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Changing Times: Refreshing the Learning & Teaching Strategy

Theme: An international university

13:25 - 14:05

Internationalisation of university curricula: a case study

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“I think the Learning & Teaching Strategy should ensure all students develop language and intercultural competence to enhance their global graduate skills and their socio-economic mobility.”

Abstract:

Internationalisation is an integral part of the University of Hull strategic plan and is increasingly part of academic discourse. However, embedding internationalisation policies into the academic practices of an institution requires a strategic, staged approach which permeates processes and structures but, above all, shapes the way in which the curriculum is conceptualised, designed and delivered.

Led by Dr Marina Mozzon-McPherson (Modern Languages) in collaboration with colleagues in Biology, Physics, Chemistry and Sports Science, this pilot project has tried to map students and staff perceptions in relation to internationalisation, and address a gap in the literature on internationalisation of the curriculum (Caruana 2004).

Recent CBI¹ data emphasizes the reliance of UK trade on exports to countries where English is not the first language and the need for active knowledge of one, or more, foreign languages and competence in intercultural skills as key to future graduate profiles in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects.

This project funded through the University Innovations in Student Learning scheme, involved a survey of students in four science subjects and in different years of study and looked at previous language learning, experience, and perception of how international is their discipline (e.g. in relation to job opportunities, career profiles and requirements). It tested knowledge of existing opportunities within the university (e.g. the free elective Passport Programme) and examined how supported and/or encouraged students feel in taking advantage of these opportunities. Finally we proposed a range of flexible models which could be considered for the development of an integrated module on language and intercultural competence for scientists.

The preliminary findings are very encouraging. Students are positive towards the opportunity to add an additional set of skills which can enhance their degrees and potential for mobility. The great majority aspire to work in multinational companies or abroad. Amongst the students who were less inclined to work abroad anxiety about language use, lack of sufficient language competence and resultant lack of confidence, were revealed as major barriers.

A survey of staff attitudes towards internationalisation is being conducted and will conclude this aspect of the research investigation.

¹ http://www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/skills_report0408.pdf: CBI Report Taking Stock: CBI education and skills survey 2008 :¹
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