Considerations for enabling
guidelines, strategies, and policies
for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts

IKUDU

Transforming curricula through internationalisation & virtual exchanges

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EDITORIAL

The iKudu Project has developed the 'Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts' through an inclusive process involving all ten of its South African and European partner universities. In the spirit of the iKudu values, which include ubuntu, trust, and equality, the project stakeholders have developed a document that will serve as a repository of ideas from which all consortium member universities can intelligently borrow when developing their institutional guidelines, strategies, and policies for curriculum renewal, COIL, or other forms of virtual exchange. We are publishing this document to make the ideas emanating from the project available to the broader higher education community. Hopefully they will contribute to further debate on internationalised curriculum renewal processes.

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GLOSSARY

The glossary contains brief explanations of, or views on, some of the core concepts used in this document. These are not uncontested explanations but were included as a point of departure for further consideration and contextualisation. We acknowledge that each person will read the definitions or brief descriptions influenced by their own context and experiences.

Collaborative online international learning (COIL)

COIL connects accredited courses, linking the classrooms of two or more higher education institutions, each located in a different country or cultural setting. The COIL model does not merely promote students from different countries sharing an online classroom. Rather, COIL creates equitable team-taught learning environments where faculty from two cultures work together to develop a shared syllabus, emphasising experiential and collaborative student learning.

The courses give new contextual meaning to the ideas and texts they explore, while providing students new venues in which to develop their cross-cultural awareness. Classes may be fully online or, more often, are offered in blended formats with traditional face-to-face sessions taking place at both schools, while collaborative student work takes place online.

(COIL CONSULTING, n.d.)

Internationalisation of education

The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.

(De Wit, Hunter, & Coelen, 2015, p. 281)

Internationalisation of the curriculum

"Internationalisation of the curriculum is the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study." (Leask, 2015, p. 9)

Internationalisation at home

Internationalisation at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments. (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 76)

Comprehensive internationalisation

Comprehensive internationalisation is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility.

Comprehensive internationalisation not only impacts all of campus life, but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalisation and the motivations and purposes driving it (Hudzik, 2011).

Decolonisation of the curriculum

Warner, Arboine, Morrison, and Tran (2020, p. 3) explain decolonisation of the curriculum as follows:

There is no agreed definition of decolonisation or what it means to decolonise the curriculum and it is worth acknowledging that 'no education is politically neutral' (Hooks, 1994, Freire, 1996). Broadly speaking, decolonising the curriculum interrogates the ongoing impact of legacies of colonisation and imperialism on knowledge production. A decolonial approach concerns itself with deconstructing existing hierarchies, in favour of drawing on multiple knowledge systems/ways of knowing in order to integrate a range of perspectives, with a particular focus on amplifying the voices currently underrepresented in the curriculum.

Whereas Western knowledges are often presented a-historically, neutral and of universal value, decolonisation advocates for the contextualisation of all knowledge within a historical, geographical, cultural framework and re-shaping the curriculum is a key component of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The goal of decolonising the curriculum is to ensure education is structured in a way which gives everyone access to the opportunities they need to thrive.

Global citizenship

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies.

GCED is based on the three domains of learning – cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural (UNESCO, n.d.):

Cognitive: knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities.

Socio-emotional: values, attitudes and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully.

Behavioural: conduct, performance, practical application and engagement.

Inclusive education

UNICEF explains that inclusive education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all (UNICEF, n.d.). In South Africa, inclusive education (RSA Department of Education, 2001) is based on the premise that the education system should be such that it "enable all learners to participate actively in the education process so that they could develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society". The following principles apply:

- human rights and social justice for all learners
- participation and social integration
- equal access to a single, inclusive education system
- access to the curriculum, equity, and redress
- community responsiveness
- cost-effectiveness.

Decolonisation of higher education internationalisation

There is no agreed definition, but this can mean moving away from dominant, mostly Anglo-Saxon models of internationalisation. De Wit, Gacel-Ávila, Jones, and Jooste (2017) present a number of emerging perspectives, including those from South Africa. Since then, we have seen the appearance of, among others, a Chinese definition of internationalisation (Lui, 2021).

Transformation of higher education

Advocate Bongani Majola, Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, explained the term as follows: "Transformation in the higher education sector will entail the creation of a system which is free from all forms of unfair discrimination and artificial barriers to access and success, as well as one that is built on the principles of social inclusivity, mutual respect and acceptance."

(Majola, 2016)

Africanisation

Different authors writing on Africanisation offer varied viewpoints

Letsekha (2013) refers to different authors:

Makgoba (1997: 199), for instance, emphasises culture and identity, noting that Africanisation is a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a world community. He states: "Africanisation is the process of defining or interpreting African identity and culture. It is formed by the experiences of the African Diaspora and has endured and matured over time from the narrow nationalistic intolerance to an accommodating, realistic and global form."

Ramose (1998) adds: "Africanisation holds that different foundations exist for the construction of pyramids of knowledge. It disclaims the view that any pyramid is by its very nature eminently superior to all others. It is a serious quest for a radical and veritable change of paradigm so that the African may enter into genuine and critical dialogical encounter with other pyramids of knowledge. Africanisation is a conscious and deliberate assertion of nothing more than the right to be African."

The considerations that follow are not uncontested views, but represent the work done by and interpretations of stakeholders in the iKudu project. We acknowledge that each person will read the considerations influenced by their context and experiences.

Preamble

The iKudu project has, through discussions at its Leadership Summit held at the University of Siena[1] in June 2022, developed a set of considerations relating to curriculum renewal, including through virtual exchange (VE)/Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). They have been predominantly written to enable internationalisation in the diverse South African higher education contexts, but also to inspire curriculum renewal and COIL at all partner universities and beyond.

The engagement in Siena was the culmination of an extensive and inclusive co-creation process that took place at and between all South African and European partner universities through constant engagements, viz:

- *the development of stakeholder models;*

- *the drafting of appreciative inquiry reports at each partner institution on the progress of delivering internationalised, transformed, decolonised curricula as part of a comprehensive internationalisation process;*

- *round-table discussions between consortium member universities that included a cross-section of institutional stakeholders; and*

- *unpacking important concepts relating to comprehensive internationalisation, curriculum renewal, virtual exchange/COIL, among others.*

Within the project, both the working group focusing on curriculum renewal and the one focusing on COIL virtual exchange contributed to this document through an iterative process. This document should be read together with other documents developed on the project website (https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu).

The principles set out in this document for consideration are meant to be a repository of ideas from which all consortium member universities can intelligently borrow when developing their institutional guidelines, strategies, and policies for curriculum renewal, COIL, or other forms of virtual exchanges. The underlying idea is that universities should develop or adapt relevant institutional strategies and policies that encourage bottom-up initiatives by enabling top-down frameworks.

Theoretical approach

At the meta-level, internationalisation of higher education[2] should be transformed to advance pluriform perspectives[3] that appreciate diverse ontologies and position epistemologies of the Global South in their rightful space, alongside those of the Global North. This transformation requires fundamental rethinking of internationalisation to link various nodes of knowledge generation with each other, as opposed to a linear and often hierarchical positioning. Central, is that knowledge generated in the Global South and different ways of knowing and being should be afforded the same worthiness, consideration, and recognition as those of the Global North.

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2   In their European Parliament Study, Hans de Wit and others (2015) define internationalisation of higher education as follows: "The intentional process of integrating an international, inter-cultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society."

3   Guérin, L., & Beelen, J. (2022). *Verbinding van twee wêrelden: Een position paper over internationalisering en wereldburger-schap. Colofon*

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1   Università di Siena

Challenge

Higher education in the developing world is to a large extent the result of historical developments over centuries that have resulted in a dominance of knowledge from the Global North, particularly from the Anglophone world. Although tertiary education institutions of the Global South still emulate dominant ways of knowing and being intrinsic to the Global North, rethinking processes are underway. Marginalisation has inhibited a sense of agency in some higher education stakeholders, and curricula at institutions often lack engagement with local context and content.

Strategies

Comprehensive internationalisation and curriculum renewal

Comprehensive internationalisation, which in the project's view implies the intentional inclusion of pluriform perspectives into all aspects of a university's being, should start with curriculum renewal. It should be rooted in local context and connect local context to international dimensions.

The curriculum renewal process should be inclusive, permeating all disciplines and spheres of a university and include all members of a university in its ambit.

Critical is the involvement of learning and teaching centres (specifically curriculum designers/developers and/or instructional designers), academics (curriculum expertise), leadership (strategy development and leadership expertise), international offices (strategic understanding of internationalisation and collaboration processes) and student voices.

Intentional curriculum renewal should recognise the formal, informal, and hidden curriculum dimensions[4]. It should furthermore strengthen interdisciplinarity as well as transdisciplinarity, while also intentionally infusing the outcomes of research into the curriculum dimensions.

It is necessary to renew the curriculum to connect higher education in the Global South with entangled pluriform knowledge beyond that of the West (without excluding Western knowledge). Hence, strategies need to centre around the inclusion of pluriform perspectives in the curriculum and its transformation to empower societies, academics, and students to recognise that their ways of knowing and being are not only of equal worth across the North–South divide, but worthy of global recognition, and essential to advancing the SDGs, both in their respective local, national, regional and continental contexts and the global context.

Central to the renewal process is the creation of discussion loci where curriculum renewal and related core concepts in internationalisation can be deliberated on. Through analysing and reviewing relevant and related concepts, including decolonisation, Africanisation, transformation, diversity and inclusion, other concepts can be developed, and can contribute to agency and pride.

If curriculum internationalisation is understood in this transformative way, it can be entrenched in the curriculum renewal process. Thus, the challenge posed by the 2020 *Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa*, namely, to integrate curriculum internationalisation with other transformation imperatives, can be achieved.

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4   Paul, D; Ewen, S.C. & Hones, R. (2014). Cultural competence in medical education: aligning the formal, informal and hidden curricula. *Advances in Health Science Education,* 19:751–758

Approaches to an internationalised curriculum

An internationalised curriculum means a curriculum where students are constantly engaged and immersed in pluriform perspectives. This could include, among others:

- Engaging with reading materials from different cultural contexts and parts of the world (using digital technology, materials in other languages may be considered).

- Leveraging cultural classroom diversity.

- Leveraging insights from international campus community members.

- Digital and face-to-face teaching by scholars from around the world.

- Making use of digital technology to collaborate across classrooms.

- Student and staff mobility, where resources allow.

To expand on point 5 above, opportunities afforded by the rapid digitalisation process that escalated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, should be embraced and leveraged. COIL, other forms of virtual exchange, and other forms of digital collaboration should be a central aspect of curriculum renewal. They provide cost-effective opportunities to afford all students international exposure. It is important to empower students to engage with their peers in other cultural and geopolitical contexts with agency as equals.

A Critical Approach to Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) implementation[5]

1. Strategic discussions around COIL and other forms of virtual exchange should be integrated in the curriculum renewal discourse, emphasising the value of interdisciplinary COIL practices that will move students and academics towards transdisciplinary and addressing wicked problems. Resourcing of institutionalised and distributed support for COIL, including pedagogical, partnering, technological and infrastructural support.

> ### This should include
>
> 1.1 *administrative support, including support for partnering across disciplines, and issuing of participation certificates;*
>
> 1.2 *pedagogical support, including professional development and curriculum design/educational development support, internationalisation of learning outcomes and assessment, reflection tools;*
>
> 1.3 *technical support such as access to software/platforms, bandwidth, data and knowledge security and equipment;*
>
> 1.4 *quality assurance and enhancement, including monitoring; and*
>
> 1.5 *reporting system.*

2. A shared understanding about roles and responsibilities as well as outcomes should be reached at the outset of any COIL engagement. What should be included in the discussion at this point is the expectations of each, commitments made, and importantly, the hidden curriculum within the planned COIL project.

3. Within and across universities, communities of practice should be established to enable engagement and intellectual cross-fertilisation between novices and more experienced COIL practitioners. COIL should extend beyond higher education into society, including communities and businesses. Suitable measures to overcome disadvantage caused by the digital divide should be infused into the development of COIL.

4. Funding should be made available at national and institutional level to incentivise and support comprehensive internationalisation initiatives, and specifically the development of COIL and other forms of virtual collaboration.

5. Academics should be recognised and appreciated for achievements in implementing virtual pedagogies, including COIL.

6. Monitoring and evaluation of COIL is critical and requires the development of an efficient reporting system that monitors practices across the institution. COIL quality assurance should focus on enhancing COIL and curriculum delivery quality. This can be done through feedback from students, academics and moderators, and resources to evaluate the insights, drawing on and expanding existing quality assurance and enhancement processes at universities.

7. COIL risk management practices should be considered. As an example, risks to institutional reputation and relations emanating from COIL collaborations established by individual academics and not requiring agreements signed by leadership, should be mitigated.

A combination of top-down strategy and policy development based on and infused with ideas emanating from grassroots academic communities, including students and scholars, could assist.[6]

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5   Although this project specifically focused on COIL as an example of an approach to virtual exchange, other approaches are not excluded and could be managed similarly.

6   An example of how this could be done is the Dutch VIS initiative. The Virtual International Collaboration (Virtuele Internationale Samenwerking –VIS) subsidy is a four-year initiative meant to encourage HEIs to develop professional development for virtual exchange. The subsidy, a lump sum of €15.000 per project, is to be used for time-release to give lecturers time to develop and implement their projects. Lecturers collaborate with educational developers in a multi-stakeholder approach to create communities of best practice within and between HEI.

Research

The scholarship of internationalisation should be advanced to underpin the understanding and further development of curriculum renewal processes, virtual pedagogies, including COIL and other virtual exchange modes and their value. Themes that should be explored across partner institutions should include, but not be limited to the following:

- Comprehensive internationalisation

- Curriculum renewal

- The role of education developers (curriculum designers/ instructional designers) in enhancing COIL design

- Alignment of COIL with other components of internationalised curricula

- Intercultural competence development for students and academics

- Suitability of specific internationalisation interventions for developing graduate attributes

- Partnership dynamics

- Measuring the impact of internationalisation.

Dissemination of the research results should include scientific and popular publications, conference presentations, topical webinars, etc. This should foster a culture of academic engagement with comprehensive internationalisation.

For more information about iKudu, kindly refer to the project link below or alternatively scan the QR code.

https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/about-ikudu/introduction-and-focus

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