

## Chapter 18. What does internationalisation or interculturalisation look like in the future in the Higher Education Sector?

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### Abstract

What is internationalisation? What is interculturalisation? What will these concepts look like in the future? Will they exist or move beyond their current state? Where are universities/higher education institutions headed with their international strategies as they prepare global citizens for the future? How will universities of the future cater for international students? These are the questions considered in this final chapter. This chapter contains reflections from the team members. We begin by defining internationalisation and interculturalisation in relation to employability. This is followed with reflections on the project as it was experienced within the six participating universities. We then bring together the reflections to highlight the key themes, which inform recommendations for practice and future research.

### Introduction

Internationalisation in tertiary education is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003). The main components of internationalisation of higher education are global competition for talents, recruitment of international students, development of international branch campuses, exchange programs for students, staff and scholars, internationalisation of the curriculum, and research and education partnerships between institutions regionally and internationally (Khorsandi Taskoh, 2014; Knight, 2004; Sanderson, 2008). Beck (2012) asserts that internationalisation is a product of and response to globalisation. Such comments have logically led internationalisation to be critiqued as having an economic orientation: indeed the internationalisation of higher education has been criticised as an international competition for the recruitment of students from privileged countries in order to generate revenue, secure national profile, and build international reputation (Khorsandi Taskoh, 2014).

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Enhanced employability is acknowledged as the primary motivation for many internationally mobile students. For example, Griffith University, through its Graduate Attribute statement, explicitly recognises the need for all graduates to be competent for work in culturally and linguistically diverse environments, as well as having a well-developed sense of social awareness, and the opportunity to be part of a diverse student body, as well as undertake an international experience during their study program, (Griffith University, 2014). This is similar to the Deakin University's Graduate Learning Outcomes that ensures all courses (programs) are highly personal, engaging and relevant where learners are educated for jobs and skills of the future (Deakin University, 2016a). In addition, local students are given the opportunity to undertake global placements, and study abroad experiences and international students are given all the necessary advice, support and encouragement on a range of matters whilst studying in Australia (Deakin University, 2016b).

The Queensland University of Technology's Graduate Capabilities echo these values with a focus on social and ethical responsibility and an understanding of Indigenous and International perspectives (QUT, 2011) and the explicit priorities to "broaden the composition of the student population" (QUT, 2016, p. 3). QUT also aims to have 20% of students engage in an international experience during their studies by 2019 (QUT, 2016, p. 9). The university has a strong focus on developing a systematic and quality assured approach to facilitate new models of collaboration that will contribute to make the university a global innovation hub; provide effective and appropriate work experience placements for international students; increase the proportion of high quality international higher degree research students and promote a whole of curriculum framework which emphasises intercultural competency and international perspectives at course level. At Curtin University, internationalisation is a core element of employability development, which is defined as developing the ability to find, create and sustain meaningful work across lengthening working lives and multiple work settings (Bennett, 2016). In operational terms, the university's employability strategy emphasises student satisfaction, retention and the quality and distinctiveness of the student experience. This includes student mobility and courses designed with direct input from global industry, so that students graduate "with the skills and knowledge they need in the ever-changing global marketplace" (Curtin University, n.d.).

Monash University aims to empower its staff, students and alumni to make a positive impact globally. The university claims to be *international* in its research, community relationships, as well as international visitor and study opportunities. Moreover, Monash boasts a large multicultural community of staff and students and multiple overseas teaching locations. Monash University believes that "a global perspective and internationally recognised skills are essential to thrive in a globalised economy" (Monash University, 2016). Although international students are offered a range of support services before and after international students' arrival in Australia, their experiences vary. This is especially the case for students who undertake placements in various Australian workplace settings, thus undergoing multi-socialisation and internationalisation processes outside the university. As discussed in this volume, true interculturalisation is desirable but it becomes possible only when all stakeholders are aware of its complex nature and are willing to engage in effective practice. The model described in Chapter 2 of this volume proposes an approach that encompasses several crucial dimensions of successful work placement experiences. It is hoped that application of the model to multiple discipline and institutional contexts promotes development of stakeholders' skills and competencies in terms of interculturalisation, reflective thinking and practices, cultural development and positive multi-socialisation experiences.

Cross-cultural awareness and interaction are also key aspects of becoming globally competent. According to Curran (2003), global competence is the ability to become familiar with an environment, negotiate the norms, and reflect on tasks completed within a new culture. Curran writes that familiarity with a new environment meant being aware of one's own personal characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, cultural biases and norms, motivations and concerns, all of which are essential to the facilitations of intercultural interaction and which provide sources of continual learning. Moreover, these traits enable mindful consideration of a culture "on its own merit, without judgmental comparison to what one may already believe" (Curran, 2003). Surely then, an open-mind, respect for all and knowledge of all cultures and world issues will bring about global competence.

Another interpretation of internationalisation is interculturalisation (as explored in Chapter 1). Hunter, Pearson, and Gutiérrez's (2015, p. i) see interculturalisation as an approach that "understands others first, yourself second, and in a truly reflective nature, the introspective analysis of teaching and learning". In this sense, interculturalisation exercises tolerance and openness; it leads individuals to consider critical events from perspectives that differ from their own.

Successful intercultural exchanges demand positive engagement between all stakeholders. They also require difference to be acknowledged as a component of accepting the beliefs and cultural backgrounds of others. In the project that forms the basis of this volume, internationalisation and interculturalisation were experienced differently according to the environment, context and participants involved. We turn next to the reflections of these experiences.

## **Reflections**

*Dawn Bennett and Sonia Ferns (Curtin University)*

The Australia-wide collegiality and collaboration afforded through the WISP project was pivotal to successful outcomes and personal benefits for the researchers at Curtin University. The robust discussions among the project team and sharing of expertise enhanced our personal capacity and scholarly capital, enabling greater awareness of the complexity of workplace learning for international students. While the significant challenges international students encounter in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placements became more apparent to us, so did the drive for these students to optimise the benefits of these authentic learning experiences. Our research findings exposed the value of workplace mentors for international students and the motivation with which they seek input and feedback on performance from supervisors. Students demonstrated eagerness to build on strengths and adjust to the cultural context of an Australian workplace with the ultimate aim of gaining proficiency to enhance global competitiveness in a dynamic job market. The importance of experiential learning, a scaffolded curriculum, and support for students in workplace learning, emerged as integral to the development of the functional and cognitive aspects of employability. Specifically, analysis of students' reflective comments across their WIL experience using Krathwohl's (2002) revision of Bloom's taxonomy illustrated the progression of our students from foundational skills to the more complex skills of analysis and critical thinking. The uniqueness of each participant highlighted the influence of cultural capital and personal strengths on outcomes from a WIL placement. Furthermore, our own professional collaboration and shared expertise within the institutional framework affirmed our intellectual and personal connection, resulting in a quality outcome from the WISP project and laying the foundation for future collaboration. The influence of WIL and its potential to transform students' perceptions of self-efficacy and workplace proficiency was realised through the evidence we collected, analysed and validated as a team.

*Dawn Joseph (Deakin University)*

As an international academic, I identify with some of the changes, challenges and dilemmas International Students encounter. They come from different and diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds where the teaching methods, styles, and expectations are tested (Andrade, 2006). They have to make financial, social and emotional adjustments abroad. Interestingly, they do not exercise their voices often enough if marginalised or excluded. Their prior knowledge or skills is not well received, and at times a lack of interest is shown towards them. Deakin University fosters an inclusive and vibrant teaching and learning environment in terms of policy (Deakin University, 2016c). While promoting respect and valuing students and staff, racism is not tolerated. This is not always upheld! I agree with Leask (2013) that it is essential to embed and integrate intercultural learning into the culture of the university. International students, as do I, contribute to the economic wealth and cultural enrichment of the university, providing an international perspective to teaching and research. Through this project I have also learnt more about the understanding, or lack thereof, by academics and professional staff about international students and their diverse learning needs. I do applaud them for the immense hours and duty of care they offer to international students. Though this university offers support to acclimatise student's academic, sociocultural and linguistic experience through social interaction, international student presence is not enough to promote intercultural relations that foster international understandings. As a tertiary music educator, it was exciting to see how 'play workshops' helped international students make connections with Early Childhood Education and Care settings. From this project I realise just how important it is to build strong and trusting relationships (student and academic) where internationalising the curriculum is beneficial for international student retention and satisfaction (Ackerman & Schibrowsky, 2007).

*Anna Podorova (Monash University)*

For me, this study was a journey full of discovery and meaningful, at times confrontational, encounters. The findings confirmed to me that international students bring useful work and life experiences which could benefit universities and workplaces. Unfortunately, these skills and knowledge are not always utilised by the stakeholders. I have also become more familiar with practical challenges facing mentors and coordinators in workplaces; unfortunately, overcoming such challenges as lack of time and insufficient physical space is often beyond their control, which has a negative impact on staff and student interaction. Despite these issues, effective approaches to the placement preparation and support to staff and students during practicum were evident. Seeing such approaches in practice was a highlight of the project. Prompting academics, workplace staff and students to reflect on what lay behind those successes allowed them and myself to evaluate our current practices and explore ways to improve placement experiences for all involved. Another important observation for me was that there were significant overlaps in effective workplace practice approaches for different disciplines, and, more importantly, for both domestic and international student cohorts. I hope that the project findings inform a holistic approach to student workplace experiences in Australian educational settings.

*Liz Jones (Griffith University)*

The WISP project has been an opportunity for me to learn about the experiences of international students undertaking psychology work placements. I understand so much more the challenges and opportunities they experience on placement, and the skills and resources they use to manage these. Moreover, I have learnt about the crucial and multi-faceted role of supervision in either assisting students or creating another challenge for them. I've also had the opportunity to learn more about how other disciplines manage work placements for students, including the different cultures of different disciplines, thus also making us aware of the cultural practice of psychology. And through all of this not only has my own cultural competence been enhanced, but we have been able to implement a range of changes to our work placements in psychology, that are benefitting both international and domestic students. Supervisors who have participated in workshops on our findings have similarly reported making changes to their practice, as they seek to balance treating each student as an individual, while also integrating the students' cultural

background into supervision. In particular, a core competency in psychology training is cross-cultural competence. The voices of our international students have provided a more extended and nuanced understanding for us of what it means to be cross-culturally competent in psychological practice and how this benefits other students, organisations and clients. We thank our international students for “shining a light on the things we take for granted”.

*Erin O'Connor Queensland University of Technology)*

An unintended outcome from this project has also been the discovery that much of what enriches, enhances or degrades and limits international student learning in workplaces is also relevant to domestic students, in some form or another. Without minimising the particular context, strengths and needs of international students, it has been very useful to note that the improvements needed to support international students often also enhances the experience of all students. International students are also critically important members in the broad learning networks proposed by some authors (e.g., Bridgstock, 2016) as a move towards more sophisticated, distributed and networked models of universities within their communities. In the current research, it was clear that host organisations and universities who engaged with international students as valued partners in learning were able to benefit from the international students' contributions as well as support the students. The full benefits of these networks (perhaps digital and global) among international students, other students, host organisations and universities, based on mutual respect, have powerful potential.

*Marleen Westerveld (Griffith University)*

Being involved in the WISP project has prompted us to evaluate our current practices related to international students in the Master of Speech Pathology program at Griffith University. Up until this point, few specific accommodations have been made, partly due to the reasonably small numbers of international students in the program and also because entry into the program for students whose first language is not English requires a reasonably high score on the International Language Testing System (IELTS, 2016) This means that generally speaking, linguistic competence is not an issue, and cultural diversity may have been overlooked. However, listening to some of our past and present international students' voices (in Chapter 10), has illuminated the unique strengths these students bring to the program as well as highlighting some of the challenges they may experience in both the university and work placement contexts. As a result, micro-level initiatives have been planned for future cohorts. These include creating better peer-support systems for international students immediately upon acceptance into the program (eg mentoring program) as well as organising whole class tutorial sessions in which cultural and linguistic diversity are explicitly discussed to raise cultural awareness in all our students.

*Donna Tangen and Marilyn Campbell (Queensland University of Technology)*

In the past few years, teacher education has had increasingly fewer international students enrolled than in the past. However, many students who migrate to Australia to study teacher education often display similar characteristics to those traditionally attributed to international students, particularly in areas of English language proficiency and lack of understanding of the culture of Australian schooling (Geer, 2008; Han & Singh, 2007; Spooner-Lane, Tangen, & Campbell, 2009). These pre-service teachers may have to come to Australia to complete their high school in order to gain a permanent residency status or have been given permanent residency in other ways so are classified as *domestic* students rather than international students. Little research has followed this so-called group of domestic pre-service teachers to understand how they may be positioned best to become teachers in Australia. Woodward (2010) suggests that the support for international pre-service teachers tends to be piecemeal and under-researched; however, support is necessary for improving their progress through to a successful completion of their degree as teachers.

*Georgina Barton and Kay Hartwig (Griffith University)*

Positive and rewarding experiences for international students in higher education are critical for success for all universities. Globalisation has indeed impacted on the ways in which we work across the world but it is essential we continue to reflect on this work to ensure improvement and quality. For some time, we have both worked within and across culturally diverse contexts as teachers, educators and program directors. We have a strong commitment to provide quality and culturally-appropriately learning experiences for students regardless of their background. A key reward as co-leaders on the WISP project was working with colleagues across a number of universities and disciplines. Being able to learn from the successes at other university sites and the strategies employed by different disciplines was a highlight. Being able to view situations from another's point of view is not always an easy task, but one that is critical if mutual benefits are to be gained. It is undoubtedly a daunting exercise to move to another country to undertake study and even more so when entering an unfamiliar workplace environment. Each university has an obligation to make international students feel at home, welcomed and supported, however, sometimes this can be overlooked. We both feel passionate about continuing research in this area and promoting the successful stories from international students who undertake work placements as part of their study programs in Australia. The project has highlighted issues that can be improved for our international students and we will continue to strive for this, as well, our own cultural competence has been enhanced. We believe that we are fortunate to be able to work with and learn from our international students as they embark on their studies and work placements.

*Anne Kelly (Independent Evaluator)*

As the evaluator of the WISP project my first key task was to monitor how the study was meeting the project outcomes and deliverables, some of which were designed to contribute to the continuing improvement of work placements for international students. My second key task was to determine how effectively these specifications were met. Throughout the two-year research process, it was evident that both the aims and objectives of the project assumed an ever-present focus by the key participants and, ultimately, were all achieved. This was a very satisfying position from which to report to the funding body. In addition to these nominated outcomes and deliverables, however, new conceptual and practical learning as well as additional products and actions ensued from the project. Examples of the increased types of knowledge gained, the tangible materials produced and the initiatives that are being planned are made explicit in the authors' reflections in this section. For my part, as well as the satisfaction resulting from engaging in a well-managed, successful project, I acquired a deeper understanding of salient concepts such as *internationalisation* and *cross-cultural awareness* which I then employed in framing up my analysis and interpretation of selected project data and subsequently in writing a chapter in this publication. I also acquired a more developed understanding of the range and diversity of work placement programs operating within Australian universities and, indeed, of the work placement stakeholders and their views on this increasingly important aspect of university life.

## **Conclusion**

The reflections have revealed some key themes. These include: *challenges for international students*; important role of the *supervisor/mentor*; *overlap between disciplines and domestic and international students* and the important *role for universities*.

Generally, *international students* will face *challenges* during their studies and work placements. They will need support both at the university and the workplace. At times, staff and supervisors/mentors do not fully understand the diverse needs of the international student cohort. It is important that adjustments are made to ensure successful experiences for the international students.

Whilst all disciplines have their own discrete differences, there was certainly an *overlap between the disciplines* in the challenges for the international students, the university and its staff and the workplace and its staff. Also evident and mentioned by the team members is the overlap between *international student issues and domestic student issues* when faced with work placements. It was noted that the improvements made initially for the international students also benefitted the domestic student cohort. The *supervisor/mentor* plays a very key role in successful placements. The supervisor/mentor needs to respect what the international students bring to the workplace. When respect is valued by both the supervisor/mentor and the student, students will be motivated to seek feedback and input into strategies for improvement.

For the team involved in the WISP project, they valued the opportunity for the collaborations across university sites and discipline areas. They believed quality outcomes were achieved and they had the opportunity to witness and learn from seeing successful outcomes. This then improved their own practices and ideas. The team members are keen to develop future collaborations and valued the time to enhance their own competencies in internationalisation and interculturalisation areas.

All the contexts of education and workplaces should be open to diverse peoples and cultures and there should be no barriers. International students should be welcomed and treated with respect. Can this be a reality? Can in the future we celebrate difference and always learn from one another? Can education be the key? Gribble (2014, p.2), writing within an Australian context argues “international students require tailored programs and support services in order to create a level playing field with local students”. If universities want to follow a path to internationalisation, they need to use international networks to promote issues of global interest. They need to have a dynamic body of staff and students who can learn from each other to create lasting networks and also study an internationalised curriculum. Mutual respect and valuing each other’s strengths will provide an important foundation for successful internationalisation and interculturalisation. Universities, as detailed earlier in the chapter, all foster inclusiveness, promoting respect for all students. Intercultural learning is embedded in their policies, strategies and statements. The *challenge for all universities* is to ensure that the culture of the university and workplaces involved in work integrated learning for students enacts these policies and statements.

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