

**INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM AS A  
TOOL FOR INCREASING GLOBAL GRADUATE  
EMPLOYABILITY: EVIDENCE FROM PRIVATE HIGHER  
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN BOTSWANA**

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**Abstract**

Research shows that internationalisation of curriculum should be considered a critical decision in private higher education institutions in the light of increased numbers of international students in these institutions, a situation which has made the learning environment more multicultural than ever before. There are currently six private higher education institutions in Botswana which offer diplomas and degrees up to Master's degree in business, computing, education and accounting and finance. Around 70 per cent of teaching staff in these institutions have master's degrees, 20 per cent have bachelor's degrees and the remainder has PhD degrees. A considerable number of the staff with master's degrees have enrolled or are planning to enroll for PhD degrees with local, regional and international universities. This exploratory study investigated how internationalisation of curriculum is understood and operationalised in private higher education institutions. A questionnaire was used as data collection tool. Results of the study indicated that the understanding and implementation of internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education institutions is very low. A number of recommendations were suggested to improve the internationalisation of the curriculum in private higher education institutions in Botswana.

**Key words:** curriculum, multicultural, internationalization, operationalizing, classroom practice and procedures.

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## Introduction and background to the Study

The world over, internationalisation of higher education in general and curriculum in particular are buzz words in higher education today (Welikala, 2011). Curriculum authorities attest to the importance of the need to internationalise the curriculum owing to the current international and multicultural nature of students in higher education (Leask, 2009; Welikala, 2011). Internationalisation of curriculum dates back centuries ago when it was applied in political science and government relations (LeBlanc, 2007). In the education sector, internationalisation of curriculum dates back to the 1980s when it was viewed in the context of international cooperation between countries (Knight, 2008). Today terms such as cross-border, transnational, borderless, and international education are used with reckless abandon to define internationalised curriculum (Knight, 2008). The need to develop graduates who are able to effectively perform both professionally and socially in multicultural environments both inside and outside the country is viewed as critical (Leask, 2006).

Literature shows that the infusion of international content into the curriculum is the most common strategy of internationalising the curriculum (AACSB, 2008; Leask, 2009). Research also shows that there is very little evidence in universities that internationalisation activities are seen as relevant to the mainstream academic practice (Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Croslings et al, 2008; Pimpa, 2009).

## Problem Statement

There is no known research in Botswana that has attempted to study the concept of internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education with particular reference to how the concept is understood and operationalised. Literature reviewed on the internationalisation of curriculum in higher education in Botswana also indicates that there is very limited substantiated body of literature on the internationalisation of curriculum in higher education with special reference to private higher education institutions. This exploratory study therefore is an attempt at bridging this research and literature gap by examining how the internationalisation of curriculum is understood and operationalised in private higher education institutions in Botswana.

**Objectives of the Study:** This study seeks to:

1. Determine how internationalisation of curriculum is understood and operationalised in private higher education institutions in Botswana.
2. Investigate the challenges, enablers, drivers and perceived negative effects of internationalising the higher education curriculum.

## Research questions

The following are the research questions this study seeks to answer:

1. How is internationalisation of the curriculum understood and operationalised in private higher education institutions in Botswana?
2. What are the challenges, enablers to and drivers of internationalisation of the higher education curriculum?

## Definition of unfamiliar terms

1. Curriculum: All the experiences students go through at schools.
2. Components of a curriculum: Objectives, content, teaching methods, activities and evaluation.
3. International students: Foreign students.
4. Homogenous culture: Shared culture.

## Scope of the Study

This study will take place in the six private higher education institutions. It included a sample of 100 teaching staff from all the teaching faculties of the institutions, i.e., computing, business, and accounting and finance, and education.

## Significance of the Study

This study was an attempt at filling the literature and research gap concerning the internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education in Botswana. It also aims at contributing to the enrichment of the body of knowledge on the internationalisation of curriculum in higher education as a tool for enhancing global employability of graduates.

## Literature Review

### Definition and conceptualisations of internationalised curriculum

There is much contestation on the universal definition of concept of internationalisation of curriculum (AUCC, 2009; Knight, 2008) because internationalisation means different things to different people (Knight, 2008). Among a number of definitions of the concept of

internationalisation of curriculum are the ones given below. Internationalisation of the curriculum is the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of a university (Leask, 2006; 2009). Internationalisation of curriculum is also defined as the process of giving the content of a curriculum an international orientation so it can adequately prepare graduates to perform both professionally and socially in an international and multicultural context (OECD, 1996; Leask, 2009). Knight (2008) also provides four conceptualisations of internationalisation of curriculum. It is viewed as: (i) a series of international activities such as academic mobility of students and staff, international networks, partnerships, and new international academic programmes; (ii) the delivery of education to other countries through new arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises using a variety of face-to-face and distance learning techniques; (iii) the inclusion of an international, intercultural and/or global dimension into curriculum and teaching/learning processes; and (iv) meaning the improvement of national or world rankings of their institutions so as to be able to recruit the best and brightest students and staff.

### **Rationale for internationalising the curriculum**

A number of rationales to internationalisation of the curriculum in higher education include the following (Qlang, 2003): *The competitive/academic rationale* which refers to making the institution more competitive locally and internationally to be able to attract the best talent and students; *the liberal rationale* which relates to pursuing internationalisation for the purpose of developing global citizens (developing graduates who can perform both professionally and socially in global multicultural settings); *the transformational/social and cultural rationale* which relates to pursuing internationalisation in order to capacitate graduates to make informed and intellectual assessment of issues of social justice; and *the economic rationale* which emphasises the generating of alternative sources of income.

### **Approaches to internationalisation of curriculum**

A number of approaches have been identified as key to facilitating effective internationalisation of the curriculum (Leask, 2006; Qlang, 2003). These approaches include *the activity approach* which emphasises staff and student exchange programs; *the competency approach* which emphasises the development of student skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to be able to function more effectively in the global environment; *the ethos approach* which emphasises

respect for cultural diversity and the establishment of a homogenous culture in higher education institutions; *the process approach* which is regarded as the most important and holistic as it emphasises the creation and deployment of internationalisation tools such as policies, procedures, teaching and learning practices to promote effective internationalisation of the curriculum.

### **The five-stage process model of internationalisation of curriculum**

The five stage process model is a useful framework for operationalizing the internationalisation of curriculum in higher education institutions (Leask & Bridge, 2013). The five stages include: *review and reflect stage* (lecturers looking at how they can include international/intercultural issues in their teaching from a professional perspective (emphasis on being a global competent lecturer), *imagine stage* (answering the following questions: What intercultural skills, knowledge and attitudes need to be developed in graduates? How can these be developed through the medium of the curriculum and teaching processes?), *revise and plan stage* (Revising the internationalisation plan based on the answers to questions in stage 2), *act stage* (implementing the plan), and *evaluate stage* (monitoring and measuring internationalisation progress and taking corrective action where necessary).

### **Drivers of internationalisation of curriculum**

The following are factors that act as drivers of internationalisation of curriculum in higher education: Top-down (promulgation of a vision, mission and institutional strategies for internationalisation of curriculum) and bottom-up (champions such as curriculum experts, experienced staff, subject experts agitating for internationalisation (Qiang, 2003, Bond, 2003); students demand for international standard curriculum (Bond, 2006); political imperative through accrediting government agencies to ensure high quality education in the country (Qiang, 2003); economic/financial imperatives: Alternative sources of income for the institution (AUCC, 2009); academic imperative: Striving for excellence (AUCC, 2009); and partnerships: going into joint ventures with international higher education institutions (AUCC, 2009).

### **Barriers to effective internationalisation of curriculum**

The following factors act as barriers to effective internationalisation of the curriculum:

Lack of a clear knowledge by faculty of what an internalized curriculum entails caused by lack of training (AUCC, 2009); difficulties by faculty in understanding how to effectively work with international students (AUCC, 2009); perceived cultural neutrality of some internationalised curriculum disciplines such as technology where some faculty erroneously believe that there is no cultural difference in technology yet there is (AUCC, 2009; Bond et al, 2003); insufficient recognition for faculty's efforts to internationalised curriculum especially with regards to issues of tenure and promotion because results seem to take precedence over service (Bond et al, 2003); apathy and resistance by some faculty and departments (LeBlanc, 2007); and extremely low levels of faculty with IoC experience in higher education institutions (AACSB, 2008).

### **Enablers of effective internationalisation of curriculum**

Enablers of effective internationalisation of the curriculum include harnessing faculty members' international experience (Bond et al, 2003), Recognising and rewarding the contributions of faculty to internalisation of the curriculum (AUCC, 2009), supporting faculty developments needs through training and development on issues of internationalisation (Blackhouse, 2005), funding internationalisation of curriculum efforts (AUCC, 2009), establishing an institutional coordination mechanism on internationalisation of curriculum (Bond et al, 2003), harnessing experiences of students to facilitate international learning on campus (Leask, 2000; Jones & Brown, 2007), facilitating multicultural interactions on campus (Leask, 2000; Jones & Brown, 2007; AUCC, 2009), maximizing on staff and student exchange programmes (AUCC, 2009), promoting a clear and coherent definition of internationalisation of curriculum in the campus (AUCC, 2009), demonstrating the value of an internalized curriculum in the context of assessing and measuring student learning outcomes (Leask, 2000), and reviewing programmes periodically (Leask, 2009; AUCC, 2009).

### **Perceived negative effects of internationalisation of curriculum**

A number of perceived negative effects (mostly emotional) of internationalisation highlighted in literature include the following: Commodification and commercialization of higher education programmes (Knight, 2008); westernizing the indigenous culture through culture hybridisation to form a homogenous culture (Brohier, 2011); linguistic imperialism by promoting western

languages (Brohier, 2011); the unmooring of identities (Brohier, 2011); and the promoting western education imperialism (Brohier, 2011).

## Methodology

This study will be exploratory in approach using the survey research method. A survey is a descriptive research method that is used to collect qualitative or quantitative data using either a questionnaire or an interview (Cresswell, 2003). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and summarize the data before presenting it in the form of proportions, means, tables and graphs. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents and participants to the questionnaire. According to Yates, Moore and Stames (2008), simple random sampling also known as probability sampling is a method of selecting a subset of individuals (sample) from a large group (population) such that each individual has the same chance/probability of being selected at any stage during the sampling process. 10 per cent of the teaching staff from the six private higher education institutions was selected as respondents for the study and this resulted in a number of 100 respondents.

## Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments that were employed in this study were the questionnaire and document analysis. A questionnaire according to Given (2008) is a method of collecting data that consists of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. According to Malhotra (1996), a questionnaire is a structured technique for data collection that includes a series of questions, written or verbal, that a respondent answers. Document analysis also known as content analysis according to Given (2008) is a study of recorded human communication such books, reports, websites, paintings and laws. Neuendorf (2002) also defines content analysis as a summarizing quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including objectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalisability, replicability and hypothesis testing) and is not limited to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented. Document analysis will involve data sources such as organisational reports, minutes of meetings and schemes of work (milestones).

## Limitations of the study

- Use of one method of data collection has implications on the validity and reliability of results. A mixed method approach could have been better were it not been for the limitations of time.
- Not including the management of the six private higher education institutions in the research could have robbed the study of information on critical current and future policy issues with regards to internationalisation of curriculum in these institutions. This policy issues on internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education institutions is therefore recommended as a subject of future research.

## Presentation of Findings

This study focused around the following four themes: knowledge and expertise; content; teaching methods, assessment and evaluation; and curriculum development process.

### Knowledge and expertise

Qtn	YES	NO
1. I have a good understanding of what internationalisation of curriculum is	21%	79%
2. I can explain to both students and colleagues what internationalisation of curriculum is	35%	65%
3. I have received training on internationalisation of curriculum	24%	76%
4. I can rate myself as internationally competent (keep up with international content in my subject)	90%	10%
5. I can rate myself as internationally aware (have high level of international teaching experience)	72%	28%
6. I can rate myself as internationally expert (have studied, worked, researched in international settings)	33%	67%
7. I know the number of international students in my class	27%	73%
8. I know from which country each of the international students comes from	15%	85%
9. I know the cultural mix in my class	20%	80%

79 per cent of the respondents indicated that they do not have a good understanding of what the concept implies with 65 per cent of them also indicating that they are not confident enough to explain to both students and colleagues what the concept means. 76 per cent of the respondents have not received any training on internationalisation of the curriculum. However 90 per cent of the respondents contended that they keep up with international trends in the subject area (internationally competent), 72 per cent agreed that they had high levels of international teaching experience (internationally aware) and only 33 per cent of the respondents agreed that they had studied and researched in international settings (internationally expert). In terms of knowledge of students, 27 per cent of respondents said they have knowledge of the number of international students in their batches, 15 per cent said that they know from which country exactly the

international students come from while 20 per cent said they knew the cultural mix in their classes. Overall therefore, it can be concluded that lecturers in private higher education institutions lack the training on internationalisation of curriculum and also that lecturers have limited knowledge of their international students in their classes. While it is clear that at a personal level faculty attempt to keep themselves updated with current issues in their areas of expertise, the above responses dovetails with and confirm the assertion by AUCC (2009) that faculties in higher education lack clear knowledge of what internationalisation of curriculum entails and that internationalisation of curriculum in higher education in general and in private higher education in particular is an area that has largely remained unexplored (AUCC, 2009, Leask, 2009). The above responses also confirm the assertion by Altbach & Teichler (2001) that curriculum internationalisation activities are not taken seriously in higher education.

### Content

Question	YES	NO
<b>Course level:</b>		
1. My department offers internationally recognised qualifications	95%	5%
<b>Resources and content:</b>		
2. I use materials from diverse sources which reflect both indigenous perspectives and global issues.	51%	49%

95 per cent of respondents agreed that their departments offer internationally recognised qualifications. This could be as a result of the accreditation requirements by Botswana government agencies that expect higher education institutions to bench mark their programmes against international institutions and standards and is in line with competitive/academic rationale of internationalisation of curriculum (making the institution more competitive locally and internationally to be able to attract the best talent and students) (Knight, 2008). 51 per cent of respondents agreed that they boost their teaching content using a diverse range of resources to reflect an international perspective. This indicates a fair attempt at internationalising the curriculum and confirms the fact that internationalisation of curriculum in higher education is mostly focused at content and output than at processes (Croslings et al, 2008; Pimpa, 2009). The above is further confirmed by ACSSB (2008) which posited that the infusion of international content into the curriculum was the most common strategy used to internationalise the curriculum in higher education institutions.

## Teaching methods

Question	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
<b>Teaching practices used:</b>					
1. I cater for the learning needs of students of different cultural backgrounds	16%	10%	39%	25%	10%
2. I avoid reinforcing cultural/gender stereotypes	80%	1%	14%	5%	0%
3. I recognise international students as a resource	11%	24%	39%	5%	21%
<b>Learning Activities and Assessment Tasks:</b>					
1. I stimulate intercultural interactions	40%	11%	33%	6%	10%
2. I include group tasks where members are from different cultures	25%	25%	15%	20%	15%
<b>Assessment:</b>					
1. Measures performance of intercultural skills	9%	6%	13%	43%	29%

## Teaching practices used in the programme

Only 26 per cent of respondents agreed that they cater for learning needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. 81 per cent of the respondents agreed that they avoid the reinforcing of cultural/gender stereotypes in their classes. Only 35 per cent of the respondents recognise international students as a resource. The above responses show that faculty focus on issues of content and output at the expense of the process aspect which further confirms the lack of understanding as a result of lack of training (already alluded to above) on the part of respondents with regards to the internationalise the curriculum.

## Learning activities and assessment

51 per cent of the respondents agreed that they assist in the development of intercultural communication skills including non-verbal communication among students by stimulating intercultural interactions in class through the use of group tasks where flexible grouping strategy is used tasks. The above results indicate that faculty in private higher education institutions in Botswana generally ensure effective communication or interaction between students of different cultural backgrounds during their teaching.

## Assessment

Only 15 per cent of respondents agreed that they measure performance of intercultural skills during assessment. This inadequacy can be tracked back to lack of capacity as a result of lack of training on IoC which again confirms lack of a clear understanding of internationalisation of curriculum as according to AUCC (2009).

## Curriculum development process

Curriculum development process	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
<b>Qtn</b>					
1. Content, learning activities and assessment tasks are developed with diverse range of consultation to allow for an international/intercultural appeal	31%	69%	0%	0%	0%
2. Content is reviewed regularly to ensure that it is in line with current international trends	29%	15%	26%	19%	11%

100 per cent of the respondents agreed that content; learning activities and assessment tasks are developed with diverse range of consultation within their institutions to allow for an international/intercultural appeal. However only 44 per cent of the respondents agreed that content is reviewed regularly to ensure that it is in line with current international standards. When looked from the perspective that most of the respondents (79 per cent to be specific, see 12.1) confirmed that they have no knowledge of internationalisation of curriculum and also that many of them are not comfortable to explain what internationalisation of curriculum entails to either students or colleagues, the above results point to the fact that the processes of developing a diverse curriculum and reviewing it regularly is more of an accreditation requirement enforced by governments agencies than one informed by knowledge and understanding of internationalisation of curriculum on the part of the respondents.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusion

From the above results it is concluded that the majority of respondents have no clear knowledge of what internationalisation of curriculum entails as well as how to effectively internationalise the curriculum. It can also be concluded that lack of training on internationalisation of curriculum is seriously affecting the ability of lecturers in these private higher education institutions to internationalise the curriculum especially in the classrooms. It can further be concluded that the only strategy of internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education institutions in Botswana that is currently widely used is benchmarking the content against comparable local, regional and international programmes. Also most of the respondents indicated that their programmes are of international standards.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are given to ensure clear understanding and effective operationalisation of internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education institutions: internationalising faculty through training, exchange programmes and research on internationalisation of curriculum should be the starting point of ensuring effective internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education; promoting joint international/intercultural research is also key to enabling effective internationalisation of

curriculum; utilising international curriculum experts to staff develop local faculty on internationalisation of curriculum; ensuring adequate strategic support in institutions through policies on internationalisation of curriculum; annual performance management to have a section that addresses internationalisation of curriculum; establishment of clear benchmarks against which all faculty can measure their internationalisation of curriculum efforts; establishment of an internationalisation of curriculum committee of subject experts, curriculum experts, staff with international experienced to spearhead internationalisation of curriculum efforts in the institution.

### Summary

This article discussed key issues around the internationalisation of curriculum which included coming up with working definitions of the concept, examining the drivers, enablers, challenges and perceived risks of internationalisation of curriculum. The research was able to come up with a number of drivers, enablers and challenges to internationalisation of curriculum as well as to show how people perceive internationalisation of curriculum. It was also shown in this exploratory research that the majority of faculty in private higher education do not understand what internationalisation of curriculum is as well as how to effectively operationalise internationalisation of curriculum due mostly to lack of training and international exposure. Recommendations were proposed as a way of improving faculty's understanding and ability to operationalise internationalisation of curriculum in private higher education institutions.

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