

A GUIDE TO **INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM AND INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY** IN TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

Internationalisation of the curriculum is the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning processes and support services of a program of study (Leask 2009). The process of internationalisation of the curriculum has been developed as a holistic concept that includes not only infusion of international content and perspectives but is also inclusive of student needs and experiences, and supports their mutual development as international citizens.

The ‘New’ Cosmopolitanism: A means to move beyond the narrow confines of nationalism and Western-centric views of the cultural ‘other’ by defining not only a commitment to pluralism and a respect for diversity of cultures but also the recognition of the interdependence between peoples and societies and the global graduate’s responsibilities that stretch beyond the formal ties of citizenship.

(Appiah 2006)



The challenges in transnational education

In practice, what does this mean for academics? How can academics internationalise the curriculum while staying true to the scholarship of the discipline? These quotes from a study of academics’ attitudes to internationalisation (Bell, 2004) highlight a view of the role of the university and the discipline as in conflict with the process of internationalisation:

“Our job is about training people to function within a discipline environment ... it is not the discipline’s responsibility to produce culturally aware and sensitive graduates”

(Engineering academic)

and

“The material I teach is stateless – it’s essentially theory and it’s the same theory basically everywhere”

(Science academic)

For transnational teachers the challenge therefore is to support local and transnational students in experiencing and learning that body of knowledge in a way that:

- maintains the academic integrity of the discipline
- avoids a form of intellectual colonialism that suggests knowledge is the province of the west
- recognises the contribution of international scholarship to the discipline
- explores the relevance of the discipline to, and adaptation of knowledge for, the international context
- acknowledges and develops students’ intercultural and international perspectives and skills.

An internationalised curriculum will engage students with internationally informed research and cultural and linguistic diversity. It will purposefully develop their international and intercultural perspectives as global professionals and citizens.

(Leask 2009)

Internationalisation of the transnational curriculum ideally involves choosing case studies to include an international perspective in subjects, collaboration between academics and students at different global sites, and opportunities for students to enhance their cross-cultural skills. Subjects and academic programs are constantly scrutinised for relevance and applicability to the transnational teaching location and the 'home campus'.

Strategies

Internationalisation of the curriculum within universities has involved a variety of strategies across disciplines including:

- Developing graduates' global and international skills
- Study abroad and exchange programs
- Structuring groups and teams for collaborative work to include international and local students
- Incorporating international views of disciplinary knowledge
- Structured inter-cultural engagement
- Acknowledging international student experiences within discussions
- Global learning using communication technologies for cross-border student engagement
- Valuing cultural and linguistic diversity.

Inclusive teaching - the way forward for transnational education

Various commentators and researchers propose 'inclusivity' as the key to internationalisation of the curriculum. An international curriculum provides a relevant educational experience for all students in an environment that is supportive and inclusive of all students (Leask, 2001).

Inclusive teaching refers to “the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all”

(UOW 2013)

'Inclusive pedagogy' integrates learning activities that develop meaningful interaction and cooperation between students of differing backgrounds and experiences. An inclusive curriculum actively constructs opportunities and reasons for meaningful dialogue between different cultural experiences and perspectives in relation to the discipline. This involves reciprocal relationships amongst students who bring their various experiences and abilities to the learning environment.

The notion of the 'inclusive curriculum' means more than including people; it means including and recognising different cultural perspectives in the curriculum, and implicitly, attempting to construct dialogue between cultural perspectives that does not homogenise them.

(Curro and McTaggart 2003)

Principles of inclusive curriculum design

Morgan and Houghton (2011) list principles for inclusive curriculum design set out below. They point out that effective practice for one group can and should be effective practice for all. An inclusive approach has its foundations in a commitment to promoting equality and diversity by embedding the following principles in the design process. An inclusive approach is:

Anticipatory - proactive in considering the entitlements of all students in the design and delivery of all activity.

Flexible - versatile and responsive to an evolving student population and changes in circumstance.

Accountable - encourages staff and students to be responsible for the progress they have made against equality objectives and agreed actions.

Collaborative - builds on partnerships between students, colleagues and other stakeholders including professional bodies and international partners to enrich the curriculum content and relevance. Staff are receptive to feedback.

Transparent - makes clear the reasons for design decisions by increasing general awareness of the benefits for all.

Equitable - ensures processes and procedures used for students are the same and decisions are made in a fair, open and transparent way.

Quality design procedures in transnational education

Inclusive design is based on adoption of the following procedures (Morgan & Houghton 2011):

- acknowledging all students are entitled to access the curriculum
- engaging with past, present and prospective students whose experience and expectations may support inclusive curriculum design decisions
- gathering and reflecting and acting upon informal and formal feedback from students and colleagues
- considering the impact of learning environment and teaching tools
- working in partnership for collaboration with department, faculty, institutional and sector staff

- working with subject colleagues to consider subject specific considerations
- consulting professional bodies, employers and other stakeholders.

Teaching principles for an inclusive learning environment

Principles for inclusive teaching (Devlin et al 2012) support students in their ongoing development of a sense of belonging and self-control, offer respect and recognition, and give opportunity for their ideas to be heard. They support transnational students in integrating into the broader university community and the specifics of the discipline. They are good teaching practice in any educational environment and support all students, local and international, in developing their full potential. These teaching principles provide a sound platform for thinking about internationalisation of the curriculum in transnational contexts.

- Know and respect your students - Communicate with them, embrace and integrate their diversity and enable contributions of their knowledge to everyone's learning.
- Offer your students flexibility, variety and choice - While upholding academic standards, offer students flexibility, choice in assessment and variety in teaching and learning strategies.
- Make expectations clear, using accessible language - Speak and write in plain language to ensure students understand the concepts being taught, your expectations of them and what is required to be a successful student.
- Scaffold your students' learning - Take a step-by-step approach to teaching to ensure students build on what they bring to higher education and are taught the particular discourses necessary to succeed.
- Be available and approachable to guide student learning - In addition to being available, be approachable so that students may make use of your expertise and guidance to improve their learning and performance.
- Be a reflective practitioner - Reflect and seek to act on your own reflections, those from peers and feedback from students, to continuously improve your teaching practice and your students' learning.

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Professional Development Principles

A set of professional development principles for transnational teaching teams informed, and were refined through, the work of the participatory action learning groups in this project.

The principles can be accessed at: transnationalteachingteams.org



Professional development for quality enhancement of learning and teaching

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