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LEARNING & TEACHING PAPER #9

Internationalisation in learning and teaching
Thematic Peer Group Report

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the findings and considerations of the EUA Thematic Peer Group 'Internationalisation in learning and teaching' (hereinafter "the group"; for details see Annex),[1] which was tasked with identifying approaches to internationalisation for universities to enhance their education provision. The group's deliberations are complemented by two additional activities designed to seek student perspectives on the topic: a) The University of Limerick organised a student focus group to provide views on the group's discussions[2] and b) the University of Bordeaux conducted a small-scale survey among second-year degree students.[3]

The following sections present the group's shared understanding of the term 'internationalisation', typical circumstances and practices which might impede a meaningful internationalisation of learning and teaching, recommendations for universities to consider in their efforts to internationalise their education provision, as well as examples of practice drawing on the experiences and expertise of the group members. These examples are interspersed throughout the report.

Enhancing universities' education provision and societal impact through internationalisation

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

The group started its work on the premise that in today's highly complex and interdependent world, continuously challenged by numerous problems of grand scale, more outward-looking and interculturally aware policies and approaches are needed in academia and in the development of learning and teaching at universities. Furthermore, the development and expansion of the European Union and the European Higher Education Area are clearly driving universities in Europe to educate a more diverse and globally minded workforce and citizens. Such a global mindset entails, most importantly, awareness of and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity. It is also an essential basis for the sustainable and inclusive societies of the future. As a result, universities are developing their strategies and policies to ensure that their students and staff are equipped with relevant skills and competences to thrive in a globally connected world.

However, having internationalised education as a strategic goal does not automatically ensure that it is of equal relevance to all actors and stakeholders. Forming international networks and collaborating across borders in order to ensure quality and diversity of perspectives as well as relevance of methodologies is a well-established practice in research, often seen as a natural and self-evident part of the work. With regard to learning and teaching, however, internationalisation is still often viewed as a separate strand of a university's activities consisting mainly of student or staff mobility, as well as joint degree programmes.

This has implications for the design and implementation of internationalised education. Institutional strategies and policies frequently include commitment to internationalisation, but the group found that a common understanding of the concept and its benefits to education provision are often lacking. Such a common understanding can be achieved through joint development and comprehensive communication across the institution. Yet a concise definition of internationalisation, as understood and promoted at the institutional level, is not necessarily required. Instead, there can be an intuitive understanding of the concept within individual groups of institutional actors.

To provide clarity for its work, the group adopted an understanding of internationalisation of higher education based on the definitions developed by Hans De Wit and Fiona Hunter,[4] Betty Leask[5] and the American Council on Education (ACE).[6] Subsequently in this report, internationalised education is understood as being synonymous with good education. Internationalised education is an indispensable tool to educate globally minded, skilled and engaged people. The term 'internationalisation' is thus not synonymous with inter-nationalisation, which in the group's view imparts too much focus on mobility and language. Rather, internationalisation of higher education is seen as a crucial sustainability strategy which should be viewed and approached in the context of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.[7] Conclusions from the student focus group showed that mobility and language issues are – and should remain – central aspects of an institution's internationalisation activities and of students' international learning experiences. However, meaningful efforts to provide education that equips students with global competences need to follow the broader objective of ensuring that education develops perspectives geared towards sustainability. Such perspectives cover all core aspects of university life, including curriculum design[8] and internationalisation at home.

> ⮕ At CEMUS, Uppsala University's Centre for Environment and Development Studies, international students run university courses in English on sustainable development and bring their domestic experience to an international setting. International students from all continents are enrolled in these courses, where peer-to-peer exchange facilitates ideas on how to tackle global sustainability challenges in a natural manner. The exchange facilitates an enhanced global mindset, which translates into more thoughtful solution generation for tackling sustainability challenges.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY – PRACTICES AND APPROACHES

Universities across Europe (and beyond) have varying approaches and are at different stages of internationalisation, due to their diverse institutional, regional and national contexts. This was evident also among the group members. Some universities have a separate, institutional-level internationalisation strategy, which sometimes includes a concise definition of the concept. Other universities have chosen to embed internationalisation as a crosscutting element of their strategies.

Across institutions, there is usually a strong will and interest to enhance their internationalisation efforts through all their activities. Yet, actors involved in these efforts may view or prioritise these efforts differently.

Students are generally equally enthusiastic about the opportunities offered by an internationalised education and are aware of the benefits to their own professional and personal development. They are, however, often confronted with obstacles arising from the organisation of internationalised education, especially with regard to mobility. Both the student focus group and survey results referred to bureaucratic hurdles, including problems with the recognition of credits earned abroad, as well as a lack of support in preparing for the mobility period and in processing and reflecting on its outcomes.

Equally, staff often find insufficient support to develop their skills and competences in contributing to internationalised education. They may also find it difficult to take advantage of internationalised professional development. Moreover, elements of internationalisation in institutional strategies, and the role of individual staff or staff categories in implementing these elements, are not always communicated clearly.

Considering these experiences, the group identified the following practices challenging and sometimes impeding meaningful internationalisation in learning and teaching:

1. A clear, jointly developed and communicated understanding of internationalisation and its importance to providing quality education is often lacking, even when internationalisation is mentioned as a cornerstone in universities' strategy documents. This hinders the development of an internationalisation community-of-practice and shared responsibilities in implementing internationalised education, even though such a community would be the basis for the success of any comprehensive and lasting internationalisation.

2. Internationalisation as a comprehensive and purposeful approach is already successfully established in research, whereas internationalised learning and teaching is often reduced to mobility and language issues. It would be more fruitful to define it more broadly as an approach aiming to equip teachers and students with a mindset, skills and competences geared towards addressing global challenges and solutions, including measures

to develop such a mindset through course content and teaching methods.

3. Many universities have initiatives and programmes developed to promote and foster an internationalised learning experience. These are often initiated and carried out at the department, programme or even individual level. Yet in many cases, concerted efforts to connect all existing activities are lacking. One factor potentially contributing to this lack of a connection might be the widespread existence of international offices as separate organisational units. These may lead to internationalisation activities being understood as a desirable addition to a university's, faculty's or programme's offer, rather than a fundamental aspect of fit-for-purpose education provided to every student, which has implications for both students and teachers:

   a. Since international activities are often targeted at either domestic or international students, these two student populations remain disconnected, even though both would benefit from a common learning experience, e.g., through intercultural communication classes or a curriculum designed to equip all learners with transversal, global skills. In addition, students are rarely aware of their university's full range of internationalisation activities, as reported by the student focus group.

   ➜ The University of St Andrews' First Abroad scheme helps to raise awareness about international opportunities among students. It provides an undergraduate student and a student with an offer for a study place with the opportunity to visit one of the university's partners in the USA and supports the student in an internship on their return. The scheme also guarantees a place on, and funding for, a study abroad programme when they reach their third year, as long as they meet eligibility criteria. As such, the scheme aims to ensure that students and applicants who may not normally be aware of study abroad opportunities are given an early insight into opportunities available, and to provide the financial backing to take advantage of those opportunities. It also enables the university to enhance communication and contact with undergraduates at an early stage of their educational path.

   b. Where internationalisation is not a comprehensive approach to education provision covering all aspects of university life and a mindset pervading an institution's learning and teaching culture, it risks remaining a niche project dependent on the efforts of a few individuals. At the same time, existing efforts by individual teachers to either offer an international learning experience to students (e.g., through their choice of topics or teaching methods, or through contact with international peers during the course) or to enhance their own competences, are not always acknowledged or supported by their supervisors.

4. The issues discussed above lead to students not always being able to process, reflect and communicate the wider added value of their international learning experience, regardless of whether the experience was obtained abroad or at the home university. However, clearly articulating a global mindset and skills as

learning outcomes would facilitate promoting the relevance of internationalised learning and teaching to stakeholders (e.g., employers), social partners, students' families and the local and international community.

Thoughtfully designed, comprehensively communicated and implemented internationalisation measures have the potential to transform university education and its outcomes. The following sections provide recommendations for universities to consider when developing internationalised learning and teaching.

EMBEDDED AND SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONALISATION

As highlighted by the students in the group, current and future learners find ecological, economic and societal sustainability of pressing importance and relevance. This applies also to internationalisation, especially because of its potential to conflict with ecological sustainability. Therefore, mainstreaming efforts at the institutional level are needed to ensure an understanding of internationalised education as one geared towards enhanced, topical and fit-for-purpose student learning. The following considerations could help to safeguard the continued added value and relevance of internationalised education in this new context:

1. Internationalisation should be established as a crosscutting element pervading institutional strategies and policies. This would help ensure its links with every domain of university life, and thus promote an understanding of internationalisation as a key component of high-quality education. If this is not feasible or desirable due to context-dependent circumstances, institutional policies should be designed in a way that ensures clear and extensive communication to all internal and external stakeholders of the key value of internationalisation to education provision.

2. To foster a shared understanding of the value of internationalised education, communication should highlight:

   a. the role of universities in providing individuals with a sense of global citizenship and the skills needed to thrive in this role, such as a global mindset, which includes intercultural, transversal skills and international perspectives;[9]

   b. the potential of internationalising learning and teaching to support universities' role in tackling global issues, especially sustainable development challenges.

➜ The University of Limerick is committed to providing access to education for people from all backgrounds. In 2017, it was designated as a University of Sanctuary, allowing the institution to provide students with a refugee background with access to third level studies. Together with the Access and Mature Student Offices, the Sanctuary Committee developed a number of financial support as well as individual and social needs programmes to aid these students with the transition to university life. The University of Limerick aims to provide an informed safe space in which issues impacting the lives of refugees and asylum seekers can be discussed.

3. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly allocated at the institutional, faculty and programme level to facilitate ensuring that the education provided transmits a global mindset and skills. Clear roles and responsibilities would support the development of an internationalisation community-of-practice while at the same time such a community-of-practice can provide support in clarifying the roles and responsibilities further. A clear articulation of roles and responsibilities can be achieved through formal procedures at the institutional or faculty level, but also more informal processes such as (non-procedural) interaction between staff members. Yet to achieve such a community it is vital to ensure:

   a. internal coordination and communication of an institution's internationalisation activities, e.g., through a centrally organised mapping or by establishing an institution-wide communication framework, thus ensuring that existing activities are acknowledged and allow for scaffolding;

➜ The University of Zaragoza organises an annual one-day event to share all internationalisation activities carried out within the institution. Activities and good-practice examples are showcased, and problems are discussed, with the objective of tackling them. This event is open to all staff members of the institution and the emerging issues are discussed transversally, across all faculties and schools involved in internationalisation activities.

   b. access for both domestic and international students and – both teaching and administrative – staff to orientation programmes, training and continuous professional development to foster vital global skills, e.g., through long-term resourcing, as well as communication of these opportunities. This includes structured and comprehensive support and training before, during and after mobility periods to individuals to fully realise and reflect on the benefits of their international experience to their learning and development. In general, all internationalised learning offered to students and staff should reflect and enable their individual development journeys, and thus be learner-centred.

➜ *Défi International* at the University of Bordeaux is a training programme for academic staff focusing on language, pedagogical and intercultural aspects of international classrooms. The approach aims at developing a cross-campus community of practice around internationalisation of education. Over 300 academic staff have participated in the programme since 2014. In parallel, a career development programme for administrative staff combines language support and short-term mobility to support individuals and teams seeking to improve working practices or gain new skills through international experience. More than 40 administrative staff members have participated in this programme since 2017.

A similar programme, TACE (Teaching Academic Content through English) has been running at the University of Jyväskylä since 2010. It has a formal status in the university pedagogical training for staff at the university.

4. The potential of technology should be explored to ensure that international learning experiences remain transformative, while also being sustainable. For example, technology-enabled alternatives to physical mobility, such as virtual learning mobility through Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange[10] and internet-facilitated networking opportunities with peers across borders, could be more actively promoted.

5. Similar to traditional mobility schemes, alternative offers of internationalised learning experiences also entail the risk of creating (or maintaining) a system in which learning mobility and many other forms of internationalised education remain a habit of privilege. Measures to widen access to internationalised learning should be developed at all stages from planning to adaptation to a new learning environment. Physical learning mobility, for example, requires significant financial and personal investments, which means that not everyone is able to take advantage of such opportunities, for reasons such as financial restrictions or care-taking duties. Virtual learning mobility has the potential to reduce social polarisation, but not if it is seen and used as a "second-class" alternative for those who cannot afford physical learning mobility Hence, support measures for both virtual and physical mobility must be reinforced in parallel. In addition, blended mobility models could be explored.[11] Such efforts to address and tackle inequality and lack of sustainability in current internationalisation practices play a vital role in future-proofing learning and teaching and making education more inclusive.

Many of these measures are mutually reinforcing and play a vital role in establishing and nurturing an internationalisation community-of-practice.

TRANSVERSAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE INTERNATIONALISATION

The curriculum or study programme a student follows is arguably one of the most influential factors in shaping the learning experience. Particular attention should thus be paid to how internationalisation can be embedded in curriculum design. The following considerations could support this process:

1. Curriculum design can be an effective vehicle for internationalisation, if course development and the definition of learning outcomes take into account the unique added value of internationalised learning.

   It could be, for example, worth exploring a curriculum that includes the development of a personal internationalisation plan and an intercultural competency profile by each student during their first year implemented throughout their studies and monitored through self- and formative assessment.[12]

> ➡ The University of Genoa offers a course in international cooperation for development to all students enrolled for the academic year 2019/20 in degree programmes, specialisation schools and PhD programmes. It aims to raise awareness about international cooperation for development and to provide the basic tools for a first orientation in this field, with a view to possible further training and professional development. The course explores the main aspects of international cooperation, sustainable development and intercultural mediation. Scholarships are funded for internships at non-profit organisations and local NGOs in developing countries, as part of the course.

As a parallel action, a framework for assessing internationalisation skills and competences of staff and students, e.g., indicators of successful internationalised education could provide support in determining and highlighting the quality and added value of these skills. These indicators could be part of the universities' quality assurance systems for implementing, monitoring and assessing their study programmes. The results of the projects IntlUni (The Challenges of the Multilingual and Multicultural Learning Space in the International University)[13] and MAGICC (Modularising multilingual and multicultural academic communication competence)[14] could provide inspiration for developing such indicators.

2. Active participation in international networks can also be used in a more targeted way to support curriculum development and to create co-curricular opportunities for students (e.g. in the form of joint degrees) in addition to serving benchmarking purposes and exchange of good practice. Participation in such networks would also expand the internationalisation community-of-practice across research and learning and teaching domains.

> ➡ Moving Mindsets is an initiative at University of Jyväskylä where all bachelor programme students are guided in developing their individual internationalisation plans from their first study year onward where they reflect, plan and discuss their goals for internationalisation as part of their future academic careers. These goals include both language and communication competence, study/work abroad and internationalisation at home.

3. Staff – both teaching and administrative – need to be active participants in the processes outlined above from the beginning. Developing a framework to assess their internationalisation skills and professional development efforts would encourage staff to feel responsible for the success of internationalised education offers and thus develop their skills. The outcomes and training resources developed through EQUiiP (Educational Quality at Universities for inclusive international Programmes)[15] and SUCTI (Systemic University Change Towards Internationalisation)[16] projects could provide some inspiration for this.

Conclusions

Internationalisation is vital for universities to ensure the quality and relevance of their education provision, and to future-proof it in a globally connected and interdependent world. Students and staff need to be equipped with adequate skills to prosper in a rapidly changing and increasingly connected world and to contribute to the solving of fundamental global challenges. With this in mind, internationalisation emerges as a key element of a university's societal responsibility instead of being an additional strand of activity favoured by more privileged institutions.

The examples of practices provided in this report highlight the potential to establish initiatives at various levels. Yet it is important to emphasise that the potential of such actions is multiplied when they are coordinated and connected. No single isolated activity is enough to ensure that a university's vision for internationalised education is implemented in a way that yields meaningful results for institutions, their staff and students, and external stakeholders. Hence, the instruments for measuring internationalisation need to be re-considered, and indicators measuring internationalisation as part institutional quality assurance processes need to be more systemic and systematic in nature.

In order to establish a successful, sustainable, meaningful and inclusive approach to internationalisation, the concept of an institutional ecosystem may assist in developing a systemic and systematic approach at each institution (see Figure 1).

Such an ecosystem should ideally be established through the active involvement of staff and students. It would also require an integration of approaches to local and international or global issues, since the once legitimate distinction between these two spheres is becoming increasingly obsolete. It also has implications for how universities reach out to stakeholders, especially students and staff, but also employers as well as their local, national and international communities.

Especially individual learning journeys of students and staff need to be taken into account and be supported through an offer of learning and training opportunities, which reflects the transversal nature of internationalised education.

Finally, successful internationalisation requires fully functional and comprehensive support structures, not only at the institutional but also at the national level. Hence, a national context that enables every member of an internationalisation ecosystem to fulfil their role is indispensable as well.

Figure 1. Ecology of internationalisation

Annex

EUA LEARNING & TEACHING THEMATIC PEER GROUPS

As part of its work on learning and teaching, EUA carries out activities with the aim to engage with university communities in charge of learning and teaching. One of these activities is coordinating the work of a set of Thematic Peer Groups. The groups consist of universities selected through a call for participation to:

- discuss and explore practices and lessons learnt in organising and implementing learning and teaching in European universities, and to

- contribute to the enhancement of learning and teaching by identifying key recommendations on the selected theme.

The 2019 Thematic Peer Groups, active from March 2019 to February 2020, invited participating universities to peer-learning and exchange of experience, while at the same time they contributed to EUA's policy work as the voice of European universities in policy debates, such as the Bologna Process.

Each group was chaired by one university and supported by a coordinator from the EUA secretariat. The groups met three times to discuss key challenges related to the theme, how to address the challenges through innovative practices and approaches, and what institutional policies and processes support the enhancement in learning and teaching. In addition, the groups were welcome to discuss any other issue that was relevant to the theme. Outside the three meetings, the groups were free to organise their work independently. Members of the groups also attended a final workshop, where they had the opportunity to meet and discuss the outcomes of other groups and address synergies. The workshop was hosted by Utrecht University in the Netherlands on 12 February 2020 and followed by the 2020 European Learning & Teaching Forum from 13-14 February, where focus groups based on the work of the Thematic Peer Groups were organised to obtain feedback on their results.

Composition of the Thematic Peer Group 'Internationalisation in Learning and Teaching'
(starting with the group chair and by alphabetical order of the country name)

- University of Jyväskylä, Finland: Peppi Taalas, Anna Grönlund (chairs)

- University of Bordeaux, France: Joanne Pagèze, Lola Coly-Layani

- University of Limerick, Ireland: Mary Fitzpatrick, Anca Minescu

- University of Genoa, Italy: Micaela Rossi

- University of Zaragoza, Spain: Carmen Pérez-Llantada, Maria Villarroya-Gaudó, Alberto Herranz (student)

- Uppsala University, Sweden: Geir Gunnlaugson, Ulrika Svalfors, Mats Cullhed, Lovisa Håkansson (student)

- National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine: Zoryana Skaletska, Larysa Chovnyuk, Anna Osypchuk

- University of St Andrews, United Kingdom: Clare Peddie, Graham Kirby, Amy Bretherton (student)

- Group coordinator: Helene Peterbauer, Policy & Project Officer, EUA

Endnotes

1   The group would like to thank the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Bordeaux and the University of Limerick for hosting its meetings. The group is also grateful to the members of the other Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups as well as to participants at the 2020 European Learning and Teaching Forum (hosted by Utrecht University, 13-14 February 2020), for their feedback and input.

2   The group thanks the participating students Robert Brennan, Lisa-Marie Corbett, Ellen Gray, Jack Loughnane, Lorna O'Sullivan and Jack Owens for sharing their perspectives and experiences, which enhanced the scope of the views reflected in this report.

3   The survey yielded 37 responses. Despite the limited degree to which this survey is representative, its results nevertheless complemented the insights gained through the student focus group and contributed to refining the conclusions in this report.

4   De Wit & Hunter 2015 revised Jane Knight's "commonly accepted working definition for internationalization as 'the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.'" (De Wit, H. & Hunter, F., 2015, 'The Future of Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe', International Higher Education, 83, p. 3. http://bit.ly/3b2jhKi (accessed 02/12/2019)).

5   Leask, B., 2015, Internationalizing the curriculum. (London & New York: Routledge).

6   The American Council on Education defines "comprehensive internationalization" as "a strategic, coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate policies, programs, and initiatives to position colleges and universities as more globally oriented and internationally connected". See http://bit.ly/2WeRmSW (accessed 02/12/2019).

7   United Nation, Sustainable Development Goals. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300 (accessed 02/12/2019). The fourth goal is to "[e]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and the group members consider internationalised education as one means to support the achievement of this goal.

8   This report uses the term 'curriculum' as referring to the study programme.

9   Cf. Chan, K.C. et al., 2018, 'A Conceptual Framework for Instilling a Global Mindset in Business Students', Journal of Teaching in International Business, 29:1, pp. 4-19. See also Pathak, S., 2018, 'Encouraging Development of a Global Mindset among Students in Online International Management Courses', Journal of Teaching in International Business, 29:1, pp. 20-48.

10   The Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange Impact Report 2018 takes stock of the experiences with the initiative so far and suggests a highly positive impact of the programme on participating individuals' intercultural, professional and transversal skills. See Helm, F. & van der Velden, B., 2019, Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange Impact Report 2018. (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union).

11   For inspiration, see O'Dowd, R. & Lewis, T. (Eds.), 2016, Online intercultural exchange: Policy, pedagogy, practice. (New York & London: Routledge).

12   For inspiration see Little, D. & Simpson, B., 2003, European Language Portfolio: The intercultural component and Learning how to learn. (Council of Europe). http://bit.ly/2TQFqVX (accessed 12/12/2019). Another useful model tool might be the ICOPROMO model: http://bit.ly/3d4dTYE (accessed 12/12/2019).

13   See http://intluni.eu/ (accessed 03/12/2019).

14   See http://www.unil.ch/magicc/home.html (accessed 03/12/2019).

15   See https://equiip.eu/ (accessed 22/01/2020).

16   See https://suctiproject.com/ (accessed 22/01/2020).