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Title: Exploring Chinese Students' Experience of Curriculum Internationalisation: A Comparative Study of Scotland and Australia

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Exploring Chinese Students' Experience of Curriculum Internationalisation: A Comparative Study of Scotland and Australia

Abstract

Increasing enrolment of Chinese students has become a key feature of internationalisation for Western universities, but there is limited research into how curriculum internationalisation affects Chinese students' learning experiences. Using the typologies of curriculum internationalisation (Edwards et al, 2003) as a framework, this paper explores and compares how Scottish and Australian universities integrate international and intercultural elements into their curriculum to support Chinese postgraduate taught students' study. Interviews, focus groups and a survey are used as the main research methods. Analysis reveals that the practice of curriculum internationalisation in both countries is rather limited, and that Chinese students express a desire for more international perspectives in the course content, and for more mobility experiences, in order to prepare for their future careers. The mismatch between academics' and students' understandings of curriculum internationalisation is highlighted as an arena of power differential and an area for further study.

Key words: curriculum internationalisation, Chinese student, postgraduate taught, Scotland, Australia

Introduction

The number of Chinese students studying abroad is rising considerably. Research on Chinese students has drawn much attention to the influence of culture on their academic performance and the challenges they experience during their transition to a Western university (Huang, 2012; Zhou and Todman, 2009). However, there is limited research into how the practice of curriculum design and development affects Chinese students' learning experiences. This

research will address the gap by exploring how Chinese postgraduate taught (PGT) students experience curriculum internationalisation at a Scottish and an Australian university. Scotland and Australia are chosen for study because they are popular study destinations for Chinese students, due to perceived academic reputation and prevalence of the English language (Iannelli and Huang, 2013). For example, Chinese postgraduate taught students accounted for 16% of the total international student population in Scottish universities in 2012/13 (Centre for Population Change, 2013). Likewise, in 2013, Chinese students comprised 35% of all postgraduate international students in Australian higher education institutions (Department of Education, 2014).

The increasing number of Chinese students is partly due to a perception that a good quality programme in the UK or Australia will give Chinese students advantages in their careers, especially when back in China (Bamber, 2014; Huang, 2013; Mikal et al., 2015; Wu, 2014). However, studies (Wong et al., 2015; Huang, 2012; Mikal et al., 2015) show that adjusting to teaching and learning abroad is a challenge for many Chinese students, and their levels of cultural integration into the host communities seem to be low. These experiences contradict the aim of internationalisation of higher education, and raise a question as to how universities internationalise their curricula to improve students' experiences. Given that there is limited research into how Chinese students experience curriculum internationalisation, this study will explore and compare how Scottish and Australian universities integrate international and intercultural elements into their curriculum to support Chinese postgraduate taught students' study.

Literature review

There is increased awareness of the importance of internationalising the curriculum in the higher education sector (Yemini and Sagie, 2015). Internationalising the curriculum has been perceived as a key approach in developing students' global perspective of their subject area, and the competences they will need in their future career (International Association of Universities, 2012). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1996: 6) describe curriculum internationalisation as "an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students as well as foreign students".

Leask (2009) develops the understanding of curriculum internationalisation and relates it to all aspects of the learning/teaching situation, the student experience, and the formal/informal/hidden curriculum. In her words, curriculum internationalisation is "the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a program of study" (Leask, 2009: 209). The unwritten or hidden curriculum, featured by informality and lack of conscious planning, is very important for the development of critical pedagogy, as it includes "values, intergroup relations and celebrations that enable students' socialization process" (Kentli, 2009: 83). In other words, it is an arena through which students encounter various norms and cultures that will form part of their overall learning experience.

Despite the increased awareness around internationalising the curriculum, there is limited practical guidance on how to internationalise the curriculum (Edwards et al., 2003): on what to teach, how to teach it, when, and to whom, and in what sequence (Bell, 2004; Curro and McTaggart, 2003). There are reported barriers to academics being engaged with curriculum internationalisation (Leask, 2005). One barrier is that academic staff's understandings of the meaning, purpose, relevance and approach to internationalising the curriculum may vary with subject areas (Sawir, 2011). For example, it is a common practice for academics in business studies to incorporate international elements into the course content (Wamboye et al., 2014; Wamboye et al., 2015), but others in hard disciplines may not feel the need to adjust their course material and delivery style (Sawir, 2011). This lack of agreement often leads to fragmented and individual academic approaches, as well as a lack of institutional cohesion in addressing curriculum internationalisation (Caruana and Hanstock, 2003).

While disciplinary differences affect how academics respond to curriculum internationalisation, cultural differences (Turner, 2009) and individual characteristics (Sawir, 2011) could have greater influence on academics' responses. Studies reveal that cultural differences within a cross-cultural learning environment can fragment class groups and thus inhibit promotion of cross-cultural interaction (Dunne, 2009; Turner, 2009). Cultural stereotyping and students' attitudes toward their peers' intercultural effectiveness, and their peers as learners, are points of intercultural inequality that inhibit curriculum internationalisation. Furthermore, a lack international experience among academics is regarded as a key constraint on curriculum internationalisation (Wamboye et al., 2014). Some

other barriers, including a lack of consideration of academics' engagement with teaching in institutional tenure and promotion procedures, also limit the propensity of academic staff to adopt an internationalised curriculum (Andreasen, 2003).

Numerous studies have examined ways of promoting curriculum internationalisation among academic staff (Carroll and Ryan, 2007; Mak and Kennedy, 2012; Niehaus and Williams, 2015; Sawir, 2011). One argument is that employing staff with overseas experience may enhance international students' learning experiences, as these staff are more sensitive to the difficulties experienced by international students (Sawir, 2011). Another argument is that a professional development programme could provide adequate support to academic staff in developing the knowledge, perspectives, and motivation to engage in curriculum transformation (Mak and Kennedy, 2012; Niehaus and Williams, 2015). Leask (2005) proposes a critical reflection approach, in which academics constantly reflect on the influence of their own culture and values on their teaching practices, and pursue active engagement with students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

As for the practice of internationalising the curriculum, most emphasis is devoted to incorporating international elements into course content (Wamboye et al., 2014; Wamboye et al., 2015), and promoting mixed discussion groups to encourage students to explore multicultural perspectives in the classroom (Bell, 2004). However, there is little emphasis on promoting student mobility experiences, such as work placements, study abroad and internships, despite it being generally believed that student mobility can improve students' career prospects (King et al., 2010; Knouse and Fontenot, 2008).

On consideration of the importance of curriculum internationalisation and the challenges in its implementation, this paper will use the threefold typology proposed by Edwards et al. (2003) as a framework to explore and compare the practice of internationalising the curriculum in a Scottish and an Australian university. This typology is chosen because it has a focus on curriculum designers (academic staff) and students, and it provides higher education institutions with practical approaches to internationalise the curricula (Caruana and Hanstock, 2003). According to Edwards et al. (2003), international awareness, international competence, and international expertise are the keys to curriculum internationalisation. International awareness aims to foster an understanding that knowledge does not emerge from a single cultural base and requires that teaching be integrated with international examples, cases and perspectives. International competence refers to building cross-cultural

interaction into students' university experiences. The aim of developing international expertise is to prepare students to become global professionals through promoting student mobility experiences, such as study abroad and international work placements. Using this typology of curriculum internationalisation as a framework, this research explores how Chinese postgraduate taught students in Scottish and Australian universities are supported to develop international awareness, international competence, and international expertise. It will reveal whether the practice and strategies of curriculum internationalisation vary with disciplines and countries.

This paper also considers that the internationalised curriculum can be an arena of competing social orders wherein certain discourses dominate, in active denial and suppression of any hybridity, in the midst of multiple actors from different cultural backgrounds (Doherty and Singh, 2005). For instance, international students may become disengaged with a Western curriculum which does not consider learning styles from other cultures as appropriate. This suggests that a power differential could be inherent in the curriculum design. According to Barnett and Duval (2005), power could take four different forms: compulsory, institutional, productive and structural. In compulsory power, one actor directly controls another. In institutional power, actors indirectly control others by setting rules. In productive power, domination is achieved by capturing people's thought processes through language, whereas in structural power, actors control others by virtue of their membership of social groups. In these terms, curriculum internationalisation can be understood as a process embedded with institutional, productive and structural power. For example, institutional power can be entrenched through a "hierarchical" form of curriculum design in which Western ideologies dominate and form the basis of the curriculum. There is a need to increase international students' involvement with curriculum internationalisation, in order to empower them to meet different academic and cultural expectations. This study will examine whether power is embedded in the process of curriculum internationalisation in Scottish and Australian universities, and how that affects the experience of Chinese postgraduate taught students, from the perspectives of both academic staff and students.

Methodology

The research uses a case study approach (Yin, 2009), focusing on the cohort of Chinese postgraduate taught students and academic staff predominantly in business and engineering

studies, in one Scottish and one Australian university. The authors are fully aware of the limitations of case study (Willis, 2014), and do not intend to generalise the findings to all Scottish and Australian universities, but provide insights into how curriculum internationalisation affects student learning experiences.

Both universities are well established, with years of internationalisation experience, and they have a large number of Chinese postgraduate taught students. Business and engineering studies are chosen for study because these are popular subject areas among Chinese students (HEFCE, 2014). Study of these two universities offers in-depth insights into whether the practices and strategies of curriculum internationalisation vary across two disciplines and two countries, as well as comparing the perceived impact of curriculum internationalisation on student learning experiences in these two chosen universities.

Data collection and analysis

A two-stage data collection process is employed in this project. Stage one involves ten focus groups with 40 Chinese postgraduate taught students and 21 semi-structured interviews with academics, programme directors and university managers from the two case study universities. These interviewees are selected from business and engineering studies. A theoretical sampling approach (Punch, 2013) is used to select these interviewees. Gender, seniority and cultural background are considered.

The focus groups and interviews are tape recorded and professionally transcribed. The data are used to explore the existing practices and strategies of curriculum internationalisation, and to understand how these have affected Chinese student learning experiences from the perspectives of academics and students. Effective strategies and practices of curriculum internationalisation are identified and analysed, as are challenges encountered. Content analysis (McKee, 2001) employing NVivo software is used for data analysis.

In the second stage, informed by the findings of the focus groups and interviews, a questionnaire is designed and circulated to Chinese postgraduate taught students in business studies and engineering in the two selected universities, in order to further explore their understanding and experience of curriculum internationalisation. 325 students complete the survey. This survey provides a broad comparative view of Chinese students' experiences with curriculum internationalisation at a Scottish and an Australian university.

Research findings

The majority of academic interviewees in the Scottish and Australian universities share a common understanding of curriculum internationalisation, asserting that it mainly involves teaching case studies that cover an international context, and being responsive to cultural differences in the student cohort. They believe that the use of case studies will equip students with the relevant knowledge and skills to develop their careers internationally. This view is consistent with the findings of Wamboye et al. (2015) that curriculum internationalisation is largely restricted to the course content.

In terms of the extent of international elements in the curriculum, there is a difference between business studies and engineering courses in both countries. Engineering is seen as having a universal language and being rather 'standard' across cultures, but business studies theories and practices are perceived to vary with countries. Academic interviewees feel the need to provide international examples in business studies, but not in the engineering syllabus. For example, an engineering lecturer states that there is no need to introduce international elements in his teaching:

> Academic Daniel*: Engineering is a universal subject. If you taught Civil Engineering in China or anywhere else in the world, it will largely be the same type of material as you will get here. We do inevitably concentrate in design classes on British/European codes of practice.*

This suggests that when the nature of the subject is perceived as universal, academics may not feel the need to add international elements into teaching and learning. This finding is similar to the argument of Sawir (2011) in that disciplinary nature affects how staff respond towards curriculum internationalisation. This raises three pertinent issues. Firstly, how to encourage academics, especially those in the hard sciences, to internationalise their discipline remains an issue to be explored; secondly, if the curriculum content is mainly based on Western perspectives, this does not provide students with opportunities to explore issues from other cultures. The third issue relates to the power dynamics (mainly structural and productive) that are inherent in such a curriculum. International students may become confused by the use of "British/European codes of practice" which they have never been exposed to, unlike their peers, who are local students. This, as a result, can structure the class in favour of the home students.

Student mobility

Edwards et al. (2003) argue that student mobility, including internships, visiting industry and international exchanges, is argued by to be a key feature of curriculum internationalisation. This study reveals that there is a clear lack of opportunities for Chinese students to obtain mobility experience during their Masters' studies in both Australian and Scottish universities, which raises a question of whether Chinese students are actually getting what they pay for by studying abroad. The perceived main barriers from the universities' perspective are administrative issues, including recruiting students, providing accommodation for them, and converting their grades once they return. For example, an academic interviewee describes these issues below:

> Academic John: *It would complicate life an awful lot, because actually the Erasmus, those kinds of schemes … they're very troublesome if I'm really being honest. They involve lots of different issues like the students being settled abroad, arranging for the students to go or recruiting the students, finding places for the students that the students are happy with. Helping them to get settled, helping to make sure that their class choices are okay, converting the marks that they have back into marks that XX University is going to recognise at degree classification and so on.*

Language is considered to be another barrier that limits the exchange programmes mainly to English-speaking countries. For example, academic interviewees from the Scottish university find it disappointing that the language has restricted their students' mobility to EU countries.

> Academic Rachel: *We have very often students if they're doing a year abroad for instance they'll be looking to the States or Canada or Australia. There has been a decrease, a big decrease in exchanges to the European Union for the same reasons; the language problem. (…) We've actually had to cancel quite a few Erasmus agreements because we've not had any students going to these places.*

Perhaps due to these challenges, academics and university manager interviewees do not consider the lack of mobility opportunities to be a problem. They rationalise it by explaining that the students already have international experience because they come from different cultures. Another justification is that students will have to adapt to a new culture and new education system again, which might be too difficult for them. For example, one academic interviewee suggests that promoting Chinese student mobility might not be "a wise choice" considering that they would have to go through a new process of adaptation in a short period of time.

> Academic Adam*: For the Chinese students in particular, we wouldn't have presented them with that option. … If they had had some difficulties and some challenges, deciding for their project to go and take a project in Spain or in Italy or in France or as many of our exchange arrangements are with other European countries where it is a different language, a slightly different culture again. It would probably just be making life even more difficult for them.*

In contrast, Chinese Master's students express a strong desire for mobility opportunities. They believe that this will give them good international experience, especially when they are spending most of their time learning in an environment where most of their classmates are Chinese. For example, one business studies student from the Scottish university points out that the large proportion of Chinese students in her class does not give her a truly international experience:

> Student Emily: *There are so many Chinese people in our class. So we don't have many opportunities to communicate with some other foreign students.*

Chinese students' desire for international learning opportunities also appears strongly in the survey. 65% of student respondents indicate that they do not have sufficient opportunities to participate in international learning experiences, such as internships, exchange programmes and visiting industry. There is no significant difference between Australian and Scottish universities with regard to this experience. The difference in views between students and academic interviewees suggests that they hold very different expectations in relation to gaining mobility experience. Although the large number of international students might make it too difficult for the university to develop this practice, students feel they would benefit from the mobility experience, so a solution is called for. It is worth noting that academic staff in both universities tend to relate student mobility mainly to study abroad and exchange programmes. There is a need for them to look at mobility beyond these programmes, as internships and visiting industry can also provide students with international learning experiences.

Skills and knowledge for the profession

According to Chinese student interviewees from both universities, the most important skills that they have developed in their Masters studies are leadership, communication, negotiation, problem solving, critical thinking, independence, English language skills, time management, cultural intelligence, teamwork and writing skills. However, the majority do not find their

Master's education equips them well for their future jobs in China, because the subject as a whole is too focused on European, British, American or Australian perspectives, even when academics add international case studies into their teaching. Chinese students perceive the focus on Western perspectives as non-beneficial to their future careers, as most of them plan to return to China after graduation. For example, one student interviewee plans to learn about Chinese practice, in order to apply for jobs in China:

> BES1.1: ... *Maybe when I go back to China in September I need to learn more about Chinese institution, like Chinese factory or companies, their systems, management systems, instead of this.*

This contrasts with the view of academic interviewees that Western perspectives are important because they have long been dominating many academic fields, and have imposed codes of practice that are now adopted all over the world. This scenario suggests that academics and Chinese students hold different understandings of what students need in order to pursue an international career, and that having a mainly Western perspective during their studies does not make Chinese students feel readily employable. This is an example of a situation where productive power generates tension between academics and Chinese students. In such a situation, it would be helpful for universities and academics to understand international students' expectations regarding employability, and then blend this with Western perspectives, rather than trying to define and impose what international students need to become employable.

In addition, over half of the Chinese student interviewees state that their Master's education does not offer value for money. Two students state that they could learn the programme on their own.

> Male student 7: *If I tell the truth, I think the knowledge we have learnt here is not worth the money we paid. If we get the PPTs, we can learn at home because that is our process of learning here.*

However, academic and university manager interviewees hold different views about the value of Master's study. One of their views is that studying abroad can represent a real advantage for Chinese students who wish to return to China upon graduation, not just in terms of the degree, but also in terms of the experience and the skills that students develop. For example, a university manager interviewee emphasises that the international elements to their learning will benefit Chinese students in their future careers.

> Manager 1: *I think the international experience must add something to their CV that they value and must make them attractive to some employers. (…) As regards what I expect happens after the degree, I'm not really sure. But I guess we do expect that they take something of the approach to learning that they find here and carry that with them in the rest of their working lives.*

Interaction with peers

Chinese students' interaction with peers from different cultures is raised as an area to work on by both Scottish and Australian universities in this study. Chinese student interviewees interpret the main challenges as cultural differences, language barriers, and sometimes a feeling of being treated differently. Cultural differences drive Chinese students to adopt different communication styles, all of which require cultural intelligence. One of the Chinese students from business studies gives an example of their understanding of "discussion" and "argumentation" during teamwork to illustrate that cultural differences could significantly affect ways of communicating

> Student Frank: *Like, for example, when we were discussing some topics related to our courses, especially when we (Chinese students) had arguments it seems to be quite conservative and quite implicit, but my colleagues (home students) tend to be quite explicit in contrast. It takes really quite a long time to get used to this kind of discussion and argumentation. Well it's okay but we have arguments. In China we would like to address it in a quite peaceful way.*

Language barriers are perceived to be another key challenge that inhibits the quality of interaction between Chinese students and their peers from other cultures:

> Student George: *Just like I said, it's always the language and the culture. When they talk I don't understand they are talking. …*

The language barrier is also evidenced in the challenges Chinese students experience in making friends outside the campus in Scotland and Australia, despite 75% of student respondents in the survey having an IELTS score of 6.5 or above (Figure 1). A score of 6.5 is the minimum language requirement for international students in Scotland. Chinese students feel discouraged by the language barrier, because they perceive passing the test as official proof of their English language competence. This suggests that universities need to make international students realise that passing the language test does not guarantee that they will not experience language barriers when studying abroad.

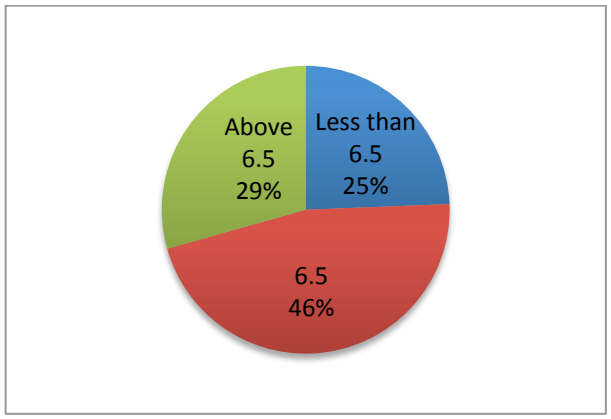

Figure 1: Student respondents IELTS score

About half of the Chinese student interviewees state that they have been discriminated against in some cases in both Scottish and Australian universities. The perceived discrimination refers to some students from non-Chinese cultures refusing to communicate with Chinese students, downgrading Chinese students' contributions to group work and evaluating Chinese students' performance solely on the basis of their cultural background. For example, one female Chinese student in the Scottish university shares her experience that some local students treat Chinese students differently:

> Student 16*: For my group there were just 2 locals and 3 Chinese and others from other countries. One of my Chinese students heard one of the locals say they don't like us and they don't even want to talk to us. After the coursework we have to do the peer review to score everyone's performance. One of the locals said he wanted to give us zero. ...*

It is worth noting that the challenges that Chinese students experience mainly come from group work. This suggests that although group work aims to promote intercultural exchange and understanding, it may become a source of discomfort, if there is a lack of intercultural awareness among the student cohort. Academics need to ensure that the group setting is not structured in a way that disadvantages Chinese students, because once the structured power is inherent, students begin to think and act in terms of 'them' and 'us' (Tian and Lowe, 2009).

Chinese students from the Scottish university report that they find local students are not interested in Chinese culture, which is another factor that imposes a certain distance between them. This corroborates the finding by Leask and Carrol (2011) that home students can sometimes regard time spent getting to know others' cultural backgrounds or past experiences as time wasted. However, Chinese student interviewees who have international roommates, and who join sports activities, generally find it easier to socialise and make friends with

people from different cultures. For example, a student shares his experience of making friends in the gym.

> BS3.2: *I went to a gym and because we shared the same interests I now play basketball, so we can communicate with each other and maybe after the game we can also be friend and in the gym we can help each other if someone needs help, we can go to help them. I think they also wanted to learn something about us.*

This suggests that sharing a common interest seems to create a safe environment for Chinese students to meet new people and sometimes even expand the interactions by joining activities together.

Discussion

This study shows that any weakness in the alignment of the practices to the three levels of curriculum internationalisation proposed by Edwards et al (2003) has a negative impact on Chinese students' learning experiences in a Scottish and an Australian university. In other words, teaching dominated by western cases and perspectives does not encourage international awareness but creates productive power, which generates tension between academics and Chinese students. International competence is weak because of poor cross-cultural interaction inside and outside the classroom; and the lack of mobility decreases opportunities to develop international expertise.

One implication of these findings is that cultural differences in the work sphere continue to exist between countries, especially between Eastern and Western societies, so there is a strong need for curriculum internationalisation, in order to prepare students to become competitive in international settings. The other implication is that when academics' engagement with curriculum internationalisation is mainly confined to case studies and Western codes of practice in their teaching, this puts Chinese students in a disadvantaged position. One reason is that when the content of the curriculum is based on Western perspectives and devoid of consideration of other cultural perspectives, this makes it difficult for Chinese students to understand some key Western concepts, for example, critical thinking. The other reason is that job security is one of the main motivations for Chinese students to study abroad (Mikal et al. 2015), and most need to return to China after graduation. Therefore, Chinese students need to not only understand Western practices, but also develop practical experience and skills that will help them in their future jobs in China.

Moreover, Chinese students in both Scotland and Australia believe that mobility is central to their studies and express a desire for relevant opportunities, whilst academics and university managers think otherwise. These different understandings explain why there is a lack of mobility experiences for Chinese students during their study, which reduces the opportunities for Chinese students to gain work experience in the UK and Australia. In this case, Chinese students who choose to stay in China for their postgraduate studies might find it easier to enter the job market in China, because they could more easily gain work experience through internships and placements than those studying in the UK and Australia.

In considering that most Chinese students would prefer to have more mobility opportunities to gain work experience, an initial suggestion is to increase the duration of the Master's programme. However, not all students would agree with this solution, because a key reason for them to study in the UK or Australia is that the Master's programme is only one year's duration (Bamber, 2014). Another suggestion is short mobility programmes, which would allow students to achieve their goals of gaining work experience during their Master's study. However, challenges still remain, including whether universities would wish to undertake a massive amount of administrative work to prepare and to make the mobility programmes work well. In addition, there are challenges relating to return on investment and visa restrictions stopping companies from accepting international students for mobility opportunities such as internships. This suggests that the issue of mobility for postgraduate taught students will need to be addressed holistically, involving universities, the government and industry.

Cultural diversity in the classroom is another area for improvement by the Australian and Scottish universities. Chinese students, especially in business studies, complain that their classes are too big and the majority of students are Chinese, sometimes as many as 95%. Chinese students do not find this study environment international, as they have little opportunity to work with peers from other cultures. This echoes the view that having Chinese students dominate lecture theatres and tutorials can be detrimental to their academic performance (Bamber, 2014; Tian and Lowe, 2009). Some academic interviewees acknowledge this problem and make efforts to group students of different nationalities together, so that they can share their international experiences and learn from one another.

However, this is not a perfect solution, because students from other backgrounds represent the minority, and on many occasions Chinese students are left to work with Chinese peers in

the classroom. Such homogenous grouping indicates structured power and disadvantages Chinese students. It isolates students and denies them the opportunity to learn from and interact with other cultures (Glass, 2002). This also undermines the essence of the internationalised curriculum as an avenue for cross-cultural interaction, as it entrenches a feeling of 'otherisation' that leads to social and cultural withdrawal into national groups and a heightened sense of national identity (Tian and Lowe, 2009). Perhaps it is time for the university to support home students to increase their intercultural awareness, and to increase the quality of student learning through developing programmes which are attractive to not only Chinese students, but also students from non-Chinese backgrounds. In this way, the university could achieve a more balanced number of nationalities in the student cohort, and enhance the learning experience for all students. This is a timely call considering that study abroad is becoming a popular option for students from fast-growing African and Latin American economies where scholarship programmes are on the increase (ICEF Monitor, 2015).

It is worth noting that although universities have made efforts to internationalise the curriculum, the impact is limited due to piecemeal approaches in both Scottish and Australian universities. Universities need to keep to their promise to develop students with global perspectives and cross-cultural capabilities through fully internationalising the curriculum. One paramount step is to increase the awareness among academics that a power differential is inherent in the curriculum design and development. For example, when the content of the curriculum is mainly based on Western perspectives, the learning environment can be structured in a manner that disadvantages international students. It is important to develop a framework that integrates power variables into curriculum development as a means to enhance the quality of education. Some other approaches include rewarding good practice in curriculum internationalisation, and promoting relevant training courses for academics.

Another step to be taken by universities is to encourage staff, especially in hard science, to include international perspectives in their curriculum, because the nature of the discipline could influence how academics approach and understand the curriculum. Bourn and Neal (2008) identified the crowded curriculum, funding constraints and a lack of relevant experience and knowledge among academics as notable constraints to internationalising the hard science (Engineering) curriculum. Universities need to increase staff engagement with curriculum internationalisation, through encouraging a focus on the development of students

in curriculum reform (Clifford, 2009), and considering internationalisation as a criterion for academic promotion and career progression.

Apart from the initiatives from the universities, Chinese students need to think carefully about the challenges involved in studying abroad, and not simply about obtaining a degree in a short period of time. Based on the experiences of Chinese students in this study, one recommendation is that Chinese students need to interact more with local people to better understand different cultures and to improve their English skills. Cultural differences could make it difficult for Chinese students to develop friendships with people from different cultures, as they often do not enjoy the same social activities. Students from similar cultural backgrounds tend to form their own closed groups of friends. Perhaps taking up sports and joining clubs and societies could be a good start for Chinese students to meet peers with common interests. Besides, Chinese students should be supported to understand that being open to different cultures is central to developing intercultural competence (Edwards et al., 2003).

Conclusion

This research reveals that curriculum internationalisation is an area to be improved in both universities in Scotland and Australia, and that the lack of international and intercultural elements in the curriculum has made Chinese students doubt the value of Master's programmes. The findings of this study offer a starting point to understand the practice and strategies of curriculum internationalisation across business and engineering studies in a Scottish and an Australian university, and to consider how to improve the learning experience of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Further empirical research with different types of universities is needed in order to better understand how the practices and strategies of curriculum internationalisation differ between universities and education systems. So far, we have seen that there is a divide between engineering and management courses. However, future research could investigate new domains (e.g. arts or politics, social and medical science) where it might be more difficult to infer the degree of curriculum internationalisation. Moreover, it would be helpful to conduct a longitudinal study on Chinese graduates from Western universities to follow their progress towards employment, either in China or internationally. Understanding their endeavours

could put universities in a better position to offer practical advice to current students, or focus on the aspects that are the most relevant in the field of studies, including not only theoretical knowledge, but also skills development.

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