

Teaching international students:

Strategies for enhancing students' learning

Jude Carroll

Educational Development Consultant

The case against the term 'international student'

Does it mean anything?

Is it useful?

Should we focus on one sub-group of students?

'International students': who are they?

Foreign.... overseas offshore

Students who don't pay home

Students who are

who speak

other

capability
with
English

fees and money

'cultural'
distance
travelled

far from support
far from family
far from help

- unfamiliar with 'how it works here'
- 'strange' expectations
- inappropriate skills

`International students': who are they?

Foreign.... overseas offshore

`The students who don't pay home fees'

`The students who are not from [here]'

`Students who speak a
language other than [national language] at home'

Students who travelled by a plane to study'

Anyone who calls themselves 'international'

`We are all international'

There's no such thing: students are students.

'Diverse students': many factors you might include

.... here, I suggest a focus on

Educational mobility

Students moving across [national] boundaries

Ideas, images, media etc moving

Programmes moving to students (Transnational Education)

Students returning 'back home'

Pedagogic variation [academic cultural differences]

'Same words, different meaning'

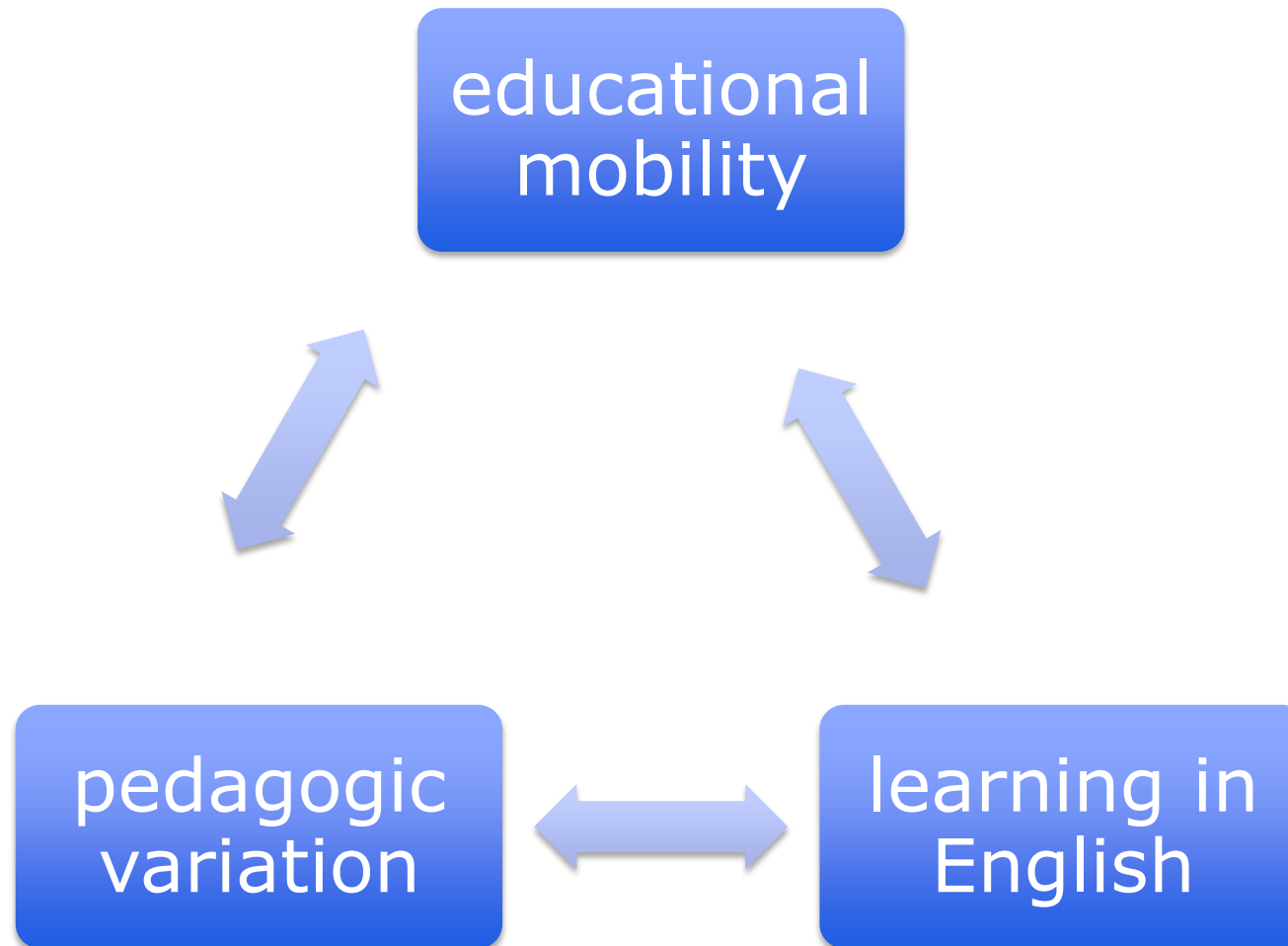
Learning and teaching in English

Students: variable levels of competence and confidence

[Teachers, too]

Not the same as 'learning English'

These factors inter-relate



Where is the 'bottom line'?

What is NOT negotiable?

What standards must all students achieve?

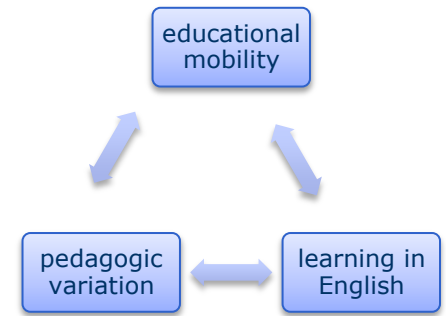
Am I clear about what they need to leave here, able to do?
.... and about standards along the way?

The students must adapt *'They want a Western education
so, they should be ready for that: ready for a Western education.'*

**Teachers can accommodate and adjust their
practice:**

*These are my students: what do they bring? What do they need from me
in order to succeed? What can I do to help them succeed?*

Students' key learning issues:



- **Language** [studying in English]
- **Academic transition:** new practices assumptions and expectations; new standards
- Having appropriate **skills**
- Engagement and **participation**
- **Collaboration, mixing.** Having their knowledge and experience valued
- **Useful awards:** knowledge and skills can be applied 'back home'



adjustment and accommodation?

- to students' **language** capability, to teachers' use of English. Better support for students learning in English.
- to students' **transition** to a new way of learning [and to new assessment].
- to ensuring students have necessary **skills for success**.
- to encouraging **participation** in teaching and learning methods
'Students getting the most from
- to student-student **collaboration** [vs. 'ghettos' and 'silos' and avoidance].

Issues needing accommodation

- students' language capability
- New academic culture
- building necessary skills.
- participation [*'Getting the most from*']
- collaboration & inclusion

Teachers' role Curriculum issues

- auditor; enhancing students' language learning
- Mediating between pedagogic cultures
- Coaching, providing practice, feedback
- Choreographing, shaping, valuing. Inviting in...
- Designing it, supporting it, valuing it

Resources for finding answers

Students

Colleagues

Books

Teaching `international Students project

Higher Education Academy `Lifecycle`

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/teachingandlearning/internationalisation/studentlifecycle>

Two reactions: "Oh good!" "Yes, but...."

Teachers as language enhancers

- language self-awareness
 - Ensuring students have a true sense of their language needs and strengths
 - Building students' vocabulary
 - Building students' language awareness
 - Useful feedback about errors and language improvements
 - creating opportunities for language practice
 - Helping local students improve their skills as communicators with those for whom English is a developing skill
- HOW?
 - Where?
 - When?

Language issues in lectures

- **For teachers**
- For students

students' participation in lectures

What students do

Teacher support?

Make notes/ create a record

Understand & think

Make links to assessment

Ask and answer questions

Do brief activities

Language enhancement in seminars

- [leave until we look at participation issues.....]

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Focus on students' transition to Carlow ways, Carlow assumptions, Carlow expectations

From what to what?

Where are the predictable 'sites of conflict'?

What are the 'trip wires for trouble'?

How can teachers help students recognise 'new game, new rules' then ensure they have the skills to play that new game?

An encounter on a flight from the Middle East (August, 2010) to London

Mohammed turned 18 ^{years} old two days before.

Of Indian (Muslim) heritage but all his schooling was in an Arabic-speaking country. Speaks no Arabic. Oldest of 6 children. *'My mother is crying since Monday'.*

Starting an undergraduate course (3 years). Big plans *'I will get an MBA in the US then a top job'*

All assessments so far by year-end exams. No coursework.

Has written up to 50 words in exams. No writing in any other language.

Never read a book in English except school text books

Shows me his IELTS: 5.5. **Very** strong on listening and speaking. Was taught in English by Indian-origin teachers

He knows nothing about UK Higher Education

Just 18, all schooling in an Arabic-speaking country where he is an outsider.

Starting a BA in xxx

All assessments by year-end exams.
No coursework.

Has only written 50 word answers in exams

Never read a book in English except text books

IELTS 5.5 but very strong oral (listening and speaking) .

Taught in English by Indian-origin teachers

What issues can you foresee for Mohammed

in lectures?

in seminars?

in 1:1 tutorial discussions with a teacher?

in assessment?

Transition: from what to what?

An aside about previous academic experiences

'Students expected a different culture they didn't expect a different culture of teaching and learning. They didn't expect a different meaning for the word 'examination'.

Poulton, 2009

They continue to not expect these differences until they encounter them.



Teachers as academic cultural mediators: same words, different meanings

Teacher
Student
Read
Write
Examination
Dissertation
Supervisor

Help
Good work
9:00 AM
'my own work'
'logical case'

'I call my teacher Dr. X'



- **A good teacher notices I need help and offers it.**
- **A good teacher tells me good answers to good questions.**
- **To learn, I must listen to the teacher. Really listen.**
- **I read the textbook many many many times. Exam questions and answers are from the textbook.**

I say, 'Call me Jude'



- **When students ask, I help with study-based issues.**
- **I select the issues but the students must find their own answers**
- **I want students to discuss, argue, solve problems. What's their conclusion?**
- **I want students to read around, to choose good bitsand to weave them together to make an answer. I want their answer not the answer**

..... **`previous educational experiences...'**

What are some of
the answers I
have seen?

Under each heading,
what would someone
see/notice here?

What would a student
from other kinds of
experiences find
surprising 'here'?

No: describe / name the artifact

Yes: explain the rationale

the artifact

the rationale

First names for teachers

Reading list

Word limit on essays

Office hours

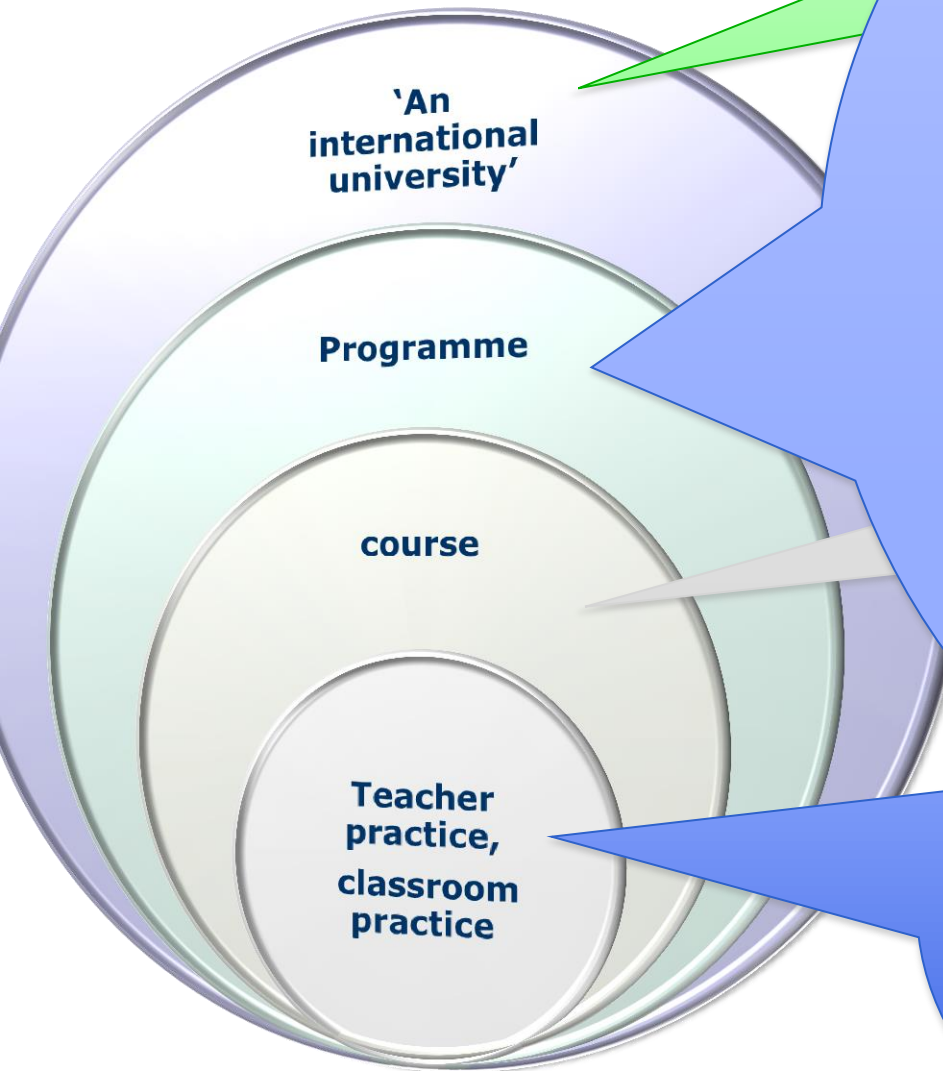
group work

72% as top mark

Issues for teachers [continued]

- Students' language capability, using English. Learning in English.
- Students' transition to new learning [and new examination] context. Ensuring students have necessary skills.
- Students' participation in teaching and learning methods
'Getting the most from
- Integration and collaboration [vs. 'ghettos' and 'silos' and avoidance]. Using students' 'cultural capital'

Not just YOU



Graduate outcomes
Beliefs and values for
internationalisation

Epistemology [*knowledge-making*]

Good induction & skills progression
Appropriate admission criteria

Support and guidance

Knowledge
experiences ...
and more

information

examples

tools and
equipment

motivating
reasons



Practice of the
'sub-skills'

feedback

Putting sub-
skills together.
Practice

time

working with an
expert to aim high

practice

Teacher-supported skill development

Programme-level planning and delivery

Early **diagnostics**

Design in **practice** and feedback

Practice, practice, practice over time

Skills learned as an integral part of content learning

Teacher adjustment and accommodation [continued]

1. Language capability, using English. Learning in English.
2. Students' transition to [new] learning, new examinations, new context. Ensuring necessary skills.
- 3, Support for students' **participation** in teaching and learning methods
4. Integration and collaboration

Participation: the primacy of exploratory talk?

'Learning is not a spectator sport'

Learning always takes engagement, personal involvement, but does that mean talking?

Some teaching methods are especially reliant on interaction and involvement – what is the learning rationale?

If you want students to talk,
prepare students for it
plan it; organise it
process it – ensure students make sense of it

students' participation in seminars

What students do

Speak

Listen

Question &
discuss

Apply, analyse,
evaluate

Evolve a
personal
stance

Teachers' support strategies

- for language

What to say?

*What did she
mean when she
said that?*

- for thinking
& learning

What's
the
point?

- for
interaction?

How can I
join in?

Will it ever be MY
turn?

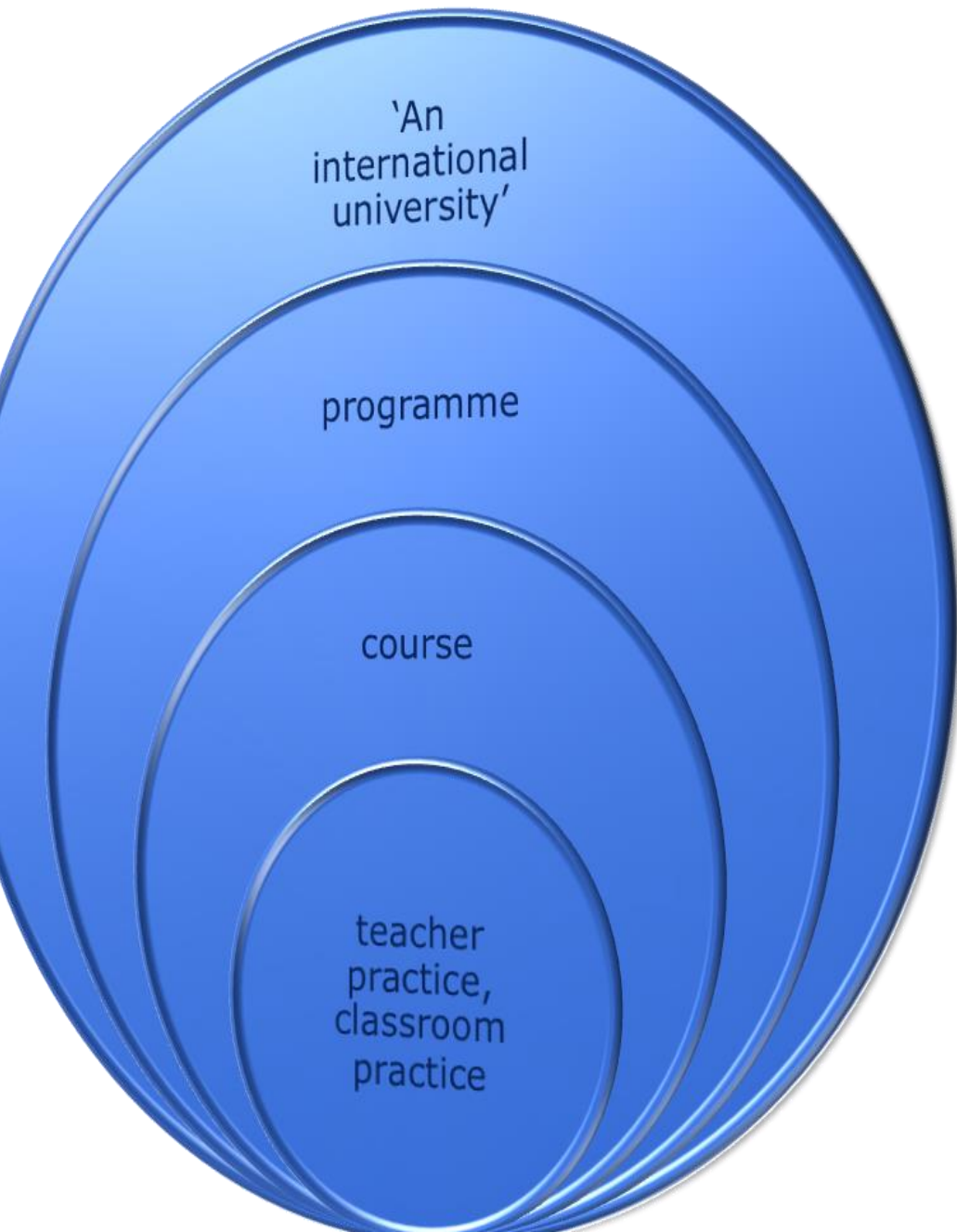
Thinking in seminars

What students do

State information
Ask questions
Answer questions
Challenge each others' views
Collect ideas and organise them
Solve problems
etc.....

What teachers can do to create the thinking space

Collaboration and interaction: student-student



'Whole university'
issue

Requires
deliberate action

Not easy!

Making groupwork work

- Here is one for this afternoon

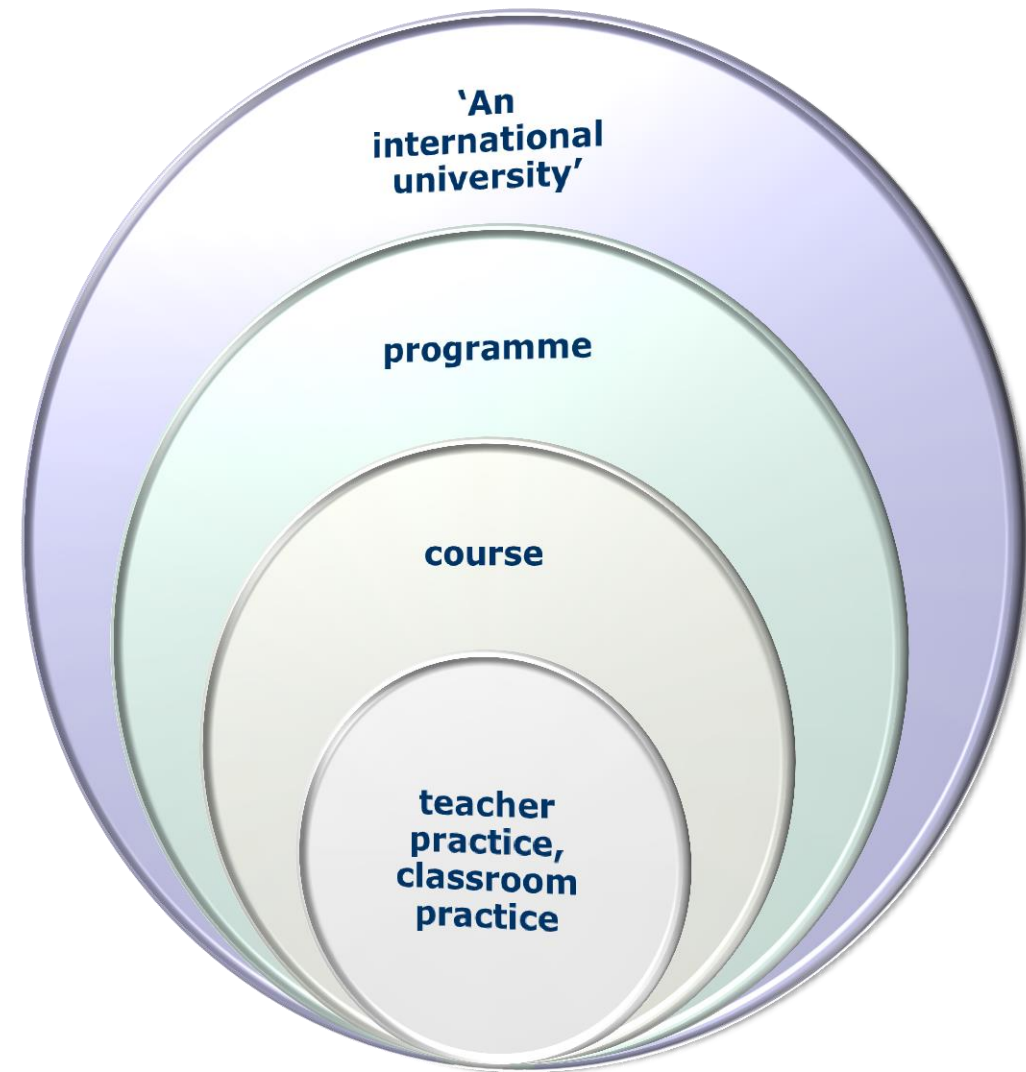
Last words

Most students succeed

Most students are proud
*'It was the hardest thing I ever
did'*

Most teachers cope
Many teachers enjoy it
A few will never change

Many practical changes do help
There is support and guidance for
teachers



Resources

- Teaching International Student's Project UK
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/international-student-lifecycle>
Website with excellent range of resources
- [**Guide Teaching International Students S Arkodis**](#)
Guide from Melbourne University
- *Carroll J. and Ryan J. (Eds.) (2005) Teaching International Students: improving learning for all. Routledge*