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## Internationalisation of the curriculum in an Arts foundation subject: A collaborative autoethnography

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### Abstract

The conceptualisation of internationalisation of the curriculum has evolved over the last 30 years. Simultaneously, its contextual foundation has also gradually shifted from being Euro-centric to encompass a broader landscape beyond the Western domain. Therefore, understanding of Internationalisation of the curriculum needs to include practices in these contexts. This special issue hence has invited researchers and practitioners in the field of higher education internationalisation to participate in this conversation. The focus of the discussion is on emerging and alternative understanding and practices of internationalising the curriculum which include incorporating local cultural values and perspectives in the curriculum. This Special Issue features articles that firmly situate the Internationalisation of teaching, learning, and the curriculum in their specific contexts and acknowledge the influence of important contextual factors on the motivations, processes, and outcomes of internationalisation. Closely associated with taking an inclusive lens in understanding internationalisation of the curriculum, we also discuss the inclusivity of communicating research in this field. Specifically, we discuss the challenges encountered by scholars working outside the English-speaking domain to communicate their research with English-speaking research communities. We hence call for support for international academics from the publication outlets. We hope that this Special Issue constitutes a step towards a more diverse and inclusive scholarship in the field of internationalisation in higher education.

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## Introduction

Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC) acknowledges the diversified purpose and function of higher education (Beelen & Jones, 2015). This is especially true in relation to teaching and learning with an increasingly diverse student body. Over the last three decades, the conceptualisation of IoC has been evolving to align with the changing realities in higher education internationalisation (de Wit, 2017). Definitions of IoC have slowly transitioned from the initial agenda which was to improve home students' international professional capabilities in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (van der Wende, 1996, 1997), towards a more inclusive framework that considered all students - not only domestic but also international students - and other support services outside the core curriculum (Leask, 2008). The latest definition of IoC by Leask (2022) has incorporated more local realities into the framework, such as disciplinary, institutional, regional, and country contexts.

The typologies currently available in the literature, such as van der Wende (1997), Edwards et al. (2003) and Bell (2004), address some complementary dimensions of IoC, but fail to provide a comprehensive framework that reflects the emerging realities, especially local factors in the curriculum. Furthermore, while most universities in Australia have guidelines and recommendations in place for the implementation of IoC (for example, Arkoudis & Baik, 2022; Federation University, 2023; University of Adelaide, 2020), these guidelines generally provide one single set of recommendations across the whole institution, not taking into account possible local variables on the subject and program levels.

A generalised typology may be ineffective as local variables in the teaching and learning process, such as discipline, student diversity and academic staff, may require contextualised understanding of the concept of IoC so that local needs are met. Recent research increasingly recognises the importance of considering IoC from disciplinary perspectives. Some disciplines intrinsically share more international knowledge while others involve more local learnings (Arkoudis, 2005). Similarly, some student cohorts in some programs are more diverse than others, and hence more research on IoC in the teaching and learning space is larger in the former - e.g., Business (Edwards et al., 2003; Heffernan et al., 2019) - than in the latter. Research has also shown that academics' experiences of and attitudes towards IoC vary between disciplines and contexts (Bell, 2004; Sawir, 2011; Whitsed & Green, 2016; Zou et al., 2023), but there is little information about academics' culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds as a factor in the IoC.

In this collaborative auto-ethnography, we discuss our understanding of IoC through a subject in which we all taught, from several local aspects including our lived international experiences, our disciplinary backgrounds, and our diverse student body. We offer local perspectives to the current conceptual framework of IoC based on our study findings.

### **Context: The Arts Discovery subject**

Arts Discovery is the flagship interdisciplinary subject for Bachelor of Arts (BA) students enrolled in one of the largest faculties in a major university in Australia. Compulsory for all commencing undergraduate students, the subject was designed as an essential introduction to the diversity and distinction of research in the humanities, social sciences and languages (Faculty of Arts,

2023). It was launched in Semester 1, 2022, as a transformative learning journey to discover how Arts research drives creative innovation and deepens understanding of societies and environments by constantly asking questions about the world around us.

This subject foregrounds enquiry-based and object-based learning. Guided by academics from various disciplines in the Faculty, students develop a collaborative research project inspired by objects carefully selected to spark potential interest in Indigeneity, sustainability, technology, diversity and inclusivity, and real-world impact. Teaching plans and assessment are designed to scaffold different stages of a group research project, with the final assessment being the presentation of the project outcome. A key component in this subject is staff diversity.

Arts Discovery is taught by an interdisciplinary team, encouraging all staff to bring their own research experiences and expertise into seminar discussions. This study focuses on the experiences of the first cohort (Semester 1, 2022), which consisted of almost 2,000 students across 34 seminar groups each led by a teaching team of three academics – an academic lead and two teaching associates. The composition of each teaching team aimed to provide diversity in disciplinary expertise, cultural and linguistic background, and gender.

In this article, we reflect on our experience in teaching the first iteration of this subject and question current understandings of internationalisation of the curriculum from a range of local realities, including our respective disciplines, our lived experiences and diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Students and staff are usually thought of agents capable of *doing* something to internationalise the curriculum, but the internationalising effects that their very identities have in the classroom has been mostly overlooked. Because one's understanding of internationalisation informs one's teaching practice, we ask what elements of the curriculum can be internationalised and in what ways.

## Literature

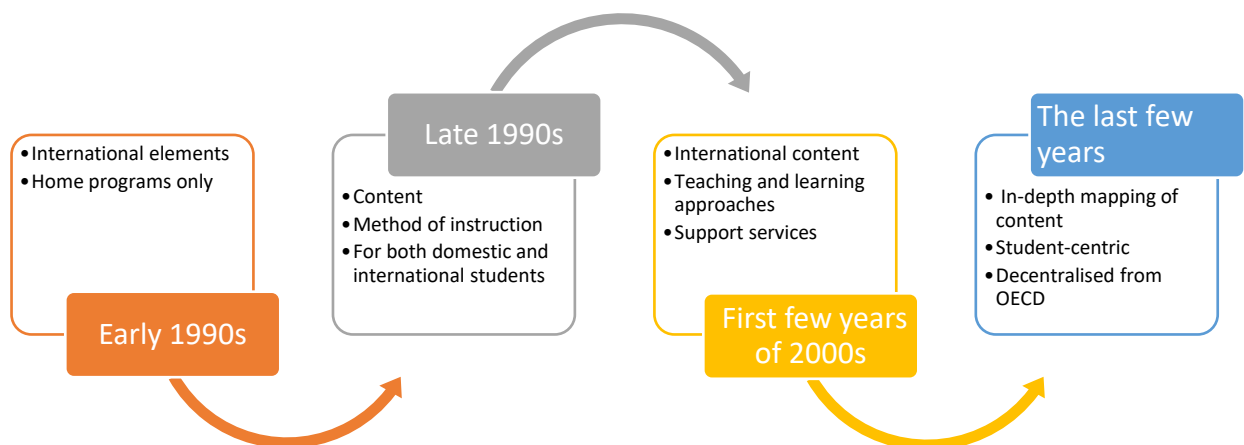
This study was informed by the current understandings of internationalisation of the curriculum and typologies available in our local context of practice and the broader the literature.

### Definitions of IoC

The conceptualisation of IoC has undergone several major milestones since its initial conception in the 1990s as shown in Figure 1. At the earlier stage, IoC was considered a relatively small part of the overarching concept of higher education internationalisation (HEI) initiated in member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (van der Wende, 1996). At that point, IoC focused on bringing in international elements into home-based programs. These definitions were only for home programs, programs with no exchange or abroad components with the purpose of increasing non-mobile students' foreign language proficiency and intercultural competency (van der Wende, 1997). In other words, they were for curricula mainly focused on providing domestic students with international experiences to offset the lack of mobility programs.

**Figure 1**

*Development of IoC*



Soon scholars found the OECD definition unfit for the purpose of higher education internationalisation and argued that IoC should include all students, both international and domestic students (Beelen & Jones, 2015). Van der Wende also argued for the curriculum to be designed for not just domestic but also foreign students “to prepare students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context” (1996, p. 186).

As Kehm and Teichler (2007) explained, research into IoC since the 1990s varied in modes of enquiry, but not in its core. Programs were developed to suit within western contexts and philosophies. These IoC programs were mainly offered within the OECD circle, and in English, whether in France, the Netherlands, Australia or Japan (van der Wende, 1997). The concept of internationalisation of the curriculum – together with its associated concepts, internationalisation of higher education, and internationalisation at home – has been criticised for representing mainly the western ideology (Beelen & Jones, 2015). In short, internationalisation of the curriculum was essentially westernisation of the curriculum (Sperduti, 2017). These earlier definitions were biased and unable to provide an integrated framework that considered the local context, although recent studies have argued that IoC should be context and discipline specific (Arkoudis, 2005; Heffernan et al., 2019).

The most recent definitions by Leask (2008, 2009, 2015, 2022) have taken a more integrated and inclusive approach. Leask (2008, 2009) included informal curricula or support services outside the core curriculum and argued that these services were a key part of IoC to foster interactions between international students and home students to increase all students’ intercultural competency. Leask’s latest definition (Leask, 2015, 2022) maps out the components discussed in previous research and considers emerging factors due to the changing nature of internationalisation. This last framework places “knowledge in and across disciplines” in the core of four outer “context” layers: institutional, local, national and regional, and global (Leask, 2022, p.168). The core is also central to dominant and emerging paradigms, informing requirements of “professional practice and citizenship”, “assessment of student learning”, and “systematic development across the program in all students” (Leask, 2022, p.168).

Leask's (2015, 2022) framework posts challenges on the original OECD-centric thinking in many aspects. It offers a more thoughtful presentation of the concept that is multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Firstly, this definition expands from the original OECD or western paradigm and offers flexibility of application in contexts outside the traditional western domain. This framework calls for integrating multi-disciplinary conversations, instead of siloed disciplinary knowledge, as solving global problems requires not just one aspect or system of knowledge but multi-disciplinary knowledges (Leask, 2022). This definition also considers all students rather than only domestic students, as in the earlier discussions in the 1990s (e.g., Harari, 1992). By acknowledging the cultural and social construction of knowledge, this framework allows practitioners to recognize the contribution of students from different backgrounds as a source of knowledge, hence breaking away from the traditional western-centric thinking in the curriculum. In addition, embedding the complex three-layer contexts also provides opportunities for a context-sensitive curriculum.

### **Typologies of IoC**

Many of the typologies available in the literature have taken reference to the definitions that preceded the innovative work of Leask (2022). The OECD typology (van der Wende, 1997, pp. 56-57) is one of the most prominent, with nine types of internationalised curricula, which are those

- 1) with an international subject
- 2) in which the original subject has been broadened by a comparative approach
- 3) which prepare students for international professions
- 4) in foreign languages or linguistics addressing inter-cultural issues and providing training in intercultural skills
- 5) interdisciplinary programs with regional studies
- 6) leading to internationally recognised qualifications
- 7) leading to joint or double degrees
- 8) of which compulsory parts are offered abroad by local lecturers, and
- 9) in which the content is designed for foreign students.

The OECD typology covers a comprehensive list of curricular types, but it can be restrictive. Although the typology describes a range of subject contents, it offers little guidance at the practical delivery level (Dunne, 2011).

Later typologies and models address the issue from different perspectives, such as academic attitudes (Bell, 2004) and student skill development (Edwards et al., 2003). Bell's framework discussed academic staff's perceptions of internationalisation and how that may affect the internationalisation of their curricula, hence proposed a four-level "spectrum of acceptance" (p.4) framework:

Level 1 – Internationalisation would have a negative impact (p.5)

Level 2 – Internationalisation is not appropriate (p.6)

Level 3 – Internationalisation of content is possible (p.6)

Level 4 – Internationalisation is integral (p.8)

In addition to the important role that academics play in IoC, Bell's research also acknowledges disciplinary differences and importance of international students as a learning resource. Bell's

case study provides a good model to consider local factors in the curriculum from the staff's perspective.

Similarly, Edwards and colleagues (2003) investigated the disciplinary realities at the more practical level of IoC design and delivery. More specifically, their study was based within the business discipline. They proposed a three-stage curriculum internationalisation model: international awareness, international competence, and international expertise, in which the authors called for implementation of these stages in curriculum design and delivery practice.

Arkoudis and Baik (2022) propose four types of curricula as good practices in IoC, which are curricula:

- 1) with “international content” (p.1)
- 2) in which “the content is broadened by internationally comparative approaches” (p.1)
- 3) which “incorporate interaction for learning between diverse groups of students” (p.2)
- 4) that “provide experiential learning opportunities either locally within the community, nationally, or internationally” (p.2).

The Arkoudis and Baik (2022) typology has predominantly adopted Van Wende's (1997) and Leask's (2009) frameworks. This typology, like other institutional ones, tends to provide one set of overarching guidelines for all disciplines across the university. It also only focuses on the formal curriculum. Lastly, this typology seems to consider curriculum as a job solely of the institute. Although it touches on student interaction, it tends to overlook the contribution from students as active members of the knowledge community. Overall, most existing frameworks describe IoC at the program and institutional levels. There is much less information about IoC at the more micro level, such as the subject and the individuals – teachers and students.

In this paper, we aim to address the conceptualisation of IoC with a focus on the local contexts of the curriculum: the disciplines, the students, and the teachers. Authors reflect on what internationalisation means in our own disciplines integrated in a shared context of practice.

## **Method**

We employed a critical collaborative autoethnographic (CAE) approach. Collaborative autoethnography, as summarised in Lapadat (2017), is

a multivocal approach in which two or more researchers work together to share personal stories and interpret the pooled autoethnographic data, builds upon and extends the reach of autoethnography and addresses some of its methodological and ethical issues.

where autoethnography is “analysis of the cultural context and implications of that experience”. As researcher-practitioners in this study, we found this method useful as it allows us not just to reflect on and critique our own lived experiences but also to extend the individual reflection to the shared context of practice. Collaborative autoethnographic analysis also involves identifying commonalities and differences among the experiences and stories, and discover the meanings of these stories in relation to the culture and context (Chang et al., 2016)

The CAE method was deemed suitable for our study. We were in general reflective practitioners, as many teachers are. Teaching the same subject for the first time provided a space for even richer reflection. We got together voluntarily on a weekly basis sharing our teaching in the subject.

The CAE process, through “the critical consciousness within researchers and practitioners” (McIlveen, 2008), offered an opportunity for us to surface and interpret our reflections in a conscious and systematic process, in the hope to bring positive changes to our practice.

Autoethnography as a relatively new qualitative research method focuses on recounting and interpreting of researchers’ experiences in relation to the context and culture (Arnold & Norton, 2021). As this approach provides efficient and timely results, we found it suitable for our circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic which placed a lot of restrictions on academic research. As a result, more academics have turned to their own experiences and the self as participants situated in the site of inquiry, justifying autoethnography as a useful tool to gather culturally and contextually rich data in pedagogical research (e.g. Dutton, 2021; Scott et al., 2022). We also appreciated that CAE valued inter-subjectivity and strived to provide rich cultural interpretation of information (Chang et al., 2012). We were also confident with the authenticity of data and loyalty of data interpretation (McIlveen, 2008), as they were completed by ourselves as participants-researchers.

### **Participant researchers**

Participants were eight academics who taught in the Arts Discovery subject. We were all from different disciplinary backgrounds: language and cultural studies, art history and object-based learning, education, geography, media studies, political science, and gender studies. We are also from different cultural and educational backgrounds. These differences were intentional in the staffing for the subject. Of the eight participant researchers, three were from Australia, two from China, and one from the UK, Pakistan and Mexico, respectively.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Two types of data were collected: group meetings and cross-reflections. Data collection started in July 2022, after teaching was completed in semester 1, 2022 and went on till February 2023. To analyse data, we used a thematic analysis procedure (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Terry et al., 2017). Group meetings were guided by four stages of data process, initial data collection, preliminary data analysis – identifying key themes, further data analysis – organising and categorising themes, and final stage of analysis – interpreting themes as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Meeting timeline

<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Meeting purpose</b>	<b>Meeting dates</b>
Meeting 1	Researchers provided open-ended reflections on teaching in Discovery based on existing IoC typologies	14 July & 21 July 2022
Meeting 2	Data analysis - identified key themes	11 August 2022
Meeting 3	Data analysis - organised and categorised themes	18 August 2022
Meeting 4	Data analysis - further interpreted themes	2 November 2022

Cycles of cross-reflective, and self-reflective writings took place in between the four meetings. Authors went back to the shared draft to analyse each other's reflections, by writing interpretive comments after each quote. These comments were then consolidated and summarised to become collective interpretations of the reflections. It has been found by other researchers that cycles of reflective writing strengthens collaborative auto-ethnography (e.g. Adamson & Muller, 2018).

## Results

We reflected on the concept from our experience of leading, coordinating, developing the curriculum and teaching the subject. We recognised the localisation and contextualisation of the existing concepts. Such localisation can be reflected in our respective disciplines and the Arts Discovery subject. Key themes generated from the findings include teachers' international backgrounds and experience, discipline contexts, the teaching and learning implementation, and students as partners in knowledge construction. The quotations were highlighted by authors in bold letters for emphasis.

### **An internationalised staff team**

As we reflected on the teachers' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and international educational experiences, we noted that the teaching team itself was an important aspect of internationalisation. Our own international perspectives, both personal and professional, contribute implicitly and explicitly to the curriculum. Our reflections revealed that the diverse educational backgrounds and international experiences that the academic team brought into the subject had a significant impact on student learning.

The staff recruitment framework for Arts Discovery was intentionally focused on diversity and inclusion, not just in terms of their academic expertise, but also in relation to their cultural backgrounds and educational experience:

*We wanted to embody the ethos of diversity and internationalisation in our teaching staff, modelling the diversity and internationalisation we expect to encounter in the student cohort and within the project teams. **Staff were carefully recruited to ensure diversity in gender, age, disciplinary and cultural backgrounds**, which added complexity to the process but certainly ensured internationalisation with staff from Asia, North and South America, Europe, UK, and First Nations cultures as well as Australia and New Zealand. Each teaching team had a staff member representing Humanities, Social Sciences and Languages, so they were not just international but also attuned to questions of intercultural competence and communication in their research and teaching. (Academic 6, emphasis added)*

Individual teachers' reflections on their own lived experience were aligned with the subject's diversity and internationalisation initiative. For example, one of the academics in the subject reflected on themselves as a migrant, with life experience across two countries: China and Australia, as part of a diversified composition. Hence, discussions in the classroom were naturally diversified in terms of content and interaction without deliberate attempts to diversify the discussion. Their personal identities and experience of working in an intercultural team allowed



the three teaching members to diversify teaching content with a wide range of global examples and comparative perspectives:

*The old idea of internationalisation I had was about making the curriculum, the content, more internationalised - however you define that. But... Because we compose a diverse group in terms of disciplinary background, gender, cultural, etc. **My teaching team is composed of one German, one Chinese and one English. ... The teaching team demonstrated to students how personal experiences can inform critical inquiry**, which helped many students to expand their perspective in thinking about humanities research and academic inquiry. As the Arts Discovery emphasised on a reflexive mode of learning, I was able to present how my personal background as a migrant and the journey of migration have informed my research in teaching the subject. Importantly, it was not merely sharing my own experience as a migrant and researcher but to incorporate internationalisation as a lens or, an approach for student to learn about critical reflexive research. **In other words, internationalisation to me is not simply about adding more case studies or readings from global and non-western backgrounds**, as important as these practices are, the Arts Discovery has allowed me to develop internationalisation as an approach to teach, explain and even demonstrate how self-reflexivity can inform knowledge production and intellectual advancement. (Academic 1, emphasis added)*

This academic lead's reflection on their background and experience embedded in an internationalised approach in their teaching was a good example of how the teacher's lived experience could be an intrinsic component of the curriculum. It also shows that the academic's individual status, as an international researcher with a background in cross-cultural communication, can play a key role in steering the seminars towards international content without deliberate efforts.

Similarly, another academic drew on her identity from her cultural background, education experience and academic research in international education in relation to her role teaching into the Discovery subject. Her conceptualisation of internationalisation is based on learner equality.

*I identify as an element of internationalisation in this subject. **This is from my upbringing, life experience, education and academic work**. My own background as an international student, born and educated in China through all three levels of education. In the last 15 years of my research career, I have focused on international learning and international students. Now I am back in the classroom teaching and coordinating diversity and internationalisation in the subject. I set the research theme of our seminar groups as internationalisation. My understanding of internationalisation is substantially influenced by my background as a teacher and education researcher and teacher. For me, an ideal internationalised classroom is where all students, regardless of their backgrounds, can participate in learning as if they were at home, wherever they are. That means the teacher in the room needs to make sure all students have the opportunity to learn and share their knowledge equally. (Academic 2, emphasis added)*

A third academic identified herself as an "international subject" of the curriculum based on her thinking and decision-making during her communication with learners.

*I identify as an international subject in multiple ways. Firstly, I bring in my own multicultural aspect as migrant from Pakistan. Second, I studied and lived in New Zealand and US, I bring the learnings and experiences from being in these countries. Third, I work and communicate with friends and family who live, work, and study in different parts of the world. These experiences affect my thought processes and influences my decision making and actions. I approach my students in the same way.* (Academic 3, emphasis added)

These examples of reflection showed how academics intuitively considered and embedded their own international lived experience as part of the internationalised curriculum, in several aspects, not only in terms of internationalising the content delivered in the classroom but also regarding research and communication with students. Academics understood themselves as part of the international experience and exposure of their students; this understanding allowed them to incorporate the wealth and insight of their own experiences into the classroom. Internationalisation was, then, not only a key component of the design of the course, but also inherent in its delivery.

### **Internationalisation understood within disciplinary contexts**

During the reflection meetings, authors spent much time interpreting what internationalisation entailed in their respective disciplines. This made us realise that internationalisation did not and should not be an across-the-board concept. Instead of the concept itself should allow space for local disciplinary interpretation. Below are authors' reflections from our respective disciplinary angles. By internationalisation as localisation, we meant that a truthful understanding of internationalisation of a subject requires integration of disciplinary knowledge and practice. In this subject, we had academics from a great range of disciplines and expertise from Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) and beyond. These disciplines included linguistics, geography, education, media studies, and politics. Within these disciplines, the teaching team brought a diversity of research expertise. Figure 2 shows an overview of the diverse expertise areas of the teaching team in the form of Word Cloud. These keywords were collected from the University researcher profiles and researchers' self-identification from the reflective meetings and writings.

### **Figure 2**

*Word cloud of diverse expertise of the teaching team*



Note. Word Cloud elicited from <https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/> and self-identification.

Such a staff structure contributed a crucial aspect to Arts Discovery: the emphasis of place and locality. Ensuring diversity among the teaching team also reflected an open approach to the concept of internationalisation, without being restricted with the existent conceptualisation framework.

For example, an interpretation of “internationalisation” can be seen as derived from an academic in geographical and region studies.

*Arts Discovery was about getting people to think about place (i.e., Australia, Melbourne, the University), but to recognise that those places could not be understood except through relations to other places, and those places do not have single unique identities reflecting long internalised history, but they are always made of a mixture of wider and local social processes and cultural practices. I am drawing on geographical literature of place. I think that is an interesting way to think about **internationalisation**, which **is not about pitting different nations and cultures, is something more fluid and complex.** (Academic 4, emphasis added)*

This geographical disciplinary analysis of internationalisation emphasized on connection and connected thinking and practice. The recognition of the locality and its connectedness with other places could be seen as different from the conventional conception of internationalisation where the agency of the local discipline was ignored or overwritten by internationalised standards.

The academic with a background in education reflected on internationalisation informed by her belief in learning equity which was a key part of her academic research as an educator and education researcher, coming from a higher education research background.

***Internationalisation means learner equity.** Everyone regardless of their backgrounds should feel at home in an ideal internationalised classroom. The feeling at home should overcome the barrier of language, academic conventions and cultural backgrounds, so internationalisation is not the internationalisation of the western-centric system. It should be everyone’s internationalisation. That means the curriculum and teaching and learning need to allow the contribution from outside the traditional English language territory, and value embrace different learning and research approaches from the students. (Academic 2, emphasis added)*

Another academic’s interpretation of “internationalisation” is based on her immediate experience as part of the designing team of the subject, in combination with her background in media studies: the diverse backgrounds of students and content of the curriculum.

*We have backgrounds in Media and Communications where internationalisation is, in a way, very localised, a global region in a localised community. ...**Internationalisation for me has happened at different levels, from subject coordination, different personalities, to curriculum designers and their different backgrounds and opinions, student groups, etc.** Some students were linking some items that were very localised to communities in Melbourne, which is a beautiful example of internationalisation in practice. (Academic 3, emphasis added)*

For this academic in media studies, the internationalisation process was more than bringing international material to the students– to let students bring their international selves to the

classroom, and to each other. In other words, more than the creation of “internationalised” content, internationalisation consists of creating a safe space, where students can acknowledge and share the diversity of their identities and backgrounds. Internationalisation, in this sense, needs not to happen only in the classroom as the material is delivered, but at all levels of the curriculum design: letting all staff members bring their insight into the planning.

The benefits of internationalisation are not restricted to international students alone. On the contrary, internationalisation is to acknowledge and make explicit that local students can benefit from academic interactions with international students as much as the latter can benefit from academic interactions with the former. In summary, the concern about conforming to an existent universal typology of internationalisation seemed to be a shared view among the teaching team.

### **Implementing internationalised elements in teaching**

This section collected reflections on how we implemented our beliefs and philosophies in our teaching in the subject. The reflections included not only the implementation of content, but also attitude to students (e.g., compassion and empathy) and students’ learning outcomes.

In one academic’s seminar, international examples and languages were introduced:

*We didn’t give our students lots to read, but we did give them many international examples. For instance, a female leader of a small community in the Amazon, and how she has protected her community for unwanted change. Examples of different traditions, cultures, languages. Try to make sure that happen in a very organic manner. (Academic 3, emphasis added)*

It is clear how the previous points about understanding oneself as part of the internationalisation of the classroom and localising internationalisation to your discipline produces a more diverse learning experience for the students. Openly seeking to incorporate material and examples from other settings was a common practice in the team to internationalise the teaching practice.

In another academic’s seminars, in addition to internationalisation as the theme that ran through students’ research projects, she also admitted carrying empathy for international students.

***I don’t know if there’s such a thing as “over-empathy”.** When I identify the international students in the room, I feel like I should give them more attention. My intention is to make sure they are not left out because of the cultural barriers. They have just moved to the city; they have to sort out the mundane aspects of their new lives and now they have to go straight into a high-level academic course in a brand-new language. All these local academic cultures and conventions, I want them to be as on board as other students, being able to ask questions, understand the instructions, look after their mental health, etc. They are away from family and friends, having to build their own connections. I try to speak with them in person, but I don’t know if this has also given them the impression that they are in the spotlight, “she has her eyes on me”. I don’t want to add to their fear or stress. (Academic 2, emphasis added)*

Similarly, another two academics shared their concerns about learner equity in a diverse classroom for both international and domestic students.

*I taught online last semester, and most students were international, 90% of them were from China. One of the main issues that came through is that **the international element of the class was approached as problematic and a disadvantage by the students themselves.***

*The students who were from China or other Asian countries, my sense is that they came already feeling inferior, ("I don't speak the language, I don't want to look silly in front of them", and the local students were the ones feeling left out, lacking confidence, because they were a minority in the class. Before we even bring that component into the lesson plan, the international component came as an issue. (Academic 5, emphasis added)*

***We place value on the culture coming from an international experience whereas local students have something rich to offer to. The sense of "the other" is interesting. Students who are from abroad have a lot to manage, accents and things like that. There's the oral experience and all of the other tropes that we don't know how to elevate. (Academic 7, emphasis added)***

Another example of cultural humility is not to have pre-assumptions and to have empathy.

*I try to put them on a higher level than they are likely to be. I try not to assume things. So, for instance, I say stuff like, now probably all of you are aware of this ... but here is..... and I also apologise for sounding patronising because that is not what I am intending to do. I do believe that the trick is to keep hold of their attention in a way where those who need that level of support get it and those who don't get why we must do it. It isn't always perfect, and it wouldn't satisfy everyone. But for me **creating empathy about why we are doing what we are doing is an important part of my teaching and learning journey.** (Academic 3, emphasis added)*

These reflections show a great deal of cultural humility from the academics in a multicultural learning environment. While acknowledging the different circumstances local and international students experience, the teaching staff were cautious not to "other" international students, by making these differences appear to be weaknesses. There is a fine line between, on the one hand, recognising the challenges international students face and helping international students have a positive experience and, on the other hand, assume that international students need or want some sort of special treatment.

### **Students as partners in knowledge construction**

We also realised the importance of including students in the whole curriculum process. Many of us recognised that instead of being the authority of knowledge and the sole deliverer of knowledge, we provide opportunities for students to take ownership of knowledge and contribute to the diverse knowledge community.

Creating a safe space to "allow" internationalisation to happen, as opposed to "making" it happen, implies taking a step back and recognising that students can teach each other. In this context, academic staff are not there simply to teach but to facilitate a learning experience. One academic shared:

*One of the most enlightening seminars was in week 11 when we read "Teaching to Transgress" by bell hooks and asked students to reflect on their own learning journeys. From each group of students, at least one volunteered to share their experiences, which produced an incredible mosaic of diverse perspectives on what is important to different people from different cultural backgrounds in terms of their educational milestones. A student talked about their learning journey in the Singapore military service; another spoke about finding a mentor*

*in their junior school in Dubai that remained an inspiration and contact through various international schools until now; a student from China talked about their feeling of belonging to their culturally diverse project team in Arts Discovery; another mentioned a shocking encounter with racism in an African school - **the spontaneous co-production of internationalisation through student experience and uninhibited storytelling was enriching for everyone in the most dynamic and unexpected ways.** (Academic 6, emphasis added)*

An internationalised classroom might be a challenging one. Power comes with responsibility and, unfortunately, not all students are used to having and exercising power in educational settings. There is, then, a learning curve for everyone involved as they learn to embrace agency in their learning process. As stated above, it is not only staff who need to recognise and value the contributions students can make; sometimes it is students themselves who need to understand the richness they bring to the curriculum.

As with any other skill, internationalisation of curriculum can be honed and developed. Staff can facilitate this process, not necessarily by explaining it, but by modelling it. An academic recounted:

***We made them talk about their positionality and we spoke about ours** as well, and make the most about those differences, avoiding contentious topics and trying to generate a safe space. Also using different languages, we tried using words that are not well translated into English. Some students were speaking about philosophers from China, India and Paraguay. (Academic 3, emphasis added)*

Similar reflection came from another academic identified the importance of students' power to bring in diverse knowledge and experiences in the classroom:

*To me, as a media and communication scholar, objects are inherently historical and local. By that I mean the cultural meaning of any object are dynamic and must be derived from and developed through the historical processes, events, and social structures of a local environment. Hence, **having a cohort of students with different international backgrounds and connections really help to diversify the interpretations of and conversations about objects presented in the curriculum.** Even more significant to me was how the subject has provided a space for intercultural exchange and interactions. (Academic 1, emphasis added)*

By openly sharing their own processes of self-reflection, academic staff offer a model for students, creating a safe space for students to do the same. As this occurs, students start to see themselves not only as members, but as owners and contributors of their learning community.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

In this collaborative reflective study, we found ourselves in a position of challenging the existing generalist frameworks and typologies of curricular internationalisation. We believe that one of the most important features of an internationalised curriculum is justice and equity. To reach justice and equity, we encourage taking into consideration local realities such as the teacher's cultural and linguistic background and experience, disciplinary and inter-disciplinary contexts of the subject, cultural humility, and students as partners in knowledge construction when developing and implementing an inclusive and internationalised curriculum at the subject level.

First, we argue that academic staff's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds should be considered an integral part of an internationalised curriculum. Academics' cultural, ethnic, and educational backgrounds should be recognised as a holistic asset for a subject. In a main-stream pedagogy, which is often western-centric, teachers often fall into the white-dominance in their teaching practices (Sperduti, 2017). Such a pedagogy is apparently not a true reflection of the reality. It no longer meets the needs of a diversified student body. Therefore, Pirbhai-Illich et al. (2017b) proposed a culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education, to restore social justice and equality among a diverse student body. To add to Pirbhai-Illich et al's (2017b) proposition, we argue similarly for the educator community to make use of the varied international experience of teaching staff, not only to recognise the "identity, subjectivity and self" (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017a, p. 20), but also recognise justice and equality among educators. Our recommendation is to recognise and implement teachers' own cultural and linguistic background into curriculum development, including design, execution and review, and classroom delivery. Recent research has highlighted that, in addition to their own lived experiences and cultural knowledges, international academics can also bring to the host institution a variety of pedagogical practices and curriculum innovations (Minocha et al., 2019; Nachatar Singh, 2022). Co-teaching with international academics can be a useful strategy towards an inclusive classroom. Arts Discovery effectively incorporated co-teaching in the subject allowing a culturally diverse teaching team, and hence has enabled the practice of IoC in curriculum design and classroom teaching.

Secondly, we argue that the curriculum should be understood and implemented based in the local disciplinary context. Most available typologies (Arkoudis & Baik, 2022; Bell, 2004; van der Wende, 1996) usefully emphasise different dimensions of curriculum planning. This includes a focus on incorporating international materials, providing international comparisons during the delivery of those materials, offering opportunities for an internationally diverse student cohort to interact with one another, and offering experiential learning opportunities that engage with different international contexts. They are helpful as a basis for curricular planning: designing a subject and arranging staffing. However, the typologies may be less helpful as a guide to the process through which internationalisation occurs as a subject is taught.

In particular, the typologies do not pay sufficient attention to a key dimension of internationalisation. They do not sufficiently emphasise how academic staff on a subject enact internationalisation in different ways. These differences between the approaches of different staff, which become particularly apparent in large team-taught subjects, reflect the different biographies, social position, goals, approaches, and disciplinary backgrounds of the various staff members. We explored this point in the substantive section of the paper that deals with the localisation of internationalisation.

Thirdly, we argue that students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, identities, and experiences are an important part of an internationalised curriculum. The existing typologies fail to pay enough attention to the active and creative capacity of students to reshape how internationalisation is practiced and experienced in the classroom. However, in the current study, we all reflected on the benefits of inviting student knowledge and experiences into seminar discussions. The benefits were multi-faceted. Domestic students benefited from learning inter-cultural and intersectional

knowledge from peers from CALD backgrounds. This affirms one of the initial agendas of IoC in OCED countries in the 1990s (van der Wende, 1996). The international student contributors themselves also benefited. Conventional perceptions of international students in a main-stream tertiary classroom have been often associated with a deficit model (McCrohon & Nyland, 2018; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Pasura, 2015). Arguably, this model is derived from the western-centric white-dominant colonial pedagogical “power matrix” (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 7). In a western-centric pedagogy, foreign learners are perceived to arrive and learn from the more advanced knowledge system and naturally they are seen as less capable and less competent (Surtees, 2019). As a result, such a framework fails to provide space for social justice to allow knowledges outside such a western-centric domain and hence result in marginalising and minoritising learners who are unfamiliar with the local academic culture and conventions (Pirbhai-Ilich et al., 2017a). By creating space for CALD students to contribute to knowledge construction, we need to return the ownership of knowledge to these students, so that they can be in a more equal position to domestic students.

Therefore, we recommend that students, especially CALD students, are invited to participate in curriculum design and teaching practices. There are many levels of engaging students as partners and owners of learning (Iversen et al., 2015), which can range from a high level of learner-led activities, such as students making decisions about weekly plans, reading materials, and assessment, to more moderate student-as-partner activities, such as negotiating the assessment from a list of options.

The level of learner autonomy on a subject depends on many factors. A key factor is student experience and knowledge. Students tend to navigate better with more autonomy as they are more experienced in their degree. As Arts Discovery was a first-year subject, a moderate level of student-led approach was taken. We offered a list of objects carefully selected to represent different spheres of the world and philosophy. Students chose one of those subjects to develop a research project with their team. Students were able to choose the object, their own team, and the research question to ask. The research outcomes showed a good range in terms of cultural and ethnic diversity. Acknowledging the diversity of knowledge from students leads to cultural humility. Research has admitted the omission of “the person as teacher”, namely, personal and affective elements such as the teacher’s empathy, and compassion for students (Tigelaar et al., 2004). In our reflections, humility was a key theme. Our team showed deep humility in the classroom, as we either had been international students, or had been learning in a new language and culture, or we were immigrants. We embraced humility in the learning environment, as we wanted all students to be aware of the equality we aimed to achieve in the classroom, and hopefully the attitude can be extended beyond the classroom.

Such humility may also be result of recent global changes in higher education. In a recent inquiry into internationalisation at home (MacNeill et al., 2023), it was acknowledged that changes in education during the pandemic could have flattened the hierarchy between the academic and the students and placed us in a more egalitarian dynamic. On that new landscape, academics were no longer experts in many ways; instead, students could have more expertise. There is no reason why we should not embrace humility.



## **Conclusion and implications**

In this collaborative autoethnographic study, the authors reflected on our understanding of internationalisation of the curriculum through a context and experience of teaching. We positioned our reflections within existent frameworks of IoC and recognised the frameworks and typologies were not fit for our local realities. Hence, we recommend that the following local aspects are included in the development and delivery of an internationalised curriculum: the diverse background of academic staff, the disciplinary lens, CALD students' knowledge and experience should. Most importantly, we urge institutions to embark on a journey towards cultural humility.

While this study takes Arts Discovery, a foundational subject for all Arts (social science and humanities studies) students, the focus of this paper on the agency and capacity of teaching staffs in curriculum delivery warrant broader generalisation across tertiary education to implement IoC principles.

Built on existing frameworks of IoC, the approach we used foregrounded the input of individual academics. We hope our approach offers a useful reference for colleagues in other disciplines and contexts when examining or evaluating their IoC on the subject level.

## **Future Directions and Limitations**

This study collected reflections from several academics who taught a large Arts subject when the subject was first launched. The reflections were valuable for the continuing enhancement of the subject, especially in which academics acknowledged the importance of student contribution to knowledge construction in the learning community. Although this study was set in a HASS subject, the findings in this study may also be useful for academics and education developers working with large interdisciplinary teaching teams as many university foundation subjects are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and members of the community, including students and staff are increasingly internationalised.

We also recognise that data were collected from the teaching of one subject for one semester. for a new subject that is rapidly evolving in all aspects, a continued study for two or three semesters may help us develop a more stable evaluation framework for internationalisation of the curriculum on the subject level. A comparative analysis with the students' perspectives may also enrich our understanding of IoC. A longer-term research direction would be to develop a comprehensive IoC framework focusing on staff and students' perspectives.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors 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.

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