International VET Pedagogy: Views from Teachers

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Presentation Outline

• Aims of the study
• Research approach
• International VET Pedagogy
Research Aims

• analyse international students’ purposes for investing in their VET courses
• explore how teachers adapt their pedagogy and training programs
• identify factors that shape VET’s capacity to internationalize the training programs and cater for international students

Other related papers arising from this research

• To what extent competency based training and training packages are relevant in teaching international students?
• The migration and learning mix: International students in VET
• Stereotyping international VET students and its impacts on their learning and well-being
• The engagement between international and domestic students in VET
Research Approach

- 150 semi-structured interviews from 25 providers:
  - International students
  - Teachers
  - General staff
  - Managers and CEOs
- Email and phone dialogues
- Took part in student activities and visited them at their homes and workplaces
- Theory and practice class observation

Context

- 205,968 international student enrolments in the Australian VET sector in August, 2010 (AEI 2010)
- Students from the Asian region:
  - 85% of international VET students.
- VET did not enjoy the early exposure to international education that the higher education sector gained
- Most recent discussions on international VET centred around:
  - collapse of ‘dodgy’ private colleges
  - regulations of training providers & overseas agents
  - link between education and migration
  - safety and welfare of international students
- What is largely overlooked: relevancy of training programs offered for international students and adaptation of VET pedagogy
International Pedagogy

• The need to re-contextualize ‘pedagogy to include systematic notions of teaching and learning in international contexts and with international students and curricula’ (Hellesten & Reid, 2008:2)

• Pedagogies that address international education and international contexts is integral to contemporary VET pedagogy and curriculum development

• Four different dimensions of the connection between international pedagogy and culturally inclusive and diversity principles:
  – the divergent learning characteristics and learning needs of international students and culturally inclusive practices that accommodate the diversity that is associated with the student body (Biggs, 2001, Doherty & Singh, 2005; Volet & Pears, 1994)
  – the value of making transnational connections with international students’ diverse existing and prior knowledge and experience through productive pedagogies (Singh & Han, 2010, Tran, 2010; Arkoudis & Tran, Under Review)
  – the integration of international examples, case studies and knowledge and professional practices from diverse cultures (Hellsten, 2008; Leask, 2008; Tran, Under review).
  – the facilitation of cultural engagements and the development of mutually cultural understandings by teaching staff and learners (Hellsten, 2008)

The Intercultural Approach to VET teaching and learning

• Understanding the broader society where students are from and linking these sources of knowledge to the content of teaching and learning

• Encouraging international students to share and build on their prior and cultural experiences in learning

• Being open and learning from international students

• Understanding cross-cultural pedagogic practices and familiarizing students with Australian classroom culture

• Undertaking small-scale research in order to gained a better understanding of international students’ learning needs and cultural learning styles.

• Intercultural approach to fostering the engagement between international students and local students:
  • Culturally sensitivity and awareness of cultural difference
Example

I learn to be familiar with the society where the group come from and to link back into those societies as best I can to at least hook on what they know from home into what they will have to learn here or what system they’ll be operating in. I try to read widely the papers. I like to know what's happening in India, Korea, China, the Philippines. I like to know the national leaders. I try to refer to the history of the country as best I can. And even if it's not in-depth, I find international students are very pleased if you can say, well, that's not how the courts work in Korea, they work in this way. Here we work this way because this is a British heritage country. And they're often quite stunned that you know something about the legal and political framework in the country from which they come. And try and, yeah, I guess that's my strategy. Read. Yeah. (Law, TAFE, NSW)

Example

Yeah, I did fun things. One of the exercises we did was communicate in the workplace. So I asked for volunteers and they had to speak their language. So I’d speak to them in English and they had to answer in their language. And the group had to try and figure out from their body language and tone of voice what they were actually saying to me. And then we did another little group activity where we got an Indian student and an Asian student to try and speak to each other and they both had to speak just their language, but with body language try and communicate. And it was hilarious. And it was good because it broke the barrier a bit and they got to realise how difficult it is for each other. And the local students got a real laugh out of listening to the language and then understanding the body language. But what I try and make them understand that part of the reason we’re doing that, not in English, is because it’s like excluding the local students and it’s making them look like foreigners to understand the challenge. So it was like a really good ice breaker. (Hairdressing, Private college, VIC).
Perspective Transformation Approach

- Attempting to transforming students’ perspectives by explaining to them:
  - the wide range of opportunities that the industry that they are studying can offer them
  - in what ways the vocational field can enable them to pursue their professional and personal interests
  - encouraging students to look beyond the square and positioning them as global citizens

Trying to find out what their interest is and trying to relate what we teach to maybe something that they’re interested in, to hopefully get them more engaged…Because hospitality is so diverse it’s not just being a cook or a waiter or things, there are so many opportunities within the hospitality industry. Even like talking to them about it, like you get into a big hotel chain, I mean you can still do administration work if you want to do administration work if you’re interested. There are so many fields behind the scenes of hospitality so it opens up the doors. There are still a lot of things that you can do if you get into the right areas. And what I try and do is hone in and find out what their interests are. What are you really interested in? What do you want to do? And then try and tie that back to how hospitality can maybe tie into that. So looking at the opportunities of, identify with a particular trainee or the student, what is it that you like? And then he can tell well hospitality can help you and it’s all because of this and this and this and this reason. (Hospitality management, Private college, VIC)

The language support integration approach

- Develop a list of vocabulary for each lesson in order to assist students with understanding the terminologies in the field
- Write a simple textbook and adapt the disciplinary language embedded in the textbook to make it more suitable for international students
- Encourage students to make the most of language resources in supporting their language development and their VET study:
- Collaborate with the language and learning support advisor to actively integrate language support into vocational teaching and learning.

I have a woman that comes into my class for one hour per week and she’s a language support person. And what she does is writes up words on the board. These are words, like jargon and she will help by sort of going around like interpreting these words, just meet the English language required by the school. And my main role is teaching the technical skills, the understanding of the terminologies that are needed to actually be in the workplace. (Hospitality management, TAFE, NSW)
The ‘Ubuntu’ or ‘humanness’ approach to teaching and treating international students

– International students are treated as valuable members of the classroom community
– create a human bond and a positive learning culture
– engage with students on a personal level in order to understand them
– position international students as being their own children
– understand international students’ welfare needs including other dimensions of human needs related to the ‘assaults’ and ‘stereotypes’ possibly facing international students in Australia.

You know, the way I’m treating them like a person with full respect. Ubuntu approach and it’s a term that is used in South Africa and directly translated it means humanness, our people are but one another. You keep that human factor in your teaching, that humanness between one another. And also when you’re teaching, everybody’s job is important. Not only the best students, every single job is important. I make a point of paying individual attention to every student, to all my students. That’s why I say they’re my boys. And I give him everything he wants to know. I don’t drift off and talk to someone else and someone else. And even if he’s the weaker student I still make him feel that what he’s doing is important. He mustn’t feel that he’s just carrying along because this is what we do. And when you engage students like that I find it amazing, the response you can get. If you’ve got a teaching style where you can engage the students in such a way that they feel important and they feel that they want to come to TAFE then you’ve got a good learner. (Cabinet making, TAFE, QLD)

Truyền cảm hứng or Inspiration Approach

• Inspire students and boost the self-esteem of international students by

– exhibiting commitment, passion and excitement about their vocational field
– highlighting that they have the capacity to transform
– recognizing the work of international students and offer them positive feedback on their achievement
– not only focusing on the practical skills but also explain how the skills may be associated with broader aspects, for example how hairdressing is actually connected to lifestyle.
– inspiring students by making the learning more joyful.
Value-added approach to VET teaching and learning

- extend the training package to cover the disciplinary knowledge in the vocational field
- being equipped with the conceptual knowledge underpinning their vocational practice will place international students in a better position to navigate and adapt to different workplace contexts

  So I adapt the training package by giving you more content than you need to pass the competency so that I add value to your education. And you can take it with you into your later studies. Well, we have run into problems with the compliance. When our courses have been audited, like the Diploma of Business has run into huge trouble because the Australian auditors said, you're not teaching the training package. You are teaching too much of this other knowledge and skill and not enough of the training package, and your assessments are not what we would like them to be. (Finance, TAFE, VIC)

Tentative Views (Pedagogy)

- The presence of international students in VET classrooms creates new challenges as well as possibilities to transform pedagogic practices and reshape VET pedagogy landscape.
- Most of the good practices initiated by individual teachers are ad-hoc
- International VET pedagogy recognizes and harnesses teaching and learning situations by which all students and teachers can develop and enrich their 'international' knowledge, skills and attributes
- International VET pedagogy extends the scope of student-centeredness beyond accommodating students’ learning needs to:
  - situating and validating their experiential and scholastic knowledge through the VET program
  - enriching vocational knowledge through making trans-national intellectual connections.
Thank you for your listening!

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