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'Beyond the numbers - levels and layers of internationalisation to utilise and support growth and diversity'

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Abstract

Internationalisation is seen by many Australian universities as critical to success in an increasingly globalised society in which there are economic imperatives to sell educational products and services in the world marketplace. The discourse of internationalisation is often focused on the movement of students and levels of internationalisation are equated with numbers of international students on campus, numbers of offshore programs, percentage of revenue earned offshore etc. However, universities also have a clear responsibility to prepare graduates with international perspectives, who can be active and critical participants in world society. This paper describes levels and layers of internationalisation 'beyond the numbers'. It outlines a framework for the measurement of student achievement of internationalisation objectives at four different levels in undergraduate programs. It goes on to describe resources developed for both students and staff to assist the achievement of internationalisation objectives, including an online 'Internationalisation of the Curriculum Information Kit' which supports the development of different 'layers' of internationalisation. The paper argues that by focusing on broader internationalisation objectives we can both utilize and support growth and diversity.

Paper

Introduction

Internationalisation is not a new concept in higher education, the 'wandering scholar' having been an integral and accepted member of the higher education community since the Middle Ages. However, over the centuries the shape and purpose of internationalisation in the higher education environment has undergone many changes. In Australia internationalisation in higher education has undergone transformations in both intention and interpretation over a relatively short period of time. It has moved from a focus on, and definition in terms of, 'aid', to a focus on and definition in terms of 'trade' in less than 50 years (Back, Davis, & Olsen, 1997). It has been constructed, represented and interpreted in a variety of ways - as fundamentally concerned with the recruitment of fee-paying overseas students and economic survival within a climate of ever-decreasing public funding; with the process of curriculum innovation and reform and cross-cultural interaction and harmony; with the building of links with other nations; and as a threat to the quality and standard of Australian higher education. Internationalisation in higher education is not a neutral concept – it is the subject of vigorous debate, a stage on which, increasingly, we see ideological struggles being played out. The different perspectives on internationalisation are the result of differing rationales and ideologies which position participants and observers of internationalisation in different roles and value positions, attributing varied and often conflicting motivations to them. Each perspective is associated with a different way of speaking about internationalisation. These discourses both represent and construct internationalisation within the Australian higher education community and within particular sites within that community, the institutions themselves.

In recent years the discourse of internationalisation in higher education in Australia has focused on various economically focused 'activities', such as the movement of fee-paying students into Australia, which emanate primarily from an economic rationale for internationalisation. This discourse assumes that social and political benefits flow automatically from an increase in numbers and equates levels of internationalisation with factors such as the numbers of international students on campus, the number of offshore programs, the establishment of 'offshore' campuses and the percentage of an institution's revenue which is earned offshore. There are however, many levels and layers of internationalisation beyond such numbers. These are not as easily counted or defined, but are nevertheless just as important. This paper argues that it is critical to focus on the levels and layers of internationalisation 'beyond the numbers' if Australia is to maintain a reputation as a quality provider of international education in the future.

Rationales for internationalisation

Knight (1997) describes four rationales for internationalisation: political, economic, academic and cultural and social. Political rationales are essentially those that link internationalisation with the preservation of national identity; they are a response to the perceived threat of the homogenisation of culture and national identity resulting from globalisation. Economic rationales are those associated with the generation of income from international student fees and international consultancies, academic rationales are those associated with the achievement of international academic standards for teaching and research and cultural and social rationales are those which cite the need for improved intercultural understanding and communication as key drivers of policy and practice in the area of internationalisation. Institutions may have a number of rationales for their involvement in international activities of various types but Knight maintains that it is essential that institutions are clear about their rationales and motivations for internationalising, as this will determine the most appropriate approach to, and blend of, strategies for implementation and achievement of internationalisation objectives. She argues that clear links between rationales for involvement in internationalisation and the type and level of services and resources provided to staff and students is desirable. Thus, if cultural and social rationales for internationalisation are important to an institution the development of improved intercultural understanding and communication should be key drivers of policy and practice in the area of internationalisation, internationalisation goals should be focused on all students, and strategies designed to develop skills, knowledge and values in all students.

Constructions of internationalisation

The internationalisation of higher education is a phenomenon at international level, national level and local (institutional) level. At an international level the definition of internationalisation put forward by Knight (1994) has gained widespread acceptance in the developed world. Knight, a Canadian, defined internationalisation of higher education as 'the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution' (Knight 1994). Thus at the international level internationalisation is accepted as a multi-faceted process rather than a one-off event or series of activities, it is clearly associated with intercultural learning and it is seen to have an impact on teaching, research and service functions of higher education institutions.

At a regional level, however, the character of internationalisation in higher education and attitudes towards it, have developed differently and distinctly in different parts of the world. This has largely been in response to different political, economic and socio-cultural contexts. For example, in Europe internationalisation in higher education is primarily focused on the mobility and organised exchange of students and teaching staff across national borders within Europe. This is promoted primarily through the ERASMUS scheme – the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students – which offers grants that both directly and indirectly help universities to develop links and consortia that transcend national boundaries (Teekens, 1999). In Australia the focus of internationalisation at a national level has changed in response to Government policy initiatives from a focus on 'Aid' to 'Trade' to 'International Education' (Back et al 1997). During the Aid phase (1951-1985) the numbers and the cultural composition of overseas students studying in Australian higher education institutions were restricted and manipulated by the policies of successive governments with various political ideologies and motivations. And while most overseas students studying in Australia were sponsored students, there was growing interest from, and a slowly growing number of, fee-paying students. In 1985, amid growing dissatisfaction with the Colombo Plan and after two Commonwealth Committees of Enquiry, Australia moved into a market-based approach to internationalisation characterised by an almost exclusive focus on economic issues in Government policy relating to overseas students (Smart, Volet and Ang 2000, p4). This policy allowed unlimited numbers of overseas students to enrol in Australian universities provided they met entry requirements, paid full tuition fees and didn't displace an Australian student. Universities were thus able to pursue international student enrolments as a means of supplementing the per capita funding provided by the Federal Government. In 1992 attempts were made to refocus Australian Government policy on international education to include not only economic benefits, but also the cultural,

interpersonal and political dimensions of internationalisation including the importance of internationalisation for international relations (IDP Education Australia 1995, p14). Ten years later, in 2002, 'internationalisation as an education policy direction has a broad and integrative meaning' (Gallagher 2002), including 'trade in education services, both exporting and importing – overseas students studying in Australia and Australian students studying overseas; Australian education services being provided offshore and foreign services available in Australia.' (p3-4). Gallagher goes on to list foreign language learning, intercultural learning, Australian institutions having an 'international outlook' and contributing to international research, scholarship and knowledge applications as other aspects of internationalisation. Nor has aid been completely abandoned – 'some AUD300M in education aid was provided in 2001' (p3), but 'we are about good international citizenry where it can be shown to deliver tangible results for our interests and those of other people...Australia must keep developing its relations in Asia, where we have abiding economic, security and other interests' (Downer 2002 in Gallagher 2002, p3). Thus today, while trade is still important, and aid is still significant (if somewhat self-interested and increasingly so in the wake of the Bali Bombing) there is recognition that there are other important motivations for the internationalisation of higher education in Australia.

It is perhaps not surprising then that, at an institutional level, many people are involved in internationalisation activities and different groups within a single institution often construct and represent it quite differently. Across different institutions and even within the same institution, internationalisation is spoken about differently by stakeholders who contribute to it in different ways. For example, an academic involved in a research project will speak about internationalisation as primarily involving collaboration with researchers from other parts of the world. An academic involved in teaching a course locally will speak about internationalisation in terms of broadening the curriculum to include international examples and case studies. The marketing unit will focus on internationalisation as the recruitment of international students and establishing and maintaining links with international recruitment agents. However, a student support unit primarily involved in working with international students to support their transition into local culture and lifestyle and assisting international students to meet the language demands of study will see internationalisation in issues such as the availability of language and other support services and resources. Professional development staff will focus on the curriculum implications of internationalisation and on working with academics to meet the challenges of developing international perspectives in graduates. International students are often concerned to socialise and learn with local students, as well as with study. Local students may see internationalisation as primarily associated with a period of study abroad in a partner institution or the opportunity to interact on-line with students from around the world on an assessment task. The diverse rationales for and approaches to internationalisation within and across institutions are reflected in an equally diverse range of ways of speaking about internationalisation.

These different ways of speaking about internationalisation may be loosely defined as 'discourses of internationalisation' reflecting different rationales, motivations and activities. These discourses are not independent and the relationships between them are complex and multi-faceted. For example, we can talk about the need to recruit a more diverse student population from an economic rationale perspective as well as from an academic rationale perspective. In the former, a more diverse population of student makes us more attractive as a destination and can therefore be used as a marketing tool to attract even more students from an even more diverse range of countries. In the latter, a more diverse student population provides the opportunity to incorporate a broader range of cultural perspectives into the learning environment, and has the potential to enrich the experience of all students. Universities have a clear responsibility to prepare graduates with international, cross-cultural perspectives, who can be active and critical participants in world society. If, however, at an institutional and national level we allow an 'economic' discourse of internationalisation to dominate, that is, we speak about internationalisation as primarily concerned with generating income, with numbers of students and with activities that are not associated with the broader goals of internationalisation such as academic and socio-cultural goals, we run the risk of blemishing our reputation and of losing our way as institutions of learning primarily concerned with producing and disseminating knowledge and preparing graduates for life in an increasingly global, interdependent world. In this world, an understanding of our own culture as well as other cultures, and the ability to see professional issues from a variety of national and cultural perspectives will be increasingly important. Thus in our institutions it is important to focus on learning outcomes for graduates and to focus internationalisation goals on learning outcomes rather than on numbers and dollars; to support and utilize growth and diversity through an approach to internationalisation that recognizes the value of international students in cultural as well as dollar terms, and provides services and support for the development of international perspectives in all students. And it is equally important that these academic and socio-cultural aspects of internationalisation are strongly reflected in our public discourse about internationalisation – so that it is clear that when we talk about internationalisation we are not only talking about numbers, dollars and economic activity.

To this end it is useful to consider the different layers of internationalisation at an institutional level in order to better understand the depth and complexity of the concept. These layers should be reflected in the discourse

both within and beyond each institution. Like the layers of an onion, each one can be peeled away, as an entity in itself, but also related to and to some extent dependant upon all others to create the whole. The layers of internationalisation at an institutional level include policy, program, course, teacher and student layers.

Layers of internationalisation

A conceptualization of internationalisation as consisting of different layers within an institution focuses attention on a broader range of internationalisation issues than those associated with marketing, student recruitment and balanced budgets; it shifts the primary emphasis from numbers to learning outcomes; it constructs internationalisation as being concerned with academic and socio-cultural issues as well as with recruitment and revenue generation and gives it a broader, deeper, more integrated focus. In this section I will talk briefly about each layer in general terms and then provide examples of resources that have been developed to support implementation of internationalisation within this layer at the University of South Australia (UniSA). All resources have been gathered together in an online Internationalisation Information Kit making them readily accessible to staff and part of UniSA's public statement concerning the meaning of internationalisation. However, the layers of internationalisation described, and the resources that support them, are also relevant to other institutions of higher education.

The policy layer

This is the layer of internationalisation which is concerned with institutional definition as evidenced in official, public, enforceable statements. Such statements are the background against which, and the context within which, all internationalisation activity takes place. They inform action and emphasis and are an indication of the values of the institution.

The University of South Australia does not have an 'internationalisation policy'. However it has a clear policy position in relation to internationalisation. This position is embedded in its mission statement, goals and plans and is clearly outlined in a key policies and codes. The University's Mission Statement emphasises equity and the application of knowledge in professional settings. It indicates a commitment to the pursuit of scholarship, research and intellectual innovation that is responsive to the local, national and international communities it serves. A commitment to internationalisation is also evident in several of the University's goals which include a commitment to meeting the needs of all student groups, fostering responsible social and cultural analysis and debate and to being recognised internationally for educating professionals, applying knowledge and serving the community. UniSA's Anti-Racism Policy relates to all aspects of the University and its operations. This policy promotes and enhances awareness, understanding and acceptance regarding the differences that exist between cultural groups and acknowledges and celebrates the breadth of experience and intellectual resources that people from diverse backgrounds bring to the life of the university. It affirms the University's commitment to a culturally inclusive environment, one which not only recognises, but validates, each groups' experiences through the content of courses and the teaching, learning and assessment arrangements. These commitments and intentions are incorporated in a range of ways into more practical guidelines for staff. The University's Code of Good Practice: University Teaching defines good teaching practice as being student-centred - sensitive to the different backgrounds, needs, values and experiences of all student groups and Teaching Guides and workshops are available to assist staff to teach a culturally diverse student body and to internationalise their teaching practices.

These policies and guidelines indicate strong academic, social and cultural rationales for internationalisation. Their practical application in the teaching activities of the institution has been an area of significant challenge— the implications for teaching and learning practices being varied, complex and often discipline specific (Leask 2000). At UniSA, as in any institution, the policy layer of internationalisation cannot be interpreted and implemented without due regard for other layers of internationalisation 'beyond the numbers'.

The program layer

Programs may be internationalised in various ways, including through the structure, the teaching and learning processes and through the definition and achievement of student learning outcomes. In this context structure refers to the organisation of the learning experiences and content of programs. The choices available to students within the structure of a program will determine their pathway through it to a defined set of outcomes. Desired student learning outcomes can also be overtly related to internationalisation. Programs may also be recognised by international professional accrediting bodies.

At the University of South Australia several resources have been developed to assist staff to identify how aspects of a program can be internationalised. These resources include a detailed statement on 'Structural options and pathways for program design for internationalisation' as well as a related self assessment questionnaire. The Program Structure Self-Assessment questionnaire is available on the University's web-

site and is informed by an OECD Typology of internationalised curricula (IDP Education Australia, p20). The questionnaire asks staff to rate a program's structure against a range of statements related to internationalisation in order to identify areas of strength as well as changes that could contribute to internationalisation at the program level. Staff are asked to rank their program on a five point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree against statements such as:

- professional practices in the international environment determine program content and delivery
- the program is recognised by international accrediting bodies
- successful completion of the program leads to an internationally recognised professional qualification
- study in the program combines international and cross-cultural studies components with professional studies, and leads to conferral of a double or joint degree
- part of the program is delivered by another institution in another country
- part of the program is delivered and assessed by an overseas institution using distance methods
- credit is given for prior learning undertaken offshore
- international studies and courses are included as a major or sub-major.
- students are required to successfully complete a course in one of the following areas in order to complete the program: cross-cultural communication, international studies or a foreign language

Staff are also asked to give the reasons for their rankings and to recommend changes to improve rankings against each statement. The diversity of internationalisation at program level is reflected in the questionnaire.

Internationalisation of the curriculum is a critical part of the broader process of internationalisation. Internationalisation of the curriculum at UniSA has been largely driven by a focus on student learning outcomes through the introduction of a set of seven Graduate Qualities in 1996, one of which relates to the development of international perspectives in all students. Graduate Quality #7 states that a 'graduate of the University of South Australia will demonstrate international perspectives as a professional and as a citizen'. Nine 'generic' indicators for this Graduate Quality provide guidance on the key features of an internationalised curriculum at UniSA. They focus on intercultural learning, the development of knowledge and understanding and the application of what has been learned to professional practice. However, the generic quality and its indicators require interpretation and elaboration at both program and course level. For example, the international perspectives required of a nurse or a pharmacist focusing more on socio-cultural understanding than those of an engineer, where the focus might be more on the understanding of the global and environmental responsibilities of the professional engineer and the need for sustainable development. And while practicing nurses, pharmacists and engineers should all be able to recognise intercultural issues relevant to their professional practice and have a broad understanding of social, cultural and global issues affecting their profession, the strategies they will need to use to deal with them will be different in some ways even though they may be similar in others. Comparable differences exist between the international perspectives required of for example, accountants and teachers.

Staff at UniSA are encouraged to use a Graduate Quality #7 (international perspectives) Audit Tool which assists them to determine the extent to which a program offers their students the opportunity to develop international perspectives. The tool asks staff to rank the program against six criteria related to the content, teaching and learning arrangements, assessment tasks and arrangements and teaching staff and on the basis of the ranking for each criterion to develop an appropriate internationalisation action plan for the program. The complexity of internationalisation at program level is effectively highlighted and unpacked through use of the tool.

The course layer

Courses within a program may also be internationalised to different degrees and in different ways. The extent of internationalisation of a course will influence course documentation as well as content, teaching and learning activities and assessment practices.

Staff at UniSA are again encouraged to use Graduate Qualities as the focus for internationalisation of courses. They are provided with a planning guide consisting of five key questions, the answers to which assist them to identify critical content, teaching and learning arrangements and assessment activities to internationalise their course curriculum. The planning questions are:

1. What international perspectives (knowledge, skills and attitudes) should graduates in this course, at this level, in this professional area develop?
2. What assessment task(s) could students complete to demonstrate achievement of these perspectives?
3. What international content and/or contact will students need in order to develop these perspectives?
4. What learning activities and tasks will assist learners to develop these perspectives and prepare for the assessment?
5. What tools and resources are available to achieve the above?

By focusing on alignment between objectives, teaching and learning and assessment arrangements and on strategies to assist all learners to achieve internationalisation objectives and outcomes the emphasis of internationalisation is clearly on the student, on principles of good teaching and on the total integration of internationalisation objectives into the teaching and learning arrangements – on academic and socio-cultural rationales for internationalisation.

The teacher layer

Internationalisation is as much about teaching processes as it is about content. Teacher preparation and knowledge, as well as the style and method of presentation of lectures, tutorials and materials are all important aspects of an internationalised curriculum.

At UniSA a questionnaire has been developed to highlight key areas of importance in relation to internationalisation at the teacher level and to assist staff to identify knowledge and skills they would like to develop to assist them to internationalise their teaching. Areas covered include teacher preparation and teacher knowledge, presentation in lectures and tutorials, presentation of materials and assessment practices. Teachers are encouraged to consider over 30 items related to these five areas including items such as their awareness of the cultural profile of the student group, making an active effort to find out about and understand the cultural background of their students (teacher preparation); their knowledge of the international context of their professional area and how it has developed in other countries and their familiarity with international literature in their professional field (teacher knowledge), modeling appropriate cultural awareness and interpersonal behaviour with all students and using clear and concise visual aids to support their teaching (presentation in lectures and tutorials); using a variety of forms of representation such as illustrations, diagrams, tables and charts and providing definitions and glossaries for all specialist vocabulary, abbreviations and acronyms (presentation of materials); providing students with choices and options in relation to types of assessment task and analysing patterns of student assessment completions and results for signs of any difficulties for particular groups of students (assessment practices).

Internationalisation of the teacher layer is critical to the achievement of internationalisation objectives and outcomes for students within the course and program layers. Academic staff require specific strategic professional development activities and resources.

The student layer

In the student layer the focus is on internationalisation outcomes for students – the skills, knowledge and attitudes that students will develop through participation in planned activities. At UniSA internationalisation outcomes are focused both on the acquisition of skills and knowledge related to professional areas, as well as on the development of values and cross-cultural awareness. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on the application of skills and knowledge, on taking action rather than on passive development. And while these skills are primarily developed through courses and programs within the Graduate Qualities framework it has also been necessary to provide resources to assist both domestic and international students to utilize opportunities to develop international perspectives both inside and outside of class. These resources include a Learning Guide for domestic students on 'Understanding Asian Names' and one for international students on 'Adjusting to living in a new culture'.

A conceptualization of internationalisation 'beyond the numbers' within an institution as consisting of different layers of activity can assist management and academic staff to take stock of their achievements and to identify area needing improvement and effort. Thus it can also assist in determining priorities and strategic directions related to academic and socio-cultural outcomes of internationalisation.

Qualitative differences in the achievement of internationalisation outcomes

An area of significant challenge for academic staff is the assessment of achievement of student learning outcomes related to internationalisation. It is worth giving this some attention as it is a critical area for students; an area on which they focus and an area that needs to be strong and clearly defined if we are to substantiate claims that we develop international perspectives and capabilities in students, and that all graduates will exhibit them.

Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell and Watts (2000: pp13-19) describe four qualitatively different approaches to the development of any capability:

- a) Scoping level: defining the scope of the capability
- b) Enabling level: developing certain skills related to the capability
- c) Training level: elaborating or establishing meaning of the capability within a particular discipline or field
- d) Relating level: developing understanding of the relation between the meaning and the context

These levels provide a useful focus for the development of assessment tasks and activities. But if they are to be reflected in assessment practices within courses and programs they require some interpretation. An interpretation of the levels in relation to the achievement of international perspectives (Graduate Quality #7) is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Levels of development of International perspectives (Graduate Quality #7)

Level	Focus of assessment tasks
Scoping	<p><i>Ability of students to identify the range and significance of cultural and national perspectives e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different cultural and national perspectives on past and current issues • the relationship between cultural and national perspectives and attitudes, values and actions • ways in which their own cultural and national perspectives influence their attitudes, values and actions.
Enabling	<p><i>Extent to which students have the skills necessary for effective communication across national and cultural boundaries e.g. their ability to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify ways in which others cultural and national perspectives influence their attitudes, values and actions • understand other cultures and communicate across cultural boundaries
Training	<p><i>Extent to which students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the relationship between cultural and national contexts and different approaches within their discipline area • understand international standards within their discipline area
Relating	<p><i>Extent to which students are able to adapt their behaviour to deal with different contexts e.g by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using cross-cultural communication skills to negotiate outcomes within the discipline area • reflecting on the relationship between international standards in discipline areas and their local and international contexts

As with any program of learning, students will not necessarily move in neat progression from one level to another. There may be movement backwards and forwards between levels as students' knowledge and skills develop. Students should, however, be assisted to achieve different levels of understanding in relation to internationalisation during their program of study. In order to do this, more complex learning tasks designed to challenge students and assist them to develop and demonstrate their level of achievement of international perspectives need be introduced in a planned and coordinated way across an entire program. Furthermore, the complexity of the assessment tasks needs to reflect the complexity of the learning tasks introduced at different times in a program. Only when this happens will students be given valid feedback on their progress towards achievement of the desired learning outcomes of the course and program in relation to the development of international perspectives. Learning experiences and assessment tasks therefore need to be planned and coordinated at program level as well as course level. The 'layers of the onion' are related and interdependent.

Conclusion

There are several complex layers of internationalisation 'beyond the numbers' of fee-paying international students studying on or off campus and their economic value. The discourse surrounding internationalisation in higher education is, however, frequently dominated by economic rather than academic and socio-cultural related issues. By refocusing on what internationalisation means for programs, courses, teachers and students in higher education the depth, diversity and complexity of internationalisation is highlighted and strategies for achieving a broad range of internationalisation outcomes can be developed. These strategies support growth in international student numbers by ensuring a relevant and valuable educational experience for all students and thrive on cultural diversity because it offers a rich resource for the internationalisation of learning and valuable opportunities for active and immediate intercultural learning. Recognition in the dominant economic discourse of internationalisation of the coexistence and complexity of academic and socio-cultural rationales for and outcomes of internationalisation is important for institutions and for their stakeholders.

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