The Enhancing Series Case Studies: International Learning Experience

Assessing the International Dimensions of Degree Programmes

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Introduction
This case study provides a framework of dimensions that can be used to determine the extent of internationalisation within a programme of study. While the framework is generic in nature and likely to be applicable across subject domains, it was developed as part of a recent study that identified the extent of internationalisation within UK hospitality management degree programmes.

Through the application of the framework, the second part of this case study provides an overview of the current extent of internationalisation within UK undergraduate hospitality management degrees. It highlights the importance of cross-cultural competencies to programme internationalisation and the methods used to develop these within programmes. It also identifies a number of constraints in optimising the international dimensions of degree programmes and the challenges faced by educators as a result.

Objectives
There are two key objectives. In the first instance, to provide a framework of internationalisation that can be used to assess internationalisation within individual programmes of study. The second is to identify the extent of internationalisation of UK undergraduate hospitality degree programmes through the application of this framework.

Rationale
There is no disputing that globalisation is a major factor in higher education (HE) today. As knowledge becomes a more critical resource, HE has been recognised as an important medium for cross-border flows of both knowledge and people. HEIs are charged with the responsibility of producing graduates who are ‘global citizens’ (Shiels, 2006) capable of operating effectively in the 21st century. To develop these graduate capabilities, internationalisation is placed high on the agenda in many higher education institutions (HEIs) and departments. However, Knight (2004) argues that within HE, internationalisation is interpreted and implemented in different ways in different countries and by different stakeholders. In addition, critics argue
that there is often a gap between rhetoric and reality (Ozerdem, 2006) suggesting a need for further research on how to internationalise higher education in order to produce global citizens.

Context

Various environmental forces are driving the internationalisation of HE. The inclusion of education services within the General Agreements on Trade in Services (GATS) and the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Bologna process have created a demand for degrees to be internationally recognised and to be portable between countries and institutions (Heitmann, 2005). From a socio-cultural perspective, the OECD (2004) reports on a desire to promote mutual understanding across an increasingly diverse and mobile population. The importance of developing cross-cultural understanding and capability is also recognised in an increasingly globalised business economy that “encourages the development of a market for internationally orientated and qualified graduates” (Elkin, Devjee and Farnsworth, 2005:318). These graduates are global citizens who also serve to reinforce national economies.

Schecter (1993) suggests that internationalisation goals can be classified as:

- Pragmatic (acquisition of skills and knowledge for employability in a global context).
- Liberal (developing an appreciation of cultural differences and intercultural sensibility).
- Civic (developing multidimensional global citizenship).

However, a recent Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) (2005) report emphasises the economic reasons for internationalisation, particularly within the UK. The authors suggest that economic drivers can be related to improving the international competitiveness of the higher education sector itself, or the international competitiveness of the national economy. For HEIs, Harris (2006) suggests that internationalisation as an indicator of excellence is frequently used as a competitive marketing strategy.

The drivers and goals of internationalisation are important as they underpin how internationalisation is defined by individual HEIs and the subsequent policies and practices implemented (Schoorinan, 1999; Ozerdem, 2006). For example, economic pressures resulting from ‘massification’ and reduced government funding have required many UK HEIs to seek alternative funding through international student recruitment, international franchise agreements, or the delivery of programmes overseas. Socio-cultural factors, on the other hand, have seen greater emphasis placed on the development of cross-cultural skills in line with Schecter’s (1993) liberal goals.

As a result of the different approaches adopted, internationalisation as a construct within HE remains characterised by fuzziness (Kehm and Teichler, 2007). However,
there is some consensus that internationalisation is a process (Gacel-Avila, 2005) and therefore Knight’s (2002:3) definition as:

“The process of integrating international dimensions into the teaching, research and service functions of higher education institutions’ finds favour with many academics.”

Knight (2003) further advises that internationalisation as a process consists of two streams, internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad. The first stream is concerned with helping students develop international understanding and intercultural skills without ever having to leave the campus. The second stream comprises the same activities but requires the movement of people or programmes within international environments. Building on Knight’s work, Black (2004) considers both people and learning activities within her international classification as follows:

- Faculty: exchange, international joint research and consultancy.
- Students: exchange, double degree programmes, joint international programmes.
- Curriculum content: internationalising courses, adding international courses, adding languages, work or study abroad.
- International alliances: faculty exchange, student exchange, double degree or joint degree programmes.

These factors predominantly reflect the formal elements of programmes, yet the importance of informal elements of the student experience within HE is increasingly recognised. Extra curricular activities at programme or institutional level can help to support the international experience of students. A culturally diverse student body can also impact on the informal internationalisation of the student experience and has been considered a key resource to facilitate the development of an appreciation of cultural differences and intercultural sensibility (Seymour, 2002). International networking and conference participation by faculty members also serves to enhance the internationalisation of programmes of study for these same reasons. These networking opportunities are also possible post graduation through alumni members and services.

A Framework for Assessment of Internationalisation

As the preceding discussion suggests, internationalisation within HEIs is wide-reaching and potentially complex to implement, given the inter-related nature of the different dimensions identified. However, Raftery (2007) draws together these different components to provide a framework with seven key dimensions of internationalisation:

- Internationalisation of the curriculum
- Internationalisation of the student experience
- International recruitment
• International partnerships and strategic alliances
• International exchanges (staff and students)
• International research
• Alumni relations

These dimensions can be incorporated into internationalisation strategies at institutional or programme level and include formal and informal elements, people and learning activities and internationalisation at home and abroad. In order to use this framework to assess the extent of internationalisation within institutions or programmes, each of these dimensions requires more specific criteria by which to gauge the extent to which the dimension is developed. Within degree programmes for management and business administration, one of the most comprehensive sets of guidelines for internationalisation has been developed by the European Quality Improvement System (Equis). These guidelines also provide key indicators for assessing internationalisation. Table 1 draws together Raftery’s (2007) dimensions and Equis key indicators (www.efmd.org) to create a framework for evaluating the internationalisation of degree programmes.

Table 1: A Framework of Programme Internationalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Internationalisation</th>
<th>Key Indicators</th>
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| Internationalisation of the curriculum (generally reflective of more formal elements) | ✤ Programme aims and outcomes  
✤ Teaching which focuses on the European and global business environments  
✤ International case studies and learning materials  
✤ An international perspective in all main functional areas  
✤ Opportunity to study a foreign language |
| Internationalisation of the student experience (reflective of both formal and informal elements) | ✤ A concern for intercultural exchange in the classroom  
✤ Opportunity for intercultural exchange in a social or other informal setting  
✤ The provision of internships or project work across borders  
✤ The involvement of international |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visiting professors</td>
<td>- The recruitment of non-nationals to the faculty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The international experience of faculty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The foreign language skills of faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>International recruitment</td>
<td>- Recruitment of students from other countries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Support provided for international students</td>
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<tr>
<td>International partnerships and</td>
<td>- Courses jointly designed and taught with partner schools abroad</td>
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<td>strategic alliances</td>
<td>- The involvement of faculty in international networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>International exchanges (staff and</td>
<td>- Existence of exchange programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student)</td>
<td>- Internships and study abroad as an integral part of programmes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Courses taught in English in non-English speaking countries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The opportunity for faculty to serve as visiting professors abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>International research</td>
<td>- Participation in international conferences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Research and publication of an international nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alumni relations</td>
<td>- The international placement of graduates</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The language ability of graduates</td>
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(Brookes and Becket, 2008)

In the following section this framework is applied to UK undergraduate hospitality management degree programmes to assess the international dimensions of current provision.
**Internationalisation of UK Hospitality Management Programmes**

The hospitality industry has long been characterised as global, and firms across a wide range of industry sectors continue to internationalise at a rapid pace. Hospitality firms are reported to generate US$950 billion annually to the global economy and employ over 60 million people (IH&RA, 2008). As such, there is a demand for university graduates who are global citizens capable of working effectively within the industry, and international hospitality management degrees have been developed across the world as a result.

Within the UK the importance of developing hospitality graduates as global citizens is reflected to some extent in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmark statement for undergraduate hospitality provision. These benchmark statements are subject specifications used in the UK to inform programme design and quality review. A 2005 study conducted by Lunn (published 2006) as part of a Royal Geographical Society and IBG project on Global Perspectives investigated UK hospitality and tourism management degree provision, including international programmes. The authors concluded that while the subject areas have the potential to develop strong global perspectives, at that point in time only moderate global perspectives were developed amongst graduates. These findings suggest there might be room for improvement in the internationalisation of these degrees; however, there are limitations to this study as Lunn (2006) reviewed only secondary data available in the public domain.

In order to provide a more complete picture of the extent of internationalisation in current UK undergraduate hospitality management provision, research was undertaken by the authors using the framework developed. The first stage involved a review of publicly available secondary data (as did Lunn’s study) but in conjunction with programme specifications. In the second stage, structured telephone interviews were undertaken with 13 programme managers, thereby incorporating 60% of the UK current provision.

**Identifying International Dimensions**

Given the international nature of the hospitality industry, there is enormous scope for the development of global perspectives within curricula in line with the QAA benchmark requirements and the programmes investigated in this study are making concerted efforts to do so. This section provides an overview of the current provision of internationalisation in UK hospitality management degree programmes presented according to the seven dimensions of the internationalisation framework.

**Internationalisation of the Curriculum**

The development of graduates ‘capable’ and/or ‘prepared for’ working in the international/global hospitality industry or international organisations is recognised as a fundamental aim of most programmes. Cross-cultural capabilities are deemed an essential skill required by graduates. Furthermore, cross-cultural competencies are considered necessary at both a business and a personal level. Assessment of these aims is through the mapping of learning outcomes at module level and through assessment that is constructively aligned with these outcomes. However, this could perhaps be addressed more rigorously in some programmes.
Two main approaches are used to develop student perspectives of internationalisation; either through explicitly titled modules or through a fully embedded approach. In the former, modules are frequently more prominent in later stages of study and sometimes these are solely through generic management modules. Finance modules are frequently deemed more difficult to internationalise. In the second approach, internationalisation is fully embedded in a holistic manner within programmes. Internationalisation is embedded through the nature of the discipline being studied, the use of international case studies, the particular context of the modules, by drawing on the international background of students, or by academic staff providing international industry examples. However, sometimes there is a lack of transparency as to where global perspectives are explicitly developed.

Languages are considered to be an effective way of creating an international dimension to programmes. The majority of programmes offer the option to study a language and gain credit towards the degree, with one exception where languages are studied in addition to the degree requirements. However, there are often practical issues relating to location and timetabling conflicts that inhibit students taking these modules. These implications are often exacerbated by institutional policies driven by funding requirements.

**Internationalisation of the Student Experience**

The contribution of international students to the development of global perspectives is well recognised. Efforts are made to draw effectively on this resource, facilitated by the high percentage of international students attracted to UK hospitality management degrees. It is generally perceived to be important to get students interacting at the start of their programmes and induction activities are often used for this purpose. Almost all programmes use informal social events as part of induction, however, these are mostly optional.

There also appears to be a genuine concern for inter-cultural exchange within the classroom. Cross-cultural work groups within individual modules are generally considered to be a very important formal international dimension of programmes of study. Approaches taken to forming cross-cultural groups vary with some using an ad hoc approach, and relatively few suggesting that this is undertaken on a formal basis to ensure cultural diversity within groups. In one programme however, cross-cultural awareness and skill development is mapped across the programme and forms part of course validation.

The importance of international or shared experiences of both staff and students in developing graduates with cross-cultural skills is well recognised. Throughout programmes cultural experiences are shared by asking students to draw on their own backgrounds and experiences, or by drawing on the international work or academic experiences of staff members. However, this approach requires staff and students to have a mindset open to exploring and embracing different cultural perspectives. A high percentage of international staff and/or staff with international work experience is perceived to enhance the potential for internationalisation through shared experiences.

The use of visiting academics is related to the existence of research centres which predominantly encompass tourism or retail management. It appears that there may be less international research activity in hospitality than in other business subjects.
Internationalisation learning activities at home are generally well supported within UK degree programmes, however, internationalisation abroad activities are more challenging and these are discussed further under internationalisation exchanges, below.

**International Recruitment**

As the preceding section indicates, international recruitment remains a priority for UK hospitality programmes where the proportion of international students ranges between 10 and 95%. However, there is some difficulty in assessing the percentage of students from outside the UK due to funding models for students from within the EU. In addition to the cross-cultural contribution of these students, their financial contribution is also important. As a result, support for international students is quite extensive with induction programmes up to two weeks long at university, department and programme level. Continuous language and teaching support tends to be offered throughout all programmes at departmental, school or university level. These services are usually in addition to a university level international student office offering administrative and non-academic support services such as visa, financial or housing assistance.

**International Partnerships and Strategic Alliances**

International recruitment is also reflected in the extent of credit rating agreements held across a wide range of international institutions. Although international students can enter most programmes at any level of study, the majority join after completing a diploma programme in order to gain a degree qualification. This frequently changes the international constituency of student cohorts in the final year of programmes and enhances the potential for further cross-cultural exchanges at this later stage of study.

The majority of departments are also working collaboratively with partner institutions outside the UK through the franchising of degrees, predominantly with India, Singapore and Europe. While probably driven by economic initiatives, these partnerships provide further scope for staff members and students to engage in international exchanges.

**International Exchanges**

Despite these opportunities, staff teaching exchanges do not feature highly within the programmes reviewed, although there are Erasmus exchanges being undertaken within Europe and some funding support for these. International study exchanges also appear to be a less attractive option for students according the research undertaken. Educators recognise the potential of these to help achieve programme aims but there is concern over a decrease in student demand due to funding issues and language barriers. Most funding comes from external sources, such as Erasmus or educational trust funds. The increase in the diversity of the student body is also likely to inhibit the uptake of study abroad, as a result of age and personal or family commitments. When hospitality students do undertake study exchange, those offered at programme, rather than university, level are more popular with students. These exchanges tend to be developed through personal networking by individual academics who then frequently became a champion for them.
International placements often suffer from the same complaints. These are not compulsory in the majority of programmes, and in one programme a placement is an alternative to international study exchange. Students are actively encouraged to take up the opportunity of an international placement, but there are often difficulties related to the financial constraints of students or their demographic backgrounds. An international placement is normally considered to be one outside the student’s home country, with one exception where an international company within the UK is deemed to be an international placement opportunity.

Field trips are recognised as a further opportunity for intercultural exchange and optional field trips are offered in over half the programmes, usually within an industrial context. However, there are a number of restrictions experienced when organising international field trips that negatively impact on the number of trips offered or on student uptake. For example, visa restrictions for international students, health and safety requirements, and funding constraints serve to curtail these internationalisation abroad activities. International volunteering is seen as a potential solution in facilitating intercultural exchange to overcome these constraints.

International Research

International research and consultancy tends to be driven by individuals. The majority of international research activity is undertaken through research centres at departmental or school level, drawing on hospitality academics’ expertise as required. The importance of staff attendance at international conferences and networking is recognised on an individual basis, yet only one programme reported a defined policy for attendance and support. For staff members, participation in international conferences, research and consultancy also appears to be reliant on the initiative and drive of individuals, particularly in the face of dwindling financial resources within individual HEIs. International hospitality conferences are hosted to a lesser extent.

Alumni Relations

While the importance of networking with alumni is recognised, formal links tend to be maintained at the university level, and events are often hosted in countries that are key feeder markets. Informally, alumni are used as guest lecturers, to assist with student and graduate placements and as in-country advisors for recruitment purposes.

Conclusion

Most programmes reviewed for this study have incorporated all seven internationalisation dimensions within their programmes to some extent, and there are clearly a number of strengths in the internationalisation of UK hospitality undergraduate degree provision. The importance of the development of students’ cross-cultural skills is clearly recognised within programmes, particularly within internationalisation-at-home learning activities. Within the classroom, the very nature of hospitality assures that staff and students have an experience of hospitality to share either from a customer or work-related perspective. Nevertheless, the extent to which these experiences are shared is dependent on the willingness of students and the ability of individual staff members to facilitate cross-cultural discussions. These tasks are also dependent on the mindset of individual staff and
students and the extent to which they embrace a truly global perspective. Other formal international learning activities also appear to rely on initiatives of individual members of staff. There is potential to capitalise on this opportunity through course teams taking a more considered approach to maximising the opportunities for cross-cultural exchange within programmes. In addition, programme teams may also wish to consider how to make the international dimensions of their degrees more explicit.

Cross-cultural experiences as internationalisation abroad activities are also recognised as very important in achieving programme aims. However, there appears to be an increased reluctance of students to undertake placements, international or otherwise. This is reflective of a general pattern evident since the late 1990s across UK HE (Little and Harvey, 2006). Although not specific to hospitality, recent research by the Council for Industry in Higher Education on graduate employability determined that 65% of employers felt that overseas work experience would make candidates more employable and one third of employers consider a graduate with any overseas study experience to be more employable (Archer and Davison, 2008). Despite the potential value of these international student experiences, they have been dropped within a number of programmes as compulsory requirements in response to student demand and other external constraints. Competitive pressures on individual programmes of study require them to be more responsive to student, rather than industry, demand. At the same time, politically driven massification agendas have created more diverse student populations and many students are not in a position to travel overseas easily due to personal or financial constraints. As tuition fees continue to rise, financial constraints are likely to further restrict the number of students who are able to take advantage of these international opportunities. Other external factors identified in this chapter serve to exacerbate this decline and programme teams need to consider how to encourage and support students to undertake internationalisation abroad activities. For some students, volunteering schemes that are financially supported may prove to be a potential solution. Greater engagement with industry partners may be another way to achieve this support for students and to highlight the importance of international work experience on graduate employability.

The research identified that programmes have the requisite international ingredients and are constantly making improvements, but whether students graduate as global citizens is often dependent on the extent to which they engage in the opportunities available to them. Furthermore, there appear to be concerted efforts by staff members to encourage international and cross-cultural experiences for themselves and students. Ironically, the very forces that are driving internationalisation within UK HEIs at present are also serving to hinder the extent to which undergraduate hospitality management programmes are internationalised. Further development in internationalisation abroad activities for students and staff would help to enhance internationalisation of hospitality undergraduate degrees. As educators, it is important that we start to address the identified constraints to ensure that we continue to build on the evident strengths.

The authors would like to acknowledge the co-operation from UK colleagues for their contributions to this research.
References


**Biographies**

**Nina Becket**

As Assistant Director, Nina is responsible for leading the network's academic development work. Her current research interests include the internationalisation of programmes and quality management within in higher education. Nina joined the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management at Oxford Brookes University in 1991 following extensive management experience in the hospitality industry. During her time in the School, Nina worked as undergraduate programme director, conducted research into the accounting and marketing interface, achieved membership of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, and managed a British Council project to develop tourism in Bulgaria.

**Dr Maureen Brookes**

Maureen is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism Management at Oxford Brookes University. She is also Hospitality Liaison Officer for the HLST network and member of the Council for Hospitality Management Education executive committee. Maureen held a number of hospitality management positions in North America before coming to England as owner/director of a Cotswolds hotel. Since joining the Department, Maureen has completed doctoral research on the diverse market entry strategies of international hotel chains. She has also researched and published on marketing standardisation and centric orientation of international hotel groups and is also actively involved in pedagogic research with publications on quality management and internationalisation within higher education. Maureen has also undertaken consultancy and bespoke programme development for organisations including Marriott International, Rezidor and Whitbread.