

The Community as a Key Stakeholder in the Internationalisation Project

Session Abstract

For universities to promote inclusive internationalisation they have a responsibility to engage both the global and local community. Internationalisation strategies of universities often neglect local partnerships in favour of international partnerships. This session challenges practitioners of international education to think of community engagement as an integral part of their internationalisation strategies and think of the community as a stakeholder of international education. Community engagement can help universities understand the needs and perspectives of diverse communities thus leading to internationalisation strategies that are comprehensive and inclusive.

Discussion Questions

- What role do communities play in international education?
- What is the responsibility of international education towards the community?
- At what point does community engagement and internationalisation converge? Highlighting the interdependent relationship between the two

Introduction

Oftentimes when drafting internationalisation strategies, most practitioners prioritise international student recruitment, increasing their global footprint as well as making profit. In this sense ethical internationalisation and community engagements are not prioritised. This creates the illusion that the internationalisation strategies and the community are isolated from each other. This session aims to use critical internationalisation as a theoretical framework to advocate for inclusive and ethical Internationalisation strategies aimed at creating a diverse and multicultural environment within the campus and beyond the campus. Critical Internationalisation focuses on reimagining the dominant trends of relationships, representation, and resource distribution in internationalisation. It promotes internationalisation that is ethical and politically conscious. Critical Internationalisation rises out of the concern of reproducing the uneven global power relations that exist in the world (Vavrus & Pelok, 2015). The main aim of critical internationalisation is challenging the inherent hierarchies that exist in global politics that recreate themselves in international education as well as to denaturalise said hierarchies. It also aims to think critically about how local communities are affected by different approaches to internationalisation. Lastly, to foster respectful relationships and a more equitable distribution of resources.

The community as a key stakeholder in internationalisation



Figure 1: Convergence between the community and Internationalisation Strategies to produce comprehensive and inclusive internationalisation

- Acknowledge that there should be no 'one size fit all' approach to internationalisation of higher education, internationalisation strategies should be responsive to local contexts. This includes the needs of the communities the universities operate in.
- This means that communities need to be engaged and play an active role in the internationalisation strategies of university.
- This requires a move from isolated approaches and make deliberate attempts to incorporate community engagement into internationalisation strategies.
- Community member and stakeholders go beyond transactional activities. They play vital roles in adding cultural and societal experience.
- Support from university level, local community, and government and national organizations.
- Re-enforcing that by working in silos, the strategy does not positively contribute to exploring opportunities in internationalization. Understand the needs of stakeholders and be empathic to the population's expectations. The 'one size fit all' model does not produce successful results.
- Comprehensive internationalisation requires a relentless pursuit of social justice, equity and inclusivity.
- This means that the practitioners of international education need to seek collaborative approaches with community members to ensure that communities are not being isolated and exploited.
- These approaches should target to bring universities and communities together in a process of co-production that is mutually beneficial.
- Challenges impacting universities and communities is the resistance to change. Introducing a new concept to communities can bring discomfort or unease. Not knowing what the outcome will be can places stakeholders and universities at a disadvantage.
- Cultural norms can lead to misunderstanding. It is important to continue to have open communication and ask for clarification.
- Economic disparities can also be a factor to how efficient or quickly the goal is met.
- There can be more than one way to succeed. Establishing transparent communication from the beginning. It sets the foundation of the partnership so there is little room for error.
- Bring all necessary stakeholders into the decision-making process. Address concerns and respond to questions in the same room rather than through multiple channels and meetings.

- The convergence between the universities internationalisation strategies and the communities creates an interdependent relationship between the two. The interaction creates a mutual relationship.
- There are some dangers associated with internationalisation that does not have the buy-in of the community through which the university are located, including broken links of communication between the community members and other stakeholders, missed opportunities for creating shared social norms, and in some extreme cases crime and xenophobia.
- Community outreach programs. Involvement with community member to play active roles within the international community,
- Cultural heritage education abroad programs. The program ties student cultural roots and adds representation to the university and community. Create international opportunities like these open the doors to expand what internationalization is in higher education.
- Therefore, its is important to rethink the role of international education in community engagement and community development.
- Retire the 'one size fits all' model. Move away from silo and tunnel-vision mind-set.
- It is important to establish comprehensive internationalization through mutual relationship and agreement. Have open communication and be adaptable to change.
- Be intentional in proactively engaging with university and stakeholders. Consider the investment and the impact of internationalization strategies. If needed, revisit the mission or goal.
- Find pathways to collaborate and celebrate internationalization and opportunities for future generations.