

## **Internationalisation of the curriculum: towards an inclusive framework**

### Abstract

This paper examines the concept 'internationalisation of the curriculum' by considering rationales at sector level in conjunction with the plethora of 'global' learning agendas that continue to influence development. It suggests that these agendas, the interpretative nature of 'internationalisation of the curriculum' and contradictory disciplinary discourses indicate the need for a more sophisticated approach to internationalised pedagogy at the meso and micro level of activity.

Jane Knight's (2003) updated definition of internationalisation is now arguably one of the most influential. Used as an introduction to the Internationalisation of Higher Education at the HEFCE's Leadership Summit in 2006, and mentioned in a number of institutional internationalisation strategies across the world, it provides a valuable reference point. This definition is particularly useful at institutional level because of its focus upon 'process' and its inherent recognition of the range of interconnected rationales that support and drive the aspirations of universities to be 'international' institutions.

A proposed model for review and development of this process had already been outlined in earlier work by Knight and de Wit (1999). The model advocated not only an institutional team to conduct the review but an international peer review team also – to include one member of the home country and at least one from another continent (cited in Knight, J: 2002). This commitment to internationalising the 'process' through such worldwide interaction reveals perhaps the value that Knight places upon international consensus and the perceived benefit of encouraging external engagement from, as Wenger et al would describe, our international 'intellectual neighbors [*sic*]' (2007:56).

At meso level however, the definition is problematic, perhaps especially when applied to learning and teaching. For example, despite Knight's interpretation of the term 'global' to denote a general 'sense of worldwide scope', contradictory disciplinary discourses contest the term for its negative connotations. These tensions, coupled with the troublesome concept 'curriculum' can create difficulties for those who attempt to internationalise their curriculum. Even by appreciating the role of intercultural learning theory – often cited as a preferred pedagogic approach - significant challenges need to be overcome. According to Land (2005) successful integration of intercultural learning within either inward looking institutional strategies or outward looking transnational strategies requires international and intercultural dialogue, a rigorous academic development framework and a monitoring and evaluation strategy that effectively measures the implementation of theory upon practice and student development.

Complicated further by the array of contemporary 'global' agendas that are searching for theories of learning representative of their own mission; and the internationalisation of the curriculum becomes even more elusive. These agendas on the one hand provide clear justification for internationalisation but raise questions about what exactly the Internationalisation of the Curriculum is attempting to address. It could however, be construed that these agendas provide evidence of a more complex international context and the need for a more sophisticated approach to pedagogic development. A similar suggestion has been made in Australia, where much original 'curriculum internationalisation' work has been done, but where there is now a growing concern over the lack of consolidated theory (Eisenclas & Trevaskes 2003 p.89; Sanderson (2008). According to Sanderson, this need for consolidation is

due to Australian higher education entering a 'more mature era of internationalisation [which requires] additional concepts' (2008:281).

UCL is committed to developing learning that is fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education, and those, who like us, have been involved with the internationalisation agenda over the years are well aware of its potential for learning and the enrichment of lives. Thus, this paper proposes a new framework for progress. A framework that firstly begins by exploring the currency of definition; secondly that seeks synergy between contemporary agendas; thirdly that re-focuses the debate upon the development of theories of learning. Finally, it is proposed that to achieve genuinely internationalised provision will require national, international and intercultural dialogue and a sector wide commitment to the aims of such dialogue.