The Impacts of International Students on Pedagogical Practices in Vocational Education and Training

Ly Tran, Deakin University

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

• The broader context
• The research
• Key pedagogical approaches to cater for VET international students
• VET pedagogy that addresses international students and Australia in the Asian Century
THE BROADER CONTEXT

• Over 4.3 million globally mobile students (OECD, 2013)
• International students in VET: 93,180 (AEI, 2013)
• Students from Asia represent 85 per cent of all international VET students
INTERNATIONALISATION IN VET

• VET reforms since the late 1990s
  – Primarily motivated by neo-liberal market-driven principles
  – the decrease in the government funding for VET
  – the participation of private providers and commercialisation of VET.

• Global skills mobility:
  – skilled migration
  – there are eleven million workers in Australia and one million Australian citizens working overseas
  – Demand for Asian literacy: *Australia in the Asian Century* (DEEWR 2012) and *Australia’s Competitive Survey*
  – Overseas employers rate Australian graduates as relatively poor in its knowledge of Asia and its languages (Australia’s Competitive Survey).

THE RESEARCH

• Four-year project funded by the ARC
• More than 150 semi-structured interviews with international students, teachers, support staff, managers and CEOs from 25 VET institutes
• Second interviews were conducted with a small number of students
• Email and phone dialogues
• Took part in student activities and visited them at their workplaces
• Theory and practice class observation
• Theories on teaching and learning in vocational education, international education, intercultural learning, transformative learning
Teaching international students in vocational education: new pedagogies

• Intercultural approach
• Perspective Transformation approach
• Value-added approach
• Language and vocational learning integration approach
• Work-based learning and experimental learning for international students
• Ubuntu approach
• Flexible divergent pedagogy
• International VET pedagogy

HOW EACH PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH IS DEVELOPED

• Empirical data from interviews and observation
• Grounded in relevant theories
• Key principles of each approach
• Insights from teachers: specific examples from their actual teaching practices
• Implications for practice
• Reflective questions
THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

• 1. Enhancing awareness and knowledge about international students’ backgrounds
• 2. Designing activities to validate students’ cultural experiences, trans-national knowledge and prior resources
• 3. Fostering the engagement between international and domestic students

Designing and structure activities that require students to build on their cultural experiences

♦ Asking students to do presentation about vocational practices in their home countries
♦ Engaging students in the reflective process about professional practices in different countries

Oh, I try to get them to tell me, well, I’m always asking them, how do you do it in your country?... Our timber frame, this is all unknown to them because there’s no timber frame buildings there. Most of them are brick or solid walls of some sort, mud. So I try to relate what we’re doing back to what they explain that they do in their country and then show them the differences. (Building, TAFE, VIC)
Designing and structure activities that require students to build on their cultural experiences

♦ Using improvisation to help students develop international vocational knowledge and skills

All the students would develop an international marketing plan. The students might be asked to pick a country - Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and told, okay, your clients wants you to sell this product that's unique for this particular country, you have a different target audience. So in that regard you could re-contextualise it. (Finance, TAFE, VIC)

♦ Encourage students to be trainers of the day

So you sort of, or rather let the students be a trainer for a day and then, see in my home country, this is how we do it. And then everyone learns. So yeah, I think that would be good. (Hairdressing, private college, VIC)

Enhancing awareness and knowledge of international students’ backgrounds

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 like to know what's happening in India, Korea, China, the Philippines. 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. (Law, TAFE, NSW)
Intercultural approach to fostering engagement between international students and local students

♦ Designing pairwork including a local and an international student followed by a plenary activity
♦ Structuring learning activities that allow international students to respond in their native language

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… 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 and to understand the challenge.

(Hairdressing, Private college, VIC).

Teachers’ adaptation of teaching to cater for international students depends on:

• teachers’ capacity to mediate between:
  – their understandings of the diverse characteristics and study purposes of learners in vocational education
  – the demands of competency-based training
  – their underpinning professional beliefs and pedagogical principles
  – their understandings of their vocational fields and changing workplace context
  – their ethical and professional identities
VET pedagogy that addresses international students is relevant to the context of Australia in the Asian Century

- **Practices such as:**
  - engaging students in comparing and contrasting industry practices in different countries
  - using Asian case studies and international examples
  - designing activities to help students experience bicultural and bilingual situations

These practices help students to:

1. Situate, validate and share their experiential, cultural and vocational knowledge
2. Enrich their intercultural competence, their vocational knowledge and their ideas about Asia.
3. Enhance their ability to look at the broader context, adapt knowledge and navigate skills
4. See the wider and more diverse meanings attached to their profession and vocational field

**REFERENCES**

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