

Internationalisation of higher education: Issues within and beyond the practice

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Introduction

I have been asked to talk about a comparative perspective of internationalisation of higher education by the steering committee of this conference. It's a topic that has received substantial attention and will continue to be highlighted in the education sector particularly higher education operating in a globalised sphere. There have been many interpretations and definitions given to internationalisation. But today I am not going to talk about definitions and concepts. I am more interested in giving you a brief overview of the activities/initiatives that scholars/researchers refer to when they talk about 'internationalisation'.

Some scholars have used the term 'internationalisation' in the context of *international development aid* or the *provision of aid/scholarship for international students*. An example of this is Australia's participation in 1951 Colombo Plan. This was national and university sponsorship of overseas students, particularly from less developed countries to study in Australia. That tradition continues in the present Ausaid program of scholarships.

The term 'internationalisation' has also been used in the context of the *international school movement* that prepares students for employment anywhere in the world, in what is commonly known as 'baccalaureate' programs. The original purpose of international school was to facilitate the international mobility of students preparing for university by providing schools with a curriculum and qualification recognised by universities around the world. But now the mission of international schools is to provide education that caters for students of all ages.

Internationalisation is also associated with '*quantity*' counted as an international success for an institution might be the number of (1) international students, this is often associated with attracting 'foreign revenue' to make up for reduced public sector funding; (2) the number of exchange students, or students mobility as in foreign exchange students; and (3) the number of agreements with foreign universities.

Some scholars also talk about internationalisation in the context of *academic staff mobility*. Indicators of internationalisation include the proportions of academic staff members who had their highest degree from another country.

Internationalisation has also been associated with *expanding educational access* through a number of means: (1) study abroad and international exchanges programmes. Research indicate that more students from Asia studying abroad but there is a change in the trend with more people from English speaking countries than before now considering Asian countries as a study destination (IIE, 2008); (2) increasing establishment of international branch campuses. Australia is second after the US in terms of the number of institutions with established international branch campuses; (3) distance learning as a means of promoting greater educational access. Online learning is the fastest growing market

segment of adult education and it has grown faster over the last six years than any other sector of higher education.

There might also other aspects or activities associated with internationalisation which I have not covered here. But regardless of what it means, internationalisation of higher education involves the process of responding to the changing outlook of the institutions as a result of globalisation. A key challenge in making international education program to work involves learning to understand the changes and to manage differences.

Now let me turn into how internationalisation is negotiated and contested within the context of higher education in Australia and Indonesia. I will draw from three different sets of data interviews (1) my involvement in a joint research project with Prof. Simon Marginson of Melbourne University on 'A Comparative Study of Leaders' Strategies in the Global Environment'. I was involved in case studies of research universities in Indonesia (in this case UI), Australia (ANU), Malaysia, Japan, Canada, and Thailand; (2) Data were also gained from some selected readings into the Indonesian and Australian research and literature on internationalisation of higher education. (3) Further Australian data were also drawn from research findings on a study of academic staff perspectives on internationalisation and international students and intercultural learning.

Today I will restrict my presentation on selected aspects of internationalisation distinctive to each particular institution and country. These include:

- trend in internationalisation of higher education
- internationalisation of the curriculum
- internationalising academic staff
- internationalisation at student level, and other
- issues beyond the practice of internationalisation

I will talk mostly about the data from the case studies in Australia and Indonesia.

Trend in internationalisation of higher education

Across all of the universities studied, there was a trend to increasing outward movement of academic staff either temporarily and permanently. In the case of Indonesia there was outward movement either for short training or for further degrees. As discussed by staff in the interview inward movement was inhibited because of a numbers of reasons one of which was low salary. At the Australian National University inward staff exchange was widespread (there was a high proportion of foreign-born academics) and students. According to an international survey Australia (Welch, 2002:433) is one of the more internationalised higher education systems with academic staff who have degrees from many parts of the globe as compared with the staffing profiles in most other countries.

In Indonesia there was upward movement of first degree students out of Indonesia at postgraduate stage. Like academic staff, some students upon completing their studies returned home but others stayed in the country of study. This growing mobility is made possible by an increased provision of scholarships from Indonesia and also from overseas.

Australia contributes significantly via the Australian Scholarship Program which awards 300 scholarships per annum to eligible Indonesian citizens. Indonesian overseas students make up a large proportion of international students in Australian universities, through both scholarship provision and private study. Statistics on international student numbers

in Australia indicate that Indonesia has been consistently one of the top ten sending/source countries (Australian Education International (AEI), 2010) and Australia remains a popular study destination for Indonesian students and the number of Indonesian student commencements from 2009 is expected to grow (AEI, 2009).

While there was a broad potential for brain gain in Australia as a result of trends in the mobility of staff and students, the issue of brain-drain is beyond the control of Indonesia. It was encouraged that Indonesian students upon completed their studies to return home and to develop the knowledge and skill they gained from overseas training.

Now let me move on to internationalisation of the curriculum.

Internationalisation of the curriculum

Internationalising the curriculum is frequently cited in the literature as a strategy for the internationalisation of higher education. Both institutions in Australia and in Indonesia held a broader concept of internationalised curriculum. The necessity to internationalise higher education arose because staff were very aware of their responsibility to produce qualified graduates and to prepare them to live and to work in an increasingly interdependent world.

To achieve these aims staff at UI focused on the need for students to have competence in English and be critical and creative in their thinking.

Within the Indonesian context the need to maintain local and cultural identity was of primary concern in designing internationalised curriculum.

In designing an internationalised curriculum, students were required to take one of the eclectic subjects in Indonesian art and culture to strengthen students' national identity. It is compulsory for the students to have one skill either from the art and culture for example in vocal, dancing or painting. Other interviewees noted the importance of being aware of cross-cultural issues. This meant that the curriculum should be designed to include subjects such as an introduction to cross-cultural studies, with the ultimate aim being to reduce inter-cultural conflict in the global environment.

Within the Australian context staff have become more aware of the need:

- to design activities so as to promote intercultural learning;
- to design the curriculum which are more internationally relevant to respond to a more diverse student population (for example, to include international elements in the curriculum)

Internationalising academic staff values and behaviours

In discussions of internationalisation of higher education in Australian higher education there has been much discussion of issues relating to teaching and learning, education policy and international students. Recently there has been a focus on the need to discuss *internationalisation at the staff level*.

The notion of 'cosmopolitanism' (Sanderson, 2008) has been introduced as a foundation for a 'whole-of-person' approach to teaching in environment characterised by significant diversity. A cosmopolitan outlook involves openness towards peoples, places, and

experiences from different cultures. A cosmopolitan individual values diversity and shows a greater interest to engage with other cultures. According to Sanderson (2008: 282), being accepting of cultural differences, and knowing something of other cultures have a pivotal place in internationalisation at the level of the individual teacher. So 'how educators enhance their global competencies and intercultural communication skills so they can better educate students in our increasingly diverse society' is a key issue in internationalisation of higher education within the Australian context. Professional development that includes training on cross-cultural issues, travel and living in another country have been identified as having a considerable impact on one's own cultural perspectives.

While in the Australian case study the internationalisation of academic staff was discussed in the context of enhancing staff cultural sensitivity and competence, internationalisation of academic staff in the Indonesian context was discussed in the context of enhancing staff academic skills as in research and teaching quality through study abroad program.

Internationalisation at student level

In Australia one ongoing issue discussed in the context of internationalisation of higher education is the capacity of all students to integrate cross nationally. Institutions strive to help local students to internationalise by providing a learning environment that values differences so local students can learn to appreciate the experiences of others and broaden their own perspectives.

But despite efforts by the institutions to integrate local and international students, for example through teaching and learning practices, or extra-curricular activities, research findings continue to indicate persistent patterns of segregation between the two groups of students. The lack of social integration between international students and local students was attributed partly to the English competence of the international students.

In Indonesia internationalisation at student level was discussed in terms of providing a better quality of higher education by up-skilling and empowering student through graduate and postgraduate study abroad preferably conducted in the medium of English and by increasing the allocation of scholarships for overseas university study, with the expectation that graduates will return to Indonesia to benefit the local economy and community.

Issues underlying practice

Staff both at UI and at ANU noted the importance of having a coherent value and shared beliefs and a unified way of thinking among staff in conceptualising and implementing internationalised programs.

The growth of student mobility inwards to Australia has created tension among academic staff in the Australian context on whether or not it is necessary to make some adjustment to meet the needs and expectations of international students. Proponents of the latter view argues that all students are the same regardless of local or internationals and making a special accommodation is not necessary. This often reflects a strong commitment to traditional ways of working and established pedagogies and structure and the management of thinking, fully dominated by western influences (Dimmock & Walker 1998). With the concept of 'west is the best' educators tend to ignore the significance of cultural variations in education policy and teaching practice (Walker Walker, 1998).

There are also debates on the relevance of internationalising the curriculum in the Australian context. Some staff members see it as negative and inappropriate but others report benefits of having an internationalised curriculum (Bell, 2004).

Understanding staff attitudes toward internationalisation is very important as their attitude may inform their teaching and learning practices and other academic practices.

In summary

	Indonesia	Australia
Trend in internationalisation of higher education	Outward staff and student mobility	Inward staff exchange was widespread (there was a high proportion of foreign-born academics) and students
Internationalisation of the curriculum	To maintain local and cultural identity was of primary concern in designing internationalised curriculum	To include international elements in the curriculum; to design activities so as to promote intercultural learning
Internationalising academic staff	To enhance staff academic skills as in research and teaching quality through study abroad program	To enhance staff cultural sensitivity and competence
Internationalisation at student level	To provide a better quality of higher education by empowering and promoting students for study abroad, preferably conducted in the medium of English, and by increasing the allocation of scholarships for overseas university study, with the expectation that graduates will return to Indonesia to benefit the local economy and community.	The capacity of all students to integrate cross nationally. Institutions strive to help local students to internationalise by providing a learning environment that values differences.
Issues underlying practice	The importance of having coherent values and shared beliefs and a unified way of thinking among staff in conceptualising and implementing internationalised programs.	The importance of having coherent values and shared beliefs and a unified way of thinking among staff in conceptualising and implementing internationalised programs. There are tensions about whether to acknowledge and/or value differences

Conclusion

To sum up, it is always desirable to learn from each other's systems, across national borders. Obviously, individual university in each country has a distinctive concept and practice of internationalisation. Naturally any initiatives should be relevant to the perspective of the development of a nation.

To successfully operate an internationalisation agenda requires a unified way of thinking and strategy among staff and stakeholders.

Finally, as the theme of this conference indicates *Thinking of Home While Away: The Contribution of Indonesian Students Studying Overseas for Education in Indonesia*, I would like you to reflect on your overseas experience. Can I suggest that you give attention to the following questions? To what extent is your endeavour

- to integrate into the local culture/people?
- to network/collaborate with staff and students from other nationalities?
- to produce papers for international publication (sole papers, co-author with supervisors or other colleagues)?
- to attend international local and conferences?

All of these activities can contribute to international collaboration and cross-cultural learning.