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CURRICULUM & TEACHING STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Internationalisation of the curriculum in higher education: A case from a Mozambican university

Charnaldo Jaime Ndaipa^{1,2*}, Kristina Edström¹, Patrício Langa^{3,4} and Lars Geschwind¹

Abstract: Internationalisation of the curriculum has been the subject of various debates in recent years in higher education institutions. In particular, the need to incorporate local knowledge systems when internationalising the curriculum continues to be a major challenge in African universities. This study explores faculty members' experiences inherent in the internationalisation of the curriculum at one Mozambican university. On the basis of semi-structured interviews with eleven faculty members, two research questions were investigated: (1) How do faculty members understand the internationalisation of the curriculum in their university? (2) How are local knowledge systems embedded in the internationalisation of the university curriculum? The findings revealed that the internationalisation of the curriculum is mainly understood in terms of developing intercultural knowledge, skills and values; mobility of students, teachers and academic programmes; and teaching international students and languages. Some practices suggest opportunities for a more decolonised approach in the internationalisation of the university curriculum, such as the integration of local languages and the practice of ethnomathematics, with the main focus on ethnomathematics.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) has been a subject of many debates nowadays involving students, teachers, researchers and non-academics within and beyond academia. However, its interpretation and framework for implementation have been always different across higher education institutions around the world, opening room for the need to bring into discussion different actors from different contexts in an attempt to express their views. In this study, we invited teachers from one university in Mozambique to share their lived experiences on the IoC. As a consequence, we had interesting findings and after critically analysing them we come across that IoC is a reality in the institution but one of the main constraints is the prevailing perception of linking the interpretation of IoC with Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, it was interesting to note some practices related to local languages and cultures which are good for home and foreign students.

Subjects: Higher Education; International & Comparative Education; Curriculum Studies

Keywords: faculty members; internationalisation of the curriculum; local knowledge; Mozambique

1. Introduction

Internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) plays an important part in reforms of the higher education system in various countries, becoming more of a focus for higher education institutions (HEIs) in recent years (Huang, 2006; Zhou, 2019). It is recognised by scholars and policy makers as an important component of any university's internationalisation strategy because it provides international and intercultural opportunities to all students (Leask, 2013). The world of work and business is becoming more international, more globalised, more multicultural and more cosmopolitan. Thus, engaging students with the internationalisation agenda of universities will have a great impact on their future lives, with the potential to have a broader impact on society (Haigh, 2018; Leask, 2011).

Nevertheless, there are critical voices regarding internationalisation. For instance, according to Gyamera and Burke (2018) and McDonald and Van Der Horst (2007), the hegemonic discourses connected to neoliberal agendas have been re-privileging Western-oriented values and perspectives, and that the impact of curriculum changes in African HEIs are issues of critical concern. According to Ndaipa et al. (2022a), this applies to national policy and the core internationalisation practices of the premier HEIs in Mozambique. Thus, it is a challenge for African universities to maintain a transformative agenda from decolonisation (Du Preez, 2018) under conditions in which indigenous knowledge systems are suppressed in other ways (Gyamera, 2014). New approaches have emerged to decolonise the curriculum, placing less emphasis on the Anglosphere and Western dominance in the IoC (De Wit & Jones, 2021). Hence, it is no longer possible to consider IoC only in terms of a Westernised, largely Anglo-Saxon and predominantly English-speaking paradigm. A key discourse comes from A. Mbembe (2015), who states that “a decolonized university in Africa should put African languages at the centre of its teaching and learning project” (p. 17).

Le Grange (2016) posits that decolonisation, like internationalisation, is a key concept in the university setting, but also warns that it is a contested term with different meanings in different discourses. For example, Du Preez (2018) describes it as a strategic response of HEIs to redress past inequalities and injustices, challenge the dominance of Western knowledge, pedagogy and research, and question the colonial roots of university curricula.

Empirical studies of IoC have focused on different perspectives, such as those of lecturers (Renfors, 2019), students (Cheng et al., 2016) or both students and staff (Clifford & Montgomery, 2015; Johansen & Tkachenko, 2019). As these studies focus on the Western context, however, it is not advisable to assume that the findings can be generalised across Africa or Mozambique. As Leask (2009) notes, IoC varies between institutions, faculty members and disciplines.

We focus our study based on the case of one Mozambican HEI named “University of Technology” (UniTech), as a pseudonym, with enormous experience in teacher education programmes. As Ndaipa et al. (2022b) noted, it is one of the premier HEIs established in the country, which embodies a classic model of internationalisation with a diverse international student body, inward and outward mobility of students and staff, and partnerships and collaborations with different international entities. Hence, based on UniTech’s case, this study explores faculty members’ understanding of IoC from the perspective of teaching. Moreover, as a follow-up, it investigates the extent to which local knowledge is embedded in IoC. For the purposes of this research, “faculty members” refer to academic staff devoted to performing teaching activities, also called teachers or lecturers elsewhere. The concept of local knowledge systems is underpinned by the definition given by Hoppers (2002), who describes the concept as

the combination of knowledge systems related to technology; social, economic and philosophical learning; or educational, legal and governance systems, including those used in liberation struggles.

There is a strong rationale for exploring faculty members' views. Faculty are stewards of internationalisation across the teaching agenda, and IoC does not occur without their engagement (Brewer & Leask, 2022). Gal (2020) reports that engaging faculty members in discussions around IoC can serve to establish an institutional culture around curriculum work, making it less invisible and less solitary. Faculty members have the opportunity to experiment and implement various kinds of change. IoC can begin at different levels—from adding one activity in class or a specific assignment to revising an existing course or designing a new one. Thus, IoC is not a narrow concept, such as teaching in English or supporting student mobility needs, but rather an opportunity to challenge existing knowledge paradigms, with the boundaries of the curriculum serving as a major point of engagement (Gal, 2020; Zhou, 2019).

The current study makes three key contributions. First, it links the ongoing discussions regarding IoC in higher education to the burgeoning literature on global perspectives, intercultural competence and responsible global citizenship. Second, it sheds empirical light on the IoC debate by providing local understandings of the phenomenon to the case institution and analysing the findings through a decolonisation framework. Third, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the context of the scarcity of literature about IoC in particular and the internationalisation of HEIs in general (see Ndaipa et al. 2022b; Proctor & Rumbley, 2018), benefiting higher education practitioners in Mozambique and elsewhere. The findings are based on a critical analysis of semi-structured interviews elicited from faculty members at one public Mozambican university, guided by the following research questions:

- (1) How do faculty members understand IoC in their university?
- (2) How are local knowledge systems embedded in the internationalisation of the university curriculum?

1.1. IoC Research

Betty Leask's interpretation of IoC is described in the literature as the most widely accepted definition: "the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a program of study" (Leask, 2009, p. 209). The goal is to help students develop attributes, qualities or competencies to successfully handle the challenges of living and working in contemporary societies across the world through formal, informal and hidden curricula (Leask, 2009; Villar-Onrubia & Rajpal, 2016). Some international students may become disengaged with a curriculum that does not consider ways of learning in other cultures to be appropriate (Cheng et al., 2016). To avoid this, De Wit and Hunter (2015) suggest an *inclusive internationalisation*, which can be interpreted as a type of internationalisation that incorporates values, norms and principles not only from the Global North but also from the Global South, respecting intercultural realities in multicultural societies.

Barnett and Coate (2005) acknowledge that "curriculum" is one of the major terms in the language of higher education because, through it, ideas of higher education are put into practice. However, there is no common understanding on its definition among theorists or practitioners (Gosper & Ifenthaler, 2014) as there are several meanings associated with it (Makura & Makura, 2012). Sprandel (2010) defines the curriculum as a set of ideas comprising a means of structuring the association of the student and the teacher, with the aim of nurturing the personal development of the student. For Bernstein, the curriculum is a principle or principles whereby, of all the possible contents of the time, some contents are given a special status and enter into an open or closed relation with each other. Moreover, "[the]curriculum defines what counts as valid

knowledge” (Bernstein, 1975, p. 77). From Bernstein’s understanding, we can explore “time and content” as vital for curriculum definition, independently of “valid knowledge”, meaning that a curriculum is flexible and that, from time to time, its content or valid knowledge can be transformed across the three curriculum types, namely, formal, informal and hidden.

Scholars (e.g., Leask, 2009; Leask & Bridge, 2013) elaborate on formal, informal and hidden curricula. A formal curriculum is defined as including international and local learning experiences in a planned and sequenced programme of teaching and learning activities that are later assessed in different ways, aiming to develop specific international and intercultural learning outcomes. Conversely, the informal curriculum encompasses intercultural interactions involving extra-curricular activities. The hidden curriculum comprises incidental lessons learned about power and authority, as well as about what and whose knowledge is valued and not valued, based on the way the curriculum is organised and enacted. The hidden curriculum, according to Kentli (2009), is characterised by unexpected and unintentional social interactions within an environment.

One of the major concerns of IoC in some HEIs is “to ensure students graduate with the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to make positive, ethical contributions as citizens and professionals to their global, national and local communities” (Leask, 2011, p. 8). An internationalised curriculum articulates three intended outcomes: global perspectives, intercultural competence and responsible global citizenship (Green & Whitsed, 2015; Leask, 2015).

1.1.1. Global Perspectives

Developing a global perspective implies broadening curricula and incorporating pedagogic approaches that empower students to develop a sense of critical thinking so that they can challenge orthodoxy and bring about change; promoting different perspectives and approaches; and encouraging social and political engagement (Bourn, 2011). Hence, following Bourn and Shiel (2009, p. 672), a curriculum that has been achieved by embedding global perspectives within internationalisation strategies will:

- Enable students to understand the links between their own lives and those of people throughout the world
- Increase understanding of economic, social and political forces that shape life
- Develop skills, attitudes and values to enable people working together to bring about change for the “common good” and to take control of their own lives
- Provide learners with the knowledge and skills to work towards a more just and sustainable world in which power and resources are more equitable and shared.

1.1.2. Intercultural Competence

The definition of intercultural competence can be found in various studies (see, for Chen & Starosta, 1996, 1999; Gundling, 2003; Magolda, 2000). The concept is mainly associated with notions of global citizenship, global learning, multiculturalism and, increasingly, diversity, equity and inclusion (Deardorff & Jones, 2022). The most cited interpretation is given by Deardorff, who defines it as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 247–248). It is viewed as one of the core elements of IoC (Leask, 2009, 2015) also referred to as *interculturalisation* (Jones, 2019).

As Deardorff notes, intercultural competence involves specific components, such as understanding others’ views, cultural self-awareness and a capacity for self-assessment, adaptability and adjustment to a new cultural environment, skills to listen and observe, general openness to intercultural learning and people from other cultures, the ability to adapt to varying intercultural communication and ways of learning, deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one’s own and others’) and respect for other cultures (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 249–250). Therefore, as claimed by

Jones (2013), it is not about specific knowledge of one culture but operating effectively across different cultures and challenging one's own values, assumptions and stereotypes.

Intercultural competence can be developed through the curriculum learning outcomes that require all students to encounter, embrace and explore a broad range of *cultural otherness*; through meaningful and purposeful interaction between international and home students; through intercultural opportunities in the local community; and through intercultural experiences abroad (Deardorff & Jones, 2022; Jones, 2019). Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) consider intercultural competence to be of the utmost importance for students for three reasons. First, it enables them, once equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes, to compete globally in a culturally diverse world. Second, they become interculturally competent, with ample opportunities for employment overseas. Third, they develop the ability to relate to and with people from vastly different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

1.1.3. *Responsible Global Citizenship*

Interest in internationalising the curriculum in terms of global citizenship education has increased in parallel with the employability agenda (Clifford & Haigh, 2018). According to Haigh (2018), education for global citizenship is about encouraging learners to see themselves as citizens of the world, rather than just a small fraction. Three attributes need to be fostered through teaching to produce global citizens: critical awareness of their own tradition, recognition of their responsibilities as world citizens and an empathic imagination needed to see the world as others see it.

Given that IoC is an approach to developing global learning and preparing students to become global citizens, Zhou (2019) recommends that faculty members care about their students and learning outcomes; when putting IoC into practice, they are advised to focus on specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely goals. Moreover, following Leask (2009) and Leask and Bridge (2013), when conceptualising IoC, faculty members are advised to take into account the following elements: dominant and emerging paradigms; requirements of professional practice and citizenship; assessment of student learning; systematic development across the programme; and the institutional, local, national, regional and global contexts.

1.2. *Conceptual Framework*

In analysing how faculty members understand IoC and the extent to which local knowledge is embedded in IoC, we have applied a decolonisation framework. The framework was applied on the basis that, as elsewhere in Africa, Mozambique's internationalisation and its HEIs are increasingly connected to a colonial past (see e.g., Ndaipa et al. 2022a; Heleta & Chasi, 2022; Thondhlana et al., 2021), thus influencing the teaching and learning processes throughout the university curricula. Nevertheless, calls for decolonisation in the curriculum of Mozambican HEIs are emerging (see, Dias, 2012).

Decolonisation refers to critically examining what and whose knowledge and ways of being are being incorporated into education programmes and, most importantly, decentring (not destroying) Western knowledge (Le Grange, 2016; Le Grange et al., 2020; Heleta, 2016), thus ending Westernisation, that is, the Eurocentric epistemic canon that attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production (J. A. Mbembe, 2016). Santos (2014) calls the elimination of local knowledge *epistemicide*, elaborating thus:

Unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it. In the most extreme cases, such as that of European expansion, epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide. The loss of epistemological confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity. The more consistent the practice of diatopical hermeneutics, the more destabilizing the image of such epistemicides. (Santos, 2014, p. 92)

Decolonisation can be understood as confronting epistemecides, cognitive injustices and hierarchies in knowledge and education as its key contribution to the internationalisation of higher education and the cultivation of a curriculum that fully recognises planetary human entanglements (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

The current internationalisation of higher education, as posited by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021), is informed by hegemonic neoliberal, capitalist and commercial globalisation, taking the form of the enrichment of the curriculum with the addition of foreign languages and new materials from scholars from other places. These actions can also be seen as responses to academic capitalism and university imperialism. Such a curriculum, as assessed by Heleta (2016), does not develop students' critical and analytical skills to understand and move the African continent forward. A more detailed account of the quest for the transformation of the curriculum is needed. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, this would entail the search for a liberatory perspective, focusing on a curriculum that is relevant to the local context so that Africans would "see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe" (Wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 87). The ultimate goal is the *Africanisation of knowledge* (Jansen, 2017) or *Afrocentricity*, which entails placing African ideas at the centre of the curriculum (Asante, 1998) while also maintaining both foreign and local knowledge in the curriculum (Heleta, 2016).

The recovery of local or indigenous knowledge is deeply intertwined with the process of decolonisation because the historical past of colonialism implied the systematic devaluing of local knowledge (Shizha, 2010). Hence, curriculum studies become a decolonising practice in the sense that no knowledge tradition dominates another; in the context of Africa, this means the possibility of including the values and traditions of indigenous peoples, that is, African values and beliefs (Le Grange, 2016, 2018). Indigenous knowledge is defined as unique, local, traditional knowledge developed around the specific conditions of people in a particular geographical area (Sillitoe et al., 2005). It reflects the dynamic way in which the residents of an area, such as Africa, have come to understand themselves in relation to their natural environment and how they organise their folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs and history to enhance their lives (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

When discussing IoC, we believe that it is important to explore how faculty members at the case university understand it, as well as whether and how local knowledge is embedded. The impetus is to understand the extent to which IoC is on the pathway to decolonisation or whether it is solely focused on the Western paradigm.

1.3. Overview of the Study Context

The curriculum of the case university has been subject to various reforms or, as Shay (2015) calls it, "transformations". According to Camuendo and Cruz (2016) and Duarte (2009), the reform of 2004 was the first since the establishment of the institution in the 1980s. The curriculum was seen as inadequate and outdated in terms of its political, economic and social framework, as well as any recent scientific-technological developments. According to the aforementioned scholars, the curricular plans did not allow students to combine scientific areas, the assessment system was inflexible and the conditions for laboratory work in the natural sciences were insufficient. In 2010, a new curriculum was introduced, with flexibility and practical components in the courses of natural sciences and others (Camuendo & Cruz, 2016).

In contrast to these reforms, the impetus for curriculum reform to address internationalisation came from the national level. The government created the National Higher Education Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance System (SINAQES) in 2007. The purpose was to harmonise national standards with regional and international standards to ensure improvements in the quality and relevance of Mozambican higher education (Decreto no 63/2007) (2012) through an agency called the National Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (CNAQ). Influenced by SINAQES and international trends in higher education, new changes were made to implement IoC.

As a result, the university had to adapt and harmonise its institutional programmes with other higher education systems in the African region and globally, and embrace student international mobility within the Southern African Development Community and worldwide (UP, 2014).

1.4. Method

1.4.1. Research Design

Based on UniTech's case, the primary purpose of this study is to explore faculty's understanding of IoC from the perspective of teaching. Moreover, as a follow-up, it investigates the extent to which local knowledge is embedded in the IoC. The study adopts a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research focuses on humans' understanding, experiences and interpretations of the social world. Furthermore, it gives voice to participants (Cohen et al., 2018). This study focuses on the ontological and epistemological beliefs of the faculty members' views regarding the teaching practices concerning IoC in the Mozambican higher education context.

1.4.2. Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2014) reports that in the qualitative approach, data are collected in the field at the site where the participants experience the phenomenon under investigation. With respect to the issues of anonymity and confidentiality, the name "UniTech" was chosen as explained at the outset, as a pseudonym for the case institution under study. Moreover, the respondents were assured that their participation would also be anonymous and that the data collected would be handled in a confidential manner. Eleven senior faculty members from UniTech were involved in the study. Prior to contacting the interviewees from the sampled university, letters were sent to three faculties to explain the purpose of the interviews and seek permission from the deans. Following approval, consent was sought through email before interviewing the participants. The interviews were undertaken between 2021 and 2022. Since most of the interviewees were not fluent in English, the interviews were conducted in Portuguese and the first author, who is fluent in both Portuguese and English, translated the interviews and later validated them through a professional language editor.

1.4.3. Participants' Profile and Sampling

Participants were selected through a purposive sampling strategy to encompass a general spectrum of the IoC in Mozambican higher education according to their daily experiences. In purposive sampling, according to Cohen et al. (2018), people are accessed on the basis of their expertise and experience. The profiles of the respondents varied (see, Table 1) in terms of gender and the area of their PhD. Their teaching experience was considerable, ranging from 10 to 35 years.

Table 1. Description of the participants

Participant	Sex	Experience (years)	Location
P01	Female	20–25	FCLCA
P02	Female	25–30	FCTA
P03	Male	10–15	FCNM
P04	Male	10–15	FCNM
P05	Male	25–30	FCTA
P06	Male	25–30	FCNM
P07	Male	25–30	FCNM
P08	Male	15–20	FCLCA
P09	Male	30–35	FCTA
P10	Female	30–35	FCLCA
P11	Male	30–35	FCLCA

1.4.4. Instrumentation and Data Analysis

A semi-structured interview served as the instrument for data collection to answer the research question. The interview protocol was divided into two sections. The first section used three questions to elicit the respondents' background information (gender, years of experience in teaching and academic degree). The second section consisted of nine questions to explore the participants' understanding of IoC from the perspective of teaching, their views on the purpose of education and the skills, knowledge and attitudes required. Finally, information about the incorporation of local knowledge systems into IoC was also elicited.

Data were thematically analysed using inductive approaches to develop data-driven categories. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data. It provides a flexible and useful research tool with a rich and detailed account of the data. From this process, a set of themes was generated.

1.5. Findings

The purpose of this research was to explore the faculty members' understanding of IoC and the extent to which local knowledge systems are embedded in IoC at UniTech. In the following, we elaborate on the six key success factors that were identified as themes in the interview data. They are discussed in order of importance, which is to say the most commonly mentioned factors or most emphasised by the interviewees. Representative interview excerpts illustrate how the issues were expressed.

1.5.1. Understanding IoC

From this category, four themes emerged as a result of the responses given by the participants: (i) IoC in terms of mobility of teachers, students and academic programmes; (ii) IoC in terms of teaching a range of international languages in the classroom; (iii) IoC in terms of helping students develop intercultural competence, skills and values; and (iv) IoC in terms of teaching international students.

2.6. IoC in Terms of Mobility of Teachers, Students and Academic Programmes

Many participants were consistent in describing IoC in terms of the mobility of teachers, students and academic programmes, with cross-border scope between international partner universities. Such mobility has internal and external horizons for teaching and learning, as was highlighted by the interviewees.

From the perspective of teaching, [IoC] could be summed up in the sense that we have Mozambican teachers who can be invited, for example, to another country to teach a subject that is also taught in our courses here and we can also welcome teachers [...] from other countries to come to teach in our courses. (P02)

In addition, P05 focused on partnerships that influence the curricula:

It has to do with the issue of partnerships between the programmes that are taught at the faculty or department with similar programmes involving foreign institutions so that the contents given in one university are similar to those given in another. It necessarily goes through the question of the mobility of the teachers and student body [...] for advanced internships in various domains. (P05)

The internationalisation of the curriculum can mean sharing the construction of the curriculum/programmes with teachers from other faculties and countries. For instance, the first editions of the master's programme at [our university] had technical assistance from international professors. (P01)

Concerning similar programmes, one of the faculty members gave a practical example from an African University Consortium, supported by the United Nations Office for Africa and the European Commission, involving six HEIs:

This involves the Masters of Arts in Translation and Interpretation [...] chosen due to the universities' expertise in language teaching education programmes: UniTech teaching Portuguese, the University of Nairobi teaching English and Swahili, the University of Buea in Cameroon teaching French and English, along with the University of Ghana, Benin and Senegal. (P06)

No matter how strategic, the mobility of students and faculty members is not fully undertaken due to financial constraints. The respondents see this as hindering the process, especially when it involves the outward mobility of doctoral students for scientific internships and participation of the faculty in international events:

It is the prerogative of those finishing a doctoral programme at our university to do an advanced scientific internship abroad. However, many of our students fail to enjoy such mobility due to financial limitations. (P05)

[...] there is this interest from the faculty members in participating in person in international events for conferences, seminars, colloquia, etc., but when we submit our projects to the institution's managers, we face a financial roadblock. (P03)

1.7. IoC in Terms of Teaching a Range of International Languages in the Classroom

This theme refers to equipping local students with traditional and emerging international languages. The main purpose of this, according to the participants, is to enable scientific communication in the international arena:

It is important to determine which are the most spoken international languages in the world today. [...] English, French and now Mandarin, which is emerging [in Africa], among others. Moreover [teaching] these languages is important for communication and no matter how knowledgeable you are as [in an international setting], you will need them to communicate. (P09)

Furthermore, as P06 noted:

We [had to] include international languages in our curricula, not just Portuguese because our students will not just go to Portugal, Brazil or another Portuguese-speaking country, but [to other] countries abroad. (P06)

The respondents viewed the issue of linguistic diversity as extremely important because it facilitates the mobility of teachers and students. The solution is implemented in the classroom:

When we design our curricular plans, we are concerned about looking at linguistic diversity, which is why we offer technical English in all UniTech programmes as mandatory, whereas French is an elective. In addition, we also teach short German courses. (P09)

1.8. IoC in Terms of Helping Students Develop Intercultural Competence, Skills and Values

In the participants' understanding, IoC is about helping students develop intercultural knowledge, skills and values to create the solid foundation required of a graduate. The respondents also emphasised the need for linguistic competency, which above all facilitates regional and global integration:

Apart from input, students must also have an output profile related to instructional aspects, content learning [and] other values expected as a graduate from higher education, such as ethics and honesty. (P03)

Other participants elaborated:

We want a graduate who has not just professional skills but also linguistic and intercultural skills so that they can grow and have the necessary foundation. (P04)

It has a lot to do with the issue of regional integration and international integration of graduates in this globalised world, where the job market is open. (P05)

Interviewee P04 expressed the view that as the current institutional conditions stand, graduates with language and infrastructure limitations might not properly develop global knowledge. Thus, it is necessary to move beyond the classroom curriculum. Interviewee P06 made this observation:

[...] the fact that we only work in Portuguese, with limited resources in terms of, for example, access to laboratories [...] means that our graduates are disadvantaged. (P06)

1.9. IoC in Terms of Teaching International Students

On the basis of the respondents' experiences, IoC in action can be said to include the presence of international students in the classroom. This may comprise short-term stints to obtain specific credits in some programmes or long-term attendance for an academic degree:

It [consists] of [...] receiving students from other universities abroad who take some courses from our curriculum that are accepted at their home institutions. (P03)

Indeed, IoC was explicitly mentioned in relation to this topic:

We talk about the internationalisation of the curriculum [...] when we have the possibility of having students from other regions in our classrooms. (P08)

Such students, according to the faculty members, come from diverse corners of the world, such as Africa, Asia and Latin America, with many differences in cultural background between them and home students.

1.9.1. The Incorporation of Local Knowledge Systems in IoC

Many interviewees emphasised two approaches to the incorporation of local knowledge: Those from the science field referred to *the incorporation of ethnoscience in the teacher education curriculum*, which looks at culture from a scientific perspective, mainly in relation to postgraduate programmes, as elaborated by P02:

Local knowledge has always been treated at UniTech in different areas. As far as I know, it began to be studied in the areas of ethnoscience and ethnomathematics. Currently, our postgraduate students adopt this approach when they pursue their internships abroad. (P02)

2. Moreover, as P07 added

Ethnomathematics came to strengthen local knowledge and to show that this local knowledge has science. For example, from a cultural aspect, a cultural game, a cultural event, or a cultural situation of a society, you try to find out if there is Mathematics in that content. Cultural aspects to be worked on in the contents of that discipline. (P07)

During the interview, we witnessed a prototype of a hut as a small dwelling constructed of various local materials:

As evidence of ethnomathematics, we have the construction of [this] hut. Discerning the Mathematics that is there, such as a rectangle, triangle, or cone, in which the builders of the huts often build them without realising that there is Mathematics involved. (P02)

Furthermore, when we asked how could ethnomathematics be incorporated into the IoC, one of the participants was straightforward:

It would be from the discipline itself not only to be lectured by local teachers but also international ones, whether from Africa or the West who could bring more the question of interculturality through faculty mobility. (P01)

Second, participants from the arts field pointed to *the inclusion of local languages* as a minor component of the language teaching education curriculum at the graduation level:

At UniTech, we have been creating a balance in language teaching education programmes that comprise English, French and German as major components, alongside Bantu [local] languages like Changana and Ronga as minor components at the graduation level. These Bantu language programmes were designed in collaboration with a university from South Africa, leading to the mobility of teachers and students from both institutions. (P10)

Conversely, notwithstanding the incorporation of local knowledge in IoC, some interviewees had a critical attitude towards the phenomenon and the terms “local” and “indigenous”, followed by suggestions for new approaches:

Local knowledge, for me, should not be viewed as inferior or considered exotic, which has been one of the problems so far, introducing it into our internationalisation of curriculum as folklore or exoticism. What is important is to present the scientific content of such knowledge. (P08)

Another interviewee made the point that the introduction of local languages was not enough in itself:

[...] Despite introducing Bantu culture, folklore, etc., our internationalisation of the university continues to be colonial, responding to the interests of others rather than our own [...]. Therefore, we need to design a curriculum that resembles us, that is identified with the project of our *Mozambicanity*, and that looks at the world from our perspective. (P11)

Finally, our interviewees noted that it might be better to build a curriculum that looks at international knowledge but also takes into consideration local priorities.

These expressions of local or indigenous knowledge are subalternising our [African] knowledge. What matters is to build a curriculum from where we are in dialogue with others [from abroad], respecting our languages and customs, without labelling them with the terms ‘local’ or ‘indigenous.’ (P07)

3. Discussion

This study builds on the case of UniTech aimed at exploring faculty members’ understanding of IoC from the perspective of teaching (first research question). As a follow-up, it investigated the extent to which local knowledge is embedded in IoC (second research question).

The study showed that while faculty members have a wide conception of IoC, unsurprisingly, their understanding varies. We say “unsurprisingly” because IoC can be interpreted from multiple angles and is not as straightforward as might be imagined. **This means that although in the literature, Betty Leask’s (2009) interpretation of IoC is described as the most widely accepted definition, in the context of internationalisation under the perspective of decolonisation it should not be considered as a standardised one because following Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) and Santos (2014), internationalisation is not a technical or procedural process, but it must be a liberatory and rehumanising project, especially in Africa where there is a loss of epistemological confidence perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity.**

Taking a closer look at the first interpretation, IoC is concerned with *the mobility of students, teachers and academic programmes*. This is a common perception of IoC among participants, emphasising physical movement to foreign countries. Although our interviewees are correct in their view, the physical movement of students and faculty members, when implemented, should be understood as elitist and expensive because it integrates a small number of geographically mobile people. An alternative to physical movement could be online mobility, which, apart from involving the majority, could be a response to financial constraints, as identified by the respondents in the interviews. By applying such a strategy, the university would be adopting a proactive approach without relying increasingly on Western support for the implementation of IoC, which is common in Mozambique and elsewhere.

The second interpretation of IoC is in terms of *teaching a range of international languages in the classroom*. This interpretation seems to be valid, albeit narrow, given the examples of international languages mentioned by the respondents. In our view, the concept needs to be understood in a broad sense when it comes to IoC in teaching. The findings suggest the need for a decolonisation perspective, given that the concept of “international languages” is simply understood to be “Western”, mainly comprising English, French and German, as empirically shown. Decolonising the concept of “international languages” could involve not only embedding Western languages into curricula but also local languages spoken in Southern Africa, such as Swahili (e.g., Tanzania), Shona (Zimbabwe), Chewa (Malawi) and Xhosa and Zulu (South Africa), commonly regarded as indigenous languages. The rationale for including such languages is threefold. First, they are strongly connected with the local languages spoken in the three regions of Mozambique, namely, the North (Swahili), Centre (Shona and Chewa) and South (Xhosa and Zulu). Second, many foreign students pursuing their studies across Mozambican HEIs are from Southern Africa, including the sampled university, according to its report (see, GPE, 2019). **Third, it could be a good response to the current internationalisation of higher education which according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) is informed by hegemonic neoliberal capitalist and commercial globalisation that enriches the curriculum with the addition of foreign languages and new materials from scholars from other places. Nonetheless, some of the backdrops that could be faced by the university as a result of embedding African Southern languages into the curriculum would be an absence of written course materials and the shortage of highly skilled local faculty members.**

With respect to the third interpretation of the IoC in terms of *helping students develop intercultural competence, skills and values*, the findings suggest that faculty members recognise the importance of developing intercultural competence among students because they come from different parts of the world. It is worth noting that the development of intercultural competence may occur through curriculum learning at home without requiring travel abroad and/or as a result of interaction across different cultures between home and “international” students, broadly speaking.

Concerning the fourth understanding that emerged from the study results, namely, understanding IoC in terms of *teaching international students*, it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind that when teaching international students, the content of the internationalised curriculum should embed international and intercultural dimensions regardless of the country of origin, as long as international standards are respected. Nevertheless, the view that having international students in the classroom is one of the key aspects of internationalising the curriculum should be understood as a myth that needs to be demystified by faculty members and other academic staff because some HEIs may not enrol international students yet still engage in IoC.

With regard to the second research question, the findings reveal, interestingly, two teaching practices, the incorporation of ethnoscience studies and local languages into the curriculum. We regard this finding as interesting because it indicates that IoC is not solely restricted to the arts, incorporating local languages, such as Ronga and Changana; it also includes scientific fields, embedding ethnoscience and ethnomathematics into the curriculum. **While it seems to be clear that in Arts can easily be seen as favourable for decolonisation, in natural sciences and mathematics the debate may take an opposite direction because the latter comes to us with all of modern**

Western science. In our perspective, corroborated by research data, the contribution of ethnomathematics in the IoC is not intended to the creation of *African mathematics*, which may even constitute a utopia, and demand the complete abandonment of Western knowledge. Ethnomathematics in the framework of this research is, however, linked to *interculturality*, as one of the components of the IoC where mathematical knowledge is translated into different cultures of each society. This endeavour might be achieved by sharing experiences between local and international students during the teaching and learning process, as empirically shown. Following our conceptual framework, the findings seem to suggest the *decolonisation* of the curriculum as understood by various scholars (e.g., Le Grange, 2016; Le Grange et al., 2020; Heleta, 2016).

If, through IoC, we encompass education for global citizenship, the inclusion of ethnomathematics and local languages into the curriculum will come as part of an important emerging paradigm, namely, *developing the vaunted diversity of intercultural competence, knowledge, skills and values* between home and incoming international students. Either way, UniTech and other Mozambican universities must offer high-quality programmes that support and enhance intercultural learning and abilities in higher education because the global economy has been influencing higher education settings and suppressing indigenous knowledge systems.

4. Conclusion

Following the findings and the discussion above, we conclude that there is a balance in the extent of perceptions and implementation of IoC at UniTech. Although HEIs are strongly influenced by the prevailing supremacy of the Western scientific paradigm, this Mozambican university, while integrating international elements, also embeds some local knowledge systems into the curriculum. Nevertheless, a more detailed account of the quest for the transformation of IoC is still needed. This will entail a search for a liberatory approach, focusing on an internationalised curriculum that is relevant to local and national contexts, being “international” in a broad perspective and not merely “Western”, as stressed by Wa Thiong’o, who argues that when conceptualising a curriculum we should “see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe” (Wa Thiong’o, 1986, p. 87).

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