

# Building Global Collaboration With a Partner University:

Toyo University and ENES León

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## Abstract

The internationalization of higher education has become an important strategic priority for many universities in the past two to three decades with the mobility of students and teachers considered the most important reason for it becoming a priority (Knight, 2003; Teichler, 2017). This paper discusses the development of a collaborative partnership that first began between two instructors, one in the Faculty of Business Administration at Toyo University and the other from Escuela Nacional de Estudios Superiores Unidad León (National School of Higher Education León Unit) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (henceforth referred to as ENES León) located in León, Guanajuato. The activities have since grown to include a university-wide agreement between Toyo and ENES León agreed upon in August, 2022. Since many of the readers will already be familiar with the foundations of Toyo University, this report will begin with a brief introduction to Toyo University and its background followed by a lengthier description of ENES León, a campus of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Following a chronological description of events that has been taking place between the two instructors over the past few years, the discussion often departs from a more formal academic style and is written in the first rather than the third person, and uses the personal (subject) pronouns ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘my’, ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘our’.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Toyo University

Toyo University was originally founded in 1887 as a private academy of philosophy, named Tetsugakukan, by Dr. Enryo Inoue, a prolific Japanese philosopher, Buddhist scholar and author. Approximately 20 years after its foundation in 1906 Tetsugakukan changed its name to Toyo University. The founder believed that humans needed to study philosophy to cultivate the mind, akin to exercise for the body. As a result, the spirit of its foundation as an Academy of Philosophy has been retained without change to this day.

Dr. Inoue was born in 1858. Only four years earlier Japan had signed the Harris Treaty of 1854 forcing the nation to open its doors diplomatically and commercially to the United States of America, and to embrace foreign technology. At the age of 15, Inoue began to study English and then at 18 years of age entered the seminary and was soon sent to Tokyo to master English in order to prepare for entry to the University of Tokyo. In those days, all courses at the University of Tokyo were taught in English and as a result, only students with the means to study for many years could enrol in higher education. Inoue entered as the only freshman in the Department of Philosophy in 1881. As a student, he established the Philosophy Society and published many papers and articles in magazines and journals. He graduated

in 1885 with a BA from Tokyo University and held a couple teaching positions before refusing careers, first as bureaucrat and later, as a researcher. Enryo Inoue was determined to open a school in which he could help to spread philosophy.

In June, 1887, at the age of 29, Inoue published *The Prospectus of the Academy of Philosophy* and established Shiritsu Tetsugakukan (Private Academy of Philosophy). Ordinary citizens would have had much difficulty studying at the tertiary level due to constraints of both time and money. One of Inoue's original tenets was to provide education to those who were eager to study but could not afford to go to university or did not have the time to learn to read and to understand original foreign books. It was a school for people with neither excessive savings nor time. He hoped to bring great benefits to a rapidly modernizing society and that it could help civilization to progress. In fact, Toyo University was the very first private university in Japan to enroll female students in 1916 (Toyo University Guide Book, 2022). This clearly indicates the forward thinking of the founder. His wish was to benefit as many people as possible by keeping tuition as low as possible. In addition, he sought to make distance-learning available by compiling lectures and distributing them to those who could not gain ready access to the campus. From 1888 to his death in 1919, Dr. Inoue gave more than 5,000 lectures all over Japan and internationally. He also went on three world tours in order to watch and learn from others and assist in Japan's transformation through and beyond the Meiji Era.

At present Toyo University consists of:

- a postgraduate law faculty
- 15 graduate schools
- 13 undergraduate faculties
- 3 double degree programs
- 45 departments
- various research institutes
- five affiliated high schools
- serving a combined student body of more than 30,000 students over 5 campuses in Tokyo and its surroundings

Nearly one hundred years after the death of the founder, Dr. Enryo Inoue, Toyo University continues to transform. It was selected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2022) as one of 24 Type B representatives of the Top Global University Project. It is a 10-year initiative that began in 2014 as a means of implementing university reforms and internationalization. In total, 37 universities of 775 eligible institutes of higher education were designated special status as a "Top Global University". Type B, Global Traction Type Universities are recognized as innovative institutions that lead the internationalization of Japanese society. Toyo University has been carrying out educational and governance reform to assist the university in becoming a leader in global education.

This includes:

- Attracting international exchange students
- Increasing the number of courses available in other languages and strengthening students' abilities (with a focus on English skills)
- Sending more students to study abroad
- Helping to better develop global leaders
- Hiring a more diverse faculty
- Becoming more internationalized
- Establishing partnerships with universities around the world

## 1.2 UNAM/ENES León

Founded in 1551 the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) has developed a leading role in the history of the country, as the biggest and most important university of Mexico and Latin America. This public, autonomous and lay institution's essential tasks are teaching, research and dissemination of culture. It responds and reacts to the present and future as the most important ongoing cultural project in the country (UNAM, 2022, *Agenda estadística*). As a result, UNAM is seen as a part of the identity of the Mexican people. The main campus Ciudad Universitaria (University City) was recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2007. It was designed by some of the best-known architects of the 20th century and murals in the main campus were painted by some of the most recognized artists in Mexican history.

Overall UNAM has 369,307 students and 42,535 faculty spread over 104 academic and research facilities that include nine National Schools of Higher Education in the country (UNAM, 2022 *Agenda estadística*). One of these Schools is ENES León in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico. The Institutional Development Plan 2019-2023 (IDP) from the Rector of UNAM, Dr. Enrique Luis Graue Wiechers in section 5.3 on Internationalization, states as its first objective that UNAM seeks to promote and consolidate academic collaboration with educational and research institutions with renowned international recognition. Another objective of this program that is worth mentioning due to its importance on UNAM's internationalization efforts is objective six that pursues strengthening its international presence through its Centers of Mexican Studies (CEM) which are Extension Schools overseas, and to follow and evaluate the cultural and academic activities performed at those sites (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (2022). *Plan de Desarrollo Institucional 2019-2023*). These international facilities are located in Berlin, Germany; Beijing, China; San Jose, Costa Rica; Madrid, Spain; Paris, France; London, United Kingdom; Johannesburg, South Africa; Gatineau, Canada; and Los Angeles, Tucson, Boston, Chicago and San Antonio, in the United States, this last one since 1944.

These campuses have as their main purpose to teach, evaluate and certify the Spanish language of non-native speakers concerning the formation of teachers of Spanish as a second language; they represent an instance of inclusion, collaboration and academic exchange between universities and other tertiary level institutions, governments and any other educational or

cultural entity of any country or region in the world. A further aim is to promote the internationalization project of UNAM, and the expansion of its activities through the participation and exchange of professors and researchers, student mobility, boosting the studies of Mexican culture, especially oriented with the relations to the country or region where the facilities are located (CRAI, 2022).

All these Centers of Mexican Studies (except for Chicago, Gatineau and San Antonio which are UNAM owned locations) are located in university campuses of the home country, enriching the academic and cultural exchange with faculty and students of the region. Historically and nowadays the most important program the CEM has developed is the PUMA Program, which integrates intensive language courses and cultural immersion in some of the sites abroad. This program provides UNAM students and faculty of all campuses across Mexico to apply and experience language learning and cultural immersions in the host country during the summer and winter breaks. A few students from different majors of ENES León have applied and lived the experience of this life changing program.

The story of ENES León goes back to the first decade of the century, when the former UNAM Rector (2007 to 2015), Dr. José Ramon Narro Robles, had the vision to extend formal education to other Mexican states, decentralizing from Mexico City where UNAM has had a presence since its foundation. In this vision the state of Guanajuato, the sixth most populated state in Mexico of 32, became the place to undertake this project. UNAM, hand in hand with both the state and municipal governments, on October 5th of 2010, signed an agreement to create, build and operate an academic, cultural, research, ecological and sports complex located in the city of León, the biggest in the state, with agricultural and industrial productive orientation.

The educational model of ENES León is active and participatory. Among other characteristics of this model are its innovative ways; flexibility in every undergraduate degree with students able to choose an elective minor; takes into consideration the historical regional context; promotes significant learning, critical thinking and social interactions; includes the information and technology communications as part of the learning processes; includes English language learning as part of all the curricula (a first in the UNAM system); focuses on a humanistic approach in all disciplines; encourages research as part of learning; fosters gender equality; creates a sustainable environment, with all of this student based - meaning that student are at the center of the process of teaching and learning. The founding Dean of ENES León, stated *“This project is life changing and represents the most important one in my almost 45 years of academic life at UNAM”* (Dr. Javier de la Fuente Hernández, personal communication, August 9th, 2021).

ENES León can be considered as a young multidisciplinary school of the UNAM system. It opened its doors back in 2011 with four undergraduate degrees (Dentistry, Intercultural Development and Management, Industrial Economics and Physical Therapy). Today in 2023 it has 1,185 students and 305 faculty in 10 Undergraduate and 14 Graduate Degrees. In its Institutional Development Plan it is noted in Program 2.6: National and International Projection, the first objective states as a goal to *“promote*

*collaboration among national and international institutions as the participation of students and faculty in academic, research, innovation and social intervention activities abroad*" (ENES-UNAM Institutional Development Plan 2021-2025, 2021). Although stated in the 2021-2025 IDP, this goal has been put into practice since the foundation of the campus with the participation of students and faculty across the five continents during its eleven years of existence.

## **2. The Beginning of Collaboration**

The story of collaboration between Toyo University and ENES León began back in 2016 in the small town of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico. It is small in demographics, but big in history and culture. It is only about 25 kilometers from the spot where the Mexican Independence movement from Spain started back in 1810. Its cobblestone streets, colonial architecture and its nature as an artistic and cultural hub has made San Miguel de Allende one of the most visited cities in Mexico and approximately 10% of the population being foreign expats or immigrants call San Miguel home. Adding to that, the town has been named the Best Small City in the World by Condé Nast Traveller, one of the most prestigious tourism and lifestyle magazines, for the sixth time in October of 2022.

In this small town ENES León opened a smaller campus in 2012, just one year after its inauguration. It started as an Extensión School with the objective of strengthening the activities of ENES León in the northern part of the state of Guanajuato. Initially, five professors and three administrators oversaw the activities, which included mainly language courses in English and Spanish for foreigners. Also on offer were other topics, especially in the areas of health, social-sciences, and humanities, three areas in which ENES León has academic and research programs, in order to help to create an interesting and ongoing continuing-education program.

Today, ten years after its creation, the School in San Miguel de Allende is offering its first formal undergraduate major, a degree in Translation with the first class due to graduate in 2024 (with the classes of 2025 and 2026 on the way). This also allows for a richer variety of activities in continuous education, and the dissemination of culture and research. As a result, a new and bigger campus in San Miguel de Allende is scheduled to start operations in 2023.

### **2.1 Sabbatical with UNAM/ENES León**

In March of 2016 I was visiting family in San Miguel de Allende and approached my co-author, Professor Salvador Andrade to ask about the possibility of spending a year on sabbatical with UNAM in San Miguel de Allende. He advised me to seek out an appointment to discuss the possibility with Dr. Javier de la Fuente, the founder and then Director of the campus in León. What began as a casual conversation in the courtyard of the satellite campus in the beautiful and world renown UNESCO designated Protective town of San Miguel de Allende has blossomed into a variety of collaborations that will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Although I regard Mexico as a place where things happen on a different schedule from what I've become used to in Japan, my meeting was promptly

arranged, and I traveled approximately two hours by car from San Miguel de Allende to León to speak with Professor De la Fuente regarding my prospects. I was warmly invited into his office to discuss my proposal. After some small talk, he asked how my journey had been and how I had arrived. Responding that my sister had offered to drive me, he quickly invited her and my two-year-old niece into his office. This was the first shock, as this would undoubtedly not happen in my adopted homeland of Japan. Soon after our initial discussion, he invited me to speak with four of the full-time instructors to discuss my intentions and for us to get to know each other. My second shock occurred shortly after the second meeting ended when I was warmly invited by Dr. de la Fuente to spend the 2017 academic year at the León campus as a visiting professor. Although I often lament the Mexican way of seeing time, I learned then that things can happen very quickly in Mexico if you are talking to the right person.

I arrived in León in April of 2017 and became acquainted with the campus and more of the staff. Through the month of April and the start of May, I spoke with one of the tenured English instructors, Mr. Alan Sanchez concerning the possibility of organizing a conference at ENES, León. My friend and colleague, Dr. Jim McKinley, along with Dr. Trevor Grimshaw, both from Bath University, UK, were planning a visit to Centro de Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras (CELE) UNAM towards the end of May, 2017. I felt it would be an excellent opportunity to have them come and speak at ENES, León, during their time in Mexico. A conference (*La Primera Sesión Académica Internacional Vanguardia Metodológica y de Investigación en Lingüística Aplicada*) was held on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at ENES.

It was a great success, with over 60 instructors attending presentations from at least eight universities and organizations in the region (Figure 1). The Conference opened with Dr. Trevor Grimshaw giving a talk on his research on Language and Education in Practices (LEP) followed by his colleague, Dr. McKinley discussing research in applied linguistics. The morning session ended with Alan Sanchez presenting his research on suprasegmental features and intonation. After a short lunch break Sandra Sichler described her linguistics research with youth in marginalized communities and culminated with me discussing tasks that encourage student collaboration and the active use of English in the classroom.



**Figure 1***ENES León Conference , May 26th, 2017*

Back row: attendee, Trevor Grimshaw, attendees  
 Front row: Allyson MacKenzie, Jim McKinley

Both Jim and Trevor were very pleased with the excellent turnout of instructors for the conference, and especially on such short notice. They were also thrilled by the level of enthusiasm of the participants to engage in discussion on the various topics. A direct result of the success of the conference, they showed a strong interest in maintaining a connection with ENES and the attendees and shared a website offering opportunities for collaboration on projects between researchers at the University of Bath and at ENES (Language and Educational Practices research cluster@Bath (n.d)).

## **2.2 Student and Instructor Workshops**

In September 2017, I organized two workshops on pronunciation skills with 91 students attending sessions on two separate days. In October, I presented a workshop on tools for vocabulary learning with a total of 263 participants on the two days. As a result of the success of the student workshops, I was asked if I could offer a similar type of interactive training to the native Spanish speaking instructors of English in the region.

Beginning in December, I facilitated the first of two interactive teacher training workshops. The first, held at the campus in León, was well received with a total of 15 instructors in attendance over the four days. The second, in January 2018 in San Miguel de Allende was equally well-attended and had 9 instructors for a grand total of 24 spread over the two workshops. Considering that most were veteran teachers we acted in a variety of roles such as teacher, student, peer. Each session offered hands-on opportunities to revisit classroom tools, techniques, and ideas and to discuss, collaborate, share, practice, and reflect on our classroom teaching.

The themes for each session were chosen to give instructors practice utilizing skills and strategies in the language classroom that can help boost both student participation and engagement, as well as encourage the active use of English in the classroom.

Session 1: Dictogloss and Collaborative Classroom Activities

Session 2: Strategies, Techniques and Tools for Vocabulary Acquisition

Session 3: A Variety of Activities and Classroom Organization

Session 4: Using Task Based Language Teaching

Towards the end of my sabbatical in February 2018, I attended the IJAS Conference at the University of Malta and presented preliminary findings from research I had been conducting with the Self-Access Learning Center at ENES León. I presented some staff and student opinions from a survey I had circulated. The presentation focused on the function and purpose of such a space and efforts being made by the staff at the León campus. One goal was to create a space where students could work on their language and metacognitive skills while also having the option of being part of a language-learning community.

### **2.3 Visiting Professor at Toyo University**

As Professor MacKenzie finished her 2017 sabbatical year, professional and personal relations were built in León and San Miguel de Allende. One of those was with me (Salvador Andrade Ortiz). We kept in communication and began going back and forth on some opportunities to continue the collaboration among the two universities. She kindly looked for options at Toyo University where I could participate and found and assisted me with the paperwork to apply for the Visiting Researcher Program at Toyo University. In general terms it consists in the visit of a professor for as long as four weeks to collaborate in academic and research activities that enrich the training of students at Toyo. On this order of ideas, we both identified that the state of Guanajuato, Mexico had an important number of Japanese population due to the numerous companies from Japan that have invested in the región. To mention just a few Honda, Hino Motors, Mazda, and Toyota have assembly plants in the state, being part of the most important automotive cluster in Mexico.

This being identified and foreign direct investment as a very important line of research in ENES León, we decided to work on a paper that would describe the environment of Japanese foreign direct investment in the region. That became the main topic on my lectures during my three weeks of visiting professor at Toyo University from November 25th to December 13th of 2019.

During the period of my amazing, very welcoming stay at Toyo University there were many academic and research activities that came to action. Highlighting two of them, first the lecture entitled Japanese Foreign Direct Investment: Its influence in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico was attended by over 100 students of the Faculty Business Administration (Figure 2). This



presentation introduced relevant partnerships that have been built among different Japanese and Mexican stakeholders, especially in the automotive industry. I also gave several smaller lectures to students in their classrooms that encouraged them to think of and discuss cultural similarities and differences between Japan and Mexico. The discussions that followed helped to inspire students to think more deeply with regards to global business environments. Next, was the publication along with Professor MacKenzie of the article entitled *Influence of Japanese Foreign Direct Investment in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico*, published in the *Journal of Business Administration of University of Toyo* in the March issue of 2020.

## Figure 2

*Japan FDI Lecture, December 2nd, 2019*



Salvador Andrade speaking at Toyo University

### 2.4 UNAM Faculty of Accounting and Management International Festival

Out of the 104 academic and research facilities that UNAM has in Mexico and abroad, the Faculty of Accounting and Management is one of its most representative, since it has over 20,000 students across all its academic programs. This comes up due to the fact that the collaboration between Toyo University and ENES León has now permeated to other UNAM facilities. In September of 2022, Professors MacKenzie and Andrade participated in the 2nd International Festival of the Faculty and gave a 90-minute lecture entitled *Toyo University-ENES UNAM León, a multidimensional experience of collaboration*. It brought over 100 students of the Business Management major of the Faculty of Accounting and Management. Prof. MacKenzie (connected via Zoom) and Prof. Andrade (in person) talked about their collaboration on different fronts and how it has brought challenges and opportunities to students and faculty.

## 2.5 Student Global Exchange Workshops

The unfortunate pandemic declared in March of 2020 by the World Health Organization initially slowed things down with the various adjustments that institutions were required to make. It also brought new opportunities because of the social distance that we were required to maintain. Towards the end of 2020, we began discussing the possibility of the creation of a periodic *virtual global exchange*, where students could meet to discuss topics related to business, culture, tourism, education, local traditions, among others. Our hope was that this discussion platform could help lead to developing greater cultural awareness and understanding and promote student and faculty exchange and collaboration and to continue building bridges between the two Institutions.

The inaugural Global Exchange Workshop was held at the start of February 2021. Nine student participants and four instructors discussed the topic of Japanese Foreign Direct Investment in Mexico. Since then, we have held seven more 90-minute sessions featuring a variety of different topics and have attracted an average of about 17 students per session (see Table 1). From the third session, we also invited students from the Faculty of International Tourism who have added strength and diversity to the Toyo cohort under the guidance of Professor Graham Robson. He has become a regular workshop facilitator along with Professor Yoichi Sato of the Faculty of Business Administration and the two authors of this paper. We have guest professors from both universities taking part from time to time to assist in and learn about the process. As a result, both students and faculty alike have had the opportunity to get to know each other and to strengthen their English communication skills.

**Table 1**

*Workshop dates, topics and attendance: Toyo and ENES Leon*

Date	Topic	N
Feb. 3/4 2021	Impacts of FDI in Japan and Mexico	9
Mar. 3/4 2021	Challenges of doing business abroad	12
Oct. 6/7 2021	CoVid-19: impacts on life	24
Nov. 10/11 2021	CoVid-19 impacts on business	16
Feb. 17/18 2022	Culture: festivals & holidays	16
May 13 2022	Culture: good, bad and culture shock	12
Oct. 11/12 2022	Discuss your work experience	17
Nov. 17/18 2022	What makes a presentation great?	16
		(123)

In October 2022, because of the success of the workshops, and receiving positive word of mouth from attendees, we decided to begin collecting data. This took the form of a post workshop survey that included five 5-point Likert scale questions. Student responses to the statement for question 6: *This workshop topic was satisfying* were overwhelmingly positive (Figure 3). None of the students chose the neutral, disagree or strongly disagree options.

**Figure 3***Workshop Satisfaction*

In addition, there were five open-ended questions. Student comments on what they enjoyed about the workshop include:

- I mostly like these workshops because they give us an insight on how things work in each other's culture. It's always really interesting to hear Toyo's perspective about different topics.
- Learning new things from Mexico as well as each person's experience and enjoying speaking in English.
- Learning about different perspectives but at the same time, it is interesting to find similarities.
- Speaking with different people and learning new things from them.
- Getting to know new people and their culture. It is also interesting to get to know the perspective of foreign students that live and study in Japan.

Students also responded with ideas for improvement in future sessions:

- I wouldn't really change anything. We could also interact with the professors from the other university.
- Maybe to do a workshop without planning anything, just let everything flow and let students talk about anything they are curious about but always being respectful.
- More specific questions so we can stick and discuss more effectively
- If I have to choose one thing, I want 2 hours because it always finish (sic.) when we start becoming easier to talk.

All participants found the structure to be effective (Figure 4) with all students responding they agreed or strongly agreed. Again, none chose the neutral, disagree or strongly disagree choices provided on the 5-point Likert scale.

**Figure 4**

## Perceived Effectiveness of Workshop



This information will guide us in the coming sessions to maintain students motivation needed to continue to engage in upcoming sessions. Beyond multiple choice and open-ended question types for participants from the latest workshop, we interviewed two regularly participating students, one from each cohort. We hoped to learn in more detail about their reasons for participating and key points we could take away from the sessions. Excerpts from their interview are included below.

**ENES León student**

*I have always been interested in other cultures and I believe that being open to learning new things opens up our perspective of the world. Participating in cultural workshops and exchange brings benefits to our life. Sharing cultures allows us to become open and tolerant to new things. I think it also makes us empathetic towards people from other cultures in countries with different traditions, with different rules, everything is different. Also getting the chance to interact with native people to get rid of stereotypes - that kind of cloud our judgement.*

*Before going into the first session I was so nervous because I thought it was going to be a super formal talk with the students and academics from a university in Japan, but it was the opposite...And it actually ended up being even better than I imagine because I got the opportunity not just to learn more about Japan and its traditions, people and culture but also got to make friendship with students not just from Japan but also from Vietnam and China...so it was pretty cool to get to know them and also their traditions and everything like that.*

**Toyo University student**

*There's one thing I want to add - is not only I have a chance to communicate with Mexican students, but I also have a chance to see for example, Korean or Chinese or Japanese student, communicate with Mexican students because I have seen the way that the way - Asians - we are sharing*

*the communication is quite the same. So not only in my country but I had the opportunity to see Asian culture like Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese students how we communicate with a totally different culture like Mexican so that is a really great experience for me.*

*The most clearly I noticed is that Japanese students are a little bit shy and usually passive. They're waiting to be asked instead of the asking. But if they were being asked they would just share the focus and answer the question instead of sharing more. But now I have because Mexican people is so friendly and tried to know more and more so some of Japanese student have confident and they feel kind of relaxed so they share more than more than just the questions you are asking about.*

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

As of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, Toyo University had 212 overseas partner institutions. Then, in August of 2022 after more than five years of collaboration at a variety of levels, ENES León and Toyo University entered into a five-year agreement as oversea partner institutions. This official partnership will hopefully continue to motivate instructors and students from both institutions to engage in sharing and collaboration over the next many years to come.

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