

Internationalisation strategies and the development of competent teaching staff

Els van der Werf

This article argues that the role of the lecturer in an internationalised higher education institution is not limited to teaching internationally or interculturally diverse groups of students. Teaching staff members will normally be required to undertake a variety of tasks, which require different competences. In addition, they will need specific competences to be able to function well in an international working environment. In order to foster the discussion on the topic of staff competences in relation to internationalisation, this article suggests the use an 'International Competences Matrix.' This HRM tool is meant to alert both teaching staff and their heads of department to the fact that working in an international environment requires new and additional competences and that training teaching staff in 'weak' competence areas may be necessary to make a university's internationalisation policy a success.

The role of the lecturer in an internationalised higher education institution and the competences required to fulfil this role successfully are topics which have not received the attention that they deserve and which managers in higher education have been loath to address, not only in relation to the recruitment of new staff, but particularly in relation to current staff. The emphasis in most studies on this topic has been on teaching in the international classroom and on the intercultural competences which a lecturer needs to effectively engage with students from different educational and cultural backgrounds. However, the introduction of the concept of 'Internationalisation at Home' (IaH), particularly in European higher education, has led to a redefinition of internationalisation and subsequently to the realisation that this would have consequences for the competences required of teaching staff. They are not only expected to contribute to the internationalisation of their higher education institution by teaching to internationally diverse groups of students. Working in an internationalised higher education institution requires them to undertake a much wider variety of activities, such as internationalising curricula aimed at a domestic student population, counselling and supervising (domestic and international) students in preparation for and during study abroad periods, and maintaining collaborative relations with partner institutions abroad. This calls for a more differentiated approach to teaching staff competences in relation to internationalisation.

Important work on the teaching of students from different educational and cultural backgrounds has been done in Australia, where most universities actively engage in both recruiting international students for Australian campuses and offering transnational or 'offshore' programmes, particularly in Southeast Asia (Leask, 2001; 2004; 2005; Stone, 2006). Similar approaches can be found in the USA, Canada and the UK (Mestenhauser et al., 1998; Bond et al., 2003; Schuerholz-Lehr, 2007; Hyland et al., 2008). One of the most comprehensive contributions to the topic, however, is Hanneke Teekens's profile of 'the ideal lecturer' for the international classroom (Teekens, 2001; 2003). Teekens defines nine clusters of qualifications and she lists the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which are relevant for lecturers who work in an internationalised teaching environment. She pays specific attention to an aspect which is largely absent from studies that originated in English-speaking countries, but which has had a significant impact on the thinking about staff competences in relation to internationalisation: the use of English as the language of instruction, instead of, or alongside the national language. Her profile "provides lecturers with an insight into the demanding role of standing before a culturally mixed group and teaching in a language other than their own" (Teekens, 2001, p. 23). Teekens's intention is "to create awareness among the managers of higher education institutions of the specific qualities and skills required of teaching staff destined to be lecturers in the international classroom" (Teekens, 2001, p. 23) and can be used to identify "discrepancies relevant for the planning of future staff selection and further training" (Teekens, 2001, p. 23). In response to Teekens, Gavin Sanderson suggests a number of modifications of her profile and introduces the concepts of the internationalisation of the academic Self and cosmopolitanism (Sanderson, 2006; 2008; 2011). Whilst he lists a large number of things a teacher might do to approach the ideal, he concludes that the complexities "lie in the personal and professional commitment it takes to become both a better teacher and someone with a well-developed cosmopolitan disposition" (Sanderson, forthcoming).

The profile developed by Teekens does not distinguish between the different tasks that a lecturer may have. It views teaching as complex, comprehensive responsibility. In many higher education institutions, however, not all teaching staff members have the same set of tasks. Some may be required to teach in English, but have few research tasks. Others may teach only in the national language, but be involved in the supervision of foreign students.

Similarly, the tasks of an individual lecturer may change considerably over time, i.e. from one academic year to the next, or even within the relatively limited time span of an academic year. This means that lecturers may be required to have different sets of competences and/or that an individual lecturer may be required to have different competences in various phases of his/her career. Teaching staff competences in relation to the international higher education working environment can be addressed in a more diversified manner by using an 'International Competences Matrix', in which tasks that are normally undertaken by teaching staff members are set off against competences which are needed to fulfil the task well (see appendix).¹

The first version of the 'International Competences Matrix' was developed by the Office for International Relations of Hanze University Groningen, University of Applied Sciences, in collaboration with the Office for Personnel & Organisation. It was developed in response to the need for a practical tool which could serve to alert both teaching staff and their heads of department to the fact that working in an international environment requires new and additional competences and that training teaching staff in 'weak' competence areas may be necessary in order to make a university's internationalisation policy a success. Heads of department were advised to use the tool during job interviews with potential new members of staff, but also in relation to current staff, e.g. in job appraisal talks. Teaching staff members were invited to use it in reflecting on their own needs for professional development. As such, the 'International Competences Matrix' formed an integral part of the HRM appraisal cycle.

The competences defined in the matrix are primarily based on the descriptions of the qualifications in Teekens's profile. With regard to the didactic competences, I have incorporated the work of Dineke Tigelaar and colleagues (Tigelaar et al., 2004). Proficiency in the English language is given a considerable amount of attention in the matrix, because outside the English-speaking world it is generally accepted that it is an important competence in relation to working in an international environment. The level descriptions

¹ An earlier version of the 'International Competences Matrix' was published in *Internationalisation and Quality Assurance*. EAIE Professional Development Series for International Educators 4. Amsterdam: European Association for International Education, 52-54.

have been adapted from those defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The matrix reflects a number of influential studies that have been done on the topic of staff competences in relation to the higher education working environment. However, it is not carved in stone. It can be adapted to suit the specific situation of a higher education institution, e.g. by shortening or extending the list of tasks or by adapting the competence categories. Similarly, the level and the definition of the competences can be adapted to reflect the policy of a higher education institution with regard to its teaching staff.

The introduction of the 'International Competences Matrix' in the HRM appraisal cycle of a higher education institution should ideally be supplemented with making a range of personal and professional development options available to teaching staff members. The use of the matrix is, after all, intended to be a tool to stimulate the awareness of the need for specific or additional competences for working as a teacher in an internationalised environment and to foster the discussion on how to acquire or improve these competences. For many higher education institutions, the process of internationalisation means a transition from being a workplace steeped in a national, even regional, identity to becoming a multinational and multicultural working environment. That process can only be successful if an institution's human capital is given the opportunity and support to make that transition on a personal and professional level.

References

Beelen, Jos., Ed. (2007). *Implementing Internationalisation at Home*. EAIE Professional Development Series for International Educators 2. Amsterdam: European Association for International Education, 17-19.

Bond, S., Qian, J., Huang, J. (2003). *The role of faculty in internationalizing the undergraduate curriculum and classroom experience*. CBIE Research Millennium Series No. 8. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Bureau for International Education.

Galen, Adinda van., Ed. (2010). *Internationalisation and Quality Assurance*. EAIE Professional Development Series for International Educators 4. Amsterdam: European Association for International Education, 52-54.

Hyland, F., Trahar, S., Anderson, J., Dickens, A. (2008). *A Changing World: The internationalisations experiences of staff and students (home and international) in UK higher education*. Retrieved March 28, 2011 from <http://escalate.ac.uk/downloads/5248.pdf>.

Leask, Betty (2001). Bridging the Gap: Internationalizing University Curricula. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 5.2, 100-115.

Leask, Betty (2004). Transnational Education and Intercultural Learning: Reconstructing the Offshore Teaching Team to Enhance Internationalisation. Paper presented at the Australian Universities Quality Forum, 'Quality in a time of change', Adelaide, July 7-9, 2004. Retrieved March 25, 2011 from <http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/staff/homepage.asp?Name=betty.leask>.

Leask, Betty (2005). Internationalisation of the Curriculum and Intercultural Engagement: A Variety of Perspectives and Possibilities. Refereed paper presented at the Australian International Education Conference (AIEC), October 11-14, 2005, Queensland, Australia. Retrieved March 25, 2011 from <http://www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/Leask,%20Betty.pdf>.

Mestenhauer, Josef A. and Ellingboe, Brenda J. Eds. (1998). *Reforming the Higher Education Curriculum: Internationalizing the Campus*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press and Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Sanderson, Gavin (2006). Examination of a profile of the ideal lecturer for teaching international students. Adelaide: Flinders University. Retrieved March 7, 2011 from <http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/staff/GavinSanderson/APA-5th-16-Oct-06.pdf>.

Sanderson, Gavin (2008). A Foundation for the Internationalization of the Academic Self. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 12.3, 276-307.

Sanderson, Gavin. (2011) (forthcoming in Vol 30, Issue 5). Internationalisation and teaching in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) special edition on internationalisation*.

Schuerholz-Lehr, Sabine (2007). Teaching for Global Literacy in Higher Education: How Prepared Are the Educators? *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11.2, 180-204.

Teekens, Hanneke (2001). A description of nine clusters of qualifications for lecturers. In Hanneke Teekens (Ed.), *Teaching and Learning in the International Classroom*. The Hague, Nuffic, 22-39.

Teekens, Hanneke (2003). The Requirement to Develop Specific Skills for Teaching in an Intercultural Setting, *Journal of Studies in International Education* 7.1, 108-119.

Teekens, Hanneke (2006). Internationalization at Home: a background paper. In Hanneke Teekens (Ed.), *Internationalization at Home: a global perspective*. The Hague, Nuffic, 7-18.

Tigelaar, Dineke E.H., Diana H.J.M. Dolmans, Ineke H.A.P. Wolfhagen, and Cees P.M. van der Vleuten (2004). The Development and Validation of a Framework for Teaching Competencies in Higher Education. *Higher Education* 48.2, 253-268.