

# Internationalisation @ Home

International awareness and competence are employability traits desired of graduates in most fields (Jones and Killick 2013). Previous studies of internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) have focused heavily on international students, home students abroad and transnational partnerships. There is an identified need to address home students, as much as 80% of whom have limited contact with internationalisation directly (Jones 2013; Jones and Killick 2013; HEPI 2015). Current research on this is sparse, and does not address student views, effects of teaching changes, or the situation across a range of disciplines.

## Question 1:

What views and understandings of internationalisation do undergraduate home students enter HE with, across a range of subjects? Do these suggest any universal pedagogies for developing internationalisation at home?

## Question 2:

Are there significant subject-level differences in the student views? If so, do these undermine or coexist with universal pedagogies for internationalisation?

## Question 3:

Is there a significant bias in the literature towards certain subjects? If so, do the views of undergraduate home students in other subjects justify the literature as representative?

## Literature Review

A wealth of literature has emerged in the last few decades under the heading 'internationalisation of the curriculum'. Most of this research looks at enhancing the experience of international students. Very little of it refers to home students at all, and where it does so it is largely about study abroad. However, there has been some recent interest in developing intercultural/international awareness, or 'internationalisation at home' (IaH) (Jones and Killick 2007; Beelen and Jones 2015a). Literature on IaH suggests that a balance between generic and subject-specific elements is required (Leask 2012), and that strong beliefs by some staff about the irrelevance of internationalisation to their discipline provide a barrier to further development (Leask 2013). This perspective is reinforced by the fact that almost 50% of journal articles on IoC in the past 5 have drawn exclusively on Business subjects as evidence sources. In terms of pedagogies, there is a strong focus in the literature on experiential learning as a way of exposing students to international experiences (Wang *et al.* 2014), such as by working with local cultural or religious groups (Beelen and Jones 2015b). However, there is very limited literature on how home-based students see internationalisation in relation to their subjects.

## Student Views of Internationalisation Across the Disciplines

Our survey looked at first year students at the beginning of their studies. Exploring prior understandings is important to help shape the curriculum and pedagogic approaches. This research responds to an identified gap in the literature. Key findings included:

- University of Plymouth home students are generally positive about internationalisation in the curriculum in all subjects
- Their understandings of Global Citizenship are erratic and not similar to the presumed meaning in the literature - student definitions lack personal agency or responsibility
- Student understandings of Cross-Cultural Competency are very consistent, clearly articulated, and nearly always involved personal agency and responsibility
- There was the expected divide between Science and Business/Social Science disciplines. The latter were strongly pro-IoC and the former much less so (but still not overall negative). However, Biology was more similar to the Business/Social Sciences than to the other Science subjects, while English Literature was more similar to the Science subjects.
- Science students felt *multiculturalism* was not relevant, but that a global perspective was useful for employment. They felt that their subjects were objective, empirical, and culturally universal, therefore international without needing special focus
- English Literature students felt multiculturalism was relevant, but also had the strongest *qualitative* resistance to internationalisation. They cited that the subject was 'English' literature, therefore not international...even though the module was about Homer's *Odyssey*.
- Business and Social Work students were much more positive about all aspects of internationalisation, and had almost no negative outliers - all other subjects had many.
- Exclusively Business students strongly felt that international students in one's classes and/or study abroad were necessary for international learning. This implies that internationalisation cannot be learned by home

students without these elements.

- The previous two findings, with the Business bias in the literature, suggest that current trends in IoC for home students wrongly assume an environment rich with international students and study abroad opportunities. Further, it presumes a *recognised* international element to the subjects themselves.
- Education and Social Work students noted the value of multiculturalism in the *home* environment they expect to work in.
- The impact of specific teaching methods on student views was unclear. Nevertheless, some tentative patterns were present.
  - Several pedagogies showed as moderately influential on positive student views over the whole dataset. Specifically, those which drew attention to international or multicultural aspects of the subject directly - those which were *explicit and contextualised*.
  - Looked at by subject, this all almost entirely disappeared.
  - Thus, subjects which taught these ways also had students with more positive views, but we cannot say whether one has influenced the other just yet.

## University Strategies: Content Analysis of Internationalisation Policy

We reviewed the University Strategies for 117 UK HEIs for approaches to internationalisation:

- All refer to developing internationalisation as a key aim and selling-point.
- Nearly all only relate this to international students, expanding recruitment overseas, transnational partnerships, and international research.
- The current league table rankings also only account for percent of international students and amount of international research.
- Very strategies few mention of home students. Those that do refer to the benefits to them of having more international students, or of study abroad.
- Only three addressed non-mobile home students directly.

## Recommendations:

There are many things that can be done to bring internationalisation into the curriculum for home students. Other resources on this site offer several examples of practice, but there are also some universal guidelines that can be applied in any subject and any module:

1. Focus on identifying international and multicultural features specific to your subject and presenting these to students *explicitly* and in a strongly contextualised way. At Plymouth, the immersive module is an excellent opportunity to do this, as subject context is the core aim of these modules. Done at this stage, this awareness may positively colour students' perceptions other internationalisation of the curriculum initiative that follow, such as multicultural campus events which they may otherwise view as irrelevant to their course.
2. Focus on promoting the term Cross-Cultural Competence. Students appear to grasp inherently the meaning of this term across subjects, including a sense of personal responsibility.
3. Avoid using the term Global Citizenship, at least in first-year. Students poorly and inconsistently understand it, and do not regard it as something in their control or that they should be directly part of.
4. When looking for ideas on internationalising a programme or module, consider critically the breadth of evidence used in the studies you review. Recommendations from the predominately business-centric research may be based on good research, but may not address some views or situations of students in your subject. Note as well, that many studies about internationalisation in non-business subjects, nevertheless draw on business-subject sources for interpretation.

## References

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