

Internationalisation at Home

(Domestic Irish students)

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Background

- **Study abroad is currently the best way for students to develop intercultural competence**
- **The number of domestic students studying abroad is small**
- **Internationalisation at home is seen to be an alternative**
- **Limited studies have been done on the effectiveness of multicultural classes in developing intercultural competence**



The Study: Internationalisation of Irish Higher Education

- **Funded by Irish Research Council**
- **Two-year project**
- **First national study on Internationalisation of Higher Education in Ireland**



Purpose

- **To assess the current context by exploring the mechanisms in place for the promotion, development and provision for quality assurance systems in relation to internationalisation at both sectoral and institutional levels.**
- **To inform policy development in this area of Irish higher education.**



Research Questions

- How can higher education institutions be supported to adopt a holistic approach to internationalization, and how can their success in so doing be evaluated?
- What strategies can be adopted to ensure that the internationalisation of higher education is complementary to the strategic development of the Irish higher education landscape (as a coherent system of diverse institutions with distinct missions), balancing responsiveness to local, regional and national needs with international competitiveness?
- How can the internationalisation of curricula and of the student-experience be supported?



Mixed Method

- **Large-scale quantitative survey of HEIs**
- **In-depth interviews**
- **Advisory board**



Participants

- **Irish HEIs**
- **Admin & academic staff**
- **Irish & international students**
- **Policy makers**



Irish graduate's perspective on working with international students

"[...] I find that, in the university, we will take [Uni] for example, you can have one person here, they might have their boyfriends or girlfriends, their family, they have their network there and their security blanket, and they are very happy that way. And to meet an international person, if there is language barrier, cultural differences, it requires sometimes patience maybe and you need an genuine interest."

(Clarke, Yang et al. 2018)



Irish students' concerns:

"R: You are always gonna get students who don't want to work with international students cuz they fear their marks would be affected.

[...]

B: It's that fear of the unknown there. And that's the problem.

D: People might think they have to do extra work in (B&C: yeah) working with international students, they might not want to have to do that. [...]

(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)



Irish students' concerns:

L: What made them worried about that?

R: To be honest I think it's just lack of information about what exactly you know lecturers they tend to mark based on someone's ability and how hard they tried, not necessarily I don't think people would understand lecturers won't compare. Lecturers tend not to compare because lecturers tend to understand someone might be good at presenting someone might be good at research part. I don't think students get that. I think they assume that if I enter a group with international students, I might be reflected negatively because we are not a fantastic presentation group for example.

[...]



(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)

Irish students' concerns:

R: To be honest maybe at first you have that fear you don't want to do something that you think it's gonna be risky by being in a group with international students cuz you don't know how it's gonna turn out. But honestly I'm like four days away from graduating so I know what it's like. So slowly disappears because you've seen the ability of international students. You are thinking ok you know I'm just wrong about these people. They improve drastically themselves because you can't understand like you might have someone from Malaysia and China and they landed the country two weeks before they started they need like a couple of months to adjust (All: Yeah) and people don't think that.

(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)



Language competency is not equivalent to Academic ability

T: Challenging, yeah absolutely yeah. There is language barrier.

K: yeah. I was gonna say that like I was working with a fella like who's from Malaysia originally I believe. His English wasn't great I mean something that would take 5 minutes for somebody else will take 10 minutes for them. But at the same time he is a good worker as well. So it's one of those thing you do have sort of overcome but it is worth anyway to make it effort.

(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)



Irish students' views: Learn from each other

[...]

P: With students from America and Australia, they had a different way of thinking, different way of presenting, it was very good to learn from them. We all learn from each other.

(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)



Irish graduates' views: Broadens mind

“[...] but I feel that the people who have their security blanket here are at a loss because I feel meeting international students broadens your mind. From people who have patience with me in France and Germany learning French and German, I have more patience with people now if they are struggling with English. [...] I know if a French person doesn't not pronounce their Hs, I know ok it's not necessarily a bad student it's literarily, they haven't had so much exposure to English, and they need to practice and pronounce their Hs, and it can be difficult.



(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)

Irish students' views: Different ways of thinking

L: Have you worked with students who are from outside of Ireland?

G: Oh yeah all the time yeah.

L: how's that experience so far?

G: It can be challenging I suppose at the beginning it's daunting but I suppose if you wanna learn, you sort of jump at the opportunity. Because the great thing of working with international students is that they think differently.

(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)



Irish students' views: Different ways of thinking

L: They think differently?

G: yeah, you sort of get a second approach to thinking. Cuz it's good to have groups with people like maybe Asian, middle East, Africa. Cuz they do have certain approach to thinking that is often different than westernise practice. And I think you all the better for that, the project shows a much more in-depth analysis. Cuz you may not think something that they did.

(Clarke, Yang etc al. 2018)



Irish Lecturer's observations of multicultural classes

“[Different] learning needs of different learner group. Teaching and learning systems are different to what many international students are used to. The large amount of team or project work is challenging for [many] students. There is a tendency to remain in study-groups with fellow-country students on- and off-campus.”



(Clarke and Yang et al. 2018)

Key Findings

- Internationalisation at home does happen and can develop intercultural competence in domestic students
- Requires patience, interest and understanding from domestic students and academics
- Domestic students who have studied abroad benefit most from multicultural classrooms
- Support should be given to both students and academics to help them develop intercultural skills

