



JUTLP

Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice

A contextualised Internationalisation of the curriculum: A case study in China

Qi Li^a, Dongmei Li^b, Jianli Wu^a

^aSouth China Normal University, China, ^bMelbourne University, Australia

Abstract

China is often seen as a home country of international students in higher education internationalisation. Little is known how Chinese institutions actively engage in multi-modal and multi-lateral internationalised practices. This paper offers an updated insight of higher education internationalisation in a context outside the dominant western landscape through a case study set in an international college in China. Making use of the existing frameworks of internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC), the current case study focuses on three key aspects of the curriculum: program development, student experience and staff perspectives. A mixed-method approach was used to collect data from three sources: institutional archives and course materials, and student and staff surveys. Triangulated data show that the curriculum was well aligned within the existing IoC frameworks. The curriculum incorporated international content and comparative approaches. Local socio-cultural values were also embedded in joint programs. Both students and academics' perspectives of an internationalised curriculum showed a high level of alignment with the western community. Student and staff data also revealed urgent need to enhance the level of internationalisation, including English competence of discipline academics, people-to-people connection between local Chinese students and incoming international students, student and staff mobility opportunities, and teaching and research development for academic staff. This study hopes to contribute to the current knowledge of internationalisation of the curriculum with updated understanding in a Chinese context. This paper also provides insight in internationalisation implemented at the curriculum level in China, a context that presents much difference from but relates closely with the western context.

Citation

Li, Q., Li, D & Wu, J. (2024). A contextualised Internationalisation of the curriculum - A case study in China. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(4). <https://doi.org/10.53761/qv9kbg65>

Editors

Section: Special Issue
Senior Editor: Jo-Anne Kelder
Associate Editor: Navneel Prasad

Publication

Received: 14 May 2023
Revision: 29 November 2023
Accepted: 12 March 2024
Published: 30 March 2024

Copyright: © by the authors, in its year of first publication. This publication is an open access publication under the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY-ND 4.0 license.

Introduction

Internationalisation has been a globally recognised institutional practice in higher education (HE) and is widely regarded as an institutional imperative (Hudzik, 2015). Universities have been seeking to establish partnerships overseas in various forms such as branch campuses, study programs and student exchange. This approach to internationalisation is regarded as transnational education (TNE) (Allport, 2002; Francois, 2016). In Asia, TNE is usually delivered between foreign, mostly Western, and especially Anglophone institutions and a local university. A common TNE form is a program jointly delivered by a foreign university and the local university (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2011).

China has been a popular partner for Western universities over the last two decades. As of 2017, there were 2572 TNE programs in 12 disciplines and 200 programs, involving more than 785 Chinese institutions and over 961 foreign institutions from 34 countries or regions (Lin, 2017). To ensure TNE quality, Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) (2003; 2004) set clear criteria for TNE educational resources, called the “Four One-thirds” principles. With these criteria, all international courses must include at least one-third of the total courses within a program. The criteria also required that at least one-third of the courses were taught by teachers from the foreign university.

While MoE policies usefully set up higher-level guidelines and criteria at the institutional and national levels for TNE programs in China, there is a lack of understanding of key fundamental dimensions at the more micro-levels such as student experience, subject design and teacher development at the program and individual levels. Recognising the importance of these micro-level dimensions is essential for enabling and sustaining the functioning of a program at the macro (institutional) and mega (international) levels (Fakunle & Hunter, 2023). There is also limited information available in the literature, both in Chinese and English, that informs internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) in TNE contexts.

To address the gap in the literature, the current case study investigated a cluster of TNE programs at the subject and individual levels – curriculum design, student experience, and staff development - at an international institute in China. This study aims to provide an updated understanding of internationalised TNE curricula in a context outside the Western domination. To achieve this aim, the following two questions are asked:

1. How is curricular internationalisation implemented in a transnational education institution?
2. What are some good practices and challenges?

Literature: A Localised and Contextualised Concept of Internationalisation of the Curriculum

Internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) is a relatively new concept originating from university programs in Europe about 30 years ago (Harari, 1992; van der Wende, 1996). The conceptualisation of IoC has gone through some major changes over the last three decades (e.g., Nilsson, 2000; Robson & Wihlberg, 2019; van der Wende, 1997). Many of the earlier

definitions tend to be framed within the Western paradigm and may not fully consider the local contexts that are outside the Western domain.

The concepts of IoC developed over the last 10 years or so tend to take a more localised lens while keeping the broader national and global contexts. As Jones (2015, p. x) asserts in the editorial of one of the most prominent works in this field in the last decade *Internalizing the Curriculum* (Leask, 2015), "academic programs, the students who study them, and the academics who design, deliver, and assess them are at the heart of university endeavours". These three elements are inter-connected in the conceptual framework presented in Leask (2015, 2022). The framework places the knowledge of the discipline and across the discipline at the centre their conceptual framework. Centralising the disciplinary knowledge means focusing the curriculum on student learning. The localised approach embedded in this idea are reflected in two layers. One is that the process of internationalisation should be integrated within the local cultures and values that are related to the disciplines; and the other is the academics who teach in the subject and their skills and expertise is inseparable in the curriculum (Leask, 2016).

The framework also takes an inclusive approach by considering four layers of contexts: institutional, local, national and regional, and global contexts (Leask, 2022). By considering these contexts, this framework allows space for analysis of curricula beyond the western contexts. This breakthrough benefits the current study in particular at the institutional and national levels. The college in the current case study specialises in joint programs with international university partners. Curriculum requirements are directly aligned with the Chinese national guidelines and standards.

Transnational education institutions outside the Western context are unique in many ways, including the learner, the teacher, the educational environment, and the broader societal and cultural environment. Therefore, when exploring possibilities for building new transnational programs, how to facilitate with local applicability should be considered (Gough, 2020; Nguyen, Phan & Tran, 2021).

Host countries in Asia have different interpretations and practices of IoC. Two countries that are currently becoming strong TNE powers in TNE are China and Vietnam, which both take different approaches and policies. Vietnamese authorities launched the Advanced programs as its implementation of the internationalisation of the curriculum, which is considered one of the most important initiatives in Vietnamese HE reform (Tran, Phan & Marginson, 2018). The goal of the Advanced program project is to fully revamp the university curriculum by importing whole foreign degree courses, those have been regarded as the already-tested best practises in curriculum, into specific fields at Vietnamese universities. All other elements of the foreign programs, including the course design, teaching strategies, and assessment, are imported in addition to the content (Tran, Phan & Marginson, 2018).

As for China, the Minister of Education (MoE) (2003; 2004) has set clear quantitative indicators for introduction of high-quality educational resources that all approved TNE programs must comply with, called "Four One Thirds". The Four One thirds rule requires that introduced foreign units and introduced foreign specialisation core units account for not less than one-third of the joint program; and introduced core units and hours taught by foreign faculty respectively

account for not less than one-third of the total courses (Lawson, n.d.). The criteria of the Chinese government for the course introduction are evident.

Curriculum teaching and pedagogies are important considerations while offering transnational programs out of the Western context. This involves introducing Western curricula and pedagogies to a country with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Since English is the chosen language for international commerce and academia (Fellenson & Mahlck, 2017), English-speaking nations are leaders in the provision of transnational education. These programs employ English to teach academic material.

Local universities can find it difficult to adapt Western knowledge to the local context because of ideological and practical differences (Ziguras, 2008; Nguyen, Phan & Tran, 2023). Research has indicated that when teachers and students lack the English language skills necessary for instruction and learning, teaching content in English jeopardizes the quality of education (Chapple, 2015; Hamid et al. 2013; Hu et al. 2014). Regardless of the built-in intensive English courses, the English barrier nevertheless still reduces the quality of students' learning, especially in discipline-specific subjects (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Hellekjær, 2010).

A similar unequal situation is reflected in the status between the local and foreign staff. In a case study of Malaysia-British dual degree, it indicated that internationalisation of the curriculum achieved by the different academic requirements from partners, cooperation and commitment between academics and the cultural understanding. Through the staff interview, it also reflected the Britain's colonial influence affecting Malaysian TNE but academics in Malaysia looked beyond colonialism in the curriculum. Academics working with British counterparts felt of being 'unequal partners' and the sense of being in 'master and servant' (Cheng, 2018).

There are also concerns about the teaching arrangements with the foreign partners. Western partner institutions send over lecturers for a short period of time to teach in a TNE program. These teaching staff are often deployed with minimal preparation or sufficient understanding of the students or the local environments (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003). Very little pre-departure or continuing training is provided to lecturers who work remotely (Dunn & Wallace, 2008). It has been debates on how to support staff professional development for international education (Beelen & Leask, 2010; Tran & Nguyen, 2015).

The literature presents discussions of TNE teaching and learning in Asia, particularly in the internationalisation of curriculum. However, little empirical research has been done to present a connected understanding how the key components of teaching and learning - the program, the learner and the teacher - interact synergistically to shape the educational experience and influence overall outcomes.

Method

A case study method was considered suitable to address the two research questions – the implementation of IoC, and good practices and challenges, as a case study is broadly recognised to offer in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. It offers reflexivity to collect various types of data and enables the researcher to see the relationship between the case and the context (Priya, 2021).

The Case

The case was a college featured by internationalisation based in a major university in south China. It has established long-term and stable cooperative relationships with more than 20 universities in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, France for over 10 years. As of September 2023, 1102 undergraduates and 87 graduate students were enrolled in four undergraduate and one postgraduate programs. The undergraduate disciplines are Big Data Management, Finance, Financial Management and Business in French, and postgraduate program in International Business. All these programs are joint programs with an international partner university. The college also has international students from France, Canada, Belgium and other countries every year. The college's graduate attributes are excellent Chinese citizens with international vision, and global citizens who thoroughly understand the Chinese culture. In this paper, we will use IBC and the college interchangeably as the name of the case.

Data Collection

A mixed-method approach was used to collect and analyse data. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, mixed methods research aims at complementary results of representativeness from quantitative data and depth from qualitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

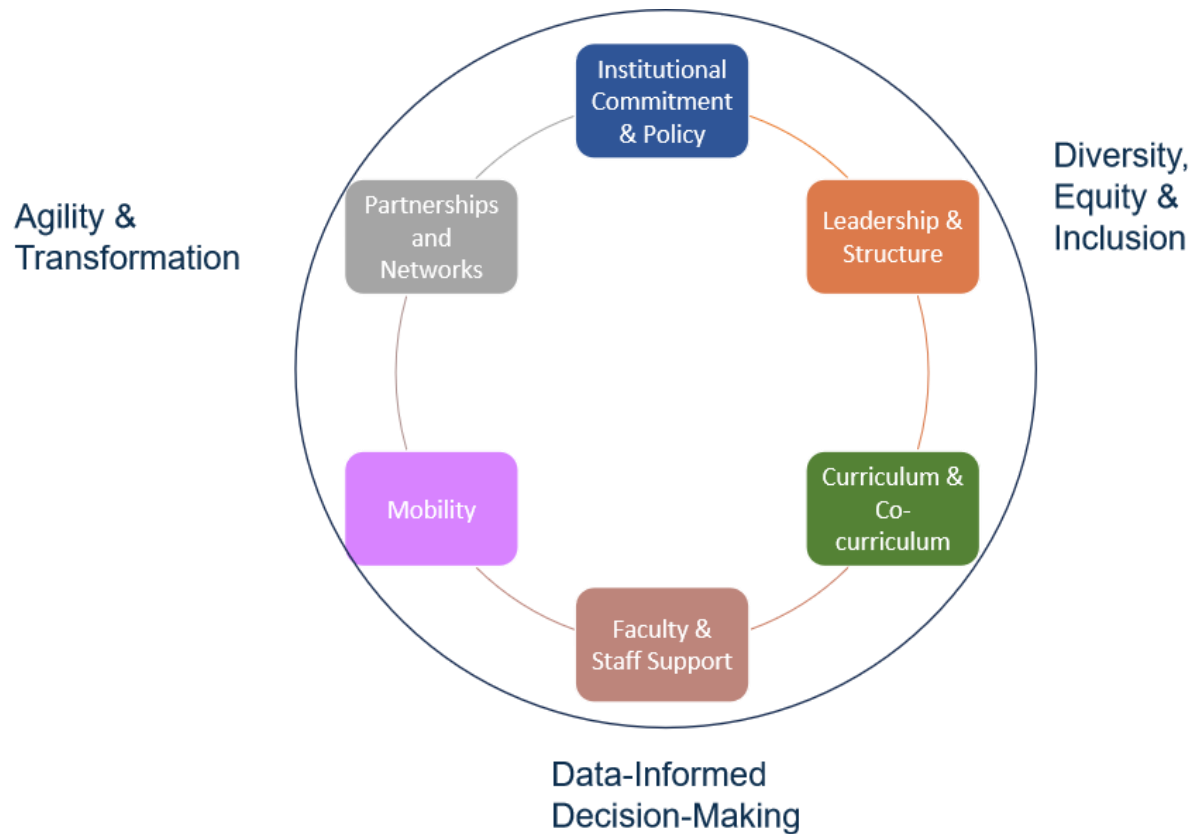
Two sets of data were collected: archival analysis, surveys with students and staff. Archival data were collected from files of all international programs at the institute from May to June 2018. Documents included government policies, curriculum plans, learning materials, promotion brochures, records of co-curricular activities, student scholarships, and student international mobility activities.

Questionnaire Development

Two questionnaires were developed to collect responses from students and staff. Both questionnaires were created based on the Comprehensive Internationalisation Model (CIM) by the American Council on Education (ACE) (n.d.). The key components of CIM are illustrated in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, there are six target areas in the ACE CIM: institutional commitment and policy, leadership and structure, curriculum and co-curriculum, faculty and staff support, mobility and partnership and networks. These six areas are also focused through three lenses: agility & transformation, data-informed decision-making, and diversity, equity & inclusion (*American Council on Education, n.d.*). These three lenses not only informed the questions design of the surveys of the current study, but also the analysis of the responses.

Figure 1

The Comprehensive Internationalisation Model (CIM)



Note. Figure recreated from Comprehensive Internationalisation Framework by American Council on Education, (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx>

Comprehensive internationalisation is a strategic, coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate policies, programs, and initiatives to position colleges and universities as more globally oriented and internationally connected institutions. The surveys enquired a range of topics including university and college commitments, administrative structures to support internationalisation, curriculum and co-curriculum, student mobility, faculty international development and mobility and research collaboration and partnerships.

Participants

Surveys were conducted online in the 2018 May to students and academic staff in all programs at the College. The survey response rates were 74% of students (N=530) and 74% of staff (N=52). The key demographic distribution of students and academic staff are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

Table 1

Students Demographic Distribution

Participant breakdown		Number	Valid percentage	Total	Missing
Program	International Finance	99	19.8%	500	30
	Financial Management	248	49.6%		
	Business French	61	12.2%		
	Overseas Preparation Program	92	18.4%		
Years of study	1 year or less	262	50.8%	516	14
	2 years	73	14.4%		
	3 years	65	12.6%		
	4 years	115	22.3%		
	5 years or more	1	0.2%		

As shown in Table 1, students from all four programs participated in this survey, with the most respondents enrolled in Financial Management, following by International Finance, Overseas Preparation Program and then Business French. This distribution was proportional to the enrolments in the programs. There was also a mixture of students in all four years of study.

Table 2

Academic Staff Demographic Distribution

Participant breakdown		Number	Valid percentage
Nationality	Chinese	49	94.2%
	Foreign	3	5.8%
Background	Experience of studying abroad	40	76.9%
	No experience of studying abroad	12	23.1%
Language of instruction	In full English	28	39.4%
	In full French	5	7.0%
	In both French and Chinese	3	4.2%
	In both English and Chinese	28	39.4%
Programs taught	Only in Chinese	7	9.9%
	International Finance	19	25.7%
	Financial Management	18	24.3%
	French	8	10.8%
	Overseas Preparation program	9	12.2%
	Centre for Language Training	20	27.0%

As shown in Table 2, most respondents were local Chinese academics, with only three international academics. Most of Chinese staff had studied abroad and were able to teach bilingually. The academic staff respondents were from all courses including the Centre for Language Training, which delivered all English language subjects College wide.

Data Analysis

Quantitative survey questions were analysed with a descriptive approach with the use of Excel. Document analysis was used to systematically review archives of program administration and curricula and course statistics (Morgan, 2022). Cross reference was also used for accuracy during both analysis processes between a team of three program administrators.

Results

The Variety of International Disciplinary Programs

Document analysis showed three undergraduate international programs. These programs fell into five categories in terms of governance relations between the delivery partners. These programs were also distinct from each other in terms of structure and length of delivery, as well as elements at the micro level, such as curriculum design, learning materials, composition of local Chinese and foreign teachers.

In terms of governance and partnership, they are respectively categorised as:

- 1) Sino-foreign Joint Program (SFJP): programs, often degrees, approved and regulated by the Chinese MoE.
- 2) Sino-foreign Articulation Program (SFAP): programs established by the institutions voluntarily and filed on the local educational authorities.
- 3) Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE): mobility programs franchised by the CSCSE.
- 4) Scottish Qualifications Authority Higher National Diploma Program (SQA HND) : diploma programs accredited by SQA.
- 5) China Business Immersion Program (CBI) : short-term exchange co-curricular without degree commitments.

Table 3 provides an overview of the five types of programs delivered at IBC and summarises how the curriculum and delivery were also different among these programs. In the first category, the curriculum was developed collaboratively by SCNU and partner university. The curriculum had to conform to the TNE regulations by both Chinese and UK HE systems. At least one-third of the subjects were taught by staff of the UK university. At least 80% of the subjects were taught in English by either the Chinese or UK academics.

The design of Business French Program's training scheme has taken reference to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR). In the way of credit articulation with about 10 universities in French speaking countries, students may go to partner universities getting the second degree. Faculty are from different counties of French speaking countries, including the program director who has been working with IBC for more than 10 years.

China Business Immersion program (CBI) has combined with the local characteristics in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects to receive overseas students studying in China. This provided international students an in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and economy through immersing in the curriculum that combines both course knowledge and rich experience. Besides campus lectures, field trips are provided to students fully engaged with the local enterprises.

Table 3

IBC's International Joint Venture Programs

Program name	Collaboration mode	Curriculum development	Course delivery
Real Estate Finance	2+2 or 4+0	Developed collaboratively by IBC and partner university	IBC+ at least 1/3 curriculum from the UK partner
Business French, Financial Management, Big Data Management	4+0, 3+1, 2+1.5+0.5 or 2+2 with various partner universities	Developed collaboratively by IBC and partner university	IBC+ at least 4 international courses from foreign partners
Business, Arts, Education	2+2, 2+2.5 or 2+3 with various partner universities	Developed collaboratively by IBC and partner university	IBC
Accounting, Marketing, Human Resource Management	3+1 with various partner universities	Developed collaboratively by IBC and partner university	IBC
China Business Immersion	Students from foreign universities	IBC	IBC + local entrepreneurs

Note: The lengths of each program and collaboration modes are listed in column 3. For example, in the Real Estate Finance course, students have the option to study all four years of the degree at the College in China (4+0) or spend the first two years in China and the last two years in the UK (2+2).

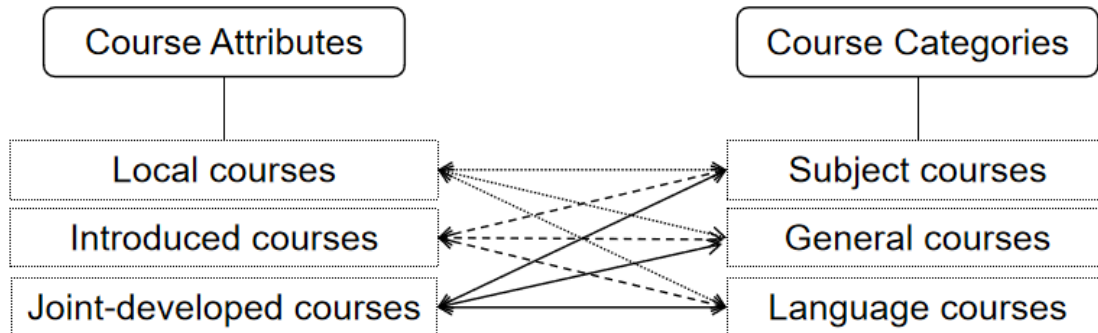
A Series of Foundation Programs for Core Skill Development

IBC introduced three types of courses in English language, liberal education and program core subjects (Figure 2).

Figure 2 is a summary that archived from course development files on how the college to construct the internationalisation of curriculum. Academic English courses and Bridging English courses were integrated into the curriculum. Students studying in international programs learn up to 120 hours of Academic English courses, to meet the English requirements of the partner university.

Figure 2

IBC's Systematic Design in Curriculum Introduction



General and subject courses are mainly introduced from Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada within the field of financial management, business, economics, finance, French and other business-related areas (Table 4).

Table 4

Course List Introduced from Partner Universities

Course type	Introduced course
Language Courses	Academic English, Bridging English, Writing and Communication
General Courses	Public Speaking, Critical thinking, American Literature, Philosophy, Modern American History, etc
Subject Courses	Business Information System, Business Statistics, Organizational Behaviour, Business Research Methods, Financial Markets, etc

Courses and original book list used by partner universities were introduced. More than 40 courses were taught with English or French internationalised textbooks and resources. IBC incorporated self-compiled materials and domestically published Chinese textbooks in the local teaching and learning activities, to develop introduced courses with local characteristics, to develop local curriculum with internationalised elements.

International vision was integrated into the curriculum in all courses. For example, Finance was to provide the best blend of events and analysis of international finance. The learning outcomes were for students to build abilities to understand global economic developments and to evaluate proposals for changes in economic policies. Different forms of student assessment were emphasized, such as case analysis, comparative study, moot court and research report. The 3rd Edition of the Fundamentals of Multinational Finance (Moffett et al., 2010) and the 12th Edition of International finance (Pilbim, 2013) were introduced into the Finance course as additional reading materials. Formal teaching contact comprises 39 lectures plus 15 tutorials over a period of 18 weeks. Lectures aim to provide an overview of the subject, the key ideas,

theoretical and empirical developments, issues and debates. Lectures provide guidance and insight, but students must be supplemented by discussion and further reading.

During the pandemic, over 70 online courses, including liberal education course modules, business course modules, language course modules and practical course modules were set up all in English or bilingually. Based on the developed English courses, IBC further combined with the local characteristics in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects to establish a Business Immersion program to receive overseas students studying in China. This provided international students an in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and economy through immersing in the curriculum that combines both course knowledge and rich experience. Besides campus lectures, there are also field trips to the local enterprises, guest speaker lectures addressed by Chinese entrepreneurs, visit historical sites in together with Chinese students, cross-cultural socializing with Chinese students in and out of class, and internship in some companies and China Import and Export Fair.

Institutional Strategies for Teaching Joint Programs

The document analysis shows two key strategies implemented to maintain sustainable high-quality programs, including teaching quality assurance and teaching staff academic development: bringing in highly qualified teaching staff from overseas and provide staff academic development.

Partner universities assigned teaching staff to teach the courses on site in China. These foreign teachers joined and built a relatively stable academic team locally. Foreign teachers and local IBC teachers co-designed, co-lectured and co-evaluated in one course. Blended teaching took place in the classroom and online independent and practical learning. For example, Business French program adopted a Canadian neuro-linguistic approach into the teaching of the first- and second-years courses where students at the beginner's level were taught in French. Teachers were trained by the founder of Neurolinguistic approach Claude Germain and his team. In every course in Real Estate Finance program there was one lecture from partner university and one lecture from IBC to deliver the courses together.

Staff academic development was another strategy that the College employed to help teachers improve teaching effectiveness. IBC introduced domestic and foreign experts to organise discipline and professional ability enhancement workshops to further conduct course teaching. These included conferences, seminars, collaborative curriculum development, and extracurricular activity organisation. IBC funded teaching staff to study abroad as academic visitors for at least three months to one year to improve instruction and learn new teaching methods. For example, trainers in the English Language Centre of Australian university visited to conduct two-week course training on Academic English bridge course for teachers in the Language Centre of IBC. A total of 30 teachers have been sent to the United States, the United Kingdom and France for professional competence training until 2017.

Student Perspectives

Student survey results showed a mostly positive experience in an internationalised program. Students were in general satisfied with global perspective incorporated in the curriculum, learning experience and student mobility.

Firstly, curricular in the international programs at IBC support the development of a global perspective in students. Over 70% students agreed that studying at IBC have helped them better understand the global market and global issues. The courses encouraged students to understand the viewpoints of different culture and interact with people from other countries. 65.2% recognized global and international topics has been provided throughout the activities.

Secondly, students reflected positively on their learning experience. Students had access to foreign learning resources and acquire knowledge based on the foreign universities' teaching models. 70% students reflected the teachers used methods they learned overseas and presented the class from different perspective effective teaching methods. The language medium was used in English to explain the content. Student-centred learning required more autonomy and independence was considered different from local normal programs in a teacher-centred environment. 84% students recognised the adjustments to the international programs were made to reflect the learning outcomes of IBC students.

Thirdly, students were informed, encouraged and supported to study abroad. 77.5% students reported that the studies at IBC helped them understand other cultures. IBC provided students opportunities to study in overseas institutes during their four-year studies at the college. Short-term student exchange opportunities were offered for students to have an experience abroad in partner universities. Students felt familiar with the diversity and internationalisation and over 50% of students perceived the implementation and impact of internationalisation at IBC. Compared with students studying in the normal Chinese programs, students have stronger intentions to have an experience in students exchange overseas and postgraduate studies. 64.5% of students in Real Estate Finance received offers overseas in 2020 that is much higher than the students studying in the normal Chinese programs (South China Normal University, 2020).

Staff Perspectives

From the results of academic faculty survey, staff met expectations of internationalised teaching, mobility and interaction internationally. IBC provided staff with opportunities to teach outside China. 90% faculty agreed that traveling abroad changed the perception of quality teaching. New teaching methods learned from colleagues who had studied abroad and over 60% faculty used it in class. Almost 99% faculty who have studied abroad report that this experience helped them to understand how their course content was relevant in the global market. 100% staff agreed the opinion that leaning about people from different cultures as well as learning a foreign language was a very important part for their education or undergraduate degree.

Faculty perception of the impact of faculty mobility and efforts to promote internationalisation was positive. 77% of faculty reported that they have been encouraged and supported to study

abroad. 90% of the teaching group made the consensus that travelling abroad has helped them understand how the courses are relevant in the global market and how this experience changed the perception of quality teaching.

Challenges

Nonetheless, both student and staff surveys revealed challenges in teaching and learning in an internationalised curriculum.

The student survey showed that a lack of confidence on communicating and learning in English. 26.4% students reported difficulty in understanding their teachers when they lectured or discussed course content in English. Close to half the students reported difficulty in communicating in English.

Students also found some teachers hard to understand in English. 26% students were confused as teaching staff failed to speak English well enough to explain the content to students.

Students also expressed the need for more communication and interaction internationally. Students were engaged in co-curriculum activities on international themes but not enough with international students from foreign universities. The finding found that 90% students expressed they would like more opportunities to meet and socialize with international students. Teachers' response on their English competence was similar to those of the students. On staff's English abilities, despite almost 70% staff indicated that it was easy for them to read the course materials in English, 80% staff found it challenging to teaching in English or bilingually. Over 50% reported having difficulty in lecturing course materials in English and discussing course materials in English. 72% of faculty believed they needed help to improve instruction and learn new teaching methods, especially pedagogy in English as medium of instruction courses.

Teachers also reported lack of confidence in pedagogy and called for teaching and learning research opportunities with international colleagues. 94.2% of the teaching staff were Chinese and only 5.8% were international whether hired locally or assigned from a partner institute. 70% staff had not engaged in research opportunities with international organizations or foreign universities. 40% of faculty advised that training for learning research-based teaching methods was not provided sufficiently.

Discussion

Informed by the prevalent conceptual frameworks of IoC (van der Wende, 1996; Leask, 2015; 2022), we also used the case study as a test field of the contextuality and localisation of these frameworks. The findings show that our case was aligned with the conceptual framework in many aspects, in the program subject matter integrated with local cultures and national values, the learners' understanding and experience of curricular internationalisation learning experience and learner, and the academics' expertise and skills. This shows that the current framework lead by Leask (2015, 2022) can be adopted in a context outside the traditional western domain. Many of the concerns and challenges expressed by students and staff also fall into the call made from this framework.

The strongest voice are the English language confidence and competence of both students and staff. Students took their study at the College as an opportunity to enhance their English

language abilities that may lead to better employment in the local workplace. The stress on teaching in English and English as the medium of instruction is from all levels of the curriculum, as a requirement in the national T&E policy and the institutional policy. It's also preference for the students and possibly some teachers.

The programs taught in English give students and staff access to the internationally accredited knowledge and content through locally based education, further enable them to have a good command of English proficiency and global employment competence (Tran & Marginson, 2018; Phuong & Nguyen, 2019; Rose, 2019). However, the lack of teachers who are both qualified and willing to teach in English has a detrimental effect on the success of TNE programs teaching (Dearden, 2014). This causes students to have difficulties understanding the discipline knowledge and interacting with teachers, which, in some cases, results in student resistance (Galloway et al., 2017; Rose, 2019). This is also the case at IBC. Some students reported concerns about the language competence of their discipline teachers, so did some teachers of their own. Although the staff at IBC were qualified with their English qualification but still felt the difficult to deliver the courses in English both in language and pedagogies. This dilemma confirms Leask's (2016) concern about the precarity of connection between teaching in English and student achievements.

Teachers understand and respond to the curriculum in ways that depend on their personal biographies and cultural dispositions (Green, 2003; Pinar, 2004). Firstly, when the institutions introduced the curriculum, staff at the first point shall understand the materials, academic norms and the conflicts between internationalised curriculum and localisation practices. This requires staff to have an international teaching experience or got the degrees from those western countries. Pressure for recruiting these staff locally and foreign staff are increased for the local institutions. Secondly, The cultural context of transnational teaching highlights importance of good teaching skills. Thirdly, pressure on staff training, and changes in faculty culture amid the integration of Western style are also important (Galloway et al., 2017). Establishing a stable and sustainable eco-system that involves regular exchange of staffing with partner institutes, hiring of international faculty, establishing peer teaching and research groups, and short-or long-term teaching and training programs, as well as inviting external pedagogical experts as teaching and research mentors and buddies may be beneficial.

Another voice that emerged from both student and staff surveys was the longing for people-to-people interaction through experiential intercultural activities. The responses revealed that often these activities were not within the core curriculum but in co-curricular or mobility programs. Staff and students valued the intercultural knowledge and skills gained through these experiences, which supported the emerging arguments to include the co-curriculum into the development of an internationalised curriculum (Leask, 2009; 2022). This further asserts the value of people-to-people connection in an inclusive international learning environment (Tran, 2020). This call was aligned with the college's policies and strategies as well as the broader global higher education needs. Staff and student mobility was a part of the college's policies and strategies. Academic mobility has always been an important feature of higher education internationalisation (De Wit, 2017). However, mobility activities only benefit the small group of staff and students who participated (Leask, 2016). It is recommended that the college seeks

more inclusive approaches to enhance people-to-people connection, including expanding on outbound opportunities, and in-bound student offerings.

Conclusion and Future Research

In this case study, we tried to understand the practice of an international college in China by making use of some of the most expansively explored frameworks in the field of internationalisation of the curriculum. We found that the frameworks are adaptable in a context outside the traditional western domain in several key aspects. The program design was integrated with local cultures and values. Student and staff perspectives of IoC were well aligned with the frameworks. In this case study, we also identified some key challenges in the college and among students and staff. English as the medium of instruction was challenging for both local teachers and students. Both students and teachers also highly valued people-to-people connections. It is recommended that a series of stable and sustainable professional development system for staff should be in place.

There might be some possible limitations in this study. First, the student and staff data were collected before the pandemic. The disruption of the pandemic did not only stall the progress of this study till this year, but also potentially alter the student and staff experience of internationalisation. Therefore, readers can make use of the findings of this study a pre-pandemic 'normal' state of the case. A timely next step for this study is to conduct a comparative study on the cusp of opening of international education activities in China. Methodologically, it would benefit the triangulation of information in the new study to include qualitative data such as student and staff interviews.

Although a case study of a small-sized college, the variety of programs presented a condense ecosystem of transnational education can provide useful implications for the broader international community in higher education research and practice. It showcases a living example a localised and contextualised internationalised curriculum. The broader community of IoC can find this case study of comparative value for their own context of practice.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Prof. Gary Miron of Western Michigan University for his invaluable contributions to the evaluation of IBC's internationalisation. We would also extend our gratitude to colleagues at IBC, and our team at the research Centre for Cross-Border Education Quality Assurance for their research and teaching practice work in internationalisation.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) disclose that they have no actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The authors disclose that they have not received any funding for this manuscript beyond resourcing for academic time at their respective university. The authors have produced this manuscript without artificial intelligence support.

References

- Allport, C. (2002, March 14-16). *Transnational education and GATS: An Australian perspective* [Conference presentation]. EI Conference on Higher Education, Montreal.
- American Council on Education. (n.d.). *Comprehensive internationalization framework*. American Council on Education. Retrieved November 30, 2023, from <https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx>
- Beelen, J., & Leask, B. (2010). Enhancing the engagement of academic staff in international education. *Proceedings of a Joint IEAA-EAIE Symposium* (pp. 28-40). Melbourne: International Education Association of Australia. https://pure.hva.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/144046/497964_Engaging_Academic_Staff_in_International_Education_in_Europe_and_Australia.pdf
- Chapple, J. (2015). Teaching in English is not necessarily the teaching of English. *International Education Studies*, 8(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.5539/IES.V8N3P1>
- Cheng, M. W. (2018). The Southeast Asian higher education space: Transnational, international or national in new ways? *European Educational Research Journal*, 17(6), 793-808. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904117699627>
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.
- De Wit, H. (2017). Global: Internationalization of higher education: Nine misconceptions. In Mihut, G., Altbach, P.G., & Wit, H.D. (Eds.), *Understanding higher education internationalization*. Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6351-161-2_2
- Dearden, J. (2014). *English as a medium of instruction - A growing global phenomenon*. British Council. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/case-studies-insights-and-research/english-medium-instruction-growing-global>
- Evans, S., & Morrison, B. (2011). Meeting the challenges of English-medium higher education: The first-year experience in Hong Kong. *English for Specific Purposes*, 30(3), 198–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2011.01.001>
- Fakunle, O., & Hunter, F. (2023). Call for proposals for winter 2024 special issue: Conceptualizing micro-level narratives in thematic constructs of internationalization. *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*. <https://mailchi.mp/ojed/jcihewinterspecialissue2024>
- Fellenson, M., & Mahlck, P. (2017). Untapped research capacities? Mobility and collaboration at the intersection of international development aid and global science regimes.

- International journal of African higher education*, 4(1), 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.6017/ijahe.v4i1.10248>
- Francois, E.J. (2016). What is transnational education?. In Francois, E.J., Avoseh, M., & Griswold, W (Eds), *Perspectives in transnational higher education*. Sense.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-420-6_1
- Galloway, N., Kriukow, J., & Numajiri, T. (2017). Internationalisation, higher education and the growing demand for English: An investigation into the English medium of instruction (EMI) movement in China and Japan. The British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/H035%20ELTRA%20Internationalisation_HE_and%20the%20growing%20demand%20for%20English%20A4_FINAL_WEB.pdf
- Gough, N. (2020). Transnational education and curriculum studies. In Lee, J. C., & Gough, N. (Eds.), *Transnational curriculum inquiry: Building postcolonialist constituencies and solidarities* (pp. 20-37). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351061629>
- Green, B. (2003). Curriculum inquiry in Australia: Toward a genealogy of the curriculum field. In W. F. Pinar (Ed.), *International handbook of curriculum research*. (pp.123-141). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410607645>
- Gribble, K., & Zигuras, C. (2003). Learning to teach offshore: Pre-departure training for lecturers in transnational programs. *Higher Education Research and Development*. 22(2): 205-216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360304115>
- Hamid, M. O., Nguyen, H. T. M., & Baldauf, R. B., Jr. (2013). Medium of instruction in Asia: Context, processes and outcomes. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 14(1): 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2013.792130>
- Harari, M. (1992). The internationalization of the curriculum. In C. Klasek (Ed.), *Bridges to the future: Strategies for internationalizing higher education* (pp. 52-79). Association of International Education Administrators. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED362112.pdf>
- Hellekjær, G. O. (2010). Lecture comprehension in English-medium higher education. *Hermes - Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, 23(45): 11-34. <https://doi.org/10.7146/HJLCB.V23I45.97343>
- Hu, G., Li, L., & Lei, J. (2014). English-medium instruction at a Chinese university: Rhetoric and reality. *Language Policy*, 13(1), 21-40. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-013-9298-3>
- Hudzik, J. K. (2015). Comprehensive internationalization: Institutional pathways to success. *Higher Education*, 72, 259–260. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9948-9>
- Jones, E. (2015). Series editor's foreword. In B. Leask (Ed.), *Internationalizing the curriculum* (pp. ix–xi). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716954>

- Lawson, C. (n.d.). *China - Transnational higher education update*. International Education. Retrieved November 30, 2023, from <https://internationaleducation.gov.au:443/news/latest-news/Pages/CHINA-Transnational-Higher-Education-Update.aspx>
- Leask, B. (2006, November 26-30). *Keeping the promise to transnational students: Developing the ideal teacher for the transnational classroom* [PowerPoint slides]. SlideShare. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8c96/dc5cd0c0d6350f1ba90142557a62ebb212a1.pdf>
- 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. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1028315308329786>
- Leask, B. (2015). *Internationalising the curriculum* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Leask, B. (2016). Internationalizing curriculum and learning for all students. In: Jones, E., Coelen, R., Beelen, J., & Wit, H.d. (Eds.), *Global and local internationalization*. Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-301-8_8
- Leask, B. (2022). Rethinking internationalisation of the curriculum. In D'Angelo, A.M., O'Brien, M.K., & Marty, G. (Eds.), *Mestenhauser and the possibilities of international education: Illuminating pathways for inquiry and future practice*. (1st, ed., pp. 164–176). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003159810-19>
- Lin, J. (2017). New features, new issues and new trends of Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools in the new era. *China Higher Education Research* (12),35-37. <http://doi.org/10.16298/j.cnki.1004-3667.2017.12.09>.
- Ministry of Education. (2003, March 1). Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools. <https://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/news/index/3>
- Ministry of Education. (2004, June 2). Measures for the implementation of the regulation of the Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A02/s5911/moe_621/200406/t20040602_180471.html
- Ministry of Education. (2021, August 23). The Ministry of Education approved the termination of 286 Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/s5743/s5746/202108/t20210823_553575.html
- Moffett, H. M., & Stonehill, I. A., & Eiteman, K. D. (2010). *Fundamentals of multinational finance* (3rd ed.). China Machine Press.
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*. 27(1): 64-77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715%2F2022.5044>

- Nguyen, H., Phan, H., & Tran, L. (2021). Internationalisation of the curriculum in Vietnamese higher education: Mediating between 'western' and local imaginaries, *Compare*, 53(6), 1080-1097. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2021.1995699>
- Nilsson, B. (2000). Internationalising the curriculum. In P. Crowther et. al. (Eds.), *Internationalisation at home: A position paper* (pp. 21-27). European Association for International Education. <https://www.univ-catholille.fr/sites/default/files/Internationalisation-at-Home-A-Position-Paper.pdf>
- Pilbeam, K. (2013). *International finance (4th ed.)*: Red Globe Press.
- Pinar, F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Priya, A. (2021). Case study methodology of qualitative research: Key attributes and navigating the conundrums in its application. *Sociological Bulletin*, 70(1), 94-110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038022920970318>
- Robson, S., & Wihlborg, M. (2019). Internationalisation of higher education: Impacts, challenges and future possibilities. *European Educational Research Journal*, 18(2), 127-134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904119834779>
- Rose, H. (2019). The future of English in global higher education: Shifting trends from teaching English to teaching through English. *CALR Linguistics Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.60149/HRXR6518>
- South China Normal University. (2020, 9 July). The promotion rate of finance graduates from international business school has reached a new high. <https://news.scnu.edu.cn/32367>
- Tran, L. (2020). Teaching and engaging international students: People-to-people empathy and people-to-people connections. *Journal of International Students*, 10(3), xii-xvii. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i3.2005>
- Tran, L., & Nguyen, N. (2015). Re-imagining teachers' identity and professionalism under the condition of international education. *Teachers and teaching: Theory and practice*, 21(8), 958-973. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1005866>
- Tran, L., & Pasura, R. (2023). How do teachers learn to teach international students? Teachers' informal professional learning in international vocational education. *Teacher Development*. 27(4), 431-446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2023.2223548>
- Tran, L., Phan, H., & Marginson, S. (2018). The 'advanced programmes' in Vietnam: Internationalising the curriculum or importing the 'best curriculum' of the west?. In Tran, L. & Marginson, S. (Eds.), *Internationalisation in Vietnamese Higher Education* (pp.55-75). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78492-2_4

van der Wende, M. (1996). Internationalizing the curriculum in higher education: Report on an OECD/CERI study. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 2(2), 186-195.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.1996.9966900>

van der Wende, M. (1997). Internationalising the curriculum in Dutch higher education: An international comparative perspective. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 1(2), 53-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/102831539700100204>

Wallace, M & Lee, D. (2008). *Teaching in transnational higher education: Enhancing learning for offshore international students*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203930625>

Ziguras, C. (2008). The cultural politics of transnational education: Ideological and pedagogical issues for teaching staff. In L. Dunn, & M. Wallace (Eds.), *Teaching in transnational education: Enhancing learning for offshore international students* (pp. 44–54). Routledge.

Ziguras, C., & McBurnie, G. (2011). Transnational higher education in the Asia-pacific region: From distance education to the branch campus. In Marginson, S., Kaur, S., & Sawir, E. (Eds.), *Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific. Higher Education Dynamics*. Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1500-4_5