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# Values and Behaviours of an Effective Community of Practice: a Case for Staff/Student Social Collaboration for Internationalisation

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## Abstract

*UK universities suffer constrained autonomy, disputed values and aims and increasing performance demands: 'new managerialism' or application in the public sector of private sector values. However, values of internationalism and the ideals of international co-operation aim for a world order of peace and social justice. Connecting these apparently disparate areas is the assertion that values are prominent not only in values-driven internationalisation strategy but also in entrepreneurial behaviour needed to establish communities of practice, similar to 'academic freedom'. This article analyses the values and behaviour of a "campus community" that developed into a full structure of "communities of practice" or social collaborations which drove student mobility. Analysis of the action research cycles leads to the identification of different forms of motivation, levels of engagement and entrepreneurial behaviour in both students and staff, combining to define a set of values and behaviours driving a social collaboration's culture and performance.*

## Introduction

Based on our own values, developed either by nature or nurture or by both, the work presented here takes as its premise the notion that positive benefits can accrue from international and cross-cultural experiences [1]. We formally acknowledge our bias in favour of internationalisation as a 21st century imperative for institutions of HE [2]. Like tempered radicals, we were 'angered by the incongruities'

(p.586) [3] between our own values and beliefs and those we observed in our organisations [4]. Humanistic and constructivist approaches to education (eg those of [5] Freire or [6] Piaget) and a 'holistic' approach to internationalisation [7] underpin our personal philosophies of higher education. Dewey's [8] ideas about democracy and social reform through education provide guiding principles: HE not only as a way to gain knowledge, but rather as a way for a student to learn how to live, realise their full potential and use their skills for the greater good. Dewey proposed that a university is a social institution through which social reform should take place. This is important for us, as we work in 'peripheral' regions of the EU. We equate international mobility with social mobility and believe that developing global citizens is one way universities contribute to society. Defining engagement as 'individual student learning' and students' engagement with 'structure and process' [9], this article focuses on engagement for equality and social justice.

In common with other public service providers, universities suffer constrained autonomy, disputed values and aims, and increasing performance demands [10]. 'New managerialism' in the public sector is a term referring to "ideologies" and the "actual use" [11] of private sector practice, technology and values. Welch [12] links the decreased public funding of HE and resulting 'new managerialism' [13] to regional integration, such as in Europe and thereby to globalisation. This link results in the treatment of education as a commodity to be traded in international marketplaces by universities functioning as enterprises and students

acting as consumers [14]. Such marketisation paradoxically militates against 'genuine', values-driven internationalisation and innovative, entrepreneurial behaviour [15]. Defining globalisation commercially using Slaughter and Leslie's [16] terminology, 'academic capitalism, commodification and marketisation' Welch [12] positions it in opposition to 'internationalism', which involves *"genuine mutuality and reciprocal cultural relations"* [p.439]. He sees them as opposing forces, pulling HE in opposite directions. One is predicated on global market forces and aims to integrate universities into deregulated global business. The other is based on the values and the ideals of international cooperation, aiming for a world order of peace and social justice. It will be increasingly difficult for universities to reconcile the two because the contentious character of globalisation affects them more acutely than other organisations [17]. Otter [18], discussing universities generally, pinpoints a *"gap between rhetoric and reality"* (p.52). Turner & Robson [19] identify an internal gap between the motivations and values of academics and those of management and the capacity of this gap to disrupt the institution. There is also an external gap between the internationalist rhetoric of British institutions and the actual experience. *"Higher education can no longer merely espouse universal values at the rhetorical level but must promote understanding through interpersonal, cross-cultural, international and shared experiences"* (p.51) concludes Bartell [20]

This article describes a cyclical action research initiative in the UK to establish a "campus community" [21] as an innovative and entrepreneurial social collaboration between staff and students in line with their values. Recognising and escaping our own culturally imposed limitations is central to transformative learning theory [22] which underpinned the social collaboration between staff and students aimed at creating a cross cultural campus community in a 'new' UK university. The aim was to start to internationalise home students and encourage them to engage in further international experience. This was developed into a greater community of practice with highly successful results in the international mobility of students in one of the most challenging contexts: UK higher education. It serves as a case study, evidencing the role of values in implementing this approach to internationalisation. Here we analyse and reflect on the experience, arguing that a campus community can promote internationalization with intercultural learning occurring both at home and abroad, but outcomes are affected by the depth of student and staff engagement,

which is in turn related to fundamental values, motivations for and attitudes towards social collaboration.

## Importance of Staff Values & Behaviours in the Internationalisation Strategy of Universities

Jones & Brown [23] characterise a 'values–based or ethical approach' as distinct from one focused on raising income from international students. The rise of managerialism has pushed universities into trying to adopt a planned approach to internationalisation, working entirely against the predominant values of academics. Mintzberg [24] characterises universities as professional bureaucracies and Grigg [25] warns that one can expect a distinct management style in 'professional' organisations due to the *"tension between professional values and bureaucratic expectations"* (p.279). Demands for academic autonomy clash with bureaucratic, hierarchical control, making it difficult to serve and satisfy both requirements.

Simons [26] highlights the importance to strategy of 'beliefs systems' which are the values, mission and credos of the organisation. They provide momentum and guidance to opportunity-seeking behaviours and inspire commitment to the organisation's purpose. Peters & Waterman [27] explain that better-performing companies have a well-defined set of guiding beliefs. The articulation of values and also their content make a difference. Financial objectives seldom motivate those down the line. The effect of values and beliefs on university decision making is strong [28]. Sporn [29] defined the 'strength' of a university culture as the degree of fit between values, structure and strategy. The orientation and strength of a university's culture are highly influential on an ability to adapt and cope with environmental turbulence and can enhance or inhibit renewal and innovation [30]. A strong culture can act as both an enabler and inhibitor, say Pfeffer & Sutton [31] recommending *"why before how"* (p.246) and emphasising the importance of core principles, basic values and even core beliefs about the human beings in the organisation. An organisation guided by a clear philosophy and values can develop flexibility and speed in strategy execution as employees understand the boundaries and overall direction and are empowered within them. Organisational culture can significantly affect an individual's behaviour, either becoming a constraint on innovation which limits academic staff's entrepreneurial spirit or encouraging staff to act as entrepreneurs creatively

[32]. An over-entrepreneurial project can continue without contingencies and this is poor execution. However, a reliance on planning will not succeed in internationalisation since the personal nature of a decision to be involved renders an institutional, strategic plan alone impotent in implementation.

*"Most academics hold cosmopolitan values in high esteem"* claims Teichler (p.8) [33] and Knight [34] suggests that improved intercultural understanding and awareness, especially in graduates, is regarded as a strong and legitimate motive for internationalisation by many academics. Turner & Robson [19] describe a strong preference in academics for the high-end of the internationalisation continuum, describing in them *"widespread disengagement"* (p.80) with their institution's commercial approach as they intellectually distance themselves from it, while still complying with the attainment of related targets. This results in a *"counter-culture of cynicism and resistance"* (p.80) provoked by a desire to develop a reciprocal and co-operative approach consistent with their values, such as a social collaboration. Their International Continuum (p.69) [19] identifies that personal values drive commitment, rather than compliance, co-operative rather than competitive engagement and lead to transformation and internationalism.

Connecting three apparently disparate areas are the assertions that values, attitudes and ethics, (culture) are prominent not only in values-driven internationalisation but also in entrepreneurial and innovative behavior [35] and an ability to internationalise [20]. Schumpeter's defnition of "pure" entrepreneurship [36]: *"the doing of new things or the doing of things that are already done in a new way"* emphasises the value of autonomy and flexibility, similar to 'academic freedom' and therefore appealing to the strong values of many university staff. Management is increasingly a cultural rather than technical activity [37]. In condemning 'new managerialism' and its effect on 'academic freedom' and in calling for an 'ethical, values-driven approach' to internationalisation, academic authors unconsciously recommend entrepreneurial behaviours [15] leading to social collaborations such as a campus community [21].

Referring to a university-based example, O'Leary [38] concludes that *'working in ways that empower the individual can be a real challenge for any bureaucracy'* (p.194). However, individuals can *"attempt to escape"* (p.65) [39] the presiding structural context. Meyerson and Scully acknowledge that individuals bring to work various values, beliefs and commitments *'based on multiple identities and affiliations that become more or less salient in different circumstances'* (p. 587)[3]. Burgelman & Hitt [40] suggest that people with an entrepreneurial mindset are 'habitual entrepreneurs' who share some common characteristics, among them engaging all others involved in the pursuit of opportunities, as in a campus community. Timmons et al.'s [41] generic management capabilities of entrepreneurs (quoted in [42]) highlight 'taking initiative and personal responsibility'. Stopford & Baden-Fuller [43] suggest that 'pro-activeness' and 'aspirations beyond current capabilities' mean that entrepreneurial staff are not limited by current resources. 'Team-orientation' reflects the importance of working together at all levels of the organisation and across boundaries to support innovative ideas, creative individuals and to build momentum, such as in a campus community. Mann [44] identified that individual staff interventions are crucial to student engagement.

## Student Values & Behaviour in Engaging with Intercultural Learning

Krause's [45] working principles to enhance student engagement include 'foster social connections' and 'use complex engagement' such as a campus community. Two of the scales of the National Survey of Student Engagement measure student/staff interactions and a supportive learning environment. A participatory learning approach has been suggested as an effective approach since this process enables 'participants' to 'learn' from what they already 'know' [46]. Given that current knowledge affects and guides every aspect of the process of the learning [47] it can be assumed that core values are also important components to consider. Zupan et al [48] conclude that while national culture may be important to understand values of the young generation, it is not the dominant factor and gender is important. Lindsay and Knox [49] also found that gender explained differences in values among young adults due to differences in socialization processes and social learning.

Billett [50] believes that the potential for an individual's development is greatest when s/he engages in new tasks which enable him/her to take their prior learning and through new experiences create new cognitive structures. This process – dealing with the challenges and problems created by 'new' situations – fosters new learning (51). However Yager [52] avers that the success of participatory learning relies heavily on the new experiences or information being consistent with an

individual's current belief system, or core values. Participatory learning enables the 'updating' of this system, not a rejection of it eg *"what you know is correct except for this little part"* (p. 1229). Ippolito [53] concurs that successful intercultural learning requires that the new understandings it creates are based on previous experiences and knowledge, emphasising the importance of the current belief system.

According to Fennes and Hapgood [54], intercultural learning has to be dialectic (between the self and the foreign) and interaction across cultural barriers is a necessary precondition for intercultural learning to take place. This can only take place when learners are confronted with a different culture and hence realising cultural differences. Awareness of one's own culture is a necessary step towards intercultural learning. Only intercultural experiences can trigger reflection on what has been unconscious so far to the learner or has been perceived as being 'natural'. Knowledge about one's own culture as well as pre-existing knowledge (facts) about other cultures form the current belief system. Only the ongoing exposure to cultural diversity activates the arousal mechanism which leads to a loss of confidence in the learner's current belief system and allows for updates and changes and therefore intercultural learning.

Teekens [55] believes that intercultural learning does not happen automatically from intercultural interaction, while Wright and Lander [56] argue that in many international classrooms there is not even intercultural interaction. Yet there is agreement when it comes to the need for careful design and implementation of intercultural learning, to make it possible. Cooper's study [57] revealed that students tend to group themselves together within their own ethnic group, unless serious effort is made to break up these ethnic groups and increase intercultural interaction between students. In Ippolito's study [53], students preferred tutor-selected, multicultural work groups. Without guidance they also tend to choose co-nationals as team members. The same effect is described by Volet and Ang [58] who found that if students are not guided, spontaneous intercultural interaction is very unlikely to occur. If language skills are insufficient and there is no particular need for communicating with people from other cultures, the likeliness is high that students will remain in their own cultural group [54]. Opportunities have to be developed to create an environment in which intercultural education can take place and to this extent it could be helpful to ask students to complete a specific assignment or task or project that requires intercultural interaction. In this context Fennes and Hapgood [54] refer to a 'triangular didactic': *"you,*

*me and a common theme or project that is pursued jointly.*" (p.76). Working together on a specific project provokes cultural conflicts so that it is learned how to deal with them when accomplishing a common task. Although this type of experience already exists in multicultural classes, they suggest that it might be useful to create other experiences than those that occur in a class room, as this forces students to *"go beyond their traditional patterns of behaviour and relationships".* (p.74). A campus community is designed to offer this opportunity.

## Campus Communities and Communities of Practice

A campus community is an idea for multicultural campuses to develop spaces for the 'non-mobile majority' to experience difference on the way to global citizenship [21]. It is an alternative to the classic international mobility structure eg a semester abroad. Higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide their students with an education that is fit for purpose, and in today's super-complex globalised society, 'global literacy' [59] is a fundamental tenet. Diversity on campus provides social fora for intercultural capability to develop [58], yet research shows that the mere presence of students from different cultures is no guarantee that intercultural learning will occur [60]. Whilst Montgomery [61] finds that international students form a strong social network of support for each other, intercultural contact between 'home' students and their international peers is still lacking [62]. Traditionally UK home students are expected to experience life-changing intercultural experiences through outbound mobility such as study abroad; yet whilst mobility is on the increase, such options are not integral to the majority of undergraduate programmes, meaning that the 'non-mobile majority' may be missing out on a vital part of their education. Killick [63] investigated experiences of UK students abroad to identify the aspects which lead to profound personal transformations. He found that they were socially situated, triggered in contact with 'others', driven by students' openness to learn and go beyond their comfort zones which led to 'virtuous circles of becoming' in which confidence and self belief extended learning across cognitive, social and affective dimensions. He grounds the personal transformative learning experiences in more general current theories of learning in higher education, rather than in the theories of interculturality, thus claiming that the international sojourn is not unique in providing profound, life-changing transformative

learning experiences, but that they can be experienced by all students on the home campus.

For transformative intercultural learning to occur at home, the campus must become a site of genuine intercultural community, and the curriculum must enable and require students to apply their intercultural capabilities [63]. Yet the question remains as to how to change the campus culture, for Killick concludes that current practice in higher education *"is largely culpable in sustaining, even reinforcing, the ethnocentrisms of an unexamined existence".* Socialising with like-minded others is a human tendency; breaking out of our comfort zone is a risky even painful experience, yet it is precisely this discomfort, or disequilibrium which leads to learning. It is suggested that transformative learning can underpin social collaborations between staff and students, in which traditional teacher-student power relations may be disrupted in the pursuit and support of autonomous learning. This is needed to break free from culturally imposed limitations which might work against the development of genuinely intercultural campus communities. Critical reflection is directed both outwards on the world, and inwards on the self; as such it can afford participants more dependable frames of references both on themselves and on the external world. Thus it is a process through which one could arrive at Killick's two dimensional model of Cross Cultural Capability: the sense of being in the world, and the 'global perspective' on the world and the discipline.

## The Case: A Campus Community Develops into a Community of Practice

This case emerges from a 'new' university (a former polytechnic) business school in the UK as described by Pearce [15] Historically, UK polytechnics have not enjoyed the autonomy and independence of traditional universities and have operated under greater financial constraints and public scrutiny and a more hierarchical and rule-bound local authority tradition [64]. Professional autonomy and discretion disappeared in 1989 when they became corporations. Since their re-designation as universities in 1992, they have faced the same issues of positioning, image and identification of alternative revenue streams as the existing universities [65] with some different challenges. 'New' UK universities are reliant on income from student fees, forcing them to focus on formal teaching. All academic staff are engaged in a relatively high level of class contact, management and administration at all times [15], minimising

'slack' [66] and operating costs through staffing levels, thereby reducing the flexibility of academics to engage in social collaboration with students as is common in traditional universities in the UK and others worldwide. It is this resource constraint which determined the focus of this research on the influence of values as motivator for staff to engage in social collaborations such as a campus community.

A research pre-step, Coghlan & Brannick [67] identified a lack of integration between home and international students and this had been explored with students and colleagues. Both seemed to assume that the 'home' students were not interested in getting to know their international fellows, and preferred to stay with their friends of similar background. In the first cycle, we set about dealing with this in a practical way: suggesting that students drop-in to propose activities which would promote integration: an infant campus community. These drop-in sessions took off and began to thrive. The students used social media to advertise activities. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive: *"Today I felt like a truly international student!"* said one girl who had been teaching her first language (Mandarin Chinese) to students from various countries. In the second cycle, the students collaborated more closely with staff on an ambitious social event involving food, games and cultural displays from around the world. It was a truly remarkable event, celebrating diversity in a 'new' UK university with a largely local student body. It was planned, marketed and run by student volunteers, facilitated by volunteer staff. It troubled us that only one student organiser was British and that, despite our efforts to market the event to the whole school, 'home' students had been conspicuous by their absence.

In the third cycle, we discussed how we might encourage their participation. Outward student mobility was at the time growing rapidly in the business school as a result of the 'repositioning' of the opportunities and consequent changes to the way study abroad was communicated to students. Rather than the somewhat apologetic approach used in the past, the opportunity to gain international experience was now presented as aspirational and competitive. A basic segmentation based on the various values of students and their motivations to go abroad was conducted: different messages were communicated to different segments, with tailored destinations and opportunities according to the students' primary reason for considering study abroad. The overall message to one ambitious segment concerned graduate employability, and the value of international exposure and experience to their future careers. In

order to select students for the most prestigious partners and challenging programmes, evidence of their more general engagement with international life on the campus was sought. We now required their integration with incoming international students, driving engagement. Thus they were directed to the drop-in sessions described above and co-operated with the event organization.

In the final cycle, this campus community with a specific aim was expanded into a broader community of practice promoting and supporting international experience for students 'at home' (through interaction on the campus) and 'abroad' (through study abroad schemes). The participation requirement was abandoned and instead students invited to take part. More involved guidance from staff was provided.

As staff, our first task had been to convince senior management in the school that a new attitude and communication approach were worthwhile. As the community snowballed, we needed to bring our academic colleagues on board. The challenge of scaling up, as well as improving quality throughout the community was met by increasing involvement of a greater number of colleagues from a wider range of departments, functions and external partners, creating challenges in consistency and focus.

Initially faced with cynicism (at worst) and apathy (at best) from many academic colleagues, we adopted a policy of 'working with the willing'. Students and interested academic colleagues were organised into communities-of-practice from Year 1. Returning students in Year 4, working with incoming students and interested staff, volunteered to co-ordinate meetings, social events and to run social media groups which could then include alumni and students currently abroad.

We had now to work with a much larger number of programme leaders and directors. Applying the social collaboration approach to this wider community of practice, we acted as mentors for academic staff as they became more involved in promoting international experience at open days, dealing with students' concerns and developing initiatives with partner institutions. As the community became institutionalised and developed in other faculties, our work in the vanguard impacted the definition of roles and responsibilities across the university. Student participation in work/study abroad increased fifty-fold.

## Analysis and Results

To develop intercultural learning and international experience in 'home' students, we sought out methods of experiential-and situated-learning [68] in which the teacher acts as facilitator and supporter. In situated-learning, achievement is attained through authentic experience of real situations (such as interacting with international students) and success is directly related to effort and support received. The vicarious experiences of social role models are important as motivators, as is verbal persuasion from a knowledgeable, credible supporter.

Experiencing 'inertia' [45] in students' behavioural engagement [70] towards intercultural learning and international experience, we used the instrumental motivations of students to trigger participation in an international campus community. Zupan et al [48] revealed advancement to be the top individual work value for the young generation and we aimed initially at this work-focused segment. This is consistent with the ambitious nature of the young generation [71]. Messages included not only the development of transferable skills (and the accompanying evidence) but also in the contacts they would make. Typically, such students are instrumental in their approach to their university education: highly focused on the classification of their final degree and on employment applications. They were offered highly-ranked partners, double degree programmes and international internship opportunities. The aim was to test their commitment and existing openness, while also helping them to prepare for the experience of living abroad and kick-off the 'disequilibrium' identified widely as a requirement for learning.

As a result of this new selection policy, there was a flurry of initial interest, and ten 'home' students attended the weekly drop-in sessions. With one or two exceptions, these students seemed largely confused about what they had to do: rather than coming up with ideas and suggestions they preferred to be instructed, which went against the spirit of the group. Their attendance was also sporadic, preventing the formation of a cohesive group to organise the next cross-cultural event. Tellingly, the one 'home' student who did play a very active role had nothing formally to gain from his involvement but had returned from a year abroad. He advised us that many of those who had attended initially to secure a good placement would no longer come now they had been selected. In his view they had been more of a hindrance than a help. Home student attendance at the event did increase slightly due to higher awareness, but the transformative experience of being part of a 'campus community' was not widely shared among the group.

It is fair to say that such instrumental students strive to maintain the equilibrium that can help them focus on the narrow outcome of assessed academic performance (eg degree classification) and this leads them to 'behavioural engagement' only ie doing the minimum to succeed against these narrow criteria. Killick suggests that the comfort of being entrenched in a like-minded group of your peers can result in 'stasis' - non-learning - and thus hampers intercultural learning. We sought to extract them from this state by requiring evidence of their involvement in the international "campus community" initiative as part of a competitive selection for ambitious study abroad places. This was our attempt to legitimize such 'at home' international engagement in the eyes of these students, to motivate them to move beyond their comfort zone. These students, extrinsically motivated by selection for a competitive placement, were compliant rather than committed, and therefore not really engaged.

Our work went on to focus on developing the student experience by working with students as partners through peer-to-peer learning and a university community of practice. This entails their participation in challenging academic activities and enriching educational experiences. We facilitated formative communications between students and academic staff. Coates [72] found that student interactions do not necessarily align with organisational structures so we built new processes with them. We found peer-to-peer learning through the community increasingly effective and efficient, allowing students and staff to provide up-to-date detail and colour to an intercultural learning process. These democratic groups impacted the learning of students and staff alike. This interaction in turn benefitted the incoming international students in the original campus community and beyond.

Instead of behavioural engagement, we triggered emotional engagement to help students invest in their learning, go beyond expectations and relish the challenge of studying and working abroad: cognitive engagement. Achieving this through the 'scaffolding' approach [73], and best practice developed by Kruse & Brubaker [74], we pinpointed a series of 'support points' required by a student in the process of application / preparation and identified the importance of guidance from a teacher or more competent peer - an international student, for example - as students entered their 'zones of proximal development' [75] to consider and manage living abroad. The students involved testified to its transformative effect, which emerged from interaction with other 'international' students rather than with the host community. The organisation of the special event created Fennes and Hapgood's 'triangular didactic': international student, home student and an intercultural event.

Developing an area from scratch meant there were no formal roles defined so we were able to experiment and innovate with social collaboration. Staff's values of internationalism drove their contribution beyond resource and capability constraints. They took initiative and responsibility, acting in an entrepreneurial fashion and outside the structural context.

## Conclusion

Here we have reflected on the experience of the campus community, in which outcomes were affected by the depth of student engagement, which was in turn related to fundamental motivations for and attitudes towards learning, employment and internationalism: the students' values. The "campus community" developed into a full structure of "communities of practice" or social collaborations, often digitally-based, and peer-support, which drove increasing levels of engagement in international activity by students. Highly-engaged students and staff shared values and spread them more widely through a network of communication, transforming the experience of others.

An instrumental approach, resulting in behavioural engagement, is unlikely to produce the deep learning required for intercultural learning in the non-mobile majority, and indeed, may hamper the development of a "campus community". Other ways of legitimising student engagement with international experience were therefore explored: creating emotional engagement.

Intercultural capability is often cited in the discourse surrounding graduate attributes. As an outcome, the focus tends to be on behavioural aspects such as communication and competence, and less on the psychological processes which might enable these to develop. By their nature graduate attributes are more concerned with specifics and measurables, and clearly changes in one's sense of self are not easily amenable to such assessment. Too often university curricula fail to allow a space for a student's sense of being in the world to develop. The social collaboration described here attempted to create such a space. The entrepreneurial values, attitudes and behaviours of staff involved as guides and supporters were fundamental to the success of the community, shared with and developed in the students.

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