Creative Futures Exchange

Report 1 – Approaches to Internationalising the Curriculum

Internationalisation of the Curriculum is the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching, learning and assessment arrangements and support services of a programme of study.

(Leask, 2009, p. 209)

The ambition of most internationalised curricula is to create graduates who are capable of engaging in a culture of communication and work that is becoming increasingly global.

(Peterson *et al.*, 2000, cited in Haigh, 2002, p. 52)

Approaching internationalisation as a contribution to an institution's social responsibility has the potential to strategically align multiple institutional agendas, increase opportunities, and improve impact because it encourages thinking globally and locally about social and intercultural engagement.

(Jones *et al.*, 2021, p. 332)

Introduction

The Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC) agenda is increasingly important for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), including for The University of Southampton. The university's international strategy aims to improve international partnerships, attract world-class teaching and research talent, and the high quality students (University of Southampton, 2021). The University of Ghana also attaches the utmost importance to international partnerships and exchanges that enhance teaching and learning at the University.

While the aims of the institutions might be considered market focused, IoC is purported to bring benefits for students and Universities in other ways which are desirable for a site of learning. Cross cultural exchanges and a global outlook, whether studying abroad or studying with international students at home are understood to be valuable to student experiences and human development (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010; Jones and Killick, 2013; Rienties and Jindal-Snape, 2016). An international education is also viewed as delivering an advantage in the job market through engendering a greater passion for a career, developing marketable skills, and making international connections (Potts, 2015). When Internationalisation and social responsibility agendas are aligned, IoC can help the social, economic, and cultural development of communities beyond a host institution's home country through meaningful engagement with local contexts. (Jones *et al.*, 2021). While much IoC is focused on home institutions and their curricula, new technologies allow alternatives to traditional study abroad options, with the development of remote learning and collaboration that has been coined 'Internationalisation at a Distance' (IaD) (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2021). This model of education opens up access to learning opportunities beyond borders for those without financial resources or legal access to the host institutions. Not only does this offer new markets for HEIs but leads to more diversity of knowledge production from communities of students not previously able to participate.

However, several areas of concern related to IoC that affect implementation and engagement have been identified. These relate to a lack of buy-in from academic staff (Ryan *et al.*, 2021), misalignment between institutions and students (Leask and Bridge, 2013), and insufficient attention being paid to cross-cultural learning (Zhou *et al.*, 2008; Leask and Carroll, 2011; Heffernan *et al.*, 2019). These issues can be exacerbated by market-first as opposed to student- and community-first institutional agendas which can perpetuate poor practice through lack of investment in time and resources (Haigh, 2002; Jones *et al.*, 2021). Financial and legal barriers to participation are evident when considering traditional study abroad programmes. While, as mentioned, technology now allows institutions to achieve Internationalisation at a Distance, digital divides are still important to consider when planning interactions (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2021). In addition, IoC has been criticised for perpetuating Anglo-centric and Eurocentric world views (Jones and de Wit, 2012), and privileging of Western perspectives (Haigh, 2002; Stein *et al.*, 2021). The possibility of these power imbalances and digital divides converging so as to silence different forms of knowledge production is cause for unease, including for the Creative Futures Exchange (CFE).

In a bid to address these concerns, the literature on IoC provides evidence of a range of good practice for how to overcome these issues that is of relevance to the CFE. This report highlights where debates related to IoC are likely to affect the delivery of the Creative Futures Exchange, followed by recommendations for good practice which will best support an enriching experience for students and staff, while meeting the proposed outcomes of the project.

As the project moves from its set up phase and initial delivery to an ongoing project, this document can be used as a reference for new and returning staff to (re)familiarise themselves with what good practice in IoC can look like in the context of the CFE.

Preparation

Staff orientation to IoC

Acknowledging the key role that academic staff play in delivering a meaningful internationalisation agenda, a number of studies highlight that if staff are ill-prepared or disengaged from the process of internationalisation, then outcomes can be poor (Leask, 2013; Leask and Bridge, 2013; Ryan *et al.*, 2021). These papers discuss the importance of staff engaging in the process of IoC, with consideration of existing paradigms within disciplines, challenging what they believe in terms of curriculum and student learning, and making time to imagine and negotiate new possibilities. Leask (2013), highlighting how academic staff may either be disengaged from the IoC process, or without the required capacities to do so effectively, develops a five-stage, Participatory Action Research (PAR) model of IoC, devised to support staff engagement by "produc[ing] knowledge and action directly useful to a group or people" (Reason, 1998, p. 71, cited in Leask, 2013). These 5 cyclical stages are 'review and reflect', 'imagine', 'revise and plan', 'act', and 'evaluate'. At each stage a process of negotiation takes place where staff work together to form their own, as opposed to a top-down, understanding of what a delivery of a programme of an internationalised curriculum could look like that may be very different from what works within a purely local context. Relevant findings include that this work should be done in disciplinarily teams of academic staff as they are the people who understand the field of study the best, and that support from universities is necessary to pay for time for these activities to take place, and to make the process worth staffs' time in relation to their other

pressures and priorities. This is something that may affect future iterations of the CFE if support or funding is not in place in either institution. Ryan *et al* (2021), developing the process devised in Leask (2013), highlight the importance in their findings of the integration of equality and diversity issues when working through the process of IoC. This is certainly relevant for the CFE, and time needs to be invested in understanding how ensure that everyone involved is included and respected equally.

Curriculum Planning

Haigh (2002) highlights the need to ensure curriculum design serves global rather than national priorities, does not rely on existing local knowledge, offers all students the same inclusive learning environment, and benefits local as well as international students by providing a global perspective. Rather than teaching to the lowest common denominator, Haigh argues that IoC means developing teaching beyond a narrow local agenda, demanding the creative imagination of teachers. This reflects what has been said above. Recognising the historic problem of universities priorities being 'saturated with local traditions and values' (2002, p. 54), Haigh highlights that UK universities' curricula build upon assumed white and Eurocentric knowledge (cf. Stein, 2017), including the use of colloquial language, which has been found to be unwelcoming for international and 'non-traditional' home students (for example those from marginalised backgrounds). While acknowledging the challenges in making a curriculum truly international, Haigh suggests that a bi-cultural curriculum is less problematic. This point is relevant to the CFE, although how this works with the large number of international students at Winchester School of Art is something to be aware of i.e., can the CFE just focus on the UK and Ghanaian creative industries, or should it also incorporate other creative economies? The paper does highlight the trade-off between a focus on being international in scope and the depth of understanding of local contexts, so focusing on just the UK and Ghana could prevent this to some extent. Making the geographical focus of the curriculum explicit at the start of the programme is important so that people are aware of what prior knowledge they are expected to have. Elsewhere, Heffernan *et al.* (2019) show that taking time to contextualise the need for an international perspective (in whichever form the CFE takes) helps to improve positive views of IoC with home students, so explaining the choice of curriculum to students and what positive outcomes are expected from this approach may lead to improved engagement. This could be done as part of the invitation to participate in the CFE.

Other suggestions of good practice include ensuring a student-led programme as opposed to the traditional model of 'lecturer imparting knowledge' so that students co-construct knowledge. This speaks to the cross-cultural exchange discussed below, and this sentiment is echoed by Sawir (2013), who argues that international students can help teachers develop appropriate curriculum through an exchange of knowledge whist they are studying at a host institution (therefore an iterative process within one year's delivery of the CFE, and over future years' development). Also, it is important to consider how language is used, as slang, acronyms, and fast pace of speech can be inaccessible. Ensuring spoken delivery is considered, and that the CFE has a referenceable glossary of terms will be important for both UK- and Ghana-based students.

Delivery

Cross-cultural introductions

The role of cross-cultural experiences in ensuring that IoC is meaningful for both home and international students is explored (Leask and Carroll, 2011; Campbell, 2012; Heng and Yeh, 2021). Leask and Carroll (2011) discuss the necessity of encouraging cross-cultural exchanges in order to make internationalisation worthwhile for the student body. If not, international students are often left isolated and can leave without making connections with groups from the university's home students. The paper talks about integrating the formal and informal curriculum, where the informal curriculum is all the shared experiences that extra-curricular bonding brings and the cultural learning that happens in those spaces. Campbell (2012) discusses the use of a buddy system between international and home students. This is shown to help students see behind the 'front stage', public-facing performances of both home and international students to see 'back stage' i.e., what the values are that guide students' actions. It is seen as a valuable exercise in cultural exchange. While the paper highlights the reluctance of home students to engage, this shouldn't be an issue within the structure of the CFE who are a self-selecting group. This could be useful for the CFE as a buddy system might make for more impactful cultural exchanges than being in a larger group. However, it might be valuable to have a combination of home (UK), Chinese (UK), and Ghanaian students (and maybe others),

acknowledging the large cohort of Chinese students at WSA and the perceived need (by this author) to work on UK/Chinese student cultural exchanges.

Heng and Yeh (2021) evaluate a video making project in Taiwan which could act as an discipline-appropriate model of cultural exchange suitable for the CFE cohort. Taiwanese students produced videos in English about the history and culture of a city in central Taiwan, with selected videos entered into a bilingual video competition. All students were asked to write a reflective essay on what they gained from the video project, including what they discovered about their own culture, their English skills, and their digital literacy. The project helped improve digital literacy, English language, and helped students understand the importance of teamwork and collaboration (aims of IoC), while also helping students to 'be conscious of their own cultural values, beliefs and norms, and to incorporate digital affordances that allow them to generate the knowledge they have acquired into meaningful inventions' (Heng and Yeh, 2021, p. 2). Findings are relevant to the CFE as the project helped students to understand and celebrate their local culture while developing 'global skills' of understanding the 'linguistic and cultural differences of others, as they contemplated the ways they can best introduce their unique local cultural to a wider global audience (Heng and Yeh, 2021, p. 13)'. The reflective writing also showed that students really valued working with their peers and mentors, which speaks to the aim of a cross-cultural exchange identified as important above. One suggestion for an activity in the CFE could be that the students in the CFE form groups across the institutions and make a pair of videos on one aspect of their relationship to the creative industries. They could then view the videos in groups and discuss the differences in perspective. E.g., how artists intend to get paid (selling at exhibitions, getting commissions, digital content, platform work…), or how their folk culture (Chinese, white British, immigrant British, Ghanaian) informs how they relate to their creative outlet (embraced, rejected, fusion). Outcomes could be similar to that in the Heng and Yeh paper, gaining enhanced agency through the process of making the video, gaining insight into international perspectives in the creative industries, and the digital skills that doing the exercise brought. As a note of caution, it will be important to understand what technology all students have access to in order to make a video. For example, are students' mobile phones able to record video, and how would they edit? This leads to the report's final point.

Ensuring equitable learning environments

In addition to the epistemic and power issues related to good practice around staff orientation and cross-cultural learning which works to put diverse experiences and forms of knowledge at the forefront of IoC, another necessary consideration is how technology can support or inhibit an equitable learning environment. Within recent history, the role of virtual learning environments, video conferencing, and mobile technologies has meant that those without previous access to HEIs in different geographies, either due to a lack financial resources or legal access, can now benefit from an international education. This has been conceptualised as a 'third category' of university internationalisation, that of 'Internationalisation at a Distance (IaD) (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2021). Different from Internationalisation Abroad which is when students cross borders to study, and Internationalisation at Home which provides an international education for home students, IaD can offer many of the benefits of studying abroad without leaving one's home country. Knowledge and ideas are internationally mobile, with the aid of technology, rather than the students themselves. However, how well this technology works is important to consider, as low bandwidth, older hardware, and divides in digital literacy may exacerbate existing inequalities between different institutions rather than place them on a level playing field. While it is not a given that people in the Global North have sufficient capacities, both in terms of technology and knowhow, and those elsewhere do not, this issue needs to be built into the planning of learning activities so that the delivery of IaD, which the CFE is an example of, runs as smoothly and equitably as possible.

Summary: Recommendations for Good Practice for the Creative Futures Exchange Project

Having digested the debates, findings, and appropriate application to the CFE of the literature above, a set of recommendations for good practice when thinking about IoC in the CFE can be outlined. These are:

- Sufficient training of staff is desirable in order to embed values and practices so that IoC is as thorough and impactful as possible.
- Curriculum content should be co-designed so that it reflects the needs of all teachers and learners. This includes discipline-specific, context-based course content which spans all relevant geographies.

- Sufficient time should be given to cross-cultural learning in the formal and informal curriculum to ensure engagement with the course and the varied participant groups.
- International and home students (whether in a host country or remote) should be valued equally, including having their voices heard and understood related to teaching and learning.
- Technological limitations should be explored in the planning of the curriculum and mitigated as much as possible so that learning environments are equitable.

These recommendations should be considered alongside the debates, findings, and recommendations surrounding discipline-specific pedagogies of the creative industries that the CFE cohort encompasses, and the mode of delivery of the project through collaborative online international learning (COIL) which the CFE will employ. These discussions feature in reports 2 and 3.

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