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# PAPER

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*Paper*

# Internationalising curricula: The motives

*Jos Walenkamp*

Globalisation means that today there is an overwhelming need for our higher education institutions to produce internationally and interculturally knowledgeable, competent, and concerned graduates. International competencies, such as proficiency in foreign languages and intercultural skills, are essential if our graduates are to meet the challenges of, and thrive in, a rapidly changing world and an increasingly international and multicultural society and labour market.

## 1 The impacts and consequences of globalisation

The changes humankind is now seeing are unprecedented in speed and impact. People, products, finances and ideas cross the globe ever faster. Means of communication are ubiquitous. The impact of globalisation can be felt in everything we hear, read, see or buy. All members of the global community are affected by the exploitation of shale gas in the USA, a pandemic or a downturn in the Chinese economy. Humankind has grown and become richer.

The world population has trebled in the past 70 years and will increase by another 30% by 2050. That growth will almost exclusively occur in the least developed countries. Never in our history did such large numbers of people belong to the middle class, with a daily income of more than ten dollars a day. Although both the relative and the absolute numbers of the very poor have decreased substantially, almost a billion people are still going to bed hungry, with dire consequences for their physical and intellectual development.

Although the group under the poverty line of $2 a day remains large and vulnerable, the percentage of the poorest has halved in the past 15 years (Millennium Development Goal 1) and will be halved again in the next 15 years, if we have the collective political will. Predictions are that in the coming decade the number of very poor people will decrease sharply (Kenny, 2011), and those in the middle class will outnumber those in poverty. Never have more people been receiving education and healthcare. Never have so few of our fellow men died in war.

The West, Europe, and its offshoots in North America and Australia, have dominated the world for centuries. After the Second World War, the world superpowers were divided into two camps: the West (including Australia and Japan) and the East (the Warsaw Pact countries and China). The other nations belonged to the so-called Tiers Monde, the Third World. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the West was briefly the only superpower, but emerging economies and demographic giants, such as China and India, are rapidly gaining in economic, political and military power and will claim their rightful place on the world stage, just as they have done in the past (Coolsaet, 2011). Nations and political blocks hold each other in a dynamic equilibrium, one that can peacefully contain, because of their interdependence, the costs of war and growing democracy.

With a rapidly growing world population that is living longer than ever, and a rapidly growing middle class, consumption will reach heights never before seen. In the next 30 years food production will need to double, and the demand for energy will rise as fossil fuel resources are depleted and the fear of greenhouse gasses increases. Mineral resources are unevenly distributed over the globe, but are needed by all. China has already severely limited the export of rare-earth metals, and there is a new ‘scramble for Africa’ in search of minerals, fossil fuels and arable land. Potable water will become dangerously scarce in some areas of the world, such as the Middle East. Arable land is limited in some of the most populous countries. Terrorism and international financial crime are growing and are becoming harder to tackle, particularly in the cyber world.

The normal negative feedback mechanisms seen in healthy ecosystems – as the population of foxes rises, more rabbits are eaten, and as the rabbit population decreases, more foxes will starve – do not work for global warming, where a diminishing ice mass will lessen the albedo effect, and the thawing of the permafrost will free increasing amounts of greenhouse gasses, thus speeding up the rise in Earth's temperature and the volume of water in the sea. Climate change and rising sea levels will be particularly threatening for the most vulnerable of our fellow men. Environmental degradation will make the Earth less inhabitable. Pandemics are a major threat to both mankind and many of its domesticated plants and animals. Sustainable development, i.e. not leaving the Earth worse off for the next generation, is as yet incompatible with the understandable wish for more and better food, and more and better consumer goods, for the very many who are entering the middle class.

The nation-state as a unit of power is losing ground to supranational organisations such as the United Nations organisations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as to such non-state transnational actors as religious groups, criminal networks, multinational companies, mayors of big cities, and NGOs; and in all of those, democracy and democratic legitimacy are not always unquestionable (Erman & Uhlin, 2010). The safeguarding of our global public goods, such as clean air, drinking water and biodiversity, and the elimination of global public 'bads', including extreme poverty and hunger, need some form of global governance. The challenges facing the world cannot be addressed by individual sovereign nation-states, acting first and foremost in their own, short-term interests.

The challenges facing humankind are formidable, but despite a lack of political will and short-sightedness we do have a few things going for us. The number of people with a basic, secondary and higher education is rising. In developing countries literacy increased from 25 to 75 percent in the 20th century (Cohen, Bloom, Malin & Curry, 2006); the number of university graduates is increasing dramatically, primarily in China, but also in other emerging economies such as India and Brazil. In China over 500,000 students obtained a PhD degree in 2009; in 1993 there were 1900. In 2010 China produced 500,000 engineers, including 10,000 with a PhD (cf. Mahbubani, 2013). Until 1900 the world's knowledge doubled every 100 years. In 1900-1950 it was every 25 years, and currently it is 13 months. A simple smartphone can now do more than the enormous computers of yesteryear.

We know how to feed the world in 2050. We know how to eradicate poverty and save the tropical rainforests. We know how to stop the use of fossil fuels and instead harness the renewable energy of water, wind and sun. The question 'How to build a safe world with well-being and equality for all in a sustainable way' is not a technical problem, but a political one: can sovereign nation-states forge a global partnership in the new multipolar world of several major powers – and a great number of significant small ones – to tackle the problems of the world in an equitable and sustainable way?

Much has already been done: the world created the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Trade Organisation, the protocols of Montreal, the old Millennium Development Goals and new Sustainable Development Goals, the European Union, ASEAN, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Although intra-state armed conflicts still abound, between nations there are no wars. "Pourvu que ça dure", as Napoleon's mother used to say.

But on the other hand, no hard decisions were taken during the UN Conference on Climate Change in Lima in 2014. Each year there are 13 million fewer hectares of tropical rain forest. It appears impossible to achieve a common European strategy on mineral resources. Despite the growing importance of countries such as China, Brazil and India, the powers-that-be do not want real changes in the composition of the leadership of the UN Security Council, the World Bank or the IMF. The United States has still not ratified the Law of the Sea, and it is not a participant in the International Criminal Court (ICC). Other countries that have not signed or ratified the Rome Statute include India, Indonesia,

and China. The Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015, which is crucial as a basis for the new Sustainable Development Goals, 2016–2030, was a bitter disappointment.

And still almost a billion people go to bed hungry. Corruption and theft in developing countries are aided and abetted by the rich nations, which do little to stem international crime and improper conduct like whitewashing and tax evasion, land grabbing and resource plundering, dumping of subsidised products, and the forcing of developing economies to lift the protection of their own fledgling industries. We are not there yet!

## 2 Why? The rationale for the internationalisation of higher education

Internationalisation is the response of higher education to globalisation (Coelen, 2013) and is taken seriously by a rapidly increasing number of governments and higher education institutions.

The demands of the labour market are also changing. Subject knowledge and skills are important, but soft skills, along with transversal or twenty-first-century competencies, are considered increasingly important.

In a 2013 survey of over three hundred employers by Hart Research Associates, on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, almost all of them said that a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than knowledge of a discipline (Hart Research Associates, 2020). The vast majority of them mentioned the importance of such things as a broad knowledge of the liberal arts and sciences, knowledge about global issues and foreign societies and cultures, critical thinking and analytical reasoning, complex problem-solving in diverse settings, skills and judgment essential for contributing to society, and direct experience with community problem-solving.

Employers, whether knowingly or not, value the competencies that come from internationalisation (Brandenburg, Berghoff & Taboadela, 2014; European Commission, 2010; Leppanen, Saarinen, Nupponen & Airas, 2014). Our own research shows how much both employers and alumni value such international competencies as proficiency in foreign languages and intercultural skills (Funk, den Heijer, Schuurmans-Brouwer & Walenkamp, 2014; Walenkamp & Funk, 2014).

An institute for higher education may have a mix of reasons for wanting to be 'international'. These may be economic – the increasing relevance and employability of graduates, thus contributing to the competitiveness and economic development of the nation as well as the careers of the graduates themselves, and income for the institution. They may be political – in 1952, shortly after the Second World War and the loss of Indonesia as a colony, Dutch universities founded Nuffic, the Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Higher Education, in order "to create the conditions for a better world, by fostering the exchange of people and ideas…", and thus prevent another world war (successfully so far). Academic rationales may be pedagogical, opening the eyes of their students to the world, teaching them solidarity and concern for others, endowing the students with twenty-first-century skills, making them comprehend the international dimensions of their academic discipline and profession, and enhancing the quality of education. Socio-cultural rationales aim at increasing students' abilities to behave appropriately and communicate effectively in an increasingly multicultural environment (Childress, 2010). Many other reasons are listed, such as the recruitment of the best students for doctorate trajectories and the wish to contribute to development aid, as well as institutional status.

The main reason for internationalisation, however, is to produce graduates with the international competencies that will enable them to live and function in an increasingly international and multicultural society and labour market as concerned and competent world citizens.

## 3 How? The internationalisation of higher education

Whatever the rationale for internationalisation, ideally it should be reflected in the strategy and approach of an educational institution. Internationalisation is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Knight (2011) and De Wit (2011) made explicitly clear that attracting foreign students, sending students abroad for study or internships, teaching in English, and internationalisation at home do not in themselves automatically lead to the desired outcomes. Without a truly internationalised curriculum, proper training and guidance of students in the goal-conscious and goal-oriented acquisition of international competencies, without motivated and qualified lecturers, and without institutional leadership and adequate resources, internationalisation of education is a meaningless term. More memoranda of understanding does not mean better quality or greater attractiveness, and more foreign students does not mean an internationalised culture.

All students need the international competencies that, with the right measures, can come from internationalisation efforts. Yet very few are fortunate enough to go abroad or participate in an international classroom with fellow students from different nationalities. If higher education is elitist, international higher education is doubly so. Degree mobility in higher education in the Netherlands is about 3% of the total student population; some 20% of Dutch students gather credit points abroad (Richters, 2013). Within The Hague University of Applied Sciences, only six of the 63 programmes are international, taught in English to an international classroom. Foreign students make up only 12% of the total student population. Internationalisation at home should thus include internationalised learning outcomes, along with curricula and efforts to make use of the diversity in the classroom. Large urban universities of applied sciences like ours are fortunate in this respect, having students of several cultural backgrounds.

To reach that goal, a university needs vision and leadership and a comprehensive internationalisation policy that focuses on the ends, rather than the means (Deardorff, 2006; Childress, 2010; Leask, 2015).

Comprehensive internationalisation needs to be explicit in all key university policies and strategies, incorporated into planning processes, and aligned and delivered through normal line management routes, and it should include positioning and profiling, learning and teaching, research strategies, human resources policy, assessment, subsidies (local, national and international) and facilities. Internationalising learning goals and curricula should be supported by suitable pedagogy and assessment and, by such means as varied international mobility opportunities, demonstrably linked to the desired internationalised learning outcomes and curricula. They should also be connected to intercultural learning opportunities in international and multicultural national classrooms, within the local community and during internships in multicultural workplaces (cf. Belt, Ham, Kaulingfreks, Prins & Walenkamp, 2015).

Finally, there should be clear management structures and a continuous enhancement of internationalisation activities and strategy through feedback, reflection and evaluation processes.

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Jos Walenkamp
*Emeritus Professor International Cooperation*
*The Hague University of Applied Sciences*

Jos Walenkamp read Biology at Leiden University and Fisheries Biology and Management at the University of Wales. He obtained a PhD degree at Leiden University with a dissertation on the zoogeography and systematics of Caribbean starfish. He worked for six years at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, as a lecturer and as dean of the Biology Faculty. In Nigeria he headed a team that managed the training and research programs of the European Commission there. Dr. Walenkamp served at Nuffic, the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Education and Research as Director Development Cooperation and Director Knowledge and Innovation. The last ten years he was professor (lector) at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, where he is now Fellow/Emeritus Professor.