INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH STUDENT MOBILITY PROGRAMMES AND THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

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Abstract

This paper assumes that internationalisation of higher education demands a variety of pedagogical approaches to facilitate every student's acquisition of intercultural competencies. Drawing from two existing internationalisation approaches, it is argued that intercultural communication – both as a field of study and a discipline – can also play a key role in this process. Only graduates who possess intercultural communication competence as well asknowledge and such skills as cultural awareness, second language acquisition, and interaction across cultures will be able to live and work more effectively in a diverse and global environment.
Key words: *internationalisation, internationalisation at home, intercultural communication, intercultural communication competence, globalisation, students mobility.*

Introduction

On-going globalisation and active exchanges have produced a considerable change in goals among universities around the world. In today's highly competitive global environment graduates need to know more than the facts in their professional area. Employers, in their turn, expect graduates to have skills such as being able to adapt to new conditions, find information any time they need it and communicate effectively in a range of situations. For universities, that means opening up to partnerships and collaborations with international peers, investing in scholarships, and student mobility and seeking other ways of trust-based cooperation for the purpose of promoting cultural exchange and understanding between people, now known as 'the process of internationalisation.' The relationship between internationalisation of higher education and such concepts as "intercultural competence", and "intercultural learning" is central to this research and wants close consideration.

Besides, this paper addresses intercultural teaching and learning by foregrounding the intercultural dimension and examining existing state of things in this field on the example of Russian and the Netherlands universities and its developmental perspectives. Its purpose is also to provide a deeper understanding and improve knowledge about intercultural communication competence and its development through student mobility programmes and through internationalisation at home.

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1. Literature review

Internationalisation now is one of the central aspects of higher education both in the European Union and in Russia. In the context of education, the term 'internationalisation' became popular at the end of the 1980s. It was mainly defined at the institutional level as "a set of activities" [1]. In the early years internationalisation primarily focused on increasing student mobility and the number of institutional exchange agreements as students and teachers who went to study abroad got the opportunity to acquire knowledge of other cultures [2, 3]. Thus, one of the most supported and well-known efforts of internationalisation primarily was intensification of studying and teaching abroad.

Nowadays, however, these activities are very dependent on funding availability, and due to recent global economic crisis, they have been dramatically underfunded, leaving the opportunity to a very few, specifically to those who have the money to pay for their own expenses or those who are lucky to get some of the available funding [4].

Thus, the definition of internationalisation was updated and now is known as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution", meaning that this dimension has to be part of all the processes carried on in a university. Additionally, this also means, that for a successful internationalisation initiative all members of the university should take part in it and in all their processes [5]. Besides, in the past two decades internationalisation and globalisation have become closely interwoven and there is more discussion on developing intercultural competencies in all students regarding those that are very unlikely to study abroad due to economic reasons.

At the broadest level of discourse, internationalisation now is characterised in a variety of ways. The most common meanings associated with internationalisation are:
– the presence of international students;
– study abroad/international mobility programs;
– inclusivity;
– internationalising the curriculum.

The internationalisation of the curriculum is seen by many educators as a key component of the larger internationalisation process. There is the recognition that internationalisation cannot rely on mobility programs alone, as significant as they are. Even if the number of students going on a student exchange has increased in the 21st century in higher education (despite low funding in some countries), all students are not willing to study or do their work placement abroad. Therefore, in addition to student mobility, internationalisation should be integrated in the studies at the students' home university. Rather, internationalisation must also occur at home and the central location of the effort is the curriculum, the content and process of instruction.

So, in order to help all students acquire intercultural competencies there appeared an alternative that is known as "internationalisation at home". Internationalisation at home refers to all international activity, with the exception of student mobility, through which institutions provide international and intercultural learning opportunities to all students. Examples of these activities include internationalising the curriculum, developing a diverse faculty and student body, and hosting of intercultural events and activities [6]. It is also often mentioned that internationalisation of higher education has moved from being the goal, to a means of achieving and advancing other institutional goals such as producing globally aware and inter-cultural competent graduates [7, 8, 9, 10]

2. Materials and methods

Internationalisation of the curriculum is often discussed in terms of teaching and learning processes. There are five ways in which the internationalisation of teaching and learning is manifested internationally [10]. They are:
– object of study;
– trained communication;
– foreign language teaching and learning;
– inclusivity;
– immersion at a distance.

First, as an 'object of study', the intercultural dimension is something to be, for example, analysed, compared, discussed, appreciated and understood. Tasks, assignments, activities here require students to analyse the cultural construction of knowledge and cross cultural-practices.

The term 'trained communication' is referred to training offered, for example, in 'cross-cultural communication handbooks' and seeks to provide learners with the means to communicate 'across' cultures. The risk of relying on intercultural teaching and learning as 'trained communication' is that, while it provides learners with instruction on how to act with members of another culture, it may still leave learners situated within their own, without the capacity to monitor and manage their actions in response to the expectations of members of the 'other' culture.

Foreign language teaching and learning is usually reduced to the English language proficiency of international students, where the focus of intercultural teaching and learning is concentrated on such areas as language support. In English-speaking countries, the focus on the intercultural as concerned with 'language' can also reflect a view that monolingual English-speaking students should be encouraged to learn a second language [11]. For educators here, teaching a foreign or second language is not simply teaching an object of academic study, but more appropriately teaching a means of communication.

Inclusivity, in its turn, focuses on intercultural teaching and learning as a matter of acknowledging and celebrating differences between students, and people more generally, and of promoting 'diversity' and 'equity'.

Immersion at a distance is the role play or simulation. These learning activities seek to develop students' ability to interact with members of diverse cultures by acting out interactions with them. Cross-cultural role-plays and simulations are quite often the only ways to engage students with international and cross-cultural learning. On-line interactive learning processes should also be mentioned here. They include organising students into diverse or multicultural learning communities, having them work together on projects with an international dimension, and using different synchronic or asynchronic electronic forms of communication (forums, chat rooms, Skype, Viber, etc) to discuss their work amongst themselves, conducting comparative cultural analyses, having students discuss multiple perspectives arising from different cultural contexts, organising small group activities with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and utilising international case studies (where students have to immerse themselves in the different cultural contexts being represented in the case).

3. Research results

Thus, we recognize that internationalisation, in one way or another, is always about intercultural communication [12]. W. Gudykunst and J. Kim conceptualise the phenomenon of intercultural communication as '...a transactional, symbolic process involving the attrib-

ution of meaning between people from different cultures.' [13] Intercultural communication should, therefore, be viewed and analysed as a complex process, not merely as an encounter [12].

Moreover, intercultural communication is by some social scientists seen as an academic discipline – that is to say, one branch of communication studies, anchored in its characteristical ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions. At the same time, intercultural communication is a field of concern for several other academic disciplines (e.g., psychology, social psychology, sociology, education, media studies, cultural anthropology and management). For them, intercultural communication is viewed as an object of study or a problem within the realms of these disciplines. The ideologies discussed above have to varying degrees influenced these disciplines' views on intercultural communication [12].

A further survey of literature reveals that there is no unanimous definition ofintercultural communication. The selection of any given definition is based on the requirements of the situation as well as the educator's personal preference and creativity. We understand intercultural communication simply as situated communication between individuals or groups of different linguistic and cultural origins and believe that for effective communication across cultures communicators are required to have excellent intercultural communicative competence.

Intercultural communication competence is the degree to which communicators effectively adapt their verbal and nonverbal messages to the appropriate cultural context. Intercultural competence also requires behaviours that are appropriate and effective [14].

According to Stier, intercultural competencies can be divided into content-competencies and processual competencies, where content-competencies refer to knowing aspects of both the 'other' and the 'home' culture. Content-competencies predominantly have a one-dimensional or static character and refer to the knowing that-aspects of both the 'other' and the 'home' culture. They include knowledge of history, language, non-verbal behaviour, world-views, 'do's and don'ts', values, norms, habits, customs, taboos, symbols, behavioural patterns, traditions, sexroles etc [12]. Content-competence does not ensure full culture functionality.Processual competencies are about cultural peculiarities, situational conditions and actors involved; they consider the dynamic character of intercultural competence and its interactional context. Such competencies are relative to the cultural peculiarities, situational conditions. This knowing how-aspect of intercultural competence involves intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. Intrapersonal competencies involve cognitive skills, that is to say, placing oneself in the position of the other (perspective-alteration), viewing oneself 'from the outside' (self-reflection), alternate between and acting according to 'insider' and 'outsider' roles (role-taking), coping with problems originating in intercultural encounters (problem-solving) and keeping an open, receptive mind and noticing cultural peculiarities (culture-detection), without valuing them automatically and uncritically (axiological distance). Intrapersonal competencies also pertain to emotional skills, i.e., understanding why feelings occur and their implications it is also about cognitive, emotional and interactive skills, where students can become more aware of one's own interaction style and adequately responding to contextual meanings [15]. Students who have the opportunity to develop their intercultural competences, are able to develop a global awareness and global citizenship; which in return makes them more competitive graduates in the labor market.

Thus, the intercultural communication competence is frequently mentioned as a necessary and desirable quality possessed by graduates. In general terms, this refers to one's ability to interact and communicate effectively with persons from other cultures and in culturally diverse settings.

Intercultural communication education in Russia:

Now, it is not only the European Union that stresses the need for educating a future labour force that possesses adequate intercultural competencies. Intercultural competences are widely accepted as essential for the future professional and personal development of graduate and post-graduate students in Russia as well.

Intercultural communication education in Russia has several goals. Firstly, it should enhance students' understanding of the dynamics of intercultural interactions. It means that by providing a set of theoretical tools, intercultural communication education should assist students in disentangling intercultural dynamics and the consequences for social interaction, grasp the vital role of culture for human communities, and appreciate the inherent problems and potentials of intercultural interplay. Secondly, intercultural communication education should enable them to obtain intercultural competence which in itself is multifaceted and complex, where certain skills probably cannot be obtained via higher education, but must further result from exposure, first-hand experience and reflection.

To build the learners' intercultural competence means providing them with opportunities to analyze problems in their cultural context (cognitive frame-shifting) and apply that knowledge to problem-solving in a culturally relevant manner (behavioral code-shifting). It also means having advanced second language learning options available so that they can gain greater linguistic as well as cultural proficiency.

There are also specific learning outcomes which can be described as:

– Cognitive: Learners gain culture general knowledge regarding cultural identity, cultural adjustment, and intercultural communication. Learners also gain second language skills and culture-specific knowledge;

– Affective: Learners become much more willing to try new cultural behaviors, to adapt to another culture, and to acquire advanced language and culture-specific knowledge;

– Behavioral: Learners demonstrate their skills in cognitive frame-shifting, behavioral code-shifting, and stress management. Learners can make accurate cultural attributions, use their advanced culture learning skills, and study ethical issues from another cultural context.

Thus, it is also important that students, before aiming to acquire intercultural competence, possess communicative competencies in at least two languages. They should be able to function in both mono- and multicultural teams and groups, which refers to cooperative competencies. After completing their education, students should also obtain meta-competencies. More specifically, they should have obtained a frame of critical thinking, i.e., to be able to analyse intercultural encounters, processes culture-influences on the world. At the same time, critical thinking pertains to problems of comparability – to recognise the cultural relativity of reality and the non-transparent and contextual nature of cultural knowledge [12].

To build the learners' intercultural competence, Samara State University of Social Sciences and Education offers a special course to first-year master students. It includes 5 double-classes of lectures, 9 double classes of seminars and a set of tasks for self-study work, based on reading materials. Lectures are given in class and are supported by Power Point presentations. For seminars, students are expected to read the assigned materials in advance and come prepared to participate actively in the discussions. Classroom activities are designed to generate discussions and exchanges of ideas and opinions among the students. In the end of the course students also write a paper (15-20 pages), based on a topic selected by the student and agreed upon by the teacher. This assignment asks students to apply some basic concepts and conceptual framework that they have learned in the course and discuss topics they are interested in. They are also encouraged to conduct short and

easily manageable empirical investigations. Students are traditionally assessed in the end of the term according to their performance: this includes attending the classes regularly, coming to classes on time, coming prepared and participating actively in classroom discussions, and contributing positively to classroom environment [16].

The main topics covered in the course are as follows:
– verbal communication;
– different cultural values in language expressions;
– cultural linguistics;
– laws and principles of communication;
– stereotypes in cross-cultural communication;
– academic communication in different cultures;
– humour as a part of national cultures;
– translation as a type of cross-cultural communication;
– etc.

As a result, by the end of the course, students acquire comprehensive knowledge of cultural differences, but do not gain cross-cultural communication skills, and are not able to apply cross-cultural terms, concepts and theories to real life situations, current events and information learned from the course materials. But only being able to communicate cross-culturally increases the success in international business, enables productive interpersonal contacts and decreases mutual misunderstanding which are all aims of internationalization [16].

Though English-medium courses are of interest to local students and can help promote "internationalisation at home", the course as it exists neither satisfies the conception of internalization at home nor can it be offered to students of other faculties or institutions. To promote the course as a part of intercultural communication education and to bring the course up-to-date, faculty should rethink the course design paradigm, moving from content coverage to the focus on student learning outcomes. It is necessary to do that as internationalisation at home approach requires that faculty members and administrators work collaboratively to design deliberate and meaningful spaces of integration, thereby creating international, intercultural, and global learning experiences for all students. These actions will lead to the settlement of a conflict between the contemporary and the traditional approaches.

Intercultural communication competence development in the Netherlands university:

"Internationalisation" and "globalisation" became key themes also in the Netherlands in the 1990s, both in higher education policy debates and in research on higher education. Higher education policy is still predominantly shaped at a national level; and as such, it still tends not only to reflect but to underscore the specific traditions and circumstances of individual countries [17]. However, a number of different trends, many of which can be grouped together under the general heading of "internationalisation", have begun to challenge the predominance of the nation state as the main determinant of the character of universities and colleges, and of the experiences of their students, their graduates and those who work in them [17].

There is little doubt that the university as we know it – the modern university as a project of the nation state and its cultural identity – finds itself in a complicated and indeed delicate situation at the moment [18]. Universities are institutions that, in all societies, have performed basic functions which result from the particular combination of cultural and ideological, social and economic, educational and scientific roles that have been assigned to them. They are multi-purpose or multi-product institutions which contribute to the generation and transmission of ideology, the selection and formation of elites, the social de-

velopment and educational upgrading of societies, the production and application of knowledge and the training of the highly skilled labour force.

To sum up, it should be said that internationalisation is contributing to, if not leading, a process of rethinking the social, cultural and economic roles of higher education and their configuration in national systems of higher education [19].

According to the research of U. Teichler, "internationalization" is generally defined as increasing cross-border activities amidst persistence of borders, while "globalization" refers to similar activities concurrent to an erosion of borders [20]. Study mobility is viewed as the most visible component in this framework in Europe with ERASMUS as the largest scheme of temporary mobility.

ERASMUS students of the late 1980s and the late 1990s reported solid positive outcomes in terms of improvement of foreign language proficiency, knowledge of the host country and cultural learning. Moreover, half of the students at both points in time believed that their academic progress during the ERASMUS period was higher than during a corresponding period at home, while less than a quarter perceived a lower progress abroad. Recognition of the study achievement abroad slightly increased over that period as a consequence of the introduction of ECTS; in contrast, the percentage of students grew slightly, who believe that their overall study period has been prolonged as a consequence of the study period abroad. Many former ERASMUS students were convinced that study abroad helped them to get initial employment and to get jobs requiring foreign language proficiency, knowledge of other countries and empathy for other cultures and persons [21].

Furthermore, the ERASMUS programme inaugurated in 1987 is widely viewed as a major trigger for a qualitative leap of internationalisation activities. Cooperation and mobility on equal terms turn out to be a creative challenge to reconsider one's own activities in every respect. It also has led to the systematic embedding of international activities into the general activities of higher education institutions: efforts are increasingly made to shape international activities into mainstream activities and to ensure that the mainstream activities are developed in such a way that they serve the international activities. These achievements were reached in a period when special emphasis was placed on student mobility within Europe [22].

Having said that it can be clearly stated that during academic year 2017-2018 at least 122,000 international students study in Dutch higher education. This is the highest number ever recorded. The group of international students consists of all bachelor's and master's students with a non-Dutch secondary education diploma who enrol for a full degree in public higher education, as well as international students who come to the Netherlands for a shorter period – for exchanges, internships, foundation years or independent research. In addition, there are almost 5,000 foreign PhD students in the Netherlands [23].

Moreover, in 2017-2018, 89,947 internationally mobile degree students were enrolled in universities in the Netherlands[1]. This meant a growth of 8,301 students, or 9.3% compared to 2016-2017. This growth took place in a relatively evenly distributed manner throughout the higher education system. (Nuffic (2017), Incoming student mobility in Dutch higher education.) The strongest growth (22.1%) took place in master's programmes at universities of applied sciences (UAS). Overall, 14.8% of all new enrolments for study programmes came from international students. Some 3 in 10 (29.4%) of all new enrolments at research university (RU) master's level were by international students, versus 1 in 4 (26.3%) at UAS master's level. At RU bachelor's level, 1 in 5 (20.0%) new enrolments were by international students, while at UAS bachelor's level this was 1 in 12 (8.4%) [23].

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[1] Universities = universities of applied sciences (UAS, HBO) + research universities (RU, WO).

It should be further mentioned that the study programme departments and universities in the Netherlands opt for English-taught programmes for the following reasons: a) they aim to create an ambitious international classroom with a diverse mix of nationalities, in which students obtain valuable intercultural skills; b) the labour market for many graduate students is increasingly international; c) Dutch students are increasingly enrolling in the English-taught variants of programmes offered in multiple languages; d) scientific, economic and societal problems are becoming more global. Students and graduates assess programmes offered in English just as positively as or even slightly better than programmes offered in Dutch [24].

Higher education in the Netherlands is known for its high quality and its international study environment. With more than 2,100 international study programmes and courses, the Netherlands comprises the largest offer of English-taught programmes in continental Europe. Dutch higher education has a binary system, which means that you can choose between two types of education. The first one is a research-oriented education, offered by research universities. The second one is a higher professional education, offered by universities of applied sciences like Zuyd University of applied Sciences [25].

The Dutch teaching style, which is also quite applicable to the Zuyd University of Applied Sciencies, is interactive and student-centred. It focuses on teamwork, which makes it easy to meet other international students. Creating a balanced international classroom is of major importance to successful internationalisation. Studying in Holland means developing an open mind and increasing your international orientation. A large part of all study programmes is dedicated to writing papers and working in groups to analyse and solve specific problems. Students are provided with an opportunity to get practical work experience through internships or do experiments in laboratories, depending on the field of study [26]. The most typical study patterns include:

– *Teamwork:* Holland has received international praise for its teaching style, which centres on students working together as a team and on self-study and self-discipline. The teacher will act as a facilitator and guide in the learning process.

– *Interaction in class:* Interaction in class is highly appreciated. You are expected to think about the knowledge that is presented to you and develop and express your own opinion. You are free to ask questions and be critical of what lecturers or fellow students say. Use your own creativity to apply your newly-gained knowledge.

– *Respect for all opinions:* The Dutch teaching method is founded on respect for each individual's opinions and convictions. This mindset is not limited to education institutions, it is a national characteristic. It is the foundation for Holland's diverse and plural society [26].

Lastly, a PITSSTOP project at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences will be further elaborated as one of the examples which will display a teamwork teaching style at UAS (Universities of Applied Sciences) in the Netherlands. At the end of this project student will be awarded with 2 ECTS. During the project, students will train many skills that a European Professional needs to possess: they will learn how to organise a project, to collect and value information, to think out-of-the-box and to critique their own ideas. In addition, students will gain experience in working with others; holding well-disciplined meetings, learning to fully make use of your own qualities and those of others. Lastly, the team of six students will work on persuading the jury that their plan is the best one.

All in all, a great deal of information will come during the week that students spend working on this project. In order to obtain a positive result in the end, it is, therefore, requested to show effort and initiative and to create a respectful and cooperative atmosphere for all team members. The student team consists of the international students which means that language skills and the cultural sensitivity, remains among the others, one of the most

important topics of this project. If international students choose to leave the Netherlands after they complete their studies, their network leads to new connections with universities and companies worldwide.

Discussion and conclusion

In effect, what is being discussed here is that internationalised education including intercultural communication competence development is a preparation for participation in a multilingual and multicultural world and that students need to be equipped by their education to function as educated people within the world they will encounter once they have left the university. This means that to be effective users of their disciplinary knowledge, they must also be effective participants in a globalised world and to be able to use and communicate their disciplinary knowledge across linguistic and cultural borders. The educated person is therefore both someone who commands disciplinary knowledge but is also interculturally competent and all education needs to recognise the cultural component of its work.

What is currently lacking in Russian universities' approaches to internationalised teaching is the development of an intercultural dimension in teaching. Such a dimension would involve engagement with and valuing of differences, rather than simply stopping at awareness of such differences. On the other hand, Dutch students enrolling in the English-taught variants of programmes offered in multiple languages obtain valuable intercultural skills through their first-hand experience.

All in all, knowledge and skills such as cultural awareness, second language acquisition, and interaction across cultures will enable students to live and work more effectively in a diverse and global environment no matter in what university they study.

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РОЛЬ СТУДЕНЧЕСКОЙ МОБИЛЬНОСТИ И «ИНТЕРНАЦИОНАЛИЗАЦИИ ДОМА» В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ

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Аннотация

В данной статье, посвященной вопросам интернационализации высшего образования, рассмотрены средства формирования межкультурной компетенции у студентов университетов. Характеризуя существующие подходы к развитию интернационализации высшего образования, авторы утверждают, что межкультурная коммуникация – как учебная дисциплина в одних вузах и постоянно протекающий процесс в других – является важной составляющей интернационализации. Очевидно, что только выпускники, обладающие сформированной межкультурной коммуникативной компетенцией, способны в дальнейшем интегрироваться в европейское образовательное пространство и занять определенную нишу на мировом рынке труда.

Ключевые слова: *интернационализация, интернационализация дома, межкультурная коммуникация, межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, глобализация, студенческая мобильность.*

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