

Internationalising Allied Health Education: Challenges to Internationalisation At Home

The widening scope of healthcare practice and increasing need to prepare graduates to work across cultures has made internationalisation an imperative for all allied health (AH) curricula. Knight (2003) defines Internationalisation of Curriculum (IoC) at the national, sector and institutional levels “as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education”. A related concept is IaH which accounts for all students not just those students who can undertake a learning experience in another country (Leask 2009, Beelen 2011). Knight (2006) describes IaH as a ‘diversity of activities’ that involve curriculum, teaching and learning processes, extracurricular activities, liaison with local cultural/ethnic groups and research or scholarly activity. Leask (2011) states that an IaH curriculum encompasses a set of instruments and activities that are part of the compulsory programme undertaken ‘at home’ with a specific focus to develop the international and intercultural competencies in all students, not just those able to travel internationally for learning activities. Appropriate curriculum and pedagogic responses are needed prior to (for example, preparation of students to work across cultures), during and after (example, dedicated reflection sessions) students’ engagement in such IaH learning experiences to not only realise the full educational worth of such learning experiences but also to secure the rich integration of IaH goals into the curriculum (Billett 2009). Discussion of IoC and IaH is well developed (Leask 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, Davies and Shirley 2007, Triggs 2004) but research on implementation and assessment of IaH is scarce.

IaH in AH education

Recent literature in IoC including AH (Speech Pathology (SP), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Physiotherapy (PT)) has analysed academic and student perspectives on studying abroad but very minimal studies have discussed implementation of IaH (Useh 2011, Lattanzi and Pechak 2012). Medical education is focused on overseas electives and global health courses for internationalising medical curricula but is struggling with how to approach IaH (Hanson 2010). Some recent IaH strategies include better utilisation of cultural diversity on campus and changes to teaching cultures that goes beyond local and national contexts. Some studies in OT discuss the importance of developing culturally competent individuals who are able to work with immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, homeless and disadvantaged population (Whiteford and Wright St-Clair 2002, Gujral 2002). Some studies in SP have explored the experiences of clinical educator and students undertaking fieldwork and study in international placements (McAllister et al. 2006, Chipcase et al. 2012, McAllister and Whiteford 2008) and studied the development of students’ clinical reasoning skills in intercultural placements, cultural knowledge and intercultural competence. More research is needed on how to use internationalisation strategies in AH education and to understand how such internationalisation can impact students’ practice (Horton 2009).

Our Approach

A detailed literature review of IaH approaches used in AH education (Australia and international) was undertaken with a view to understanding current IaH initiatives and

gathering evidence on the impact of IaH activities on development of AH students' intercultural competence. Then, we analysed current teaching, learning practices and AH accreditation criteria (Australia only). We identified challenges for implementation and integration of IaH goals with the AH curriculum.

Discussion of Findings

Some ideas for progressing IaH goals through formal and informal curricula are:

Curriculum

- Include international views/perspectives in AH subjects
- Develop an understanding of application of theory to different cultures and contexts (developed, developing, underdeveloped countries)
- Develop cultural awareness through discussion of cultural, language differences and barriers, impact of language and culture, different culture/country based attitudes to disadvantaged people, disabled persons
- Ensure academics are international educators with ability to facilitate culturally diverse student groups
- Gather support from AH professional boards and recognise intercultural competence as a priority area for graduates skill development
- Students undertake research projects/assignments to analyse different approaches to issues in different countries

Teaching and Learning

- Ensure students understand the importance on intercultural skills for current and future professional practice
- Include mandatory service learning placements in a different country or diverse settings at home (volunteer organisations, not for profit etc)
- Discuss international literature on service delivery/ evidence based practice
- Use of multicultural/international case studies
- Comparison studies of patient interventions in home and other countries
- Brainstorm ideas and strategies in-class to develop ability in students to cope with cultural as well as socio-economic differences
- Provide cross-cultural or cultural sensitivity training courses
- Maximise the use of diversity in the student cohorts by forming learning pairs comprising of students from different cultures
- Design learning tasks and assessments to test knowledge and demonstration of intercultural and international competencies

Informal

- Liaise with local cultural/ethnic groups
- Use migrant/refugee/ethnic groups in the home country to provide different perspectives
- Use diversity on campus to encourage cultural lunches, debates, competitions, mentoring (domestic mentoring international etc), buddies programs, attendance and participation in cultural events on campus

- Peer assisted study sessions, university wide study support groups managed through student services

Challenges and Future Research

There are several challenges for implementation of IaH and assessment of progress made.

- A framework of skills/competencies to describe internationalisation for AH does not exist. What set of skills/competencies contribute to internationalisation outcomes for health graduates? Commonly used terms: cross-cultural, socio-cultural, international and intercultural skills.
- Lack of consensus on what IaH means and how to implement it in practice. Definitions of IaH exists. But there are no clear directions on how to implement IaH in AH.
- Difficulty in assessment of progress made on IaH initiatives and their impact on practice/ impact on health graduate skills/competencies. How to assess an internationalisation initiative? How to measure (evidence) progress made?
- Difficulty in evaluation of outcomes for students, faculties, university and community in relation to IaH. How to assess or report on outcomes for individuals involved post IaH? Evidence for the impact on student learning outcomes and students' practice is scarce.
- How to justify resources required for supporting IaH initiatives? (Adelman 2004, Siaya and Hayward 2003, Van Damme 2001).

It is clear that robust research evidence is required to reach consensus about effective pedagogic and curricular responses for preparation of AH graduates for international healthcare practice.

References

- Adelman, C. (2004). *Principal indicators of student academic histories in postsecondary education, 1972-2000*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Beelen, J. (2011). First steps in internationalization at home. *Educación Global*, 15, 59-67.
- Billett, S. (2009). Realising the educational worth of integrating work experiences in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(7), 827-843.
- Chipchase, L., Allen, S., Eley, D., McAllister, L. and Strong, J. (2012). Interprofessional supervision in an intercultural context: A qualitative study. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*. DOI: 10.3109/13561820.2012.718813
- Davies, I., and Shirley, M. (2007). *Internationalising work-integrated learning for law students*. Paper presented at the 15th World Conference on Cooperative Education (WACE), Singapore.
- Gujral, S. (2002). Working in a transcultural context. In J Creek, ed. *Occupational therapy and mental health*. 3rd ed. London: Churchill Livingstone.
- Hanson, L. (2010). Global citizenship, global health, and the internationalization of curriculum: A study of transformative potential. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14(1), 70-88.

Horton, A. (2009) Internationalising occupational therapy education. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 72, 227-230.

Knight, J. (2003). Updated internationalization definition. *International Higher Education*, 33, 2-3.

Knight, J. (2006). Internationalization of higher education: New directions, new challenges (IAU 2nd Global Survey report). Paris: IAU.

Lattanzi, J.B. and Pechak C. (2012). Educating Globally Minded Physical Therapist Students: Curriculum Strategies to Equip the Next Generation. *Journal of Physical Therapy Education*, 26 (1), 55- 60.

Leask, B. (2005). *Internationalisation of the curriculum and intercultural engagement – a variety of perspectives and possibilities*. Paper presented at the Australian International Education Conference, Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, October 11-14, Queensland, Australia.
<http://www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/Leask,%20Betty.pdf>

Leask, B. (2007). Diversity on campus - an institutional approach: a case study from Australia. In H. Teekens (Ed.), *Internationalisation at Home: ideas and ideals* (33-39). Amsterdam: European Association for International Education (EAIE).

Leask, B. (2009). Using Formal and Informal Curricula to Improve Interactions Between Home and International Students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 205-221.

Leask, B. (2011). Internationalisation of Higher Education and Internationalisation of the Curriculum, Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Workshop Material.

Leask, B. (2012). Internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) in action. A Guide.
http://www.ioc.net.au/main/file.php/2/V2_Internationalisation_of_curriculum_6pg_Brochure_Final.pdf

McAllister, L., Whiteford, G., Hill, R. and Thomas, N. (2006). Learning and reflection in professional inter-cultural experience: A qualitative study. *Reflective Practice*, 7(3), 367-381.

McAllister, L. and Whiteford, G. (2008). Facilitating clinical decision making in students in intercultural fieldwork placements. In Higgs J, Jones M, Loftus S, Christensen N (Eds.) *Clinical reasoning in the health professions*. (3rd ed.) 357-365, Elsevier.

Siaya, L. & Hayward, F.M. (2003). *Mapping internationalisation on US campuses*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Triggs, G. (2004). Internationalisation of the Australian law degree: International Legal Education and Training Committee, International Legal Services Advisory Council, Australia.

Useh, U. (2011). Internationalisation of Higher Education: Inclusion of Socio-cultural skills in a Physiotherapy Programme. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 36(1), 1-7.

Van Damme, D. (2001). Quality issues in the internationalisation of higher education. *Higher Education*, 41(4), 415-41.

Whiteford, G. and Wright St-Clair, V. (2002). Being prepared for diversity in practice: occupational therapy students' perceptions of valuable intercultural learning experiences. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 65(3), 129-37.