

The international curriculum: developing a quantitative overview of the literature for practitioners and teachers in art and design disciplines

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Abstract

Although research on internationalisation in higher education has dramatically expanded over the last two decades, the literature examining how internationalisation has manifested in creative arts teaching has been slower to emerge and remains under-populated. This study aims to provide a quantitative and taxonomical overview of the research developments between 1999 and 2019 on internationalisation in art, design and cognate creative and performance disciplines. This initial paper describes and critically discusses an explorative, systematic literature screening, encompassing over 16,000 scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals, books and grey sources during that period and considers strengths and weaknesses in the methodology adopted for collecting, screening, coding, and analysing the gathered data.

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About the authors

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1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of internationalised educational provision in the UK and other Western countries has inevitably resulted in the increased development of policies, programmes and infrastructure to support internationalised learning at institutional, local, national, and global levels (Yemini and Sagle, 2016) and concomitantly attracted the attention of researchers and scholars (de Wit, 2011; Knight, 2013). Although the scholarly literature on internationalisation is undoubtedly getting larger (for example, Yemini and Sagle's 2016 study surveyed around

7,000 peer-reviewed papers published between 1989 and 2014), it is much less clear how much of that literature is either concerned with, or directed towards, practice and practitioners in the disciplines, and specifically in arts and creative subjects.

This study builds on the previous work undertaken by Yemini and Sagie (2016) to offer an exploratory but systematic screening of the academic research published in the two decades between 1999 and 2019 that focuses on internationalisation of higher education as it is experienced by students, teachers, and policy-makers in art and creative disciplines. This quantitative paper is the first of three planned outcomes from a project supported by the Research Development Fund at The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and conducted as part of GSA's commitment to ELIA, a globally connected European network that provides a dynamic platform for professional exchange and development in higher arts education¹. The other outcomes comprise a qualitative critical review of the literature and an annotated bibliography.

The initial paper offers a discussion of exploratory and systematic screening methods and analysis of academic research published in the field of internationalisation in higher education between the years 1999 and 2019. Relevant publications (according to the defined scope described below) were screened and categorised, and articles in one disciplinary area were identified and categorised in terms of disciplinary research trends and directions as an exemplar for the conduct of subsequent work. This article is structured as follows: firstly, a brief introduction to the context of the work; secondly, the research methodology, findings and discussion; and finally, practical and theoretical implications are suggested in the conclusion.

2. Context of the work

The context described above by (amongst others) De Wit (2011) and Knight (2013) positions internationalisation as a largely macro-level phenomenon that manifests in policy and

¹ <https://www.elia-artschools.org/home>

activities (and in the literature) at national level or as institutional policy, where it is often integrated into fiscal planning strategies and into recruitment activities. Despite attempts to de-couple internationalisation from economic drivers and to present it instead (as Jane Knight suggests) as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, and service), and delivery of higher education” (Knight, 2004 pg. 26), rather less of the extant literature seems to focus on the experience of students and teachers at the ‘coalface’ of learning in the classroom, studio, or workshop. Indeed, Clifford’s (2009, pg.133) observation that “little attention has been paid to what [internationalisation] means for curriculum development” still rings true.

Where scholarly-directed discipline-level work has been undertaken (one notable example being the very many case studies and other scholarly work published by Betty Leask and her colleagues), inevitably it spans a range of disciplines and the teacher/practitioner in arts and creative disciplines might struggle to find material either directly or contextually relevant to her practice. For arts and creative disciplines this deficit may be compounded by the specialist nature of learning and teaching in these subject areas, and because of the decline of stand-alone creative institutions where the particularities of disciplinary teaching are foregrounded in institutional policy. (For example, my own institution, The Glasgow School of Art, is one of only two independent higher education creative arts providers in Scotland, the other being The Royal Conservatoire which focuses on performance disciplines.)

Why is this important? Firstly, seminal work by Becher and Trowler (2001, pg. 194) shows that the differences in the disciplines “go to the heart of teaching, research and student-faculty relationships”. It is through the experiences, assumptions, and cultures of our academic disciplines that we understand our job roles and the ways in which we help students to develop the same disciplinary-based skills and worldviews.

Secondly, the particularities of teaching and learning in creative disciplines may in turn foster particular orientations and approaches to internationalisation that enjoy a validity within those communities but make less sense as examples for other disciplines, and vice versa. Sawir (2011) and Clifford (2009) both report a marked difference in engagement in curriculum

thinking between disciplines. They suggest that, for example, staff in science and technology disciplines are generally less open to innovation in internationalised curriculum design than those in humanities and social sciences because they view their subjects as being already inherently international in nature. The reliance on universal symbols in STEM subjects over spoken or written language means they are perceived as requiring no changes in curriculum or associated pedagogy for either home or international students. We might reasonably wonder whether similar orientations might be found amongst teachers and practitioners in creative arts disciplines (for example, music) that are similarly concerned with universal notation, but regardless we can certainly expect disciplinary differences

Betty Leask (e.g. Leask 2001, 2009; Leask and Carroll 2011; Leask and Bridge 2013) has argued for a movement away from content-driven approaches to internationalisation in the disciplines, foregrounding instead a holistic approach that encompasses curriculum design in the form of 'authentic' tasks and assessments "that are structured in such a way that they cannot be successfully completed without a meaningful exchange of cultural information" (Leask 2009, pg. 211); a close and managed relationship between the formal classroom curriculum and the 'informal' curriculum of mentoring schemes and social events that foster lasting and meaningful relationships between home and international students; and a classroom environment that invites, accommodates and nurtures new rationales, alternative paradigms and interpretations (Leask and Bridge, 2013, pg. 97) and provides a more open curriculum space than that offered by traditional Western approaches.

Internationalisation does not exist in a political vacuum and tensions between competing conceptualisations of what an internationalised curriculum is *for* uncover distinct paradigms about the purpose of higher education. Some teachers and students might characterise internationalisation as transmission of knowledge about other nations and cultures in preparation for joining a 'global workforce' and enabling graduates to transact successfully across cultural distance, enabling accurate communication, an understanding of context and the ability to influence others from a different cultural background. For others, the focus is on developing beliefs, attitudes and dispositions that underpin a respectful and equal

discourse between cultures, as well as a tolerance to difference and an empathy to understand alternative perspectives (Sawir, 2013).

More recently, tensions are emerging between an agenda that is largely grounded in identity politics (that is, students and teachers who perceive aspects of curricula as perpetuating outdated assumptions or power structures) and globalising agendas that perceive education as one step towards solving global problems such as climate change (largely by focussing attention away from differences in identity in favour of collective cross-border action).

3. Methodology

The modest aim of this study is to move towards what Tranfield *et al* (2003, pg.220) call “a reliable knowledge base” for practitioners and researchers by identifying current themes and emerging trends in the research literature on internationalisation as it relates to creative arts disciplines. In line with the scope and interests of ELIA’s membership, I have chosen to include a broader range of subjects than those currently taught at my home institution. This widening of the research lens inevitably opens up a wider body of work of use to a larger constituency of teachers and researchers, but it also reflects some similarities in the ways in which creative arts are taught and similarities in the translation of internationalisation concepts and activities in these disciplines, offering potential for useful and relevant comparison.

Core concepts

Rostan and Ceravalo (2015) argue that it is customary to distinguish three main aspects of the internationalisation of the academy: international teaching, international research, and international mobility. Each of these domains includes a plurality of activities. International teaching includes various accomplishments such as integrating an international perspective or content in courses, teaching international students at your home institution, teaching in a language different from the language of instruction currently employed at the home institution, primarily employing English as a second language in teaching, and teaching courses abroad.

Internationalisation of the curriculum is defined here as curricula, pedagogies and assessments that foster: understanding of global perspectives and how these intersect and interact with the local and the personal; inter cultural capabilities in terms of actively engaging with other cultures; and responsible citizenship in terms of addressing differing value systems and subsequent actions, but the materials uncovered demonstrate a ‘broad church’ of themes and approaches, all of which have value to the arts community.

Selection strategy and sample

In line with the experiences of Yemini and Sagie (2016), on whose previous study this work is based, one of the biggest challenges was to develop and refine a comprehensive and accurate search strategy, including identification and selection of databases, key words, and criteria for inclusion of articles in this review.

As in the work published by Yemini and Sagie (2017), all relevant literature in the field was included, and no distinctions or omissions were made based on the type of articles (for example: quantitative, qualitative, narrative, case study, or theoretical). Similarly, no judgements or restrictions were made on the quality of the work. The largest formal online indexing database in relevant disciplines formed the search context: Education Source (EBSCO), which indexes multiple collections of peer-reviewed journals. For the purposes of sample validity, I deselected indexed resources unlikely to offer useful results and selected instead the following list of datasets: British Education Index, Business Source Premier, Chicano Database, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), Education Abstracts (H.W. Wilson), Educational Administration Abstracts, ERIC, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts, Professional Development Collection, RILM Abstracts of Music Literature, SocINDEX , Teacher Reference Center, MLA Directory of Periodicals, and MLA International Bibliography.

Secondly, the selection of key words and Boolean relationships is needed to create additional domain parameters. Because the aim of the work is to show the current scope and extent of research in a particular domain of disciplines, each instance of the search for generic key

words associated with internationalisation in line with Yemini and Sagie's (2017) approach was also qualified with terminology referring to the higher education context, and to variant subject areas. As Yemini and Sagie (2017) identified, the academic discourse on internationalisation is complex and fragmented, involving several under-defined and sometimes conflicting terms and like them I chose to search only English-language resources and only to use the terms "internationalisation" and "globalisation", using both the English and American variant spellings in concert with terms and words describing higher education (higher education, college, colleges, university, and universities).

For the purposes of this study, a third set of qualifiers was needed to identify discipline-specific resources. Various commentators have provided varying suggestions on what activities to include under the umbrella term 'creative industries' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Howkins, 2001) and in fact there is significant overlap and differences in context and scope when (for example) government agencies adopt catch-all terminologies like 'creative economy', 'creative industries' or 'cultural industries' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). The 2015 Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) classifications published as part of the UK government's Creative Industries Statistical Bulletin, although widely used as a taxonomy for other studies, includes categories that might not always sit neatly within the scope of the ELIA institutions (for example, advertising and marketing; museums, galleries and libraries; IT software and computer services). However, aspects of these disciplinary areas are certainly taught within my own institution (that offers, for example, degree courses in Curatorial Practice; 3D Modelling; and Games and Virtual Reality).

In the absence of a recognised international taxonomical scheme, I chose therefore to adopt the DCMS creative sectors categories as the framework for my third search term qualifiers. Table 1 (below) shows the initial aggregated sample size from each source and search combination.

| Boolean search terms | Boolean search terms | DCMS category | EBSCO sample |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------|
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Advertising Marketing | 505 3,976 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Architecture | 647 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Crafts | 354 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Product Design Graphic Design Fashion Design | 208 1 8 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Film Television Video Radio Photography | 102 650 764 276 62 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Information Technology Software Computer Services | 2,357 740 205 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Publishing | 2,252 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Museums Galleries Libraries | 140 45 1,607 |
| Internationalisation <i>or</i> Internationalization <i>or</i> Globalisation <i>or</i> Globalization | Higher Education <i>or</i> University <i>or</i> Universities <i>or</i> College <i>or</i> Colleges | Music Performing Arts Visual Arts | 1,094 158 59 |

Table 1: initial search terms and aggregated initial and edited sample sizes

Sample

The initial search yielded an aggregate total of 16,210 theoretical and empirical articles. At this stage, however, the relevance of each of the articles to the subject of internationalisation in higher education and internationalisation in the context of creative disciplines had not yet been checked. Attempts to narrow the search results to achieve better validity within the scope and context of the work using the electronic tools provided by EBSCO (for example, searching only within subject terms provided by the author) proved counter-productive, excluding highly relevant articles whilst including those with low perceived relevance to the project.

Coding and analysis method

The methodology employed in the study combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. After gathering the data in a way that enabled the exploration of findings, a coding system was employed to identify and quantify valid results in the research of internationalisation according to disciplines, countries, and subjects of study. The coding and analysis process was organised around the following central issues: the relevance of the article to the subject of this study (internationalisation in higher education learning and teaching in creative disciplines); the main topic discussed in the article; and the academic discipline (field of study, again if available) in which the article was anchored.

Within the scope of the current work, a systematic manual review of over 16,000 articles was deemed both unrealistic and (after initial scoping) likely to yield low returns on effort in the most populated DCMS category domains of marketing, information technology, and publishing. Instead, an initial exploratory manual coding and categorisation was applied to two core DCMS categories: Visual Arts and Architecture, a total of 706 initial search results.

Each article was coded with four variables: relevance (did it indeed concern internationalisation in higher education?), geographical area that the study was concentrated on (as stated by the authors in the abstract), main theme, and academic discipline (if the study

was related to a specific discipline). Given the large-scale analysis employed in this study, findings were based on a screening and exploration of the articles' abstracts and titles (not full texts).

4. Results and discussion

From these two disciplinary datasets, once publications earlier than 1999 were discounted and manual filters applied to reject resources of low relevancy, the numbers of resources left were surprisingly low. In the case of Visual Arts, an initial set of 59 results was filtered to leave just 12, once resources that were not relevant to learning and teaching activities in higher education were excluded, a validity percentage of 7.08. In Architecture, the sample of 647 initial results yielded only 4 relevant articles, a validity percentage of 0.62.

Further work to manually scan the rest of the 16,210 articles resulted in a relevance yield of just under 300 resources, or about 17 percent of the total. This resource, once fully coded and indexed, certainly represents a valuable starting point for researchers, teachers, and practitioners looking specifically for examples of the intersects between internationalisation in the classroom and the disciplines. However, the small percentage of relevant articles from such a large initial sample size also draws attention to the limitations of systematic literature reviews.

Systematic literature reviews have their origin in the medical field and have been widely adopted in the social sciences, including education (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006; Oplatka and Addi-Racah, 2009; Tranfield et al, 2003). Tranfield and colleagues argue that this method "helps develop a reliable knowledge base by accumulating knowledge from a range of studies" (Tranfield et al, 2003, pg. 220). The results of this study suggest that this assertion is only partly true. We tentatively offer two reasons why this might be the case. The first is situated in the particularity of the disciplines as domains with their own lexicons and normative terminologies and relates back to the work undertaken by Becher and Trowler

(2001). Here, disciplines are characterised by 'tribal' and 'territorial' behaviours that (consciously or not) exclude outsiders through language. The consequences of this tribalistic adoption of local terminologies include the weakening of the 'universal' terms used as search words ('globalisation', 'internationalisation') and instead create local formulations or sub-terminologies that reflect the concerns or interests of a particular community at a particular time. One example of specific current relevance might be the growing interest in 'decolonialisation' as it is expressed through both content and delivery of the curriculum in creative arts subjects.

A second, though related, possibility is that 'tribal' disciplines prefer to publish in cognate journals or grey sources that are less easy to access through large international databases but enjoy high recognition amongst a smaller audience. This may be especially true when colleagues are writing about teaching and learning, rather than publishing research in their own disciplinary field.

This second point leads to another potential barrier to building a comprehensive resource for teachers in higher education in our discipline areas: that is, the material may not be there in the first place. No literature review, systematic or otherwise, can uncover undocumented or unpublished accounts of practice.

5. Conclusion

Further work undertaken as this project progresses is designed to offer the learning and teaching community within the creative disciplines a starting resource within which to access high quality published material related to internationalisation as it relates to the curriculum and classroom practice(s). Within that broad aim, the project also seeks to foster further discussion within the international community represented by ELIA members about the kinds of resources available; about the location of other resources not currently identified by the systematic techniques adopted by the authors in this study; and about what is missing in the published canon as it relates to internationalised practice in learning and teaching in our disciplines and subject areas.

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