

Chapter 6

Intercultureality

Making global education work in local contexts¹

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Internationalization and global citizenship are increasingly becoming the emerging focus of higher education worldwide as universities seek to incorporate global learning in their policies, curricula and strategies. Global engagement, international collaborations, strategic alliances and operations are all on the increase with the aim of delivering future-proof graduates with a global mindset and inter-cultural competences. Additionally, it can be noted that hybridity in education is acutely present through the digitalisation of delivery modes as well as the introduction of new mobility formats, such as faculty-led study abroad programmes and transnational education at branch campuses. So not only do we see more activity, but also more delivery modes of international education. While both digital delivery and new mobility structures transcend traditional boundaries of space and locality, it is precisely this point that can pose serious challenges to the success of international education. Both involve a “relocation” of education; however, when the physical locality, where the students and lecturers are rooted in certain value and beliefs systems, is not considered, the risk is that the educational experience remains one-sided despite the multidimensional context of which it should be a part. Locality is the key to successful and meaningful internationalisation.

After presenting the case that locality is of paramount importance, this chapter will outline the conceptual model of *interculturality*, which allows education programs to foster and nurture intercultural competence development of students in their own unique landscape from the ground up. Using the metaphor of a landscape, *interculturality* provides tools to create an intercultural reality by utilising the unique hybrid of the physical locality, the disciplinary context, the dynamics of the (virtual) classroom as well as the infrastructures in place. The underlying idea is that programmes and institutions can grow any kind of landscape that works for their context, building on the soil of their own previously defined intercultural competence goals. This soil will be enriched by means of five features: the formal curriculum, the pedagogy, the student experience, the informal curriculum, and the organisational and strategic frameworks. The model is further elaborated upon and illustrated with examples of practices of The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), where the authors work.

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Ever expanding internationalization

Internationalisation and global citizenship are increasingly becoming the emerging focus of higher education worldwide as universities seek to incorporate global learning in their policies, curricula and strategies (De Wit et al., 2015). Global engagement, international collaborations, strategic alliances and operations are all on the increase with the aim of delivering future-ready graduates with a global mindset and intercultural competences. Even though international student mobility is still rising (Knight, 2012), more and more institutions are realising that the majority of students are non-mobile. There is growing interest and increased activity in providing an international experience for non-mobile students through internationalisation of the formal and informal curriculum at home. Internationalisation for all implies a more inclusive and outcomes-based approach so that all students can reap the perceived benefits of internationalisation of higher education and develop key employability skills that are valued by employers worldwide.

Yet, with this widespread attention and enormous variety in internationalization activities, Knight (2012) warns us that there is a risk of internationalisation turning into a container concept that can be used for anything with the word international attached to it. Moreover, rationales for pursuing internationalisation goals and perceived benefits differ widely (see for instance Knight, 2012; De Wit, 1999; Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014), ranging from pursuing global citizenship, improving societies and economies and strengthening academic curricula to revenue generation and boosting institutional reputations. Institutions may pursue internationalisation goals for varied reasons. The impact of internationalisation on local realities is quite diverse and as such,

any examination of internationalization needs to take into account the differences among countries and regions of the world recognizing that priorities, rationales, approaches, risks, and benefits differ between east and west, north and south, sending and receiving, and developed and developing countries. (Knight, 2012, p. 28)

Parallel to the increased prominence of internationalisation on the strategic agenda of higher education institutions as well as the emerging focus on internationalisation of curricula for all students and the growing number of internationalization activities, it can be observed that hybridity in education is on the rise through the digitalisation of delivery modes and a greater variety of mobility formats, such as faculty-led study abroad programmes and transnational or cross-border education at branch campuses. Knight (2012) notes there is growing interest in foreign academic programmes students can follow in their home country, either through cross-border mobility of programmes (where the awarding institution is abroad) or cross-border mobility of providers (where the awarding organisation, be it an institution, organisation or company, is in the country such as a branch campus).

Green, Marmolejo and Egron-Polak (2012) remind us that the future of international higher education may see increased activity in such arrangements as well as digital delivery of curricula since predicted population growth in some regions of the world such as Africa and Asia may lead to a situation where the demand for higher education will surpass supply. This is offset by regions such as Europe and Japan where changing demographics are more likely to lead to a falling student population, leading to an increased thirst for international student recruitment. While both digital delivery of education and new mobility structures transcend traditional boundaries of space and locality, they can pose serious challenges to the success of international education. Both involve a “relocation” of education but not necessarily or exclusively in the traditional sense of mobility; however, a physical locality, where the students and/or lecturers are rooted in certain value and belief systems, is still present. When this dimension is not considered, the risk is that the educational experience is not anchored in the local reality and remains a superficial albeit an enjoyable experience. For (inter)cultural learning to be meaningful, the local context of the learner needs to be an integral part of the experience. Scholars have commented on the interdependence of the local and the global and stated that internationalising the curriculum would need to contextualise “local engagement within a wider frame of reference” (Webb as cited in Jones, 2013, p. 3). Rumbley and Altbach (2016) show how the local and the global represent two dimensions that appear to occur side by side in internationalisation activities in Higher Education (HE); indeed, local practices and contexts are affected by global trends and at the same time decisions and activities at institutions can influence national policies and even beyond national borders.

Why locality is important for purposeful internationalisation: aspects of locality

The role of locality and the need for contextualisation of internationalisation are widely discussed in literature. The relevance of locality can already be found in how internationalisation is defined. Knight’s definition, which is widely accepted in the field, refers to internationalisation as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 11). Her definition of internationalisation is commonly used because it is considered to be void of any bias; it does not include a reference to specific rationales, benefits, outcomes, activities or stakeholders. In discussing her own definition, she refers to the purpose as “the overall role that HE has for a country or a region or, more specifically, to the mission of an institution” (Knight, 2004, p. 12). She explains “function” as representing “the primary elements or tasks that characterize a national higher education system and an individual institution. Usually these include teaching, learning, research, and service to the community and society at large” (Knight, 2004, p. 11). Unpacking the components of her definition shows how grounded the process of internationalisation is in a local context, serving the needs of a

particular community and/or society. A study on internationalisation of higher education in Europe also appears to support this point as it raises the issue that branch campuses seem to attract local students who see a foreign degree as a way to have better employment prospects in their own country (De Wit et al., 2015). Knight also states that “The trinity of teaching/learning, research, and service has traditionally guided the evolution of universities and their contribution to the social, cultural, human, scientific, and economic development of a nation and its people” (2012, p. 40). The question she poses is whether in international higher education these roles are still the same or if internationalisation is leading us towards cultural homogeneity. Even though this question is still under debate, it is clear that the outcomes of internationalisation of higher education need to be relevant for local employment contexts because the majority of students are still recruited domestically (Watkins and Smith, 2017).

Another dimension of locality in internationalisation can be found in the national agendas, institutional policies and funding schemes that guide institutions in their internationalisation efforts (Green, Marmolejo and Egron-Polak, 2012). These can act as either enablers or blockers in achieving institutional goals (Beelen, 2017). For instance, national legislation may hinder the design and delivery of joint and double degrees and issues of quality assurance and evaluating credentials pose challenges to the responsible bodies (Rumbley and Altbach, 2016). Institutions need to navigate regional, provincial and even city bureaucracies as well as follow their own institutional procedures. Furthermore, “different national and regional dynamics and capacities, policies, and cultures will shape how different countries and regions experience a particular global phenomenon” such as internationalisation of higher education (Green, Marmolejo and Egron-Polak, 2012, pp. 439–440). Hence, these remarks serve to remind us that there is no approach or model that is suited for all contexts because regional, national and institutional realities are varied and constantly in motion.

Within the teaching setting, Olson and Peacock add the different “locales” that students bring with them to the classroom and claim that the “key to addressing the global university is the understanding that the global is grounded in the local” (2012, p. 305). Their advice to senior internationalisation officers is to “(d)efine global objectives, connecting them to local realities, and define local objectives, connecting them to global realities” (Olson and Peacock, 2012, p. 319). The local rootedness of an institution and the fact that students and lecturing staff bring in their own local colours produces distinct local flavours, realities, priorities and assumptions in the educational experience. Education is deeply cultural, which can be acutely observed in hybrid curricula such as cross-border arrangements and branch campuses, when “[i]ssues of cultural relevance of foreign education may also arise” (Green, Marmolejo and Egron-Polak, 2012, p. 440). As noted earlier, many students who enrol in branch campuses do so to improve their employability prospects in their own country. The knowledge and skills they acquire through international curricula will need to be applied locally. Connecting local meaning and internationalised curricula helps the learner link to previously acquired

knowledge and thus make sense of the newly gained insights. In this regard, Leask and Carroll (2013) point out that one of the principles of good teaching across cultures is to offer context-specific information and support because learners and teachers bring in different expectations with them into the learning space and interpret their surroundings differently. It is these implicit assumptions, values and expectations that could jeopardise the success of an international classroom when left unaddressed. The cultural nature of education can be acutely witnessed in the classroom where different cultures of the participants and lecturers meet and possibly collide. Westerholm & Räsänen (2015) show how ethnic, local, academic and disciplinary cultures interact in a multicultural classroom and shape the thinking of educators and students as to what is appropriate and professional teaching and learning. This is not without risk as “unrecognised and unscrutinised biases breed power imbalances that can go unchecked and can make for isolating, silencing and even demoralising experiences for international students and domestic students from marginalised communities” (Tervalon and Murray-García, 1998, p. 123). It goes without saying that even in the digital space, such biases which Leask refers to as “the hidden curriculum” (Leask, 2015, p. 8) influence teaching and learning and it may be precisely this, recognising and acknowledging our own biases, that requires the “most sustained energy” of educators (Leask, 2015, p. 23).

Moreover, the local context is increasingly more the context for internationalisation as universities are starting to realise that international mobility will only affect a minority of students. Educating for the mobile elite may not be sustainable, and internationalisation of home curricula has turned the attention of educators to the domestic learning environment. Curriculum internationalisation or “internationalisation at home” is a relatively recent practice. It has already been adopted widely in Europe where the term was first coined in 1999 to counterbalance the strong focus on European mobility (De Wit et al., 2015). Beelen & Jones (2015, p. 76) have defined internationalisation at home as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students, within domestic learning environments”. They add that this can include activities that go beyond the formal classroom and campus into the local community (Beelen & Jones, 2015). For instance, working with local communities or organisations on student projects can be a meaningful learning experience that enhances students’ intercultural competence. This movement further supports the relevance of locality, with universities realising that internationalisation needs to happen at home if we want to reach all students.

In sum, it can be observed that the local is omnipresent in education, be it in the legislative and policy frameworks affecting higher education institutions, the historical roles that higher education has been endowed with, or the presence of different viewpoints and experiences shaped by the disciplinary, academic, ethnic and local contexts in our classrooms. Leask’s model of curriculum internationalisation captures all of those contextual layers and shows their impact and

interdependence (Leask, 2015). Regardless of the mode of delivery, locality and cultural self-awareness of educators are key factors influencing the effectiveness and appropriateness of international education.

How to connect the local and the global in educational practice: *interculturality*

The conceptual model of *interculturality* can be used to bridge the local and the global realities of educational programmes, allowing them to foster and nurture intercultural competence development of students in their own unique local context from the ground up. The model has been designed to support degree programmes in mapping internationalisation and to help create awareness of how their local realities can present opportunities for a comprehensive internationalisation approach. Using the metaphor of a landscape, *interculturality* provides tools to create an intercultural and international reality by utilising the unique hybrid of the physical locality, the disciplinary context, the dynamics of the (virtual) classroom as well as the infrastructures that are in place while at the same time, drawing inspiration from global trends and opportunities that affect education. The core principle is that programmes and institutions can grow any kind of internationalisation landscape that works and is relevant for their context, building on the soil which comprises the local reality of the discipline, the degree programme, the institution, and the national and regional contexts. The formal curriculum, the pedagogy, the student experience, the informal curriculum and the organisational and strategic frameworks are placed within the landscape model as features that enrich the soil and reinforce each other. Where possible, the model is illustrated in Figure 6.1 with specific examples that are taken from our own working practice at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS). Like a well-maintained garden, the formal curriculum is planned and based on a solid continuum where the international dimension of a specific discipline is defined and leads to the achievement of a pre-defined international, intercultural or global competence. This international dimension can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as the use of international case studies, comparative analysis of country practices and approaches, the offer of foreign languages and the presence of international projects. However, whatever shape it takes, the key component is the presence of internationalised learning outcomes at graduate level and at module level in which the international dimension has been made explicit, measurable and assessable in terms of student learning. Such learning outcomes represent action-oriented statements of what a learner should be capable of doing at the end of a learning experience (Kennedy, 2006). An example of how the formal curriculum can tap into local realities whilst learning from global practices is taken from a Dutch-medium undergraduate programme on Skin Therapy at THUAS. The existence of the independent profession of a skin therapist is only to be found in the Netherlands and a few other countries

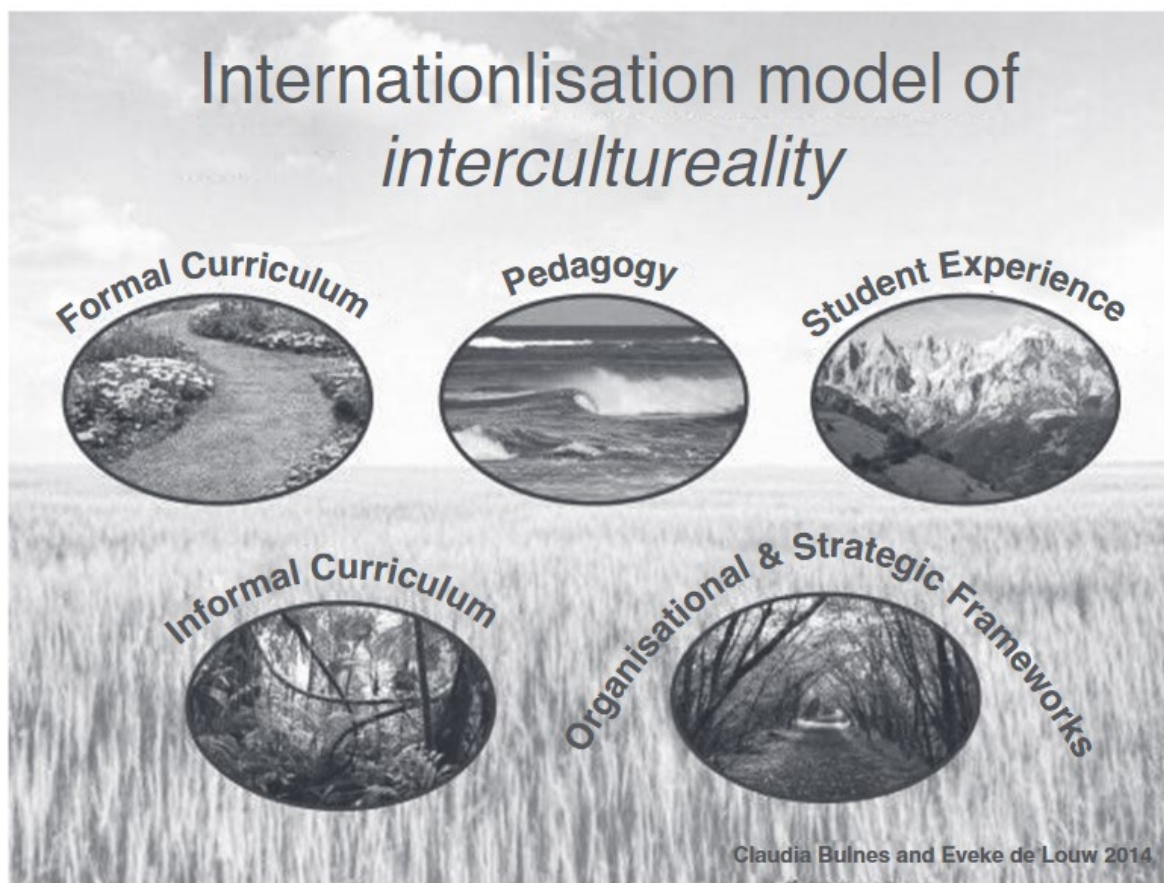


Figure 6.1 Internationalisation model of interculturality

such as Australia. As it is a growing field, the programme is seeking ways to broaden students' knowledge and scope on the different perspectives on skin treatments. Thus, the programme has integrated a student assignment as that requires researching how the profession or expertise is organised in other countries. From this comparison, students draw inspiration and create solutions which may also be applied by practitioners in the expanding Dutch context. The Skin Therapy programme also requires students to be familiar with the reality of the local population in relation to their discipline, as is the case with the existence of different views and values on skin disorders and conditions. In their curriculum, students develop knowledge and awareness of the role hair plays in different societies and skills in the preferred choice of treatments in the different cultures present in the multicultural Dutch local employment sector of skin therapists. Comparably, the Safety and Security Management programme at THUAS has incorporated an international element into a project on event safety by targeting a local event to an international audience. By having a target group who is not familiar with the local regulations, students are required to adopt a different perspective of the local features of event management and safety in the Netherlands. This example shows, once again, how the local context needs to be re-examined in the light of internationalisation.

The formal curriculum needs to be delivered in a fashion that is conducive to international and cultural learning and requires a pedagogy that is in line with the programme learning outcomes, which is the second feature of the landscape. The dynamics present in the classroom can be compared to an image of water that is constantly in motion as the pedagogy highly depends on the interaction between students and staff. Exploring and unpacking the different layers of diversity present in a specific institutional context shows that the learning environment can be utilised purposefully for enriched and vibrant classroom dynamics. Today's classrooms are increasingly diverse, be it in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, cultural background etc., and this student diversity in the classroom presents a platform for intercultural interaction. It is the pedagogy of such an intercultural classroom that places students at the heart of the learning experience.

Explicitly utilising the student diversity in our methodologies benefits the classroom as topics can be looked at through many different lenses and local knowledge can be activated as well as linked to global or international contexts (Carroll, 2015). Besides being facilitators, teachers can also bring in another dimension of diversity when sharing their own intercultural experiences, thereby catering for different teaching and learning styles (Carroll, 2015). The purposeful selection of study materials also contributes to extending the range of perspectives from different regions of the world and in different languages and may lead to an explicit discussion of bias present in study materials (Killick, 2015). The different layers of diversity should also be present in the assessment since it is important to include a varied spectrum of assessment methods so that these do not inadvertently disadvantage or favour specific learners.

In keeping with the pedagogy of the international/intercultural classroom, degree programmes can consider intentionally using a delivery structure of running lectures and supporting seminars. In this system, the theory covered in the lectures is applied almost instantly in the seminars through, for example, the use of case studies and discussion questions, creating space for students to bring in their different locales when discussing global issues. This not only allows students to share their local perspectives, it also comes with the added value of all students developing perspectives into the different lenses a topic can be viewed from, depending on which local reality we are from. The European Studies programme of THUAS helps us depict how the issue of assessment is addressed. In a particular module of the programme, students are given the opportunity to choose from a variety of assessment methods, namely a presentation, a video assignment and a written report. This is done with the deliberate consideration of the many different educational backgrounds of the students attending the programme and thus allowing for equal opportunities of completing the module successfully taking into account the educational histories the students have previously developed in other contexts. In every degree programme students can cite particular components of a curriculum that they remember most vividly as they represent key developmental

moments in the student experience. These peaks of the student experience can be visualised in the landscape model as a mountain range. We know that intercultural encounters create critical incidents that turn into deep learning experiences. Since these are purposefully planned at key moments of a programme with intended and assessed learning outcomes, we refer to them as “probable incidents”. Some of the most obvious incidents are the study abroad period and the international work placement. However, “probable incidents” can also occur in (virtual) project work, sometimes because of the composition of the team or the design of the project assignment. The key message is to provide a meeting place for intercultural interaction, which to some extent is planned and supervised, and to another extent is unplanned and spontaneous, challenging students to utilise their own resource-fulness. For educators, those interactions provide natural settings to monitor the cultural learning that students are experiencing and they present opportunities to embed assessment of (inter)cultural competences.

Those rich opportunities to develop intercultural competences can be found in the local context, for instance in the city or region where the institution is located or even the institutional environment itself. The international programme International Communication Management at THUAS runs a project which requires students to research ways to have all THUAS students engage with global citizenship, one of the strategic goals of the institution. This implies that they first need to research what global citizenship is, and how the university has defined it. They interview many stakeholders to gather perspectives on the concept and their proposed solutions. For example, students may interview staff from the communication team, international policy advisors, lecturers and other relevant stakeholders within the institution. Having students research the institutional context that they are part of on a topic that has a clear global dimension presents a meaningful and relevant learning environment. Other programmes at THUAS involve students in the larger context of the city exploring the social reality of certain neighbourhoods in the light of their discipline. The Facility Management programme has a research project in which students are asked to observe social cohesion and integration in a particular area of The Hague by engaging in conversations with local residents and proposing improved future scenarios for the area. Involving students in the issues of the local community allows them to develop an awareness of the effects of globalisation on local circumstances. The student experience is not complete without considering the role that the informal curriculum plays in the development of international, intercultural or global competences. Since this partly takes place in the private sphere of students for educators it is like reaching into a dark and unruly jungle as the amount of control and influence we can exert is limited. Here it is important to distinguish between the informal curriculum and informal learning. The informal curriculum consists of all the support services and planned extra-curricular activities that help strengthen the student learning, for example, events, field trips and exhibitions (Leask, 2015). It is intentional in that it provides opportunities for students to meet, mix and take their intercultural learning beyond the curriculum into their

private sphere or the informal learning zone. This informal space is hidden from the view of educators even though further learning does take place. The informal curriculum complements the formal curriculum and acknowledging its existence allows for a holistic view of the curriculum. A purposeful and intentional use of the informal curriculum can be found in study and career counselling programmes. In the first and second year of the European Studies programme of THUAS, a small number of credits are freed up for students to formulate their own project and learning outcomes linked to the development of an international/intercultural mindset. The project can be executed within or outside the institution but needs to have a clear international/intercultural orientation and provide an opportunity for students to connect with the local community. Some examples of student initiatives are: designing a website or survival guide for incoming international students, acting as a buddy for migrants and refugees in the city or coaching primary school pupils in support programmes at weekend schools. Students are required to draw up a plan, articulate learning goals with a clear intercultural or international dimension, execute the project and present this at the end of the academic year.

On the other side of the coin we find initiatives that THUAS has implemented to sensitise international students to their new local environment. During a 'Warm Welcome' week that precedes the welcome programmes organised at the faculty and programme levels, the institution offers a number of interactive workshops intended to help students understand their new social and educational context. Subsequently, they are invited to join a semester long series of sessions in different formats (lectures, workshops and visits to local institutions) and on different topics that introduce them to different aspects of Dutch culture and society. These interventions prepare students for their new educational and social environments, a key provision for success. The formal and informal curriculum, the pedagogy and student experience need to be brought together in a framework to avoid fragmentation so that the road towards the end goal of international, intercultural or global competences is firmly supported like a deeply rooted forest. The rationale of internationalisation needs to be firmly grounded in the institution's and programme's mission, vision and policies, and be safeguarded by a committed management team. Investment in support mechanisms and infrastructure is essential in sustaining the landscape of interculturality.

The impact of the local context can also be seen on the internationalization strategies of institutions. In the Netherlands, a recent debate has emerged on the concerns over introducing English as language of instruction and the subsequent increase in the number of international students in Dutch institutions of higher education. It has been argued that the quality of education might be compromised due to the students' differing linguistic ability in academic English. Another argument that has been put forward relates to the status of the Dutch language and issues of identity. Lastly, the debate has also focused on the effect the increasing presence of international students might have on the accessibility to

higher education of Dutch students. Although the debate is ongoing, the first repercussions can already be seen in new policies that require institutions of higher education to justify their choice of a language of instruction other than Dutch. This has resulted in institutions and programmes having to reconsider their vision to show that internationalisation is not only revenue driven, but also founded on the contribution of the presence of international students and the benefits of introducing an international dimension into curricula. Furthermore, institutions find themselves introducing new strategies as a result of their internationalisation plans. The presence of international students has created a need for professionalisation programmes, not only in the process of internationalisation of the curriculum but also to support staff in dealing with the needs of the international student body. To this end, higher education institutions should consider adjusting their professionalisation offer both by embedding internationalisation in existing training trajectories (such as an introduction programme for new teaching staff and a mandatory teacher training certificate) and creating new ones for supervisors and support staff. As a final reflection, it is important to note that the five elements of interculturality do not operate in isolation. Dialogue among all stakeholders, and especially academics and students, is essential to carefully and purposefully align the five features of the landscape. This ensures that they complement and reinforce each other, synthesising in a landscape of interculturality which is both intentional and inter-connected. The examples presented for the different features of the landscape are not only evidence of the effect of internationalisation on the local context, they also help to confirm once again that the soil of the landscape, representing the local reality needs to be considered and nurtured for the success of international education. Without a solid ground the landscape cannot be sustained.

Conclusion

Whilst there are multiple rationales for internationalisation, student development of global competences has been one of the main priorities of higher education in recent years and it has resulted in different approaches to internationalisation. However, might we be focusing on introducing new educational modes as a result of internationalisation while forgetting the purpose and the larger institutional or programme context? What seems to be clear is that the many different internationalisation initiatives need to be rooted in the local context in order to succeed. The very definitions of internationalisation (Knight, 2004) and of internationalisation of the curriculum (Leask, 2015) highlight features like ‘purposeful’ and ‘meaningful’ as key to success and the incorporation of the local dimension can provide those ingredients to the process of internationalisation. Locality can both impact and be impacted by internationalisation of higher education and the risk of ignoring the local context poses an important challenge for the success of institutions in their internationalisation strategies. Without consideration of locality there is no relevance and without relevance there is no success.

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