared concept of higher education's role in twenty-first century society. This became known as the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action. The second, the Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development of Higher Education was the task with which each of the world's regions was challenged. With

the assistance of UNESCO, each region was to transform their region's vision and plan for action into actual policy (UNESCO, 1998).

1999 - Transformative International Declarations and the UNESCO-IESALC

At the conclusion of the UNESCO-WCHE, a consensus had been reached as to what each region was to do next: each was to transform their plan of action into effective policy. Although I am primarily focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean, and to a lesser extent, on that of Europe, it is appropriate that voice is lent to the progress of additional regions; those of Africa, the Arab States, Asia, and the Pacific. The Declaration and Action Plan on Higher Education in Africa was signed at the African Regional Consultation in Nairobi, Kenya (UNESCO, 1998, p. 39), the Beirut Declaration of Higher Education in the Arab States was signed in Beirut, Lebanon (UNESCO, 1998, p. 47), and the Declaration about Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific was signed in Tokyo, Japan (UNESCO, 1997). Europe signed the European Agenda for Change for Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century, which then evolved to become the Bologna Accords in 1999 (Bologna Declaration, Bologna Process). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Declaration about Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 1998, p. 72) was published by the CRESALC (Regional Center for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean). With the aid of this policy, the CRESALC officially merged with UNESCO, and the result, one year later, was the ratification of the International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC – Instituto Internacional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe) (UNESCO, 2016a). While the CRESALC had been replaced with the IESALC, its core values were carried forward, and elaborated upon.

The parallels between the Bologna Accords and the IESALC cannot be stressed enough. Both policies introduced incredible transformations across their respective regions' education

sectors through the tremendous regard for cooperation and inclusivity. These policies focused on the importance of access to education, educational collaboration, mobility for students and staff, the harmonization of processes related to accreditation, the importance of the university's ability to remain independent and autonomous, the university's responsibility to society as a change-agent, increased compatibility and comparability of academic programming, the creation of collaborative information systems that are uniform, facilitation of accessibility to academic resources, benchmarking systems for quality assurance, simplifying the processes of research diffusion across institutions, and increased community-based programming. Higher education was to be the platform from which "the promotion of a culture of peace encourages the development of human sustainability, based on the values of justice, equality, liberty, solidarity, democracy, and respect for human rights" (UNESCO-IESALC, 2016a, para. 2). Twenty-nine European countries signed the Bologna Accord in June 1999 (EHEA, n.d.a), and in Latin America and the Caribbean, thirty-one signed in November 1999 (SELA, n.d.).

2008 - Regional Conference for Higher Education and ENLACES

In June 2008, the Regional Conference for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Cartagena de Indias, Columbia (UNESCO-IESALC, 2008, p. 2). There were more than 3,500 members of the region's academic community in attendance, and it was transmitted around the world in four languages. Hosted by UNESCO-IESALC and the Columbian Ministry of Education, the objective for the conference was to prepare the region's Plan of Action for the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) that was to be held in France in July of the following year (Carvalho, 2009b, p.4). At the center for the region's Plan of Action was the development of the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting Space for Higher Education (ENLACES – Espacio de Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Educación

Superior). Over the course of the conference, the academic community collaborated upon a framework for ENLACES, and development continued throughout the next year.

With the Declaration of Panama in November 2008, additional structure was added to the design of ENLACES, and in March 2009, ENLACES received its first gubernatorial endorsement at the Declaration of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Having yet to be ratified, ENLACES Follow-Up Committees (monitor and evaluation) were formed at the Lima Declaration in June 2009 in Lima, Peru, and the ENLACES Plan of Action was presented in Paris at the UNESCO-WCHE (UNESCO, 2008). It was not until September 2009, at the 62nd Assembly of Rectors in Villa Maria, Argentina, that ENLACES was officially ratified.

Just six months later, at the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference, the European Union's Plan of Action received its official endorsement (EHEA, 2010). Europe's new policy, The European Higher Education Area (EHEA), was working in parallel with ENLACES. UNESCO's efforts to promote the harmonization of higher education on an international scale were coming to fruition.

Stakeholder Analysis

As the higher education system plays crucial role in the development of society, the implementation of ENLACES will have significant influence throughout the region. In this stakeholder analysis, the anticipated impact of the policy will be explored through the examination of the policy's Five Axes: (a) Institutional Development; (b) Academic Cooperation; (c) Communication and Information; (d) Production and Management of Knowledge; (e) Tools and Support Services (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 2). The stakeholders whom

this analysis considers are students, staff (to include researchers), administrators, institutions of higher education, government agencies, partners (alliances), and the community.

Axis One: Institutional Development

The goal of this axis is to increase institutional development by means of normalization within governments, legal standards, and legal support. The strategy implemented to accomplish this has three areas of focus (a) obtain support from government entities that design, plan, and implement public policies for higher education; (b) present proposals that increase partnerships of integration and cooperation that promote the mission that was established at regional and global Higher Education conferences; (c) integrate the principals, declarations, and educational values that ENLACES advocates with legal structures (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 4-8).

Implementing this aspect of the policy will create a platform from which interactions between primary stakeholders, UNESCO, government agencies, higher education institutions, and administrators of higher education institutions, will work in greater harmony. This will heighten the sense of unity, streamline the policy formation process, increase channels of communication, and lead to greater integration. Secondary stakeholders will benefit from the implementation of this axis as it will result in stronger programming and increased educational opportunities. The secondary stakeholders in this particular case are students, staff, partners, and the community.

Axis Two: Academic Cooperation

The goal of this axis is to foster academic cooperation through processes of accreditation and evaluation, curriculum convergence, increased academic mobility, distance education, and the recognition of titles, degrees, and diplomas.

Implementing this aspect of the policy will provide tremendous benefit to all stakeholders. Integrating the processes of accreditation and evaluation will provide perspective students a clearer idea of the quality of education that each institution offers. A degree received from an accredited institution improves its bearer increased opportunities for continued studies, additional mobility, and assurance that their degree will be recognized. As a staff member, working for an accredited institution strengthens credentials and improves opportunities for mobility within the region, as well. A unified system of accreditation and evaluation facilitates the process of credit recognition for transferring students, which is beneficial to administrators. It holds institutions to a higher standard by their peers, and provides recognition for the quality of their programming. In regard to the formation of partnerships, it adds clarification to the decision making process when alliances are considered. Governments benefit because they have a clearer idea of which institutions need improvement, and where their resources should be allocated. Businesses within the community have a better understanding of the quality of the education obtained by perspective employs. UNESCO, the organization that administers the IESALC and ENLACES, is able to benchmark advancement in their mission.

Curriculum convergence offers students increased opportunity for mobility, as it assures that they are studying the same material as their peers throughout the region. It also adds the element of greater educational quality, as the material that they are studying is collaborated upon by top experts. For faculty and researchers, it promotes opportunities for the formation of networks regarding teaching strategies and the advancement of research. As the curriculum is standardized across the region, it also facilitates the mobility of teaching staff across institutions. For administrators and institutions, it provides a larger pool of perspective personnel during the

hiring process, offers additional assistance in the clarification of transfer credits and degrees, and creates increased opportunities for institutional partnerships.

Increased academic mobility enhances student and staff development, maturation, and future opportunities. It fosters deeper understanding of their world and promotes an experiential learning process that enriches the individual, as well as their colleagues. For institutions, the presence of international students and staff offers an additional dynamic to the learning environment, as well as opportunities for the creation of partnerships. These programs offer the community a chance to engage with new perspectives, increase their awareness, and deepen their understanding.

Distance learning programs enable students in rural areas the opportunity to access educational opportunities that, otherwise, would be inaccessible. They foster the introduction of new outlooks and enrich the quality of dialogue. These programs present institutions the opportunity to develop new programs, as well as the possibility of new partnerships. For communities, distance learning programs represent access to education, opportunity for diversified forms of development, connections to new networks, and the reduction of brain-drain.

The integration of academic cooperation for the purpose of title, degree, and diploma recognition will greatly facilitate student and staff mobility throughout the region's institutions. It will facilitate the procedures associated with documenting transcripts, enable institutions to accept additional students, and dramatically increase opportunities for the formation of new partnerships.

Axis Three: Communication and Information

The goal of this axis is to increase regional and global collaboration by creating a consolidated virtual platform from which information relevant to higher education (regional and global) can be easily accessed.

For students and staff, this consolidated platform will facilitate engagement with faculty and administration, keep them abreast with trends and challenges within higher education across the region, and provide access to information related to available scholarships. For administrators, this platform facilitates research and understanding of higher education trends, streamlines the process of making announcements, and promotes dialogue with students, staff, and the community. For the community, the platform provides a mechanism in which they can easily engage directly with institutions.

Axis Four: Production and Management of Knowledge

The goal of this axis is to improve the production and management of knowledge through the creation of collaborative, shared spaces. These spaces will serve to facilitate the collaboration of research across the region, form a fully integrated regional library, harmonize institutional databases, and create access to learning aids that are free of charge to the community.

These services will provide benefit to students in the form of increased educational quality and access to every library resource within the region. This axis provides similar benefits to staff, researchers, and partners in that they have increased abilities for communication and collaboration, improved conditions to develop their research, greater opportunities to strengthen their academic credentials through publishing, and are able to develop areas of specialization. Higher education institutions will improve their academic reputations within the community, and

among their peers, through improved degree programs. They will also benefit from increased opportunities to develop new partnerships, and deepen their relationships with existing. Both, intragovernmental, and intergovernmental, communication will be greatly facilitated, as well as communication between government agencies and institutions of higher education. In regard to the community, benefit will be received in the form of increased opportunities for engagement with institutions, access to a database of free learning aids, and opportunity for social, cultural, and economic development through the realization of institutional research advances.

Axis Five: Tools and Support Services

The goal of this axis is to facilitate administrative processes, ensure continued improvement in educational programming, and create systems of support for students, staff, and institutions. These tools and services materialize as specialized software, databases, and partnering organizations.

The primary stakeholders in relation to this axis are administrators, institutions, and partners. They benefit from the implementation of standardized software systems designed to facilitate processes of institutional management, quality assurance, and student success. This information is shared across institutions and adjustments in programming are synchronized across the region. Secondary stakeholders in relation to this axis are students, staff, and the community, as they benefit from the development that these activities provide the institutions.

Identification and Analysis of the Elements of the Policy

Policy Formation

The purpose, or the theme, for the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education was to increase regional integration and internationalization of higher education

around the world (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 3). The first step in accomplishing this was for each educational region (Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean) to create its own individual Action Plan. As each region had distinct deficits, or areas of need, the composition of their respective plans was uniquely tailored accordingly. Next, the Action Plans were to be systematically implemented with the support of higher education institutions, governments, and development agencies (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 4). The final step was the creation of committees that were tasked with monitoring and evaluating the progress of the programs within each region to ensure that the objectives set forth in the Action Plan were being realized.

The International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) is the organizational body responsible the region's Action Plan. The development of ENLACES commenced with the announcement of UNESCO's theme for the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. According to Carvalho (2009a), the theme, "to increase regional integration and internationalization of higher education around the world" (p. 3) was established as the purpose (purpose, goals, objectives) for the creation of the new policy. Once the purpose had been determined, a cyclic-process of regional conferences, followed by research studies, was undertaken by the region's academic leadership. This series of assemblies and research focused on the state of the region's higher education institutions in relation to practices of integration and internationalization, identified trends and areas of deficit, and then collaborated upon a set of strategies for improvement. Progress in the development of the region's Action Plan was denoted in the form of declarations, the most symbolic being the Declaration of Panama in which the policy's framework was completed (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 3), the Declaration of Santo Domingo in which the first government endorsement was given

(Carvalho, 2009a, p. 2), and the Declaration of Lima in which the committees for monitoring and evaluation were created (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 16). The collaboratively developed strategies that make up the Action Plan materialize in form of objectives, the culmination of which coalesce to form of the Latin American and Caribbean Region of Higher Education Action Plan. Once fully developed, it was ratified on September 28, 2009 in Villa Maria, Argentina, and officially became the ENLACES policy.

Purpose, Goals and Objectives of the ENLACES Policy

As dictated by UNESCO for the 2008 World Conference on Higher Education, the purpose for the creation of ENLACES was to increase the integration and internationalization of higher education throughout the Latin American and the Caribbean region. This was accomplished through the creation of goals for five specific areas within higher education, referred to as the Five Axes of ENLACES (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 2). The areas of concentration are (a) institutional development; (b) academic cooperation; (c) communication and information; (d) production and management of knowledge; (e) tools and support services. The following is an analysis of the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies for the Fives Axes of ENLACES (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 4-7).

Axis one: institutional development. The goal of axis one is to increase institutional development by means of normalization within governments, legal standards, and legal support. This axis will be realized through means of the following objectives:

- Gain support from government entities that design, plan, and implement public policies for higher education;

- Present proposals that increase partnerships of integration and cooperation that promote the mission that was established at regional and global Higher Education conferences;
- Integrate the principals, declarations, and educational values that ENLACES advocates with legal structures (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 4).

Axis two: academic cooperation. The goal of axis two is to foster academic cooperation through processes of accreditation and evaluation, recognition of titles, curriculum convergence, increased academic mobility, and distance education. The objectives that have been designed to accomplish this are:

- Harmonize institutional processes of evaluation and accreditation by coordinating with higher education agencies, networks, and associations responsible for these procedures;
- Strengthen cooperation, integration, and academic mobility by supporting regional policies that unify national systems of evaluation and accreditation;
- Promote the simplification and streamlining of a regional processes for recognizing degree programs, diplomas, and titles;
- Support regional processes of curriculum convergence to facilitate student and staff mobility, academic cooperation, evaluation and accreditation processes, and the recognition of degree programs, diplomas, and titles;
- Advance opportunities of exchange programming for students and staff through collaboration with university networks, institutions of higher education, and government agencies;

- Enrich the quality of dialogue and exchange of ideas in the region's higher education institutions through increased opportunities of exchange programs.
- Collaborate in regional initiatives that increase access to educational opportunities through the creation of distance learning programs (Carvalho, 2009a, p 4.).

Axis three: communication and information. The goal of axis three is to increase regional and global collaboration by creating a consolidated virtual platform from which information relevant to higher education (regional and global) can be easily accessed. The following objectives strategically address this goal:

- Create a virtual space for the dissemination of information and documents pertaining to regional and global higher education seminars, congresses, meetings, workshops, and conferences;
- Create medium that promotes the discussion of trends, challenges, and successes within regional higher education;
- Create a medium in which experts in higher education can share their perspectives on teaching trends and topics relative to their field;
- Create a medium in which anyone can engage with experts in higher education;
- Create a medium for announcements pertaining to scholarships for students, staff, and researchers (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 5).

Axis four: production and management of knowledge. The goal of axis four is to improve the production and management of knowledge through the creation of collaborative, shared spaces. This axis will be realized through the following objectives:

- Create virtual spaces that facilitate specialized research by experts within the region's institutions of higher education.
- Increase collaboration among researchers through the dissemination of research;
- Promote best practices through the dissemination of research strategies;
- Heighten awareness of research projects taking place in the region;
- Create opportunities for research partnerships across institutions;
- Improve research quality;
- Create a centralized platform for the dissemination of research results throughout the region;
- Create a database of learning aids that is open to the public and free of charge;
- Harmonize the databases of higher education institutions across the region through the process of integration;
- Facilitate the sharing of news and announcements among institutions throughout the region;
- Create a virtual space in which the region's library resources are consolidated and easily accessible (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 5).

Axis five: tools and support services. The goal of axis five is to employ tools and support services that facilitate integration and collaboration across the region. The objectives devised to realize this goal are:

- Integrate administrative processes throughout the region;
- Increase the quality of educational programming;
- Create support systems for students, staff, and institutions (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 6).

Implementation

Examples of the ENLACES policy being implemented across the region are abundant. As the policy is relatively new, many of its principal components are still in the development stages, nonetheless, its presence is unmistakable

Evidence that supports the implementation of the first axis, that of Institutional Development, can be found in the creation of the ENACES Follow-Up Commission (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 11). This commission is tasked with monitoring and evaluating the progress of ENLACES' activities, and suggesting corrections when needed. This commission works directly with the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, National Ministries of Education, and the Union of Latin American Universities, among others.

Evidence supporting the implementation of the second axis, that of Academic Cooperation, can be found in the creation of the Doctorate in Latin American Education: Public Policies and Professional Teaching (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 12). This is the first degree program created under the guidance of ENLACES, and it entails the collaboration of eleven universities from eight nations. The degree is in accordance with the Teachers Network of Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO through the Regional Office on Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the IESALC.

The third axis, that of Communication and Information, is demonstrated in the creation of the ENLACES website (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 5). From this virtual space, the user can access information regarding every activity related to ENLACES, and this can be done in Spanish, Portuguese, and English. Additional examples within this axis that are accessible through the ENLACES website are (a) ENLACES Events: a virtual space for the dissemination of

information and documents pertaining to regional and global higher education seminars, congresses, meetings, workshops, and conferences; (b) ENLACES PuntoEDU: a radio podcast that promotes the discussion of trends, challenges, and successes within regional higher education; (c) ENLACES Weekly Debate: a virtual tool in which anyone can submit questions regarding higher education and responses are provided by experts.

Production and Management of Knowledge, the fourth axis, is evidenced by the formation of Regional Observatories, Studies and Publications, and Open Educational Resources (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 5). Regional Observatories are virtual spaces that facilitate dissemination of information regarding specialized research projects, strategies for the employment of best practices, and the creation of opportunities for inter-institutional research partnerships and networks. Studies and Publications constitute a centralized platform for the dissemination of research results throughout the region, and Open Educational Resources is a database of learning aids that is open to the public and free of charge.

The fifth axis, Tools and Support Services, is evidenced through the implementation of standardized information systems for institutional management, quality assurance, and support services. SIU management software harmonizes the processes related to human resources, budgeting, data analysis, and academic development. Proflex monitoring and evaluating software incorporates the use of student surveys to ensure quality of degree programming, make necessary changes within programs, and the results are used by institutions to promote their academic programs to perspective students. SPADIES is a tracking software that focuses on the trends associated academic abandonment (drop-outs). Generated results are used to create effective institutional strategies and policies that proactively address the challenge.

Outcomes

My understanding is that the *outcomes* section of this capstone paper is to examine collected data and analysis that measure the success of the policy to date. The challenge that I am presented with is that many of the key components of the ENLACES policy are currently in the development stages, and thus, have yet to be implemented. Data collection and analysis can only take place after programs and procedures have been allotted sufficient time to produce measurable outcomes. Without the presence of active programs, there are no activities taking place from which data can be extrapolated for examination.

The reason for the delay in the implementation of programs and procedures lays in the complexity of the activities being developed. In my opinion, the most significant component of ENLACES, and by far the most challenging, is that of the second axis: *academic cooperation*. In order to homogenize the processes of accreditation and evaluation, recognition of diplomas, and curriculum convergence across the entire region, every agency, organization, and institution involved must be in full agreement. This requires tremendous bureaucratic coordination on a regional scale, and while it is true that the processes are underway, they have yet to materialize and produce discernable data.

ENLACES Follow-Up Commission. There is, however, a component of ENLACES that is appropriate to discuss in this section, and it was been established for the crucial role of monitoring and evaluating the successes of programs and procedures. The ENLACES Follow-Up Commission is made up of eight regional associations, and is tasked with the activity of quality assurance (Carvalho, 2009a, p. 8). The associations that comprise the commission were fully established prior to the creation of ENLACES, and their expertise will greatly contribute to the success of the policy.

Association of Montevideo Group Universities. According to Grupo Montevideo (n.d.), the Association of Montevideo Group Universities, or in Spanish, Asociación de Universidades Grupo Montevideo (AUGM), is a non-profit organization established in 1991. It forms a network of public universities in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay for the purposes of increased institutional integration, sharing of scientific and technological research, and community development within its member states. AUGM's areas of focus are harmonizing postgraduate curricula, creating academic mobility programs for students, educators, and researchers, and promoting stewardship initiatives for the environment.

Peruvian National Rectors Assembly. ANR (n.d.) states that the Peruvian National Rectors Assembly, or in Spanish, Asamblea Nacional de Rectores de Perú (ANR) is an autonomous public body that promotes integration and quality assurance among the nation's public universities. Established in 1983, ANR concentrates on the dissemination of institutional advancements in research, compliance with national policies, the accreditation and evaluation of new universities, recognition of diplomas for increased mobility, and coordinates the creation of new academic programs.

National Leadership Association of Federal Institutions of Higher Education. According to ANDIFES (n.d.), the Brazilian Asociación Nacional de Dirigentes de la Insituciones Federales de Educación Superior (ANDIFES) was established in 1989 and is comprised of sixty-seven federal universities. Its mission is to facilitate institutional integration and to promote social, cultural, and economic development throughout the country. Its activities concentrate on fostering cooperation and collaboration between public universities and federal government agencies, parliaments, and development organizations.

The Latin America and Caribbean Continental Student Organization. EcuRed (n.d.) describes the Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE) as a student rights organization that vehemently promotes regional solidarity in the face of twenty-first century fascism, imperialism, colonialism, and social injustice. The OCLAE was established in 1966 and is composed of forty organizations from twenty-three countries. It has an active voice in the social, cultural, and political movements throughout the region, and asserts that education is a basic human right and is the responsibility of the state.

Union of Latin American Universities. The Unión de Universidades de América Latina is a non-governmental organization that was established in 1949. According to UDUAL (n.d.), it is as a network of universities whose mission is to promote collaboration between academic associations, facilitate the integration of universities with the community, and advocate for social, cultural, economic, and political development. The association focuses on the creation of mobility programs for students and staff, facilitates opportunities for collaborating and sharing research, and works to streamline institutional curriculum convergence. The UDUAL network is comprised of 180 universities in twenty-two countries.

UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Instituto Internacional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe (IESALC) has previously been discussed at length in this capstone paper. The IESALC is the organization that, under the patronage of UNESCO, developed the action plan that is known as ENLACES today. The organization seeks to maximize access to educational opportunities through the building of collaborative networks throughout the region.

National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions. According to ANUIES (n.d.), the Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior

(ANUIES) is a Mexican non-governmental organization that was established in 1950. It is composed of 180 universities, both public and private, and its mission is to promote institutional development, foster integration, and increase access to educational opportunities. ANUIES primary area of concentration is on educational policy development through the formation of political alliances.

Central American University Superior Council. ENLACE (n.d.) describes the Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA) as a non-profit organization that was established in 1948 and is the governing body for the Central American University Confederation. It is comprised of 21 universities from eight countries, and is composed of university rectors and the presidents of student federations from public universities throughout Central America. CSUCA is a member of the Central American Integration System and its job is to promote the regional integration of the Central American higher education system in the public sector. Its areas of concentration are evaluation and accreditation, regional curriculum convergence, creation of regional postgraduate programs, fostering relationships between the university and the community, student welfare, and regional cooperation in scientific research.

As initially conveyed in this section, many of the essential processes of the ENLACES policy, those of the second axis, *academic cooperation*, remain in the development stages. Having yet to be implemented, there is simply a lack of data from which analysis can be made. The ENLACES Follow-Up Commission is the agency that will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the advancements of the programs and procedures as they are implemented. Although the intended goal of this section was not addressed as envisioned, an examination of the organizations that form the commission presents value.

Overall Analysis, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Is the Policy Working?

When examining the policy to determine whether or not it is working, one must question what evidence would be necessary to affirmatively answer this question. If the success of this policy is based on the manifestation of programs associated with each of its objectives, the response to this question would be *no*. While many of the objectives have been successfully implemented, many remain in the planning stages, and have yet to be employed. However, if the success of this policy is determined by the realization of the policy's purpose, that of increasing the integration and internationalization of higher education throughout the Latin American and the Caribbean region, then the answer is an emphatic *yes*. Evidence for this conclusion is demonstrated in the collaborative efforts that have gone into the creation of the Region's Action Plan, and subsequently, the planning required to realize each of the objectives. Without a doubt, the ENLACES policy is finding success.

Does the Policy Have the Appropriate Goals and Objectives?

I believe that the goals and objectives of the policy are very appropriate. Fully realizing them will take considerable effort and time, and the region has demonstrated that it is very committed to their maturation. Their formation took place under the guidance of UNESCO, an organization that has demonstrated, since 1945, its devotion and expertise in building global networks for increased peace and understanding through the creation of educational opportunities (UNESCO, n.d.a). The goals and objectives of ENLACES have been carefully crafted to systematically evaluate the needs of the target populations, and they were developed accordingly. The programs administered under the ENLACES policy will continue to develop, their numbers will grow, and their reach will extend. As José Renato Carvalho (2009), director

of UNESCO-IESALC, stated, “ENLACES should be conceived as a collective construction in perpetual fine-tuning, open to the participation and collaboration of all” (p. 11).

Is the Policy Meeting the Needs of the Target Population(s)?

As mentioned previously, the goals and objectives of the policy have been carefully composed to effectively address the needs of their target populations throughout the region. They were developed from a collective point of view; a perspective of inclusion in which their success equates the success of society. Comprehensive in nature, they address the needs of the community, perspective students, current students, staff, faculty, researchers, administrators, the institutions themselves, partners, and government agencies. By design, the policy is a continuing work in progress, and as the needs of the region evolve, so will it.

What Is Likely to Produce the Desired Outcomes?

The key to its success is maintaining the iterative momentum that it has accrued to date. This process involves the formation of a policy that is strongly supported by regional research, implementing the policy in a manner that maximizes its impact across the spectrum of stakeholders, and then educating the stakeholders as to the potential benefit of the program. Once stakeholder buy-in is established and the program is being utilized, make adjustments as needed to facilitate access and usability, and then conduct research regarding the areas in which additional programming can be developed to complement the existing activities. The results of this research are studied, and new policy is created. Maintaining positive feedback-loops, such as this, is the key to ENLACES continued success.

What Aspects of the Policy Are Working?

It appears that the intentions of the policy are finding success. Advancement in the integration and internationalization of regional institutions is evidenced by the creation of

countless networks throughout the area. These networks are producing research through collaborative means, activities that promote increased accessibility to educational opportunities are being created, and institutional processes are being harmonized. There are some programs that have yet to be implemented, but the very act of developing these programs is evidence that the policy is working. The region is collaborating as it has never done before.

What Aspects of the Policy Are Not Working?

This question is difficult to address. As previously noted, many of the objectives have yet to be implemented, however, they should not be considered unsuccessful as they are currently being developed. This does not signify failure, but rather, evidences the momentum of policy. For example, the process of implementing a regionally standardized system for accreditation and evaluation has yet to be implemented. This endeavor is tremendously complicated, as it requires every country in the region to harmonize their entire higher education systems. The process is complex, but it is being developed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

What Do You Conclude Based on Your Analysis?

I am extremely impressed with the entire process. The succession of advancement in the region's institutions of higher education has proven to be extremely progressive and inclusive, and based on its current activities, I believe that its trajectory will continue. Much of the policy's success is owed to the pivotal role that UNESCO has had in the development of the IESALC, and UNESCO deserves a tremendous amount of recognition and respect. I believe that the key to success for this policy lays in maintaining the enthusiasm and synergy that has accumulated, and the continued pursuit of opportunities for inclusion.

What Policy Recommendations Would You Make?

Based on my analysis, I believe that it is too early to suggest changes to the ENLACES policy. The goals and objectives of the policy appear to be very thorough, and the effort to develop and employ programs is making great progress. I believe that there will be sufficient opportunity to improve the policy, however, I cannot detect such areas at this time.

Additional Notes from the Author

My interest in ENLACES developed at SIT Graduate Institute when studying the Bologna Accords in the International Education Policy course. I asked my professor, Dr. Thomas, if there were higher education policies similar to the Bologna Accords in Latin America. In her response, she indicated that she did not know, and that I should conduct my own study on the subject. Keenly, I followed her suggestion, and when I told her about the parallels between the Bologna Accords and the IESALC, she asked me to continue my research. It was at that time that I realized that the creation of the European Higher Education Area was ENLACES' equivalent, and under the supervision of my academic advisor, Dr. Thomas, I continued exploring higher education advancements throughout the region.

There is no doubt that education in the United States is strongly influenced by European policy. We look to Europe as a partner in a myriad of activities, and their education system, unquestionably, merits our focus. The formation of the Bologna Accords, and later, the European Higher Education Area, represent tremendous higher education advancement, and warrants acclaim and applaud.

Having established my praise for Europe's educational progress, I believe that the study of educational achievement in other regions of the world would strengthen the International Education program at SIT Graduate Institute. As the European Higher Education Area is akin to

ENLACES, so, too, are the African Union Strategy for Harmonization of Higher Education Programs (Knight, 2013, p. 110), the Arab Space for Higher Education (UNESCO, 2009, p. 35), and the Asia Pacific Quality Assurance Network (Knight, 2013, p. 107). These policies represent an excellent opportunity for IE Policy analysis and research, and although expanding the SIT curriculum would prove laborious, I believe that it would benefit students and faculty.

Dr. Thomas' suggestion that I research my own question regarding the existence of a Latin American IE policy analogous to the Bologna Accords has had drastic influence on the trajectory of my IE focus while at SIT. Through this research, I learned of Science Without Borders, a higher education scientific mobility program in Brazil, and it was with this program that I did my practicum. My professional plans are concentrated on returning to Latin America, specifically, Brazil, to develop collaborative IE programs at the university level. Dr. Thomas' suggestion opened a lot of doors for me, and I would like to express my gratitude to her for encouraging my academic curiosity.

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