

Internationalisation of the Curriculum in Action

Journalism and Communication

This case study was developed as part of an ALTC National Teaching Fellowship, *Internationalisation of the Curriculum in Action* in 2010-2011. One of the outputs of the fellowship was [a process model of internationalisation of the curriculum](#). The model identifies five-stages of internationalisation of the curriculum:

- Review and Reflect
- Imagine
- Revise and Plan
- Act
- Evaluate

As you read through this case study it is useful to think about the following questions:

1. What are the enabling factors within the institutional context?
2. What does the case study tell you about the process of IoC?
3. What does it tell you about the product, an internationalised curriculum?
4. What questions does it raise for you?

Institutional context

The university is a large research intensive university whose approach to internationalisation is embedded in its policies and mission. University policy documents describe a comprehensive approach to internationalisation of the curriculum (Hudzik 2011).

Recognition and reward for staff actions in internationalisation are specifically addressed in documentation, primary responsibility for which rests with the senior international officer, the Deputy Vice Chancellor International (DVCI). The DVCI emphasises the University's commitment to internationalising the curriculum for all students. The University demonstrates this commitment in various ways, including by promoting and supporting opportunities for students to acquire international experience and develop inclusive perspectives.

University documentation describes a multi-level approach to internationalisation, encompassing elements such as joint degrees involving collaboration with international partner institutions; recognising and rewarding student endeavours in internationalisation; finding ways to facilitate quality interaction between international and domestic students in both academic and non-academic settings; as well as committing to an ongoing process of internationalising the curriculum to produce graduates with the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for living and working in a globalizing society.

The university offers students the opportunity to study a foreign language concurrently with their degree program and a Diploma in Global Issues, which can be taken concurrently with any degree program.

Background

The parent school is a stand-alone administrative entity that sits within a Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. The school manages programs at undergraduate and post-graduate levels in the fields of journalism, public relations (strategic communication) and communication. There is an intake of 600-700 students per year across a number of undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The undergraduate Journalism program is by far the more popular. The multi-faculty Bachelor of Communication contains the majors Public Relations and Professional Communication,, Organisational Communication, Mass Communication and Communication, Media and Culture. The Bachelor of Communication was experiencing significant growth at both under graduate and post-graduate levels at the time the case study was conducted. At a post-graduate level at that time the school was experiencing considerable growth in the area of Communication for Social Change.

The unique nexus between professional communication (journalism and public relations) and Communication for Social Change has resulted in the school identifying its research and teaching as “empowering global communicators”. The undergraduate student cohort was largely domestic (dominated by the privately schooled), while the postgraduate cohort was largely international (and overwhelmingly Asian). There were no offshore campuses. Furthermore, the academic staff profile was culturally diverse, with scholars from India, China, Africa, Europe and Australia.

Despite this cultural diversity, there was considerable opacity and lack of clarity around the meaning of internationalisation of the curriculum. At the commencement of this case study the team reported that much of the curriculum content already drew upon international examples, much of the theoretical basis was drawn from international thought, and much of their research was published in international journals. Involvement in this cycle of internationalisation of the curriculum prompted the teaching team to reassess what the term meant in the context of the school and the program at that point in time. His resulted in the identification of new directions for the internationalisation of the school’s programs.

The process of IoC

Reviewing and reflecting

Four members of the teaching team (including the Program Director and Deputy Head of School who also held the position Chair of Teaching and Learning) met with two external facilitators to discuss the Questionnaire on Internationalisation of the Curriculum (QIC). They concluded that, despite the assumption that the curriculum was already significantly internationalised, their curriculum was quite narrowly focussed in places. They found themselves asking where non-Western practice was recognised, and where the non-Western examples were in the curriculum. Furthermore, they started to question the balance within the curriculum between global and local perspectives.

Prompted by questions in the Questionnaire on Internationalisation of the Curriculum Version 1 (QIC 1), the team undertook an informal audit of what the curriculum offered in terms of

internationalisation. They already had two courses that were fully focused on international and intercultural content: *International Journalism and Mass Communication* and *Identity, Culture and Communication*. They also noted that there were a number of areas within the curriculum which drew upon non-Western practice, theories and assessment. Despite regular school planning days and activities, however, the QIC helped to highlight gaps in the curriculum. While at a program level internationalisation was at an early stage of the IoC process cycle, individual courses and activities were distributed all around the cycle. Therefore, it was decided significant benefit could be gained from building connections between different courses, as well as exploiting and developing knowledge or skills developed in earlier courses later in the program. Building these connections was identified as a priority for further work. Thus Internationalisation of Curriculum focused on course or subject level alignment. This involved extensive negotiations between academic course coordinators.

In particular, the two courses *International Journalism and Mass Communication* and *Identity, Culture and Communication*, had so far been left to function as free-standing courses. The skills students were learning in these courses were not incorporated into other courses, despite the huge potential they provided. *Identity, Culture and Communication*, for example, focused on multicultural group work: these skills could be drawn on for very practical reasons in other courses. Another advantage of having an overview of the various internationalisation (or de-Westernization) activities in the curriculum was that this enabled the sharing of such activities across the teaching team: novel approaches to assessment were discovered and their potential for incorporation into other courses was identified. The potential value included informal knowledge about how to implement diverse assessment practices.

The teaching team also acknowledged that while they had worked hard to interpret the graduate attributes in terms of professional content, in the end they may still not have gone far enough in thinking about what they actually mean. Being global, ethical, accountable, responsive to change are all worthy objectives, but what does it actually mean to be global, or ethical? They realized they needed to look at the words they had used, and focus on what these things actually meant in depth.

Finally, the teaching team realised the need to approach the global through the local. They recognised that some of their programs were quite parochial in focus. This situation had developed because graduates were mostly employed locally. However, it was acknowledged that even graduates working locally needed to be able to understand their work in an international and even global context. An awareness of Indigenous issues also needed to be embedded in a similar way.

The team began to imagine what de-Westernization might mean for what they taught, how they taught it, how they supported learning and how they assessed learning. This prompted them to revisit, and in some cases read for the first time, scholarly literature from within and beyond the discipline. They concluded that critical de-Westernization means challenging the normative model by which they judge and assess, and understanding local environments within global perspectives. This means not treating other journalisms as marginal and not locating them in an isolated and optional course on how things are done in other countries. It also means being aware as teachers and professionals of the cultural construction of knowledge in the discipline that has resulted in the dominance of Western paradigms, which assume certain norms, and that are not as universal as they claim to be.

Imagining

This led to them defining internationalisation of the curriculum in the context of their programs as 'critical de-Westernization'. This approach was supported by the school's research and teaching priorities and the scholarly literature. For example, a South African study had found that non-Western journalism academics often find themselves confronted with the unacceptable choice of either remaining relevant to the local conditions of journalism practice, or completely abandoning this in favour of the dominant paradigm which is largely being unconnected to their situation (Wasserman & de Beer, 2009).

Another reason for the focus on de-Westernization was identified as the US dominance of the International Communication Association, the key international professional body, in terms of practice, theories and ways of being. This dominance of Western thought and the English language tended to produce a homogeneous perspective, from which non-Western experience was excluded. This dominance is perpetuated by Western journals which are ranked highly in terms of research impact, western associations and the western theories being applied to all forms of journalism and communication.

What has been taken for granted in journalism (and communication) curriculum is, however, increasingly being challenged by the processes of globalisation, changes in the way technology is employed and increasingly diverse ways of 'being a journalist'. From this point on, critical de-Westernization (which captures local and global perspectives) was used as the lens through which to understand and enact internationalisation of the curriculum.

While these issues were being discussed in the program team they were also raised beyond the core group involved in teaching the program, in various groups and committees, including the School's Teaching and Learning Committee. This resulted in raising awareness of issues associated with IoC more broadly across the School.

Revising and planning

A number of possible changes to the way in which graduate attributes were described in the context of the disciplines of journalism and communication were discussed. These graduate attributes aim to develop reflective practitioners who are mindful of diversity and changing sociocultural settings and can work within global and local contexts. With this in mind changes to courses were proposed. In the *International Journalism and Mass Communication* course one assessment item was introduced to encourage students to step back from a purely Anglo-Saxon view of foreign news reporting and appreciate it from the point of view of other cultures. This involved students analysing the reporting of an event in three Australian and three overseas newspapers (Western and non-Western).

In the course - *Identity, Culture and Communication* - students were required to write reflectively on a cultural event that they attend during the semester from the point of view of non-members of that particular culture.

A number of changes to the content and assessment of other courses are also planned. These include inviting international higher degree research students from various cultural backgrounds to present in courses, as well as enabling international students to present case studies in class from their own cultures.

Opportunities for students to undertake practical or service learning in overseas organisations (FAO, UNESCO), or on international issues with Australian development organisations will also be introduced.

The process to this point took around 12 months. Responsibility for internationalising the curriculum has expanded beyond program leaders. One of the keys to success of the process has been getting high level support for the initiative. Internationalising the curriculum remains a process of constant negotiation with **all** stakeholders including the university, the faculty, the student cohort, the scholarly community and future employers.