Teaching International Students in Vocational Education: New Pedagogical Approaches

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Presentation outline

- Acknowledgements
- The Research
- Pedagogical Approaches
- Insights from teachers
The Research

- Learning process for me: conceptual vs. practical, useful
- Four-year Discovery project funded by the Australian Research Council
- More than 150 semi-structured interviews with international students, teachers, support staff and managers from 25 VET institutes and dual sector Universities
- Second interviews with a small number of students
- Took part in student activities and visited them at their workplaces

Structure of the book

- 10 chapters
- Chapter 1: Internationalisation in VET
- Chapter 2: Competency-based training and pedagogies in response to internationalisation
Distinctive pedagogical approaches

- Intercultural approach
- Language and vocational learning integration approach
- Perspective transformation pedagogy
- Ubuntu approach
- Value-added approach
- Work-based learning and experiential learning
- Flexible, responsive and divergent pedagogy

Each pedagogy chapter includes

- Key characteristics of the pedagogical approach
- Examples of good practice & challenges
- How these insights are interpreted in light of the literature
- Implications for practice
- Reflective questions
Develop interpersonal/intercultural relationship among students

One of the exercises we did was to communicate in the workplace. I asked for volunteers, I’d speak to them in English and they had to answer in their language. The group had to try and figure out from their body language and tone of voice what they were actually saying to me. Then we did another little group activity where we got an Indian student and an Asian student to try to speak to each other and they both had to speak just their language, but with body language, and try to communicate. And it was hilarious it broke the barrier a bit and they got to realise how difficult it is for each other… 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. So it was a really good ice breaker. (Hairdressing, Private College, VIC)

Teacher as an intercultural learner and adaptive agent

I did the research and as a result of that I worked out it’s a cultural issue where the students don’t want the teacher to lose face if they have problems. They [also] don’t want to lose face themselves if they give a wrong response without having the proper time to interpret what’s being said and then perhaps give an uninformed response. So I structured my lessons, from that point on, [by] deliver[ing] a particular unit and then the next week, rather than asking questions about the unit on that week, I would ask questions about the previous week unit… Through my own research I’ve learnt that I [get] a far greater response [by doing this]. (Management, TAFE, VIC)
The ‘Ubuntu’ approach

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 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. 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)

Flexible, responsive, divergent pedagogy

For me, the only other strategy that I do differently is, it’s a lot more visual. It’s a lot more visual explanation, a lot more drawings, a lot more pictures ... because we do lose, particularly in that first six to 12 months, the language thing. I may call this a ‘bearing’. In Korean it’s called something totally different or there is no word for it. So we have to come across that boundary [of not having equivalent words in Korean to name some concepts in English]. The best way I’ve found is get your hands on it. Let’s draw a picture. Let’s paint a story whilst we’re talking about what we’re doing. (Automotive, TAFE, QLD)
Implications for practice

To use language effectively in the delivery of content, teachers could try to:

- use plain language to explain vocational concepts and practices, but avoid talking in childish language
- draw on analogies and metaphors and link learning to things that are familiar to students to enhance their understandings of vocational theories
- use multiple approaches to present information, such as visual presentation
- find a comparison for the theoretical concept and explain the history of an approach to students to help them understand it
- speak slowly and clearly
- be sensitive to students’ facial expressions that may indicate their uncertainty about new concepts or practice
- teach students to not only learn from, but also teach and support, each other.

Reflective questions

To help understand students’ study purposes and expectations, consider using the following outline:

- My purposes in undertaking this course are …
- My expectations of this subject are …
- My expectations of my teacher are …
- My expectations of my classmates are …
- I am prepared to make the following commitment to study in terms of …
- My concerns as I begin this subject are …
- What I intend to do about my concerns is …
- What I expect my teacher to do about concern is …

Adapted from Hunt, Chalmers & Macdonald (2012, p. 30)
Thank you for your listening!

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Questions & Feedback