

Accreditations and internationalization of the Business School Curricula

FAHDIA KHALID

University of Bath, Bath, UK

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Globalization and technology infusion have made internationalization of higher education unavoidable; one of the key agendas for today's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is the internationalization of their curricula (Edwards et al., 2003). The curriculum (as product, process or outcome) represents the institutional strategic orientation on internationalization. Though implemented as multicultural curriculum, since early 20th century, the topic still has potential to provide guidelines to the new and existing HEIs. Such as, what is curriculum in the new global settings, what are the determinants of an internationalized curriculum and how can we approach curriculum internationalization that ensures fulfillment of local market skill needs and compliance to the international higher education regulations, at the same time. This study analyzes policy artifacts to guide academics on the mandated requirements to answer these questions. By undertaking qualitative-interpretive (Yanow, 2007, p.407) discourse analysis of policy artifacts from OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and European and American accrediting bodies (AACSB, ACBSP, EQUIS and EPAS), the study has synthesized an operational framework on the said topic. It identifies the determinants of curricula internationalization and the relation between them that can inform curricularists and academics in following policy-driven practices.

Corresponding author: Fahdia Khalid

Email address for corresponding author: F.Khalid@bath.ac.uk

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, globalization and technology integration have brought internationalization as an obvious implication for higher education. While "globalization is beyond our control, for internationalization, we have choices" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 291). Internationalization of higher education (HE) has become a key consideration for higher education management, academic leadership and policy makers. Internationalization of business schools as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery" (Knight, 2003, p.2) is also an expectation of accelerating international business communities. "Internationalization of higher education" and business schools are "becoming important, complex and confusing" (Knight, 2004). Today's HEIs particularly business schools have internationalization embedded in their policies and practices in some form or the other.

One of the challenges around internationalization of HEIs is “international education” that includes curriculum and content (Hyden,2011). The curriculum (“course of action” in its simplest form) design for internationalization is a strategic concern (Chen and Liu, 2011, p.103) that requires a more conscious approach to innovation in curriculum development for internationalization (Robson, 2011, p.626). HEIs have continued to transform both formal and informal curricula to not only cater to learning needs of international students but also to prepare domestic students for global competitiveness (Robson, 2011, p 622). The international education is translated through internationalization of degree programmes and compliance to international standards often represented as accreditation. “Accreditation is a voluntary, nongovernmental process that includes a rigorous external review of a school’s ability to provide the highest quality programs.” (Understanding AACSB Accreditation | AACSB International, n.d.). Sometimes reinforced by governments, accreditations are needed for “triggering funding of an institution or program, enabling students to receive grants and loans, recognizing degrees and diplomas by the government, authorizing employment of graduates, preventing or closing an institution” (Accreditation Mills | INQAAHE, n.d.). Accreditation becomes a strategic need if an HEI wants to attract international students or target markets in another region; increased number of American institutions acquiring European accreditations and vice versa confirms it a regional affair (Lewis, 2009) of targeted markets.

This article represents a framework for internationalization of business schools’ curricula from the perspective of quality assurance and international accrediting bodies. The first section is a literature review on internationalization of higher education, policy and curricula. In the second section, it represents the analysis of policies that directly or indirectly set out benchmarking for curriculum internationalization. In the last section, it synthesizes the findings and discusses the determinants of curriculum internationalization. The concluded determinants can direct HEIs and particularly business schools in channelizing their efforts to comply with relevant policies and accreditation guidelines. To cover the regional differences in the expectations on an internationalized curriculum, the study has included guidelines from UNESCO and European and American accrediting bodies.

Internationalization of HEIs and Curricula:

The internationalization of HEIs is often described by mentioning expats in the academic staff and student populations, off-shore commencement of study modules and/or exporting study programmes to various parts of the world. It is the institutional holistic response that is demonstrated as “school-wide involvement in myriad networks, research, creative work, exchanges, professional development, curricular development, study abroad programs, and institutional partnerships” (Dewey & Duff, 2009, p.493). Internationalization of higher education is the “simultaneous process of bringing the world to the institution as well as bringing the institution to the world” (Hawawini, 2016, p.1) that can arguably be considered a transformative process requiring a great deal of reforms in the core academic and managerial functions. The core academic functions would include curriculum development, teaching and learning pedagogies and synergizing knowledge networks. The internationalization of HEIs is implemented in a variety of ways; where the focus has largely been from management and

operational perspective that does not necessarily include similar attention to internationalization of curricula (Luxen and Peelo, 2009, p.53). Internationalization of curricula is one of the important indicators of institutional internationalization (Huang, 2006) so both formal and informal curricula need to be best-fit with other internationalization initiatives (Robson, 2011).

Curriculum and curriculum design:

'What do we mean by curriculum?' had been a question of philosophical analysis ever since its early use in the seventeenth century. The search for an acceptable definition, that is neither too broad to be dysfunctional nor too narrow to fully encompass the scope of curriculum, continued even in 20th century. In higher education, the term has been designated to baccalaureate experience and often described through three streams of content, experience and plan (Portelli, 1987, p.357). The curriculum for higher education, be as a 'product' or a 'process' (Goodlad, 1984), is often referred as "an academic plan, a designed progression of coursework framing a student's experience in higher education" (Higher Education Curriculum - National Reports On The Undergraduate Curriculum, Traditional And Contemporary Perspectives - INNOVATIONS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM, n.d.) that is "always rationalized as practical" (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p 32). Considering the complexity of curriculum as a concept it is often agreed difficult to capture in a defining statement. The curricularists hence focus on the curriculum design, the underlying philosophical criteria (Portelli, 1987, p.366) for curriculum and its relation to other educational concepts. Coate (2009)

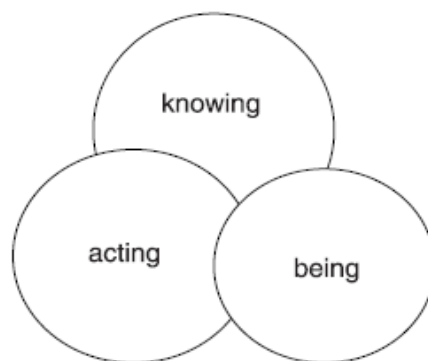


Figure 1: Schema for Curricula (Barnett and Coate, 2005) and (Coate, 2009, p89).

presents a three domains schema [Figure 1] for curriculum design that encapsulates curriculum as knowing, acting and being; where "knowing" suggests consideration on the subject specific "core" knowledge, acting represents "skills and actions" (p.89) expected from students and being denotes the "development of students' identities.... developing students' engagement with the world" (p. 89). The schema also highlights an overlap between domains such as application of knowledge and skills in assessments and course works that require problem solving (skills) and subject specific concepts application at a same time. Following the schema, an internationalized curriculum can be expected to, abreast learners with internationally recognized knowledge, equip them with skills and attitudes that are needed to operate in

diversified communities such as communication, risk taking and facilitate establishment of sense of being in various roles.

The curriculum design, for any HEI, is expected to be in constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999) with learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods and assessments. This learning outcomes driven approach to curriculum design has facilitated quality assurance and credit recognition across countries such as within the Bologna Process. The curricula in higher education are developed following national and supranational frame works and policy (Coate, 2005, p.78) that has in turn increased a formal control on curriculum development and design. Apart from national quality assurance, supra national organizations also evaluate curriculum design (Coate, 2005, p. 81) to affirm confidence in the standards of education. Such evaluations are often carried out through international accreditation bodies. Aimed at enhancing students' ability to understand business and management problems in international contexts (Ghemawat, 2011, p.107), the curriculum internationalization cannot be limited to merely introduction of a few international content in the relevant courses. Many business schools have incorporated international content in their curricula; there are many opportunities to make it "more deliberate, less fragmented and better aligned" (Ghemawat, 2011, p.108). It requires comprehensive initiatives for the successful transformation (Brustein, 2013) that are often addressed by researchers in many ways. Hawawini (2016) presents a three fundamental components formula namely "unit, element and medium" (p.35) on decision making which can determine the internationalization scale of a business school curricula. Edwards et al. (2003, p. 190) provides three levels of curriculum internationalization that scaffolds the learning experiences from simple to complex. Nevertheless, internationalization of business school curricula is a complex transformation that is influenced by authorities and stakeholders in the form of policy, expectations and resources. It is a transformational discourse that requires change at each level of policy integration. Following Dewey & Duff's and Knight's definitions, internationalization can arguably be considered as a strategic national agenda that requires policy penetration from institution level to programme and course level.

Curriculum internationalization and policy:

As business education became accessible to wider international communities and economic benefits triggered internationalization of business schools, policy interventions became compulsory to ensure quality education for individual recipient of these services and to secure the long-term social and economic impact on the relevant countries. The national directorates of HE from different countries have reinforced their frameworks and benchmarking to recognize international qualifications; they have also started to strengthen and formalize inter-country and regional ties to standardize the quality of business education for comparability. The supra national organizations such as OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) also facilitated the quality assurance efforts.

In the light of literature review on internationalization and curricula so far, this study undertakes analysis of policy artifacts from supra national organizations and accreditation

bodies that represents implementation hierarchy of curricula internationalization up to the course level and are listed in [Table-1].

OECD has been one of the early supporters of internationalized curriculum for higher education enabling students to perform in internationalized context (OECD, 1996, p.36).

One of such OECD's contributions is the **"Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education UNESCO 2005"** (UNESCO, OECD guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education - OECD, 2015) which is analyzed as part of this study. This policy document was developed as a joint effort of UNESCO and OECD. Established in 1961, based in France, OECD has 36 member-countries including USA and UK. The analysis of the said policy document has helped to incorporate a breadth of perspectives on internationalization across countries including UK and USA (About the OECD - OECD, n.d.). OECD also collaborated with national and regional field specific bodies to achieve their goals such as international collaboration the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) which is an official partner of UNESCO for quality assurance (UNESCO | INQAAHE, 2016).

Policy document Level	Policy document Title
Supra National/ National	Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education UNESCO 2005 (UNESCO INQAAHE, 2016)
Institute / School Level Accreditation guidelines from European and American Accreditation bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation (AACSB 2013 Business Accreditation Standards AACSB International, 2013). • 2016 EQUIS standards and Criteria -EFMD Accreditation for an International Business School (Pergoot, 2016).
Programme Level Accreditation guidelines from European and American Accreditation bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016 EPAS Standards and Criteria: EFMD Accreditation for International Degree Programmes in Business and Management (EPAS Standards and Criteria, 2016). • ACBSP standards and Criteria for Demonstrating Excellence in Baccalaureate Degree Accounting Programs (ACBSP standards and Criteria for Demonstrating Excellence in Baccalaureate Degree Accounting Programs, 2016).

Table 1- Level Wise Policy artifacts on internationalization of curricula

AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation:

One of the INQAAHE members is AACSB. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), established in 1916, is a network of higher education stakeholders from across the globe. Aiming engagement, acceleration and innovation, AACSB, itself, is an evidence of internationalization. This voluntary membership organization provides quality assurance for business and accounting programmes. Any business school aiming to acquire membership with AACSB, needs to comply with standards and procedures that are explained in the AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation. The eligibility

assessment is the first step in accreditations acquiring process (AACSB 2013 Business Accreditation Standards | AACSB International, 2013). The document is one of the data analyzed that identifies determinants of internationalization of curricula from AACSB perspective.

ACBSP standards and Criteria for Demonstrating Excellence in Baccalaureate Degree Accounting Programs-2016

ACBSP (The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs), is an accreditation body that reviews business, accounting and other business related programmes. Head quartered in USA, it has representation in 60 countries and offers accreditation for business programmes at associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree levels (Join ACBSP - Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, 2016). As ACBSP is focus on teaching and students' learning, it makes it fit-for-purpose to identify curriculum determinants in internationalized context. The policy document under study lists the standards and criteria for accounting programme.

2016 EPAS Standards and Criteria and 2016 EQUIS standards and Criteria

EFMD (European Federation of Management Development), founded in 1972, is a membership based organization that is based in Belgium with presence in Asia and America. It undertakes quality and impact assessment of business education. EQUIS (EFMD Quality Improvement System) and EPAS is (EFMD Programme Accreditation System) are the institutional and programme accreditations systems operated by EFMQ. EPAS assesses programmes that have internationalization orientation. The accreditation covers national and international context along with programme structure and design. Such scope makes it an appropriate policy document to identify determinants of an internationalized curriculum. 2016-EPAS Standards and Criteria set out standards covering accreditation for all for programmes from Bachelor to Doctorate. EQUIS is an institutional accreditation system that reviews and accredits operations/units of an institution. 2016-EQUIS Standards and Criteria is a policy document that presents standards and criteria for any international institution.

Methodology:

The selected policy artifacts are analyzed qualitatively by following qualitative-interpretive (Yanow, 2007, p.407) discourse analysis approach from the field of contextual policy research. With the application of grounded theory, the analysis is inducted in the model presented in Figure 3. The discourse analysis is applied using computer-aided tools (Clarke, p. 452) called NVIVO-11. At first policy documents were classified and then emerging key themes (Wilson, 2011, p.177) were identified to discuss the determinants of curricula internationalization. The conceptual content analysis was applied to make inferences (Wilson, 2011, p.177) about expectations from quality assurance perspective and coding into NVIVO. The contextual variables (Robert, 2015, p.772) in this qualitative-interpretive approach are the stakeholders' expectations, international market for HE and strategic orientation of an institution on internationalization of qualification it offers. The next section illustrates findings that are concluded as 'determinants of curricula internationalization'.

Findings and discussions:

Internationalization of curricula is reinforced as a cornerstone across all studied policy documents. Apart from other regulatory requirements, curricula internationalization requires interventions in planning for curricula across the implementation hierarchy, as proposed in [Figure-2], from the policy to the course level.

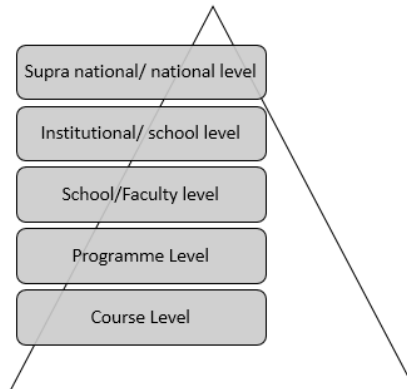


Figure 2. Implementation hierarchy of Curriculum Internationalization and policy diffusion

The findings of the policy analysis conducted for the study is presented in the form of a model [Figure-3] that indicates the detriments of curriculum internationalization and the relation between them. From here on, the model is unpacked to discuss the findings and explain the determinants of internationalization of curricula. In the light of expectation from international bodies, the determinants of curricula internationalization are identified as follows.

International standards for curricula:

The business schools are expected to design curricula to deliver to international corporate world. The curricula are expected to be quality assured by a competent body on knowledge and skills. They are also expected to be designed to nurture abilities on understanding diversity in social, cultural and linguistic domains. Another expectation is the conscientiousness and sensitivity to varied global agendas such as corporate social responsibility, economic and environmental sustainability. Though not a determinant of an internationalized curriculum, access to most up-to-date, valid and relevant information to all stakeholders is mandated for successful execution of curricula. The establishing of inter-institutional networks to develop criteria for qualifications' comparability and awarding equivalence is also recommended. The comparable curricula help position programmes and qualifications at international level. The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes/goals (PILOs) are considered an agreed tool for accreditation, compliance and recognition also providing a framework for designing curriculum constituents such as assessment and delivery methods and international content. The inclusion of internationalization/global perspective in developing PILOs, is arguably the most challenging and crucial to internationalization of curricula. PILOs provide scope and level of internationalization of curricula and, of course, reflect the institutional mission and strategy on internationalization. PILOs should showcase the conceptual and operational knowledge and "intellectual and behavioral competencies" from

internationalization perspective. The PILOs should incorporate a wide range of international skills (such as communication, analytical and reflective thinking, information handling, technology integration and team work skills); analytical, personal, and enterprise qualities and business and management knowledge areas in global societal context acknowledging interdependent international environment. Such as anticipating customer needs, recognize policy implications and knowledge of another language etc. The learning outcomes and other constituents of curriculum should be in constructive alignment. However, the use of programme delivery mode should not affect

The assurance on PILOs.

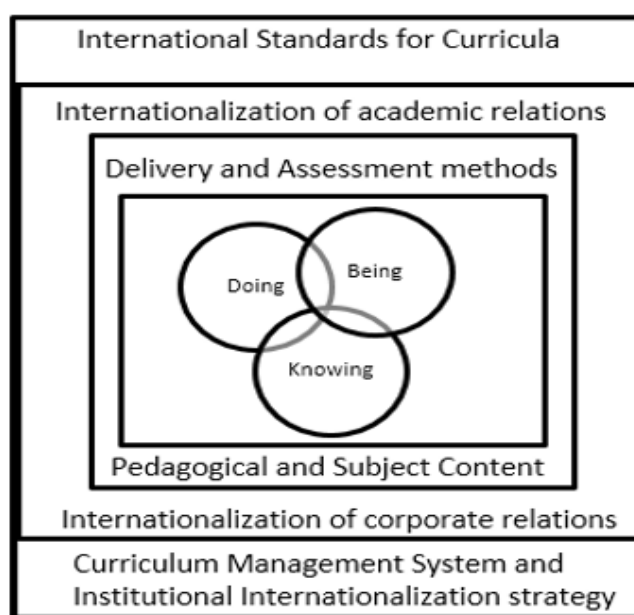


Figure 3- Determinants of Curricula Internationalization

Institutional internationalization strategy and Curricula Management System (CMS):

Institutional internationalization strategy sets out processes that collect international employers, students and subject experts' recommendation towards curricula improvement. CMS provides mechanism to incorporate stakeholders' input in continuous improvement and revision of curricula. It also facilitates appropriate intersection of academic and professional engagement that brings cross-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability and technology agendas up for discussion and inclusion in curricula. The proactive role of institutional CMS is also a determinant of curricula internationalization as it aligns the internally recommended interventions with relevant national HE systems and institutional capacity. CMS also work towards Provision of valid, reliable and explicit processes for credit transfer and exemptions that allow for international compatibility and comparability of curricula.

Internationalization of academic and corporate relations:

Another important determinant is the involvement of stakeholders as active members in internationalization of learning experiences. The nationality-mix and diversity in student and

faculty population enriches peer learning for international content and bring internationalization to the classrooms. The faculty portfolio of international and/or professional qualifications and scholarships influence teaching/learning methods, assessment design and constructive alignment with institutional goals around developing global citizens.

Apart from in-class learning experiences, internationalization of curricula also supported by internationalization of academic and corporate relations. Inter-institutional coordination, agreements and collaboration for convergence of practice on internationalization are also important. International peer support for policy and programme review, feedback for improvement in pedagogical content and dissemination of information about quality assurance are a few examples. The learning communities, such as academic or faculty relations with international companies also strengthen curricula by providing knowledge creation and capacity building opportunities to learners and international business community.

Pedagogical and subject content:

The curricula provide learning experiences encapsulating knowledge and skills that enable learners to operate in internationalized contexts. The international skills include, but not limited to, transferable intellectual skills, key managerial skills, cognitive thinking skills, written and oral communication skills. Although curriculum design is subject to institutional context and access to resources; however, an internationalized curriculum should provide theory and concepts application in international, regional and local contexts. The integration can be in the form 'interlocking' the functional concepts into diversified context that encourage problem solving and further exploration of the concept in varied (such as legal) environments. The curricula are to be flexible and dynamic in terms of content to incorporate emerging international contexts and business concepts such as access to cross country data comparison and trend analysis. The curricula design is to be innovative with explicit international focus. Evidence and description of how international content is incorporated is provided across the programme. Inclusion of knowledge of languages which is other than native and in alignment with internationalization strategy of the institute is a part of international learning. The functional business subject content should also incorporate ethics, responsibility and sustainability concerns and other emerging corporate social responsibility issues such as global economic activities, diversity and sustainability concerns. Such engagement will enhance learners' sense of being and identity that would cultivate global mindsets. The curricula content is also expected to be mapped to the relevant professional qualifications' content and skills [where applicable] ensuring graduates' access to international jobs.

Delivery and Assessment methods:

Another constituent of internationalization of curricula is programme delivery and assessments that encompass internationalization of learning experiences for business students. The curricula are to be taught and delivered in a way that facilitates knowledge creation and authentic problem solving of business world. The programmes can be structured to incorporate learning in the form of split degree programs, joint degree, distance learning, international student exchange, research collaborations, internship at local branch of an international organization or at an offshore international company etc. Alongside setting programme

structure for an internationalized learning experience, classrooms can also be internationalized by deploying various modes of delivery. Delivery method and pedagogical content that capitalizes on international experiences of peers, teacher and faculty enhances exposure to varied environments, collaborative learning and student- teacher interaction. Teaching materials that incorporate and inform learners on acknowledging international problems and solutions in those environments can trigger discussions and practice of needed skills. The delivery methods that allow extensive student-student and student-faculty interaction and are driven with authentic international business problems are conducive for learning international education. The pedagogical and subject content for international learning experience (case studies, data sets etc.) are expected to be incorporated across the programme. Degree structures are designed in multiple formats such as offering globalization courses and management functional courses separately or interlocking application of international skills and knowledge within functional courses (Shooshtari and Manuel, 2014).

The assessments are designed as a means of competency building and assurance of learning (Higher Education to 2030, Volume 2, Globalization, 2009). The assessments that relate to globalization should incorporate skills and indicators that assure learners' competence to perform in international context. It is also expected to deploy international benchmarking of assessment methods and standards that will also ease comparability and credit recognition at international level. Establishment of assessment methods and procedures that are based on learning outcomes is an internationally accepted approach to assessment design. The assessments should also incorporate professional standards (both from foreign and local labor market) for better positioning of programme and graduates' in the international markets.

Conclusion

This study identifies the determinants of curricula internationalization from the policy perspective. The recommendations are based on contextual policy qualitative-interpretive analysis (Yanow, 2007, p.407) of artifacts from selected American and European accrediting bodies and OECD guidelines. The purpose of this paper is not to compare these agencies but to recommend a framework that can assist curricularists in translating compliance guidelines into designing curricula from internationalization perspective and follow best practice. This study can also inform financial and managerial decisions around directing resources towards internationalizing curricula and accreditations. The model, by no means, limits innovation in HE it rather provides a road-map to explore possibilities of imparting operational and academic competencies into graduates that are in-line with realities of today's international business world. Further studies can be conducted on factors that influence these determinants and hence make each curriculum different from the rest; such factors may include scholarly activities of faculty, attention to international stakeholders' expectations and regional/local policy interventions.

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