

Chapter 22

The Road to Intercultural Development and Internationalization

Erica Jin Jung
University of Manitoba, Canada

ABSTRACT

The post-secondary educational landscape is slowly becoming a backdrop for an increasing number of examples of efforts being made to establish intercultural development and internationalization at the university and college levels. Universities and colleges are responding to the increase in international student recruitment and to technological advancement both of which promote collaboration in research, teaching, and studying across borders. The growing demographic diversity has resulted in changes to how and what internationalization looks like in our post-secondary institutions and in higher education in general. This chapter explores four areas that are key to the process: buy-in from the Administration, support in the curricular arena, recognition for intercultural work of faculty members, and a more centralized mechanism and structure to help advance the internationalization agenda. Despite the progress made in Canada, these areas are still continuing to gain traction in higher education in other countries.

INTRODUCTION

At the post-secondary levels, institutions have generally been slow to legitimize the importance of intercultural development and internationalization in a meaningful way (Knight, 2010), as evidenced by the lack of changes to the processes, structure, and actions at many universities (Lumby & Foskett, 2015). There are four areas that are essential to the progress of intercultural development and the internationalization of post-secondary education. First, support from the Administration is crucial for its success. Although grass-roots movements can be an impetus for great change, in order for organizational change to occur within academia, it germinates “from the top down”. Second, the work involved in this process is fraught with time challenges and financial constraints, especially in the curricular areas. Third,

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recognition for the intercultural work that faculty members undertake must have commensurate reward or recognition especially in relation to the tenure and promotion process. Lastly, the advancement of intercultural development and the internationalization of an institution can be more efficient when there are centralized mechanisms and structures in place.

This chapter is focused on how to operationalize intercultural development and internationalization at post-secondary institutions. Much of the literature on internationalization at the post-secondary level focuses on the barriers and reveals the level of importance that it has within institutions. However, the processes and details of implementation are not as clear, nor are they available to those who have influence over the structural and administrative responsibilities within the institutions.

With advances of technology and accessibility, globalization has become a reality in our economy, industry, and education system. In particular, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada proposes that it is feasible to double the number of international students in Canada by 2022 (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2012). With this heightened focus on international student recruitment at the post-secondary level, the task of internationalization at our institutions is brought further to the forefront.

From the previously accepted definition of internationalization of higher education as “the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college” (Knight, 1994, p. 7), the understanding has evolved into a more robust one which is relatable to the wider university community. The identified elements now extend beyond those that were more specific to the traditional academic to those which are applicable to a broader audience. Replacing the terms “teaching, research, and service” are the broader terms of “purpose, function, and delivery” (Knight, 2004, p. 12).

Intercultural development, in particular, lies more in the realm of awareness and competencies. This occurs at both the individual and institutional levels. Both stronger self-awareness and guided workshops help, at the individual level, to promote development and understanding of intercultural communication, intercultural instructional strategies, and intercultural aspects of teaching and learning. At the institutional level, curriculum design, as well as supports to facilitate workshops or seminars for all the actors in higher education (faculty, students, and support staff) provides opportunities for engagement for everyone.

The Numbers Can Be Misleading

If internationalization continues to be our reality, then what that looks like on the ground and in the classrooms must be a significant consideration for post-secondary institutions. Leask (2013) addresses the importance of internationalization, not just through curriculum (re)design, but also stresses the need to create a conducive environment and to reward intercultural activities rather than focusing on student recruitment efforts alone or on isolated incidents and experiences. According to a study by the Association of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (2014) there has been progress made in terms of intercultural development and internationalization of the curriculum. This is a significant improvement from a previous report only eight years earlier in which a mere 41 percent of Canadian universities were engaging in initiatives to internationalize the curriculum (AUCC, 2014). This signified that less than half of Canadian universities at that time were providing an adequate environment with the appropriate programming and supports for international students to build the social and academic capital needed overall for a successful educational experience in Canadian post-secondary institutions. The 2014 survey’s current numbers now reveal that 72 percent of Canadian universities are involved in efforts to internationalize the curriculum.

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