Final CALT report on 2014 University Teaching Development Grant

How do university teachers 'teach', 'foster' or otherwise 'influence the development of' the Otago graduate attribute 'global perspective'?

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Overview

This project aimed to use a modified *circuit of culture* enquiry, incorporating framing analysis, to better understand how the 'global perspective' attribute is produced, represented, and consumed at the University of Otago. The project also aimed to produce a range of resources to help departments and teachers address this attribute in their university work.

Introduction

This research explored how university teachers '*teach*' or otherwise '*influence the development of*' the graduate attribute "global perspective". Graduate attributes are to be fostered within Otago's degree programmes, but they are not necessarily formally 'taught'. They may not appear as intended learning outcomes or as text in lecture handouts. They may not be 'assessed' or 'evaluated'. They may not appear explicitly in papers or in programmes at all. In some respects we need to 'read between the lines' to understand the nature of the communication that is intended and that perhaps occurs. To limit the difficulties involved we focused, in this project, on written communications available on web pages; accepting that the rich diversity of spoken interactions will need to wait for other research opportunities.

Methods and results

Our project operated in four phases.

Phase 1 The context of production considered how multifarious factors, from learning and teaching norms, to economic pressures (e.g. to increase international student numbers), to institutional operational issues, have shaped the production of text about a global perspective at Otago. We did this by looking at objectives in key institutional documents as well as by interviewing people who have been involved in promoting or interpreting a global perspective (and internationalisation more broadly) at this University. We interviewed three senior academic managers with relevant roles.

Our data suggests that the University of Otago has responded to its particular position, and its particular conceptions of its position, within global higher education to incorporate various time-dependent notions of 'international', 'internationalise', 'globalise' and 'global' within its strategies and reports. Interviews suggest that the happenstance of who is in key important roles at key times points has had a significant bearing on the precise details of what a global perspective is perceived to be and on what this has to do with the University of Otago. Each person interviewed expressed a particular, even unique viewpoint on the development of the global perspective at the University of Otago.

Phase 2 Representation and circulation Phase two used framing analysis to discover the dominant and reoccurring frames that exist within higher education discourse at this university in the context of fostering a global perspective. We focussed on institutional and departmental web pages and explored words, metaphors, examples, descriptions, arguments and visual images for evidence of dominant cultural frames and to discover potentially new (to the educational literature) frames in the context of global perspective.

Our results suggest that there are at least four relatively independent frame packages for global perspective that appear in University of Otago webpages. We describe these as Arena, Agora, Home and Garden and our research outputs will provide details on their nature.

While we might have expected a frame package that emphasised, 'the natural world' as a constituent of 'the global environment' used within Otago definitions of global perspective, we did not find this approach to framing global perspective. All global perspectives identified in our research were essentially anthropocentric.

Phase 3 Consumption The third phase of this project invited university teachers, students and support staff to interpret the meaning of examples of text in three group interviews.

In all three interviews, participants: found it relatively straightforward to allocate text from webpages to one of our four frame packages; did so in ways strikingly similar with each other and with the researchers in this project; did not seem worried that four relatively independent frame packages coexisted within University of Otago communications and in particular were not concerned that some of these four frame packages were likely mutually exclusive; were neither surprised nor concerned that a 'natural world' frame package did not appear to exist.

Phase 4 Outputs and evaluation We focus on producing resources to support teaching and learning and evaluation of global perspective. In particular we are attempting to produce a resource that challenges users to reflect on their own global perspective and the global perspective that they may be fostering as they teach. The researchers intend to create a research article for a peer-reviewed journal, a professional development workshop (in HEDC) and a conference presentation.

Implications

In particular, although the coexistence of potentially conflicting frame packages was not troublesome to participants in our group interviews, it may be interesting to those within the institution charged with responsibility to manage the institution strategically. It may, for example, lead some to doubt the existence of a unique and identifiable Otago graduate profile. Even within an individual department, we think it is likely that some university teachers are fostering a highly competitive, Arena, style of global perspective, while others may be simultaneously fostering a more caring and sharing, Agoura, Home or Garden perspective.

We find it fascinating that the word 'environment' could be interpreted by university academics, support staff and students in a wholly anthropocentric manner and hope that the university will research this phenomenon more quantitatively at some point.