Engaging academic staff in internationalisation: perspectives from the UK and Australia

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Associate Professor Betty Leask
ALTC National Teaching Fellow
University of South Australia

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### Why is it important?

The context in which universities work...
- universities operate within local and global contexts
- internationalisation of the curriculum (IOC) connects the local with the global
- IOC is a critical component of any university’s internationalisation strategy

### IOC is important to all students and graduates

- Globalisation requires that all students graduate with specific skill, value and knowledge sets
- ‘The aim of internationalisation is to produce graduates capable of solving problems in a variety of locations with cultural and environmental sensitivity’ (Aulakh et al. 1997:15)
IoC connects students with the world

• Internationalisation of the curriculum is a critical component of internationalisation in higher education of relevance to all staff and all students
• But what is it …?

Internationalisation of the curriculum

• The incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the preparation, delivery and outcomes of a program of study (Leask 2009)

• The formal and the informal curriculum; the visible and the invisible; the overt and the covert

• Essential to the achievement of internationalisation goals for all students
The intercultural dimension

• a dynamic, ongoing, interactive self reflective learning process that transforms attitudes, skills and knowledge for effective communication and interaction across cultures and contexts’
  • (Freeman et al 2008 ALTC Project Report ‘Embedding the development of intercultural competence in Business’)

Academic staff own and control the curriculum

• But internationalisation of the curriculum in and across disciplines is poorly understood and has been a low priority in the past
• Biggest obstacle to internationalisation was lack of faculty interest, expertise and involvement - higher than obstacles related to financial and material resources. (Knight, 2006, p. 133).
### The rhetoric

- Graduates can draw upon the experience and the skills developed in culturally diverse universities in their own future employment (Ryan, 2004)
- Diversity in campus creates ‘a flow of knowledge and cultures across national boundaries’ (Slethaug, 2007, p. 5).
- Studying on culturally diverse university campuses could contribute to world peace (Larkins, 2008).

### The reality

- ‘the ideal of transforming a culturally diverse student population into a valued resource for activating processes of international connectivity, social connectivity and intercultural learning is still very much that, an ideal’ (De Vita 2007, p. 165)
- Nothing much has changed in the way we deal with diversity in the last ten years
The student experience of internationalisation?

• ‘in tutorial class … beside me it’s an empty chair, but this girl she … I remember I smiled at her, then she just walked back and she sat at the back of the class. Why didn’t she just sit here?’
• International student 2004

It’s critical that we engage academic staff

• But they often don’t know where to start
• The task can seem daunting
• Some are resistant
• Tendency to focus on issues related to teaching international students; adapting curricula for offshore delivery
• They need to be international and intercultural learners themselves
A UK Perspective

An Australian perspective

- Ongoing work

- *ALTC National Teaching Fellowship*
  - *Internationalisation of the Curriculum in Action*
  - Themed ‘literature review’
  - Case studies of IoC in action – new and existing
  - Opportunities to network internationally in discipline groups on IoC
  - Ideas and examples; issues and concerns
IoC in the context of the disciplines

- An ongoing process that must be owned by disciplinary specialists
- Only they can identify and develop discipline-specific graduate attributes for living and working in a globalised world
  - Related to discipline study but also to personal development
  - Linked to development of intercultural competence in context
- Existing literature ...

Engaging academic staff

Requires that we:
- Act at the macro and the micro level – policy into practice at program and course level; objectives, assessment criteria
- Focus on the total student experience – of all students – formal and informal curriculum
- Need to support academic staff as well as students – staff to design and achieve specific ‘internationalised learning outcomes; students to achieve them
Academic staff may need to ....

- Modify program and course learning goals
- Learn how to manage and support mixed culture groups to help them to achieve specific learning outcomes
- Modify learning and assessment tasks
- Model appropriate cross-cultural behaviour
- Use different strategies to connect with students
- Look for different types of literature e.g. scholarly articles on internationalisation
- Reflect on their discipline and their teaching – e.g. how is my approach to the discipline and to teaching influenced by my culture?

This is serious work

- ‘individuals having an international perspective means questioning their own personal biases … so they have a sense of their own biases and their own practices, and greater awareness of their own cultural affiliations and how that impacts on the way that they practice’
- Staff member 2004
An internationalised curriculum will
• engage students with cultural and linguistic diversity and purposefully develop their international and intercultural perspectives (Leask 2009)
• emphasise ‘carefully structured and designed interactive and collaborative learning processes’ (Van der Wende 2000, p.25).

The development of intercultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, interactive self reflective learning process that transforms attitudes, skills and knowledge for effective communication and interaction across cultures and contexts’
• (Freeman et al 2008 ALTC Project Report ‘Embedding the development of intercultural competence in Business’ )
### What are the blockers?

- Discourse of marketisation
- Poorly managed internationalisation strategy
- Particular disciplinary ‘headsets’ – disciplines are themselves culturally constructed, bound and constricted
- A preference for working independently

### What are the main enablers?

- Well designed, communicated, managed and supported institutional policy
- ‘Local’, school-based experts and enthusiasts
- Recognition and reward for effort through traditional structures
- A ‘problem’ to be solved – ‘local’ advice
- A strong team culture
- Desire to do a good job
Getting started

- Different starting points
- Common responses
  - We already do this
  - We don’t need to do this
  - We don’t have time to do this
  - We don’t have the expertise
  - We don’t know where to start

Aids to conceptualising IoC

1. National curriculum
2. Study abroad
3. Clearly defined and assessed international learning outcomes
4. Internship

- Case studies from different cultures
- Language study

National curriculum
Internationalised curriculum
Internship
A focus on key questions

1. What international/intercultural perspectives/competencies do we want graduates of this degree to have?
2. How will we develop these in each successive year of the degree?
3. How will we assess students’ progress towards achieving these internationalised outcomes?
4. How will we know our graduates have achieved them?
5. How can we support this through the informal curriculum?

An audit tool

‘A checklist to assist you in reviewing the internationalisation of your curriculum and a guide to making changes’

• e.g. Learning Outcomes
  – Descriptions of student learning outcomes do not explicitly mention that international and/or intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes (K,S,A) will be developed in all students.
  – There is systematic and planned development of KSA related to the development of international/intercultural perspectives throughout the course/program
  – These K, S and A are related to those required of graduates in a globalised world.
  – There are mechanisms in place to ensure that all graduates have achieved the highest level of learning outcome described
Support from the ‘informal curriculum’

- Together the formal and the informal curriculum shape the lived experience of the student
  - they simultaneously define present learning and create the capacity for further learning within an increasingly connected and globalised society
- How can we get them to work together more effectively?
Want to stay in touch or get involved?

Contact me: betty.leask@unisa.edu.au

Visit the website http://www.ioc.net.au
- Presentations and workshop slides
- PD resources
- Themed literature review
- Discussion Forum
- Case studies of IoC in Action

Questions and discussion
References


