

## Reflecting on the HEA Framework for Internationalizing Higher Education & on the 'practical theory' of Handal and Lauvas

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Internationalization,  
Higher education,  
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### Abstract

*Internationalised curriculum development is critical to any institution aiming to approach internationalisation in a coherent way. Research on Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC), emphasizes the notion of curriculum as encompassing all aspects of learning and works at formal, hidden, and informal levels. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) developed a framework approaching internationalization of teaching, learning & curriculum. Rachel Scudamore, in the guide Engaging Home and International Students, examined the relationship of culture & learning, based on the 'practical theory' of Handal & Lauvas (1987), providing useful information and suggestions that informs teaching philosophy. The present work, through critical literature review, reflects upon the HEA framework and Handal & Lauvas' practical theory, showing new challenges and issues of concerns. It provides recommendations for educators 'why' and 'how' to internationalize curriculum and teaching and concludes that Handal & Lauvas' work (1987) should continue to shape teaching approach nowadays.*

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### Introduction

Borrowing from Leask, (2015 as cited in Green & Whitsed, 2015 p.xii) *Internationalisation of the curriculum is the process of incorporating international, intercultural and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study.* It builds the capacity for the university to work with a diversity of backgrounds and prepares students to become global citizens (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014). Disciplinary, institutional, local, national, regional and global factors interact in different ways to facilitate and inhibit, drive and shape approaches to internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC), including the way in which learning outcomes are defined, taught and assessed. Hence, we would expect to see approaches to internationalisation of the curriculum that are both similar and different within and across disciplines (Leask & Bridge, 2013 as cited in Green & Whitsed, 2015 p.xii).

Internationalisation is not a goal in itself but a means to enhance the quality of the education, research, and service functions of higher education in general and this is what an international curriculum serves. An international curriculum (IC) reflects a cross cultural way of thinking in general which might not be part of a specific program or expressed to some extent through various international oriented learning activities; a significant part of it might still be hidden shaping another curriculum which students know and experience of it in class. Thinking truly internationally means behaving internationally; the class dynamics and class interactions elicit additional behaviours of those prescheduled ones in the curriculum. I might say it shapes the climate in the class.

On the basis of literature review, I believe there is not specific model of internationalization which could fit for all higher education systems and disciplines. The interrogation of disciplinary paradigms, personal biases and beliefs connected with internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) requires innovative & creative thinking, imagination, problem solving skills.

### Methodology

The methodological approach for the present study is based on critical literature review. The purpose of a literature review is to gain an understanding of the existing research and debates relevant to the particular topic or area of study, and to present that knowledge in the form of a written report. Conducting a literature review helps building knowledge in the examined field. This approach serves the purpose of the present study because helps to gain insight into how researchers apply the concepts in relation to Higher Education and internationalization of the curriculum, as well as, helps towards a better understanding of how research findings are presented and discussed.

### Internationalization of the curriculum

Internationalization of the curriculum is a critical component of the internationalization of higher education. Internationalisation of curriculum is concerned with the curriculum in its broadest sense. As Leask (2009) (cited in Beelen & Leask, 2011, p. 8) states: “*An internationalised curriculum will engage students with internationally informed research and cultural and linguistic diversity.*”

The impact of an internationalized curriculum on student learning will be more evident if:

- Attention is attributed to internationalizing learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks.
- The approach taken moves beyond isolated, optional subjects, experiences, and activities for a minority of students and focuses on all students’ learning.
- The process is undertaken in a planned and systematic way rather than consisting of occasional international case studies sprinkled haphazardly across the program of study.

The reality shows that common misconceptions of internationalization of the curriculum are problematic. These views are often focused on learner activity rather than learning outcomes or/and on a single aspect of the curriculum.

### Reflecting on the HEA Framework

Reflecting on the *HEA Internationalizing Higher Education Framework* document, and how the IC would look like, I would agree with the opinion of Bordogna, & Harvey (no date) that previous internationalising guidelines had more focus on processes than on broad aspirations like this framework. Engaging with such broader and deeper notions may contribute the context of internationalisation to be reviewed. (Bordogna, & Harvey, no date).

The framework is structured around three key areas: People (staff, students, decision makers) Organisation and Curriculum. All these are interconnected and interrelated. From the perspective of this HEA Framework each of the above three (3) dimensions should be addressed separately, but also, in relation to one another and this raises some ‘complex and sensitive’ issues which may not have considered before. This regards the design and delivery of teaching materials. The same interconnection is emphasized for values, activities, knowledge for which is important to be established a kind of ‘analytical & strategic’ approach- philosophy. Leask (2005 as cited in Green & Whitsed, 2015) stresses that internationalisation of a curriculum should not be seen as an ‘end’ in itself, but rather as ‘a strategy which will assist learners to become more aware of their own and others cultures’. Hence the importance of focusing on what students learn from an internationalised curriculum

There is a “realism” of the framework, whereas a complex issue is made tangible and relevant to the situations and challenges academics face on a daily basis. It shapes a common reference point for all encouraging flexibility and challenging for creativity. This means that we all speak the same language, but we have the space to create more for the benefit of our students. This challenges more the engagement of all participants towards internationalization of HE in which the international curriculum contributes. It is an excellent tool to cultivate a new way of thinking, innovations, and creativity in daily practices and specifically how to design teaching materials, communication tools but in relation to people and needs of the organization. It emphasizes inclusivity and acknowledges diversity; it inspires for introducing changes in daily practices considering people and structure of the organization as a whole.

So, the curriculum should look inclusive; this means that all students are entitled to access and participate; it does not place groups in opposition to each other; it respects diversity but does not imply lack of commonality, it supports the concept of widening participation, but does not imply an externally imposed value judgment; it values equality of opportunity but encourages all to feel that this relates to them (Croucher & Romer, 2007 p.3). So, learning activities and other parts of a curriculum / module should be inclusive, encouraging access and participation of all students.

Diversity does not mean that there are no things in common, so, being inclusive means embracing diversity but also trying to find existed commonalities among our people/students. This can link, bring together people. Due to this, when students share different experiences, there might be a common background. On the other hand, the target is the same for all and that is all to be prepared to live responsibly in a globally interconnected world. The concept of interconnecting and bridging differences is also important in an international curriculum and not only to include elements and activities which help students to be cross cultural aware and aware of differences. The term also global is broad reflecting more a broad way of thinking for all. At a parallel basis, the curriculum encourages the notion of global interdependence, mutual respect and globally extensive relations of responsibility and social responsibility. It emphasizes ‘equitable and global learning opportunities for all’ meaning that our curriculum should ensure fairness of equal opportunities of learning and advancement for all students regardless language cultural, educational, social, learning difficulties and other differences. The concept is very important as it also reflects acknowledgement of respect and fairness towards diverse learning communities and groups of people. It supports the existence of *formal and informal curriculum* with regards to learning, teaching and research acknowledging influential dynamics and factors which challenge the formality of a curriculum. With regards to organization and people, the Framework challenges a collegial approach, sharing and working all together having each one as well responsibility towards internationalization and enhancement of activities, knowledge and values supporting internationalization. Leask and Bridge (2013, p. 82) emphasize the impact of the ‘often overlooked’ hidden curriculum. By ‘hidden curriculum’ they mean the implicit understandings concerning ‘power and authority’ structures inherent in a discipline or school/ faculty, through which one comes to understand ‘what and whose knowledge is valued and not valued’. The Framework emphasizes though on a collegiate approach meaning all together participate to what is valued and what not, there is a common *language*.

The Framework assists individuals to evaluate and critically enhance the extent they contribute to internationalization of curriculum facilitating improvements; so internationalizing efforts regard an ongoing process allowing space of being flexible, creative; allowing policy makers, organizations, individuals to continue to contribute bringing improvements. An international curriculum needs always to be reviewed, and improvements to take place through creative ideas which are in line with organization processes, policies, and values. Creating the space for criticality and reflexivity can open the curriculum to new imaginings, and new ways of thinking (Leask, 2013; also, Green & Whitsed, 2013). Achieving this openness means involving whole disciplinary teaching teams, precisely because

disciplinary 'teaching and learning regimes' (TLR) (Trowler & Cooper, 2002) have the power to constrain or foster innovation. Unless they are encouraged and supported to be otherwise, academic staff are likely to be constrained by their particular TLR, 'culturally bound' by their 'own disciplinary training and thinking', and thus blinkered to the possibilities for IoC. So, all (people, organizations, students) are parts of the same *chain* with a common target: internationalization. The above mean that the curriculum would look more open to an ongoing process of improvement, more flexible, more collegiate, student focused in terms of development of it; it would also be open towards supporting a global academic community (challenging partnerships, international collaborations etc.) reflecting a reference point not only for interconnection of academics, organizations, students in a specific environment but in a global one; this reflects a broad way of international-global thinking of 'where we all belong'. The curriculum itself contributes to internationalization; academics and students should think globally, we all belong in a global world. All the above make the international curriculum to look as an ambassador of the idea of 'global belongingness' and of social responsibility of all who contribute to the internationalization; social responsibility of HE; knowledge, actions and values to be built & be enhanced in future towards this direction.

In this journey students as individuals contribute as well. Acknowledgement of student involvement in this process, challenges us to design activities, to consider learning matters and issues more broadly (e.g. how our curriculum can be more international when we consider the feedback from our students; what we can learn from them when sharing their experience and knowledge with us? What we have to do? how we can develop our intercultural competencies for a better understanding and at the same time how we can help them to develop their own intercultural competencies?).

As the context of the specific knowledge and of the specific values is clearly defined in the HEA Framework a direction of knowing 'what should be considered in the body of the international curriculum' is important; it becomes again a very clear reference point and reflects the role and responsibility of staff to ensure that all required knowledge and values are incorporated. In similar way, it defines the role of organizations towards this process 'inspiring, leading & sourcing the development of internationalization. Clear interconnected roles and contributions, common efforts should be considered. This reflects the dominant philosophy of the Framework targeting values, attitudes, and knowledge through creation of values, attitudes, and knowledge.

The curriculum should incorporate global trends and developments, facilitate mobility, support diversity. The Framework defining the benefits for the curriculum helps us to understand clearly our roles, activities, targets and our priorities attributing value to specific elements & challenging us creatively to work towards these; also, self-evaluating our contribution challenges for continuous engagement and creativity, as well as, exploring ways of self-development and critical thinking. The same applies for the roles and issues of critical importance that should be considered by Organizations. Considering all the above, the curriculum looks inclusive, serving different benefits which actually become targets calling for actions: capitalizing on the diverse range of knowledge, experience and values, meanings; deepening personal and interpersonal learning within academic community; broadening the range of perspectives; enriching its design & delivery for future sustainability; confronting humanitarian issues; responding to diversity within the academic community and informing practice through the impact of internationalization. All the above, realistically, and dynamically contribute to our deep critical insight and understanding of the importance of internationalization, attributed values, benefits, the interconnection of values-activities-knowledge to which all are engaged. Engagement in activities and practices contributes directly to internationalizing the curriculum. The Framework challenges me to think about a greater extent and diversity of engagement with internationalizing the curriculum.

The context of the questions for individuals, organizations and for the design and delivery of the curriculum/module/unit provide directions, sets constraints, challenges innovative thinking, it is becoming a learning source. The curriculum looks multidimensional, and interdisciplinary in the process of its design/development, context, delivery (including intercultural, educational, psychological and other elements) and developmental in nature (challenging for the development of our own intercultural competencies, supporting the development of intercultural competencies of our students) a learning resource widening the range of perspectives encouraging reflective and critical thinking. Through the reflective practice and elements of the HEA Framework, the curriculum looks serving cosmopolitanism reflecting openness, tolerance, engagement with diversity. It looks targeting & serving global citizenship. The curriculum enables a global learning experience, supports a global academic community, promotes an ongoing intercultural and international dialogue, promotes international & intercultural learning (sharing international experience). The HEA curriculum challenges adaptation to learners' diversity, stimulates inclusion of global exemplars and perspectives, development of collaborative & integrative tasks suitable for diverse groups. It supports independent learning but also mixing learning and work; it utilizes the diversity of the academic community as a learning resource. The curriculum embeds opportunities for international mobility, suitable support, and intervention strategies.

According to HEA Framework, the curriculum encourages pro-active development of inclusive learning outcomes attitudes and skills, embed learning outcomes associated with values, attitudes and skills of global citizenship within subject-based knowledge. It supports the development of values associated with global citizenship being associated with a broader agenda of social justice, cosmopolitanism and global ethics. The curriculum challenges students to be actively engaged in both critical scholarship around global citizenship and in developing their own skills, attitudes and abilities for active participation in diverse and interconnected societies.

### **Reflection of the 'practical theory' of Handal and Lauvas**

One challenge that instructors face is how to teach and design a curriculum or a module so the material and activities engage students' prior knowledge, experience and their skills, whether the aim is to build on that knowledge, to interrogate it, or to situate new ways of thinking. When instructors teach cohorts, which include students with diverse backgrounds, any curriculum or module design is more challenging. On the other hand, considering student differences provides valuable clarity for both students and instructors; and drawing on student differences multiplies the teaching and learning exchange in a class.

The teaching philosophy provides the rationale for the educator's teaching behaviour (Kreber, 2001). As a broad philosophical statement of teaching practice, it shows the conceptualization of teaching into action by justifying a set of principles that justifies how one teaches (Chism, 1998). For example, this can include how teachers conduct classes, how mentor students & develop instructional resources, or how they grade performances; also, what instructional strategies are used which display creativity, enthusiasm, and wisdom; what they want a student to experience in class, what energy level is required, what the qualities they try to exhibit as a model and a coach, what climate they try to establish in the setting in which they teach (Chism, 1998). The teaching philosophy addresses issues such as: Under what opportunities and constraints do I learn and do others learn? What outcomes do I expect of my teaching? What student-teacher relationship do I strive for? How do I evaluate effective teaching? What habits, attitudes, methods show teaching outcomes? What values do I wish to impart to students and what skills to be developed? What code of ethics guides me? Under what opportunities and constraints do I carry out my role? etc.

Rachel Scudamore, in the guide *Engaging home and international students*, examining the relationship of culture & learning, based on the 'practical theory' of Handal & Lauvas (1987), provides useful information and suggestions that informs teaching philosophy regarding teaching activities & strategies when teaching cohorts with diverse groups of students. It also enhances or/and challenges knowledge about the relationship culture-learning-teaching. With reference to HEA Teaching International Students (TIS) and HEA Internationalizing Higher Education, this guide seems practical & helpful providing directions how critical issues of learning & teaching international students can be addressed in practice. A general reflection on Handal & Lauvas 'practical theory of teaching' (1987) is that it helps staff to understand how to engage all learners in the class. The theory serves practically how home and international students can get a supportive learning environment from the beginning (induction) where cultural differences, differences in values, experiences, perceptions, diversity in general is respected, is used as part of the learning environment and how all have equal learning opportunities.

There is plenty of research regarding the influence of culture on teaching; the issue that often is raised is how teachers working from their own cultures and teaching styles can successfully reach the diverse students' populations today. What training do they need for this challenge? Bennett (1986) is not the only one who believes that "to the extent that teachers teach as they have been taught to it each and earn, and to the extent that culture shapes learning style, students who share a teacher's ethnic background will be favoured in class" (p. 96). Bennett also warns that ignoring the effects of culture and learning style affects all students: *If classroom expectations are limited by our own cultural orientations, we impede successful learners guided by another cultural orientation. If we only teach according to the ways we ourselves learn best, we are also likely to thwart successful learners who may share our cultural background but whose learning styles deviate from our own.* (p. 116). Culture encapsulates various aspects. There are a number of cultural factors, which have direct implications for teaching and learning. Teachers need to be responsive to individual ethnic groups' cultural values, practices, language, learning preferences, involvement, and familial patterns. Today's teachers must also be more than just aware or respectful of the idea that ethnic groups have distinct values in unique ways (Gay, 2002).

As culture is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 2001). Members of a society function according to culturally determined implicit models which are in the minds of their members (Hofstede, 2001); in this guide it is noticed that some of the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2001) take place (power distance, individualism-collectivism), however, it is interesting to read in this guide that the current approaches view culture as dynamic rather than rigidly determining an individuals' views or behavior; It helps us to expand our thinking, be open minded and alert to various influential factors, not to develop cognitive patterns of categories to which people belong, not to be biased. Borrowing from my own experience as international staff member, but also, borrowing from my experience teaching classes with large numbers of international students, I see the 'diversity' of values, attitudes and culture of international students where those who have lived abroad besides their home country (either working or studying) their attitudes, behaviors, values differentiate from those international students who do not have such experience. Culture does not regard only nationality but includes educational experience demographic (gender, age, social status, experience) characteristics. The first day of my classes, I try to devote some time to get information about the cultural background of each of my students (this is more difficult for large classes) so to know the synthesis of my audience.

The perspectives of culture examined in this guide-theory and its connection with teaching and learning, remind but also help me through this developmental activity, to conceptualize better the need our teaching philosophy to be in line with our teaching practice. Time constraints, workload, confidence that we do the right thing in the right way and other, distracts our attention to revisit, review and correct.

Self-evaluating some of my activities, I note that my teaching philosophy is not always reflected fully in my practice and due to this I need to enhance or/and change or/and incorporate new things. For example, when I am struggling with time constraints, having large size classes not always being able to get information regarding the 'background' of my students, Through a simple written activity I could invite (not request) my students to write briefly (by email) information about their personal profile-culture. This saves time instead of doing it in the first class session, it helps to learn more about students (their names, who they are - what their personal cultural background is - and, not only their national one on which my question focused on till now), consider and keep track with the information in relation to activities and module, so that to make a better use of sharing experience in the class and not only. This adds value for a supportive international learning environment e.g. to know in advance if some of my students may also have working experience; this can contribute to the analysis of real business case studies sharing their own international experiences helping instructors also to understand better where their perspectives stem from, and to learn from them.

This guide and the 'practical theory' of Handal & Lauvas (1987) besides challenging to see *gaps between our teaching philosophy and teaching practice, self-evaluating practices and enhancing thinking & practice* (e.g. introducing new activities etc.), also enriches the perspectives of my teaching philosophy to be *continuously creative, to build opportunities in class for enhancing my role and contribution*. I stated above that part of my teaching philosophy is 'under what opportunities do I learn and enhance my role?'; but till now my perspective was strictly academic. For example, I do learn from my students when sharing their experiences in class or in our meetings; I do consider their feedback for improving my work, teaching effectiveness and other, however, my role remains lecturer, mentor, supervisor. I would emphasize though here, reflecting upon the 'theory of practice' that, besides my teaching role seems that my role as facilitator is acknowledged facilitating students' knowledge acquisition, expression, interaction, sharing of their experiences, development. However, preparing students as global citizens is important to create as much as possible new opportunities for enhancing our roles and preparing them better; for example, as *career consultant or business consultant* sharing further my own business expertise and international working experience with them and challenging them to learn more from them and to critically think. For example, I had a female young student from China who told me that she is running a consulting company in the field of education in China and she found very interesting and useful all what she learnt from my lectures and international case studies we did in the class. This was a good opportunity to learn more about this type business sector & activity in China and of many business, cultural and personal characteristics of my student, but, also to provide a lot of guidance and constructive feedback for her business and for her future career challenging her to apply what fits to her. This example in relation to reflecting on the present practical theory, motivates me to think that all of us, as teachers, can build new learning opportunities, *formal or/and informal* ones in the class or out of the class (through well-structured unit activities to provide the same opportunities to all), sharing assumptions or teaching informally/consulting/guiding challenging students' own assumptions; through a global thinking & global or local acting approach, empowering them to see critically what fits to them and what not, us to learn from them sharing their reflections. In this way, we can support them more.

Reflecting additionally upon the practical theory, I fully agree that *the culture of a discipline affects teaching practice* and that *teaching & learning is based on shared values and common experiences* as learners in the discipline. This is an issue that I always consider in my work; as literature confirms, group dynamics/values/beliefs shape sub-cultures influencing attitudes and behaviors of its members. However, if such sub-cultures, are not perceived as dynamic ones responding to new situations and changes, it may result in causing constraints in being creative.

Borrowing from Kolb (1984) *learning cycle* which emphasized different, but, complementary stages in learning (active, practical, theoretical and reflective), and in relation to my understanding of Handal & Lauvas (1987) practical theory, while reflecting upon my practice and writing in a reflective way, I understand in a clear and deeper way the various benefits of applying 'reflection' in learning, teaching, writing. This enriches my teaching philosophy regarding ways of learning through reflection upon experiences, skills development and many other. Preparing students for a global world, it is critical to learn to reflect on their experiences sharing these with others: students should take control of their learning as active participants. Teaching connects with students' existing knowledge and experience and help them 'construct' a new world. However, reflecting upon the 'theory of practice' which is based on Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, I am concerned with the fact that Kolb's framework is mainly a model to study learning styles at an individual level, and, it does not appear to give a good conceptual foundation to study how learning styles might differ among different cultures. Pratt (1992) supports that learning styles may vary from culture to culture. Recent interdisciplinary research in this area enhances our understanding of how learning styles or approaches vary across cultures (De Vita, 2001; Ramburuth, 2001; Paul & Arcodia, 2002; Morse, 2003).

Regarding the concept of 'practice' I agree with Handal and Lauvas (1987) approach, that teaching is informed by a lecturer's 'practical theory' but I feel that this is also challenging but creative as well for a group of people (e.g. discipline) where different colleagues have different experiences, approaches and discipline culture influences teaching practice. I also agree that we need to use teaching time effectively to engage students with each other and with the topic of our class, as part of developing their independence and understanding, and, engaging students in a range of teaching contexts incorporating cross cultural activities (e.g. induction as this activity is inclusive because settles all students into the course) support their learning and adjustment. Teachers to reflect on their experience

Regarding the presented here literature on learning & teaching, I agree about the importance in learning process of the role of others and of discussions with others, the importance of social engagement for motivating students' learning as social interactions help learning; also I fully agree about the importance of interactive & evidence based teaching when designing and delivering a module; valuable information can be received by influential interventions (e.g. feedback from staff, peers, students, self-assessment) assisting structure of activities; on the other hand, teaching interventions across disciplines are effective when they inform a structured reflection on one's own experience.

A very important aspect of the 'theory of practice' which informs teaching practice is explicitly and clearly when delivering a module and learning activities is the *task to say why are included and not only what is included*. A rational approach should not only exist when working myself on a module, but, I should share this with my students as well providing evidence to them 'why' things happen, but being also 'open' and 'flexible' to incorporate other possible suggestions.

The examined 'practical theory', challenges & informs my teaching philosophy goals 'to prepare global mindsets and global citizens'; enhance my knowledge in learning more about cultural diversity in approaches to learning and in developing ways for engaging all students in a variety of contexts, in strategies of revealing my own assumptions relating them to my teaching practice. However, some of my concerns are the following:

According to Handal & Lauvas (1987) theory, teaching which integrates teachers' practical theories with their daily action includes three levels of practice; the 1<sup>st</sup> is the level of action where the educator teaches, gives assignments, analyzes, asks questions, assess. The 2<sup>nd</sup> level is planning & reflection where educators question why they do what they do in their class. I think that this level of practice involves both aspects of reflection-on-action: educators' thoughts, planning, preparation of what they will teach, as well as, their after-teaching reflections and actions trying to learn from what they do. I believe that often

indeed, in the realm of 'thought' we see planning and reflection-on-action. However, I believe that being prepared for teaching this means physical and mental actions/activities consisting a critical part of their actions. The 3<sup>rd</sup> level of teaching practice is the ethical consideration one, where, educators reflect about the ethical and moral basis of their actions and raise questions about how or whether their activities/actions have added value to a supportive learning environment or the enhancement of equity & justice. This level emphasizes mainly thoughts about ours and others. However, I think that both explicit instructional activities, as well as time devoted for planning these activities and subsequent thoughts regarding these are all presented as levels of practice. The authors propose, and I agree with this, that all these aspects should be viewed as parts of practice as it is also confirmed by Zeichner, & Liston (2011). I think though that the 1<sup>st</sup> level includes those elements which we often consider as practice, however, the authors' approach is that teachers' actions and practical theories are interwoven in their practice. I think that what someone does at the 1<sup>st</sup> level is the result of previous activities and reflections being found at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> levels. Adding to these, I think that often we experience a situation where on the surface, teachers seem to be engaged in a similar approach to teaching, but, when a teacher starts to probe deeper, it is obvious that both teachers may have very different ideas about teaching. These differences become sharper when the specific types of students being involved in teaching are brought also into the picture. In any case, as I mentioned before, I agree with Handal and Lauvas's theory (1987) that all 3 levels are instances of teachers' practice; the 1<sup>st</sup> level relates more to practice, but, all levels are integral parts of the teaching practice. Through this perspective, we can see how educators' practical theories are part of their practice and how reflection regards an examination of both practice and practical theories (Zeichner, & Liston, 2011).

Practical knowledge is not a set of rules of 'what to do' as expressed in activities, but, a rich interweaving of images, experiences, understandings and personal stories that guide and inform teachers' actions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Many educators have examined the metaphors and images that teachers have about themselves as educators and have used metaphors as heuristic devices helping them to become more aware of their teaching approaches. They have agreed that the reflection with regard to personal teaching, metaphors involves the process of reframing experience described by Schon, (1983, as cited by Zeichner & Liston, 2011). *'Teachers may discover new perspectives and new solutions to the problems (of practice), ultimately improving the learning environment, by restructuring the frame through which they perceive a problem and generating alternative metaphors'* (Marssshall, 1990, as cited by Zeichner & Liston, 2011). So, at different times different metaphors can be applied as teachers are capable of developing their images and conceptions of their teaching as long as they teach. However, and in relation to 'practical theory of Handal and Lauvas, (1987) I agree that the degree to which teachers reflect on personal experiences affects the degree of examining and enhancing their own teaching.

Regarding the level of *knowledge-personal experience*, and specifically, 'the personal experience' where reflection is encouraged when evaluating one's own teaching and activities are proposed, e.g. proposing sb to be observed by a colleague in order to give alternative perspectives, to me there seems to be an issue: teachers differ in the content of their practical theories holding different values and attributing importance to different things (for example about their teaching approach, the module content etc.) regardless of how they developed their ideas. As mentioned above, they may employ different images and metaphors regarding their beliefs about teaching (e.g. progressive versus traditional teachers; teacher-centered versus learner center teachers etc.), they may be more conscious or less conscious of their practical theories, so, being evaluated by a colleague who may propose new perspectives reflecting on his own personal experience, this requires me to explore more his/her way of thinking, where stems from (values, perceptions) etc. This means that we have to be very cautious & well prepared when proposing an activity in our curriculum or module.

My belief is that although teachers' practical theories influence indeed their practices (for example, how their values influence their decisions of defining the content of a module or of choosing specific teaching approaches), however, the contexts in which they work also influences their practices. Rules, institutional policies, discipline issues and other factors outside academics' control impose occasionally constraints on their freedom to act on the basis of their own practical theory; often teachers are constrained by workplace cultural and institutional forces such as the structure of work, workload, little planning time (Freedman, Jackson & Boles, 1983, as cited by Zeichner & Liston, 2011), and by other factors which influence teaching and teachers (Popkewitz, 1991, as cited by Zeichner & Liston, 2011).). Although there has been a great shift from rhetoric about controlling educators to a concern for empowering them (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988 as cited by Zeichner & Liston, 2011), however, to some extent, pressures, or better, various factors still exist which influence educators. However, academics interpret and give meanings to various situations probably in different ways according to their practical theories.

### Conclusion

Closing, I agree with Handal and Lauvas (1987) that the proposed three levels are instances of teachers'/academics' practice; As I mentioned above, all are part of the so called *practice of teaching* where teachers' practical theories are part of their practice and that reflection regards an examination of *practice* and *practical theories*. Although this theory was not designed as a theory for teaching international students, however, even nowadays with all the changes and challenges around, it still has added value to our teaching practice and challenges our teaching philosophy. However, considering that it is important to be 'open' and 'flexible', we should know that there are not 'ready recipes', 'things are not black or white', 'we are moving continuously', 'we experience and will experience many additional changes'. It is not only what we know, or what we think we know, but if we perceive correctly what we (think) know, if we implement correctly what we (think) know. So, we have to develop *informed judgements* (analyze, synthesize, mix, adjust) avoiding biases (confirming one direction because we favour it, we know it, others follow it etc.) and rejecting uncritically another. I believe that the *theory of practice* offers to us if we perceive it correctly; however, with reference to my own teaching practice as expression of my teaching philosophy, It is not, and, should not be constrained by one approach; it should be dynamic, broad, open and flexible in nature. Otherwise, how can we develop ourselves towards a global mindset?

### Contribution, limitations and recommendations for further research

The paper contributes to our knowledge on the basis that critically discusses the outcomes of the Higher Education Framework for internationalizing curriculum showing the benefits when is applied. The emphasis on the role of consideration of different values, attitudes, assumptions, as well as, on the importance of pro-active development of inclusive learning guides educational leaders how to develop international curricula in context. Also, the critical review of the practical theory of Handal & Lauvas (1987) challenges leaders to see possible gaps between teaching philosophy and teaching practice as well as to find ways to enrich the perspectives of my teaching philosophy.

The main limitation of the present work regards the methodological approach & scope. An empirical study with research findings from different educational settings and systems in other countries would enrich our knowledge towards additional factors which would have added value to be considered for internationalizing teaching & curriculum. Empirical data helps to understand better what works really in practice and what it does not. Finally, the present study recommends that internationalization of curriculum and teaching requires an open to other cultures mind-set by educators and educational leaders.

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